

Monergism

# THE FADING OF THE FLESH

GEORGE SWINNOCK

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## by George Swinnock

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## THE EPISTLE DEDICATORY

To the Courteous Mrs JANE SWINNOCK, widow of Mr CALEB SWINNOCK, late of Maidstone, deceased.

HONOURED COUSIN,—The whole world is fitly termed by the Holy Ghost, a sea of glass, Rev. 4:6. A sea for its tempestuousness; all the passengers who sail on it are sure to be driven to and fro with the surging waves, and high winds of sorrows. Man entereth on this stage of the world crying, goeth off groaning, and the part which he acteth is chiefly tragical, his whole life being little else, from the womb to the tomb, but a chain of crosses, and a circle of sufferings; he is tossed like a tennis-ball, from hazard to hazard, till at last he fall to the earth. A sea of glass, for its brittleness; glass is soon broken, be it never so much gilded. The fashion of this world passeth away; all its carnal comforts perish with it. The possessions of it are corruptible; gold and silver are liable to that rust which will consume them. The relations in it are mutable; whilst we are refreshing ourselves with those pleasant flowers, and embracing them in our breast, and sticking them in our bosoms, they wither. The Jews at this day have a custom, saith one, when a couple are married, to break the glass wherein the bridegroom and the bride have drank; thereby to admonish them, that though at present they are joined together, yet ere long they must be parted asunder. The saints of God themselves are not privileged from such arrests; nay, those vessels which are most richly laden go often deepest in these waters. The howling wilderness is the direct way to the heavenly Canaan.

The late providence which removed your loving and beloved husband (I hope to heaven) hath taught you the truth of these particulars. The loss of such a relation must needs be a sore affliction. The nearer the union is, the more difficult the separation. Husband and wife are one flesh, therefore to part them cannot but be painful; but grace will help you both to submit to that blow which is so grievous to nature, and to be the better for it.

It was some comfort to me to observe your Christian carriage under so great a cross. The hour of affliction is an hour of temptation. Satan loves to fish when the waters are troubled. He would bring us to hard thoughts of God, by the hard things we suffer from God; 'touch him, and he will curse thee to thy face.' In such stormy weather, some vessels are cast away. A corrupt heart in adversity, like water boiling over the fire, then most of all discovereth its froth and filth, Isa. 8:21. But though frosty seasons are hurtful to weeds, yet they are helpful to good corn. A sanctified person, like a silver bell, the harder he is smitten, the better he soundeth. Faith is a special antidote against the poison of the wicked one. It can read love in the blackest characters of divine dispensation; as by a rainbow we see the beautiful image of the sun's light, in the midst of a dark and waterish cloud. God's rod, like Jonathan's, is dipped in honey. Our daily bread, and our sharpest rod, grow upon the same root. Every believer may say in affliction, as Mauritius, when his wife and children were slain before his eyes, Righteous art thou, O Lord, and in very faithfulness hast afflicted me.

Dear Cousin, since God's rod hath a voice as well as his word, and, like Moses's rod in Egypt, worketh wonders in and for his people, let me beseech you to hear it, and to know him that hath appointed it. Oh how highly doth it behove you to labour, that, as Aaron's rod, it may bud and blossom with the fruits of holiness!

Two lessons principally God would teach you by it:

First, That your affections be taken off from earthly possessions. Dying relations call for dying affections. When Israel doted on Egypt as a palace, God made it an iron furnace to wean them from it, and to make them weary of it. The creature is our idol by nature; we bow down the knees of our souls to it, and worship it; but infinite wisdom makes it our grief, that it may not be our god. When children fare well abroad, they are mindless of home; but when abused by strangers, they hasten to their parents. The world is therefore a purgatory, that it might not be our paradise. As soon as Laban

frowned on Jacob, he talks of returning to his father's house. Every rout the world puts us to, sounds a retreat to our affections, and calls off our heart from the eager pursuit of these withering vanities. Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? Prov. 23:5; much less thine heart.

I have read of a young hermit, who, being passionately in love with a young lady, could not by any art suppress the fury and violence of that flame, till at last, being told that she was dead, and had been buried about fourteen days, he went secretly to her vault, and, with the skirt of his mantle, wiped the moisture from the carcase, and still at the return of his temptation, laid it before him, saying, Behold, this is the beauty of the woman which thou didst so much desire; and the man at last with that moisture of the corpse put out the fire.

The godliness of the world, its whole glory and gallantry, is but a curious picture drawn on ice, which affords no good footing; for whilst we are standing on it, we are sliding from it; and who would lay the stress of his felicity upon so slippery a foundation? No wise man ever put his chiefest goods and riches in such low, damp rooms, where they will corrupt and putrefy.

Hippocrates affirmeth that all immoderations are enemies to the health of the body; sure I am they are to the health of the soul. The amity of the world is enmity against God. All the water is little enough to run in the right channel; therefore none should run beside. The time is short; use the world as not abusing it, 1 Cor. 7:29.

Secondly, That you choose the good part that shall never be taken from you. Man's heart will be fixed on somewhat as its hope and happiness. God therefore puts out our candles, takes away relations, that we may look up to the Sun, and esteem him our chiefest portion. When we are digging and delving in the earth to find out content and comfort, he sendeth damps, purposely to make us call to be drawn upward. Till the prodigal met with a famine, he regarded not his father. If the waters be abated, the dove is apt to wander and defile

herself; but when they cover the face of the earth, and allow her no rest, then she returneth to the ark.

I hope there is a good work begun in you, which shall be finished at the day of Christ. But every one standeth or falleth to their own master. Get Scripture on your side, and you are safe for ever. The Romans, when they parted from the bones of their dead friends, (for they burnt them,) took their leave in such language, Vale, vale, vale, nos te ordine quo natura permiserit sequemur; Farewell, farewell, farewell, we shall follow thee in the time and order which nature alloweth us. You may say of your husband, as David of his child, I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me. Prepare therefore for your dying hour.

Labour to be rich in godliness. Grace alone is special bail against death; it is such wealth as will be current in the other world. Lay up your treasure in heaven, where neither thief nor moth, neither men nor devils, can rob you of it. Take God in Christ for your heaven, and you are happy in spite of the world, death, and hell. You know the living comfort of your dying husband was, that though his flesh and heart failed him, yet God was the strength of his heart and his portion for ever. And it was a memorable speech of his, when some friends came to him and commended the richness and magnificence of Hampton Court, newly trimmed and adorned for the reception of her Majesty, One drop of the blood of Christ is more worth than all the world. I must tell you there is no such cordial in a day of death as this covenant-relation to the Lord of life.

The child may walk in that dark entry without fear if he have but his Father by the hand: 'Though I walk in the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear none ill, for thou art with me.' Death indeed is strong; it overcometh principalities and powers: but as strong as it is, it cannot separate God and the godly person. It may dissolve the natural union betwixt soul and body, but not the mystical union betwixt God and the soul. The saints die in the Lord, they sleep in Jesus.

O cousin, be married to Christ, and you are made for ever. Heaven is the jointure, and death one of the servants or slaves of her that is the spouse of this Lord. Death is yours, ye are Christ's, 1 Cor. 3:21. Other men are death's, (it hath dominion over them,) but death is yours—your servant to strip off your rags of sin and misery, and to clothe you with the robes of joy and glory.

The ensuing discourse was, for the substantial part of it, delivered at the funeral of your dearest relation on earth. You gave me the text, and my indisposition of body allowed me then but little time, which caused me now to make some enlargements and additions; but it is the same body, possibly in a little neater, far from gaudy, dress, which was prepared for the pulpit. I present it to you, not doubting of its acceptance, for his sake whose death was the occasion of it. The good Lord bless it to you, requite your love to me and them that fear him, make up the want of streams in the more abundant enjoyment of the fountain, fill you with all the fruits of righteousness, enable you to persevere and increase in godliness, and so to live with a good conscience that you may die with much comfort, and be a follower of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises; so prayeth,

Your servant for Jesus' sake,

GEORGE SWINNOCK.

#### THE EPISTLE DEDICATORY

To the Right Worshipful the Mayor, with the Recorder, Jurats, Common Council, and the rest of the inhabitants of his native town, Maidstone, in Kent.

HONOURED AND BELOVED,—It is a general observation, that all creatures have propensity and inclination towards those places where they receive their births and beings. Vegetatives which stand

in the lowest rank of life, thrive best, because they delight most, in those grounds whence they first grow. Sensitives, as they have a higher being, so a stronger inclination to those parts where they are born.

The prince of philosophers telleth us that fish usually stay with pleasure in those waters in which they are bred, and beasts in those woods in which they are brought forth, and that neither of them will remove without force and violence; nature hath planted in them both this principle of affecting their native places. Hence it comes to pass that even these creatures have manifested their thankfulness after their manner. Trees acknowledge that sap which they borrow from the earth in which they stand, in the tribute of leaves which they pay back to the same in autumn. The storks are said to leave one of their young in that part of the earth where they are hatched. Men, as they have a nobler life, so a greater love to their native country.<sup>2</sup> Heathen themselves have been famous for this.

Pericles, the Athenian, did so affect his countrymen, that his usual speech was, If none but myself should lead them to the shambles, as much as lieth in me, they shall be immortal. When Cleomenes, king of Sparta, being greatly distressed, had a promise of help from Ptolemy, king of Egypt, upon condition that his mother and son were sent to him as pledges; Cratesiclea, for so was his mother's name, as soon as she understood it, said to her son, who was afraid and ashamed to mention it to her, How is it that thou hast concealed it so long and hast not told me? Come, come, put me straight into a ship and send me whither thou wilt, that this body of mine may do some good unto my country, before crooked age consume it without profit. Themistocles, notwithstanding his countrymen had banished him, drank the blood of a bull, and poisoned himself, to keep Artaxerxes, who had sworn not to go against it without him, from invading his country.<sup>2</sup> Codrus, king of Athens, Attilius Regulus, general of the Romans,<sup>4</sup> and M. Curtius, are renowned in history for sacrificing their lives for their country's liberty.

The Christian is ὁμοιοπαθής, a man of like passions, only he acteth from higher principles, and affecteth far holier purposes. Religion doth not break the string of natural affection, but wind it up to such a pitch, as may make its strokes more true, and its sound more melodious. Nehemiah was sad and pensive when the city of his father was solitary, Neh. 2:3. The Jews were disconsolate when their native country lay desolate, Ps. 137., beginning. Paul could wish himself parted from Christ, that his kindred and countrymen might be united to Christ, Rom. 9:3. Greg. Nazianzen and Jerome report that the Jews to this day come yearly to the place where Jerusalem, the city of their fathers stood, which was destroyed by Titus and Adrian, and upon the day of the destruction of it, weep over it.

As it is natural to love, so not unusual in our kingdom for rich persons to manifest their love to their native parishes by large gifts to the poor. But though my respects to you be sincere, yet I may say, in a sense, silver and gold have I none to speak my affections by, only such as I have I give you; a treatise which may, through the blessing of God, help you to the true treasure.

Bucholcerus blessed God that he was born in the days, and bred under the discipline of holy Melanchthon. I must ingenuously acknowledge, that it was a great mercy to me that I was born amongst you, and brought up under as pious and powerful a ministry there, as most in England.<sup>7</sup>

In testimony of my unfeigned love, I present you with this brief discourse, which was conceived in your pulpit, and through the importunity of several of you, brought forth to the press. The occasion of it, as is well known to you, was the death of your neighbour, and my dear relation, Master Caleb Swinnock, who was interred May 21, 1662, whose father and grandfather had three or four times enjoyed the highest honour, and exercised the highest office, in your corporation. I am much of his mind, who saith that funeral encomiastics of the dead, are often confections of poison to the living; for many, whose lives speak nothing for them, will draw

the example into consequence, and be thereby led into hope that they may press a hackney funeral sermon to carry them to heaven when they die; and therefore am always sparing myself, though I condemn not the custom in others, where they do it with prudence, and upon good cause. My friend's holy carriage in his sickness, besides his inoffensiveness, for aught I ever heard, in his health, commandeth me to hope that his soul is in heaven. I had the happiness some time to be brought up with him in his father's, Mr Robert Swinnock's family, whose house, I cannot but speak it to the glory of God, had holiness to the Lord written upon it. His manner was to pray twice a day by himself, once or twice a day with his wife, and twice a day with his family, besides singing psalms, reading, and expounding Scriptures, which morning and evening were minded. The Sabbath he dedicated wholly to God's service, and did not only himself, but took care that all within his gate should spend the day in secret and private duties, and in attendance on public ordinances; of their proficiency by the last, he would take an account upon their return from the assembly. His house indeed was, as Tremellius saith of Cranmer's, Palæstra pietatis, a school of religion. I write this not so much for the honour of him, of whose industry for the good of the souls committed to him I was a frequent eye-witness, and whose memory is blessed; but chiefly for your good, that as some of you do already, so others also may be provoked to follow such gracious patterns. I must tell you, that what low thoughts soever any of you now may have of holy persons, and holy practices, yet when you come to look death in the face, and enter into your unchangeable estates, a little of their grace and godliness will be of more worth in your esteems than the whole world. Though the saint be marked for a fool in the world's calendar at this day, and the prosperous sinner counted the wisest person, yet when the eyes of sinners' bodies are closed, the eyes of their souls will be opened; and then, oh then, they will see and say, according to that apocryphal place which will be found canonical for the matter of it, We fools counted his life to be madness, and his end to be without honour; but now he is numbered among the children of God, and his lot is among the saints, Wisdom 5:4, 5.

The subject of this tractate is partly the true way to die well; which I am sure is of infinite concernment to your immortal souls, and such a lesson that, if it be not learned, you are lost for ever. The cynic cared not what became of his body when dead; and the other heathen could slight the loss of a grave, a little earth;<sup>2</sup> but without question it concerns you nearly to take care what becomes of your souls, and you cannot so easily bear the loss of God and heaven.

Men, indeed, are generally unwilling to hear of death, and the minister who would urge them to it is as unwelcome as foul weather, which usually comes before it is sent for. Whatsoever hath a tendency to death is killing; the telling them of it sounds as mournfully in their ears as the tolling of a passing bell; and the making their wills, as frightful to them, as the making their graves. Hence, when they are riding post in the broad way of sin and the world, and conscience would check and rein them in with the curbs of death and judgment, they presently snap them in pieces, and stifle its convictions; they dare not look into the book of conscience, to see how accounts stand between God and themselves, but, like hawks, are ever hooded within-doors, blind at home, and never use their eyes but abroad, to the hurt and censuring of others.

The Egyptian slaves drank wine freely, and wrapped their heads in veils, that they might die without sight or sorrow. I know many drown the thoughts of their future mourning in carnal pleasure and present mirth; but such mirth, like Nabal's, will last no longer than while they are drunk with ignorance and senselessness; for they no sooner come to themselves, to understand the state they are in, but their hearts die within them. Besides, hereby they put themselves upon a necessity of perishing; for, alas! how will they do to die, who consider not beforehand of their latter end.

Naturalists tell us of a cockatrice, that if men see it first, that dieth; if that seeth a man first, the man dieth. It is most true of death, if we see it first, by a holy preparation for it, we kill it—it cannot hurt us; but if death see and seize us first, it kills us eternally. Oh believe it,

sirs, it is another manner of thing to die well than the sleepy world dreams of. The lustiest of you all must expect that ere long death will trip up your heels, and give you a fall; ask your souls whether you are ready for it. Will it not prove your downfall? When death throweth you, will it not be your eternal overthrow? It is possible, ye think of preparing for death hereafter, but why not now? Do any of you say, 'To-morrow I will repent'? What if God say, 'Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee.' Where are you then? It is one of the greatest stratagems of the devil, whereby he hath undermined millions of souls, by prevailing with them to delay till it was too late. Oh consider, death, like thunder and lightnings, blasteth the green corn, and consumeth the strongest buildings, Job. 21:23, 24. One dieth in his full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet: 'His breasts are full of milk, and his bones are moistened with marrow.' The cock in the Arabic fable, having overcome another cock in a battle, thought now that he had no enemy, and therefore got to the top of a house, and began to crow and clap his wings in token of triumph. When behold, on a sudden, a vulture cometh and snatcheth away his bragging champion and conqueror. If nature in any of you have mastered one distemper, it gives you not leave to be secure, for an outward accident or inward disease will on a sudden master you.

It is observable in the days of Solomon, when Israel enjoyed the greatest peace, they made strong preparation for war, 1 Kings 4:25, 26, 'And Israel and Judah dwelt every man under his own vine and fig-tree. And Solomon had forty thousand stalls of horses for his chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen.'

Iphicrates, the Athenian general, in times of peace intrenched his army, ordered his outworks, set his watch, kept his guards, and observed all martial discipline, as if he had been in the height and heat of war; and being asked the reason by one of his familiars, and what he feared; he answered, To be surprised, and lest it should so fall out that he should be constrained to say, I thought not on it. Oh that we were as wise, who are listed under the captain of our salvation, for that war wherein there is no discharge! Beloved

friends, watch therefore; 'for ye know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of man cometh, Mat. 25:13.

The Brachmanni had their graves before their doors. The Sybarites at banquets had a death's head delivered from hand to hand by every guest at the table. The emperor Ferdinand had one appointed at certain times to salute him with *Vive memor lethi, Ferdinande; O Ferdinand, live as one that is mindful he must die.* Joseph of Arimathea had his tomb in his garden. When the blessed Saviour was in his glorious transfiguration, in company with those heavenly courtiers, they spake to him of his decease, Luke 9:31. Could you think but one quarter of an hour every day, what a searching, trying day, the day of death will be; ah! how holy would you live! how exactly would you walk! Were death at your doors, at your tables, in your gardens, in your shops, present before your eyes in all your projects and pleasures, how would it deaden your hearts to these sublunary vanities, and quicken your affections to celestial felicities!

I have read of one that prayed six times a day, and being asked the reason, said no more but this, *I must die.* If any argument in the world will dissuade from wickedness, and persuade to godliness, and abounding in the work of the Lord, death will. They who steer the ship aright, sit in the hindermost part of it. They who order their conversations aright, dwell in the thoughts of their dissolutions. When our time is short, we must work the harder.

It is reported of the birds of Norway that they fly faster than the birds of other countries, not because they have greater nimbleness of wing, but by a natural instinct—they knowing the day in their climate to be very short, (not above three hours long, say some)—make the more haste to their nests. Your time is little; your accounts will be great; your work must be done now or never. Oh work the work of him that sent you into the world, 'while it is day, for the night cometh, when no man can work,' John 9:4.

I am bound to tell you that God hath committed many talents into the hands of several amongst you; ye are higher in place and power; ye have more opportunities than others to serve the interest and honour of Christ, and therefore God expecteth that you should do more for him than others. Indulge the drunkenness, and swearing, and uncleanness, and Sabbath-breaking of others, lest ye should be counted busy-bodies, or precise persons, and you destroy both your own and their souls. There is no such cruelty to men's souls, as clemency to their sins. He loves his friend best, who hates his lusts most. Besides the wrong your sinful compliance doth to others, whilst ye bear the sword—as women wear their artificial teeth for show only, not for service—ye treasure up wrath on your own heads against the day of death; for as a reverend divine, now with God, said truly, Nothing more saddens the heart when one comes to die, than his neglect of those opportunities which God's providence, or his own place, have put into his hand of doing or receiving good. Neither is there a sharper corrosive than the reflection upon those days and times which have passed over him male, aliud, nihil, agentem.

It is chronicled of Philip the Third, king of Spain, that though he never committed gross sin all his lifetime, yet when he came to die, he screeched out dreadfully, Oh that I had never reigned! oh that I had never been king! for then I should not have now to answer for my neglect of doing the good I might, and my not hindering the evil I ought in my government. Sirs, I beseech you, give me leave to be faithful to you. Will it not be a dreadful time with you, when you are tumbling on your dying beds, and near your eternity, if conscience should fly in your faces for your falseness and unfaithfulness in your places, and make you cry out, Oh that I had never been mayor of Maidstone! oh that I had never been justice! oh that I had never been jurat! for then I should not have now to answer before the dreadful tribunal of a righteous God, for all the oaths, fornications, profanation of the Lord's day, and other evils which I might have hindered, and did not; and for all the good which I might, by my holy pattern, and encouraging others in piety, have done, and would not. Alas! ye cannot imagine the dreadfulfulness of such a man's condition

on such a day. Therefore now be terrors to evil-doers, and encouragements to them that do well, if ye would find comfort then; for as in philosophy, so in divinity—they who mind not the premises, make but mad, but sad conclusions.

The naturalists assure us, that the ashes of a viper applied to that part of the body which is stung, will draw the venom out of it,—natural attraction, as it were, calling home that poison which injury and violence had misplaced; the serious consideration that you must die, and be turned into dust and ashes, will be a sovereign medicine against the poison and pollution of sin; it will make you both good men and good magistrates.

The latter part of the treatise containeth the gracious person's glorious portion. Therein I have endeavoured so to set forth the vastness of the saints' estate (though, I must confess, neither men nor angels can cast up its total sum) that I might prevail with you to desire the felicity of God's children, and the inheritance of his chosen ones. This is the portion, which is, as the Spanish ambassador said of his master's treasure in the Indies, without a bottom. Though the seven streams of Nilus are known, yet the head of it was never found out. Much of the riches, and beauty, and perfections of the ever-blessed God may be read in the book of the creatures; more may be seen in the glass of the Scriptures; but the longest line of human or angelical understanding can never fathom his boundless, bottomless nature and being; yet there is so much to be known of him even in this life, as may draw out your hearts to choose and close with him. The world is ready to wonder what the people of God see or enjoy in him, that they are so fearful of his fury, and so joyful in his favour. As the ignorant wretch could see nothing in the picture of Helena, why Nicostratus should admire it so much, but, as Nicostratus told him, O friend, if thou hadst my eyes, thou wouldst wonder at it as much as I do; so, had the world but the saints' eyes; could they see what a crown of glory, what a paradise of pleasures, what a mine of riches, what a loving, able, and faithful friend God is; could they but behold that beauty and bounty, grace and peace, love and life, which are in

the infinite God, they would admire him too; yea, their eyes would affect their hearts, that they could not but love him, and delight in him; but Satan, with his black hand, like swallows' dung, puts out men's eyes, that they, not seeing so great a good, might not desire him.

The Italians have a proverb, He who hath not seen Venice doth not believe; and he who hath not lived there some time, doth not understand what a city it is. This is most true of God: he who hath not, with Moses, seen him that is invisible, doth not believe; and he who never had fellowship with the Father, and Jesus Christ his Son, cannot understand what a vast, all-sufficient, and infinite portion the eternal God is. O friends, did your eyes, with Isaiah, see this Lord of hosts, or with Israel's magistrate, beheld but his back parts; or had you, with Paul, ever been caught up into the third heavens, ye would quickly trample on all the honours, and pleasures, and treasures of this lower world, as toys and trifles, and say, with David, 'Whom have we in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that we desire besides thee.'

I have undertaken briefly, in the ensuing discourse, to shew also the vast difference between the Christian's and the worldling's portion, by which you may understand, that if any one among you could enjoy the wealth of Croesus, the wisdom and glory of Solomon, the beauty of Absalom, the strength of Samson, the pleasures of Sardanapalus, and to all the long life of Methuselah, yet in the midst of all these, his soul would be as beggarly as the body of Lazarus, and as restless and unsatisfied as the stormy, tempestuous ocean. No water, say naturalists, will quench the dragon's thirst. No creature can fill the vast desires of a capacious immortal soul. As among all the beasts of the field there was not a meet companion for man—Adam was solitary and alone, notwithstanding their numerous society; so amongst all the creatures of the world there is not a meet portion for the soul—it is poor and beggarly without God, in the midst of all its possessions. Your heads may be solicitous, and your hearts industrious, to heap up creature comforts, and when ye have got

what the world can give, ye would be but as hungry men in a room full of stones or chips. That which is unsuitable to the soul's nature, cannot be satisfying to the spirit's desires.

There is a nourishment proper to every animal. Spiders feed on flies, moles on worms; the horse on grass, the lion on flesh. There is also food proper to man's soul, spiritual meat, and spiritual drink; 'My flesh is meat indeed, my blood is drink indeed,' (all other is *cibi et potus tantummodo umbra*;) this, this is that which, when the soul comes once to feed on it, it is filled, it is satisfied.

Philosophers observe that the matter of the heavens desireth no other form, whereas in all sublunary things it constantly doth, and the reason is, because of the actuality and perfection of that heavenly form. While the soul fasteneth on any sublunary thing as its happiness, it desireth more and better; but when it doth once choose the blessed God, it desireth no more, no better, because of those infinite perfections which are in God. One God answereth all the soul's desire and necessities.

To keep you no longer out of the body of the book, it is recorded of Marcus Cato, that after his return from Carthage, when he did at any time deliver his judgment about any business in the senate, he would conclude his speech with, Methinks Carthage should be destroyed. Sirs, will you suffer me to tell you again and again, Methinks a dying hour is not to be neglected; methinks a living God is worthy to be embraced. Though there may be some differences among you, about things that are ceremonial and circumstantial, yet ye are, I hope, generally agreed,—I am sure all are, that have the least savour of religion—that man's greatest wisdom is to prepare for his dying hour, Deut. 32:29; Ps. 90:12. That the heart of religion consisteth in taking, not the world, but God, for your portion and happiness, Ps. 73:25; Mat. 22:35; 1 John 2:15. That profaneness ought to be avoided in yourselves, 1 Cor. 6:9, 10; Gal. 5:19–21, and suppressed according to your places and powers in others, Rev. 2:2; 2 Chron. 15:16; Ps. 101:7; 1 Tim. 5:22. That the power of godliness ought chiefly to be minded

and countenanced, 1 Tim. 4:8; 2 Tim. 3:5; John 4:24. That a holy, spiritual, not a fleshly, sensual life, is the way to heaven, Rom. 8:5, 13. That your children and servants ought to be instructed in the knowledge of God and Christ, of their misery and the means of their recovery, Gen. 18:19; Prov. 22:6; Eph. 6:4. That your houses should be churches, praying, reading, and singing families, Joshua 24:15; Ps. 101:2, 6, 7; Col. 3:16; Rom. 16:5; Jer. 10:25. And that the Lord's day should be conscientiously observed, and devoted to the dearest Redeemer by secret, private, and public duties, Exod. 20:8; Is. 58:13; Acts 20:7; Rev. 1:10. These things are written, as with the beams of the sun, so clearly in the Scriptures, that if ye deny them, ye deny yourselves to be Christians, and profess yourselves to be infidels; I beseech you, therefore, in the name of the blessed Saviour, who redeemed you from your vain conversations with his own most precious blood, and for the sake of your immortal souls, which within a few days must throw their last cast for eternity, that your practices be answerable to such principles. For, believe me, it will be a dreadful thing another day, for your lives to give your consciences the lie at this day.

I have but one request more to you—pardon my freedom and plainness of speech, for truly my heart is enlarged towards you—be pleased to peruse the following discourse, with serious consideration of the truth and weight of the particulars therein delivered, and with supplication to God that the treatise may be serviceable to your eternal salvations. If I write not what is agreeable to the word of God, reject it; but if I do, submit to it, lest ye subvert your own souls. The Father of mercies and God of all grace enlighten all your minds in the saving knowledge of himself; and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent, bless this brief discourse to you, infuse grace in every of you where it is wanting, increase grace where it is; bless you so in civil things that your town may be a habitation of justice, and so succeed you in spirituals, that it may be a mountain of holiness; and enable you all so to prepare for death, that it may be to you the gate of life; so to take him for your portion, that he may be your everlasting possession; and so to glorify him in your generations, that ye may be

meet for, and heirs of, the eternal weight of glory; which is the prayer of

Your most affectionate servant,

GEORGE SWINNOCK.

## **THE FADING OF THE FLESH**

My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.—Ps. 73:26.

### **CHAPTER I**

The preface, division of the psalm, and coherence of the text

THE Holy Scriptures are famous above all other writings for their verity. The works and books of men are like their bodies, liable to many weaknesses. After their most correct edition, there may frequently be found more errata in the copy than in the press. But the word of God is like himself, full, without all imperfection; and faithful, without all falsehood or corruption. Its author is the God of truth, for whom it is impossible to lie, and therefore its matter must needs be the word of truth. Thy law is the truth, 2 Pet. 1:21; Titus 1:2; Ps. 119:142.

Among all the books of Scripture, the Psalms of David are famous for variety. Other books are either historical, doctrinal, or prophetical; the book of Psalms is all, Ps. 22. and 16. It describeth some histories of the church, foretelleth the passion and resurrection of Christ, and declareth the duty of a Christian. The Psalms, saith Gerrhard, are a jewel made up of the gold of doctrine, of the pearl of comfort, and of the gems of prayer. Basil saith,<sup>2</sup> It is a common shop of remedies, a

compendium of all divinity, a storehouse of excellent doctrine for all persons and in all conditions.

In this seventy-third Psalm we may consider,

1. The title to it.
2. The substance of it.

Its title is, A Psalm of Asaph, or a Psalm for Asaph, saith Ainsworth. The original bearing both, causeth some difference among expositors whether Asaph were the penman of it, or only the musician to whom it was directed to be set and sung with the voice or instrument. That Asaph was a prophet or seer is plain, 2 Chron. 29:30; as also that he was a singer, 1 Chron. 15:19. Mollerus thinketh Asaph the compiler of it; Calvin judgeth David. The matter is not much; for whosoever of the two were the pen, the Spirit of God, which is called the finger of God, guided it, and wrote the psalm.

For the substance of the psalm, it containeth the godly man's trial in the former part of it, and his triumph in the latter part of it. We have,

First, The grievous conflict between the flesh and the Spirit, to the 15th verse.

Secondly, The glorious conquest of the Spirit over the flesh, to the end.

In the beginning of the psalm he ingeniously pointeth at those rocks against which he was like to have split his soul.

In the middle he candidly confesseth his ignorance and folly to have been the chiefest foundation of his fault.

In the conclusion, he gratefully kisseth that hand which led him out of the labyrinth.

Or we may observe,

First, The cause of his distemper.

Secondly, The cure of it.

Thirdly, The psalmist's carriage after it.

His disease was envy. The psalmist was much troubled with the frets: 'I was envious at the foolish,' ver. 3.

First, The cause of it: 'When I saw the prosperity of the wicked,' ver. 3. His heart was pained because profane men prospered. That weeds which cumbered the ground should be watered so plentifully, and grow so exceedingly, when good corn was so thin and lean; that the lion and raven, those unclean creatures, should be spared, when the innocent lamb and dove were sacrificed; that the wicked should flourish like the bay-tree, enjoy a constant spring and summer, be fresh and green all the year, though without fruit, when saints, like good apple-trees, had their autumn and winter; this touched the good man to the quick; his sore eyes could not behold the glorious sunshine of their prosperity without much pain.

The heathen have, from the flourishing of such unholy persons flatly denied all providence. Diogenes the cynic, seeing Harpalus, a vicious fellow, increasing in wealth, whilst he wallowed in wickedness, said that the gods took no care how things were carried here below. The Athenians, upon the defeat and death of their honest general, Nicias, in Sicily, concluded that the divine powers were wholly regardless of human affairs. And not only these blind heathen who walked in the night of darkness, but even saints themselves, who were able to see afar off, and who pondered the paths of their feet, have stumbled at this stone, Jer. 12:1, 2; Hab. 1:13.

Secondly, The cure of his distemper. His disease was bad eyes. An envious eye is an evil eye: 'Why is thine eye evil, because mine is good,' Mat. 20:15. His remedy was this: his eyes were anointed with

some eye-salve out of the sanctuary, which helped them. He saw the end of wicked men's prosperity to be no less than endless misery; that they did but like malefactors go up the ladder above others to be turned off and executed; and this satisfied him.

The heathen, as they ascribe the subject of the disease to many causes; some naturalists to the principles of generation and corruption; the stoics to the necessary connexion of second causes; the astrologers to the motion and influence of the stars, undertaking to shew us the very houses of prosperity and adversity; the wiser sort of those pagans,—though also their foolish hearts were darkened,—to the will of Jupiter, who had his vessels of good and bad things by him, out of which he gave to all persons according to his pleasure; so also they prescribe for its removal many cures, though generally their medicines, like weak lenitives, did only move and stir, not remove or purge away the distemper. Their receipts were all of kitchen physic, such as grew in nature's garden, when those drugs which do work the cure must be fetched from far. I confess the master of moral philosophy, whom I most admire of all heathen, seemeth to harp upon the same string with the psalmist. Those, saith he, whom God approveth and loveth, he exerciseth and afflicteth; those whom he seemeth to spare, he reserveth for future sufferings. But an ordinary capacity may perceive by the treatise, though there be many excellent things in it, how far the moralist came short of Christianity. It is also without question that his sight was not so good as to look into the other world, and there to see the eternal pains of the evil, and pleasures of the good, which vision did allay the storm in the prophet's spirit. He tells us, indeed, that vicious persons are not dismissed, only their punishment is delayed; but to him this life was the time, and this world the place, of their execution.

That which did assuage those boisterous waves, which threatened to swallow up the soul of the psalmist, was the different conclusion of the saint's and sinner's conversations. By faith he foresaw that the whole life of a wicked man was but a tragedy: though its beginning might be cheerful, yet its ending would be mournful; though their

power were great on earth for a time, yet their portion should be in the lowest hell to eternity. 'Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they were utterly consumed with terrors,' ver. 17–19. They are but exalted, as the shell-fish by the eagle, according to the naturalists, to be thrown down on some rock and devoured. Their most glorious prosperity is but like a rainbow, which sheweth itself for a little time in all its gaudy colours, and then vanisheth. The Turks, considering the unhappy end of their viziers, use this proverb, He that is in the greatest office, is but a statue of glass. Wicked men walk on glass or ice, thou hast set them in slippery places;' on a sudden their feet slip—they fall, and break their necks. Oh the sad reckoning which they must have after all their merry meetings! Though their sweet morsels go down pleasantly here, yet they will rise in their stomachs hereafter.

The holy prophet saw also that saints, after their short storm, should enjoy an everlasting calm. 'Thou shalt guide me by thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory,' ver. 24. As the pillar of fire by night, and cloud by day, thou wilt march before, and direct me through the wilderness of this world, till I come to Canaan.

Thirdly, His carriage after it.

1. In a holy apostrophe or conversion to God: 'Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none on earth that I desire besides thee.' What though ungodly persons abound in sensual pleasures, yet I have infinitely the better portion. They have the streams, which run pleasantly for a season, but will shortly be scorched up; but I have the fountain, which runneth over, and runneth ever. If they, like grasshoppers skipping up and down on earth, have their notes, what tune may I sing who am mounting up to heaven, and enjoy him who is unspeakably more desirable than anything, yea, than all things, either in heaven or earth!

## CHAPTER II

The interpretation of the text, and the doctrine, that man's flesh will fail him

In a heavenly position, concerning his happiness in God: 'My flesh and my heart faileth me: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.'

In reference to which I shall,

First, Open the terms.

Secondly, Divide the text.

Thirdly, Raise the doctrinal truths.

'My flesh and my heart faileth me.' Some take the words in a spiritual, others in a civil, others in a natural, sense. Amongst them who take it in a spiritual sense, some expositors take it in an evil, others in a good sense.

They who take the expression in a bad sense, take it to be a confession of his former sin, and to have relation to the combat, mentioned in the beginning of the psalm, between the flesh and the Spirit, as if he said, I was so surfeited with self-conceitedness that I presumed to arraign divine actions at the bar of human reason, and to judge the stick under water crooked by the eye of my sense, when indeed it was straight; but now I see that flesh is no fit judge in matters of faith; that neither my flesh nor heart can determine rightly of God's dispensations, nor hold out uprightly under Satan's temptations; for if God had not supported me, my flesh had utterly supplanted me: 'My flesh and my heart faileth me: but God is the strength of my heart.' Flesh is sometime taken for corrupt nature, Gal. 5:13. First, Because it is propagated by the flesh, John 3:6; secondly, Because it is executed by the flesh, Rom. 7:25; thirdly,

Because corruption is nourished, strengthened, and increased by the flesh, 1 John 2:16.

They who take the words in a good sense, do not make them look back so far as to the beginning of the psalm, but only to the neighbour verse. The prophet, say they, having passionately fixed his heart on God, as the most amiable object in heaven and earth, (ver. 25,) was transported therewith so excessively, and carried out in holy sallies after him so vehemently, that he was ready to sink and swoon away; his spirits were ready to expire through the exuberancy of his love to, and longings after, the blessed God. The weak cask of his body was ready to break, and not able to hold that strong and spiritual wine. 'My flesh and my heart faileth me.' I am so ravished with delight in, and so enlarged in desires after, this infinitely beautiful object, that there is no more spirit in me. I am sick; yea, if God should not appear, the strength of my heart should die for love.

2. They who expound the words in a civil sense, as I may say, affirm the sentence to refer to the psalmist's sufferings.

He had a good rod instead of a good piece of bread for his breakfast every morning, and the table was covered with sackcloth, and furnished with the same bitter herbs both at dinner and supper. 'For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning,' ver. 14. Now the weight of this burden was so great, pressing his body, and oppressing his mind, that without an almighty power, it had broke his back; his flesh and his heart failed him.

3. Others take the words in a natural sense, as if the prophet did neither intend by them his fault, as some who take them in a spiritual sense; nor his fear, as those who take them in a civil sense; but only his frailty, as if he had said, My moisture consumeth, my strength abateth, my flesh falleth, my heart faileth, or at least, ere long, my breath will be corrupt, my days extinct, and the grave ready for me. How happy am I therefore in having God for the strength of

my heart! Ainsworth reads the words, Wholly consumed is my heart and my flesh.<sup>3</sup>

I shall take the words in this sense, as being most suitable to this occasion.

So far the thesis, now to the antithesis.

'But God is the strength of my heart.' Though my flesh fail me, the Father of spirits doth not fail me; when I am sinking, he will put under his everlasting arm to save me.

The Seventy read it, But God is the god of my heart, because God is all strength—God in the heart is the strength of the heart.

The Hebrew carrieth it, But God is the rock of my heart, i.e., A sure, strong, and immoveable foundation to build upon. Though the winds may blow, and the waves beat, when the storm of death cometh, yet I need not fear that the house of my heart will fall, for it is built on a sure foundation: God is the rock of my heart The strongest child that God hath is not able to stand alone; like the hop or ivy, he must have somewhat to support him, or he is presently on the ground. Of all seasons, the Christian hath most need of succour at his dying hour; then he must take his leave of all his comforts on earth, and then he shall be sure of the sharpest conflicts from hell, and therefore it is impossible he should hold out without extraordinary help from heaven. But the psalmist had armour of proof ready wherewith to encounter his last enemy. As weak and fearful a child as he was, he durst venture a walk in the dark entry of death, having his Father by the hand: 'Though I walk in the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear none ill, for thou art with me,' Ps. 23. Though at the troubles of my life, and my trial at death, my heart is ready to fail me, yet I have a strong cordial which will cheer me in my saddest condition: 'God is the strength of my heart.'

'And my portion.' It is a metaphor taken from the ancient custom among the Jews, of dividing inheritances, whereby every one had his

allotted portion; as if he had said, God is not only my rock to defend me from those tempests which assault me, and thereby my freedom from evil, but he is also my portion, to supply my necessities, and to give me the fruition of all good. Others, indeed, have their parts on this side the land of promise, but the author of all portions is the matter of my portion. My portion doth not lie in the rubbish and lumber, as theirs doth whose portion is in this life, be they never so large; but my portion containeth him whom the heavens, and heaven of heavens, can never contain. God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever; not for a year, or an age, or a million of ages, but for eternity. Though others' portions, like roses, the fuller they blow, the sooner they shed; they are worsted often by their pride, and wasted through their prodigality, that at last they come to want—and surely death always rends their persons and portions asunder; yet my portion will be ever full, without diminution. And, first, without alteration, this God will be my God for ever and ever, my guide and aid unto death; nay, death, which dissolveth so many bonds, and untieth such close knots, shall never part me and my portion, but give me a perfect and everlasting possession of it.

The words branch themselves into these two parts:

First, The psalmist's complaint: 'My flesh and my heart faileth me.'

Secondly, His comfort: 'But God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.'

Or we may take notice in them,

1. Of the frailty of his flesh: 'My flesh and my heart faileth me.'
2. Of the flourishing of his faith: 'But God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.'

According to the two parts of the text, I shall draw forth two doctrinal truths.

Doct. 1. That man's flesh will fail him.

The highest, the holiest man's heart will not ever hold out. The prophet was great and gracious, yet his flesh failed him.

Doct. 2. That it is the comfort of a Christian, in his saddest condition, that God is his portion.

This was the strong water which kept the psalmist from fainting when his flesh and heart failed him.

I begin with the first:

That man's flesh will fail him. Those whose spirits are noble, will find their flesh but brittle. The psalmist was great, yet death made little, yea, nothing of him. Like the Duke of Parma's sword, it makes no difference between great and small. This cannon hits the great commanders as well as the common soldiers. Like a violent wind, it plucks up by the roots, not only low trees, but also tall cedars. They who lie in beds of ivory, must lie down in beds of earth. Some letters are set out very gaudily with large flourishes, but they are but ink as the other. Some men have great titles,—worshipful, right worshipful, honourable, right honourable,—but they signify no more with death than other men; they are but moving earth, and dying dust, as ordinary men are. Worship, honour, excellency, highness, majesty, must all do homage to the sceptre of this king of terrors. When Constantius entered in triumph unto Rome, and had a long time stood admiring the gates, arches, turrets, temples, theatres, and other magnificent edifices of the city, at last he asked Hormisda what he thought of the place. I take no pleasure in it at all, saith Hormisda, for I see the end of this city will be the same with all her predecessors. What he spake of places, is as true of persons; though men may admire them for a while, yet the stateliest and most curious buildings of their bodies will fall to the ground as their ancestors' have done before them, Job 3:15. This storm will beat on the prince's court as much as on the peasant's cottage. 'What man is he that

liveth and shall not see death? Shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave? Selah.' Ps. 89:48. The interrogation is a strong negation. The prophet challengeth the whole world to find out a person that can procure a protection against death's arrest.

The psalmist was gracious, yet grace gave way to nature. Death will, like hail and rain, fall on the best gardens, as well as the wide wilderness. The wheat is cut down and carried into the barn as well as the tares. A godly man is free from the sting, but not from the stroke, from the curse, but not from the cross, of death. Holy Hezekiah could beg his own life for a few years, but could not compound for his death; he did obtain a reprieve for fifteen years, but not a pardon. The best fruit will perish, because it is worm-eaten. The gold and the dross (the good and the bad) go both into this fire; the former to be refined, the latter to be consumed. The whole world is a charnel-house, and the several inhabitants, thereof so many walking carcasses. 'The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof as the flower of the field. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass,' Isa. 40:6, 7. The word speaks man's mortality. He is grass, withering grass—a flower, a fading flower. Secondly, Its certainty. 'The voice said, Cry.' The prophet had a charge in a vision given him, to proclaim so much from God to his people. 'Surely the people is grass.' Thirdly, The universality; the flesh of kings and counsellors, the flesh of saints and martyrs, the flesh of high and low, rich and poor—'All flesh is grass.' Man is sometimes compared to the flower for its beauty, but here for its frailty. A flower will quickly fade; if it be not cut down by an instrument of iron, nor cropped by the hand, yet the gentle breath of wind quickly bloweth off its beauty. Besides, an expositor observeth, it is to the flower of the field, not of the garden. Flowers of the garden have more shelter, and are better looked to, than flowers of the field; these are more open to hard weather, and more liable to be plucked up or trod down. Naturalists tell us of a flower called ephemeron, because it lasteth but a day. Man is such a flower; his life is but a day, whether longer or shorter—a summer or a winter's day. How quickly

do the shadows of the evening stretch themselves upon him, and make it night with him! Pliny speaks of a golden vine, which never withereth. The bodies of saints shall be such hereafter, but at present the best herbs wither as well as the worst weeds. Neither the dignity of a prince, nor the piety of a prophet, can excuse from entering the list with this enemy. Against this arrest there is no bail.

## CHAPTER III

The reasons of the doctrine, Man's corruptibility, God's fidelity, and man's apostasy from God

I shall only lay down, in the explication of the point, two or three reasons, and then proceed to that which will be practical.

The first ground of the doctrine is the corruptibility of man's body. It is called in Scripture a house of clay, Job 4:18; and an earthly tabernacle, 2 Cor. 5:1. The body of man at best is but a clod of clay, curiously moulded and made up. The Greek proverb hath a truth in it, Κέραμος ὁ ἄνθρωπος, Man is but an earthen vessel. Some indeed are more painted than others in regard of dignity and place; others are stronger vessels than the rest in regard of purity of constitution; but all are earthen. 'Surely every man at his best estate is altogether vanity,' Ps. 39. All Adam is all Abel. Man, nay, every man, when most high in regard of his hopes, and most firm in regard of his foundation, is even then the next door to, and but one remove from, corruption. What the great apostle said in a proper, every one may say in a common sense, I die daily. We carry our bane every moment about us. The very food which preserveth our lives, leaves that behind it which will force our deaths. It is holden for certain, saith one, that in two years space there are in the body of man as many ill-humours engendered as a vessel of a hundred ounces will contain. Against some, these enemies appear in the open field, often skirmishing with them; but against all others they lie in ambush, and wait for an opportunity to fall on and destroy them. In the best

timbered body they are but like fire raked under the ashes, and reserved to another day, when they will flame out, and burn it down. We are all, like the apples of Sodom, quæ, contacta cinerescunt, which, being touched, crumble into dust; or as the spawn of locusts, which, being handled, dissolveth, according to the philosopher. God needs not bring out his great artillery to batter down the building of man's body; a small touch will tumble it down, nay, it is every moment decaying, and will at last fall of itself.<sup>3</sup> There is rottenness at the core of the fairest fruits. Our flesh is no match for the Father of spirits. An ordinary besom will sweep down the spider's web; though it hath accurate weavings and much curiosity, yet it hath no stability. As it was with the gourd of Jonah, so it is with the children of men, we breed and feed those worms which will devour and destroy us. Every man's passing bell hangs in his own steeple.

The second reason is, God's fidelity. The righteous and gracious God hath threatened eternal pains to the wicked as the wages of their sins, and hath promised endless pleasures to the godly, as the reward of Christ's sufferings. Now the place of payment where these threatenings and promises shall be accomplished, is the other world, to which death is the passage. Man dieth, that God's word may live, and faileth to the earth, that God's truth may stand.

Sin, though it be finite in regard of the subject, as being the act of a limited creature, yet it is infinite in regard of the object, as being committed against a boundless Creator; therefore it is punished with the absence of all good, which is an infinite loss; and the presence of all evil, which is infinite in duration, though not in intension, because of the incapability of the sinner. The infernal pit is the place of those punishments, into which, by the ladder of death men descend, Mat. 7:23, and 25:41; Mark 9:49. Death is but the sinner's trap-door into hell. The English capital malefactors, when cast, are carried into a dungeon, and from thence to the gallows. Ungodly men being cast by the law of God, and not suing out their pardon from the gospel, which is an office set up for that purpose, do go through the

dungeon of death to the place of their dreadful and everlasting execution.

God hath also engaged to bestow on the members of Christ an incomparable and unchangeable crown. It is your Father's pleasure to give you a kingdom; but death is the young prophet that anointeth them to it, and giveth them actual possession of it. They must put off their rags of mortality, that they may put on their robes of glory. It is in the night of death that saints go to their blessed and eternal rest. The corn must first die before it can spring up fresh and green: Israel must die in Egypt before he can be carried into Canaan. There is no entrance into paradise but under the flaming sword of this angel death, that standeth at the gate. The soul must be delivered out of the prison of the body, that it may enjoy the glorious liberty of the sons of God. This bird of paradise will never sing merrily, nor warble out the praises of its Maker in a perfect manner, till it be freed from this cage.

The sinner dieth, that, according to God's word, he might receive the bitter fruits of his evil ways. Death is to him as the gate through which condemned and piacular persons pass to their deserved destruction. The saint dieth, that, according to God's promise, he may enjoy the purchased possession. Death to him is as the dirty lane through which Chrysostom passed to a feast—a dark short way through which he goeth to the marriage supper of the Lamb. His body is mortal, that his sins and sufferings might not be immortal.

The third ground of the point may be man's apostasy from God. Death broke in upon man, by reason of man's breaking the commands of God. We had never fallen to dust, if we had not fallen from our duties. Sickness had never seized on our bodies, if sin had not first seized on our souls.

The Pelagians and Socinians say that death is not a consequent of sin, but a condition of nature. The blasphemous Jews tell us that Adam and his posterity were therefore condemned to die, because

there was one to come out of his loins who would make himself a God, meaning Christ; but the God of truth hath resolved the genealogy of death into another cause, even the first Adam's aspiring to be like God, and ambition to cut off the entail, and hold only from himself, Gen. 3:15; Rom. 5:12. As a lethargy in the head diffuseth universal malignity through the whole body, and thereby corrupteth and destroyeth it; the apple which Adam did eat was poisoned, which entered into his bowels and being; the venom of it is transmitted all along, like Gehazi's leprosy, to his seed. Some tell us that he would often turn his face toward the garden of Eden and weep, reflecting upon what he had done. Sure I am it was not without cause, for we all got the infection from him, and by him it is that the whole world is tainted and turned into a pest-house. Whatsoever delight he had in the act, there was death in the end.

It seemeth unquestionable that man in his estate of innocency had a conditional, though not an absolute immortality. It is true, he was mortal, *ratione corporis*, being a compound of corruptible elements; but immortal, *ratione fœderis*, being free from the law of death by virtue of the covenant. As before he fell he had a *posse non peccare*, a possibility not to have sinned, but since, a *non posse non peccare*, a necessity of sinning; so in his estate of purity he had a possibility of not dying, but in his estate of apostasy, a necessity of it. If he had stood, he should, like Enoch, have been translated that he should not see death; he should have entered into his Father's house, but not have walked thither through the dark entry of death.

The flesh faileth us, because sin hath defiled it. Man's flesh at first was fly-blown with pride, and is ever since liable to putrefaction, Ps. 90:7; Rom. 8. Sin is therefore called a body of death, because it causeth the death of the body. When one asked who set up the stately edifices in Rome, it was answered, The sins of Germany, meaning the money which the pope's agents received for pardons granted to the Germans. If it be demanded, Who pulleth down the goodly building of man's body? it may be answered, The sins of man. It is sin which turneth such costly, curious houses into confused, ruinous heaps.

Draco the lawgiver appointed death the punishment of every offence, for which cause his laws are said to be written in blood; and being demanded the reason, he gave this answer, That though, when crimes were unequal, he seemed to be unjust in making all equal in punishment, yet herein his justice appeared, that the least breach of the law deserved death. The light of nature taught them that those that sin are worthy to die, Rom. 1:23. The estate of all sinners lieth in the valley of the shadow of death. Wheresoever sin hath but a finger, death will have a hand. Sin, though never committed, but only imputed, did put to death the very Lord of life. It is like that wild caprificus, which, if it get but rooting, though in the substance of a stone in the wall, it will break it asunder.

## CHAPTER IV

First use, Discovering the folly of them that mind the flesh chiefly

Having laid down these reasons in the doctrinal part of my discourse, I shall now speak to that which is practical. The truth may be useful, both by way of information and exhortation.

First, By way of information. If our flesh will fail us; what fools are they whose whole contrivance is to feed and please the flesh. We laugh at the vanity and folly of children, when we see them very busy and taking much pains to make up a house of cards, or pies of dirt. The greatest part of men are but children of larger dimensions, and are indeed more foolish, because they ought to be more wise. What is their main work, but to make provision for the flesh? to provide fuel enough for the fire of its covetousness, and pleasant water enough for the leviathan of its voluptuousness, and air enough for the chameleon of ambition; as if God had no other design in sending them into the world, but that they might be cooks to dress their bodies as well as possibly might be for the worms. All their care is, What shall we eat? and what shall we drink? and wherewith shall we be clothed? and how shall we do to live in these dear and hard times?

As vermin in dunghills, they live and feed on such filth, never once asking their souls in earnest, What wilt thou do for the bread which came down from heaven, and how wilt thou do to put on the robes of Christ's righteousness, that thy nakedness may not appear to thy shame, and oh, what wilt thou do to be saved, to live eternally? These things are not in all their thoughts. Like flies, they are overcome with the spirits of wine, and nourished with froth. It is enough, they think, if, when they come to die, they bequeath their souls to God in their wills,—though it is a thousand to one if those wills be proved in heaven; I can tell them of unanswerable caveats, which the judge's Son will put in against them,—and therefore their whole lives must be devoted to the service of their bodies. Like dying men, they smell of earth, and carry its complexion in their very countenances. If a man that had two houses in his possession, one whereof was his own freehold for ever, and the other his landlord's, which he agreed to leave at an hour's warning, should neglect his own house, let all things there run to wrack and ruin, but night and day be mending and adorning his landlord's house, as if he could never be at cost enough, or make it neat enough, would not every one condemn this man for a fool or a madman? Truly this is the very case of most men. The soul in the body is a tenant in *domo aliena*, saith the orator. The body is our house of clay, in which we are tenants at another's will; we may be turned out of its doors without so much as an hour's warning. The soul is our own everlasting possession, yet generally the immortal spirit is slighted, no time taken for a serious view of its wants, no cost laid out for its supply, as if it were an indifferent thing whether it swim or sink for ever, when men are always plotting and studying to gratify and please their fading flesh. Oh this is one of the dolefullest sights which eyes can behold, the servant to ride on horseback, and the prince to go on foot; the sensitive appetite to be the grave of religion, and the dungeon of reason. It is reported of a certain philosopher,<sup>2</sup> that dying he bequeathed a great sum of money to him that should be found most foolish. His executor, in pursuance of his will, travelled up and down to find out one that excelled others in folly, and so might challenge the legacy. At last he came to Rome, where a consul abusing his office was adjudged to

death, and another, sueing for the place, chosen, who cheerfully took it upon him. To this man he delivered the money, telling him, That he was the most foolish man in the world, who, seeing the miserable end of his predecessor, was nothing therewith discouraged, but joyfully succeeded him in his office. How much do most titular Christians resemble this foolish consul; they see in the world their sensual companions, like sheep, as they are feeding in their fleshly pastures, culled out by death, and called away from them; nay, they may see in the word, if they will believe God himself, the block on which they are laid by that bloody butcher Satan, the knife with which they are stuck, and which he runs up to the very haft in the throat of their precious souls; the heavy curse of the law, and the infinite wrath of the Lord, which they must undergo for ever, and yet they are therewith not the least affrighted, but merrily follow them to the place of endless mourning.

Reader, if thou art one of these fleshpots of Egypt, what folly and madness art thou guilty of. Is not thy spirit οὐρανιον φῦτον, a heavenly plant, the immediate workmanship of the glorious God, and thy flesh, like the first Adam, of the earth earthy, and art thou not a fool to prefer dirt before that which is divine? Is not thy spirit the impress and image of God himself, in its immortality, noble faculties, and capacity of honouring and enjoying his infinite majesty? and thy body the resemblance of beasts, nay, in many things inferior to them, and art thou not unwise in esteeming that which is brutish above that which is the picture of God's own perfections? Again, is not the wellbeing of thy body involved in the welfare of thy soul? As really as the branches depend on the root for its flourishing, thy body dependeth on thy soul for its salvation. How mad art thou, therefore, to let the vessel sink, and yet presume to preserve the passenger that saileth in it! Once more, shall not the life of thy spirit run parallel with the life of God himself, and the line of eternity? and hath not God himself told thee that thy flesh will fail thee? Dost thou not find it now and then tottering, and, as it were, telling thee that it must drop down; and art not thou a fool in grain, a fool in the highest degree, to place all thy happiness for ever, to set all thy stress and

weight for thine unchangeable estate, on this rotten bough, which will certainly break under thee, when thou mightst have sure footing, and lay up a good foundation, by a hearty regarding thine heaven-born soul. Oh consider it, and give conscience leave to call thee fool once, that thou mayest be wise for ever. Attilus, king of Swethland, made a dog king of the Danes, in revenge of some injuries received from them. What wrong hath thy soul done thee, that to be revenged on it, and to spite it to purpose, thou makest its slave its sovereign, that part by which thou art kin to the beasts, its lord and king?

The truth is, were not men drowned in sensuality, as he whom Seneca speaketh of, that knew not whether he stood or sat, till his slave told him, and their consciences seared and made senseless by them, as young gallants, being arrested for debt, make the sergeants drunk, and thereby escape at present, it would be impossible for men to live thus after the flesh. But as some cunning thieves, if there be a mastiff belonging to the house which they intend to rob, give it some morsels which will keep it from barking, that so they may steal the inhabitant's wealth, and they not have the least warning either to hinder or recover it; so the devil hath an art to make men's consciences dumb, whilst he robs them of their inestimable souls. Poor foolish creatures, they are lazing on their beds of carnal security, and delighting themselves in their dreams of lying vanities, and in the interim he riflETH their houses, and taketh away all that is of any value. Yet, as fast as conscience is now asleep, it will shortly awake, as the jailer at midnight, and then what fears and frights will possess them! Ah, how clearly will they see their folly, in sowing to the flesh, and trusting to that which was never true to any! Then they will roar out, If we had served our spirits as faithfully as we have served our flesh, they would not have failed us thus.

When Pausanias desired Simonides to give him some grave, apophthegm, by which he might apprehend his great wisdom, for which he was so renowned, Simonides smiling, spake this, *Esse le hominem, ne excideret tibi*; Remember that thou art a man, that your flesh will fail you. Pausanias puffs at this, but in a short time

after, being almost pined to death with famine, he began to think of Simonides' saying, and cried out, O Simonides, magnum quiddam erat oratio tua, sed præ amentia esse nihil opinabar; O Simonides, thy speech was full of weight, but I, mad wretch, thought it of no worth. Friends, ministers, nay, the chief master of sentences himself, delivered thee this as the masterpiece of wisdom, to remember that thy flesh will fail thee: 'Hear counsel, receive instruction, that thou mayest be wise for thy latter end,' Prov. 19:20. But possibly thou, like Gallio, carest for none of these things. It is death to thee to think of death; thou hatest it, as Ahab did Micaiah, because it never speaketh well of thee; thy voice to it is as Pharaoh's to Moses, 'Get thee hence, let me see thy face no more.' It is said of Vitellius in Tacitus, that he was one hour trepidus, dein temulentus, fearful, the next drunken, in the very approach of his fatal ruin, striving to drown his fears in his cups. Thou art resolved to riot and revel, and therefore canst not endure to think of a reckoning. Well, put off the thoughts of it, as far and as much as thou canst; make as light of it as thy hardened heart will give thee leave, yet be confident, it is on its way riding post towards thee with a warrant from the God of heaven for thy execution; and oh then, when thou seest its grim face, how will thine heart tremble! and when thou hearest its dreadful voice, how will thine ears tingle! The flesh which thou now pamperest will then wax pale, and the vessels which now thou drawest thy comforts from will then run dregs; and then, oh then, how mournfully wilt thou screech out, O pastors, O teachers, the counsel which you gave me was of infinite weight and consequence, but I, fool, madman, had not the wit to follow it. Carolus, king of Sicily, did on his death-bed, Alas, alas! I am going to die, and yet have not begun to live.

I shall conclude this use with that sad relation which Athenæus makes of a great monarch's life and death, in which, as in a looking-glass, thou mayest see that flesh-pleasing vanities will end in soul-piercing miseries, and that, as wise as such a man may be counted by the world, yet in his latter end he is but a fool.

Ninus, the Assyrian monarch, had an ocean of gold and other riches, more than the sand in the Caspian Sea; he never saw the stars, he never stirred up the holy fire among the magi, nor touched his god with the sacred rod according to the law; he never offered sacrifice, nor worshipped the deity, nor administered justice; but he was most valiant to eat and drink, and having mingled his wines, he threw the rest on the stones. This man is dead, behold his sepulchre. And now hear where Ninus is: Sometimes I was Ninus, and drew the breath of a living man, but now am nothing but clay. I have nothing but what I did eat; and what I served on myself in lust, that was and is all my portion. The wealth with which I was esteemed blessed, my enemies meeting together shall bear away, as the mad Thyades carry a raw goat. I am gone to hell, and when I went thither, I carried neither gold, nor horse, nor silver chariot. I, that wore a mitre, am now a little heap of dust.

## CHAPTER V

Second use, An exhortation to sinners to prepare for death, with three quickening motives: Death will come certainly; it may come suddenly; when it comes, it will be too late to prepare

The second use shall be by way of exhortation, which will run in two distinct channels, partly to the sensual worldlings, partly to the serious Christian. I shall speak one word to the wise, but in the first place, two words to the wicked.

If the flesh will fail you, mind the salvation of thy spirit. When one leaf falls in autumn, we conclude that all will follow after; by the death of others, thou mayest conclude thy own dissolution. When men's leases of the houses wherein they dwell are near expired, they think of providing another habitation, that they may not be exposed to the injury of the wind and weather in the naked streets. Reader, I

am come to thee with a message this day from the faithful God, and it is to acquaint thee that the lease of thy life is almost worn out, the time of thy departure is at hand; what house wilt thou provide for thy precious soul, that it may not be obnoxious to the roarings of damned spirits, and to the rage of tormenting devils? The Roman gladiators designed to death, were very careful so to contrive and carry themselves that they might fall handsomely. Sure I am, thou art one appointed for the dust; where, oh where is thy solicitousness to die comfortably? Possibly thou art one who hast often spoken of dressing thy body neatly for the coffin; thy wedding shift, the finest sheet; thy handsomest headclothes must all adorn thy clod of clay, and grace thy carcase, to entertain the worms at their feast, with clean and fine linen. But, in the meantime, thou hast no thoughts of dressing thy immortal soul against the coming of the bridegroom.

When thou diest, thou throwest thy last cast for thine everlasting estate; thou shalt never be allowed a second throw. An error in death, is like an error in the first concoction, which cannot be mended in the second. Where thou lodgest that night thou diest, thou art housed for ever. That work which is of such infinite weight, and can be done but once, had need to be done well. God hath given thee but one arrow to hit the mark with; shoot that at random, and he will never put another into thy quiver. God will allow no second edition to correct the errata of the first, therefore it concerns thee with all imaginable seriousness to consider what thou doest when thou diest.

One would think, thou shouldst take little comfort in any creature, whilst thy eternal state is thus in danger. Augustus wondered at the Roman citizen, that, he could sleep quietly when he had a great burden of debt upon him. What rest canst thou have, what delight in anything thou enjoyest, who owest such vast sums to the infinite justice of God, when he is resolved to have full satisfaction either in this or the other world? When David offered Barzillai the pleasures and preferments of his own royal palace, he refused them, because he was to die within a while. 'How long have I to live, that I should go up with the king unto Jerusalem? Let thy servant turn back that I

may die, 2 Sam. 19:34, 35, 36—i.e., Court me no courts, I have one foot in the grave, my glass is almost run, let me go home and die. Without controversy, thou hast more cause to wink on these withering comforts, and to betake thyself wholly to a diligent preparation for death. The Thebans made a law, that no man should build a house before he had made his grave.

Every part of thy life may mind thee of thy death. The moralist speaks true: 'Thou livest by deaths.' Thy food is the dead carcasses of birds, or fish, or beasts; thy finest raiment is the worm's grave before it is thy garment. Look to the heavens: the sun riseth and setteth; so that life which now shineth pleasantly on thee will set. How much doth it behove thee to work the work of him that sent thee into the world while day lasteth, that thou mayest not set in a cloud, which will certainly prognosticate thy foul weather in the other world! Look down to the earth; there thou beholdest thy mother, out of whose womb thou didst at first come, and in whose bowels thou shalt ere long be laid. The dust and graves of others cry aloud to thee, as Gideon to his soldiers, Look on us, and do likewise. Oh trim thy soul against that time! If thou risest up, and walkest abroad in the streets, thou seest this house and that seat, where such a woman, such a man dwelt, and lo, the place which knew them shall know them no more; they are gone, and have carried nothing with them but their godliness or ungodliness. If thou liest down, thy sleep is the image of death; thou knowest not whether thou shalt awake in a bed of feathers, or in a bed of flames; but art certain, that shortly thy body shall lie down in the grave, and there remain till the resurrection. Look on thy companions, thou mayest see death sitting on their countenances; it is creeping on them in the deafness of their ears, in the dimness of their eyes, nay, it is posting towards them in the very height and zenith of their natural perfections. Look on thy own house of clay; death possibly looks out at thy windows, however it looks in at thy windows; thou wearest it in thy face, thou bearest it in thy bones, and doth it not behove thee to prepare for it? Naturalists tell us, that smelling of earth is very wholesome for consumptionate

bodies. O reader, a serious thought of thy death, that thou art but dust, would be very wholesome for thy declining and decaying soul!

Hard bones steeped in vinegar and ashes grow so soft that they may be cut with a thread. Give me leave for one half hour to steep thy hard heart in such a mixture; possibly it may be so softened through the operation of the Spirit with the word, that thou mayest become wise unto salvation. It is reported of one Guericus, that hearing these words read in the church, 'And all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years: and he died. All the days of Seth were nine hundred and twelve years: and he died. And all the days of Enos were nine hundred and five years: and he died. And all the days of Methuselah were nine hundred sixty-nine years: and he died,' Gen. 5:5. He was so strongly wrought upon by those words, and he died, and he died, that he gave himself wholly to devotion. Friend, if thou hast any drachm of true love to thy soul, and its unchangeable condition in the other world, the consideration of death would make a deep impression upon thee.

But that I may awaken and rouse thee while there is time and hope, and then help and heal thee, I shall in the prosecution of this exhortation,

First, Speak to thee somewhat that may be persuasive.

Secondly, Offer to thee somewhat that is directive.

First, I shall offer thee some thoughts which may quicken thee to a diligent provision for this time.

First, Dost thou not know that death will come certainly? As the young prophet said to Elisha, 'Dost thou know that the Lord will take thy master from thy head to-day?' 2 Kings 2:3. Reader, dost thou know that the Lord will take thy soul out of thy body, and send it to the unknown regions of the other world, where thou shalt see such things as thou never sawest, hear such things as thou never heardest, and understand such things as thou didst never understand?

Possibly thou wilt answer me, as Elisha then, 'I know it, hold your peace.' But truly I am ready to urge it again, being assured that thy knowledge is, as Cicero speaks of the Athenians, like artificial teeth, for show only; thou dost not yet know it for thy good; therefore give me leave to enforce it still. Dost thou know that God will bring thee to death, and to the house appointed for all the living? Dost thou! know that thy ruddy countenance will wax pale, thy sparkling eyes look ghastly, thy warm blood cool in thy veins, thy marrow dry up in thy bones, thy skin shrivel, thy sinews shrink, nay, thy very heartstrings crack? And hast thou provided never a cordial against this hour? Dost thou not read in the writings of God himself, that no man hath power in the day of death, and there is no discharge in that war, Eccles. 8:8. No man hath power, either to resist death's force, or to procure terms of peace. The greatest emperor, with the strength of all his dominions, cannot withstand death. The most eloquent orator, by his strongest reasons, and most pathetic expressions, cannot persuade death. The deepest counsellor, by all his policy, cannot outwit or cozen death.

O mighty death, saith the historian, thou hast drawn together all the far-stretched greatness, all the pride, cruelty, and ambition of man, and covered it with these two words, *Hic jacet*. There is no discharge in that war. Every one must go in person; there is no appearing by a proxy. Though the tenant would serve for his landlord, the subject for his sovereign, the father for his child, as David for Absalom, yet it will not be accepted. All must in their own persons appear in the field, and look that grim Goliath, death, in the face: 'It is appointed for all men once to die,' Heb. 9. God hath decreed it, and man cannot disannul it. The grammarian, as one observeth wittily, who can decline other nouns in every case, can decline death in no case. Death is every moment shooting its arrows abroad in the world, and doing execution; and though it shoots above thee, slaying the superiors; below thee, taking away thy inferiors; on thy right hand, killing this friend; on thy left hand, causing that acquaintance to drop; yet it will never cease shooting till thou art slain. Thy life for a while may be kept up, like a ball by the rackets, and tossed from

hazard to hazard, yet at last it will fall to the earth. When once death, this son of a murderer, sin, comes to take away thine head, there will be none to shut the door, or hold him fast. Now men that must travel, arm themselves for all weather. Women that cannot escape their appointed sorrows, provide bezoar and amber powders, against that time. But oh what a madman art thou, who knowest certainly of the coming of this enemy, and that when he cometh he can both kill and damn, destroy both body and soul, yet takest no care to arm thyself for that hour!

In other things thou providest for what may be, and wilt thou not for that which must be? In summer thou layest in fuel and food, because it may be thou mayest live to spend it in winter. Thou workest early and late to increase thy heaps, and to add to thy hoards, because it may be thy children may come to enjoy it. Where is thy reason, then, to toil and moil for an uncertainty, and thus foolishly to neglect that which is of necessity?

Secondly, Dost thou know that death may come suddenly? Some diseases do no sooner appear, but we disappear. Death, like a flash of lightning, hath on a sudden burnt down many a body. It sometimes shoots white powder, doth execution without giving warning.

Diodorus died with sudden shame; Sophocles with sudden joy; Nabal with sudden fear; Pope Alexander was choked suddenly with a fly; Anacreon the poet with the kernel of a grape; Æschylus was killed by the shell of a tortoise, which the eagle let fall on his bald head, mistaking it for a rock; the Cardinal of Lorraine was lighted to the chambers of death by a poisoned torch; a Duke of Brittany pressed to death in a crowd; King Henry the Second of France was killed at tilting; Senecio Cornelius had his breath stopped by a quinsy. I might name very many others, who took a short cut to their long homes. Belshazzar's carousing in his bowls drunk his bane; Amnon, merry at his dainties, meets with death; Zimri and Cozbi unload their lusts and their lives together; Korah and his companions find the earth opening her mouth and swallowing them up quick, though she stay

for others till they are dead; Herod scarce ends his proud speech before he is sent to the place of silence; Ananias and Sapphira finish their lies and their lives at the same time. Scarce a week but, nigh those parts we live in, some or other, by violent or natural means, are suddenly sent into the other world. That which hath been one man's case may be any man's case. Reader, when thy breath goeth out, thou art not sure of taking it in again; thou mayest, like the fool, be talking of many years, when that God whose word must stand, may say, 'This night thy soul shall be required of thee;' and oh what will then become of thee? Thy eternal condition, that estate which is to be for ever and ever, dependeth on this uncertain life, and art not thou mad to be revelling and roaring, dallying and delaying, when thine unchangeable estate is in danger? Thieves, after the commission of their robberies, frequently repair to inns, where they drink joyfully, and divide their booty, when on a sudden the hue-and-cry arriveth at that town; the constable entereth their room, attacketh their persons, marreth all their mirth, and carrieth them to the jail, whence, after their trial for their felonies, they are carted to Tyburn. Many a sinner in the midst of his carnal triumph hath been haled to eternal torments, like that filthy adulterer mentioned by Luther, who went into hell out of the embraces of his harlot. The philosophers say that the weather will be warmish before a snow. When the sky is most clear, then the great thunder cometh; Sodom had a fair, sunshiny morning, but a storm of fire and brimstone before night. Sure I am, thou hast no promise to excuse thee in thy greatest pleasures from such a sudden punishment. Thou art already a condemned person, and thou wantest nothing but the messenger death; nothing but a hurdle, a horse, and a halter, as Judge Belknap in Richard the Second's time said of himself, to carry thee to thy deserved execution: Ps. 64:7, 'God shall shoot at them with an arrow; suddenly shall they be wounded.' When the pie is priding herself on the top of a tree, little thinking of a fowler so near, she is fetched down by a sudden shot.

It may be thou trusteth to thy youth and strength; because thou feelest no infirmity, therefore thou fearest no mortality. Thou

thinkest death should go to the dead bones and dry breasts, to such as see with four eyes, and go on three legs; but dost thou not know that death never observeth the laws of nature. As young as thou art, thou mayest be rotten before thou art ripe; thy sun may set at high noon. The Jews have a proverb, that the old ass often carrieth the young ass's skin to the market; blossoms are liable to nipping, as well as full-grown fruit to rotting. Have not several been married and buried in the same week; nay, dressed by the same hands in one day for their weddings and their coffins? Bensirah the Jew hath a good saying, The bride went into her chamber, and knew not what should befall her there: Prov. 27:1, 'Therefore boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.' Is it thy strength thou trustest to? alas! the leviathan of death laughs at the shaking of that spear; he counts thy strength but as straw, and thy youth but as rotten wood; he maketh a leak in a strong new vessel, and it presently sinketh. Though thy body be never so strong a fort, death, to take it, needeth not besiege or block it up with lingering diseases, but can undermine it, and blow it down in a moment. Think therefore with thyself: This day may be the last day that ever I shall see; this hour may be the last hour that ever I shall spend; these words may be the last words that ever I shall speak. Oh what a fool am I to live thus contentedly without fear, next door to the eternal fire; there is but one step betwixt me and hell, and for aught I know, the very next step that I take may be thither, and then, wo and alas, I am gone for ever! Surely this consideration, like a hectic fever, might cause an irrecoverable consumption of all thy carnal joy. Death is called war, Eccles. 8:8: thou knowest not but orders may come from the Lord of hosts for thy sudden march; thou mayest not have an hour's warning to put on thy armour or prepare thyself.

Invasions are judged far more dangerous than pitched battles, because those are sudden, and usually take men unprovided. I must tell thee that, whenever death cometh, it will be dreadful and dangerous; for, continuing as thou art, it will surprise thee unprepared, and unable to make any resistance. Oh, how it will tear thy soul like a lion, renting it in pieces, whilst there is none to deliver

it! No chapman comes amiss to him whose shop is ever furnished; but every enemy will foil him who goeth always unarmed and naked. Death to a sinner is always sudden; they go down quick into hell, Job 21.

Thirdly, Dost thou not know that, whensoever death comes, it will be too late to prepare for it? The ship must be rigged in the harbour; it will be too late to do it in the main ocean in a storm. Probably enough, though now thou canst spend thy days delightfully without Christ and grace, yet, when the bridegroom cometh by death, thou wilt, as the foolish virgins, talk of getting oil, because thy lamps will be then gone out; but, alas! then it will be too late; only such as are ready enter in with him. I have read of a woman in Cambridge, who, lying on her death-bed, was visited by persons of worth and piety, and heard much heavenly discourse from them; but they could hear nothing from her, save this, Call time again, call time again. But time runs swiftly, and being once past, is irrecoverable. Time, saith Bernard, were a good commodity in hell, if it could be bought up at any rate. Ah, when thou comest to die, a week, a day, nay, an hour, would be more worth to thee than all the world. But it will be impossible to put off the trial which death hath with thee for thy soul till another time, till another term. When death calleth, at leisure or not at leisure, ready or unready, willing or unwilling, thou shalt not deny, but must go the way whence thou shalt never return.

The tide will not stay for the greatest merchant's goods; they must be shipped before, or left behind. Death will not stay for any man to freight his heart with grace; he must do it before death cometh, or it can never be done. If our spiritual change be not before our natural change, we are miserable unchangeably. Petronius speaks of one Eumolpus, who in a desperate storm was composing verses, and when the ship split upon a rock, and they called to him to shift for himself, he answered, Let me alone till I have finished one verse, which I perceive to be lame. Death will not wait whilst thou finishest the most serious works.

It is said of Demetrius, after that though he lived a slave all his lifetime, yet when he lay on his death-bed he earnestly desired manumission, that he might descend into his grave in freedom. Reader, I doubt not but, though thou livest a slave to sin and Satan, yet thou wouldst die the Lord's freeman; but God himself tells thee, that if thy life be in bondage to thy lusts, when death comes, there is no getting thy liberty, Eccles. 9:10. Either now mind thy soul, and ensure thy salvation, or it can never be done; there is no doing it in the place whither thou art going. Life is death's seed-time, and death is life's harvest; expect thy crop, both for quality and quantity, answerable to thy seed which thou now sowest. Cicero saith of Hercules, that he had never been enrolled among the gods in heaven, if he had not laid out his way thither whilst he lived. Neither canst thou live with God hereafter, unless thou livest to God here.

Friend, think of it seriously; thy preparation for death must be now or never. Bees work hard in summer, flying over this and the other field, sucking this and the other flower, and all to lay in provision against winter, at which time else they must starve, no honey being then to be made. The shell-fish opens and takes in moisture whilst the tide floweth in upon them, that they may be supplied when the waters ebb; and wilt thou, like a drone, now sleep and then starve? Let thy reason judge, is it a fit time to dress thy soul for the marriage feast of the Lamb in the dark night of death? or what canst thou think to do in that dismal hour? Conscience will tell thee thou hadst thy candle of life set up to have wrought by, and that is burned to the snuff whilst thy work is still undone; the day is past, thy soul is lost, because thou, unworthy wretch, didst defer it till it was too late. Wilt thou call to the sun of thy life, as Joshua did, Stand still for one hour, that I may be avenged of these fleshly lusts, which hinder me of the heavenly Canaan? Alas, alas! it will not hear thee, it cannot obey thee, for time shall be no more with thee; thou art entering upon thy eternity. Remember that thou art warned of it, and do not,—as Cæsar, being warned by Artemidorus of a conspiracy to slay him suddenly, pocketed up the paper, and was very busy in saluting the

people, till at last he was slain,—so trouble thyself with trifles, as to compliment away thy soul and salvation.

## CHAPTER VI

Three motives more: A dying hour will be a trying hour; the misery of the unprepared; the felicity of the prepared

Fourthly, Dost thou not know that thy dying hour will be a trying hour? When grapes come to the press, they come to the proof. The mariner's skill is seen in a storm. The soldier's courage is known when he comes to the combat; while he lieth in garrison he may boast much, but then he fighteth only with his words, but in a battle it will appear how he can handle his sword. Many flourish with their colours, when they know their enemies to be far enough off, who change their countenances when they meet them in the field. In thy lifetime thou art walled in, and liest warm in the confluence of creature comforts, no visible enemy appeareth against thee; but when this champion sheweth himself, bidding thee defiance, and offering to fight with thee for thy soul, and Saviour, and heaven, and happiness, at the sight of whom the hearts of kings and captains have melted like grease before the sun, then, then thou wilt perceive what metal thou art made of; whether thou hast the faith and spirit of a David, and canst encounter him in the Lord or no. Now thou art a vessel in the harbour, and so art kept above water, though several things are wanting; but when thou launchest into the ocean, the boisterous waves, and tempestuous winds, will soon discover thy leaks, and tell thee what is lacking.

It is like enough thou hast some armour with which thou hopest to defend thyself against the strokes of death; but know, for a truth, that death will stab thee through all thy paper shields of profession, privileges, and performances, since thou art a stranger to Christ and the power of godliness.

Thy life is like the letting down a fisherman's net; thy death as the drawing up of this net. While the net is down a man cannot tell certainly what he shall catch, for the nets may break, and the fish may escape; whilst thou livest, it is not so evident what thine aim is, or what thine end shall be; but at thy death, when the net shall be drawn up, then thou wilt see what draught thou hast made. Though godly men at their deaths may look up to the Lord of life, and say, At thy word we have let down our nets and caught abundantly; we fished for holiness, and have caught happiness, fished for grace, and have caught glory, and honour, and immortality, and eternal life; yet when the net of thy life cometh to be drawn up, thou mayest say with Peter, Lord, I have fished all night, all my lifetime, and have caught nothing; I fished for honours, and pleasures, and riches, and I have caught nothing but the weeds of wrath and damnation. I blessed myself many a time, like the vain, confident husbandman, in the goodly show which my corn made on the ground; but now the threshing time is come, I find nothing but straw and chaff, vanity and vexation.

It must needs be a trying hour, upon this twofold account;

1. Because all thy temporal mercies will then leave thee. When the hand of death shakes the tree of life, all those fair blossoms will fall off. 'We brought nothing into the world, and it is certain that we shall carry nothing out of this world,' 1 Tim. 6:7. The hedgehog gets up to a pile of apples, and gathers as many as she can upon her prickles; but when she comes to her resting-place—her hole—she throweth them all down, and carrieth not one in with her. Thus men walk in a vain shadow, and disquiet themselves in vain; heaping up riches which die with them; naked they come into the world, and naked they go out of the world. Plutarch wisely compareth great men to counters, which one hour stand for thousands, and the next hour for nothing. Hermocrates, being unwilling that any man should enjoy his estate after his death, made himself in his will his own heir. Athenæus reports of a covetous wretch, that on his death-bed swallowed many pieces of gold, and sewed up others in his coat, commanding that

they should be buried with him; but who doth not laugh at such folly?

In that storm of death, all thy glory and riches, which thou hast taken such pains, and wrought so hard for, must be thrown overboard. As the great Sultan hath an officer to search all persons that come into his presence, and take away all their weapons, so the great God, by his messenger death, will search thee, and take away all thy wealth. In that day the crowns of princes and shackles of prisoners, the russet of beggars and scarlet of courtiers, the honours and offices of the highest, the meat, and drink, and sleep, and mirth of the lowest, must be laid by.

As it was said of Sarah, it ceased to be with her after the former manner; so the time will come that it may be said of thee, it ceaseth to be with him after the former manner. Now thou canst relish thy food, and delight in thy friends, ravish thine ears with melodious sounds, and thine eyes with curious sights, rejoice in things of naught, and be titled with vanity and nothing; but when death comes, it will cease to be with thee after the former manner. Now thou pleasest thyself in thy lovely relations, and pridest thyself in thy stately possessions; these weak props preserve thy spirit from sinking at present; but ah! what will become of thee, when they shall all be taken away from thee, when thou shalt bid thy wife, and children, and friends, farewell for ever? and say to thy house, and lands, and credit, and sports, and pastimes, adieu to eternity; or as dying Pope Adrian did, O my soul, the loving companion of my body, thou are going into a solitary place, where thou shalt never, never more take pleasure. At the hour of death thy most costly jewels, and most pleasing delights, will be as the pearl in an oyster, not thy privilege or perfections, but thy disease and destruction.

When those carnal comforts are gone, thy spiritual comforts, if thou hast any, will be known. When the hand which held thee up by the chin, and kept thee above water, is taken away, thy own skill in swimming will be discovered. When the virtue of those cordials

which supported thy spirits for a time is spent, it will appear whether nature hath any strength or no.

2. Because thy spiritual enemies will then assail thee. Those adversaries which before were hid, and lay lurking, as it were, under the hedge, will then appear openly, and wound thee to the very heart.

Thy sins will then assault thee. When the prisoner appeareth before the judge, then the evidence is produced, and the witnesses, which were never before thought of, shew themselves. When thou goest to stand before the judge of the whole earth, thy sins will bear thee company. In the night of death, those frightful ghosts will walk. Thy lusts, which are now lying dormant, will then be rampant. Thou mayest say to death, as the woman to the prophet, Art thou come to call my sins to remembrance, and to slay my son? Art thou come to call my sins to remembrance, and to slay my soul?

While the hedgehog walketh on the land, she seemeth not so uncomely, but when she sprawleth in the waters, her deformity appeareth. Whilst men walk up and down, they usually look in false glasses, and judge themselves fair, because some may be found who are more foul; but death will pluck off their masks, present them with a true glass, in which all the spots, and dirt, and wrinkles in the faces of their hearts and lives will be visible. Men flatter them often, but death never flattered any.

It is observable that Haman, the day that he died, was called and named according to his desert: The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman,' Esther 7:6. Haman probably had many a title given him before. Some had styled him Haman the great, Haman the magnificent, Haman the prince, Haman the virtuous; all before nicknamed him; but when he comes to die, it is Haman the enemy, it is wicked Haman; then he is called by his proper name. Since he was born, he never heard his right name till now. The enemy and adversary is this wicked Haman. So it may be, in thy lifetime, thou art styled great or gracious, because in place higher than others; but

when death comes, those gaudy colours will be washed off, and thou shalt hear, not the King of heaven's favourite, but his fool; when thou art nigh thy execution, as he was, it will not be the worshipful, but the wicked, Haman.

Satan will then play hardest upon thee with his biggest guns; when his time is but little, his rage is greatest. This is his hour, and the power of darkness. As the Turkish emperor, when he hath blunted the edge of his enemies' weapons, and wearied their arms with thousands of his ordinary soldiers, then falls on with his janizaries—the pride and power of his kingdom; when thou, through pain of body and perplexity of mind, are least able to resist, then the devil cometh with his fiercest assaults. If on thy death-bed thou shouldst think of turning to God, he hath a thousand ways to turn thee off from such thoughts; when there is but one battle for a kingdom, what wounds and work, what fighting and striving, is there! When the devil, who knoweth thee to be his own already, hath but a few hours to wait on thee, and then thou art his for ever, be assured he will watch by thy sick-bed night and day, and if all the power and policy of hell can prevent it, neither cordial shall benefit thy body, nor counsel thy soul.

Will not this be a trying hour to thee, when the cloth shall be drawn, and thy bodily comforts all taken off the table? Will not death search thee to the quick, when those thieves, in their frightful vizards, all thy sins, in that night will break in upon thee? As the elders of Samaria said of Jehu, when he sent to them to prepare and provide to fight with him, Two kings stood not before him, and how shall we? Adam and angels could not stand before sin, (it laid them both low,) and how wilt thou? Believe it, those that have been lions in peace, have carried themselves like harts in this war. Brutus, whose blood seemed as warm, and to rise to as great a degree of courage, as any since the Roman consuls, yet when Furius came to cut his throat, he cried out like a child. Heathen, who saw nothing almost in death, save rottenness and corruption accompanying the body, who look no farther than the grave, have esteemed death the king of terrors, the

terrible of terribles, and have been frightened into a fever upon the sight of its forerunner. But death is not half so terrible to a moral heathen as it will be to thee, O wicked Christian! Thou knowest that thy death's-day is thy doom's-day; that the axe of death will cut thee down as fuel for the unquenchable fire; that as soon as thou art carried from the earth, thou art cast into hell. Thou presumest that thou shalt behave thyself like a man in the onset with this enemy, but I dare be the prophet to foretell that thy courage will be less than a woman's in the issue; for man, man, dost thou not know, as Pilate said to Christ, that death hath power to kill thee, as well as to release thee? it can send thy body to the grave, and thy soul to the place of endless misery and desperation.

Fifthly, Dost thou not know the misery of every carnal man at death? In thy lifetime thou doest the devil's work, and when death cometh he will pay thee thy wages. Sin at present is a bee with honey in its mouth, but then the sting in its tail will appear and be felt. Now thou hast thy savoury meat and sugared draughts, but then cometh the reckoning. Some tell us that sweetmeats, though pleasant to the taste, are very heavy in the stomach. Sure I am the sweet morsels of sin, which now thou feedest so merrily on, will then lie heavier than lead on thy heart, and be more bitter than gall and wormwood. Thou mayest see now and then in this world, through the flood-gates, some drops of wrath leaking in upon thy soul; but when death cometh, the flood-gates will be all pulled up, and then, oh then, what a torrent of wrath will come pouring down upon thee! Here thou sippest of the cup of the Lord's fury, but then thou shalt drink the dregs thereof. The pains which thou sufferest here are only an earnest-penny of thy eternal punishment. It was a cruel mercy which Tamerlane shewed to three hundred lepers, in killing them to rid them out of their misery; but death will be altogether merciless and cruel to thee, for it only freeth thee from the jail, to carry thee to the gallows; it will deliver thee from whips, but scourge thee with scorpions; its little finger will be infinitely heavier than the loins of this miserable life. When God saith to death concerning thee, as Judas to the Jews concerning Christ, Take him and lead him away

safely; who can tell the mockings, buffetings, piercings, scourgings, the cursed, painful, and shameful, eternal death which will ensue?

Suppose, for thy soul's sake, in earnest, as Turannius did in jest—who would needs be laid in his bed as one who had breathed out his last, and caused his whole family to bewail his death—that thou wert ascending up to thy chamber, whence thou shouldst never come down, till carried on men's shoulders, betaking thyself to thy dying bed. Thou lookest on thy body, and beholdest death's harbinger, sickness, preparing his way before him. Oh how thy colour comes and goes, at the sight of this axe, which the hand of death hath laid at the root of thy tree of life! Like the locust, thou art ready beforehand to die at the sight of this polypus. Now thou art laid down on that bed whence thou shalt never rise more, thy next work is to seek for some shelter against this approaching storm. Thou lookest upward, and seest that God, full of fury, whom thou didst many a time dare to his very face, and resolved, since thou wouldst live without his counsels, thou shalt die without his comforts; thou lookest downward, and seest Satan, who formerly was thy flatterer and seeming friend, now thy tormentor and desperate foe, waiting, like the jailer, to drag thee to his own den; thou lookest inward, and conscience presents thee with a black catalogue of thy bloody crimes, and in the name of God, whose officer it is, arresteth thee for them, and chargeth thee to answer them at his dreadful tribunal, to which thou art even now going; thou lookest without thee, among thy friends and relations, and earthly comforts, and seekest the living among the dead, as the angel said to the woman—living comforts amongst dead creatures—but, alas! it is not there. Thy wife, and children, and neighbours may weep with thee, but cannot ease thee of one tear; they may give thee occasion to call to mind thy sins, but not abate the least of thy sorrows. Miserable comforts are they all, physicians of no value. I have read of one in Holland, that being condemned for killing her bastard, when the messenger was dragging her away to execution, looks pitifully on her father, a person of quality then present, and casts a doleful eye on her mother. Will ye not help me? Where are your bowels? Can ye find in your hearts to let your own child be thus

cruelly dealt with? But, alas! they might not, they could not, help her. Such truly is thy case; thou lookest on thy right and left hand, on thy father, or mother, or husband, or house, or land, and dost, as it were, call for help, but, alas! they cannot give thee any comfort in this groaning hour, in this thy dreadful conflict; they may be about thy body, as ravens about a carcass, to devour it, to get something from thee, but they cannot defend it.

Well, now the screech owl of death, which all this while clawed about thy windows, is entered thy chamber, flieth towards thy bedside; the messenger by this time is come to thee, and sheweth thee the warrant for thy speedy and immediate execution. Now, now is the beginning of thy sorrows. Live thou canst not, and die thou darest not; fain wouldst thou be rid of thy pain, but fearful lest thou shouldst go to a worse place; thou dislikest thy dirty, nasty dungeon, but dost not like to exchange it for a gibbet; thou chooseth to stay, but death will not be denied—thou must go. Thou sayest, thou art not at leisure, thou hast such worldly affairs of concernment to finish, thou art not prepared, thou hast the business of thy soul, a work of infinite weight, to begin, as they for their farms, so thou, I pray thee, have me excused. Thou beggest one week, one day, nay, one hour, death will not wait one moment; death pulls thee, as Benaiah did Joab, towards the place of thy eternal punishment. Thy soul clings about thy body, as he about the altar, and still sings loath to depart; death, like Solomon's officer, renteth thee in pieces by force, and slayeth thee there. Now thy soul standeth quivering upon thy pale lips, ready to take its flight to its everlasting home; thou seest devils looking and longing, like so many ravening and roaring lions, for thee their prey. Thy past sins trouble thee; oh how thou cursest thy pastimes and pleasures, thy companions and possessions, which stole away thy time and affections, and hindered thy preparation for such a dreadful hour! Thy future sufferings terrify thee; and ah, thinkest thou, Whither am I going? Where must my soul lodge this night? In what place, with what persons, must I dwell for ever? Oh that I had provided for this beforehand! How many a time did God wish me, ministers persuade me, Christ beseech me, and conscience

warn me; but fool that I was, I rejected the entreaties of Christ, stifled the convictions of conscience, scorned the counsels of men, set at nought the commands of God, trampled on Sabbath and sermons, and seasons of grace, as things of no worth; and now my day is past, my soul is lost, heaven's gate is shut, and, woe and alas, it is too late. The blessed God, in whose favour is life, to whom I, wicked wretch, said, Depart from me, hath now fixed my doom, to depart from him for ever. Oh what unconceivable evil is there in the loss of so great a good! ten thousand hells are included in my banishment from that heaven. The frightful and cruel devils, whom I defied in my words, but deified in my heart and works, whose lust were my laws, and whose wills were my warrant, shall be my masters, tyrants and tormentors to all eternity. My own spirit (oh that I could flee from myself!) is infinitely more grievous and painful, than ever sword was to any flesh. What wolf in the breast, what pangs of the stone, what pain of the teeth, what cancer in the bowels, ever caused the thousandth part of that torture, which the worm in my conscience causeth! but it is as impossible for me to avoid it, as for the wounded deer to run from the arrow that sticks in his side. The fire burns me, yet consumes me not; gives heat to scorch me, but no light to refresh me. Here is blackness of darkness, yet I can see the heart-cutting frowns of an angry God, and can see myself to be infinitely miserable. I enjoy a long night, but no rest; I must always complain, but have no relief; here is crying without compassion; all pain without the least pity; sorrow without the smallest drachm of solace, or the least drop of succour. If my misery were ever to end, though after so many millions of ages as all the men in the world could number, my heart would have some hope; but, alas, alas! as it is intolerable, so it is unchangeable. As long as God is God, I must fry in these flames; all my tears shall not quench the least spark of this fire; though I must weep for ever, all this fire will not dry up the least tear, though it will burn for ever. Oh that I had never been! oh that I might never be! What! must I ever live, and yet never live? must I ever die, and yet never die? Consider this, all ye that pass by, Is there any sorrow like unto our sorrows, wherewith the Lord afflicteth us in the day of his fierce wrath; for who can dwell in such everlasting

burnings? and who can abide such devouring flames? Oh that the mountains would fall on us, and the hills cover us, from the presence of him that sits upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, because the day of his wrath is come, and who can stand! Oh what a dreadful sunset of life will it be, which brings such a dismal night of eternal death!

O friend, think of this now, how wilt thou do to die? If thou shouldst leave this life in the service of thy lusts, thou art thus irrecoverably lost; thou art miserable beyond all expressions, beyond all conceptions. If Job, because of some temporal calamity, cursed the day wherein he was born, and the messenger that brought tidings of his birth, and desired to die rather than to endure it, whom wilt thou curse, or rather, whom wilt thou not curse, when under the sense of eternal misery; surely thou wilt seek for death, but not find it, dig for it, but it will flee from thee. Though Judas could make himself away out of the hell he had on earth, yet he cannot out of the hell he hath in hell. When thou diest, thou art stated by God himself, and there is no appeal from this judge, nor reversing of his judgment. It is the observation of the schoolmen, that what befell the angels when they sinned, that befalls every wicked man at death. The angels, upon the first act of sin, were presently by God himself stated in an irrecoverable condition of misery; so wicked men, upon the last act of their lives, are fixed as to their eternal woeful estates: 'It is appointed for all men once to die, and after death the judgment.'

Sixthly, Dost thou know the felicity which upon thy death thou shouldst enter into if thou wert prepared for it? As the good housewife looketh for winter, but feareth it not, being prepared for it with double clothing; so thou mightst expect death, but not fear it, being prepared for it with armour of proof. Sirens, some write, screech horribly when they die, but swans sing then most sweetly. Though sinners roar bitterly when they behold that sea of scalding lead in which they must swim naked for ever, yet thou shouldst, like the apostle, desire to depart, wish for that hour wherein thou shouldst loose anchor and sail to Christ, as the word signifieth, Phil.

1:23. Thy dying day would be thy wedding day, as the martyrs called theirs, wherein the fairest of ten thousand and thy soul, now contracted, should be solemnly espoused together. As frightful a lion as death is to others, that their souls are fain to be torn from their bodies, thou mightst, like a weary child, call to be laid to bed, knowing that it will send thee to thine everlasting happy rest. If it be a happy death to die willingly, as the moralist affirmeth, thou shouldst give up the ghost, and be a volunteer in that war. Nature teacheth that death is the end of misery; but grace would teach thee that death would be the beginning of thy felicity—it could not hurt thee. Death among saints drives but a poor trade; it may destroy the body, and when that is done, it hath done all its feats; like a fierce mastiff whose teeth are broken out, it may bark and tear thy tattered coat, but cannot bite to the bone. This bee fastened her sting in Christ's blessed body, and is ever since a drone to his members. Though the wicked are gathered at death—as the Rabbins sense that place, 'Gather not my soul with sinners, let me not die their deaths,' Ps. 26:9—as sticks that lie on the ground for the fire, or as grapes for the winepress of God's fury, yet thou shouldst be gathered, according to the Hebrew, Isa. 57:2, as women do cordial flowers to candy and preserve them.

Nay, death would exceedingly help thee. Plutarch saith that strong bodies can eat and concoct serpents. Thou mayest, like Samson, fetch meat out of this eater, and out of this strong lion sweetness. Death, ever since it walked to mount Calvary, is turned, to believers, into the gate of life. A heathen could say, Life is not taken away from me by the immortal gods, but death is given to me; meaning, as an act of grace and favour. Much more may a Christian esteem death, which puts an end to his trials, and sins, and troubles, a privilege rather than a punishment. 'Blessed are they that die in the Lord; they rest from their labours,' Rev. 14:13.

When sickness first gives thee notice that death is at hand, thou mightst make the servant welcome for bringing thee the good news of his approaching master. Thy heart may leap to think that though

thou art, like Peter, now bound in the fetters of sin, and imprisoned amongst sinners, yet the angel is coming who will, with one blow on thy side, cause thy shackles to fall off, open the prison doors, and set thy soul into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. When this Samuel is come to thy gate, thou needest not, as the elders of Bethlehem, tremble at his coming, for if thou askest the question, Comest thou peaceably? he will answer, Tea, peaceably; I am come to offer thee up a sacrifice of a sweet smelling savour, acceptable to God in Jesus Christ; the pale face of death would please thee better than the greatest beauty on earth. When thou liest on thy dying bed, and physicians had given over thy body, Christ would visit and give thy soul such a cordial that thou mightst walk in the valley of the shadow of death and fear none ill. How willingly mayest thou part with the militant members of Christ for the triumphant saints! How cheerfully mayest thou leave thy nearest relations for thy dearest Father and elder brother! How comfortably mayest thou take thy leave of all the riches, honours, and pleasures of this life, knowing that though death cometh to others with a voider to take away all their fleshly comforts and carnal contentments, nay, all their hopes, and happiness, and heaven, and hereby, when they break at death, they are quite bankrupts for ever; yet it is to thee only a servant, to remove the first course of more gross fare, of which thou hast had thy fill, and to make way for the second, which consisteth of all sorts of dainties and delicates.

When thy soul was ready to bid thy body good-night, till the morning of the resurrection, thou mightst joyfully commit thy body to the grave, as a bed of spices, and shouldst see glorious angels waiting on thy soul, and carrying it, as Elijah, in a triumphant chariot into heaven's blessed court. There thou shouldst be saluted by the noble host and celestial choir of saints and angels, welcomed by the holy Jesus and gracious God, in the fruition of whom thou shouldst be perfectly happy for ever and ever. If there were so much joy in heaven at thy repentance, when thou wert but set into the way, what joy will there be when, through so many hazards and hardships, thou art come to thy journey's end! Thus, friend, wert thou but prepared,

death would be to thee a change from a prison to a palace, from sorrows to solace, from pain to pleasure, from heaviness to happiness. Thy winding-sheet would wipe off all tears from thine eyes; all thy sins and sorrows should be buried in thy grave; and the vessel of thy soul, which in this life is weather-beaten, tossed up and down with the boisterous billows of temptations, and the high winds of the world's wrath and the devil's rage, would there arrive at a blessed and everlasting harbour. Death would sound a retreat, and call thee out of the field, where the bullets fly thick and threefold in thy combat with the flesh, world, and wicked one, to receive a crown of life. Hence that ancient custom of placing a laurel crown at the head of the dead man's coffin in token of victory and triumph.

## CHAPTER VII

What is requisite to preparation for death. A change of state and a change of nature, with a most gracious offer from the most high God to sinners

If anything, or all that I have written, hath wrought thee to a resolution to prepare for thy dissolution; if these motives, which thy conscience must needs confess to be weighty, have melted thee and made thee pliable for a divine stamp and mould,

I shall acquaint thee with the means and way how thou mayest die well. Having finished what is persuasive,

Secondly, I shall offer thee somewhat that is directive. And know, reader, further, that there is no other medicine in the world which can possibly cure thy wounded dying soul, but that which I have from God to prescribe thee; throw away this, or neglect the rules in applying it to thy sores, or advise with flattering mountebanks, and thy lamentable condition will be irrecoverable, thy dreadful estate will be desperate. I shall not, like an empiric, try new tricks or remedies on thy bleeding, gasping soul, but give thee that receipt,

consisting but of two ingredients, which the great physician hath left in writing under his own hand, and which thousands have experienced to be effectual for their cure, whose souls are made thereby at this hour, as his body in the Gospel, every whit whole.

Pride, or an ambitious desire of self-sufficiency, and self-subsistence, was the stone at which man at first stumbled, and fell into the bottomless pit of matchless misery—it was the fatal knife which cut the throat of his glorious hopes and happiness; the wise God therefore, like a tender father, in man's recovery, takes special care to lay these weapons out of the children's way, by which they had wrought themselves such woe. Hence it is that he hath chosen those two graces to make us happy, and carry us to himself, which speak us to be most beggarly, and carry us most out of ourselves, faith and repentance. Faith teacheth us to deny ourselves, as utterly weak; and repentance causeth us to abhor ourselves, as altogether unworthy. Repentance discovereth our nakedness, and obnoxiousness thereby to shame and suffering; and faith telleth that our own rags come infinitely short of hiding it, and that we must fetch our garments out of another's wardrobe. The whole globe of Christianity divideth itself into these two hemispheres. As the bodily life consisteth in natural heat and radical moisture, so the life of the soul in faith and repentance.

Therefore, reader, if thou wouldst die well, undergo that great change with comfort; it is absolutely and indispensably necessary that thou mind these two changes beforehand: a change of thy state or condition, which is wrought by faith; and a change of thy nature or disposition, which is wrought by repentance.

The door of thy happiness hangs on these two hinges: the merit of Christ without thee, and its acceptation with God for the justification of thy person; and secondly, the Spirit of Christ within thee, and its operation for the sanctification of thy nature.

First, There must of necessity be a change of thy state by faith in Christ, or thou canst never put thy head into the other world with comfort. There is no such shroud, such a winding-sheet, for the departing soul to be wrapt in, as the righteousness of a Saviour; Paul's care was that he might not be found naked, 2 Cor. 5:3. Oh it is sad indeed for thy soul to be summoned to appear before the jealous God, and to have nothing to cover thy nakedness. Adam, knowing that he was naked, fled from God. Guilt cannot but be shy of a judge; sore eyes will not endure the sight of the sun. God is a consuming fire to all who have not Jesus Christ for their screen. He seemeth to every person, as Joseph to the patriarchs, 'Thou shalt not see my face with joy, except thou bringest thy brother with thee.' It is alone in the garments of thine elder brother that thou canst have a sound hope to receive the blessing. Every one who dieth out of Christ, dieth in his sins, John 8:21. And were not men's hearts desperately hard, it were impossible that any should die in their senses who die in their sins; all would die distracted who die thus defiled.

By nature thou art under the covenant of works, and so bound to earn happiness by thy fingers' ends, if ever thou wilt have it; in which sailing, for no mere man ever sailed to bliss in that bottom, thou art liable to the curse of the law, a bond-slave to thy jailer Satan, and an heir of hell. If ever, therefore, thou wouldst arrive at heaven's blessed port, there is a necessity of embarking in another vessel, and that is the covenant of grace, by which thou mayest be freed from all the former crosses and curses, and filled with all the special comforts and rich cordials of the gospel. Now it is faith in Christ by which thou comest to be shipped in this covenant, and surely it concerns thee then to get this grace. Many, nay, millions, are drowned and cast away, sailing through the boisterous billows of death, in the broken bottom of the first covenant, when others, in the second, ride in triumph, with top and top-gallant, to their desired haven.

Reader, if thou art out of this covenant, thou art like a man in the midst of the sea, without any boat or bottom; though some in vessels at the same time are safe, yet he is sure to sink. It is related of one

that, being at the point of drowning in a river, and looking up and seeing a rainbow in the sky, the sign of God's covenant that he would never more drown the world, he made this conclusion: What if God save the whole world from a deluge of waters, and suffer me to perish in this river, what good will that covenant do me? So say I to thee, Though thousands escape a deluge of wrath through God's promise to Christ, and in Christ to his purified ones, what good will it do thee if thou perishest?

An interest in this covenant was the living comfort of dying David: 'He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make not my house to grow,' 2 Sam. 23:5. Mark how the pious king draws all the wine which made his heart glad, in one of his last hours, from this pipe. Death is one of the sourest things in the world, and such things require much sugar to make them sweet. David found so much honey in the covenant, that therewith he made death itself a pleasant, a desirable dish. If you observe the beginning of the chapter, you will find that his end was near. 'Now these be the last words of David.' But this, this was the quiet and ease of his heart, that God's covenant with him was everlasting and without end. As death is famous for its terror, being king thereof, so also for his power, it brings down the mighty princes and potentates of the earth. Samson was but a child in death's hands; hence we read, when Scripture would draw strength in its full proportion and length, 'as strong as death,' Cant. 8:6; but as strong as death is, David knew it could not break in sunder the covenant between God and him, nor dissolve the union betwixt his Saviour and his soul. The firmness of this covenant being sure footing for faith to stand on, is that which puts life into a dying Christian. As death, though it parted the soul and body of Christ, parted neither of them from the divine nature; they were as a sword drawn by a man, the sword is in one hand separated from the sheath in the other hand, but neither of them separated from the man; so though death break the natural union between the believer's soul and body, it cannot break the mystical union between Jesus Christ and the soul; therefore saints are said to

sleep in Jesus, 1 Thes. 4:14. And truly, by the virtue of this cordial, this covenant, they are so far from flying back at the sight of their foe death, that they can look him in the face with courage and confidence. See how they triumph over him, as if he were already under their feet, 'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?' 1 Cor. 15:57, 58. 'The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which hath given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.' Hark, they speak as challengers, daring their disarmed enemy to meet them in the field; and they speak as conquerors, being assured, through the captain of their salvation, of the victory before they fight. Epiphanius saith that Adam was buried in Calvary, where Christ was crucified. Sure it is, that Christ at Calvary did somewhat which made the Christian's bed soft and easy; that whereas it would have been a bed of thorns, he turned it into a bed of down, and thereby the believer comes to lie on it so contentedly, and to sleep so sweetly and comfortably.

By this time, reader, I hope thou understandest the necessity and benefit of this relative change. With this covenant thou art armed cap-à-pie with armour of proof, with the righteousness of Christ, which is law-proof, death-proof, and judgment-proof, and leavest death wholly disarmed and naked. Without this thou hast no weapons, and findest death a man of war. In the forequoted place, thou seest that sin is the sting of death, and the strength of sin is the law. The law binds the soul over for disobedience to its precept, to its malediction and punishment, passeth a sentence of condemnation already upon the creature, and beginneth its execution in that bondage and fear, as flashes of the unquenchable fire, which seize on men in this life, Rom. 7:6; John 3:18; Heb. 2:14. And as sin hath its strength from the law, the law making it so powerful to curse and condemn; so death has its strength and sting, its venom and virtue, to kill and damn, to destroy soul and body for ever, from sin. Sin makes death so deadly, that it is the poison in the cup which makes it so mortal and loathsome a draught. Thy work and wisdom therefore is,—as the Philistines, when they heard that the great strength of Samson, the destroyer of their country, lay in his hair, were restless

till they had cut it off, and he became weak;—so now thou hearest wherein the strength of death, the great destroyer and damner of souls, consisteth, to be unquiet night and day, to follow God up and down with sighs and sobs, strong cries, and deep groans for pardon of sin, and to give thyself no rest till thou attainest an interest in this covenant through Jesus Christ. Pious Job, though not in thy case, was for this cause exceeding importunate for a sense of this pardon: 'And why dost thou not pardon mine iniquity, and take away my transgressions? for now shall I sleep in the dust; and thou shalt seek me in the morning, and I shall not be,' Job 7:21. He crieth out, as one fallen into a deep dirty ditch, or one whose house is fired, Water, water for the Lord's sake, to cleanse this defiled soul, and to quench this scorched conscience; Lord, why doth the messenger, who useth to come post to me, a poor condemned prisoner, with a pardon, linger so long? Alas! I wish he may not come too late. But what is the reason of this importunity for expedition? Why, Job in his own thoughts was going to appear before his judge, and he durst not venture without a pardon in his hand; 'for now shall I sleep in the dust.' The child did not dare to go to bed at night till he had asked his father's blessing, and begged and obtained forgiveness of his disobedience in the day.

Nothing in the whole creation can pacify the conscience awakened with the guilt of sin, and frightened with the fear of death, but a pardon in the blood of this covenant; for want of this it was that the heathen were either desperate or doubtful in their deaths, and their orator ingeniously confesseth, that notwithstanding all the medicines they could gather out of their own gardens, the disease was still too strong for the remedy. But a plaster spread with the blood of Christ, and applied by faith to the sore, is a sovereign and certain cure. Faith in Christ is such a shield, that under its protection a Christian may stand in the evil day of death, keep his ground, and secure himself from all the shot which the law, Satan, or conscience can make against him: 'I am the resurrection and the life; he that liveth and believeth in me shall live, though he die,' John 11.

The death of the King of saints is the only comfort and help against death, the king of terrors. It is a strange property which some report of the charadrion, that if any man have the jaundice, and look on the bird, and the bird on him, the bird catcheth the disease and dieth of it, but the man recovereth. Christ took man's disease and died, that all who look on him with an eye of faith might recover and live. The red sea of his blood is the only way through which thou canst pass into Canaan. Reader, since there is a flood, and vengeance, and wrath upon the face of the world, fly, as the distressed dove, to this ark of the covenant; see how Jesus Christ, the true Noah, a preacher of righteousness, puts forth his hand to take thee in. He is the Son of David, to whom souls that are in debt and in distress may flee, and seemeth to speak to thee, as David to Abiathar, 'Abide thou with me, fear not: for they (the world and devil) that seek thy life, seek mine: but with me thou shalt be in safeguard,' 1 Sam. 22:23.

Secondly, There must of necessity be a change of thy nature by repentance, or death can never be thy passage into the undefiled inheritance. The new man is the only citizen of the new Jerusalem. It is bad venturing a voyage to the Happy Islands in an old leaking bottom. In the art of navigation it was a law, and formerly seriously observed, that none should be a master or master's mate, that had not been first a sculler, and rowed with oars, and from thence been promoted to the stern. None are fit to reign with God, who have not wrought for God; others are more unfit for it than a carter for a prince's court. Men must be bound apprentices on earth to that high and holy trade of worshipping and glorifying the blessed God, and know the art and mystery of it, (which the purblind eyes of nature cannot discern,) before they can set up for themselves, and enrich themselves by it in heaven. Men that are wholly strangers to a country, and no whit acquainted with the language and carriage of the natives, would find, if in it, but a solitary place. He whose eyes are so bad that he cannot see God with the help of the spectacles of ordinances, will be much more unable to see him face to face. Alas! what would an earthly man do in heaven?

Till thou art converted, and hast a sense of thy sins and miseries, thou art a rebel in actual arms against God; if death finds thee in such a condition, God takes the fort of thy soul by storm, with thy weapons in thy hands, and therefore thou canst expect nothing less than death eternal without mercy. There is no peace to be thought of with God, whilst thou maintainest war against him. The sinner, instead of disarming, armeth death against himself; the life of sin is the life of death, and enableth it to kill the soul. Till thy nature be renewed, thy heart is full of enmity against God, and thy life nothing else but a walking contrary to him, and therefore thou canst have no delight or joy in him, which is the very heaven of heavens. There must be conformity to him, before there can be communion with him. God and man must be agreed before they can walk or dwell together: 'Except ye be converted, ye can in no wise enter into the kingdom of God;' and again, 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God,' Mat. 18:3; John 3:3; which negatives, can in no wise, and cannot enter, speak not only the impossibility of it on God's part, because he is fully resolved against it; but also the incapacity on man's part, because he is wholly unprepared for it. Swine are not fit for a rubbed room, or a presence-chamber. As timber must be laid out and shrunk, before it is fit for building, otherwise it will warp; so God humbleth and draweth out self-sap and self-indisposition, before they become the temple of the Holy Ghost. That building which reacheth up to heaven must have a low foundation.

They that would turn pewter, by alchemy, into silver, first dissolve the pewter, or otherwise their labour is in vain. Thy heart must be melted by godly sorrow for sin, and hatred of sin, before thou canst be a vessel of silver for thy master's use. The angel troubled the waters before they were healing, John 5:4. 'Repent, that your sins may be blotted out,' Acts 3:19. Repentance and remission are ever twins. It is observable that nature hath made the roots of many trees bitter, whose fruits are very sweet. They that in life sow in tears, at death shall reap in joy; it is the wet seed-time that hath the sunshiny

harvest. God is resolved that all the sons of men shall feel sin, either in broken bones on earth, or broken backs in hell.

When sin hath its death wound before, it will expire at death; for though sin brought death into the body, death will cast sin out of the body. When grace is before budded and blossomed, at death it will ripen into glory. Holiness is the raiment of needlework, in which thou art to be brought to thy Lord and husband, Ps. 45:14; but it is necessary that, like Abraham's ram, thou be perplexed in these briers, before by death thou art offered up as a peace-offering to God. They are foolish who dream of being carried to heaven in a feather bed. None but such as are weary of the work, (as a sick man of his bed,) and heavy laden with the weight, of sin, (as a porter can be of his burden), shall enter into the everlasting rest.

Naturalists observe that the Egyptian fig-tree being put into the water, presently sinketh to the bottom, but being well soaked, contrary to the nature of other trees, it buoys itself up to the top. Till thy mind is enlightened, to see sin's deformity; thy will renewed, to refuse it as thy only enemy; and thy affections purified, to grieve for it, and loathe it, as it is contrary to the blessed God and thy own felicity; till thy soul is soaked in these bitter waters, never expect to be lifted up to the rivers of pleasures at God's right hand. This howling wilderness is the only way to Canaan. The path to Zion lieth by Sinai; God poureth the oil of gladness into the broken vessel. Some philosophers tell us that feeling is the foundation of natural life—no feeling, no life. It is true, I am sure in divinity, no feeling, no sense of sin, no spiritual, no eternal life; impenitency, like a lethargy, is deadly, is damning.

God doth qualify all whom he intendeth to dignify. Saul is qualified, by receiving another spirit than he had before, to reign over men; much more must they be qualified, by receiving a new heart and a new spirit, who are to reign with God. The sun never leaped from midnight to midday, but first sendeth forth some glimmerings of light, in the dawning of the day, then looketh upon us with some

weak and waterish beams, after that beholds us with open face, and even then hath many miles to run before he can arrive at his meridian glory. God never carried a soul from hell to heaven, from a natural condition to the beatifical vision, but through the door or gate of conversion.

Reader, to conclude this use, and sum up these two particulars, which are more worth than the whole world, that thou mayest see how willing I am to be instrumental for thy welfare, I shall come up a little nearer and closer to thee. Oh that I did but know what savoury spiritual meat thou lovest most! if possible, I would provide it for thee, and set it before thee, that thou mightst eat, and thy soul might bless God before thou diest.

In order to thy eternal good, I have a special offer to make to thee from the blessed God, and that is of a marriage with his only Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. I am this day sent to thee, as his ambassador, with full instructions to woo in his behalf, that I might present thee a chaste virgin unto Christ; thou needest not doubt of my authority, for in the Scriptures thou mayest, read my commission and credential letters, which may give thee full security and satisfaction against all jealousies and suspicions which can possibly arise in thy breast. Thou needest not question God's reality in the tender of so great a fortune to thee, notwithstanding all thy unworthiness; for he sent his Son so great a journey, as from heaven to earth, to marry thy nature, on purpose that he might be married to thy person; and hath caused him already to be at infinite cost in providing glorious attire, and precious jewels, out of heaven's wardrobe and cabinet, that thou mightst be adorned as is fit for the spouse of so great a Lord; nay, he himself hath sent thee his picture, of greater value than heaven and earth, drawn at length, and to the life, in the gospel, in all his royalty, beauty, and glory, to try if thou canst like and love his person. Friend, look wishly on him, consider his person; he is fairer than the children of men; he is the express image of his Father's person. Thy beloved (oh, shall I call him so!) is white and ruddy, the fairest of ten thousands, he is altogether lovely; nothing but amiableness; none

ever saw him, but were enamoured with him. View his portion; he is heir of all things; all power is given to him in heaven and earth. I know thy poverty, but there are unsearchable riches in Christ, yea, durable riches and righteousness. Thou art infinitely in debt, and thereby liable to the arrest of divine justice, and eternal prison of hell; but I must tell thee, the revenues of this emperor are able to discharge the debts of millions of worlds, and to leave enough, too, for their comfortable and honourable subsistence to all eternity. Behold his parentage; he is the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth; the eternal Son of God. As there is incomparable beauty and favour in his person, and inestimable riches and treasure in his portion; so there is unconceivable dignity and honour in his parentage; for he is the only natural Son and heir of the most high God. For thy further quickening, he is thy near kinsman, bone of thy bone, and flesh of thy flesh, Gen. 24:4, 5, and so hath right to thee. God hath given his stewards a command, as Abraham his servant, not to take a wife to his son of the daughters of the Canaanites, from among the evil angels, but to go to his Son's own country and kindred, and to take a wife for him among the children of men. Friend, thou hast heard the errand about which I am sent to thee. I hope there is such an arrow of love darted into thy heart from the gracious eyes and looks of this Lord of glory, that thou art wounded thereby, and beginnest of a sudden to be taken with him, and to wish, Oh that I might have the honour and happiness to become the bride of so lovely a bridegroom; that this king of saints would take me, a poor sinner, into his bed and bosom. Thou sayest, as Abigail when David sent to take her to wife, 'Behold, let thine handmaid be a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord; I am unworthy to be his spouse.' If it be thus with thee, I see that thy affections are already entangled, and for thy comfort, know that he is not of the number of them, who, when they have gained others' good-will, then cast them off; only it will be needful that thou understand what he requires of thee, to avoid all future jars and differences. Plain dealing is never more necessary than in marriage; those that by daubing have huddled up matches in haste, have found cause enough to repent at leisure.

I shall propound two arguments for thy encouragement, and then demand thy agreement to two articles, upon which and no other this match can be concluded.

First, Consider the necessity of thy acceptance of Christ for thy husband. It is impossible to obtain heaven for thy jointure, but by marrying with him who is the heir. It may be, like him in Ruth, chap. 4:2–4, whom the Spirit of God thought unworthy to be named, thou art ready for the band—the portion—but unwilling to marry the person; thou art forward to be pardoned, adopted, and saved, but backward to take Jesus Christ for thy husband, lest thou shouldst lose thy sinful pleasures, and thereby mar, in thy opinion, a better inheritance. But know of a certain, as Boaz told him, what day thou buyest the field, thou must marry the owner of it; what day thou gainest the invaluable privileges of the gospel, thou must match with Christ, the purchaser and owner of them. There is no gaining the precious fruit, but by getting the tree that bears it. Indeed thy marriage with him is so fruitful a blessing, that thou needest no more. Forgiveness of sins, the love of God, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, eternal life, every good thing, all good things, are in the womb of it; thou canst not imagine what a numerous posterity of Barnabases—of sons of consolation—would be the effect and issue of such a wedding; but it is so needful a blessing, that without it thou art completely and eternally woeful. Beware, oh beware, how thou refusest so good an offer; for thou art in the same condition with the woman taken captive by the Jews, Deut. 21, either to marry or die; either to match with Christ, or be damned for ever.

Secondly, Consider God's clemency and condescension, in tendering to thee so great a fortune. Kings on earth will not stoop so low, unless necessity force it, as to match their only sons with their subjects, though he and they are of the same make and mould; if they do, it is with the highest families, with such among them as sparkle most with the diamonds of birth, breeding, beauty, riches, and glory. But hear, O heavens, and be astonished, O earth! wonder, O reader, at this low stoop of the infinite God; he is willing, nay, earnest, that his

only Son and heir, the King of kings, should marry with his creature—between whom and him there is an infinite distance and disproportion; nay, not with the noblest house among those creatures; not with angels, those heavenly courtiers, (he is their head, not their husband,) though by matching with them he had matched somewhat more like himself; but with sinful polluted dust and ashes. That our spiritual souls should be joined to our earthly bodies is much, yet here is some proportion—both are limited created beings; but that God should marry with man is infinitely more. It is said of the king of Babylon, that he lifted up the head of Jehoiachin out of prison, and spake kindly to him, and changed his prison garments, and set his throne above the throne of the kings that were with him, 2 Kings 25:27–29. Man was a poor prisoner, bound and fettered with his own corruptions, kept up close by the devil, his jailer, and condemned to suffer the pains of eternal death; but, lo, the philanthropy and kindness of God! He sendeth his only Son to open the prison doors—having first satisfied the law, for the breach of which they were cast in, and removed its curse, which was as a padlock on the prison gate to keep it fast—set the poor captives at liberty, change their nasty prison weeds, and to exalt their nature above the nature of glorious angels, by marrying it to himself. Canst thou find in thy heart, friend, to abuse such matchless grace and favour? Is not that beggar mad that should refuse the real offers of a match from a gracious emperor? Shall majesty thus stoop to misery in vain? I must tell thee, it is infinite abasement in God thus to make suit to thee, but it is the highest preferment thou art capable of—nay, such as it had been blasphemy to have desired it, had not God offered it—to close with him.

I come now to the articles of this marriage, which truly are no more than thou requirest of thy own wife (if thou hast any,) and therefore thou canst not but think them reasonable. I shall propound them to thee in these two questions.

First, Art thou heartily willing to take Jesus Christ for thy Saviour and Sovereign? Canst thou love him with the hottest superlative love

as thy husband? It is one thing to love a man as a friend, and another thing to love him as thy husband. Canst thou give him the keys of thy heart, and keep thy affections as a fountain sealed up from others, and opened only for him, and in subordination to him? Wilt thou honour him with the highest honour as thy Lord, submitting to his Spirit as thy guide, and to his laws as thy rule? Is thy soul so ravished with the beauty of his person, the excellency of his promises, and the equity of his precepts, that thou darest promise, through his strength, to be a loving, faithful, and obedient wife? Have the hot beams of that love, which have been darted forth from this Sun of righteousness, as the rays of the sun united in a glass, turned thee into a flame, that thy heart is now ascending and mounting to heaven where thy beloved is, and thou canst no more live without him, than thy body without thy soul? Art thou willing to be sanctified by his Spirit, that thou mightst be prepared for his bosom and embraces, and to be saved alone by his merits, as the only procuring cause of all thy hopes and happiness? Wilt thou take him for better and for worse, for richer and for poorer; with his cup of affliction, as well as his cup of consolation; with his shameful cross, as well as his glorious crown; choosing rather to suffer with him, than to reign without him; to die for him, than to live from him? Such as marry, thou knowest, must expect trouble in the flesh. Christianity, like the wind Cæcias, doth ever draw clouds and afflictions after it, but thy future glory and pleasure will abundantly recompense thee for thy present pain and ignominy.

Secondly, Wilt thou presently give a bill of divorce to all other lovers, and keep the bed of thy heart wholly for him? Shall the evil of sin never more have a good look from thee; but, as Amnon served Tamar, shall the hatred wherewith thou hatest those filthy strumpets—with whom thou hast had cursed dalliances, and committed spiritual fornication—be greater than the love wherewith thou hast loved them? Canst thou pack away the bondwoman and her son, and these things not at all be grievous in thy sight; that thy whole joy and delight may be in, and all that thou art worth preserved for, the true Isaac? Shall this Sun reign alone in the heavens of thy heart without

any competitor? As when a dictator was created at Rome, there was a supersedeas to all other authority; so if Christ be exalted in thy soul, there must be a cessation of all other rule and power. Christ will not be a king merely in derision, as the Jews made him; nor as the stump of wood was to the frogs in the fable, whom every lust may securely dance about and provoke.

These are the terms upon which this match, so honourable and profitable, is offered to thee. Give up a hearty yea to these two equitable articles, and thou art made for ever; refuse it, and thou art miserable above all apprehensions, and beyond millions of ages, even to all eternity. What sayest thou to it? Shall I put the same question to thee which they put to Rebekah: Wilt thou go with this man? In thy denial there is no less than eternal death. Methinks the thoughts of that fire and brimstone should force thee to fly to this Zoar. In thy unfeigned hearty acceptance there is no less than heaven and eternal life. What wouldst thou not do to continue natural life? What then shouldst thou not do or suffer for eternal life? It may be thou desirest time to consider of it; as Rebekah's mother, thou art willing to the match, but wouldst not have it yet concluded. Augustine bewails it in himself, that when God was drawing him to Christ, his carnal pleasures represented themselves before his eyes, saying, What! wilt thou leave us for ever, and shall we be no more with thee for ever? And then he threw himself down, and weeping, cried out, O Lord, how long, how long shall I say to-morrow? why not to-day, Lord? why not to-day? Why should there not be an end of my sinful life this hour? But believe it, delays are dangerous, especially in works of such weight.

If thou answerest, as Rebekah did, I will go; cheer up, poor soul. Whatever thy course or carriage hath been, thy husband is able and willing to pay all thy scores, were they a million for a mite; and come forth, behold thy beloved in his embroidery and glory; see how his arms are stretched out to embrace thee; his lips are ready to kiss thee; oh what a look of love he giveth thee. Sure I am thou art more in his heart than in thine own. Little dost thou think what rings and

robes, what dainties and delicates, what grace, and mercy, and peace he provided on purpose against the return of thee, a wandering prodigal. Thou needest now no longer run a score with the world for any of its coarse, carnal fare; thy beloved will entertain thee at his own table with curious and costly feasts; thou shalt have bread to eat which the world knows not of. If dangers and evils pursue thee, thou hast thy city of refuge at hand, wherein thou mayest be secure from the fear and fury of men and devils.

It will be life to thee now to think of death; thou mayest lift up thy head with joy when that day of thy redemption draweth nigh. Death will give thee a writ of ease both from sin and sorrow; then thy indentures will expire, and thy soul be at liberty. Thou hast now taken in thy full lading for heaven, and mayest therefore call, like a merchant that hath all his goods on shipboard, to the master of the vessel, to hoist up sail, and be gone towards thy everlasting harbour. Oh how may thy heart revive, with old Jacob's, to see those waggons which are sent to fetch thee to thy dear Jesus, for thou knowest that he is lord of the country, and able to make thee welcome when thou comest thither. Now thou art present in the body, and so absent from the Lord; but then thou shalt ever ever be with the Lord. But if thou refusest so great and so good an offer, choosing slavery to the flesh before this Christian liberty, and resolving, as many wicked ones do, rather to be free for many harlots than to take one wife, rather to love and serve divers lusts and pleasures than to be wedded to Jesus Christ, go on, take thy course, but be confident that thy fleshly life, like the head of Polypus, though pleasant at present, will afterwards cause troublesome sleep and frightful dreams. If thou intendest to launch into the ocean of eternity without this pilot, the blessed Saviour, who alone can steer the vessel of thy soul amidst those dangerous shelves and sands aright, and the ballast of grace, not regarding what passage thou hast, nor at what port thou arrivest in the other world, whether heaven or hell, prepare thyself to take up thine eternal lodging amongst frightful devils, and to bear thy part in the endless yellings and howlings of the damned; and know withal to thy terror that this very tender of grace will one day, like Joab's

sword to Abner, stab thee under the fifth rib, cut thee to the very heart, and, like a mountain of lead, sink thee deep into that ocean of wrath, when thou shalt have time enough to befool thyself for refusing so good an offer, and where thou shalt be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

'I have this day set before thee life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live: that thou mayest love the Lord thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he is thy life, and the length of thy days,' Deut. 30:19, 20.

## CHAPTER VIII

The second exhortation to the serious Christian, shewing how a saint may come to die with courage

I shall now speak in this use of exhortation to the serious Christian.

If thy flesh will fail thee so, fortify thy spirit, that thou mayest give the flesh a cheerful farewell. Thy care must be to die with courage. A good soldier, in all his armour, may be daunted at the sight of that enemy whom he meeteth on a sudden. Mary was troubled at the sight and sayings of that angel which brought the best news that ever the world heard, Luke 1. It is true thou canst never die before thou art ripe for heaven, but thou mayest die, in some sense, before thou art ready, in thy own apprehensions, to leave the earth. Many go to heaven certainly, who go not to heaven comfortably.

It was Tertullian's character of the Christians in his time, that they were *Expeditum morti genus*, A sort of people prepared for death. When a son hath loitered in the day, he may well be afraid to look his father in the face at night; but when he hath laboured faithfully, he may come into his presence without fear.

Though he that is sober at home be more ready to put off his clothes and go to sleep, than he that is drinking and vomiting in a tavern, yet even this man may think of some business which he neglected, in the day-time, that may make him unwilling to lie down. Surely somewhat is the cause that the children of God are so unquiet when night cometh, and so many of them go wrangling to bed.

Christian, I would in a few words direct thee how thou mayest put off thy earthly tabernacle as cheerfully as thy clothes, and lie down in thy grave as comfortably as ever thou didst in a bed of down. It is thy own fault, if thou dost not keep such a good fire all day—I mean

grace so flaming on the hearth of thy heart—that thou mayest increase it at night, and so go warm to bed, even to thy eternal rest.

### The first means

Take heed of blotting thy evidences for heaven. Darkness, we know, is very dreadful; when men, by great or wilful sins, have so blurred the deeds which speak their right to heaven, that they cannot read them, no wonder if, being thus in the dark, they are afraid to leave the earth.

It is reported of good Agathon, that when death approached, he was much troubled; whereupon his friends said unto him, What dost thou fear? He answered, I have endeavoured to keep the commandments of God; but I am a man, and how do I know whether my works please God or no? for other is the judgment of God, and other is the judgment of men. He must needs be troubled to be removed from present pleasures, who knoweth not that he shall go to a better place. Twenty pounds a-year certain is counted better than—and a man will be unwilling to part with it for—forty pounds a-year that is doubtful. It is assurance only of a better life which will carry the soul with comfort through the bitter pangs of death. Hence it was that Job called so frequently, and cried so earnestly, to be laid to bed: 'Oh that I might have my request; that God would grant me the thing that I long for! even that it would please God to destroy me; that he would let loose his hand, and cut me off! then should I yet have comfort. Let him not spare; for I have not concealed the words of the Holy One,' Job 6:8–10. Job had lived with a good conscience, and therefore feared not to die with great comfort. His fidelity to God encouraged him to expect mercy from God. He had not concealed nor shut up God's faithfulness from men, and therefore knew that God would not conceal his loving-kindness from him. But David, on the other hand, when night, in his own thoughts, drew near, was as importunate to sit up longer. God seemed to call him to bed, but he begs hard, 'O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more,' Ps. 39:13.

Now mark the reason of this petition. David, as it is generally conceived, was now persecuted by Absalom. The unnatural son forced his father to fly. He in his suffering reads his own sin, and God's indignation, and so dreads an appearance in the other world in such a condition. He who, when things were clear betwixt God and his soul, could walk in the valley of the shadow of death and fear none ill, could even give death a challenge, now, when things are cloudy and dubious, runs back like a coward. He had lost the sense of God's favour, and therefore could not think of venturing into his presence without much fear. The train of his corruptions threatened to wait on him to the highest court, and he durst not appear before the Lord with such company. He had been declining in his grace under a sad distemper, and, as a weak, consumptionate man, he was afraid to travel so great a journey, as the way whence he should never return. The tenant who wants his rent, loves not to hear of the quarter-day.

Friend, if thou wouldst leave the world cheerfully, live in the world conscientiously; take heed of those fiends which will fright thee in the night of death; choose suffering before sin, and punish thy body to keep thy soul pure. The ermine, some say, will die before she will go into the dirt to defile her beautiful skin; and the mouse of Armenia will rather be taken and slain, than preserve and pollute herself in a filthy hole. As the white is always in the archer's eye, so let thy death be in thine, that it may quicken thee to diligence and exactness in thy life.

Logicians who regard not the premises, infer wild conclusions; so if thou art careless of thy conversation, expect but an uncomfortable dissolution. As when God looked on all his works, and saw that they were good, then followed his Sabbath of rest; so when thou canst reflect upon the several passages of thy life, and see that through Christ they are good, and thou hast not been guilty of enormities, though of infirmities, after this thou wilt joyfully by death enter into thy everlasting Sabbath. Thy evidence will be clear, if thy conscience be kept clean; but the truth is, many, even amongst Christians,

wound their souls by venturing on sin, and then flinch and start back when they come to be searched; besides, they neglect casting up their accounts so long, that they know not whether they are worth anything or nothing, and so may well be unwilling to have their estates ransacked into.

If thou shouldst fall, (I would not sad any saint,) take heed of lying there; but be as speedy as is possible in calling to Christ to raise thee up. If thy conscience be raw with the guilt of any sin, a light affliction (much more death) will make thee kick and fling, and unwilling to bear it. But when thy flesh is sound, (thy spirit healed by the blood of Christ,) death itself will be but a light burden on thy back. How merrily mayest thou, though thou hast not a penny in thine own purse, go the way of all the earth, travel into the other world, when thou art sure of Christ in thy company, who will bear thy charges all the way.

The second means

Secondly, Mortify thy affections more to the world and all its comforts. They who love the world most, leave it worst. Lot's wife lingered in Sodom so much, and was so loath to depart, because she loved it overmuch. When boards lie close one upon another they are easily parted, but when they are glued one to another it will cost some trouble and pains. If thy heart be loose to the world, it will be a small matter to thee to leave it, but if thou art fastened to it in thy affections, it will not be done without much reluctancy and opposition.

The wife who hath been so faithful to her husband as to keep her heart wholly for him, is ready always to open the door to him; when she that entertaineth other lovers, though her husband knock at the door, dares not run presently to open it, but first makes a shuffling and bustling up and down to hide, or get them out of the way. The more thy affections are set on Christ, thy true husband, the more the world is taken out of thee; and so the more easily wilt thou be taken

out of the world. He who hath laid up his heart in heaven will comfortably think of laying down his head in the earth. When the pins of the watch are taken out, which held it together, how easily doth it fall in pieces! When thy affections from these things below are removed, how quickly, how quietly will thy soul and body fall asunder! If the world be as loose to thee as thy cloak, thou canst put it off at pleasure; but if it be as close to thee as thy skin, they shall have somewhat to do who shall persuade thee to part with it. We read of some who were unwilling to die, for they had treasure in the field, Jer. 41:8. Where their treasure was, their hearts were also.

Make it thy work, therefore, by considering the world's vanity and deceitfulness, and by pondering heaven's glory and happiness, to wean thy heart from sublunary things; hereby thou wilt as willingly leave them as ever infant did those breasts which long ago it was weaned from.

### The Third Means

Use thy heart to the frequent thoughts of death. When children are frightened at a dog or a cat, we do not give way to their foolish fears, but bring the brute to them, and get them to touch and handle it, and shew them that it is not such a frightful thing as they imagine; and hereby in time they are so far from being frighted, that they can play with it familiarly. Dost thou dread this king of terrors, death? give not way to this fear, but bring death up to thy spirit, handle it, feel it, there is no such hurt in it as thou imaginest, nothing which should terrify thee; hereby at last thou mayest come to play upon the hole of this asp.

One ground I suppose why Job made no more of dying, was because he was so well acquainted with death. Strangers are startled at many things in a place, which they that are home-born and used to can delight in. 'I have said to corruption, Thou art my father; and to the worms, Thou art my brother and sister,' Job 17:14. Job was as familiar with death, as if it had been his father; and made no more of

dying, than of falling into the arms and embraces of his mother or sister. Moses at first started back at the sight of the serpent; but when he had handled it a little, it was turned into a rod, and nothing frightful to him.

There is a story of an ass, called Cumanus ass, which, jetting up and down in a lion's skin, did for a time much terrify his master, but afterwards, being descried, did much benefit him. Thou art fearful possibly, reader, of this beast, supposing it to be a roaring lion; but come up to it, and thou wilt find it but an ass in the skin of a lion, and such a one as will be no way hurtful, but many ways helpful to thee. What is this bugbear death which thus frights thee? Is it not the paranympus, which presenteth thy faithful soul to thy beloved husband? Is it not a leaving the world, and a going to thy Father? Is it less than a kiss of God's lips? The indulgent parent will take the babe into her arms, and with many kisses lay it in her lap, when it is falling asleep.

The Chaldee paraphrase tell us, Moses died with a kiss of the Lord's mouth, Deut. 34:5. Will it not be the funeral of all thy corruptions and crosses, and the resurrection of all imaginable delights and comforts? Didst thou but know this, friend, more, thou wouldst not be so shy of its company.

The Roman used their youth to gladiatory fights, and bloody spectacles, that acquaintance with them beforehand might make them less troubled in wars with their enemies. Philostrates lived seven years in his tomb before his death, that his bones might be the better known to his grave. Accustom thyself to the thoughts of death, thy change, thy translation to bliss, thy entrance into heaven, and when it comes, his errand being known so well before, he will be welcome.

Mithridates, by accustoming his body to poison, turned it into good nourishment; use thy soul to the thoughts of death, and though it be worse than poison to others, it will be pleasant and profitable to thee.

## CHAPTER IX

The second doctrine, That God is the comfort of a Christian, with the grounds of it: his happiness is in God

I PROCEED now to the second doctrine, from the second part of the text, The saint's comfort: 'But God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.'

That the comfort of a Christian in his saddest condition is this, that God is his portion. The psalmist's condition was very sad; his flesh failed him. Man's spirit often decays with his flesh. The spirits and blood are let out together. His heart fell with his flesh; but what was the strong cordial which kept him from swooning at such a season? Truly this: 'But God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.' Aristotle affirmeth of the tortoise, that it liveth when its heart is taken away. The holy man here liveth when his heart dieth. As the sap in winter retreateth to the root, and there is preserved, so the saint in crosses, in death, retireth to God, the fountain of his life, and so is comforted. David, when his wives were captivated, his wealth plundered, and his very life threatened—for the soldiers talked of stoning him—was doubtless in a very dreadful estate; one would have thought such a heavy burden must needs break his back; but, behold, the joy of the Lord was his strength. 'But David encouraged his heart in the Lord his God,' 1 Sam. 30:6. When the table of earthly comforts, which for a long time at best had been but indifferently spread for him, was quite empty, he fetcheth sweetmeats out of his heavenly closet. But David encouraged his heart in the Lord his God. Methodius reporteth of the plant pyragnus, that it flourisheth in the flames of Olympus. Christians, as the salamander, may live in the greatest fire of affliction at this day; and, as the three children, may sing when the whole world shall be in a flame at the last day. They are by the Spirit of God compared to palm-trees, (Ps. 92:12,) which, though many weights are hanging on the top, and much drought be at the bottom, are neither, say some naturalists, borne down nor

dried up. This nightingale may warble out her pleasant notes with the sharpest thorn at her breast.

The only reason which I shall give of the doctrine is this: because a godly man placeth his happiness in God. It is natural to the creature, in the midst of its sufferings, to draw its comfort and solace from that pipe, whether supposed or real—happiness. All things have a propensity towards that in which they place their felicity. If a stone were laid in the concave of the moon, though air and fire and water are between, yet it would break through all, and be restless till it come to the earth, its centre. A suitable and unchangeable rest is the only satisfaction of the rational creature. All the tossings and agitations of the soul are but so many wings to carry him hither and thither, that he may find out a place where to rest. Let this eagle once find out and fasten on the true carcase, he is contented; as the needle pointing to the north, though before in motion, yet now he is quiet. Therefore the philosopher, though in one place he tells us that delight consisteth in motion, yet in another place tells us, μάλλον ἐν ἡρεμῖα ἢ ἐν κινήσει, that it consisteth rather in rest.

Happiness is nothing but the Sabbath of our thoughts, and the satisfaction of our hearts in the fruition of the chiefest good. According to the excellency of the object which we embrace in our hearts, such is the degree of our happiness; the saint's choice is right, God alone being the soul's centre and rest. Omnes literæ in Jehovah sunt literæ quiescentes, say the Rabbis. Let a sinner have but that which he counteth his treasure, though he be under many troubles he is contented. Give a covetous man wealth, and he will say, as Esau, I have enough. When an ambitious man mounts up to a chair of state, he sits down and is at ease. If a voluptuous person can but bathe himself in the streams of carnal pleasures, he is as a fish in his element. So let a godly man enjoy but his God, in whom he placeth all his joy and delight, in whom is all his happiness and heaven, he is well; he hath all. 'Shew us the Father and it sufficeth;' no more is desired, John 14:8.

No man thinks himself miserable till he hath lost his happiness. A godly man is blessed when afflicted and buffeted, because God is the proper orb in which he doth fix, and he hath his God still, Job 5:17. When a few leaves blow off, his comfort is, he hath the fruit and the tree still. As a man worth millions, he can rejoice though he lose some mites. In the Salentine country there is mention made of a lake brimful; put in never so much, it runneth not over; draw out what you can, it is still full. Such is the condition of a Christian—he hath never too much; and take away what you will, having God, is still full. Augustine out of Varro allegeth two hundred and eighty-eight several opinions about happiness; but those philosophers were vain in their imaginations. I shall clearly prove the strength of man's happiness to flow from another spring.

## CHAPTER X

God must needs be man's happiness, because he is an all-sufficient good

There are some things in God which speak him to be the saint's happiness and chiefest good.

First, Because of his perfection and all-sufficiency. That which makes man happy must have no want, no weakness in it. It must be able both to secure him against all evil, and to furnish him with all good. The injuries of nature must be resisted, and the indigencies of nature must be supplied. Now this Sun of righteousness—as the great luminary of the world when it mounteth above the horizon—doth both clear the air of mists and fogs, and cheer the inhabitants with his light and heat. And according to the degree of our enjoyment of him, such is the degree of our happiness, or freedom from evil and fruition of good. Those that enjoy God perfectly in heaven know no evil; they are above all storms and tempests, and enjoy all good. 'In

his presence is fulness of joy,' Ps. 16:11. They have a perpetual spring, a constant summer, never understanding what an autumn or winter meaneth. The Christian, who enjoyeth God but imperfectly, as all saints on earth, doth but in part enjoy these privileges. His life is á vicissitude of day and night, of light and darkness, of good and evil. Evil cannot hurt him, but it may fright him. He may taste of the chiefest good, but his full meal is reserved till he comes to his Father's house.

1. God is able to free a man from evil. The Greeks call a happy man μακάριος, one that is not subject to death and miseries.

That which is the happiness of man must be able, by its power, to secure him against all perils; but creatures cannot afford this help, therefore cannot be our happiness. He that trusteth to second causes, is like him that, being on the top of a tree, setteth his feet on rotten boughs, which will certainly break under him; or like the passenger, who in windy stormy weather runs to some tottering out-house, which falls upon him. But God is the almighty guard.

The schoolmen tell us the reason why Adam in his estate of innocency felt no cold, though he were naked, was because of his communion with God. God is the saints' shield to protect their bodies from all blows, Gen. 15:1. He is therefore compared in Scripture to such things and persons as shelter men in storms, defend them in dangers. Sometimes he is called a wall of fire, because travellers in a wilderness by this means are secured from wild beasts, Zech. 2:5; those creatures fly from fire. Sometimes to a river of broad waters, because a city, well moated and surrounded with waters, is thereby defended against enemies, Isa. 33:21.

A good sentinel is very helpful to preserve a garrison in safety. God is therefore said to watch and ward: 'I the Lord do keep it, lest any hurt it: I will keep it night and day,' Isa. 27:3. And though others, when on the guard, are apt to nod and sleep, and so to give the enemy an advantage, 'He that keepeth Israel never slumbereth nor sleepeth,'

Ps. 121:4; he is so far from sleeping that he never slumbereth. Some naturalists tell us that lions are insomnes; possibly because their eyelids are too narrow for their eyes, and so they sleep with their eyes partly open. But it is most true of the Lion of the tribe of Judah. As Alexander told his soldiers, he wakes that they might sleep in safety. He is compared to a refuge: Ps. 142:5, 'Thou art my refuge and my portion;' a metaphor from a stronghold or castle, to which soldiers retreat, and in which they are secure, when beaten back by an overpowering enemy. But instead of all, he is called the Lord of hosts, or general of his people, because a faithful commander goeth first into the field, and cometh last out of the field. God looketh danger in the face before his people, and seeth them safe out of the field before he departeth: 'The Lord will go before you, and the God of Israel will be your rereward,' Isa. 52:12.

Travellers tell us that they who are at the top of the Alps can see great showers of rain fall under them, but not one drop of it falls on them. They who have God for their portion are in a high tower, and thereby safe from all troubles and showers. A drift-rain of evil will beat in at the creature's windows, be they never so well pointed; all the garments this world can make up cannot keep them that travel in such weather from being wet to the skin. No creature is able to bear the weight of its fellow-creature, but as reeds, break under, and as thorns, run into the sides that lean on them. The bow drawn beyond its compass breaks in sunder, and the string wound above its strength snaps in pieces. Such are outward helps to all that trust to them in hardships.

But Christians, being anchored on this rock of ages, are secure in the greatest storm. They are like Zion, which cannot be moved. The Church, according to the motto of Venice, *Immota manet*. 'In time of trouble he hides them in his pavilion, and in the secret of his tabernacle he sets them upon a rock,' Ps. 27:5. God's sanctuary is his hidden place, Ezek. 7:22, and his saints are his hidden ones, Ps. 83:3; and there he hides them from whatsoever may hurt them. Therefore he calls his children, when it rains abroad and is stormy, to come

within doors out of the wet: 'Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors upon thee, and hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast,' Isa. 26:20.

The Christian therefore is encouraged against evils, because God is his guard. He knoweth, whilst he hath this buckler, he is shot-free, not to be pierced by any bullet: 'He covereth him with his feathers, and under his wings doth the saint trust,' Ps. 91:4. As the hen secureth her young from the kite and ravenous fowls by clucking them under her wing, and sheltering them there, so God doth undertake to be the protection of his people, and through his strength they can triumph over trials, and defy the greatest dangers. 'At destruction and famine they can laugh,' Job 5:22; and over the greatest crosses, through him, they are more than conquerors, Rom. 8:37.

2. As God is able to free from all evil, so to fill the soul with all good, therefore, is its happiness. That which beatifieth the reasonable creature, must undertake the removal of what is destructive, and the restoring to him whatsoever may be perfective. Weak nature must be supported, and empty nature must be supplied. Now the whole creation cannot be man's happiness, because it is unable both to defend him from evil, and to delight him with good. The comfort which ariseth from creatures is like the juice of some plums, which doth fill with wind, but yields no nourishment. He that sits at the world's table, when it is most largely spread, and fairly furnished, and feedeth most heartily on its fare, is as one that dreameth he eats, and when he awakes, lo, he is hungry. The best noise of earthly musicians can make but an empty sound, which may a little please the senses, but not in the least satisfy the soul. The world hath but small choice, and therefore makes us but small cheer; for as sick and squeasy stomachs, we are presently cloyed even with that which we called so earnestly for. Hence it was that those who esteemed their happiness to consist in pleasing their brutish part, did so vehemently desire new carnal delights. Nero had his officer that was styled, *Arbiter Neronianæ libidinis*, an inventor of new pleasures. Suetonius

observeth the same of Tiberius, and Cicero of Xerxes; for these men, like children, were quickly weary of that for which they were but now so unquiet. And the reason is given us, by the moralist, because error is infinite.<sup>2</sup>

The thirst of nature may be satisfied, but the thirst of a disease, as the dropsy, cannot. The happiness of the soul consisteth in the enjoyment of good commensurate to its desires, which no creature is, nay, not all the creatures.

But God is the happiness of the creature, because he can satisfy it. The Hebrews call a blessed man Ashrei, in the abstract, and in the plural number, blessednesses, Ps. 32:1. because no man can be blessed for one or another good, unless he abound in all good.

The soul of man is a vessel too capacious to be filled up with a few drops of water, but this ocean can do it; whatsoever is requisite, either to promote decayed, or to perfect deficient nature, is in God. 'The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want,' Ps. 23:1. Where is all wealth, there can be no want. 'My God shall supply all your need,' Phil. 4:19. One God answereth all necessities, because one God includeth all excellencies. He is bonum comprehensivum; in him are all the treasures of heaven and earth, and infinitely more. 'The God of all comforts' is his name, 2 Cor. 1:3. As all light is in the sun, so all comfort, all good, is in God. Theodoret calls Moses an ocean of divinity; some have called Rome the epitome of the world. It is true of God, he is an ocean of all delights and blessings, without either bank or bottom, and the epitome of inconceivably more, and incomparably better, than all this world's felicities.

'The God of peace fill you with all joy,' Rom. 15:13. Observe, here is joy which is the cream of our desires, and the overflowing of our delights; it is the sweet tranquillity of our minds, the quiet repose of our hearts; and as the sun to the flowers, it enlargeth and cheereth our affections. Joy is the mark which all would hit; and is by the philosopher well observed to be the dilation of the heart for its

embracing of, closing with, and union to, its most beloved object. 2. Here is all joy; variety of what is excellent addeth much to its lustre and beauty. The Christian sits at a banquet made up of all sorts of rare and curious wines, and all manner of dainties and delicates; he may walk in this garden, and delight himself with diversity of pleasant fruits and flowers. All joy. One kind of delight, like Mary's box of ointment, being opened, filleth the whole house with its savour; what then will all sorts of precious perfumes, and fragrant ointments do? 3. Here is filling them with all joy; plenty, joined with variety of that which is so exceedingly pleasant, must needs enhance its price. There is not a crevice in the heart of a Christian into which this light doth not come; it is able to fill him, were he a far larger vessel than he is, (as they filled the pots at the feast of Cana,) up to the brim with this water, or rather with this wine. The joy arising from the creature is an empty joy, like the musician in Plutarch, who, having pleased Dionysius with a little vanishing music, was recompensed with a deceived hope of a great reward; but this is a satiating satisfying joy: 'Fill you with all joy.' But, 4. On what root doth such a variety and plenty of lovely luscious fruit grow? Truly this light of joy doth not spring out of the earth; its fountain is in heaven: 'The God of peace fill you with all joy.' The vessel of the creature runs dregs; it can never yield such choice delights: this pure river of water of life proceedeth only out of the throne of God, Rev. 22.

## CHAPTER XI

God the happiness of man, because of his suitableness to the soul

This delight and joy in God ariseth from his suitableness to the nature of the heaven-born saints, as I shall discover in the next heads, and their propriety in him.

Secondly, God is a proportionable good. That which makes a man happy, must be suitable to his spiritual soul. All satisfaction ariseth

from some likeness between the faculty or temper which predominateth, and the object. The cause of pleasure in our meats is the suitableness of the fallen humour in our taste to that in our food. Therefore silver doth not satisfy one that is sick, nor raiment one that suffereth hunger, because these are not answerable to those particular necessities of nature. The prince of philosophers observeth truly, that those things only content the several creatures which are οἰκεια τῇ φύσει, accommodated to their several natures. Birds, and beasts, and fish, do all live upon and delight in that food which is proportionable to their distinct beings. The ox feedeth on grass, the lion on flesh, the goat on boughs; some live on the dew, some on fruit, some on weeds; some creatures live in the air, others sport themselves in the waters; the mole and worm are for the earth; the salamander chooseth rather the fire; nay, in the same plant, the bee feedeth on the flower, the bird on the seed, the sheep on the blade, and the swine on the root; and what is the reason of all this, but because nature must have its rest and delight from that only which is suitable to its own appetite and desire. Hence it is that though God be so perfect a good, yet he is not the happiness of evil men or evil angels, for he is not suitable to their vitiated, depraved natures. The carnal mind, which beareth sway in unregenerate men, is enmity against God, and devils are as contrary to God's nature as fire is to water. Hence it is that spiritual men place and enjoy happiness in the Father of spirits, because he is the savoury meat which their souls love. Though the sinner can live upon dregs, as the swine on dung, yet the saint must have refined spirits, and nothing less than angels' food and delights.

It is an unquestionable truth, that nothing can give true comfort to man but that which hath a relation and beareth a proportion to his highest and noblest part, his immortal soul; for his sensitive faculties were created in him, to be subordinate and serviceable to their master, reason; therefore he is excelled in them by his inferiors, as the eagle in seeing, and the hound in scenting; nature aiming at some more sublime and excellent design, the perfection of the rational part in those lower particulars was less exact; therefore the blessed God

alone being a suitable good to the heavenly spiritual soul of man, can only satisfy it. Philosophers tell us the reason of the iron's cleaving to, and resting in the loadstone is, because the pores of both bodies are alike; so there are effluxes and emanations that slide through them and unite them together. One cause of the saint's love to, and delight in God, is his likeness to God. Creatures are earthly, the soul is heavenly; they are corporeal, the soul is spiritual; therefore, as when friends are contrary in disposition, the soul cannot take up its rest and happiness in their fruition; but God is suitable, and therefore satisfying: 'I am God all-sufficient,' Gen. 17:1. Some derive the word Shaddai, almighty, all-sufficient, from shad, a dug; for as the breast is suitable to the babe, nothing else will quiet it, so is God to his children.

A man that is hungry finds his stomach still craving. Something he wants, without which he cannot be well. Give him music, company, pictures, houses, honours, yet there follows no satisfaction, (these are not suitable to his appetite,) still his stomach craves; but set before this man some wholesome food, and let him eat, and his craving is over. 'They did eat, and were filled,' Neh. 9:25. So it is with man's soul as with his body; the soul is full of cravings and longings, spending itself in sallies out after its proper food. Give it the credit, and profits, and pleasures of the world, and they cannot abate its desire; it craves still, (for these do not answer the soul's nature, and therefore cannot answer its necessity;) but once set God before it, and it feeding on him, it is satisfied; its very inordinate, dogged appetite after the world is now cured. He, tasting this manna, tramples on the onions of Egypt: 'He that drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but he that drinketh of the water which I shall give him shall never thirst,' John 4.

## CHAPTER XII

God the saint's happiness, because of his eternity, and the saint's propriety in him

God is a permanent good. That which makes a man happy must be immortal, like himself. As man is rational, so he is a provident creature, desirous to lay up for hereafter; and this forecast reacheth beyond the fool's in the Gospel for many years, even for millions of ages, for ever, by laying hold on eternal life. He naturally desires an immortality of being, (whence that inclination in creatures, say philosophers, of propagating their kind,) and therefore an eternity of blessedness. The soul can enjoy no perfection of happiness if it be not commensurate to its own duration; for the greater our joy is in the fruition of any good, the greater our grief in its omission. Eternity is one of the fairest flowers in the glorified saint's garland of honour. It is an eternal weight of glory, 2 Cor. 4:17. Were the triumphant spirits ever to put off their crown of life, the very thought thereof would be death, and, like leaven, would sour the whole lump of their comforts. The perpetuity of their state adds infinitely to their pleasure: 'We shall ever be with the Lord,' 1 Thes. 4:17. Here they have many a sweet bait, but there God will be their standing dish, never off the heavenly table.

The creature cannot make man happy, because, as it is not able to fill him, so it is not fast to him; like the moon in the increase, it may shine a little the former part of the night, but is down before morning. Man is not sure to hold them whilst he liveth. How often is the candle of outward comforts blown out by a sudden blast of providence! Many, as Naomi, go out full, but come home empty; some disaster or other, as a thief, meets them by the way, and robs them of their deified treasure. The vessel in which all of some men's wealth is embarked, while it spreadeth fair with its proud sails, and danceth along upon the surging waters, when the factor in it is pleasing himself with the kind salutes he shall receive from his merchant for making so profitable a voyage, is in an instant swallowed up of unseen quicksands, and delivereth its freight at another port, and to an unknown master. Those whose morning hath been sunshiny and clear, have met with such showers before night as have washed away their wealth. However, if these comforts continue all day, at the night of death (as false lovers serve men in extremity)

they leave us the knife of death, which stabs the sinner to the heart, lets out the blood and spirits of all his joys and happiness. But God is the true happiness of the soul, because he is an eternal good. As this sun hath no mists, so it never sets, so that the rest of the soul in God is an eternal Sabbath; like the New Jerusalem, it knoweth no night. Outward mercies, in which most place their felicity, are like land-floods, which swell high, and make a great noise, but are quickly in again, when the blessed God, like the spring-head, runneth over, and runneth ever.

Fourthly, Because of the saints' propriety in this good. Though God be never so perfect, suitable, sure a good, yet it is little comfort to them that have no interest in him. Another man's health will not make me happy when sick. What happiness hath a beggar in the shady walks, pleasant garden, stately buildings, curious rooms, costly furniture, and precious jewels of an earl, when they are none of his? A crown and sceptre may be as suitable to the nature of a subject as a sovereign, yet the comfort of them extends not to the former, for want of this propriety in them. The leaving out one word in a will may mar the estate and disappoint all a man's hopes; the want of this one word, my (God,) is the wicked man's loss of heaven, and the dagger which will pierce his heart in hell to all eternity. The degree of satisfaction in any good is according to the degree of our union to it, (hence our delight is greater in food than in clothes, and the saint's joy is greater in God in the other world than in this, because the union is nearer;) but where there is no propriety there is no union, therefore no complacency. Now this all-sufficient, suitable, and eternal God is the saint's peculiar portion, and therefore causeth infinite satisfaction: 'God is my portion for ever. God, even our God, shall bless us,' Ps. 67:6. The pronoun my is as much worth to the soul as the boundless portion. All our comfort is locked up in that private cabinet. Wine in the glass doth not cheer the heart, but taken down into the body. The propriety of the psalmist's in God was the mouth whereby he fed on those dainties which did so exceedingly delight him. No love potion was ever so effectual as this pronoun. When God saith to the soul, as Ahab to Benhadad, 'Behold, I am thine, and all

that I have,' who can tell how the heart leaps with joy in, and expires almost in desires after him upon such news! Others, like strangers, may behold his honour and excellencies, but this saint only, like the wife, enjoyeth him. Luther saith, Much religion lieth in pronouns. All our consolation, indeed, consisteth in this pronoun. It is the cup which holdeth all our cordial waters. I will undertake, as bad as the devil is, he shall give the whole world, were it in his power, more freely than ever he offered it to Christ for his worship, for leave from God to pronounce those two words, MY GOD. All the joys of the believer are hung upon this one string; break that asunder, and all is lost. I have sometimes thought how David rolls it as a lump of sugar under his tongue, as one loath to lose its sweetness too soon: 'I love thee, O Lord my strength. The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, my buckler, the horn of my salvation, and my high tower,' Ps. 18:1, 2. This pronoun is the door at which the King of saints entereth into our hearts, with his whole train of delights and comforts.

## CHAPTER XIII

The first use, The difference betwixt a sinner and a saint in distress

This doctrine may be useful by way of inference, and by way of trial and counsel, and by way of comfort.

First, If the comfort of a Christian in his saddest estate be this, namely, that God is his portion, it informeth us of the difference betwixt a sinner and a saint, both in their conditions when trouble comes, and in their portions.

1. In their conditions when in affliction.

The saint, in the sharpest winter, sits at a good fire. When abused by strangers he can complain to, and comfort himself in, his Father. Though stars vanish out of sight, he can rejoice in the sun. Like the

prudent dame, whithersoever he travelleth, knowing how liable he is to fainting fits, he carrieth his bottle of strong waters along with him: 'When thou passest through the fire, I will be with thee,' Isa. 43. But the sinner, when a storm comes upon his head, hath no cover. When a qualm comes over his heart, he hath no cordial, for he hath no God: Eph. 2:12, 'Without God, without hope, strangers to the covenant of promise.' A godless man is hopeless. If he be robbed of his estate, and have little in hand, his case is dreadful, for he hath less in hope. The promises are the clefts of the rock whither true doves fly, and places of shelter where they are safe from ravenous fowls; but he is a stranger to these. When the floods comes he hath no ark, but must sink like lead in the midst of the mighty waters.

The godly man, in the lowest ebb of creatures, may have a high tide of comforts, because he hath ever the God of all consolations. As Jezebel's idolatrous priests, so in the greatest outward famine God entertaineth his people at his own table, and surely that is neither mean nor sparing. As their afflictions abound, their consolations by Christ superabound, 2 Cor. 1:5. The world layeth on crosses, and Christ layeth in comforts. Men make grievous sores, and God provides precious salves. 'The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him,' Lam. 3:24. If you mind the season, you may a little admire at the church's solace. The whole book is but a pathological description of her tragical condition, and is generally concluded to be written by Jeremiah in the time of the Babylonish captivity, when her land was wasted, her people enslaved, her sabbaths ceased, and her temple profaned; yet this bird of paradise sings in a cage, and in this hard winter, 'The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him.'

The godly man may be robbed of his possessions, but he is well so long as he hath his happiness, his portion. Lazarus was happy when (sine domo, because he was not sine Domino) without goods, because he was not without God. As he in Plutarch said of the Scythians, Though they had neither wine nor music, yet they had the gods. The prophet, when the ponds were dried up, fetched his water

from the fountain: Hab. 3:17, 18, 'Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet will I rejoice in the Lord, and I will joy in the God of my salvation.' It is considerable that he expresseth not only things for conveniency, as the vine and fig-tree, but things for necessity, as the meat of the field, and flocks of the stall, and supposeth the total loss of both; yet, in the want and absence of such comforts of life, he supports himself with God, the life of all his comforts. But the ungodly is not so. When afflictions come, they hit him upon the bare, for he is without armour. He is as a naked man in the midst of venomous serpents and stinging scorpions. When troubles come like so many lions, they tear the silly lamb in pieces, having none to protect him. 'I am greatly distressed,' saith Saul; and well he might, 'for the Philistines are upon me, and God is departed from me,' 1 Sam. 28:15. Alas! poor soul, had the Philistines been his burden, and God strengthened his back, all had been well; he might have gone lightly under it. But when enemies approached, and God departed, he must needs be greatly distressed. The creature may well be full of frights and fears that stands in the open fields where bullets fly thick and fast, without any shelter or defence. David's foes had proved their conclusion to the full had their medium been true: 'Persecute and take him; for God hath forsaken him,' Ps. 71:11. If God leave a man, dangers and devils may quickly find him. No wonder that Micah cried out so mournfully, 'Ye have taken away my gods, and do you ask me what I ail?' at the loss of his false gods; much more will the loss of the true God make men mournful. As it was said of Coniah, 'Write this man childless,' Jer. 22:30, it may be said of every godless man, Write this man comfortless, helpless, hopeless, and that for ever.

Vast is the difference betwixt the case of the good and bad in distress: the former, as clothes dyed in grain, may keep his colour in all weathers; the latter, like quicksilver, may well be ever in motion, and, like a leaf, tremble at the smallest wind. Naturalists observe this difference between eagles and other birds [; when they] are in want

and distress, they make a pitiful noise; but the eagle, when in straits, hath no such mournful note, but mounteth aloft, and refresheth herself with the warm beams of the sun. Saints, like true eagles, when they are in necessity, mount up to God upon the wings of faith and prayer, and delight themselves with the golden rays and gracious influences of his favour; but the sinner, if bereft of outward comforts, dolefully complains. The snail, take him out of his shell, and he dieth presently. The godless person is like the ferret, which hath its name in Hebrew from squeaking and crying, because he squeaketh sadly if taken from his prey. When the godly man, (as Paulinus Molanus, when his city was plundered by the barbarians,) though he be robbed of his earthly riches, hath a treasure in heaven, and may say, Domine, ne excrucier ob aurum et argentum; tu enim mihi es omnia, Lord, why should I be disquieted for my silver and gold? for thou to me art all things. Having nothing, yet he possesseth all things, 2 Cor. 6:10.

## CHAPTER XIV

The difference betwixt the portions of gracious and graceless persons in this world

2. It informeth us of the difference in their portions. The wicked man hath a portion of goods: 'Father, give me the portion of goods which belongeth to me,' Luke 15:12. But the godly man only hath the good portion. I shall instance in three particulars, wherein the portion in this world of a sinner differeth from the saints.

First, Their portion is poor. It consisteth in toys and trifles, like the estate of mean women in the city, who make a great noise in crying their ware, which is only a few points, or pins, or matches. But the portion of a saint lieth, though he do not proclaim it about the streets, as the rich merchant's, in staple commodities and jewels. The worldling's portion at best is but a little airy honour, or empty pleasure, or beggarly treasure. But the Christian's is the beautiful

image of God, the incomparable covenant of grace, the exceeding rich and precious promises of the gospel, the inestimable Saviour, and the infinitely blessed God. The sinner's portion is nothing: 'Ye have rejoiced in a thing of nought,' Amos 6:13; a fashion, a fancy, 1 Cor. 7:30; Acts 25:23. But the saint's portion is all things: 'All things are yours; and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's,' 1 Cor. 3:22, 23. As Abraham gave gifts to the sons of his concubines, and sent them away, but he gave all he had to Isaac, so God giveth common gifts of riches, or friends, or credit, to wicked men, which is all they crave, and sendeth them away, and they are well contented; but he gives grace, glory, his Spirit, his Son, himself, all he hath, to his Isaacs, to the children of the promise, Gen. 25:5, 6. He giveth earth into the hands of the wicked, Job 9:24; all their portion lieth in dust, rubbish, and lumber; all they are worth is a few ears of corn, which they glean here and there in the field of this world. But he giveth heaven into the hearts of the godly; their portion consisteth in gold, and silver, and diamonds, the peculiar treasure of kings, in the love of God, the blood of Christ, and the pleasures at his right hand for evermore. Others, like servants, have a little meat, and drink, and wages; but saints, like sons, they are a congregation of the first-born, and have the inheritance. Oh the vast difference betwixt the portion of the prodigal and the pious! The former hath something given him by God, as Peninnah had by Elkanah, though at last it will appear to be little better than nothing, when he gives the latter, as Elkanah did Hannah, a goodly, a worthy portion, because he loves them, 1 Sam. 1:4, 5.

Secondly, Their portion is piercing. As it is compared to broken cisterns for its vanity, so to thorns for its vexation, Jer. 2:13; Mat. 13:22. A sinner layeth the heavy lumber of his earthly portion on his heart, and that must needs oppress it with care, and fear, and many sorrows; whereas the saint's portion, the fine linen of his Saviour's righteousness, lying next his flesh, is soft and pleasing. 'The abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep,' Eccles. 5:12. His portion hinders his peace; his riches set him upon a rack; his cruelty in getting it, his care to increase it, and the secret curse of God

accompanying it, do, like the importunate widow, allow him no rest day or night; when the godly man's portion makes his bed easy, lays his pillow soft, and covers him warm: 'I will lay me down in peace and sleep, for thou, Lord, makest me to dwell in safety.' Nay, such an excellent sleeping pill is this portion, that, by the virtue of it, David, when he was pursued by his unnatural son, and was in constant danger of death, when he had the earth for his bed, the trees for his curtains, the stars for his candles, and the heavens for his canopy, could sleep as sweetly, as soundly as ever he did on his bed of down in his royal palace at Jerusalem. 'Thou, O Lord, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head,' Ps. 3:3. 'I laid me down and slept; I awaked, for the Lord sustained me,' Ps. 4:8.

The sinner's portion is termed wind, Hosea 8:7. If wind get into the bowels of the earth, it causeth concussions and earthquakes. His riches, and honours, and friends lie near him, are within him, and thereby cause much anxiety and disquietness of spirit. His portion, like windy fruit, fills his belly with pains. It is smoke in his eyes, gravel in his teeth, wind in his stomach, and gripes in his bowels. The saint's part is his joy and delight: 'Then shall I go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy,' Ps. 43:4. It is music to his ears, beauty to his eyes, sweet odours to his scent, honey to his taste, and melody to his heart: 'In the presence of his portion is fulness of joy, and at his right hand are pleasures for evermore,' Ps. 16:11. He sits at an inward heart-cheering feast in the greatest outward famine, when the worldling in the midst of his gaudy show of wealth is but a book fairly gilt without, consisting of nothing but tragedies within. His portion is too narrow a garment than that he can wrap himself in it, and too short a bed than that he can stretch himself on it.

The vanity of the sinner's portion makes it full of vexation to him; because it cannot fill him, therefore it frets him. 'In the midst of his sufficiency he is in straits,' Job 20:22. Though his table be never so well spread, he hath not a heart to use it, but pineth himself with fear of poverty, and runneth hither and thither, up and down like a beggar, to this and that door of the creature for some poor scraps and

small dole. He may possess many pounds, and not enjoy one penny, Eccles. 6:2.

But the portion of the saint affords him a comfortable subsistence. Though the whole be not paid him till he come to full age, yet the interest of it, which is allowed him in his minority, affordeth him such an honourable maintenance that he needs not borrow of his servants, nor be beholden to his beggarly neighbours. He hath enough constantly about him to live upon, and therefore may spare his frequent walk to the creature's shop for a supply of his wants.

Thirdly, Their portion is perishing. This fire of thorns at which carnal men warm their hands—for it cannot reach the heart—after a small blaze and little blustering noise, goeth out. Carnal comforts, like comets, appear for a time, and then vanish; when the portion of a saint, like a true star, is fixed and firm. A worldling's wealth lieth in earth, and therefore, as wares laid in low, damp cellars, corrupts and moulders; but the godly man's treasure is in heaven, and, as commodities laid up in high rooms, continueth sound and safe. Earthly portions are often like guests which stay for a night and away; but the saints' portion is an inhabitant that abides in the house with him for ever.

It is said of Gregory the Great, that he trembled every time he read or thought of that speech of Abraham to Dives, 'Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime hadst thy good things,' Luke 16:25. To have his all in time, and nothing when he entered upon his eternity; to live like a prodigal one day, and be a beggar for ever: surely it was a sad saying. The flower sheds whilst the stalk remains; the sinner continues when his portion vanishes. The sinner's portion, like his servant, when he dieth, will seek a new master. 'Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: and then whose shall these things be?' Luke 12:20. Whose? possibly the poor's, whom he had wronged and robbed to enrich himself. It may be his child's, who will scatter it as prodigally as he raked it together penuriously. But whosoever it was, it could be none of his, and then, when parted from his portion,

what a poor fool was he indeed! not worth a farthing. But the saint's wealth will accompany him into the other world. The truth is, that is the place where he receiveth his portion: 'Blessed are they that die in the Lord: they rest from their labours; and their works follow them,' Rev. 14:13.

When men go a great journey, as beyond the seas, they carry not their tables, or bedsteads, or any such heavy luggage and lumber along with them, but their silver, and gold, and jewels. When the sinner goeth the way of all the earth, he leaves his portion behind him, because it consists wholly in lumber; but the saint's portion consisting wholly in things of value—in wisdom, which is better than silver, and grace, which is more worth than pure gold, and in God, who is more precious than rubies, and all that can be desired is not to be compared to him—he carrieth all along with him.

It is said of Dathan and his companions, that the earth swallowed them up, and their houses, and all that appertained to them; so when the earth shall at death swallow up his person, it will also, as to his use, swallow up his portion, Num. 16:33.

This whole world must pass away, and what then will become of the sinner's portion? Surely he may cry out, as they of Moab, 'Woe to me! I am undone,' Num. 21:29. But even at that day the saint may sing and be joyful at heart; for till then he shall not know the full value of his inheritance.

It is as sad a speech as most in Scripture, 'whose portion is in this life,' Ps. 17:14. All their estate lieth, as the Reubenites', on this side Canaan.

## CHAPTER XV

The difference betwixt the sinner's and saint's portion in the other world

But there is a further difference betwixt the portion of a sinner and saint; and still the farther we go, the worse it is for the one, and the better for the other; and that is in the other world.

The sinner's portion here, as poor as it is, is a comparative heaven; but there a real hell. Their portion is cursed on earth, but what is it then in hell? Job 24:18. 'Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this is the portion of their cup,' Ps. 11:6. The words are an allusion to the Jewish custom at meals, wherein every one had his allotted portion of drink, his peculiar cup, Gen. 43:34. Suitable to which the godly man can tell you what nectar and nepenthe he shall meet with, when he sits down at that banquet from which he shall never rise up. 'The Lord is the portion of my cup: thou maintainest my lot,' Ps. 16:5.

But look a little into the sinner's cup, and see what a bitter potion is prepared for him. I think we shall scarce find a drop in it, but is infinitely worse than poison. Reader, take heed thou never come to taste it. It is indeed a mixture of such ingredients as may make the stoutest heart alive to tremble and faint away if it come but within the scent or sight of it. Snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest. The Lord poured on the Egyptians such a 'grievous rain, as had not been in Egypt since the foundation thereof,' Exod. 9:18; but this potion of the sinner is far more bitter than that plague. Pliny tells us, that amongst the Romans, when M. Acilius and C. Porcius were consuls, it rained blood; but what is that to fire and brimstone? Observe, first, The extremity of pain which will be caused by this potion: 'Upon the wicked he shall rain fire and brimstone.' Fire is dreadful to our flesh, though it be but applied outwardly. What miserable torment did Charles the Second, king of Navarre, endure, when he was burnt to death in a flaming sheet steeped in aqua vitæ! but much greater torment will it cause when taken inward. Fire in the belly, in the bowels, will pain the creature to purpose. The inward parts are more tender, and so more liable to torture. But this drink, like poison, will diffuse itself also into all the parts, that none shall be free from pain. It was an unknown punishment which the drunken

Turk underwent, when, by the command of the Basha, he had a cup of boiling lead poured down his throat: who can think what he felt? But sure I am, as bad as it was, it was but a flea-bite to this cup of fire which the Lord hath prepared for the sinner, fire and brimstone. Fire is terrible of itself, but brimstone makes it to burn with much greater violence; besides, brimstone added to the cup of fire will make it of a most stinking savour. The sinner now burneth in lust, but then in a flaming fire; now he drinketh his pleasant juleps, but then his loathsome potion. Fire is the most furious of all elements: nothing in this life is more dreadful to nature; but our fires are but like painted ones to true, in comparison of this rain of fire in hell. Nebuchadnezzar's furnace, though heated seven times more than ordinary, was cool to this fire. Oh who can fry in such a flame as the breath of an infinite God doth kindle! Fire and brimstone. Three drops of brimstone, saith one, lighting on any part of our bodies, will make us cry and roar out for pain. What then will befall the sinner, when he shall both ever drink and ever live in this lake of fire and brimstone; when he shall drink this cup of pure wrath, of poisonous dregs, of fire and brimstone, though there be eternity to the bottom! 'Who can dwell in everlasting burnings?' Isa. 33:14.

Observe, secondly, The certainty of the punishment. 'Upon the wicked he shall rain a horrible tempest.' Some read it a whirlwind, a horrible blasting whirlwind, which carrieth all before it; but it is properly, saith Ainsworth, a hideous burning tempest, named by the Greeks *εὐρυκλύδων*, Acts 27:14. It is an allusion to the boisterous wind turbo, which casteth down and overthroweth all that is near it; which, as it is hot and fiery, is named prester, and burneth and layeth along whatsoever it toucheth and encountereth. The sinner thinketh that he is sure, but this horrible tempest will overturn him. His squeasy stomach, used to rich wines, nauseates this loathsome nasty water. When God puts this cup into his hand, oh how his heart will rise against it! but he shall be forced to drink off this cup of fire and boiling brimstone, whether he will or no.

Observe, thirdly, The suddenness of this plague and potion: 'Upon the wicked he shall rain snares.' When they are asleep and little dream of it, then this horrible tempest stealeth them away in the night, Job 27:20. What a doleful screech and dreadful cry will this cause, (as amongst the Egyptians at midnight, Exod. 12:30.) Snares take men at unawares. The sinner's woe shall come without warning. 'As the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as birds that are caught in the snare; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it cometh suddenly upon them,' Eccles. 9:12. The fish looks for a good bait when it is caught by the hook; the bird expects meat in the snare in which it is taken and murdered. When Abner expected a kiss, a kind salute, behold, then he meets with a sword which kills him. When Belshazzar was carousing in his cups, and his head full of wine, then the cup of trembling is given him by the handwriting on the wall. When the sinner, like the dolphin, is leaping merrily, then he is nearest his endless misery. 'Upon the wicked he shall rain snares.' When it rains he expects silver showers to refresh him, but lo! gins and snares to entrap him. The wicked man's cloud drops not fatness, but fury and fire.

Now, let us cast up the account, and see what the worldling's portion amounts to, and how much he will be worth in the other world. The liquor in his cup is most painful and loathsome, fire and brimstone. All his estate lieth in the valley of the shadow of death. Scalding lead were a wonderful favour, if he might drink that instead of boiling brimstone. No heart can conceive what a terrible potion that is, which a God boundless in wisdom, power, and anger, doth prepare. Yet though it be dreadful, if it were doubtful, the sinner's grief would not be so great; but as the liquor is most loathsome, so the cup is most certain. God will pour this dreadful drench down his throat. He cannot abide it, neither can he avoid it. Infinite power will hold his person, whilst infinite anger gives him this potion. And it is not the least aggravation of his sorrows that they shall come on a sudden. This rain of fire and brimstone, which will cause such matchless mourning, will come, as on Sodom, when it is least expected, after a sunshiny morning.

But there is one thing more in the cup, which, beyond all the former, makes it infinitely bitter, and that is this, it is bottomless, Luke 8:31. The sinner's fire is eternal, and the smoke of his brimstone ascendeth for ever and ever, Jude 7; Rev. 14:11. If a purging potion, which is soon down, and in some few hours out of his body, go so much against the hair with him, what wry mouths and angry faces will he make when he shall come to drink this bottomless cup of fire and brimstone! His cup is like the ocean, which can never be fathomed. This rain may well be called wrath to come, for it will be ever to come, and never overcome. His darkest night here may have a morning; but there his portion will be blackness of darkness for ever. There will be no end of his misery, no exit to his tragedy. He will be fettered in those chains of everlasting darkness, and feel the terrors of an eternal death.

But the portion of a saint is, like the wine which Christ provided for the wedding, best at last; he shall never know its full worth till he appears in the other world, and then he shall find, that as money answereth all things, so his portion will protect him from all misery, and fill him with all felicities, and answer all the desires and necessities of his capacious and immortal soul.

The cup which he shall drink of is filled out of the rivers of God's own pleasures; and how sweet that wine is, none can tell but they who have tasted it. The thought of it hath recovered those who have been dying, and recalled them to life; what then will a draught of it do? All the men in the world cannot describe the rich viands and various dainties which God hath for his own provided diet: nay, the most skilful cherubim can never count nor cast up the total of a saint's personal estate. Till angels can acquaint us with the vast millions that the boundless God is worth, they cannot tell us the utmost of a saint's portion.

It is said of Shusa, in Persia, that it was so rich that, saith Cassiodorus, the stones were joined together with gold, and in it Alexander found seventy thousand talents of gold. This city if you

can take, saith Aristagoras to his soldiers, you may vie with Jove himself for riches. But what a beggarly place is this to the new Jerusalem, where pure gold is the pavement trampled under the citizens' feet, and the walls all of precious pearls; who entereth that city may vie with thousands of such monarchs as this world can make, and with all those heathenish gods for riches. The infinite God, *quantus quantus est*, as boundless a good as he is, to whom heaven and earth is less than nothing, is their portion for ever. But of this more in some of the following chapters.

## CHAPTER XVI

A use of trial, whether God be our portion or no, with some marks

The doctrine may be useful by way of trial. If the comfort of a Christian in his saddest condition be, that God is his portion, then, reader, examine thyself whether God be thy portion or no. I must tell thee, the essence and heart of religion consisteth in the choice of thy portion; nay, thy happiness dependeth wholly upon thy taking of the blessed God for thine utmost end and chiefest good; therefore if thou mistakest here, thou art lost for ever.

I shall try thee very briefly by the touchstone which Christ hath prepared: 'Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also,' Mat. 6:21. Now, friend, where is thy heart? is it in earth? is it a diamond set in lead, or a sparkling star fixed in heaven? Are thy greatest affections, like Saul's person, among the stuff and rubbish of this world? or do they, like Moses, go up into the mount and converse with God? Do they, with the worms, crawl here below? or, like the eagle, soar aloft, and dwell above? A man that hath his portion on earth, like the earth, moveth downward, though he may be thrown upward by violence, as a stone, by some sudden conviction, or the like; yet that impressed virtue is soon worn out, and he falleth to the earth again. But he who hath his portion in heaven, like fire, tendeth upward ordinarily, though, through the violence of temptation, he

may, as fire by the wind, be forced downward; yet, that removed, he ascendeth again.

It may be, when thine enemy death beats thee out of the field of life, thou wilt be glad of a God, to which thou mayest retire, as a city of refuge, to shelter thee from the murdering piece of the law's curse; but what thoughts hast thou of him now, whilst thou hast the world at will? Dost thou count the fruition of him thy chiefest felicity? Is one God infinitely more weighty in the scales of thy judgment than millions of worlds? Dost thou say, in thy prevailing settled judgment, of them that have their garners full and their flocks fruitful, 'Blessed is the people that is in such a case; or yea, rather happy is the people whose God is the Lord,' Ps. 144:13–15.

Every man esteemeth his portion at a high price. Naboth valueth his earthly inheritance above his life, and would rather die than part with it at any rate. 'God forbid that I should sell the inheritance of my fathers,' saith he. Oh the worth of the blessed God, in the esteem of him that hath him for his portion! His house, land, wife, child, liberty, life, are hated by him, and nothing to him in comparison of his portions; he would not exchange his hopes of it and title to it for the dominion and sovereignty of the whole world. If the devil, as to Christ, should set him on the pinnacle of the temple, and shew all the honours, and pleasures, and treasures of the world, and say to him, All this I will give thee, if thou wilt sell thy portion and fall down and worship me; who can tell with what infinite disdain he would reject such an offer? He would say, as a tradesman that were bid exceedingly below the worth of his wares, You were as good bid me nothing, and with much scorn and laughter refuse his tender. This man is elevated to the top of the celestial orbs, and therefore the whole earth is but a point in his eye; whereas a man who hath his portion in outward things, who dwelleth here on earth, heavenly things are little, the glorious sun itself is but small, in such a man's eye, earthly things are great in his esteem.

Reader, let me persuade thee to be so much at leisure as to ask thy soul two or three questions.

1. In what channel doth the stream of thy desires run? Which way and to what coast do these winds of thy soul drive? Is it towards God, or towards the world? A rich heir in his minority, kept under by tutors and guardians, longs for the time when he shall be at age, and enjoy the privilege and pleasures of his inheritance. Thou cravest, and thirstest, and longest, and desirest; something there is which thou wouldst have, and must have, and canst not be satisfied till thou hast it. Now what is it? Is it the husks of this world, which thou inquirest so earnestly for somebody to give thee? or is it bread in thy Father's house which thou hungerest after? Dost thou, pant after the dust of the earth, according to the prophet's phrase? Amos 2:7; or with the church: 'The desire of my soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee!' Thou art hungry and thirsty, unquiet, unsatisfied; what is the matter, man? Dost thou, like the dry earth, gape and cleave for showers to bring forth corn and wine? Is the voice of thy heart, 'Who will shew us any good'? or is it, 'Lord, lift up the light of thy countenance on us'? Physicians can judge considerably of the state of their patients' bodies by their appetites; they who long only for trash speak their stomachs to be foul; they who hunger after wholesome food are esteemed to be in health. Thou mayest judge of the state of thy soul by thy desires; if thou desirest chiefly the trash of the world, thy spiritual state is not right, thy heart is not right in the sight of God; if thou canst say with David, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of thee,' blessed art thou of the Lord; thou hast a part and lot in this boundless portion. Observe, therefore, friend, which way these wings of thy soul, thy desires, fly. He who thirsteth after the kennel water of this world hath no right to the pure river of the water of life; but he who hungereth after the dainties of the Lamb's supper, may be sure the scraps of this beggarly world are not his happiness. The true wife longeth for the return of her husband, but the false one careth not how long he is absent.

2. What is the feast at which thou sittest with most delight? Is it at a table furnished with the comforts of this world? Are the dishes of credit and profit, of relations and possessions, those which thou feedest on with most pleasure? Or is it a table spread with the image of God, the favour of God, the Spirit of God, and the Son of God? Are those the savoury meat which thy soul loveth?

If this Sun of righteousness only causeth day in thine heart when he ariseth; and if he be set, notwithstanding all the candles of creatures, it is still night with thee, then God is thy portion. Oh how glad is the young heir when he comes to enjoy his portion! With what delight will he look over his woods, view his grounds, and walk in his gardens. The Roman would tumble naked in his heaps of silver, out of delight in them; but if thy affections only overflow with joy, as the water of Nilus, in the time of wheat harvest, when the world floweth in upon thee, the world is thy portion. He who like a lark sings merrily, not on the ground, but when he is mounting up to heaven, is rich indeed. God is his; but he who like a horsefly delighteth in dunghills, feedeth most on, and relisheth best these earthly offals, is a poor man; God is none of his God; it is an undeniable truth, that that is our portion which is the paradise of our pleasures. The fool who could expect ease on his bed of thorns—'Soul take thine ease, thou hast goods laid up for many years'—had his portion in this life; but Moses, whom nothing could please but God's gracious presence, had him for his portion: 'If thy presence go not with us, carry us not hence; I beseech thee shew me thy glory.'

Thirdly, What is the calling which thou followest with greatest eagerness and earnestness? Men run and ride, and toil and moil all day, they rise early, and go to bed late, and take any pains for that which they count their happiness and portion. The worldling, whose element is earth, whose portion consisteth, like the pedlar's pack, in a few pins, or needles, or pewter spoons, or brass bodkins, how will he fare mean, lodge hard, sleep little, crowd into a corner, hazard his health and life and soul too, for that which he counteth his portion; like a brutish spaniel, he will follow his master, the world, some

hundred of miles, puffing and blowing, breaking through hedges, and scratching himself with thorns and briers, running through ponds of water and puddles of dirt, and all for a few bones or scraps, which is all his hope and happiness. The Christian, who hath the blessed God for his portion, strives and labours, and watcheth and prayeth, and weepeth, and thinks no time too much, no pains too great, no cost enough for the enjoyment of his God. As the wise merchant, he would part with all he hath, all his strength and health, all his relations and possessions, for his noble portion. Reader, how is it with thee? thou travellest too and fro, thou weariest thyself, and wantest thy rest, thy head is full of cares, and thy heart of fears, and thy hands are always active; but whither doth all this tend? What is the market to which thou art walking thus fast? Is it gold that thou pursuest so hot? 'The people labour in the fire, and weary themselves for very vanity,' Hab. 2:13. Or is it God that thou pressest after—as the hound the hare, so the word signifieth, Phil. 3:12, διωκω—with so much diligence and violence: 'My soul followeth hard after thee' Ps. 63:8. Thus have I laid down the characters briefly of such as have God for their portion. Thy business is to be faithful in the trial of thine estate.

If upon trial thou findest that God is thy portion, rejoice in thy privilege, and let thy practices be answerable. Like a rich heir, delight thyself in the thoughts of thy vast inheritance. Can he be poor that is master of the mint? Canst thou be miserable who hast God for thy portion? I must tell thee that thou art happy in spite of men and devils. If worldlings take such pleasure in their counters and brass farthings, what joy mayest thou have in God, to whom all the Indians' mines are worse than dross! Nay, if all the gold of Ophir, and of the whole world, were melted into one common stream; and all the pearls and precious stones lay on the side of it as thick as pebbles, and the quintessence and excellencies of all other the creatures were crumbled into sand, and lay at the bottom of this channel, they were not worthy to make a metaphor of, to set forth the least perfection in this portion. Shall Esau say he hath enough, and be contented, when the narrow field of some creatures was the

utmost bounds of his estate? And wilt thou complain as if thou wert pinched with poverty, when the boundless God is thy portion? Art not thou an unreasonable creature, whom the infinite God will not satisfy? For shame, Christian; bethink thyself, and let the world know by thy cheerfulness and comfort, that their mites are nothing to thy millions. Consider, though the whole world turn bankrupt, thou art rich; for thy estate doth not lie in their hands. Do not pine thyself, therefore, with fear of penury, but keep a house according to thy estate which will afford it, in the greatest plenty. Let thy practices also be suitable to thy portion. Great heirs have a far different carriage from the poor, who take alms of the parish. Thou oughtest to live above the world. Eagles must not stoop to catch flies; the stars which are nearest the pole have least circuit. Thou who art so near God needest not wander about this world, but shouldst live as one whose hope and happiness is in a better world. When one was asked whether he did not admire the admirable structure of some stately building. No, saith he, for I have been at Rome, where better are to be seen every day. If the world tempt thee with its rare sights, and curious prospects, thou mayest well scorn them, having been in heaven, and being able by faith to see infinitely better every hour of the day; but if, upon examination, it be found that God is not thy portion, think of it seriously, thou art but a beggar; and if thou diest in this estate, shalt be so for ever. It may be thou art worth thousands in this world, but, alas! they stand for ciphers in the other world; how little will thy bags of silver in thy chest be worth, when thou enterest into thy coffin! It is reported of Musculus, that when he lay upon his death-bed, and many of his friends came to see him, and bewailed the poverty such an eminent minister of Christ was brought to, one of them said, O quid sumus! Musculus overheard him and cried out, Fumus. When thou comest to die, the whole world will be but air and smoke in thine own account. What, man, wilt thou do? Whither wilt thou go? The God that thou wilt cry to in distress, weep, and sob, and sigh to at death, is none of thy God. Thou rejectest him now, and canst thou think that he will affect thee then? either make a new choice, or thou canst never enter into peace.

## CHAPTER XVII

An exhortation to men to choose God for their portion

The third use which I shall make of this doctrine, shall be by way of exhortation. If the comfort of a Christian in his saddest condition be this, that God is his portion, let me then persuade thee, reader, to choose God for thy portion. I look on thee as rational, and accordingly shall treat thee in this use, not doubting, but if reason may be judge, I shall prevail with thee to repent of thy former, and resolve on a new choice. Thou art one who hast chosen the world for thy portion; but hast thou not read what a poor, what a pitiful, what a piercing, what a perishing portion it is? 'Why then dost thou spend thy strength for what is not bread, and thy labour for what will not satisfy? Harken to me, and eat that which is good; and let thy soul delight itself in fatness.' I offer thee this day a portion worthy of thy choicest affections, a portion that, if thou acceptest, the richest emperors will be but beggars to thee, a portion which containeth more wealth than heaven and earth; nay, ten thousand worlds are nothing in comparison of this portion. If a man should offer thee a bag of gold, and a bag of counters, a bag of pearls, and a bag of sand, which wouldst thou choose? Surely the former. The world in comparison of God is infinitely less than brass to gold, or sand to pearls, and wilt thou not choose him for thy portion? Didst thou never laugh at children for their folly, in choosing rattles and babies before things of much greater worth? And art thou not a bigger child, and a greater fool, to choose husks before bread, a mess of pottage before the birthright, the blessing; to choose a seeming fancy before real felicities; a little honour, which is but a farthing candle, that children can puff out with one breath, and blow in with another blast, before the exceeding and eternal weight of glory? To choose broken cisterns before a fountain of living waters, dirt before diamonds, vanity before solidity, drops before the ocean, and

nothing before all things? Man, where is thy reason? Samuel said to Saul, 'Set not thine heart on asses; for is not the desire of all Israel to thee?' Friend, why shouldst thou set thy heart on asses, or thy flock, or shop, or any treasure, when thou hast the desire of all nations to set thine heart upon? As Christ said to the woman of Canaan, 'If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that speaketh to thee, thou wouldst ask of him, and he would give thee living water,' John 4:10. So say I to thee, If thou knewest the blessed God, and who it is that is offered to thee, the sweetest love, the richest mercy, the surest friend, the chiefest good, the greatest beauty, the highest honour, and the fullest happiness, thou wouldst leave the colliers of this world to load themselves with thick clay, and turn merchant adventurer for the other world; thou wouldst more willingly leave these frothy joys and drossy delights for the enjoyment of God, than ever prisoner did the fetters, and bondage, and misery of a jail, for the liberty, and pleasures, and preferments of a court. Augustine speaks of a time when he and his mother were discoursing together of the comforts of the Spirit: Lord, saith he, thou knowest in that clay how wisely we did esteem of the world, and all its delights. O reader, couldst thou but see the vastness, the suitableness, and the fulness of this portion, I am confident thou wouldst suffer the natives, the men of this world, Ps. 17:14, to mind the commodities which are of the growth of their own country, and wouldst fetch thy riches, as the good housewife her food, from far.

The cause of thy wrong choice (I mean thy taking the world all this while for thy portion) is thy ignorance of the worth and excellency of this object which I am offering to thee. It is in the dark that men grope so much about present things, 2 Pet. 1:9; knowing persons prefer wisdom before silver, before choice gold, nay, before rubies, Prov. 3:14, 15. Every one will sell his heart to that chapman which biddeth most. Now the devil courts man for his soul with the brutish pleasures of sin; the world wooeth for the heart with its proffer of treasures and honours, which, like itself, are vain, vexatious, and perishing; God comes, and he offereth for the heart the precious blood of his Son, the curious embroidery of his Spirit, the noble

employment and honourable preferment of angels, fulness of joy, and infiniteness of satisfaction, in the fruition of his blessed self to all eternity. Now what is the reason that the devil's money is accepted, and the world's offer embraced, and God's tender (which is farther superior to theirs than the glorious heavens, where the King of saints keeps his court, and sheweth all his state, and royalty, and magnificence, is to a stinking dunghill) should be rejected? Truly nothing but this: men know not the worth of what God biddeth them for their wares. The money which the devil and world offer are their own country coin, and a little of this they sooner take, because they know it, than much more of another nation's, the value of which they do not understand. Swine trample on pearls, because they know not the worth of them. None look off the world but they that can look beyond it.

The turtle, saith the philosopher, brings forth her young blind. The most quick-sighted Christian brings forth blind children: now they, not being able to see afar off into the other world, prefer these poor things which they may have in present possession, before these unsearchable riches which are offered them in reversion. Hence it is also that the devil, as the raven when he seizeth the carcase, as soon as he layeth hold on any person, the first thing he doth is to peck out his eyes, Prov. 30:17, knowing that as soon as they come to see the blessed God, and the happiness which is to be enjoyed in him, they will quickly turn their backs on these shadows, and face about towards this eternal substance, 2 Cor. 4:4. Oh how dull would the world's common glass be in his eye who had once beheld the true crystal! The loadstone of earth will not draw man's affections whilst this diamond of heaven is in presence. When Moses had once seen him that was invisible, how low did the price of the honours, and treasures, and pleasures of Egypt fall in his judgment! Knowledge is by one well expressed to be appetite's taster; for as he that hath eaten sweetmeats cannot relish the strongest beer, so he that hath fed on the heavenly banquet cannot savour anything else.

A man that is born in a dark dungeon, and there continueth a long time, when he comes, after twelve or fourteen years, to see a candle, he wonders at the excellency of that creature. What delight will he take in beholding it, and inquiring into the nature of it! But bring this man afterwards into the open air, and let him behold the glorious sun, his admiration of the candle will cease, and all his wonder will be at the beauty and glory of this great luminary of the world. Every man is naturally in darkness; hence it is that, when he comes to behold the candles of creature comforts, he is so ravished and taken with them; but let him once come to see the Sun of righteousness, the all-sufficient and eternal God, he despiseth those glimmering rushes, and all his wondering is at the excellency and perfections of this glorious being. That which was glorious before, hath now no glory in comparison of this glory that excelleth. All things are small and little in his eye who hath once had a sight of the great God. The great cities of Campania are but small cottages to them who stand on the top of the Alps.

Philosophers observe that *lumen est vehiculum influentiæ*, light is the convoy of heat. Certain it is, reader, that this light of knowledge would quickly cause heat in thy affections. Couldst thou but see God with an eye of faith, thine eye would so affect thine heart, that (as some who have beheld Mahomet's tomb have put out their eyes, lest they should be defiled with common objects after they have been blessed with so rare a sight) thou wouldst shut thine eyes at those gilded poisons, and wink ever after on those specious nothings. Couldst thou see this God as he is visible in the glass of the creatures; couldst thou compass the earth which he hath made, the several islands and continents which are in it; couldst thou, like the sun, so surround it as to see all the nations in it, their several languages, carriages, customs, their number, order, natures, and the creatures in every kingdom and country; the various plants, birds, minerals, beasts, and savage inhabitants in wildernesses, their multiplicity, variety, dispositions, subordination, and serviceableness each to other, and all that concerneth them; what thoughts wouldst thou then have of this God for a portion! Couldst thou behold at one view

the vast ocean, discern the motion of the huge waters in the cause of its ebbing and flowing, all the storms and tempests which are there raised, and all the persons and goods which have been there ruined; couldst thou see how those proud waves are laid with a word; how, when they swell and rage, it is but, Peace, be still, Matt. 7, (as a mother will hush her crying infant,) and all is quiet! how they are kept in with bars and doors, and, for all their anger and power, cannot go beyond their decreed place; couldst thou dive into it, and see the many wonders that are in that great deep, the vast riches which are buried there out of the sight of covetous mortals; the leviathan, whose teeth are terrible round about him, whose scales are his pride, shut up together as with a close seal, by whose neezings a light doth shine, and whose eyes are the eyelids of the morning; whose breath kindleth coals, and a flame goeth out of his mouth; who esteemeth iron as straw, and brass as rotten wood; who maketh the deep to boil like a pot, and the sea like a pot of ointment! Couldst thou behold the innumerable fish, both small and great, that are there, good Lord, what wouldst thou think of having the author and commander of the earth and ocean for thy portion? Couldst thou ascend up to the sky, and fully perceive the beauty, glory, nature, and order of that heavenly host, how they march in rank and file, come forth, when called, in their several courses, know the time of their rising and setting; couldst thou know the sun perfectly in his noonday dress, and what influences those higher orbs have on inferior bodies, what wouldst thou then give to enjoy him who gave them their beings, who appointeth them their motions, who knoweth the number of the stars, and who calleth them all by their names, for thy portion? But oh! were it possible for thee to hold aside the veil, and look into the holy of holies, to mount up to the highest heavens, and see the royal palace of this great King, the stately court which he there keeps, the noble entertainment which he there gives to his friends and children; couldst thou know the satisfying joy, the ravishing delight, and the unconceivable pleasure which the spirits of just men made perfect have in his favour and fruition; couldst thou see him as he is there visible (like a pure sweet light sparkling through a crystal lanthorn) in the glorified Redeemer, and know him

as thou art known of him, then, then, reader, what wouldst thou think of this God for a portion? What poor apprehensions wouldst thou have of that beggarly portion which thou now admirest! what dung, what dogs'-meat would the world be to thee in comparison of this God! As Alexander, when he heard of the Indies, and the riches there, divided the kingdom of Macedonia amongst his captains, so thou wouldst leave the swine of the earth to wallow in the mire of brutish comforts, the foolish children of disobedience to paddle in the gutter of sensual waters; and wouldst desire that thy portion might be amongst God's children, and thy heritage amongst his chosen ones. Then, then, friend, all thy love would be too little, and no labour too great, wouldst thou think, for such a peerless and inestimable portion. How willingly should the Zibars of the world take all, so thy Lord and King would but come into thy soul in peace! How earnestly, how eagerly wouldst thou cry with Moses, after he had known somewhat of Canaan, 'O Lord God, thou hast begun to shew thy servant thy greatness and thy mighty hand: for what God is there in heaven or in earth that can do according to thy works, and according to thy might? I pray thee, let me go over and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon.' Lord, though others be put off with common bounty, let me partake of special mercy; though they feed on husks, give me this bread of life. Let me not for this whole world have my portion in this world, but be thou the portion of my cup; do thou maintain my lot. Whatsoever thou deny to me, or howsoever thou deal with me, give me thyself, and I shall have enough. Though strangers and enemies to thee scramble for the good things which thou scatterest here below, and desire no more, yet let me see the felicity of thy chosen, rejoice with the gladness of thy nation, and glory with thine inheritance. O friend, it is eternal life to know this only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, John 17:3.

Were I able to set this God forth in the thousandth part of that grace and glory wherewith he is clothed, as with a garment; could I present him to thee in any degree suitable to his vast perfections, and give thee eyes to behold him, it were impossible but that thou should

choose him for thy portion: but, alas! all the angels in heaven cannot draw him at length! Surely, then, we who are clogged so much with flesh, know less of this Father of spirits. Simonides being asked by Hiero, What God was? required some time to consider of it, and as much more at the end of that time, and double at the end of that: of which delay Hiero asked a reason. He answered, Quo magis inquirō, eo minus invenio, The farther I search, the more I am at a loss. There can be no finding God out, there being no equal proportion between the faculty and the object. If I had been in heaven, and seen him face to face, I should know him to my perfection, but could not know him to his perfections. But suppose I had been there, and seen those infinite beauties and glories, according to the utmost of my capacity, yet my tongue would not be able to tell it thee, nor thine ears to hear it. Oh, what an unspeakable loss am I at, now I am speaking of this infinite God! My thoughts run into a labyrinth; I am as a little cock-boat floating on the ocean, or as an infant offering to reach the sun. My meditations please me exceedingly. Oh, how sweet is this subject! I could dwell in this hive of honey and happiness—Lord, let me!—whilst I have a being. How pleasant are thy thoughts to me, O God, thou true paradise of all pleasure, thou living fountain of felicity, thou original and exact pattern of all perfections! How comely is thy face, how lovely is thy voice! While I behold, though but a little, of thy beauty and glory, my heart is filled with marrow and fatness, and my mouth praiseth thee with joyful lips. My soul followeth hard after thee. Oh, when shall I come and appear before thee? When wilt thou come to me?—or when, rather, will that blessed time come that I shall be taken up to thee? Sinners miss thee walking in the mist of ignorance. Ah, did they know thee, they would never crucify the Lord of glory! When they come once into that blackness of darkness, where they shall have light enough to see how good thou art in thyself, and, in thy Son, to immortal souls, and to see their misery in the loss of an eternal blessed life, how will they tear their hairs, and bite their flesh, and cut their hearts with anguish and sorrow for their cruel folly and damnable desperate madness in refusing so incomparable and inestimable a portion! Saints bless themselves in thee, and rather pity than envy the greatest potentates, who want

thee for their portion; having not seen thee, they love thee, and in whom, though now they see not, yet believing, they rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

But, reader, whither do I wander? I confess I am a little out of my way; but I wish, as Augustine, when preaching, forgot his subject he was upon, and fell to confute the Manichees, by which means Firmus, at that time his auditor, was converted, so that my going a few paces astray may be instrumental to bring thee home. What shall I say unto thee, or wherewith shall I persuade thee? Could I by my prayer move God to open thine eyes—as the prophet did for his servant, 2 Kings 4—to see the worth and worthiness, the love and loveliness of this portion, thou shouldst not an hour longer be alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in thee. But be of good comfort. Read on; he that made the seeing eye is willing to open the eyes of the blind, and thou mayest possibly, before thou art come to the end of the book, meet with that eye-salve of the sanctuary which may do the work.

What I have farther to offer to thee in relation to this choice, shall be to encourage thee to it by four properties of this portion; in the handling of which I shall put the world in one scale, with all its mines of gold, and allow them as many grains as can be allowed them, and put this one God in the other scale, and leave thy own reason to judge which scale is most weighty.

## **CHAPTER XVIII**

God is a satisfying and a sanctifying portion

First, God is a satisfying portion. The things of this world may surfeit a man, but they can never satisfy him. Most men have too much, but no man hath enough; as ships, they have that burden which sinks them when they have room to hold more. 'He that loveth silver is not satisfied with silver, nor he that loveth gold with increase,' Eccles.

5:10. Worldlings are like the Parthians, the more they drink, the more they thirst. As the melancholy chemist, they work eagerly to find the philosopher's stone, rest and happiness in it, though they have experience of its vanity, and it hath already brought them to beggary. The world cannot satisfy the senses, much less the soul: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing.

As the apes in the story, finding a glow-worm in a frosty night, took it for a spark of fire, gathered some sticks, and leaped on it, expecting to be warmed by it, but all in vain: so men think to find warmth and satisfaction in creatures; but they are as the clothes to David, when stricken in years, though covered with them, not able to give any heat. Where shall contentment be found, and where is the place of satisfaction? The depth saith, It is not in me; and the earth saith, It is not in me: nay, heaven itself, were God out of it, would say, It is not in me.

Reader, thou longest for the things of this world, and thinkest, couldst thou have but a table full of such dishes, thou shouldst feed heartily, and fill thyself. But dost thou not know they are like the meat which sick men cry so much for, that, when brought to them, they can taste of possibly, but not at all fill themselves with. The pond of the creature hath so much mud at the bottom, that none can have a full draught. The sun and moon seem bigger at first rising than when they come to be over our heads. All outward things are great in expectation, but nothing in fruition. The world promiseth as much, and performeth as little, as the tomb of Semiramis. When she had built a stately tomb, she caused this inscription to be engraven on it: Whatsoever king shall succeed here, and want money, let him open this tomb, and he shall have enough to serve his turn; which Darius afterwards, wanting money, opened, and, instead of riches, found this sharp reproof: Unless thou hadst been extremely covetous and greedy of filthy lucre, thou wouldst not have opened the grave of the dead to seek for money. Thus many run to the world with high hopes, and return with nothing but blanks. Hence it is that worldlings are said to feed on lies, and to suck wind from this

strumpet's breasts, both which are far from filling, Hosea 10:13, and 12:1.

Reader, since the controversy is so great amongst men, whether rest doth not grow on the furrows of the field, and happiness in the mines of gold; whether creatures wisely distilled may not have happiness drawn out of them, let us hear the judgment of one that enjoyed the world at will, and had prudence enough to extract the quintessence of it; who was thoroughly furnished with all variety of requisites for such an undertaking, who did set himself curiously to anatomise the body of the creation. And what is the result? 'Vanity of vanities; all is vanity,' saith the preacher. Mark,

1. Vanity in the abstract; not vain, but vanity.
2. Plurality, Vanity of vanities; excessive vanity, all over vanity, nothing but vanity.
3. Universality, All is vanity: everything severally, all things collectively. Riches are vanity, Eccles. 2; honours are vanity; pleasures are vanity; knowledge is vanity; all is vanity.
4. The verity of all this, saith the preacher; one that speaks not by guess or hearsay, but by experience, who had tried the utmost that the creature could do, and found it to come far short of satisfying man's desire; one that spake not only his own opinion, but by divine inspiration; yet the total of the account which he gives in, after he had reckoned up all the creatures, is nothing but ciphers; 'Vanity of vanities, all is vanity,' saith the preacher.

Men that are in the valley think, if they were at the top of such a hill, they should touch the heavens. Men that are in the bottom of poverty, or disgrace, or pain, think, if they could get up to such a mountain, such a measure of riches, and honours, and delights, they could reach happiness. Now Solomon had got to the top of this hill, and seeing so many scrambling and labouring so hard, nay, riding on one another's necks, and pressing one another to death to get

foremost, doth seem thus to bespeak them: Sirs, ye are all deceived in your expectations; I see the pains ye take to get up to this place, thinking, that when you come hither, ye shall touch the heavens, and reach happiness; but I am before you at the top of the hill—I have treasures, and honours, and pleasures in variety and abundance, Eccles. 2:12, 13—and I find the hill full of quagmires instead of delights, and so far from giving me satisfaction, that it causeth much vexation; therefore be advised to spare your pains, and spend your strength for that which will turn to more profit; for, believe it, you do but work at the labour in vain. 'Vanity of vanities, all is vanity,' saith the preacher.

We have weighed the world in the balance, and found it lighter than vanity; let us see what weight God hath. David will tell us, though the vessel of the creature be frozen, that no satisfaction can be drawn thence, yet this fountain runneth freely to the full content of all true Christians: 'The Lord is the portion of my cup, and inheritance; thou maintainest my lot.' The former expression, as I observed before, is an allusion to the custom of dividing their drink at banquets, the latter to the division of Canaan by lot and line, Ps. 78:55; according as the lot fell, was every one's part. Now David's part and lot fell, it seems, like the Levites under the law, on God, but is he pleased in his portion, and can he take any delight in his estate? 'The lines are fallen to me in a pleasant place, yea, I have a goodly heritage,' Ps. 16:5, 6. As if he had said, No lot ever fell in a better land; my portion happeneth in the best place that is possible; my knowledge of thee and propriety in thee affordeth full content and felicity to me. I have enough, and crave no more; I have all, and can have no more. Though creatures bring in an ignoramus to that inquiry concerning satisfaction, yet the all-sufficient God doth not.

If it were possible for one man to be crowned with the royal diadem and dominion of the whole world, and to enjoy all the treasures, and honours, and pleasures that all the kingdoms on earth can yield, if his senses and understanding were enlarged to the utmost of created capacities, to taste and take in whatsoever comfort and delight the

universe can give; if he had the society of glorious angels and glorified saints thrown into the bargain, and might enjoy all this the whole length of the world's duration, yet without God would this man in the midst of all this be unsatisfied; these things, like dew, might wet the branches, please the flesh, but would leave the root dry, the spirit discontented. Once admit the man to the sight of God, and let God but possess his heart, and then, and not before, his infinite desires expire in the bosom of his Maker. Now the weary dove is at rest, and the vessel tossed up and down on the waters is quiet in its haven. There is in the heart of man such a drought, without this river of paradise, that all the waters in the world, though every drop were an ocean, cannot quench it. Oh what dry chips are all creatures to a hungry immortal soul! Lord, saith Augustine, thou hast made our heart for thee, and it will never rest till it come to thee; and when I shall wholly cleave to thee, then my life will be lively.

There are two special faculties in man's soul, which must be answered with suitable and adequate objects, or the heart, like the sea, cannot rest. The understanding must be satisfied with truth, and the will with good. For the filling of these two faculties men are as busy as bees, flying over the field of the world, and trying every flower for sweetness, but after all their toil and labour, house themselves, like wasps, in curious combs without any honey. The understanding must be suited with the highest truth; but the world is a lie, Ps. 62, and the things thereof are called lying vanities; they are not what they seem to be, Jonah 2:8, and hence are unable to satisfy the mind; but God is *æterna veritas, et vera æternitas*, eternal truth, and true eternity. All truth is originally in him; his nature is the idea of truth, and his will the standard of truth; and it is eternal life and utmost satisfaction to know him, because by it the understanding is perfected; for the soul in God will see all truth, and that not only clearly—I speak of the other world, where the Christian's happiness shall be completed—face to face, but also fully. Aristotle, though a heathen, thought happiness to consist in the knowledge of the chiefest good. If Archimedes, when he found out the resolution of

one question in the mathematics was so ravished that he ran up and down crying, I have found it, I have found it; how will the Christian be transported when he shall know all that is knowable, and all shadows of ignorance vanish as the darkness before the rising sun. The will also must be suited with good, and according to the degree of goodness in the object, such is the degree of satisfaction to the faculty. Now the things of this life, though good in themselves, yet are vain and evil by reason of the sin of man, Rom. 8:20; and likewise are at best but bodily, limited, and fading good things, and therefore incapable of filling this faculty. As truth in the utmost latitude is the object of the understanding, so good in the universality of it is the object of the will. Further, that good which satisfieth must be optimum, the best, or it will never sistere appetitum, the soul will otherwise be still longing; and maximum, the most perfect, or it will never implere appetitum, fill it. But God is such a good, he is essentially, universally, unchangeably, and infinitely good, and therefore satisfieth. 'When I awake I shall be satisfied with thy likeness,' Ps. 17:15. When my body hath slept in the bed of the grave till the morning of the resurrection, and the sound of the last trump shall awaken me, oh the sweet satisfaction and ravishing delight which my soul shall enjoy in being full of thy likeness and thy love! Nay, in the meantime, before the happiness of a saint appear to his view in a full body, it doth, like the rising sun, with its forerunning rays, cast such a lightsome, gladsome brightness upon the believer, that he is filled with joy at present, and would not part with his hopes of it for the whole world in hand. 'They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house, (while on this side heaven;) and thou shalt make them drink of the rivers of thy pleasures,' Ps. 36:8. Though the wedding dinner be deferred till the wedding-day, yet beforehand the Christian meets with many a running banquet. He hath not only pleasures, 'fatness of thy house,' but also plenty of it here below: 'They shall be abundantly satisfied.'

The world is like sharp sauce, which doth not fill, but provoke the stomach to call for more. The voice of those guests whom it makes most welcome, is like the daughters of the horseleech, Give, give; but

the infinite God, like solid food, doth satisfy, the soul fully, ('in my Father's house is bread enough,') and causeth it to cry out, I have enough.

Secondly, God is a sanctifying, ennobling portion. The world cannot advance the soul in the least. Things of the world are fitly compared to shadows, for be thy shadow never so long, thy body is not the longer for it; so be thy estate never so great, thy soul is not the better for it. A great letter makes no more to the signification of a word than the smallest. Men in high places are the same men, no real worth being thereby added to them, that they are in low ones.

Nay, it is too too visible that men are the worse for their earthly portions. If some had not been so wealthy, they had not been so wicked. Most of the world's favourites, like aguish stomachs, are fuller of appetite than digestion; they eat more than they can concoct, and thereby cause diseases; nay, by feeding on this trash of earth, their stomachs are taken off from substantial food, the bread of heaven. The soldiers of Hannibal were effeminated, and made unfit for service, by their pleasures at Capua. Damps arising out of the earth have stifled many a soul. Aristotle tells us of a sea wherein, by the hollowness of the earth under it, or some whirling property, ships used to be cast away in the midst of a calm. Many perish in their greatest prosperity; and are so busy about babies and rattles, that they have no leisure to be saved, Luke 14:18.

That which doth elevate and ennoble the soul of man must be more excellent than the soul. Silver is embased by mixing it with lead, but ennobled by gold, because the former is inferior to it, but the latter excels it. The world and all things in it are infinitely inferior to the soul of man; and therefore it is debased by mingling with them; but God is infinitely superior, and so advanceth it by joining with it. That coin which is the most excellent metal defileth our hands, and is apt to defile our hearts; but the divine nature elevateth and purifieth the spirit.

The goodliest portions of this life are like the cities which Solomon gave to Hiram. 'And Hiram came from Tyre to see the cities which Solomon had given him; and they pleased him not. And he said, What cities are these which thou hast given me, my brother? And he called them the land of Cabul (that is, displeasing or dirty) unto this day,' 1 Kings 9:12, 13. The pleasantest portion here lieth in the land of Cabul; it is displeasing and dirty; it doth both dissatisfy and defile, when the heavenly portion doth, like honey, both delight and cleanse, both please and purify.

Outward things, like common stones to a ring, add nothing at all to the worth of a soul; but this sparkling diamond, this pearl of price, the infinite God, makes the gold ring of the soul to be of unspeakable value. 'The heart of the wicked is little worth,' Prov. 10:20. His house is worth somewhat, but his heart is worth nothing, because it is a ditch full only of dirt; his earthly portion hath possession of it; but the heart of a godly man is worth millions, because it is the cabinet where this inestimable jewel is laid up. 'The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour,' Prov. 12:26, because he partaketh of the divine nature. God, like gold, enricheth whatsoever he is joined to; hence it is that things which excel in Scripture are usually said to be things of God; as the garden of God, Ezek. 28:13; the hill of God, Ps. 68:15; the mountains of God, Ps. 36:6; a city of God, John 3:3; the cedars of God, Ps. 80:10;—that is, the most excellent garden, hill, mountain, city, and cedars. God is the perfection of thy soul; and therefore would, if thy portion, advance it to purpose. Oh what a height of honour and happiness wouldst thou arrive at if this God were thine! Now like a worm thou crawlest on, and dwellest in the earth, the meanest and basest of all the elements, that which brutes trample under their feet; but then like an eagle thou wouldst mount up to heaven, contemning these toys, and leaving those babies for children, and, as an angel, always stand in the presence of, and enjoy unspeakable pleasure in him who is thy portion. Thy life at present is low, little differing from the life of a beast, consisting chiefly in making provision for—that which should be thy slave—the flesh; but thy life then would be high and noble, much resembling the lives of

those honourable courtiers, whose continual practice is to adore and admire the blessed and only potentate.

Dost thou not find by experience that earthly things obstruct holiness, and thereby hinder thy soul's happiness? Alas! the best of them are but like the wings of a butterfly, which, though curiously painted, foul the fingers; but if thine heart had but once closed with God as thy portion, it would be every day more pure, and nearer to perfection. Thou hast, it may be, gold and silver; why, the Midianites' camels had chains of gold, and were they ever the better? Judges 8:26. Many brutes have had silver bells, but their natures brutish still; but oh the excellency which God would add to thy soul by bestowing on it his own likeness and love!

## **CHAPTER XIX**

God a universal and eternal portion

Thirdly, God is a universal portion. God hath in himself eminently and infinitely all good things; and creatures are bounded in their beings, and therefore in the comfort which they yield. Health answereth sickness, but it doth not answer poverty. Honour is a help against disgrace, but not against pain. Money is the most universal medicine, and therefore is said to answer all things; but as great a monarch as it is, it can neither command ease in sickness, nor honours in disgrace, much less quiet a wounded spirit. At best, creatures are but particular beings, and so but particular blessings. Now man, being a compound of many wants and weaknesses, can never be happy till he find a salve for every sore, and a remedy which bears proportion as well to the number as nature of his maladies. Ahab, though in his ivory palace, upon his throne of glory, attended with his noble lords, and swaying a large sceptre, was miserable because the heavens were brass. Haman, though he had the favour of the prince, the adoration of the people, the sway of a hundred and twenty-seven provinces, yet is discontented because he wanted

Mordecai's knee. If the world's darlings enjoy many good things, yet they, as Christ told the young man, always lack one thing, which makes them at a loss.

But God is all good things, and every good thing. He is self-sufficient, alone-sufficient, and all-sufficient. Nothing is wanting in him, either for the soul's protection from all evil, or perfection with all good. Reader, if God were thy portion, thou shouldst find in him whatsoever thine heart could desire, and whatsoever could tend to thy happiness. Art thou ambitious? He is a crown of glory, and a royal diadem. Art thou covetous? He is unsearchable riches, yea, durable riches and righteousness. Art thou voluptuous? He is rivers of pleasures and fulness of joy. Art thou hungry? He is a feast of wine on the lees, of fat things full of marrow. Art thou weary? He is rest, a shadow from the heat, and a shelter from the storm. Art thou weak? In the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength. Art thou in doubts? He is marvellous in counsel. Art thou in darkness? He is the Sun of righteousness, an eternal light. Art thou sick? He is the God of thy health. Art thou sorrowful? He is the God of all consolations. Art thou dying? He is the fountain and Lord of life. Art thou in any distress? His name is a strong tower; thither thou mayest run and find safety. He is  $\pi\alpha\nu\ \phi\acute{\alpha}\rho\mu\alpha\kappa\omicron\nu$ , a universal medicine against all sorts of miseries. Whatsoever thy calamity is, he could remove it; whatsoever thy necessity, he could relieve it. He is silver, gold, honour, delight, food, raiment, house, land, peace, wisdom, power, beauty, father, mother, wife, husband, mercy, love, grace, glory, and infinitely more than all these. God and all his creatures are no more than God without any of his creatures. As the Jews say of manna, that it had all sorts of delicate tastes in it; it is most true of God, he hath all sorts of delights in him. This tree of life beareth twelve manner of fruits every month, Rev. 22:2. There is in it both variety and plenty of comforts. The former prevents our loathing, the latter our lacking.

One being desirous to see the famous city of Athens, was told, *Viso Solone vidisti omnia*, See but Solon; and in him you may see all the

rarities and excellencies in it. Reader, wouldst thou see all the wealth and worth of sea and land? Wouldst thou be upon the pinnacle of the temple, as Christ was, and behold, and have the offer of all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them? Nay, wouldst thou view heaven's glorious city, the royal palace of the great King, the costly curious workmanship about it, and the unheard-of rarities and delights in that court, which infinite embroidered wisdom contrived, boundless power and love erected, and infinite bounty enriched? Thou mayest both see and enjoy all this in God. See but God, and thou seest all; enjoy but God, and thou enjoyest all in him.

As a merchant in London may trade for and fetch in the horses of Barbary, the Canary sacks, the French wines, the Spanish sweetmeats, the oils of Candia, the spices of Egypt, the artificial wares of Alexandria, the silks of Persia, the embroideries of Turkey, the golden wedges of India, the emeralds of Scythia, the topazes of Ethiopia, and the diamonds of Bisnager, so mightst thou, were but this God thy portion, fetch in the finest bread to feed thee, the choicest wine to comfort thee, oil to cheer thee, joy to refresh thee, raiment to clothe thee, the jewels of grace to beautify thee, and the crown of glory to make thee blessed, nay, all the wealth of this and the other world. If all the riches in the covenant of grace, if all the good things which Christ purchased with his precious blood, nay, if as much good as is in an infinite God can make thee happy, thou shouldst have it. If David were thought worth ten thousand Israelites, how much is the God of Israel worth?

This one God would fill up thy soul in its utmost capacity. It is such an end that when thou attainest thou couldst go no farther, shouldst desire no more, but quietly rest for ever. The necessity of the creatures' number speaks the meanness of their value; but the universality of good in this one God proclaims his infinite worth. As there are all parts of speech in that one verse,

'Væ tibi ridenti, quia mox post gaudia flebis;'

so there are all perfections in this one God. What a portion is this friend!

Fourthly, God is an eternal portion. The pleasures of sin are but for a season, a little inch of time, a τὸ νῦν, a season is a very short space, Heb. 11, but the portion of a saint is for ever. 'God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.' The greatest estate here below is a flood soon up and soon down; but if God say once to thy soul, as to Aaron's, 'I am thine inheritance,' Num. 18:20, neither men nor devils can cozen thee of it. 'The Lord knoweth the days of the upright; and their inheritance shall be for ever,' Ps. 37:18.

The prodigal wasted his portion, and so came to poverty. The glutton swalloweth down his portion, burying it in his belly. The drunkard vomiteth up his portion. The ambitious person often turneth his portion into smoke, and it vanisheth in the air. Those whose portion continueth longest will be turned out of possession, when death once comes with a writ from heaven to seal a lease of ejection; for all these portions are dying gourds, deceitful brooks, and flying shadows. But ah, how contrary hereunto is the portion of a believer! God is an eternal portion. If he were once thy portion, he would be for ever thy portion. When thy estate, and children, and wife, and honours, and all earthly things should be taken from thee, he is the good part which shall never be taken from thee, Luke 10:42. Thy friends may use thee as a suit of apparel, which, when they have worn threadbare, they throw off, and call for new. Thy relations may serve thee as women their flowers, who stick them in their bosoms when fresh and flourishing; but, when dying and withered, they throw them to the dunghill. Thy riches, and honours, and pleasures, and wife, and children, may stand on the shore and see thee launching into the ocean of eternity, but will not step one foot into the water after thee; thou mayest sink or swim for them. Only this God is thy portion, will never leave thee nor forsake thee, Heb. 13:5. Oh how happy wouldst thou be in having such a friend! Thy portion would be tied to thee in this life, as Dionysius thought his kingdom was to him, with chains of adamant; there would be no severing it

from thee. The world could not; thou shouldst live above the world whilst thou walkest about it, and behave thyself in it, not as its champion, but conqueror. 'He that is born of God, overcometh the world,' 1 John 5:4. Satan should not part thee and thy portion. Thy God hath him in his chain; and though, like a mastiff without teeth, he may bark, yet he can never bite or hurt his children. 'I have written unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one,' 1 John 2:13. Nay, it should not be in thine own power to sell away thy portion. Thou wouldst be a joint-heir with Christ, and co-heirs cannot sell, except both join; and Christ knoweth the worth of this inheritance too well to part with it for all that this beggarly world can give, Rom. 8:17. The apostle makes a challenge, which men nor devils could never accept or take up: 'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us,' Rom. 8:35, 37. Nay, at death thy portion would swim out with thee in that shipwreck; death, which parts all other portions from men, will give thee full possession of thine. Then, and not till then, thou shouldst know what it is worth; yea, even at the great day, the fire which shall burn up the world shall not so much as singe thy portion. Thou mightst stand upon its ruins and sing, I have lost nothing; I have my portion, my inheritance, my happiness, my God still.

Other portions, like summer fruit, are soon ripe and soon rotten; but this portion, like winter fruit, though it be longer before the whole be gathered, yet it will continue. Gold and silver, in which other men's portion lieth, are corruptible; but thy portion, like the body of Christ, shall never see corruption.

When all earthly portions, as meat overdriven, certainly corrupts, or as water in cisterns quickly groweth unsavoury, this portion, like the water in Æseulapius's well, is not capable of putrefaction.

O friend, what are all the portions in the world, which, as a candle, consume in the use, and then go out in a stink, to this eternal

portion? It is reported of one Theodorus, that when there was music and feasting in his father's house, withdrew himself from all the company, and thus thought with himself: Here is content enough for the flesh; but how long will this last? This will not hold out long. Then falling on his knees, O Lord, my heart is open unto thee. I indeed know not what to ask, but only this, Lord, let me not die eternally. O Lord, thou knowest I love thee; oh let me live eternally to praise thee. I must tell thee, reader, to be eternally happy or eternally miserable, to live eternally or to die eternally, are of greater weight than thou art aware of, yea, of far more concernment than thou canst conceive. Ponder this motive therefore thoroughly. God is not only a satisfying portion, filling every crevice of thy soul with the light of joy and comfort; and a sanctifying portion, elevating thy soul to its primitive and original perfection; and a universal portion; not health, or wealth, or friends, or honours, or liberty, or life, or house, or wife, or child, or pardon, or peace, or grace, or glory, or earth, or heaven, but all these and infinitely more; but also he is an eternal portion. This God would be thy God for ever and ever, Ps. 48:14. Oh sweet word ever! thou art the crown of the saints' crown, and the glory of their glory. Their portion is so full that they desire no more; they enjoy variety and plenty of delights above what they are able to ask or think, and want nothing but to have it fixed. May they but possess it in peace without interruption or cessation, they will trample all the kingdoms of the earth as dirt under their feet; and, lo! thou art the welcome dove to bring this olive branch in thy mouth, This God is our God for ever and ever. All the arithmetical figures of days, and months, and years, and ages, are nothing to this infinite cipher ever, which, though it stand for nothing in the vulgar account, yet contains all our millions; yea, our millions and millions of millions are less than drops to this ocean ever.

If all the pleasures of the whole creation cannot countervail the fruition of God, though but for one moment, how happy shouldst thou be to enjoy him for ever! If the first fruits and foretastes of the Christian's felicity be so ravishing, what will the harvest be? Friend, little dost thou think what crowns, sceptres, palms, thrones,

kingdoms, glories, beauties, banquets, angelical entertainments, beatifical visions, societies, varieties, and eternities are prepared for them who choose God for their portion. If the saint's cross in the judgment of Moses—when at age, and able to make a true estimate of things—were more worth than all the treasures of Egypt, and he chose it rather, what is the saint's crown, eternal crown, worth?

To conclude this use, reader, take a serious view of this portion which is here tendered to thee, and consider upon what easy terms it may be thine for ever. The portion is no less than the infinite God. 'Behold, the nations are as a drop of the bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: all nations before him are as nothing, and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity,' Isa. 40:15, 17. Other portions are bodily; he is spiritual, and so suitable to thy soul. Other portions are mixed, like the Israelites' pillar, which had a dark as well as a light side; but he is pure; there is not the least spot in this sun; he is a sea of sweetness without the smallest drop of gall. Other portions are particular; there are some chinks in the outward man which they cannot fill, besides the many leaks of the soul, none of which they can stop; but he is a universal portion. All the excellencies of the creatures, even when their dregs and imperfections are removed, are but dark shadows of those many substantial excellencies which are in him. He made all, he hath all, he is all. The most fluent tongue will quickly be at a loss in extolling him, for he is above all blessing and praises. Other portions are debasing, like dross to gold, an allay to its worth; but he is an advancing portion, as a set of diamonds to a royal crown, infinitely adding to its value. Other portions are perishing; they may be lost; they will be left when death calls; thy cloth will be then drawn, and not one dish remain on the table. But he is an everlasting portion. The souls that feast with him, like Mephibosheth at David's, eat bread at his table continually. 'In his presence is fulness of joy, and at his right hand are pleasures for evermore.' Now, is not here infinite reason why thou shouldst choose this God for thy portion?

Consider the terms upon which he is willing to be thy portion. He desires no more than thou wouldst take him for thy treasure and happiness. Surely such a portion is worthy of all acceptance. Be thy own judge; may not God expect, and doth he not deserve, as much respect as thine earthly portion hath had? Can thy esteem of him be too high, or thy love to him be too hot, or thy labour for him too great? Oh what warm embraces hast thou given the world! Throw that strumpet now out of thine arms, and take the fairest of ten thousand in her room. What high thoughts hast thou had of the world? What wouldst thou not formerly do or suffer to gain a little more of it? Now, pull down that usurper out of the throne, and set the King of saints there, whose place it is. Esteem him superlatively above all things, and make it thy business, whatsoever he call thee to do or suffer, to gain his love, which is infinitely better than life itself. Do but exalt him in thy heart as thy chiefest good, and in thy life as thine utmost end, and he will make a deed of gift of himself to thee. Is it not rational what he desires? Why shouldst thou then refuse? Here is God, there is the world; here is bread, there is husks; here is the substance, there is a shadow; here is paradise, there is an apple; here is fulness, there is emptiness; here is a fountain, there is a broken cistern; here is all things, there is nothing; here is heaven, there is hell; here is eternity, I say, eternity of joy and pleasure, there is eternity. O that word eternity, of sorrow and pain! Choose now which of the two thou wilt take, and advise with thyself what word I shall bring again to him that sent me, 1 Chron. 21:12.

## **CHAPTER XX**

Comfort to such as have God for their portion

Fourthly, The doctrine may be useful by way of consolation. It speaketh much comfort to every true Christian—God is thy portion. Thy portion is not in toys and trifles, in narrow limited creatures, but in the blessed boundless God. He cannot be poor who hath my lord mayor to his friend, much less he that hath God to his portion—a

portion so precious and perfect, that none of the greatest arithmeticians ever undertook to compute its worth, as knowing it impossible—a portion so permanent, that neither death, nor life, nor the world, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, can part thee from it. This cordial may enliven thee in a dying estate. None can part thee and thy portion. The winter may freeze the ponds, but not the ocean. All other portions may be frozen and useless in hard weather, but this portion is ever full and filling. Hagar, when her bottle of water was spent, wept, because she did not see the fountain that was so near her. The absence of the creatures need not make thee mourn, who hast the presence of the Creator.

Thou mayest have comfort from thy portion in the most afflicted condition. Do men plunder thee of thy estate? Thou art rich towards God, and mayest suffer the spoiling of thy goods joyfully, knowing that thou hast a more enduring substance, Heb. 10:34. Do they cast thee into prison? Though thy body be in fetters, thy soul enjoyeth freedom. No chains can so fasten thee to the earth, but thou mayest mount up to heaven upon the wings of meditation and prayer. Do they take away thy food? Thou hast meat to eat which they know not of, and wine to drink which makes glad the heart of man, Ps. 104:15. Is thy body sick? Thy soul is sound, and so long all is well. The inhabitants shall not say, I am sick. The people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquities. Is thy life in danger? If thine enemies kill thee, they cannot hurt thee; they will do thee the greatest courtesy. They will do that kindness for thee, for which thou hast many a time prayed, sighed, wept; even free thee from thy corruptions, and send thee to the beatifical vision. When they call thee out to die, they do but, as Christ to Peter, call thee up to the mount, where thou shalt see thy Saviour transfigured, and say, Let us build tabernacles. Oh, it is good to be here. Though Saul was frantic without a fiddler, and Belshazzar could not be cheerful without his cups, yet the philosopher could be merry, saith Plato, without music, and much more the Christian under the greatest outward misery. What weight can sink him who hath the everlasting arms to support

him? What want can sadden him who hath infinite bounty and mercy to supply him? Nothing can make him miserable who hath God for his happiness. 'Blessed is the people whose God is the Lord.' O Christian, thou mayest walk so that the world may know thou art above their affrightments, and that all their allurements are below thy hopes.

In particular, the doctrine is comfortable against the death of our Christian friends, and against our own deaths.

First, It is a comfort against the death of our friends. God is a godly man's portion, therefore they are blessed who die in the Lord without us; and we are happy who live in the Lord without them.

It is a comfort that they are happy without creatures. What wise man will grieve at his friend's gain? In the ceremonial law there was a year of jubilee, in which every man who had lost or sold his land, upon the blowing of a trumpet had possession again. The death's-day of thy believing relation is his day of jubilee, in which he is restored to the possession of his eternal and inestimable portion. Who ever pined that married an heir in his minority, at his coming to age, and going to receive his portion? Their death is not penal, but medicinal; not destructive, but perfective to their souls. It doth that for them which none of the ordinances of God, nor providences of God, nor graces of the Spirit ever yet did for them. It sends the weary to their sweet and eternal rest. This serpent is turned into a rod, with which God works wonders for their good. The Thracians wept at the births of men, and feasted at their funerals. If they counted mortality a mercy, who could see death only to be the end of outward sufferings, shall not we who besides that see it to be the beginning of matchless and endless solace? A wife may well wring her hands, and pierce her heart with sorrow, when her husband is taken away from her, and dragged to execution, to hell; but surely she may rejoice when he is called from her by his prince, to live at court in the greatest honours and pleasures, especially when she is promised within a few days to be

sent for to him, and to share with him in those joys and delights for ever.

Some observe that the Egyptians mourned longer (for they mourned seventy days) for old Jacob's death than Joseph his own son; and the reason is this, because they had hopes only in this life, when Joseph knew that, as his father's body was carried to the earthly, so his soul was translated to the heavenly Canaan. 'I would not have you ignorant concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not even as others that have no hope,' 1 Thes. 4:13.

As they are happy without us, for God is their portion; so we are happy without them. We have our God still; that stormy wind which blew out our candles, did not extinguish our sun. Our friend, when on his or her deathbed, might bespeak us, as Jacob his sons: 'I die, but God shall visit you; I go from you, but God shall abide with you. I leave you, but God will find you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.' Reader, if God live, though thy friends die, I hope thou art not lost, thou art not undone. May not God say to thee, when thou art pining and whining for the death of thy relations or friends, as if thou wert eternally miserable, as Elkanah to Hannah: 'Am not I better to thee than ten sons?' Am not I better to thee than ten husbands, than ten wives, than ten thousand worlds? Oh think of it, and take comfort in it!

Secondly, It is comfortable against thy own death. God is thy portion, and at death thou shalt take possession of thy vast estate. Now thou hast a freehold in law, a right to it; but then thou shalt have a freehold in deed, make thy entry on it, and be really seized of it. It is much that heathens who were purblind and could not see afar off into the joys and pleasures of the other world, the hopes of which alone can make death truly desirable, should with less fear meet this foe than many Christians. Nay, it was more difficult to persuade several of those pagans to live out all their days, than it is to persuade some amongst us to be willing to die when God calls them. Codrus could throw himself into a pit, that his country might live by his

death. Cato could, against the entreaty of all his friends, with his own hands, open the door at which his life went out. Platinus, the philosopher, held mortality a mercy, that we might not always be liable to the miseries of this life. When the Persian king wept that all his army should die in the revolution of an age, Artabanus told him that they should all meet with so many and such great evils, that they should wish themselves dead long before. Lysimachus threatened to kill Theodorus, but he stoutly answered the king, that was no great matter; the cantharides, a little fly, could do as much. Cleombrotus having read Plato of the soul's immortality, did presently send his own soul out of his body to try and taste it. The bare opinion of the Druids, that the soul had a continuance after death, made them hardy in all dangers, saith Cæsar, and fearless of death.<sup>2</sup>

Christians surely have more cause to be valiant in their last conflict; and it is no credit to their Father that they are so loath to go home. The Turks tell us that surely Christians do not believe heaven to be so glorious a place as they talk of; for if they did, they would not be so unwilling to go thither. It may make the world think the child hath but cold welcome at his father's house, that he lingers so much abroad; certainly such bring an ill report upon the good land.

Christian, what is it in death that thou art afraid of? Is it not a departure, the jail delivery of a long prisoner, the sleep of thy body, and a wakening of thy soul, the way to bliss, the gate of life, the portal to paradise? Art thou not sure to triumph before thou fightest, by dying to overcome death, and when thou leavest thy body, to be joined to thy head? The Roman general, in the encounter between Scipio and Hannibal, thought he could not use a more effectual persuasion to encourage his soldiers, than to tell them that they were to fight with those whom they had formerly overcome, and who were as much their slaves as their enemies. Thou art to enter the list against that adversary whom thou hast long ago conquered in Jesus Christ, and who is more thy slave than thine enemy. Death is thine, 1 Cor. 3:22, thy servant and slave to help off thy clothes, and to put thee to thine everlasting happy rest.

Is it the taking down of thine earthly tabernacle which troubles thee? Why, dost thou not know that death is the workman sent by the Father to pull down this earthly house of mortality and clay, that it may be set up anew, infinitely more lasting, beautiful, and glorious? Didst thou believe how rich and splendid he intends to make it, which cannot be unless taken down, thou wouldst contentedly endure the present toil and trouble, and be thankful to him for his care and cost. He takes down thy vile body, that he may fashion it like to the glorious body of his own Son, which for brightness and beauty excels the sun in its best attire, far more than that doth the meanest star.

Is it the untying of the knot betwixt body and soul which perplexeth thee? It is true they part; but, as friends going two several ways, shake hands till they return from their journey; they are as sure of meeting again as of parting; for thy soul shall return laden with the wealth of heaven, and fetch his old companion to the participation of all his joy and happiness.

Is it the rotting of thy body in the grave that grieves thee? Indeed, Plato's worldling doth sadly bewail it: Woe is me, that I shall lie alone rotting in the earth amongst the crawling worms, not seeing aught above, nor seen. But thou who hast read it is a sweet bed of spices for thy body to rest in, all the dark night of this world's duration, mayest well banish such fears. Hast thou never heard God speaking to thee, as once to Jacob, 'Fear not to go down into (Egypt, into) the grave, I will go down with thee, and I will bring thee up again,' Gen. 46:4.

Besides, thy soul, shall never die. The heathen historian could comfort himself against death with this weak cordial, *Non omnis moriar*, All of me doth not die; though my body be mortal, my books are immortal. But thou hast a stronger julep, a more rich cordial to clear thy spirits; when thy body fails, thy soul will flourish. Thy death is a burnt-offering; when thy ashes fall to the earth, the celestial flame of thy soul will mount up to heaven. Farther, death will ease thee of those most troublesome guests, which make thy life now so

burdensome; as the fire to the three children did not so much as singe or sear their bodies, but it burnt and consumed their bands, so death would not the least hurt thy body or soul, but it would destroy those fetters of sin and sorrow, in which thou art entangled. Besides, the sight of the blessed God, which is the only beatifical vision, which at death thy soul shall enjoy. Popish pilgrims take tedious journeys, and are put to much hardship and expense to behold a dumb idol. The queen of Sheba came from far to see Solomon, and hear his wisdom; and wilt thou not take a step from earth to heaven—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, thy journey will be gone, and thy work be done—to see Jesus Christ, a greater than Solomon? Hast thou not many a time prayed long, and cried for it? Hast thou not trembled lest thou shouldst miss it? Hath not thine heart once and again leaped with joy in hope of it? And when the hour is come, and thou art sent for, dost thou shrink back? For shame, Christian; walk worthy of thy calling, and quicken thy courage in thy last conflict. As the Jews, when it thunders and lightens, open their windows, expecting the Messiah should come. Oh when the storm of death beats upon thy body, with what joy mayest thou set those casements of thy soul, faith and hope, wide open, knowing that thy dearest Redeemer, who went before to prepare a place for thee, will then come and fetch thee to himself; that where he is, there thou mayest be also, and that for ever.

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