Human Nature in Its Fourfold State

Thomas Boston

Christian Classic Collection

Human Nature in Its Fourfold State

Thomas Boston

CHRISTIAN
CLASSIC
COLLECTION

Copyright © 2025 by BSB Publishing LLC

Thomas Boston

Thomas Boston (1676–1732) was a beloved Scottish pastor, theologian, and writer whose humility and depth left a lasting mark on Reformed spirituality. Born in Duns, Scotland, he grew up in a devout Presbyterian home and experienced profound personal struggles that shaped his compassionate approach to ministry. Ordained at just twenty-two, Boston served most of his life in the small rural parish of Ettrick, where his faithful preaching and pastoral warmth transformed an ordinary village into a place of extraordinary spiritual vitality.

Boston's most enduring work, *Human Nature in Its Fourfold State*, remains a classic of Christian teaching—offering a clear, heartfelt exploration of humanity in innocence, sin, grace, and glory. His role in the Marrow Controversy, sparked by the republication of *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, revealed his passion for the free grace of God; he defended the Gospel against legalism with both firmness and tenderness.

A man acquainted with suffering, Boston poured consolation into his writings and sermons, always pointing believers to Christ's sufficiency. His Memoirs, published posthumously, reveal a soul of deep sincerity and devotion. Thomas Boston stands as a model of pastoral faithfulness—rich in doctrine, rich in grace, and unshakably anchored in the love of God.

Introduction

Thomas Boston’s classic is a spiritual map with four bright landmarks: creation’s innocence, sin’s ruin, grace’s rescue, and eternity’s rest (or loss). With a pastor’s tenderness and a surgeon’s clarity, Boston shows us humanity as God made us—upright and joyful; as we are by nature—fallen, guilty, and helpless; as we may be by grace—united to Christ, justified, renewed, and set on a new road; and as we shall be forever—either perfected in glory or fixed in misery. He writes for the conscience, not the classroom: Scripture on every page, homely images from everyday life, and applications that land where we live—marriage and work, sorrow and temptation, prayer and hope.

Expect conviction that leads to comfort. Boston refuses flattery; he tells the hard truth so the better news can sing. He will teach you to know yourself honestly, flee to Christ readily, and walk carefully with a joy that has ballast. Read with a pen and a prayer. By the final chapters, the world will look clearer, your sin darker, and Christ immeasurably more precious.

State I.

The State of Innocence

"Lo, this only have I found, that God has made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions." Eccl. 7:29

There are four things very necessary to be known by all who would see heaven:

1. What man was in the state of innocence, as God made him.

2. What he is in the state of corrupt nature, as he has unmade himself.

3. What he must be in the state of grace, as created in Christ Jesus unto good works, if ever he be made a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light.

4. What he will be in his eternal state, as made by the Judge of all, either perfectly happy, or completely miserable, and that forever.

These are weighty points, which touch the vitals of practical godliness, from which most men, and even many professors, in these dregs of time, are quite estranged. I design, therefore, under the divine conduct, to open up these things, and apply them.

I begin with the first of them, namely, the State of Innocence: that beholding man polished after the similitude of a palace, the ruins may the more affect us; we may the more prize that matchless Person whom the Father has appointed the repairer of the breach; and that we may, with fixed resolves, betake ourselves to that way which leads to the city which has immoveable foundations.

In the text we have three things:

1. The state of innocence wherein man was created. "God has made man upright." By "man" here we are to understand our first parents; the archetypal pair, the root of mankind, and the fountain from whence all generations have streamed; as may appear by

comparing Gen. 5:1, 2, "In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him: male and female created he them; and blessed them," as the root of mankind, "and called their name Adam." The original word is the same in our text. In this sense, man was made *upright* (agreeable to the nature of God, whose work is perfect), without any imperfection, corruption, or principle of corruption, in his body or soul. He was made "upright," that is, straight with the will and law of God, without any irregularity in his soul. By the set it got in its creation, it directly pointed towards God, as his chief end; which straight inclination was represented, as in an emblem, by the erect figure of his body, a figure that no other living creature partakes of. What David was in a gospel sense, that was he in a legal sense; one "according to God's own heart," altogether righteous, pure, and holy. God made him thus: he did not first make him, and then make him righteous; but in the very making of him, he made him righteous. Original righteousness was created with him; so that in the same moment he was a man, he was a righteous man, morally good; with the same breath that God breathed into him a living soul, he breathed into him a righteous soul.

2. Here is man's fallen state: "But they have sought out many inventions." They fell off from their rest in God, and fell upon seeking inventions of their own, to mend their case; and they quite marred it. Their ruin was from their own proper motion: they would not abide as God had made them; but they sought out inventions, to deform and undo themselves.

3. Observe here the certainty and importance of these things: "Lo, this only have I found," etc. Believe them, they are the result of a narrow search, and a serious inquiry, performed by the wisest of men. In the two preceding verses, Solomon represents himself as in quest of goodness in the world; but the issue of it was, he could find no satisfying end of his search after it; though it was not for lack of pains, for he "counted one by one, to find out the account." "Behold, this have I found, says the preacher," namely,

"That," as the same word is read in our text, "yet my soul seeks—but I find not." He could make no satisfying discovery of it, which might end his inquiry. He found the good very rare, one as it were among a thousand. But could that satisfy the grand query, "Where shall wisdom be found?" No it could not—and if the experience of others in this point, run counter to Solomon's, as it is no reflection on his discernment, it can as little decide the question, which will remain undetermined until the last day. But, amidst all this uncertainty there is one point found out and fixed—"This have I found." You may depend upon it as a most certain truth, and be fully satisfied in it; "Lo this;" fix your eyes upon it, as a matter worthy of most deep and serious regard, namely, that man's nature is now depraved—but that depravity was not from God, for he "made man upright;" but from themselves, "they have sought out many inventions."

Doctrine. God made man altogether righteous.

This is that state of innocence in which God placed man in the world. It is described in the holy Scripture with a running pen, in comparison of the following states; for it was of no continuance—but passed away as a flying shadow, by man's abusing the freedom of his will. I shall,

I. Inquire into the righteousness of this state wherein man was created.

II. Lay before you some of the happy attendants and consequences thereof.

III. Applying the whole.

I. Of Man's Original Righteousness.

As to the righteousness of this state, consider, that as uncreated righteousness, *the righteousness of God* is the supreme rule; so all created righteousness, whether of men or angels, has respect to a

law as its rule, and is a conformity thereto. A creature can no more be morally independent of God in its actions and powers, than it can be naturally independent of him. A creature, as a creature, must acknowledge the Creator's will as its supreme law; for as it cannot exist without him, so it must not be but for him, and according to his will; yet no law obliges, until it is revealed. And hence it follows, that there was a law, which man, as a rational creature, was subjected to in his creation; and that this law was revealed to him.

"God made man upright," says the text. This supposes a law to which he was conformed in his creation; as when anything is made regular, or according to rule, of necessity the rule itself is presupposed. Whence we may gather, that this law was no other than the eternal, indispensable law of righteousness, observed in all points by the second Adam, opposed by the carnal mind, and some notions of which remain yet among the Pagans, who, "having not the law, are a law unto themselves," Romans 2:14. In a word, this law is the very same which was afterwards summed up in the ten commandments, and promulgated, on mount Sinai, to the Israelites, called by us the moral law, and man's righteousness consisted in conformity to this law or rule.

More particularly, there is a twofold conformity required of a man—a conformity of the powers of his soul to the law, which you may call habitual righteousness; and a conformity of all his actions to it, which is actual righteousness. Now, God made man habitually righteous; man was to make himself actually righteous—the former was the stock which God put into his hand; the latter was the improvement he should have made of it. The sum of what I have said is, that the righteousness wherein man was created, was the conformity of all the faculties and powers of his soul to the moral law. This is what we call Original Righteousness, which man was originally endued with. We may take it up in these three things:

1. Man's UNDERSTANDING was a lamp of light. He had perfect knowledge of the law, and of his duty accordingly—he was made after God's image, and consequently could not lack knowledge, which is a part thereof, Col. 3:10, "The new man is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him who created him." And indeed, this was necessary to fit him for universal obedience; seeing no obedience can be according to the law, unless it proceed from a sense of the commandment of God requiring it. It is true, Adam had not the law written upon tables of stone; but it was written upon his mind, the knowledge thereof being created with him. God impressed it upon his soul, and made him a law to himself, as the remains of it among the heathens do testify, Romans 2:14, 15. And seeing man was made to be the mouth of the creation, to glorify God in his works, we have ground to believe he had naturally an exquisite knowledge of the works of God. We have a proof of this in Adam's giving names to the beasts of the field, and the fowls of the air, and those such as express their nature. "Whatever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof," Gen. 2:19. The dominion which God gave him over the creatures, soberly to use and dispose of them according to his will (still in subordination to the will of God), seems to require no less than a knowledge of their natures. And, besides all this, his perfect knowledge of the law proves his knowledge in the management of civil affairs, which, in respect of the law of God, "a good man will guide with discretion," Psalm 112:5.

2. His WILL in all things was agreeable with the will of God, Eph. 4:24. There was no corruption in his will, no inclination to evil; for that is sin, properly and truly so called—hence the apostle says, Rom 7:7, "I had not known sin—but by the law; for I had not known lust, except the law had said, You shall not covet." An inclination to evil is really a fountain of sin, and therefore inconsistent with that rectitude and uprightness which the text expressly says he was endued with at his creation. The will of man, then, was directed and naturally inclined to God and goodness,

though mutable. It was disposed, by its original make, to follow the Creator's will, as the shadow does the body; and was not left in an equal balance to good and evil—for at that rate he had not been upright, nor habitually conformed to the law; which in no moment can allow the creature not to be inclined towards God as his chief end, any more than it can allow man to be a God to himself. The law was impressed upon Adam's soul—now this, according to the new covenant, by which the image of God is repaired, consists in two things:

(1.) Putting the law in the mind, denoting the knowledge of it.

(2.) Writing it in the heart, denoting inclinations in the will, answerable to the commands of the law, Heb. 8:10. So that as the will, when we consider it as renewed by grace, is by that grace naturally inclined to the same holiness, in all its parts, which the law requires; so was the will of man, when we consider him as God made him at first, endued with natural inclinations to everything commanded by the law. For if the regenerate are partakers of the divine nature, as undoubtedly they are, for so says the Scripture, 2 Pet. 1:4; and if this divine nature can import no less than the inclination of the heart to holiness, then surely Adam's will could not lack this inclination; for in him the image of God was perfect. It is true it is said, Romans 2:14, 15, "That the Gentiles show the work of the law written in their hearts;" but this denotes only their knowledge of that law, such as it is—but the apostle to the Hebrews, in the text cited, takes the word heart in another sense, distinguishing it plainly from the mind. And it must be granted, that, when God promises, in the new covenant, "to write his law in the hearts of his people," it imports quite another thing than what heathens have—for though they have notions of it in their minds—yet their hearts go another way; their will has a bent and bias quite contrary to that law; therefore, the expression suitable to the present purpose must needs import, besides these notions of the mind, inclinations of the will going along therewith; which inclinations, though mixed with corruption in the regenerate, were

pure and unmixed in upright Adam. In a word, as Adam knew his Master's pleasure in the matter of duty, so his will inclined to what he knew.

3. His AFFECTIONS were orderly, pure, and holy; which is a necessary part of that uprightness wherein man was created. The apostle has a petition, 2 Thess. 3:5, "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God;" that is, "The Lord straighten your hearts," or make them lie straight to the love of God—and our text tells us that man was made straight. "The new man is created in righteousness and true holiness," Eph. 4:24. Now this holiness, as it is distinguished from righteousness, may import the purity and good order of the affections. Thus the apostle, 1 Tim. 2:8, will have men to "pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting:" because, as troubled water is unfit to receive the image of the sun, so the heart filled with impure and disorderly affections is not fit for divine communications. Man's sensitive appetite was, indeed, naturally carried out towards objects grateful to the senses. For seeing man was made up of body and soul, and God made man to glorify and enjoy him, and for this end to use his good creatures in subordination to himself; it is plain that man was naturally inclined both to spiritual and sensible good; yet to spiritual good, the chief good as his ultimate end. Therefore, his sensitive motions and inclinations were subordinate to his reason and will, which lay straight with the will of God, and were not in the least contrary to the same. Otherwise he would have been made up of contradictions; his soul being naturally inclined to God, as the chief end, in the superior part thereof; and the same soul inclined to the creature, as the chief end, in the inferior part thereof, as they call it—which is impossible, for man, at the same instant, cannot have two chief ends.

Man's affections, then, in his primitive state, were pure from all defilement, free from all disorder and distemper, because in all their motions they were duly subjected to his clear reason, and his holy will. He had also an executive power answerable to his will; a

power to do the good which he knew should be done, and which he was inclined to do, even to fulfill the whole law of God. If it had not been so, God would have required of him perfect obedience; for to say that "the Lord gathers where he has not sown," is but the blasphemy of a wicked heart against so good and bountiful a God, Matt. 25:24-26.

From what has been said, it may be gathered, that **the original righteousness explained was universal and natural—yet mutable.**

1. It was **UNIVERSAL**, both with respect to the **subject** of it—the whole man; and the **object** of it—the whole law. Universal, I say, with respect to the **subject** of it; for this righteousness was diffused through the whole man—it was a blessed leaven, which leavened the whole lump. There was not a wrong pin in the tabernacle of human nature, when God set it up, however shattered it is now. Man was then holy in soul, body, and spirit; while the soul remained untainted, its lodging was kept clean and undefiled; the members of the body were consecrated vessels, and instruments of righteousness. A combat between flesh and spirit, reason and appetite, nay, the least inclination to sin, or lust of the flesh in the inferior part of the soul, was utterly inconsistent with this uprightness in which man was created; and has been invented to veil the corruption of man's nature, and to obscure the grace of God in Jesus Christ; it looks very much like the language of fallen Adam, laying his own sin at his Maker's door, Gen. 3:12, "The woman whom you gave me—she gave me of the tree, and I did eat."

But as this righteousness was universal in respect of the subject, because it spread through the whole man; so also it was universal in respect of the **object**, the holy law. There was nothing in the law but what was agreeable to his reason and will, as God made him, though sin has now set him at odds with it; his soul was shaped out in length and breadth to the commandment, though exceeding

broad; so that his original righteousness was not only perfect in its parts—but in degrees.

2. As it was universal, so it was **NATURAL** to him, and not supernatural in that state. Not that it was essential to man, as man, for then he could not have lost it, without the loss of his very being; but it was natural to him—he was created with it, and it was necessary to the perfection of man, as he came out of the hand of God, necessary to his being placed in a state of integrity. Yet,

3. It was **MUTABLE**; it was a righteousness that might be lost, as is manifested by the doleful event. His will was not absolutely indifferent to good and evil; God set it towards good only—yet he did not so fix and confirm its inclinations, that it could not alter. No, it was moveable to evil, and that only by man himself, God having given him a sufficient power to stand in this integrity, if he had pleased. Let no man quarrel with God's works in this; for if Adam had been unchangeably righteous, he must have been so either by nature or by free gift—by nature he could not be so, for that is proper to God, and incommunicable to any creature; if by free gift, then no wrong was done to him in withholding what he could not crave. Confirmation in a righteous state is a reward of grace, given upon continuing righteous through the state of trial, and would have been given to Adam if he had stood out the time appointed for probation by the Creator; and accordingly is given to the saints upon account of the merits of Christ, who "was obedient even unto death." And herein believers have the advantage of Adam, that they can never totally nor finally fall away from grace.

Thus was man made originally righteous, being created in "God's own image," Gen. 1:27, which consists in the positive qualities of "knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness," Col. 3:10; Eph. 4:24. "All that God made was very good," according to their several natures, Gen. 1:31. And so was man morally good, being made after the image of him who is "good and upright," Psalm 25:8. Without this, he could not have answered the great end of his

creation, which was, to know, love, and serve his God, according to his will; nay, he could not be created otherwise, for he must either be conformed to the law in his powers, principles, and inclinations, or not—if he was, then he was righteous; and, if not, he was a sinner, which is absurd and horrible to imagine.

II. I shall lay before you some of those things which accompanied or flowed from the righteousness of man's primitive state. Happiness is the result of holiness; and as this was a holy, so it was a happy state.

1. Man was then a very glorious creature. We have reason to suppose, that as Moses' face shone when he came down from the mount, so man had a very lightsome and pleasant countenance, and beautiful body, while as yet there was no darkness of sin in him at all. But seeing God himself is "glorious in holiness," Exod. 15:11, surely that spiritual loveliness which the Lord put upon man at his creation, made him a very glorious creature. O, how did light shine in his holy life, to the glory of the Creator! while every action was but the darting forth of a ray and beam of that glorious unmixed light which God had set up in his soul, while that lamp of love, lighted from heaven, continued burning in his heart, as in the holy place; and the law of the Lord, put in his inward parts by the finger of God, was kept by him there, as in the most holy place. There was no impurity to be seen without; no squint look in the eyes, after any unclean thing; the tongue spoke nothing but the language of heaven; and, in a word, "the King's son was all glorious within," and his "clothing of wrought gold."

2. He was the favorite of Heaven. He shone brightly in the image of God; who cannot but love his own image, wherever it appears. While he was alone in the world, he was not alone, for God was with him. His communion and fellowship were with his Creator, and that immediately; for as yet there was nothing to turn away the face

of God from the work of his own hands, seeing sin had not as yet entered, which alone could make the breach.

By the favor of God he was advanced to be confederate with heaven in the first covenant, called the covenant of works. God reduced the law, which he gave in his creation, into the form of a covenant, whereof perfect obedience was the condition—life was the thing promised, and death the penalty. As for the condition, one great branch of the natural law was, that man should believe whatever God revealed, and should do whatever he commanded; accordingly, God making this covenant with man, extended his duty to the "not eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil;" and the law thus extended, was the rule of man's covenant obedience. How easy were these terms to him who had the natural law written on his heart; and that inclining him to obey this positive law revealed to him, it seems, by an audible voice, Gen. 2:16, 17, the matter whereof was so very easy! And indeed, it was highly reasonable that the rule and matter of his covenant obedience should be thus extended, that which was added being a thing in itself indifferent, where his obedience was to turn upon the precise point of the will of God, the plainest evidence of true obedience; and it being in an external thing, wherein his obedience or disobedience would be most clear and conspicuous.

Now, upon this condition, God promised him life, the continuance of natural life, in the union of soul and body, and of spiritual life, in the favor of his Creator—he promised him also eternal life in heaven, to have been entered into when he should have passed the time of his trial upon earth, and the Lord should see fit to transport him into the upper paradise. This promise of life was included in the threatening of death, mentioned, Gen. 2:17. For while God says, "In the day you eat thereof, you shall surely die;" it is, in effect, "If you do not eat of it, you shall surely live." And this was sacramentally confirmed by another tree in the garden, called therefore, "The Tree of Life," which he was debarred from, when he had sinned; Gen. 3:22, 23, "Lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of

life, and eat, and live forever; therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden."

Yet it is not to be thought that man's life and death did hang only on this matter of the forbidden fruit—but on the whole law; for so says the apostle, Gal. 3:10, "It is written, Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." That of the forbidden fruit was a revealed part of Adam's religion, and so was necessary expressly to be laid before him; but as to the natural law, he naturally knew death to be the wages of disobedience, for the very heathens were not ignorant of this, "knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death," Romans 1:32. Moreover, the promise included in the threatening, secured Adam's life, according to the covenant, as long as he obeyed the natural law, with the addition of that positive command; so that he needed nothing to be expressed to him in the covenant but what concerned the eating of the forbidden fruit.

That eternal life in heaven was promised in this covenant, is plain from this, that the threatening was of eternal death in hell, to which, when man had made himself liable, Christ was promised, by his death to purchase eternal life. And Christ himself expounds the promise of the covenant of works, of eternal life, while he proposes the condition of that covenant to a proud young man, who, though he had not Adam's stock—yet would needs enter into life in the way of working, as Adam was to have done under this covenant, Matt. 19:17, "If you will enter into life" (namely, eternal life, by doing, ver. 16), "keep the commandments."

The penalty was death, Gen. 2:17, "In the day that you eat thereof, you shall surely die." The death threatened was such as the life promised was, and that most justly; namely, temporal, spiritual, and eternal death. The event is a commentary on this; for that very day he did eat thereof he was a dead man in law—but the execution was stopped because of his posterity, then in his loins, and another

covenant was prepared—however, that day his body got its death-wound, and became mortal. Death also seized his soul; he lost his original righteousness, and the favor of God; witness the pangs of conscience which made him hide himself from God. And he became liable to eternal death, which would have actually followed of course, if the Mediator had not been provided, who found him bound with the cords of death, as a malefactor ready to be led to execution. Thus you have a short description of the covenant into which the Lord brought man in the state of innocence.

And does it seem a small thing unto you, that earth was thus confederate with heaven? This could have been done to none but him whom the King of Heaven delighted to honor. It was an act of grace, worthy of the gracious God whose favorite he was; for there was grace and free favor in the first covenant, though the exceeding riches of grace, as the apostle calls it, Eph. 2:7, were reserved for the second. It was certainly an act of grace, favor, and admirable condescension in God, to enter into a covenant, and such a covenant, with his own creature. Man was not at his own—but at God's disposal, nor had he anything to work with but what he had received from God. There was no proportion between the work and the promised reward. Before that covenant, man was bound to perfect obedience, in virtue of his natural dependence on God; and death was naturally the wages of sin, which the justice of God could and would have required, though there had never been any covenant between God and man—but God was free; man could never have required eternal life as the reward of his work, if there had not been such a covenant. God was free to have disposed of his creatures as he saw fit—if he had stood in his integrity to the end of time, and there had been no covenant promising eternal life to him upon his obedience, God might have withdrawn his supporting hand at last and so have made him creep back into nothing, whence almighty power had drawn him forth. And, what wrong could have been in this, for God would have only taken back what he freely gave? But now, the covenant being made, God

becomes debtor to his own faithfulness—if man will work, he may crave the reward on the ground of the covenant. Well might the angels, then, upon his being raised to this dignity, have given him this salutation—"Hail! you who is highly favored, the Lord is with you."

3. God made him lord of the world, prince of the inferior creatures, universal Lord and emperor of the whole earth. His creator gave him dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, over all the earth, yes, and every living thing that moves on the earth; he "put all things under his feet," Psalm 8:6-8. He gave him a power, soberly to use and dispose of the creatures in the earth, sea, and air. Thus man was God's deputy governor in the lower world, and this his dominion was an image of God's sovereignty. This was common to the man and to the woman—but the man had one thing peculiar to him, namely, that he had dominion over the woman also, 1 Cor. 11:7. Behold how the creatures came unto him, to own their subjection, and to do him homage as their Lord, and quietly stood before him until he put names on them as his own, Gen. 2:19. Man's face struck an awe upon them; the stoutest creatures stood astonished, tamely and quietly owning him as their Lord and ruler. Thus was man "crowned with glory and honor," Psalm 8:5. The Lord dealt most liberally and bountifully with him, "put all things under his feet;" only he kept one thing, one tree in the garden, out of his hands, even the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

But you may say, and did he grudge him this? I answer, Nay; but when he had made him thus holy and happy, he graciously gave him this restriction, which was in its own nature a prop and stay to keep him from falling. And this I say upon these three grounds:

(1.) As it was most proper for the honor of God, who had made man Lord of the lower world, to assert his sovereign dominion over all, by some particular visible sign; so it was most proper for man's safety. Man being set down in a beautiful paradise, it was an act of

infinite wisdom, and of grace too, to keep him from one single tree, as a visible testimony that he must hold all of his Creator, as his great landlord; that so, while he saw himself Lord of the creatures, he might not forget that he was still God's subject.

(2.) This was a memorial of his mutable state given to him from heaven, to be laid up by him for his greater caution. For man was created with a free will to good, which the tree of life was an evidence of—but his will was also free to evil, and the forbidden tree was to him a memorial thereof. It was, in a manner, a continual watchword to him against evil, a beacon set up before him, to bid him beware of dashing himself to pieces on the rock of sin.

(3.) God made man upright, directed towards God as his chief end. He set him, like Moses, on the top of the hill, holding up his hands to heaven—and as Aaron and Hur held up Moses' hands, Exodus 17:10-12, so God gave man an erect figure of body, and forbade him the eating of this tree to keep him in that posture of uprightness wherein he was created. God made the beasts looking down towards the earth, to show that their satisfaction might be brought from thence; and accordingly it does afford them what is suited to their appetite—but the erect figure of man's body, which looks upward, showed him that his happiness lay above him, in God; and that he was to expect it from heaven, and not from earth. Now this fair tree, of which he was forbidden to eat, taught him the same lesson; that his happiness lay not in enjoyment of the creatures, for there was a lack even in paradise—so that the forbidden tree was, in effect, the hand of all the creatures, pointing man away from themselves to God for happiness. It was a sign of emptiness hung before the door of the creation, with the inscription, "This is not your rest."

4. As he had a perfect tranquility within his own bosom, so he had a perfect calm without. His heart had nothing to reproach him with; conscience then had nothing to do—but to direct, approve, and feast him—and without, there was nothing to annoy him. The

happy pair lived in perfect amity; and though their knowledge was vast, true, and clear—they knew no shame. Though they were naked, there were no blushes in their faces; for sin, the seed of shame, was not yet sown, Gen. 2:25. And their beautiful bodies were not capable of injuries from the air—so they had no need of clothes, which are originally the badges of our shame. They were liable to no diseases nor pains—and, though they were not to live idle—yet toil, weariness, and sweat of the brows, were not known in this state.

5. Man had a life of pure delight, and unalloyed pleasure, in this state. Rivers of pure pleasure ran through it. The earth, with the product thereof, was now in its glory; nothing had yet come in to mar the beauty of the creatures. God placed him, not in a common place of the earth—but in Eden, a place eminent for pleasantness, as the name of it imports; nay, not only in Eden—but in the garden of Eden—the most pleasant spot of that pleasant place; a garden planted by God himself, to be the mansion-house of this his favorite. When God made the other living creatures, he said, Let the water bring forth the moving creature," Gen. 1:29, and, Let the earth bring forth the living creature," verse 24. But when man was to be made, he said; "Let us make man," verse 18. So, when the rest of the earth was to be furnished with herbs and trees, God said, "Let the earth bring forth grass, and the fruit-tree," etc., verse 11. But of paradise it is said, "God planted it," Gen. 2:8, which cannot but denote a singular excellence in that garden, beyond all other parts of the then beautiful earth.

He was provided with everything necessary and delightful; for there was "every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food," verse 9. He knew not those delights which luxury has invented for the gratification of lust—but his delights were such as came out of the hand of God; without passing through sinful hands, which always leave marks of impurity on what they touch. So **his delights were pure—his pleasures refined.**

Yet may I show you a more excellent way—wisdom had entered into his heart; surely, then, knowledge was pleasant unto his soul. What delight do some find in their discoveries of the works of nature, by those scraps of knowledge they have gathered! but how much more exquisite pleasure had Adam, while his piercing eyes read the book of God's works, which God laid before him, to the end he might glorify him in the same; and therefore had certainly fitted him for the work! But, above all, his knowledge of God, and that as his God, and the communion which he had with him, could not but afford him the most refined and exquisite pleasure in the innermost recesses of his heart. Great is that delight which the saints find in those views of the glory of God, which their souls are sometimes let into, while they are compassed about with many infirmities—and much may well be allowed to sinless Adam; who no doubt had a peculiar relish of those pleasures.

6. He was immortal. He would never have died—if he had not sinned; it was in case of sin that death was threatened, Gen. 2:17, which shows it to be the consequence of sin, and not of the sinless human nature. The perfect constitution of his body, which came out of God's hand very good, and the righteousness and holiness of his soul, removed all inward causes of death; nothing being prepared for the grave's devouring mouth—but the vile body, Phil. 3:21, and those who have sinned, Job 24:19. And God's special care of his innocent creature, secured him against outward violence. The apostle's testimony is express, Romans 5:12, "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin." Behold the door by which death came in! Satan wrought with his lies until he got it opened, and so death entered; therefore, is he said to have been "a murderer from the beginning," John 8:44.

Thus have I shown you the holiness and happiness of men in this state. If any should say, What is all this to us, who never tasted of that holy and happy state? they must know, it nearly concerns us, as Adam was the root of all mankind, our common head and representative; who received from God our inheritance and stock,

to keep it for himself and his children, and to convey it to them. The Lord put all mankind's stock, as it were, in one ship; and, as we ourselves would have done, he made our common father the pilot. He put a blessing in the root, to have been, if rightly managed diffused into all the branches. According to our text, making Adam upright, he made man upright; and all mankind had that uprightness in him—for, "if the root be holy, so are the branches." But more of this afterwards. Had Adam stood, none would have quarreled with the representation.

III. The Doctrine of the State of Innocence APPLIED.

Use 1. For INFORMATION. This shows us,

1. That not God—but man himself was the cause of his ruin. God made him upright; his Creator set him up—but he threw himself down. Was the Lord's directing and inclining him to good, the reason of his woeful choice? or did heaven deal so sparingly with him, that his pressing needs sent him to hell to seek supply? Nay, man was, and is, the cause of his own ruin.

2. God may most justly require of men perfect obedience to his law, and condemn them for their not obeying it perfectly, though now they have no ability to keep it. In so doing, he gathers but where he has sown. He gave man ability to keep the whole law; man has lost it by his own fault; but his sin could never take away that right which God has to exact perfect obedience of his creature, and to punish in case of disobedience.

3. Behold here the infinite obligation we lie under to Jesus Christ, the second Adam, who, with his own precious blood has bought our freedom, and freely makes offer of it again to us, Hos. 13:9, and that with the advantage of everlasting security, and that it can never be altogether lost any more, John 10:28, 29. **Free grace will fix those, whom free will shook down into the gulf of misery.**

Use 2. This conveys a REPROOF to three sorts of persons:

1. To those who hate religion in the power of it, wherever it appears; and can take pleasure in nothing but in the world and in their lusts. Surely such men are far from righteousness—they are haters of God, Romans 1:30, for they are haters of his image. Upright Adam in paradise would have been a great eyesore to all such persons; as he was to the serpent, whose seed they prove themselves to be, by their malignity.

2. It reproves those who put religion to shame, and those who are ashamed of religion, before a graceless world. There is a generation, who make so bold with the God who made them, and can in a moment crush them, that they ridicule piety, and make a mock of seriousness. "Against whom do you sport yourselves? against whom make you a wide mouth, and draw out the tongue?" Isaiah 57:4. Is it not against God himself, whose image, in some measure restored to some of his creatures, makes them fools in your eyes? But, "be not mockers, lest your bands be made strong," Isaiah 28:22. Holiness was the glory which God put on man when he made him; but now the sons of men turn that glory into shame, because they themselves glory in their shame. There are others that secretly approve of religion, and in religious company will profess it, who, at other times, to be neighbor-like, are ashamed to own it; so weak are they, that they are blown over with the wind of the wicked's mouth. A broad laughter, an impious jest, a scoffing jeer, out of a profane mouth, is to many an unanswerable argument against piety and seriousness; for, in the cause of religion, they are as silly doves without heart. O, that such would consider that weighty sentence, "Whoever therefore shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he comes in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels," Mark 8:38.

3. It reproves the proud self-conceited professor, who admires himself in a garment of rags which he has patched together. There

are many who, when once they have gathered some scraps of knowledge of religion, and have attained to some reformation of life, swell big with conceit of themselves; a sad sign that the effects of the fall lie so heavy upon them that they have not as yet come to themselves, Luke 15:17. They have eyes behind, to see their attainments; but no eyes within, no eyes before, to see their wants, which would surely humble them—for true knowledge makes men to see, both what once they were, and what they are at present; and so is humbling, and will not allow them to be content with any measure of grace attained; but inclines them to press forward, "forgetting the things that are behind," Phil. 3:13. But those men are such a spectacle of commiseration, as one would be who had set his palace on fire, and was glorying in a cottage which he had built for himself out of the rubbish, though so very weak, that it could not stand against a storm.

Use 3. Of LAMENTATION. Here was a stately building; man carved like a fair palace—but now lying in ashes—let us stand and look on the ruins, and drop a tear. This is a lamentation, and shall be for lamentation. Could we avoid weeping, if we saw our country ruined, and turned by the enemy into a wilderness? if we saw our houses on fire, and our property perishing in the flames? But all this comes far short of the dismal sight; man fallen as a star from heaven! Ah, may we not now say, "O that we were as in months past!" when there was no stain in our nature, no cloud on our minds, no pollution in our hearts! Had we never been in better case, the matter had been less; but those who were brought up in scarlet—do now embrace dunghills! Where is our primitive glory now? Once no darkness in the mind, no rebellion in the will, no disorder in the affections. But ah! "How is the faithful city become an harlot! Righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers. Our silver is become dross, our wine mixed with water." **That heart which was once the temple of God, is now turned into a den of thieves.** Let our name be Ichabod, for the glory is departed!

Happy were you, O man! who was like unto you? No pain nor sickness could affect you, no death could approach you, no sigh was heard from you—until these bitter fruits were plucked from the forbidden tree! Heaven shone upon you, and earth smiled—you were the companion of angels, and the envy of devils. But how low is he now laid, who was created for dominion, and made lord of the world! "The crown is fallen from our head—woe unto us that we have sinned." The creatures that waited to do him service, are now, since the fall, set in battle-array against him, and the least of them, having commission, proves too hard for him. Waters overflow the old world; fire consumes Sodom; the stars in their courses fight against Sisera; frogs, flies, lice, etc., become executioners to Pharaoh and his Egyptians; worms eat up Herod—yes, man needs a league with the beasts; yes, with the very stones of the field, Job 5:23, having reason to fear, that everyone who finds him will slay him. Alas! how are we fallen! how are we plunged into a gulf of misery! The sun has gone down on us, death has come in at our windows; our enemies have put out our two eyes, and sport themselves with our miseries.

Let us, then, lie down in the dust, let shame and confusion cover us. Nevertheless, there is hope in Israel concerning this thing. Come then, O sinner, look to Jesus Christ, the second Adam—leave the first Adam and his covenant; come over to the Mediator and Surety of the new and better covenant; and let your hearts say, "Be you our ruler, and let this breach be under your hand." Let your "eye trickle down, and cease not, without any intermission, until the Lord looks down, and beholds from heaven," Lam. 3:49, 50.

State II.

The State of NATURE

1. The SINFULNESS of man's natural state

Genesis 6:5. "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."

We have seen what man was, as God made him; a lovely and happy creature—let us view him now as he has unmade himself; and we shall see him a sinful and a miserable creature. This is the sad state we are brought into by the fall; a state as black and doleful, as the former was glorious; and this we commonly call, "The State of Nature;" or "Man's Natural State;" according to that of the apostle, Eph. 2:3, "And were *by nature* the children of wrath, even as others." And herein two things are to be considered—1. The sinfulness; 2. The misery of this state, in which all the unregenerate live. I begin with the sinfulness of man's natural state, whereof the text gives us a full, though short account. "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great," &e.

The scope and design of these words are, to clear God's justice in bringing the flood on the old world. There are two particular causes taken notice of in the preceding verses:

1. Mixed marriages, verse 2, "The sons of God," the posterity of Seth and Enoch, professors of the true religion, married with "the daughters of men," the profane, cursed race of Cain. They did not carry the matter before the Lord, that he might choose for them, Ps. 48:14—but without any respect to the will of God, they chose, not according to the rules of their faith—but of their fancy; they "saw that they were fair;" and their marriage with them occasioned their divorce from God. This was one of the causes of the deluge, which swept away the old world. Would to God that all professors in our day could plead not guilty—but though that sin brought on the

deluge—yet the deluge has not swept away that sin; which as of old, so in our day, may justly be looked upon as one of the causes of the decay of religion. It was an ordinary thing among the Pagans, to change their gods, as they changed their condition into a married lot—many sad instances the Christian world affords of the same; as if people were of Pharaoh's opinion, That religion is only for those who have no other care upon their heads, Exodus 5:17.

2. Great oppression, verse 4, "There were giants in the earth in those days;" men of great stature, great strength, and monstrous wickedness, "filling the earth with violence," verse 11. But neither their strength, nor treasures of wickedness, could profit them in the day of wrath. Yet the gain of oppression still causes many to forget the terror of this dreadful example.

Thus much for the connection, and what particular crimes that generation was guilty of. But every person that was swept away by the flood could not be guilty of these things; and "shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Therefore, in my text, there is a general indictment drawn up against them all, "The wickedness of man was great in the earth," etc., and clearly proved, for God saw it. **Two things are here laid to their charge:**

1. Corruption of life, wickedness, great wickedness**.** I understand this of the wickedness of their lives; for it is plainly distinguished from the wickedness of their hearts. The sins of their outward lives were great in the nature of them, and greatly aggravated by their attendant circumstances—and this not only among those of the race of cursed Cain—but those of holy Seth; the wickedness of man was great. And then it is added, "in the earth:" (1.) To vindicate God's severity, in that he not only cut off sinners—but defaced the beauty of the earth, and swept off the brute creatures from it, by the deluge; that as men had set the marks of their impiety, God might set the marks of his indignation, on the earth. (2.) To show the heinousness of their sin, in making the earth, which God had so adorned for the use of man--a sink of sin, and a stage whereon to

act their wickedness, in defiance of Heaven. God *saw* this corruption of life—he not only knew it, and took notice of it—but he made them to know that he took notice of it, and that he had not forsaken the earth, though they had forsaken heaven.

2. Corruption of nature—Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. All their wicked practices are here traced to the fountain and spring-head—a corrupt heart was the source of all. The **soul**, which was made upright in all its faculties, is now wholly disordered. The **heart**, that was made according to God's own heart, is now the reverse of it, a forge of evil imaginations, a sink of inordinate affections, and a storehouse of all impiety, Mark 7:21, 22. Behold the heart of the natural man, as it is opened in our text. The **mind** is defiled; the **thoughts** of the heart are evil; the **will** and **affections** are defiled—the **imagination** of the thoughts of the heart, that is, whatever the heart frames within itself by thinking, such as judgment, choice, purposes, devices, desires, every inward motion, or rather the frame of the thoughts of the heart, namely, the frame, make, or mold of these, 1 Chron. 29:18, is evil.

Yes, and **every** imagination, every frame of his thoughts, is evil. The heart is ever framing something; but never one right thing—the frame of thoughts, in the heart of man, is exceedingly various; yet are they never cast into a right frame. But is there not, at least, a **mixture** of good in them? No, they are only evil; there is nothing in them truly good and acceptable to God—nor can anything be so, which comes out of that forge; where, not the Spirit of God—but "the prince of the power of the air, works," Eph. 2:2. Whatever changes may be found in them, are only from evil to evil; for the imagination of the heart, or frame of thoughts in natural men, is evil continually, or every day. From the first day to the last day, in this state, they are in midnight darkness; there is not the glimmering of the light of holiness in them; not one holy thought can ever be produced by the unholy heart.

O, what a vile heart is this! O, what a corrupt nature is this! The tree that always brings forth fruit—but never good fruit, whatever soil it be set in, whatever pains be taken with it, must naturally be an evil tree—and what can that heart be, whereof every imagination, every set of thoughts, is only evil, and that continually? Surely that corruption is ingrained in our hearts, interwoven with our very natures, has sunk deep into our souls, and will never be cured but by a miracle of grace. Now such is man's heart, such is his nature, until regenerating grace changes it. God, who searches the heart, **saw** man's heart was so, he took special notice of it—and the faithful and true Witness cannot mistake our case; though we are most apt to mistake ourselves in this point, and generally overlook it.

Beware that there be not a thought in your wicked heart saying, "What is that to us? Let that generation, of whom the text speaks, see to that." For the Lord has left the case of that generation on record, to be a looking-glass to all after generations, wherein they may see their own corruption of heart, and what their lives would be too, if he restrained them not—for "as in water face answers to face, so the heart of man to man," Proverbs 27:19. Adam's fall has framed all men's hearts alike in this matter. Hence the apostle, Romans 3:10-18, proves the corruption of the nature, hearts, and lives of all men, from what the psalmist says of the wicked in his day, Psalm 14:1-3; 5:9; 140:3; 10:7; 36:1; and from what Jeremiah says of the wicked in his day, Jer. 9:3, and from what Isaiah says of those that lived in his time, Isaiah 57:7, 8, and concludes, verse 19, "Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God."

Had the history of the deluge been transmitted unto us, without the reason thereof in the text, we might thence have gathered the corruption and total depravity of man's nature—for what other quarrel could the holy and just God have with the infants that were destroyed by the flood, seeing they had no actual sin? If we saw a

wise man, who, having made a beautiful piece of work, and heartily approved of it when he gave it out of his hand, as fit for the use it was designed for, rise up in wrath and break it all in pieces, when he looked on it afterwards; should we not thence conclude that the frame of it had been quite marred since it came out of his hand, and that it does not serve for the use it was at first designed for? How much more, when we see the holy and wise God destroying the work of his own hands, once solemnly pronounced by him very good, may we not conclude that the original frame thereof is utterly marred, that it cannot be mended—but must needs be new made, or lost altogether? Gen. 6:6, 7, "And it repeated the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart; and the Lord said, I will destroy man," or blot him out; as a man does a sentence out of a book, that cannot be corrected by cutting off some letters, syllables, or words, and interlining others here and there—but must needs be wholly new framed.

But did the deluge carry off this corruption of man's nature? did it mend the matter? No, it did not. God, in his holy Providence, "that every mouth may be stopped, and all the" new "world may become guilty before God," as well as the old, permits that corruption of nature to break out in Noah, the father of the new world, after the deluge was over. Behold him, as another Adam, sinning in the fruit of a tree, Gen. 9:20, 21, "He planted a vineyard, and he drank of the wine, and was drunken, and he was uncovered within his tent." More than that, God gives the same reason against a new deluge, which he gives in our text for bringing that on the old world—"I will not," says he, "again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth," Gen. 8:21. Whereby it is intimated that there is no mending of the matter by this means; and that if he should always take the same course with men that he had done, he would be always sending deluges on the earth, seeing the corruption of man's nature still remains.

But though the flood could not carry off the corruption of nature—yet it pointed at the way how it is to be done; namely, that men must

be "born of water and of the Spirit," raised from spiritual death in sin by the grace of Jesus Christ, who came by water and blood; out of which a new world of saints arise in regeneration, even as the new world of sinners out of the waters, where they had long lain buried, as it were, in the ark. This we learn from 1 Pet. 3:20, 21, where the apostle, speaking of Noah's ark, says, "Wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism does also now save us." Now the waters of the deluge being a like figure to baptism, it plainly follows, that they signified as baptism does "the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit." To conclude then, those waters, though now dried up, may serve us still for a looking-glass, in which we may see the total corruption of our nature, and the necessity of regeneration.

From the text, thus explained, this weighty point of doctrine arises, which he who runs may read in it, namely, Man's nature is now wholly corrupted. **There is a sad alteration, an astonishing overturning in the nature of man—where, at first, there was nothing evil, now there is nothing good.** In treating on this doctrine, I shall,

I. Confirm it.

II. Represent this corruption of nature in its several parts.

III. Show you how man's nature comes to be thus corrupted.

IV. Apply this doctrine.

I. I shall CONFIRM the doctrine of the corruption of nature. I shall hold the glass to your eyes, wherein you may see your sinful nature; which, though God takes particular notice of it, many quite overlook. Here we shall consult the word of God, and men's experience and observation.

For scripture-proof, let us consider,

1. How the scripture takes particular notice of fallen Adam's communicating his image to his posterity, Gen. 5:3, "Adam begat a son in his own likeness, after his image, and called his name Seth." Compare with this the first verse of that chapter, "In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him." Behold here, how the image after which man was made, and the image after which he is begotten, are opposed. Man was created in the likeness of God; that is, the holy and righteous God made a holy and righteous creature—but fallen Adam begat a son, not in the likeness of God—but in his own likeness; that is, **corrupt sinful Adam begat a corrupt sinful son.** For as the image of God bore righteousness and immortality in it, as was shown before; so this image of fallen Adam bore corruption and death in it, 1 Cor. 15:49, 50, compare verse 22. Moses, in that fifth chapter of Genesis, giving us the first bill of mortality that ever was in the world, ushers it in with this, that dying Adam begat mortals. Having sinned, he became mortal, according to the threatening; and so he begat a son in his own likeness--sinful, and therefore mortal. Thus sin and death passed on all. Doubtless he begat both Cain and Abel in his own likeness, as well as Seth. But it is not recorded of Abel; because he left no children behind him, and his becoming the first sacrifice to death in the world, was a sufficient document of it—nor of Cain, to whom it might have been thought peculiar, because of his monstrous wickedness; and besides, his posterity was drowned in the flood—but it is recorded of Seth, because be was the father of the holy seed; and from him all mankind since the flood have descended, and fallen Adam's own likeness with them.

2. It appears from that text of Scripture, Job 14:4, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." Our first parents were unclean, how then can we be clean? How could our immediate parents be clean? how can our children be so? The uncleanness here referred to, is a sinful uncleanness; for it is such as makes man's days full of trouble—and it is natural, being derived from unclean parents—"Man is born of a woman," ver. 1, "And how

can he be clean, that is born of a woman?" Job 25:4. The omnipotent God, whose power is not here challenged, could bring a clean thing out of an unclean, and so did in the case of the man Christ—but no other being can. Every person who is born according to the course of nature is born unclean. If the root is corrupt, so must the branches be. Neither is the matter mended, though the parents be sanctified ones; for they are but holy in part, and that by grace, not by nature! and they beget their children as sinful men, not as holy men. Therefore as the circumcised parent begets an uncircumcised child, and after the purest grain is sown, we reap chaff with the corn; so **the holiest parent begets unholy children, and cannot communicate their grace to them, as they do their nature**; which many godly parents find true, in their sad experience.

3. Consider the confession of the psalmist David, Psalm 51:5, "Behold, I was shaped in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." Here he ascends from his actual sin, to the fountain of it, namely, corrupt nature. He was a man according to God's own heart; but from the beginning it was not so with him. He was begotten in lawful marriage—but when the lump was shaken in the womb, it was a sinful lump. Hence the corruption of nature in called the "old man;" being as old as ourselves, older than grace, even in those that are sanctified from the womb.

4. Hear our Lord's determination of the point, John 3:6, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." Behold the universal corruption of mankind—all are flesh! Not that all are frail, though that is a sad truth too; yes, and our natural frailty is an evidence of our natural corruption; but that is not the sense of the text—the meaning of it is, all are corrupt and sinful, and that naturally. Hence our Lord argues, that because they are flesh, therefore they must be born again, or else they cannot enter into the kingdom of God, ver. 3-5. And as the corruption of our nature shows the absolute necessity of regeneration, so the absolute necessity of regeneration plainly proves the corruption of our nature; for why should a man

need a second birth, if his nature were not quite marred in his first birth?

5. Man certainly is sunk very low now, in comparison of what he once was. God made him but a "little lower than the angels:" but now we find him likened to the beasts that perish. He hearkened to a brute--and is now become like one of them. Like Nebuchadnezzar, his portion in his natural state is with the beasts, "minding only earthly things," Phil. 3:19. Nay, brutes, in some sort, have the advantage of the natural man, who is sunk a degree below them. He is more negligent of what concerns him most, than the stork, or the turtle-dove, or the crane, or the swallow, in what is for their interest, Jer. 8:7. He is more stupid than the ox or donkey, Isaiah 1:3. I find him sent to school to learn of the ant, which has no guide or leader to go before her; no overseer or officer to compel or stir her up to work; no ruler—but may do as she wills, being under the dominion of none; yet "provides her food in the summer and harvest," Proverbs 6:6-8; while the natural man has all these, and yet exposes himself to eternal starving. Nay, more than all this, the Scriptures hold out the natural man, not only as lacking the good qualities of these creatures—but as a compound of the evil qualities of the worst of the creatures; in whom the fierceness of the lion, the craft of the fox, the unteachableness of the wild donkey, the filthiness of the dog and swine, the poison of the asp, and such like, meet. Truth itself calls them "serpents, a generation of vipers;" yes, more, even "children of the devil," Matt. 23:33; John 8:44. Surely, then, man's nature is miserably corrupted.

6. "We are by nature the children of wrath," Eph. 2:3. We are worthy of, and liable to, the wrath of God; and this by nature—therefore, doubtless, we are by nature sinful creatures. We are condemned before we have done good or evil; under the curse, before we know what it is. But, "will a lion roar in the forest when he has no prey?" Amos 3:4; that is, will the holy and just God roar in his wrath against man, if he be not, by his sin, made a prey for his

wrath? No, he will not; he cannot. Let us conclude then, that, according to the word of God, man's nature is a corrupt nature.

If we consult **experience**, and observe the case of the world, in those things that are obvious to any person who will not shut his eyes against clear light, we shall quickly perceive such fruits as discover this root of bitterness. I shall propose a few things that may serve to convince us in this point:

1. Who sees not a flood of miseries overflowing the world? Where can a man go where he shall not dip his foot, if he go not over head and ears, in it? Everyone at home and abroad, in city and country, in palaces and cottages, is groaning under some one thing or other, ungrateful to him. Some are oppressed with poverty, some chastened with sickness and pain, some are lamenting their losses, everyone has a cross of one sort or another. No man's condition is so soft—but there is some *thorn of uneasiness* in it. At length death, the wages of sin, comes after these its harbingers, and sweeps all away. Now, what but sin has opened the sluice of sorrow? There is not a complaint nor sigh heard in the world, nor a tear that falls from our eye—but it is an evidence that man is fallen as a star from heaven; for God distributes sorrows in his anger, Job 21:17. This is a plain proof of the corruption of nature—forasmuch as those who have not yet actually sinned, have their share of these sorrows; yes, and draw their first breath in the world weeping, as if they knew this world at first sight to be a Bochim, the place of weepers. There are graves of the smallest, as well as of the largest size, in the churchyard; and there are never lacking some in the world, who are, like Rachel, weeping for their children because they are not, Matt. 2:18.

2. Observe how early this corruption of nature begins to appear in young ones. Solomon observes, that "even a child is known by his doings," Proverbs 20:11. It may soon be discerned what way the bias of the heart lies. Do not the children of fallen Adam, before they can go alone, follow their father's footsteps?

What a vast deal of little pride, ambition, sinful curiosity, vanity, willfulness, and averseness to good, appears in them? And, when they creep out of infancy, there is a necessity of using the rod of correction, to drive away the foolishness which is bound in their hearts, Proverbs 20:15, which shows, that, if grace prevails not, the child will be as Ishmael, "a wild ass-man," as the word is, Gen. 16:12.

3. Take a view of the manifold gross out-breakings of sin in the world—the wickedness of man is yet great in the earth. Behold your bitter fruits of the corruption of our nature, Hosea 4:2, "By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, like the breaking forth of waters, and blood touches blood." The world is filled with filthiness, and all manner of lewdness, wickedness, and profanity. From whence comes the deluge of sin on the earth—but from the breaking up of the fountains of the great deep, the heart of man, "out of which proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness," etc., Mark 7:21, 22. You will, it may be, thank God with a whole heart, that you are not like other men; and indeed, you have more reason for it than, I fear, you are aware of; for, as in water face answers to face, so the heart of man to man, Proverbs 28:19. As, looking into clear water, you see your own face; so, looking into your heart, you may see other men's there; and, looking into other men's in them you may see your own. So that the most vile and profane wretches who are in the world, should serve you for a looking-glass; in which you ought to discern the corruption of your own nature—and if you were to do so, you would, with a heart truly touched, thank God, and not yourselves, indeed, that you are not as other men in your lives; seeing the corruption of nature is the same in you as in them.

4. Cast your eye upon those terrible convulsions which the world is thrown into by the lusts of men! Lions make not a prey of lions, nor wolves of wolves—but men are turned lions and wolves to one another, biting and devouring one another. Upon how

slight occasions will men sheath their swords in one another! The world is a wilderness, where the clearest fire that men can carry about with them will not frighten away the wild beasts that inhabit it, and that because they are men, and not brutes; but one way or other they will be wounded. Since Cain shed the blood of Abel, the earth has been turned into a slaughter-house; and the chase has been continued, since Nimrod began his hunting; on the earth, as in the sea, the greater still devouring the lesser. When we see the world in such a ferment, everyone attacking another with words or swords, we may conclude there is an evil spirit among them. These violent heats among Adam's sons, show the whole body to be distempered, the whole head to be sick, and the whole heart to be faint. They surely proceed from an inward cause, James 4:1, "lusts that war in our members."

5. Consider the necessity of human laws, guarded by terrors and punishments; to which we may apply what the apostle says, 1 Tim. 1:9, that "the law is not made for a righteous man—but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners," etc. Man was made for society; and God himself said of the first man, when he had created him, that it was "not fit he should be alone;" yet the case is such now, that, in society, he must be hedged in with thorns. And that from hence we may the better see the corruption of man's nature, let us consider,

(1.) Every man naturally loves to be at full liberty himself; to have his own will for his law; and, if he were to follow his natural inclinations, he would vote himself out of the reach of all laws, divine and human. Hence some, the power of whose hands has been answerable to their natural inclination, have indeed made themselves absolute, and above laws; agreeably to man's monstrous design at first, to be as gods, Gen. 3:5. Yet,

(2.) There is no man that would willingly adventure to live in a lawless society—therefore, even pirates and robbers have laws among themselves, though the whole society casts off all respect to

law and right. Thus men discover themselves to be conscious of the corruption of nature; not daring to trust one another—but upon security.

(3.) However dangerous it is to break through the hedge—yet the violence of lust makes many daily adventure to run the risk. They will not only sacrifice their credit and conscience, which last is lightly esteemed in the world; but for the pleasure of a few moments, immediately followed with terror from within, they will lay themselves open to a violent death by the laws of the land wherein they live.

(4.) The laws are often made to yield to men's lusts. Sometimes whole societies run into such extravagances, that, like a company of prisoners, they break off their fetters, and put their guard to flight; and the voice of laws cannot be heard for the noise of arms. And seldom is there a time, wherein there are not some people so great and daring, that the laws dare not look their impetuous lusts in the face; which made David say, in the case of Joab, who had murdered Abner, "These men, the sons of Zeruiah, be too hard for me," 2 Sam. 3:39. Lusts sometimes grow too strong for laws, so that the law becomes slack, as the pulse of a dying man, Hab. 1:3, 4.

(5.) Consider, what necessity often appears of amending old laws, and making new ones; which have their rise from new crimes, of which man's nature is very fruitful. There would be no need of mending the hedge, if men were not, like unruly beasts, still breaking it down. It is astonishing to see what a figure the Israelites, who were separated unto God from among all the nations of the earth, make in their history; what horrible confusions were among them, when there was no king in Israel, as you may see from the eighteenth to the twenty-first chapter of Judges—how hard it was to reform them, when they had the best of magistrates! and how quickly they turned aside again, when they got wicked rulers! I cannot but think, that **one grand design of that sacred**

history, was to discover the corruption of man's nature, the absolute need of the Messiah, and his grace; and that we ought, in reading it, to improve it to that end. How cutting is that word which the Lord has to Samuel, concerning Saul, 1 Sam. 9:17, "The same shall reign over" – or, as the word is, shall *restrain* – "my people." O, the corruption of man's nature! the awe and dread of the God of heaven restrains them not; but they must have gods on earth to do it, "to put them to shame," Judg. 18:7.

6. Consider the remains of that natural corruption in the saints. Though grace has entered—yet corruption is not expelled—though they have got the new creature—yet much of the old corrupt nature remains; and these struggle together within them, as the twins in Rebekah's womb, Gal. 5:17. They find it present with them at all times, and in all places, even in the most retired corners. If a man has a troublesome neighbor, he may move; if he has an ill servant, he may put him away at the term; if a bad companion, he may sometimes leave the house, and be free from molestation that way. But should the saint go into a wilderness, or set up his tent on some remote rock in the sea, where never foot of man, beast, or fowl had touched, there his corrupt heart will be with him. Should he be with Paul, caught up to the third heavens, it will come back with him, 2 Cor. 12:7. It follows him as the shadow does the body; it makes a blot in the fairest line he can draw. It is like the fig-tree on the wall, which however nearly it was cut—yet still grew, until the wall was thrown down—for the roots of it are fixed in the heart, while the saint is in the world, as with bands of iron and brass. It is especially active when he would do good, Romans 7:21, then the fowls come down upon the carcasses. Hence often, in holy duties, the spirit of a saint, as it were, evaporates; and he is left before he is aware, like Michal, with an image in the bed instead of a husband. I need not stand to prove to the godly the corruption of nature in them, for they groan under it; and to prove it to them, were to hold out a candle to let them see the sun—as for the wicked, they are ready to account mole-hills in the saints as big as

mountains, if not reckon them all hypocrites. But consider these few things on this head:

(1.) "If it be thus in the green tree how must it be in the dry?" The saints are not born saints—but made so by the power of regenerating grace. Have they got a new nature, and yet the old remains with them? How great must that corruption be in others, in whom there is no grace!

(2.) The saints groan under it, as a heavy burden. Hear the apostle, Romans 7:24, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" What though the carnal man lives at ease and quiet, and the corruption of nature is not his burden, is he therefore free from it? No, no! It is because he is dead, that he feels not the sinking weight. Many a groan is heard from a *sick* bed—but never any from a *grave*. In the saint, as in the sick man, there is a mighty struggle; life and death striving for the mastery—but in the natural man, as in the dead corpse, there is no noise; because death bears full sway.

(3.) The godly man resists the old corrupt nature; he strives to mortify it—yet it remains; he endeavors to starve it, and by that means to weaken it—yet it is active. How must it spread then, and strengthen itself in that soul, where it is not starved—but fed! And this is the case of all the unregenerate, who make "provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof." If the garden of the diligent affords him new work daily, in cutting off and rooting up, surely that of the sluggard must needs be "all grown over with thorns."

7. I shall add but one observation more; and that is, that in every man, naturally, the image of fallen Adam appears. Some children, by the features and lineaments of their face, do, as it were, father themselves—and thus we resemble our first parents. Everyone of us bears the image and impression of the fall upon him; and to evince the truth of this, I appeal to the consciences of all, in these following particulars:

(1.) Is not sinful curiosity natural to us? and is not this a print of Adam's image? Gen. 3:6. Is not man naturally much more desirous to know new things, than to practice old known truths? How much like old Adam do we look in this eagerness for novelties, and disrelish of old solid doctrines? We seek after knowledge rather than holiness, and study most to know those things which are least edifying. Our wild and roving fancies need a bridle to curb them, while good solid affections must be quickened and spurred on.

(2.) If the Lord, by his holy law and wise providence, puts a restraint upon us, to keep us back from anything, does not that restraint whet the edge of our natural inclinations, and makes us so much the keener in our desires? And in this do we not betray it plainly, that we are Adam's children? Gen. 3:2-6. I think this cannot be denied; for daily observation evinces, that it is a natural principle, that "stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant," Proverbs 9:17. The very heathens were convinced, that man was possessed with this spirit of contradiction, though they knew not the spring of it. How often do men let themselves loose in those things, in which, had God left them at liberty, they would have bound up themselves! but corrupt nature takes a pleasure in the very jumping over the hedge. And is it not a repeating of our fathers' folly, that men will rather climb for forbidden fruit, than gather what is shaken off the tree of good providence to them, when they have God's express allowance for it?

(3.) Which of all the children of Adam is not naturally disposed to **hear** the instruction that causes to err? And was not this the rock our first parents split upon? Gen. 3:4-6. How apt is weak man, ever since that time, to parley with temptations! "God speaks once, yes twice—yet man perceives it not," Job 33:14—but he readily listens to Satan. Men might often come fair off, if they would dismiss temptations with abhorrence, when first they appear; if they would nip them in the bud, they would soon die away—but, alas! though we see the train coming at us—yet we stand until it arrives, and we are blown up with its force.

(4.) Do not the **eyes** in your head often blind the eyes of the mind? And was not this the very case of our first parents? Gen. 3:6. Man is never more blind than when he is looking on the objects that are most pleasing to sense. Since the eyes of our first parents were opened to the forbidden fruit, men's eyes have been the gates of destruction to their souls; at which impure imaginations and sinful desires have entered the heart, to the wounding of the soul, wasting of the conscience, and bringing dismal effects sometimes on whole societies, as in Achan's case, Joshua 7:21. Holy Job was aware of this danger, from these two little rolling bodies, which a very small splinter of wood can make useless, "I made a covenant with mine eyes," Job 31:1.

(5.) Is it not natural to us to care for the **body**, even at the expense of the soul? This was one ingredient in the sin of our first parents, Gen. 3:6. O, how happy might we be, if we were but at half the pains about our souls, that we bestow upon our bodies! If that question, "What must I do to be saved?" Acts 16:30, ran but near as often through our minds as these questions do, "What shall we eat? What shall we drink? How shall we be clothed?" Matt. 6:31, then many a hopeless case would become very hopeful. But the truth is, most men live as if they were nothing but a lump of flesh—or as if their soul served for no other use—but, like salt, to keep their body from corrupting. "They are flesh," John 3:6; "they mind the things of the flesh," Romans 8:5; and "they live after the flesh," ver. 13. If the consent of the flesh be got to an action, the consent of the conscience is rarely waited for—yes, the body is often served, when the conscience has entered a protest against it.

(6.) Is not everyone by nature **discontented** with his present lot in the world, or with some one thing or other in it? This also was Adam's case, Gen. 3:5, 6. Some one thing is always lacking; so that man is a creature given to changes. If any doubt this, let them look over all their enjoyment; and, after a review of them, listen to their own hearts, and they will hear a secret murmuring for lack of something—though perhaps, if they considered the matter aright,

they would see that it is better for them to lack, than to have that something. Since the hearts of our first parents flew out at their eyes, on the forbidden fruit, and a night of darkness was thereby brought on the world, their posterity have a natural disease which Solomon calls, "The wandering of the desire," or, as the word is, "The walking of your soul," Eccl. 6:9. This is a sort of diabolical trance, wherein the soul traverses the world; feeds itself with a thousand airy nothings; snatches at this and the other created excellency, in imagination and desire; goes here, and there, and everywhere, except where it should go. And the soul is never cured of this disease, until conquering grace brings it back to take up its everlasting rest in God through Christ—but until this be, if man were set again in paradise, the garden of the Lord, all the pleasures there would not keep him from looking, yes, and leaping over the hedge a second time.

(7.) Are we not far more easily impressed and influenced by evil councils and examples, than by those that are good! You will see this was the ruin of Adam, Gen. 3:6. Evil example, to this day, is one of Satan's master-devices to ruin men. Though we have, by nature, more of the fox than of the lamb; yet that ill property which some observe in this creature, namely, that if one lamb skips into a water, the rest will suddenly follow, may be observed also in the disposition of the children of men; to whom it is very natural to embrace an evil way, because they see others in it before them. Ill example has frequently the force of a violent stream, to carry us over plain duty; but especially if the example be given by those we bear a great affection to—our affection, in that case, blinds our judgment; and what we should abhor in others, is complied with, to humor them. Nothing is more plain, than that generally men choose rather to do what the most do, than what the best do.

(8.) Who of all Adam's sons needs be taught the art of sewing fig-leaves together, to cover their nakedness? Gen. 3:7. When we have ruined ourselves, and made ourselves naked to our shame, we naturally seek to help ourselves, by ourselves—many poor

contrivances are employed, as silly and insignificant as Adam's fig-leaves. What pains are men at, to cover their sin from their own conscience, and to draw all the fair colors upon it that they can! And when once convictions are fastened upon them, so that they cannot but see themselves naked, it is as natural for them to attempt to cover it by self-deceit, as for fish to swim in water, or birds to fly in the air. Therefore, the first question of the convinced is, "What shall we do?" Acts 2:37. How shall we qualify ourselves? What shall we perform? Not considering that the new creature is God's own workmanship or deed, Eph. 2:10, any more than Adam considered and thought of being clothed with the skins of sacrifices, Gen. 3:21.

(9.) Do not Adam's children naturally follow his footsteps--in hiding themselves from the presence of the Lord? Gen. 3:8. We are quite as blind in this matter as he was, who thought to hide himself from the presence of God among the shady trees of the garden. We are very apt to promise ourselves more security in a secret sin, than in one that is openly committed. "The eye of the adulterer waits for the twilight, saying, no eye shall see me," Job 24:15. **Men will freely do that in secret, which they would be ashamed to do in the presence of a child; as if darkness could hide from the all-seeing God.** Are we not naturally careless of communion with God; yes, and averse to it? Never was there any communion between God and Adam's children, where the Lord himself had not the first word. If he were to let them alone--they would never inquire after him. Isaiah 57:17, "I hid myself." Did he seek after a hiding God? Very far from it—"He went on in the way of his heart."

(10.) How loath are men to confess sin, to take guilt and shame to themselves? Was it not thus in the case before us? Gen. 3:10. Adam confesses his nakedness, which could not be denied; but says not one word of his sin—the reason of it was, he would gladly have hid it if he could. **It is as natural for us to hide sin--as to commit it.** Many sad instances thereof we have in this world; but a far clearer proof of it we shall get at the day of judgment, the day in which "God will judge the secrets of men," Romans 2:16. Many a

foul mouth will then be seen which is now "wiped, and says, I have done no wickedness," Proverbs 30:20.

(11.) Is it not natural for us to extenuate our sin, and transfer the guilt upon others? When God examined our guilty first parents, did not Adam lay the blame on the woman? and did not the woman lay the blame on the serpent? Gen. 3:12, 13. Adam's children need *not* be taught this hellish policy; for before they can well speak, if they cannot get the fact denied, they will cunningly lisp out something to lessen their fault, and lay the blame upon another. Nay, so natural is this to men, that in the greatest sins, they will lay the fault upon God himself; they will blaspheme his holy providence under the mistaken name of *misfortune* or *bad luck*--and thereby lay the blame of their sin at heaven's door! And was not this one of Adam's tricks after his fall? Gen. 3:12, "And the man said, The woman whom *you* gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." Observe the order of the speech. He makes his apology in the first place; and then comes his confession—his apology is long—but his confession very short; it is all comprehended in one word, "and I did eat." How pointed and distinct is his apology, as if he was afraid his meaning should have been mistaken! "The woman," says he, or "that woman," as if he would have pointed the judge to his own works, of which we read, Gen. 2:22. There was but one woman then in the world; so that one would think he needed not to have been so exact in pointing at her—yet she is as carefully marked out in his defense, as if there had been ten thousand.

"The woman whom *you* gave me:" here he speaks, as if he had been ruined with God's gift. And, to make the gift look the blacker, it is added to all this, "whom *you* gave to be with me," as my constant companion, to stand by me as a helper. This looks as if Adam would have fathered an ill design upon the Lord, in giving him this gift.

And, after all, there is a new demonstrative here, before the sentence is complete; he says not, "The woman gave me," but "the woman--*she* gave me," emphatically; as if he had said, she, even she, gave me of the tree. This much for his apology.

But his *confession* is quickly over, in one word, as he spoke it, "and I did eat." There is nothing here to point out himself, and as little to show what he had eaten. How natural is this black art to Adam's posterity! he who runs may read it. So universally does Solomon's observation hold true, Proverbs 19:3, "The foolishness of man perverts his way; and his heart frets against the Lord." Let us then call fallen Adam, *father*; let us not deny the relation, seeing we bear his image.

To sum up this point, sufficiently confirmed by concurring evidence from the Lord's word, our own experience, and observation; let us be persuaded to believe the doctrine of the corruption of our nature; and look to the second Adam, the blessed Jesus, for the application of his precious blood, to remove the guilt of our sin; and for the efficacy of his Holy Spirit, to make us new creatures, knowing that "except we be born again, we cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

II. I proceed to inquire into the corruption of nature in the several parts thereof. But who can comprehend it? who can take the exact dimensions of it, in its breadth, length, height, and depth? "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" Jer. 17:9. However, we may quickly perceive as much of it as may be matter of deepest humiliation, and may discover to us the absolute necessity of regeneration. Man in his natural state is altogether corrupt—both soul and body are polluted, as the apostle proves at large, Romans 3:10-18. As for the soul, this natural corruption has spread itself through all the faculties thereof; and is to be found in the understanding, the will, the affections, the conscience, and the memory.

1. Of the corruption of the UNDERSTANDING.

"They are darkened in their **understanding** and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts." Ephesians 4:18. "There is no one who understands." Romans 3:11.

The understanding, that leading faculty, is despoiled of its primitive glory, and covered over with **confusion**. We have fallen into the hands of our grand adversary, as Samson into the hands of the Philistines, and are deprived of our two eyes. There is none that understands," Romans 3:11. "Mind and conscience are defiled," Tit. 1:15. **The natural man's apprehension of divine things is corrupt.** Psalm 50:21, "You thought that I was altogether such a one as yourself." His judgment is corrupt, and cannot be otherwise, seeing his eye is evil—therefore the scriptures, to show that man does all wrong, says, "everyone did that which was right in his own eyes," Judges 17:6, and 21:25. And his imaginations, or reasonings, must be evil--being of a piece with his judgment, 2 Cor. 10:5. But, to point out this corruption of the mind or understanding more particularly, let these following things be considered:

1. There is a natural weakness in the minds of men with respect to spiritual things. The apostle determines concerning everyone that is not endued with the graces of the Spirit, "That he is blind, and cannot see afar off," 2 Pet. 1:9. Hence the Spirit of God in the scriptures clothes, as it were, divine truths with earthly figures, even as parents teach their children, using similitudes, Hosea 12:11. This, though it does not cure—yet it proves this natural weakness in the minds of men. But there are not lacking plain proofs of it from experience. As,

(1.) How hard a task is it to teach many people the common principles of our holy religion, and to make truths so plain as they may understand them? There must be "precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line," Isaiah 28:10. Try the same people in other things, they will be found "wiser

in their generation than the children of light." They understand their work and business in the world as well as their neighbors; though they are very stupid and unteachable in the matters of God. Tell them how they may advance their worldly wealth, or how they may gratify their lusts, and they will quickly understand these things; though it is very hard to make them know how their souls may be saved, or how their hearts may find rest in Jesus Christ.

(2.) Consider those who have many advantages beyond the generality of mankind; who have had the benefits of good education and instruction; yes, and are blessed with the light of grace in that measure wherein it is ascribed to the saints on earth—yet how small a portion have they of the knowledge of divine things! What ignorance and confusion still remain in their minds! How often are they perplexed even as to practical truths, and understand as children in these things! It is a pitiful weakness that we cannot perceive the things which God has revealed to us; and it must needs be a sinful weakness, since the law of God requires us to know and believe them.

(3.) What dangerous mistakes are to be found among men in concerns of the greatest weight! What woeful delusions prevail over them! Do we not often see those, who in other things are the wisest of men--yet these are notorious fools with respect to their soul's interest? Matt. 9:25, "You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent." Many who are eagle-eyed in the *trifles of time*, are like owls and bats in the light of eternal realities. Nay, truly, the life of every natural man is but one continued dream and delusion, out of which he never awakes, until either, by a new light darted from heaven into his soul, he comes to himself, Luke 15:17, or, in hell he lifts up his eyes in torment, chapter 16:23. Therefore, in scripture account, though he be ever so wise, he is a fool, and a simple one.

2. Man's understanding is naturally overwhelmed with gross darkness in spiritual things. Man, at the instigation of the devil,

attempting to break out a new light in his mind, Gen. 3:5, instead of that, broke up the doors of the bottomless pit, so as, by the smoke thereof, to be buried in darkness. When God first made man, his mind was a lamp of light; but now, when he comes to make him over again, in regeneration, he finds it darkness; Eph. 5:8, "You were once darkness." Sin has closed the windows of the soul, darkness covers the whole—it is the land of darkness and the shadow of death, where the light is as darkness. The prince of darkness reigns there, and nothing but the works of darkness are framed there. We are born spiritually blind, and cannot be restored without a miracle of grace. This is your case, whoever you are, who are not born again. That you may be convinced in this matter, take the following proofs of it:

Proof 1. The darkness which was upon the face of the world, before, and at the time when Christ came, arising as the Sun of Righteousness upon the earth. When **Adam** by his sin had lost that primitive light with which he was endued at his creation, it pleased God to make a glorious revelation of his mind and will to him, as to the way of salvation, Gen. 3:15. This was handed down by him, and other godly fathers, before the flood—yet the natural darkness of the mind of man prevailed so far against that revelation, as to carry off all sense of true religion from the old world, except what remained in **Noah's** family, which was preserved in the ark. After the flood, as men multiplied on the earth, the natural darkness of the mind prevailed again, and the light decayed, until it died away among the generality of mankind, and was preserved only among the posterity of **Shem**. And even with them it had nearly set, when God called **Abraham** from serving other gods, Joshua 24:15. God gives Abraham a more full and clear revelation, which he communicates to his family, Genesis 18:19; yet the natural darkness wears it out at length, except that it was preserved among the posterity of **Jacob**. They being carried down into Egypt, that darkness so prevailed, as to leave them very little sense of true religion; and there was a necessity for a new revelation to be made

to them in the wilderness. And many a cloud of darkness got above that, now and then, during the time from Moses to Christ.

When **Christ** came, the world was divided into Jews and Gentiles. The Jews, and the true light with them, were within an enclosure, Psalm 147:19, 20. Between them and the Gentile world, there was a partition wall of God's making, namely, the ceremonial law—and upon that was reared up another of man's own making, namely, a rooted enmity between the parties, Eph. 2:14, 15. If we look abroad outside the enclosure, and except those proselytes of the Gentiles, who by means of some rays of light breaking forth upon them from within the enclosure, having renounced idolatry, worshiped the true God—but did conform to the Mosaic rites, we see nothing but "dark places of the earth, full of the habitations of cruelty," Psalm 74:20. Gross darkness covered the face of the Gentile world, and the way of salvation was utterly unknown among them. **They were drowned in superstition and idolatry, and had multiplied their idols to such a vast number**, that above thirty thousand are reckoned to have been worshiped by the men of Europe alone. Whatever wisdom was among their philosophers, "the world by" that "wisdom know not God," 1 Cor. 1:21, and all their researches in religion were but groping in the dark, Acts 17:27.

If we look within the enclosure, and except a few that were groaning and "waiting for the consolation of Israel," we shall see gross darkness on the face of that generation. Though "to them were committed the oracles of God," yet they were most corrupt in their doctrine. Their traditions were multiplied; but the knowledge of those things, wherein the life of religion lies, was lost. Masters of Israel knew not the nature and necessity of regeneration, John 3:10. Their religion was to build on their birth-privileges, as children of Abraham, Matt. 3:9, to glory in their circumcision, and other external ordinances, Phil. 3:2, 3, and to "rest in the law," Romans 2:17, after they had, by their false glosses, cut it so short, as they might outwardly go well near to the fulfilling of it, Matt. 5.

Thus was darkness over the face of the world, when Christ, the true light, came into it; and so is darkness over every soul, until he as the day-star, arises in the heart. The latter is an evidence of the former. What—but the natural darkness of men's minds, could still thus wear out the light of external revelation, in a matter upon which eternal happiness depends? Men did not forget the way of preserving their lives—but how quickly they lost the knowledge of the way of salvation of their souls, which are of infinitely more weight and worth! When the teaching of patriarchs and prophets was ineffectual, it became necessary for them to be taught of God himself, who alone can open the eyes of the understanding.

But that it might appear that the corruption of man's mind lay deeper than to be cured by mere external revelation, there were but very few converted by Christ's preaching, who spoke as never man spoke," John 12:37, 38. The great cure remained to be performed, by the Spirit accompanying the preaching of the apostles; who, according to the promise, John. 14:12, were to do greater works. And if we look to the miracles wrought by our blessed Lord, we shall find, that by applying the remedy to the soul, for the cure of bodily distempers, as in the case of "the man sick of the palsy," Matt. 9:2, he plainly discovered, that his main errand into the world was to cure the diseases of the soul. I find a miracle wrought upon one who was born blind, performed in such a way, as seems to have been designed to let the world see it, as in a glass, their case and cure, John 9:6, "He made clay, and anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay." What could more fitly represent the blindness of men's minds, than eyes closed up with earth? Isaiah 44:18, "He has shut their eyes:" the word properly signifies, he has plastered their eyes; as the house in which the leprosy had been, was to be plastered, Lev. 14:42. Thus the Lord's word reveals the design of that strange work; and by it, shows us, that the eyes of our understanding are naturally shut. Then the blind man must go and wash off this clay in the pool of Siloam—no other water will serve this purpose. If that pool had not represented him, whom the

Father sent into the world to open the blind eyes, Isaiah 42:7, I think the evangelist had not given us the interpretation of the name; which, he says, signifies *sent*, John 9:7. So we may conclude, that the natural darkness of our minds is such as there is no cure for—but from the blood and Spirit of Jesus Christ, whose eye-salve only can make us see, Rev. 3:18.

Proof 2. Every natural man's heart and life is a mass of darkness, disorder, and confusion, however refined he may appear in the sight of men. Says the apostle Paul, "At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another." Titus 3:3; and yet, at the time which this text refers to, "he was blameless," touching the righteousness which is in the law, Phil. 3:6. This is a plain evidence that "the eye is evil, the whole body being full of darkness," Matt. 6:23.

The unrenewed part of mankind is rambling through the world, like so many blind men, who will neither take a guide, nor can guide themselves; and therefore are falling over this and the other precipice, into destruction. Some are running after their covetousness, until they are pierced through with many sorrows. Some are sticking in the mire of sensuality. Some are dashing themselves on the rock of pride and self-conceit. Every one stumbling on some one stone of stumbling or other; all of them are running themselves upon the sword-point of justice, while they eagerly follow where unmortified passions and affections lead them. And all the while some are lying along in the way, others are coming up, and falling headlong over them. Therefore, "woe unto you" blind "world because of offences," Matt. 18:7.

Errors in judgment swarm in the world because it is "night, wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth." All the unregenerate are utterly mistaken in the point of true happiness—for though Christianity has fixed that matter in point of principle—yet nothing less than overcoming grace can fix it in the practical judgment. All

men agree in the desire of being happy; but, among the unrenewed men, concerning the way to happiness, there are almost as many opinions as there are men; "each of us having turned to his own way," Isaiah 53:6. They are like the blind men of Sodom, around Lot's house, all were seeking to find the door; some grope one part of the wall for it, some another—but none of them could certainly say, he had found it; so the natural man may stumble on any good—but the chief good.

Look into your own unregenerate heart, and there you will see all turned upside down—heaven lying below, and earth at top. Look into your life, there you may see how you are playing the madman, snatching at shadows, and neglecting the substance—eagerly flying after that which is not, and slighting that which is, and will be forever.

Proof 3. The natural man is always as a workman left without light; either trifling or doing mischief. Try to catch your heart at any time you will, and you will find it either weaving the spider's web, or hatching cockatrice eggs, Isaiah 59:5, roving through the world, or digging into the pit; filled with vanity, or else with vileness; busy doing nothing, or what is worse than nothing. A sad sign of a dark mind.

Proof 4. The natural man is void of the saving knowledge of spiritual things. He knows not what a **God** he has to do with—he is unacquainted with Christ, and knows not what sin is. The greatest graceless wits are blind as moles in spiritual realities. Yes—but some such can speak of them to good purpose; so might those Israelites of the trials, signs, and miracles, which their eyes had seen, Deut. 29:3; to whom nevertheless, the Lord had "not given a heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto that day," ver. 4. Many a man who bears the name of a Christian, may make Pharaoh's confession of faith, Exod. 5:2, "I know not the Lord," neither will he let go what he commands them to part with. God is with them, as a prince in disguise among his subjects, who meets

with no better treatment from them than if they were his fellows, Psalm 50:21.

Do they know **Christ**, or see his glory, and any beauty in him, for which he is to be desired? If they did, they would not slight him as they do—a view of his glory would so darken all created excellence, that they would take him for and instead of all, and gladly close with him, as he offers himself in the gospel, John 4:13; Psalm 9:10; Matt. 13:44-46.

Do they know what **sin** is, who nurse the serpent in their bosom, hold fast their deceit, and refuse to let it go? I own, indeed, that they may have a natural knowledge of these things, as the unbelieving Jews had of Christ, whom they saw and conversed with; but there was a spiritual glory in him, perceived by believers only, John 1:14, and in respect of that glory, "the" unbelieving "world knew him not," ver. 10. The spiritual knowledge of these things, they cannot have; it is above the reach of the carnal mind. 1 Cor. 2:14, "The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned." He may indeed discourse of them—but in no other way than one can talk of honey or vinegar, who never tasted the sweetness of the one, nor the sourness of the other. He has some notions of spiritual truths—but sees not the things themselves, which are wrapped up in the words of truth, 1 Tim. 1:7, "Understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm." In a word, natural men fear, seek, confess--they know not what. Thus you may see man's understanding naturally overwhelmed with gross darkness in spiritual things.

3. There is in the mind of man a natural bias to evil, whereby it comes to pass, that whatever difficulties it finds while occupied about things truly good**--it acts with a great deal of ease in evil, as being in that case in its own element**, Jer. 4:22. The carnal mind drives heavily on in the thoughts of holiness—but furiously in the thoughts of evil. While holiness is before it, fetters are upon it;

but when once it has got over the hedge, it is as a bird got out of a cage, and becomes a free-thinker indeed. Let us reflect a little on the apprehension and imagination of the carnal mind, and we shall find incontestable evidence of this woeful bias to evil.

Proof 1. As when a man by a violent stroke on the head loses his sight, there arises to him a kind of false light whereby he seems to see a thousand airy nothings; so man, being struck blind to all that is truly good for his eternal interest, has a light of another sort brought into his mind—his eyes are opened, knowing evil; and so are the words of the tempter verified, Gen. 3:5. The words of the prophet are plain—"They are wise to do evil—but to do good they have no knowledge," Jer. 4:22. The mind of man has a natural dexterity to devise mischief; there are not any so simple as to lack skill to contrive ways to gratify their lusts, and ruin their souls, though the power of everyone's hand cannot reach to put their devices in execution. No one needs to be taught this black art; but, as weeds grow up of their own accord in the neglected ground, so does this wisdom which is earthly, sensual, devilish, Jam. 3:15, grow up in the minds of men, by virtue of the corruption of their nature.

Why should we be surprised with the product of corrupt wits--their cunning devices to affront Heaven, to oppose and run down truth and holiness, and to gratify their own and other men's lusts? They row with the stream, no wonder that they make great progress; their stock is within them, and increases by using it, and the works of darkness are contrived with the greater advantage, because the mind is wholly destitute of spiritual light, which, if it were in them in any measure, would so far mar the work.

1 John 3:9, "Whoever is born of God does not commit sin;" he does it willfully and habitually, for "his seed remains in him." But, on the other hand, "A fool finds pleasure in evil conduct, but a man of understanding delights in wisdom," Proverbs 10:23. Evil comes to him easily—and why—but because he is a fool, and has not

wisdom, which would mar the contrivances of darkness! The more natural a thing is, the more easily it is done.

Proof 2. Let the corrupt mind have but the advantage of one's being employed in, or present at, some piece of service for God, that so the device, if not in itself sinful—yet may become sinful by its unseasonableness—it will quickly fall upon some device or expedient, by its starting aside, which deliberation, in season, could not produce. Such a devilish dexterity has the carnal mind in devising what may most effectually divert men from their duty to God.

Proof 3. Does not the carnal mind naturally strive to grasp spiritual things in imagination, as if the soul were quite immersed in flesh and blood, and would turn everything into its own shape? Let men who are used to the forming of the most abstracted notions, look into their own souls, and they will find this bias in their minds. Therefore the idolatry which did of old, and still does, so much prevail in the world, is an incontestible evidence—for it plainly shows, that men naturally would have a visible deity, and see what they worship, and therefore they "changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image," etc., Romans 1:23. The reformation of these nations, blessed be the Lord for it, has banished idolatry, and images too, out of our churches; but **heart-reformation only can break down mental idolatry**, and banish the more subtle and refined image worship, and representations of the Deity, out of the minds of men. The world, in the time of its darkness, was never more prone to the former, than the unsanctified mind is to the latter. Hence are horrible, monstrous, and misshapen thoughts of God, Christ, the glory above, and all spiritual things.

Proof 4. What a difficult task is it to detain the carnal mind before the Lord! how averse is it to entertain good thoughts, and dwell in the meditation of spiritual things! If a person be driven, at any time, to think of the great concerns of his soul, it is not harder work to

hold in an unruly hungry beast, than to hedge in the carnal mind, that it get not away to the vanities of the world again. When God is speaking to men by his word, or they are speaking to him in prayer, does not the mind often leave them before the Lord, like so many "idols that have eyes—but see not, and ears—but hear not." The carcass is laid down before God—but the world gets away the heart; though the eyes be closed, the man sees a thousand vanities—the mind, in the meantime, is like a bird got loose out of a cage, skipping from bush to bush; so that, in effect, the man never comes to himself until he is gone from the presence of the Lord.

Say not, it is impossible to get the mind fixed; it is hard, indeed—but not impossible—grace from the Lord can do it, Psalm 108:1; agreeable objects will do it. A pleasant speculation will arrest the minds of the inquisitive; the worldly man's mind is in little hazard of wandering, when he is contriving his business, casting up his accounts or counting his money; if he answers you not at first, he tells you he did not hear you, he was busy; his mind was fixed. Were we admitted into the presence of a king, to petition for our lives, we should be in no hazard of not paying attention. But this is the case, the carnal mind, employed about any spiritual good, is out of its element, and therefore cannot fix on spiritual realities.

Proof 5. But however hard it is to keep the mind on good thoughts, it sticks like glue to what is evil and corrupt like itself, 2 Pet. 2:14, "Having eyes full of adultery, which cannot cease from sin." Their eyes cannot cease from sin--that is, their hearts and minds, venting by the eyes what is within, are like a furious beast, which cannot be held in when once it has got out its head. Let the corrupt imagination once be let loose on its favorite object, it will be found hard work to call it back again, though both reason and will are for its retreat. For then it is in its own element; and to draw it off from its impurities, is like drawing a fish out of the water, or rending a limb from a man. It runs like fire set to a train of powder, that rests not until it can get no farther.

Proof 6. Consider how the carnal imagination supplies the lack of real objects to the corrupt heart, that it may make sinners happy--at least in the imaginary enjoyment of their lusts. Thus the corrupt heart feeds itself with imagination-sins. The unclean person is filled with speculative impurities, "having eyes full of adultery". The covetous man fills his heart with the world, though he cannot get his hands full of it. The malicious person fills his mind with acts of revenge. The envious man, within his own narrow soul, beholds with satisfaction, his neighbor laid low. Every lust finds the corrupt imagination a friend to it in time of need. This the heart does, not only when people are awake—but sometimes even when they are asleep; whereby it comes to pass, that those sins are acted in dreams, which their hearts pant after when they are awake.

I am aware that some question the sinfulness of these things; but can it be thought they are consistent with that holy nature and frame of spirit which was in innocent Adam, and in Jesus Christ, and should be in everyone? It is the corruption of nature, then, which makes filthy dreamers condemned, Jude, ver. 8. Solomon had experience of the exercise of grace in sleep—in a dream he prayed, in a dream he made the best choice; both were accepted of God, 1 Kings 3:5-15. And if a man may, in his sleep, do what is good and acceptable to God, why may he not also, when asleep, do that which is evil and displeasing to God? The same Solomon would have men aware of this, and prescribes the best remedy against it, namely, "the law upon the heart," Proverbs 6:20, 21. "When you sleep," says he, ver. 22, "it shall keep you," that is, from sinning in your sleep--from sinful dreams—for a man's being kept from sin, not his being kept from affliction, is the immediate proper effect of the law of God impressed upon the heart, Psalm 119:11.

And thus the whole verse is to be understood, as appears from ver. 23, "For the commandment is a lamp, and the law is light, and reproofs of instruction are the way of life." Now, the law is a lamp and light, as it guides in the way of duty; and instructing reproofs from the law are the way of life, as they keep from sin—they guide

not into the way of peace—but as they lead into the way of duty; nor do they keep a man out of trouble—but as they keep him from sin. Remarkable is the particular which Solomon instances, namely, the sin of uncleanness, "to keep you from the evil woman," etc., ver. 24, which is to be joined to ver. 22, enclosing the 23rd in a parenthesis as some versions have it. These things may suffice to convince us of **the natural bias of the mind to evil.**

4. There is in the carnal mind an opposition to spiritual truths, and an aversion to receive them. It is as little a friend to divine truths, as it is to holiness. As for the truths of revealed religion, there is an evil heart of unbelief in them, which opposes their entry; and there is an armed force necessary to captivate the mind to the belief of them, 2 Cor. 10:4, 5. God has made a revelation of his mind and will to sinners, concerning the way of salvation; he has given us the doctrine of his holy word—but do natural men believe it indeed? No, they do not; "for he who believes not on the Son of God, believes not God," as is plain from 1 John 5:10. They believe not the promises of the word; they look on them, in effect, only as fair words—for those who receive them are thereby made "partakers of the divine nature," 2 Pet. 1:4. The promises are as silver cords let down from heaven, to draw sinners unto God, and to waft them over into the promised land; but they cast them from them. They believe not the threatenings of the word. As men traveling in deserts carry fire about with them, to frighten away wild beasts, so God has made his law a fiery law, Deut. 33:2, surrounding it with threats of wrath—but men are naturally more brutish than beasts themselves; and will needs touch the fiery smoking mountain, though they should be thrust through with a dart.

I doubt not but most, if not all of you, who are yet in the black state of nature, will here plead, *Not Guilty!* but remember, the carnal Jews in Christ's time were as confident as you are, that they believed Moses, John 9:28, 29. But he confutes their confidence, roundly telling them, John 5:46, "Had you believed Moses, you

would have believed me." If you believe the truths of God, you dared not to reject, as you do, Him who is truth itself. The very difficulty you find in assenting to this truth, discovers that unbelief which I am charging you with. Has it not proceeded so far with some at this day, that it has steeled their foreheads with impudence and impiety, openly to reject all true religion? Surely it is "out of the abundance of the heart their mouth speaks." But, though you set not your mouth against the heavens, as they do, the same bitter root of unbelief is in all men by nature, and reigns in you, and will reign, until overcoming grace brings your minds to the belief of the truth. To convince you in this point, consider these three things:

Proof 1. How few are there who have been blessed with an inward illumination, by the special operation of the Spirit of Christ, leading them into a view of divine truths in their spiritual and heavenly luster! How have you learned the truths of religion, which you pretend to believe? You have them merely by the benefit of external revelation, and by education; so that you are *Christians*, just because you were not born and bred in a Pagan—but in a Christian country. You are strangers to the inward work of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness by and with the word in your hearts; therefore you are still unbelievers. "It is written in the Prophets, They shall be all taught of God. Every man, therefore, who has heard, and has learned of the Father--comes unto me," says our Lord, John 6:45. Now, you have not come to Christ, therefore you have not been taught of God—you have not been so taught, and therefore you have not come; you believe not. Behold the revelation from which the faith, even of the fundamental principles in religion, springs, Matt. 16:16, 17, "You are Christ, the Son of the living God. Blessed are you, Simon Barjona; for *flesh and blood has not revealed it unto you—but my Father who is in heaven."* If ever the Spirit of the Lord takes you in hand, to work in you that faith which is of the operation of God, it may be, that as much time will be spent in pulling down the old foundation, as will make you find the necessity of the working of his mighty power, to enable you to

believe the very foundation-principles which now you think you make no doubt of, Eph. 1:19.

Proof 2. How many professors have made shipwreck of their faith, such as it was, in time of temptation and trial! See how they fall, like stars from heaven, when Antichrist prevails! 2 Thess. 2:12, "God shall send them strong delusions, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned, who believed not the truth." They fall into damning delusions; because they never really believed the truth, though they themselves, and others too, thought they did believe it. That house is built on the sand, and that faith is but ill-founded, which cannot stand—but is quite overthrown, when the storm comes.

Proof 3. Consider the utter inconsistency of most men's lives with the principles of religion which they profess—you may as soon bring east and west together, as their principles and practice. Men believe that fire will burn them; and therefore, they will not throw themselves into it. But the truth is, most men live as if they thought the gospel was a mere fable, and the wrath of God, revealed in his word against their unrighteousness and ungodliness, a mere scarecrow. If you believe the doctrines of the word, how is it that you are so unconcerned about the state of your souls before the Lord? how is it that you are so little concerned about this weighty point, whether you be born again or not? Most live as they were born--and are likely to die as they live--and yet live in peace. Do such people believe the sinfulness and misery of a natural state? Do they believe that they are children of wrath? Do they believe that there is no salvation without regeneration, and no regeneration but what makes a man a new creature?

If you believe the **promises** of the word, why do you not embrace them, and seek to enter into the promised rest? What sluggard would not dig for a hidden treasure, if he really believed that he might so obtain it? Men will work and toil for a maintenance, because they believe that by so doing they shall get it; yet they will

be at no pains for the eternal weight of glory! Why? Because they do not believe the word of promise! Heb. 4:1, 2. If you believe the **threatenings**, how is it that you live in your sins; live out of Christ, and yet hope for heaven? Do such people believe God to be the holy and just One, who will by no means clear the guilty? No, no; none believe; none, or next to none, believe what a just God the Lord is, and how severely he punishes.

5. There is in the mind of man, a natural proneness to lies and falsehood, which favor his lusts. "They go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies," Psalm 58:3. We have this, with the rest of the corruption of our nature, from our first parents. God revealed the truth to them—but through the solicitation of the tempter, they first doubted, then disbelieved it--and embraced a lie instead of it. For an incontestable evidence hereof, we may see the first article of the devil's creed, "you shall not surely die," Gen. 3:4, which was obtruded by him on our first parents, and by them received, naturally embraced by their posterity, and held fast, until light from heaven obliges them to quit it. It spreads itself through the lives of natural men—who, (unless their consciences are awakened), walk after their own lusts, still retaining the principle, "That they shall not surely die." And this is often improved to such perfection, that man says, in the face of the denounced curse, "I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of my heart, to add drunkenness to thirst," Deut. 29:19. Whatever advantage the truths of God have over error, by means of education or otherwise, error has always, with the natural man, this advantage against truth, namely, that there is something within him which says, "O that it were true!" so that the mind lies fair for assenting to it.

The true doctrine is, "the doctrine that is according to godliness," 1 Tim. 6:3, and "the truth which is after godliness," Titus 1:1. Error is the doctrine which is according to ungodliness; for there is not an error in the mind, nor an untruth vented in the world, in matters of religion—but has an affinity to the corruption of the heart, according to that saying of the apostle, 2 Thess. 2:12, "They believed not the

truth," but had pleasure in unrighteousness. So that truth and error, being otherwise attended with equal advantages for their reception, error, by this means, has most ready access into the minds of men in their natural state. Therefore, it is not strange that men reject the simplicity of gospel truths--and greedily embrace error and external pomp in religion, seeing these things are so agreeable to the lusts of the heart, and the vanity of the mind of the natural man. Hence also it is, that so many embrace atheistical principles; for none do it but in compliance with their sinful passions; none but those, whose advantage it would be that there were no God.

6. Man is naturally high-minded; for when the gospel comes in power to him, it is employed in "casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God," 2 Cor. 10:5. Humility of mind is not a flower that grows in the field of nature; but is planted by the finger of God in a renewed heart, and learned from the humble Jesus. It is natural to man to think highly of himself, and what is his own—for the stroke which he has got by his fall in Adam, has produced a false light, whereby molehills about him appear like mountains; and a thousand airy beauties present themselves to his deluded mind. "Vain man would be wise," so he accounts himself, and so he would be accounted by others, "though man be born like a wild donkey's colt," Job 11:12. His way is right, because it is his own—for "every way of man is right in his own eyes," Proverbs 21:2. His state is good, because he knows none better; he is alive without the law, Romans 7:9, and therefore **his hope is strong, and his confidence firm**. It is another tower of Babel, reared up against heaven; and it will not fall, while the power of darkness can hold it up. The word batters it—yet it stands—one while breaches are made in it—but they are quickly repaired; at another time, it is all made to shake—but still it is kept up; until either God himself by his Spirit raises a heart-quake within the man, which tumbles it down, and leaves not one stone upon another, 2 Cor. 10:4, 5, or death batters it down, and pulls down the foundation of it, Luke 16:23.

And as the natural man thinks highly of **himself**, so he thinks basely of **God**, whatever he pretends, Psalm 50:21, "You thought that I was altogether such an one as yourself." The doctrine of the gospel, and the mystery of Christ, are foolishness to him; and in his practice he treats them as such, 1 Cor. 1:18, and 2:14. He brings the word and the works of God, in the government of the world, before the bar of his carnal reason; and there they are presumptuously censured and condemned, Hos. 14:9. Sometimes the ordinary restraints of Providence are taken off, and Satan is permitted to stir up the carnal mind—and, in that case, it is like an ant's nest, uncovered and disturbed; doubts, denials, and hellish reasonings, crowd in it, and cannot be overcome by all the arguments brought against them, until power from on high subdues the mind, and stills the mutiny of the corrupt principles.

Thus much of the corruption of the understanding; which, although the half is not told, may discover to you the absolute necessity of regenerating grace. Call the understanding now, "Ichabod; for the glory is departed from it," 1 Samuel 4:21. Consider this, you who are in the state of nature, and groan out your case before the Lord, that the Sun of Righteousness may arise upon you, lest you be shut up in everlasting darkness. What avails your worldly wisdom? What do your attainments in religion avail--while your understanding lies wrapped up in its natural darkness and confusion, utterly void of the light of life? Whatever be the natural man's gifts or attainments, we must, as in the case of the leper, Lev. 13:44, "pronounce him utterly unclean, his plague is in his head." But that is not all; it is in his heart too—his will is corrupted, as I shall soon show.

2. Of the corruption of the WILL.

The **will**, that commanding faculty, which at first was faithful and ruled with God, is now turned traitor, and rules with and for the devil. God planted it in man, "wholly a holy seed;" but now it is "turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine." It was originally

placed in due subordination to the will of God, as was shown before; but now it is wholly gone aside. However some magnify the power of free-will, a view of the spirituality of the law, to which acts of moral discipline in no way answer, and a deep insight into the corruption of nature, given by the inward operation of the Spirit, convincing of sin, righteousness, and judgment, would make men find an absolute need of the power of free grace, to remove the bands of wickedness from off their free-will. To open up this plague of the heart, I offer these following things to be considered:

1. There is, in the unrenewed will, an utter inability for what is truly good and acceptable in the sight of God. The natural man's will is in Satan's fetters, hemmed in within the circle of evil, and cannot move beyond it, any more than a dead man can raise himself out of his grave, Eph. 2:1. We deny him not a power to choose, pursue, and act what is good, as to the matter; but though he can will what is good and right, he can will nothing aright and well, John 15:5. Christ says, "Without me," that is, separate from me, as a branch from the stock, as both the word and context will bear, "you can do nothing;" which means, nothing truly and spiritually good. His very choice and desire of spiritual things, is carnal and selfish, John 6:26, "You seek me--because you ate of the loaves and were filled." He not only does not come to Christ—but "he cannot come," ver. 44. And what can he do acceptable to God, who believes not on him whom the Father has sent? To prove this inability for good in the unregenerate, consider these two things:

Proof 1. How often does the light so shine before men's eyes, that they cannot but see the good which they should choose, and the evil which they should refuse—and yet their hearts have no more power to comply with that light, than as if they were arrested by some invisible hand! They see what is right—yet they follow, and cannot but follow what is wrong. Their consciences tell them the right way, and approve of it too—yet their will cannot be brought up to it—their corruption so chains them, that they cannot embrace it;

so that they sigh and go backward, notwithstanding their light. If it be not thus, how is it that the word and way of holiness meet with such poor reception in the world? How is it that clear arguments and reason on the side of piety and a holy life, which seem to have weight even with the carnal mind, do not bring men over to that side? Although the existence of a heaven and a hell were only probable, it would be sufficient to determine the will to the choice of holiness, were it capable of being determined thereto by mere reason—but men, "knowing the judgment of God, that they who commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same—but have pleasure in them that do them," Romans 1:31.

And how is it that those who magnify the power of free-will, do not confirm their opinion before the world, by an ocular demonstration in a practice as far above others in holiness, as the opinion of their natural ability is above that of others? Or is it maintained only for the protection of lusts, which men may hold fast as long as they please; and when they have no more use for them, throw them off in a moment, and leap out of Delilah's lap into Abraham's bosom? Whatever use some make of that principle, it does of itself, and in its own nature, cast a broad shadow for a shelter to wickedness of heart and life. It may be observed, that the generality of the hearers of the gospel, of all denominations, are plagued with it; for it is a root of bitterness, natural to all men—from whence spring so much fearlessness about the soul's eternal state, so many delays and excuses in that weighty matter, whereby much work is laid up for a deathbed by some, while others are ruined by a legal walk, and neglect the life of faith, and the making use of Christ for sanctification; all flowing from the persuasion of sufficient natural abilities. So agreeable is it to corrupt nature.

Proof 2. Let those, who, by the power of the spirit of bondage, have had the law opened before them in its spirituality, for their conviction, speak and tell, if they found themselves able to incline their hearts toward it, in that case; nay, whether the more that light shone into their souls, they did not find their hearts more and more

unable to comply with it. There are some who have been brought unto "the place of the breaking forth," who are yet in the devil's camp, who from their experience can tell, that light let into the mind cannot give life to the will, to enable it to comply therewith; and could give their testimony here, if they would. But take Paul's testimony concerning it, who, in his unconverted state, was far from believing his utter inability for good; but learned it by experience, Romans 7:8-13. I own, the natural man may have a kind of love to the letter of the law—but here lies the stress of the matter, he looks on the holy law in a carnal dress; and so, while be embraces the creature of his own fancy, he thinks that he has the law. But in very deed he is without the law—for as yet he sees it not in its spirituality; if he did, he would find it the very reverse of his own nature, and what his will could not fall in with, until changed by the power of grace.

2. There is in the unrenewed will an aversion to good. Sin is the natural man's element; he is as unwilling to part with it as fish are to come out of the water on to dry land. He not only cannot come to Christ—but he will not come, John 5:40. He is polluted, and hates to be washed, Jer. 13:27, "Will you not be made clean? when shall it once be?" He is sick—yet utterly averse to the remedy—he so loves his disease--that he loathes the Physician. He is a captive, a prisoner, and a slave--but he loves his conqueror, his jailor, and master—he is fond of his fetters, prison, and drudgery, and has no liking to his liberty. For proof of the aversion to good in the will of man, I will instance in some particulars:

Proof 1. The adverseness of children. Do we not see them naturally lovers of sinful liberty? How unwilling are they to be hedged in! How averse to restraint! The world can bear witness, that they are "as bullocks unaccustomed to the yoke:" and more, that it is far easier to bring young bullocks tamely to bear the yoke, than to bring young children under discipline, and make them tamely submit to be restrained in sinful liberty. Everybody may see in this, as in a glass, that man is naturally wild and wilful, according

to Zophar's observation, Job 11:12, that "man is born like a wild donkey's colt." What can be said more? He is like a colt, the colt of an donkey, the colt of a wild donkey. Compare Jer. 2:24, "A wild donkey used to the wilderness, that snuffs up the wind at her pleasure; in her occasion who can turn her away?"

Proof 2. What pain and difficulty do men often find in bringing their hearts to pious duties! and what a task is it to the carnal heart to abide at them! It is a pain to it--to leave the world but a little to come before God. It is not easy to borrow time from the many things--to spend it upon the one thing needful. Men often go to God in duties, with their faces towards the world; and when their bodies are on the mount of ordinances, their hearts will be found at the foot of the hill "going after their covetousness," Ezek. 33:31.

They are soon wearied of well-doing; for holy duties are not agreeable to their corrupt nature. Take notice of them at their worldly business, set them down with their carnal company, or let them be enjoying a lust; time seems to them to fly, and drive furiously, so that it is gone before they are aware. But how heavily does it pass, while a prayer, a sermon, or a Sabbath lasts! The Lord's day is the longest day of all the week, with many; therefore, they must sleep longer that morning, and go sooner to bed that night, than ordinarily they do; that the day may be made of a tolerable length—for their hearts say within them, "When will the Sabbath be gone?" Amos 8:5. The hours of worship are the longest hours of that day—hence, when duty is over, they are like men eased of a burden; and when sermon is ended, many have neither the grace nor the good manners to stay until the blessing is pronounced—but, like the beasts, their head is away, as soon as a man puts his hand to loose them; and why? because, while they are at ordinances, they are, as Doeg, "detained before the Lord," 1 Sam. 22:7.

Proof 3. Consider how the will of the natural man rebels against the light, Job 24:13. Light sometimes enters in, because he is not able

to keep it out—but he loves darkness rather than light. Sometimes, by the force of truth, the outer door of the *understanding* is broken up; but the inner door of the *will* remains fast bolted. Then lusts rise against light—corruption and conscience encounter, and fight as in the field of battle, until corruption getting the upper hand, conscience is forced to turn its back; convictions are murdered, and truth is made and held prisoner, so that it can create no more disturbance. While the word is preached or read, or the rod of God is upon the natural man, sometimes convictions are darted in upon him, and his spirit is wounded in greater or lesser measure—but these convictions not being able to make him fall, he runs away with the arrows sticking in his conscience; and at length, one way or other, gets them out, and makes himself whole again. Thus, while the light shines, men, naturally averse to it, and willfully shut their eyes--until God is provoked to blind them judicially, and they become proof against his word and providences too—so, go where they will, they can sit at ease; there is never a word from heaven to them, that goes deeper than their ears. Hos. 4:17, "Ephraim is joined to idols—let him alone."

Proof 4. Let us observe the resistance made by elect souls, when the Spirit of the Lord is at work, to bring them from "the power of Satan unto God." Zion's King gets no subjects but by stroke of sword, "in the day of his power," Psalm 110:2, 3. None come to him—but such as are drawn by a divine hand, John 6:44. When the Lord comes to the soul, he finds the strong man keeping the house, and a deep peace and security there, while **the soul is fast asleep in the devil's arms**. But "the prey must be taken from the mighty, and the captive delivered." Therefore, the Lord awakens the sinner, opens his eyes, and strikes him with terror, while the clouds are black above his head, and the sword of vengeance is held to his bosom. Now, the sinner is at great pains to put a fair face on a black heart, to shake off his fears, to make headway against them, and to divert himself from thinking on the unpleasant and ungrateful subject of his soul's case. If he cannot so rid himself from them,

carnal reason is called in to help, and urges, that there is no ground for such great fear; all may be well enough yet; and if it be ill with him, it will be ill with many.

When the sinner is beat from this false reasoning, and sees no advantage in going to hell with company--he resolves to leave his sins—but cannot think of breaking off so soon; there is time enough, and he will do it afterwards. Conscience says, "*Today* if you will hear his voice harden not your hearts;" but he cries, "*Tomorrow*, Lord; tomorrow, Lord;" and "not just now, Lord;" until that now is never likely to come. Thus many times he comes from his prayers and confessions, with nothing but a bosom full of sharper convictions; for the heart does not always cast up the sweet morsel, as soon as confession is made with the mouth, Judges 10:10-16. And when conscience obliges him to part with some lusts--other lusts are kept as right eyes and right hands, and there are rueful looks after those that are put away; as it was with the Israelites, who with bitter hearts remembered "the fish they freely ate in Egypt," Numb. 11:5. Nay, when he is so pressed, that he must needs say before the Lord, that he is content to part with all his idols; the heart will be giving the tongue the lie. In a word, the soul, in this case, will shift from one thing to another; like a fish with the hook in its jaws, until it can do no more, for power is come to make it yield, as "the wild donkey in her month," Jer. 2:24.

3. There is in the will of man a natural "proneness to evil," a woeful bent towards sin. Men naturally are "bent to backsliding from God," Hos. 11:7. They hang, as the word is, towards backsliding; even as a hanging wall, whose breaking comes suddenly at an instant. Set holiness and life upon the one side, sin and death upon the other; and leave the unrenewed will to itself, it will choose sin, and reject holiness. This is no more to be doubted, than that water, poured on the side of a hill will run downward, and not upward; or that a flame will ascend, and not descend.

Proof 1. Is not the way of evil the first way which *children* go? Do not their inclinations plainly appear on the wrong side, while yet they have no ability to hide them? In the first opening of our eyes in the world, we look asquint, hell-ward, not heaven-ward. As soon as it appears that we are rational creatures it appears that we are sinful creatures, Psalm 58:3, "The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they be born." Proverbs 22:15, "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child—but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him." Folly is bound in the heart, it is woven into our very nature. The knot will not unloose; it must be broken asunder by strokes. Words will not do it, the rod must be taken to drive it away; and if it be not driven far away, the heart and it will meet and knit again. Not that the rod of itself will do this—the sad experience of many parents testifies the contrary; and Solomon himself tells you, Proverbs 27:22, "Though you grind a fool in a mortar, grinding him like grain with a pestle, you will not remove his folly from him;" it is so bound in his heart. But the rod is an ordinance of God, appointed for that end; which, like the word, is made effectual by the Spirit's accompanying his own ordinance.

This, by the way, shows that parents, in administering correction to their children, have need, first of all, to correct their own irregular passions, and look upon it as a matter of great solemnity, setting about it with much dependence on the Lord, and following it with prayer for the blessing, if they would have it effectual.

Proof 2. How easily are men led aside to sin! Those who are not persuaded to be holy, are otherwise simple ones, easily wrought upon—those whom the word cannot draw to holiness, are "caught in the Devil’s trap, having been captured by him to do his will." 2 Timothy 2:26. Profane Esau, that cunning man, Gen. 25:27, was as easily cheated of the blessing as if he had been a fool or an idiot. The more natural a thing is, the more easy it is—so Christ's yoke is easy to the saints, in so far as they are partakers of the divine nature—and sin is easy to the unrenewed man; but to learn to be

holy, is as difficult as for the Ethiopian to change his skin; because the will naturally hangs towards evil, and is averse to good.

A child can cause a round thing to roll, when he cannot move a square thing of the same weight; for the roundness makes it fit for motion, so that it goes with a touch. Even so, men find the heart easily carried towards sin, while it is as a dead weight in the way of holiness. We must seek for the reason of this from the natural bent and disposition of the heart, whereby it is prone and bent to evil. Were man's will, naturally—but in equal balance to holiness and evil, the one might be embraced with as little difficulty as the other; but experience testifies it is not so. In the sacred history of the Israelites, especially in the Book of Judges, how often do we find them forsaking Jehovah, the mighty God, and doting upon the idols of the nations about them! But did ever any one of these nations grow fond of Israel's God, and forsake their own idols? No, no; though man is naturally given to changes, it is but from evil to evil, not from evil to good. Jer. 2:11, 12 "Has any nation ever exchanged its gods for another god, even though its gods are nothing? Yet my people have exchanged their glorious God for worthless idols! The heavens are shocked at such a thing and shrink back in horror and dismay, says the Lord." Surely the will of man stands not in equal balance—but has a strong bent to the wrong side.

Proof 3. Consider how men go on still in the way of sin, until they are stopped, and that by another hand than their own; Isaiah 57:17, "I was enraged by his sinful greed; I punished him, and hid my face in anger, *yet he kept on in his willful ways*." If God withdraws his restraining hand, it is no doubt what way he will choose; for, observe it, the way of sin is the way of his heart—his heart naturally lies that way; it has a natural propensity to sin. As long as God allows them, they walk in their own way, Acts 14:16. The natural man is so fixed in his woeful choice, that there needs no more to show he is off from God's way, than to say he is upon his own.

Proof 4. Whatever good impressions are made on him, they do not last. Though his heart be firm as a stone, yes, harder than the nether-millstone in point of receiving of them; it is otherwise unstable as water, and cannot keep them. It works against the receiving of them; and, when they are made, it works them off, and returns to its natural bias; Hos. 6:4, "Your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goes away." The morning cloud promises a heavy shower—but, when the sun arises, it vanishes; the sun beats upon the early dew--and it evaporates; so the husbandman's expectation is disappointed. Such is the goodness of the natural man. Some sharp affliction, or piercing conviction, obliges him, in some sort, to turn from his evil course—but his will not being renewed, piety is still against the grain with him, and therefore this goes off again, Psalm 78:34-37. Though a stone thrown up into the air may abide there a little while—yet its natural heaviness will bring it down again—so do unrenewed men return to their wallowing in the mire; because, though they washed themselves—yet their swinish nature was not changed. It is hard to cause wet wood to take fire, hard to make it keep alight; but it is harder than either of these to make the unrenewed will retain attained goodness; which is a plain evidence of the natural bent of the will to evil.

Proof 5. Do the saints serve the Lord now, as they were accustomed to serve sin, in their unconverted state? Very far from it, Romans 6:20, "When you were the servants of sin, you were free from righteousness." Sin got all, and admitted no partner; but now, when they are the servants of Christ, are they free from sin? Nay, there are still with them some deeds of the old man, showing that he is but *dying* in them; and hence their hearts often migive them, and slip aside unto evil, "when they would do good," Romans 7:21. They need to watch, and keep their hearts with all diligence; and their sad experience teaches them, "That he who trusts in his own heart is a fool," Proverbs 28:26. If it be thus in the green tree, how must it be in the dry?

4. There is a natural contrariety, direct opposition, and enmity, in the will of man, to God himself, and his holy will, Romans 8:7, "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." The will was once God's deputy in the soul, set to command there for him; but now it is set up against him. If you would have the picture of it in its natural state, the very reverse of the will of God represents it. If the fruit hanging before one's eye is but forbidden, that is sufficient to draw the heart after it. Let me instance in the sin of profane swearing and cursing, to which some are so abandoned, that they take a pride in it, belching out horrid oaths and curses, as if hell opened with the opening of their mouths; or larding their speeches with minced oaths; and all this without any manner of provocation, though even that would not excuse them. Pray, tell me,

(1.) What profit is there here? A thief gets something for his pains; a drunkard gets a belly-full; but what do you swearers get? Others serve the devil for pay; but you are volunteers, who expect no reward but your work itself, in affronting Heaven; and if you repent not, you will get your reward in full measure; when you go to hell, your work will follow you. The drunkard shall not have a drop of water to cool his tongue there; nor will the covetous man's wealth follow him into the other world! you may drive on your old trade there; eternity will be long enough to give you your heart's fill of it.

(2.) What pleasure is there here—but what flows from your trampling on the holy law? Which of your senses does swearing and cursing gratify? If it gratifies your ears, it can only be by the noise it makes against the heavens. Though you had a mind to give up yourselves to all manner of profanity and sensuality, there is so little pleasure can be strained out of these sins of swearing, that we must needs conclude, your love to them, in this case, is a love to them for themselves, a devilish unhired love, without any prospect of profit or pleasure from them otherwise. If any shall say, these are monsters of men—be it so; yet, alas! the world is full of such monsters; they are to be found almost everywhere. Allow me to say,

they must be admitted as the mouth of the whole unregenerate world against heaven, Romans 3:14, "Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness." Ver. 19, "Now we know, that whatever things the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God."

I have a charge against every unregenerate man and woman, young and old, to be proved by the testimony of Scripture, and their own consciences; namely, that whether they be professors or profane, seeing they are not born again, they are heart enemies, (1.) to God; (2.) to the Son of God; (3.) to the Spirit of God; and (4.) to the law of God. Hear this, you careless souls, who live at ease in your natural state.

(1.) You are enemies to GOD in your mind, Col. 1:21. You are not as yet reconciled to him; the natural enmity is not as yet slain, though perhaps it lies hidden, and you do not perceive it.

[1.] You are enemies to the very **being** of God, Psalm 14:1, "The fool has said in his heart, there is no God." The proud man wishes that none were above himself; the rebel, that there were no king; and the unrenewed man, who is a mass of pride and rebellion, that there were no God. He says it in his heart, he wishes it were so, though he is ashamed and afraid to speak it out. That all natural men are such fools, appears from the apostle's quoting a part of this psalm, "That every mouth may be stopped," Romans 3:10-19. I own, indeed, that while the natural man looks on God as the Creator and Preserver of the world, because he loves his own self, therefore his heart rises not against God being his *Benefactor*—but his enmity will quickly appear when he looks on God as the *Governor* and *Judge* of the world, binding him, under the pain of the curse, to exact holiness, and girding him with the cords of death, because of his sin. Listen in this case to the voice of the heart, and you will find it to be, "there is no God!"

[2.] You are enemies to the **nature** of God, Job 21:14, "They say unto God--Leave us alone! We have no desire to know your ways!" Men set up for themselves, an idol of their own fancy, instead of the true God, and then fall down and worship it. They love him no other way than Jacob loved Leah, while he mistook her for Rachel. Every natural man is an enemy to God, as he is revealed in his word. The infinitely holy, just, powerful, and true being, is not the God whom he loves—but the God whom he loathes. In fact, men naturally are haters of God, Romans 1:30; if they could, they certainly would make him otherwise than what he is. Now, upon this I would, for your conviction, propose to your conscience a few queries.

1st, How are your hearts affected towards the infinite **purity** and holiness of God? Conscience will give an answer to this, which the tongue will not speak out. If you are not partakers of his holiness, you cannot be reconciled to it. **The Pagans finding that they could not be like God in holiness, made their gods like themselves in filthiness; and thereby they show what sort of a God the natural man would have.** God is holy; can an unholy creature love his unspotted holiness? Nay, it is the righteous only that can "give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness," Psalm 97:12. God is light; can creatures of darkness rejoice therein? Nay, "everyone that does evil hates the light," John 3:20. "For what communion has light with darkness?" 2 Cor. 6:14.

2nd, How are your hearts affected towards the **justice** of God? There is not a man, who is wedded to his lusts, as all the unregenerate are—but would desire to blot out the God of justice. Can the malefactor love his condemning judge? or an unjustified sinner, a just God? No, he cannot, Luke 7:47, "To whom little is forgiven, the same loves little." Hence, as men cannot get the doctrine of his justice blotted out of the Bible, it is such an eye-sore to them, that they strive to blot it out of their minds—they ruin themselves by presuming on his mercy, while they are not careful to get a righteousness, wherein they may stand before his justice; but "think he will do nothing at all to them," Zeph. 1:12.

3rd, How are your hearts affected towards the **omniscience** and **omnipresence** of God? Men naturally would rather have a blind idol, than the all-seeing God; therefore, they do what they can, as Adam did, to hide themselves from the presence of the Lord. They no more love the all-seeing, every-where present God, than the thief loves to have the judge witness to his evil deeds. If it could be carried by votes, God would be voted out of the world, and closed up in heaven; for the language of the carnal heart is, "The Lord does not see us. The Lord has abandoned the earth," Ezek. 8:12.

4th, How are your hearts affected towards the **truth** and **veracity** of God? There are but few in the world who can heartily subscribe to this sentence of the apostle, Romans 3:4, "Let God be true—but every man a liar." Nay, truly, there are many who, in effect, hope that God will not be true to his word. There are thousands who hear the gospel, who hope to be saved, and think all safe with them for eternity--who never had any experience of the new birth, nor do at all concern themselves in the question, Whether they are born again, or not? a question that is likely to wear out from among us at this day. Our Lord's words are plain and peremptory, "Except a man be born again, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." What are such hopes, then—but real hopes that God--with profoundest reverence be it spoken--will recall his word, and that Christ will prove a liar? What else means the sinner, who, "when he hears the words of the curse, blesses himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart?" Deut. 29:19.

5th, How are your hearts affected towards the **power** of God? None but new creatures will love him for it, on a fair view thereof; though others may slavishly fear him upon account of it. There is not a natural man—but would contribute, to the utmost of his power, to the building of another tower of Babel, to hem it in.

On these grounds I declare every unrenewed man an enemy to the true God.

(2.) You are enemies to the SON of God. That enmity to Christ is in your hearts, which would have made you join the farmers who killed the heir, and cast him out of the vineyard. "Am I a dog?" you will say, that I should so treat my sweet Savior? So did Hazael ask in another case; but when he had the temptation, he was a dog to do it. Many call Christ their dear Savior, whose consciences can bear witness, that they never derived as much sweetness from him as from their sweet lusts, which are ten times dearer to them than Christ. He is no other way dear to them, than as they abuse his death and sufferings for the peaceable enjoyment of their lusts; that they may live as they please in the world; and when they die, be kept out of hell. Alas! it is but *a mistaken Christ* that is sweet to you, whose souls loathe that Christ who is the "brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person." It is with you as it was with the carnal Jews, who delighted in him, while they mistook his errand into the world, fancying that he would be a temporal deliverer to them, Mal. 3:1. But when he "sat as a refiner and purifier of silver," vers. 2, 3, and rejected them as reprobate silver, who thought to have had no small honor in the kingdom of the Messiah, his doctrine galled their consciences, and they had no rest until they imbrued their hands in his blood. To open your eyes in this point, which you are so averse to believe, I will lay before you the enmity of your hearts against Christ in all his offices.

1st, Every unregenerate man is an enemy to Christ in his PROPHETICAL office. He is appointed of the Father as the great Prophet and Teacher; but not upon the call of the world, who, in their natural state, would have unanimously voted against him—therefore, when he came, he was condemned as a seducer and blasphemer. For evidence of this enmity, I will instance two things.

Proof 1. Consider the treatment which he meets with when he comes to teach souls **inwardly** by his **Spirit**. Men do what they can to stop their ears, like the deaf adder, that they may not hear his voice. They "always resist the Holy Spirit." "They desire not the knowledge of his ways;" and therefore bid him "depart from them."

The old calumny is often raised upon him on that occasion, John 10:20, "He is mad, why listen to him?" Soul concern is accounted, by many, nothing else but distraction, and melancholy fits; men thus blaspheming the Lord's work, because they themselves are beside themselves, and cannot judge of those matters.

Proof 2. Consider the entertainment which he meets with when he comes to teach men **outwardly** by his **word**. His written word, the Bible, is slighted. Christ has left it to us, as the book of our instruction, to show us what way we must steer our course, if we would go to Immanuel's land. It is a lamp to light us through a dark world, to eternal light. And he has enjoined us, to search it with that diligence wherewith men dig into mines for silver and gold, John 5:39. But, ah! how is this sacred treasure profaned by many! They ridicule that holy word, by which they must be judged at the last day; and will rather lose their souls than their jest, dressing up the conceits of their wanton wits in scripture phrases.

Many exhaust their spirits in reading romances, and their minds pursue them, as the flame does the dry stubble; while they have no heart for, nor relish to, the holy word; and therefore seldom take a Bible in their hands. What is agreeable to the vanity of their minds, is pleasant and exciting; but what recommends holiness to their unholy hearts, makes their spirits dull and flat. What pleasure they find in reading a profane ballad, or story-book, to whom the Bible is entirely tasteless! Many lay by their Bibles with their sabbath-day's clothes; and whatever use they have for their clothes, they have none for their Bibles, until the return of the Sabbath. Alas! the dust on your Bibles is a witness now, and will, at the last day, be a witness of the enmity of your hearts against Christ as a Prophet.

Besides all this, among those who usually read the scripture, how few are there that read it as the word of the Lord to their souls, and keep up communion with him in it! They do not make his statues their counselors, nor does their particular case send them to their Bibles. They are strangers to the solid comforts of the scriptures.

And when they are dejected, it is something else than the word that revives them—as Ahab was cured of his sullen fit, by the obtaining of Naboth's vineyard for him.

Christ's word preached is despised. The treatment which most of the world, to whom it has come, have always given it, is that which is mentioned, Matt. 22:5, "They made light of it;" and for his sake, they are despised whom he employs to preach it; whatever other face men put upon their contempt of the ministry. John 15:20, 21, "Remember the words I spoke to you: 'No servant is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the One who sent me."

But though the earthen vessels, wherein God has put the treasure, be turned, with many, into vessels wherein there is no pleasure—yet why is the treasure itself slighted? But slighted it is, and that with a witness, this day. "Lord, who has believed our report? To whom shall we speak?" Alas! when they come to ordinances for the most part, it is but to appear, or as the word is, to be seen before the Lord; and to tread his courts, namely, as a company of beasts would do, if they were driven into them, Isaiah 1:12, so little reverence and awe of God appear on their spirits. Many stand like brazen walls before the word, in whose corrupt hearts the preaching of the word makes no broach. Nay, not a few are growing worse and worse, under "precept upon precept;" and the result of all is, "They go and fall backward, and are broken, and snared, and taken," Isaiah 28:13. What tears of blood are sufficient to lament that the gospel of "the grace of God," is thus "received in vain!" Ministers are but the voice of one crying; the speaker is in heaven; and speaks to you from heaven by men—why do you "refuse him who speaks?" Heb. 12:25. God has made our master Christ, heir of all things, and we are sent to seek for a spouse for him. There is none so worthy as he; none more unworthy than they to whom this

match is proposed; but the prince of darkness is preferred before the Prince of Peace!

A dismal darkness overclouded the world by Adam's fall, more terrible than as if the sun, moon, and stars had been forever wrapped up in blackness of darkness; and there we would have eternally lain, had not this grace of the gospel, as a shining sun, appeared to dispel it, Tit. 2:11. But yet we fly like night-owls from it; and, like the wild beasts, lay ourselves down in our dens—when the sun arises, we are struck blind with the light thereof; and, as creatures of darkness, love darkness rather than light. Such is the enmity of the hearts of men against Christ, in his prophetical office.

2ndly, The natural man is an enemy to Christ in his PRIESTLY office. He is appointed of the Father a priest forever; that, only by his sacrifice and intercession, sinners may have peace with, and access to God. But *Christ crucified* is a stumbling-block, and foolishness to the unrenewed part of mankind, to whom he is preached, 1 Cor. 1:23. They are not for him as the "new and living way;" nor is he, by the voice of the world, "a High-priest over the house of God." Corrupt nature goes quite another way to work.

Proof 1. None of Adam's children are naturally inclined to receive the blessing in borrowed robes; but would always, according to the spider's motto, "owe all to themselves:" and so climb up to heaven on a thread spun for themselves. For they "desire to be under the law," Gal. 4:21, and "go about to establish their own righteousness," Romans 10:3. Man naturally looks on God as a great master; and himself as his servant, who must work and win heaven as his wages. Hence, when conscience is awakened, he thinks that, to the end he may be saved, he must answer the demands of the law, serve God as well as he can, and pray for mercy wherein he comes short. And thus many come to duties, who never come out of them to Jesus Christ.

Proof 2. As men naturally think highly of their duties, that seem to them to be well done, so they look for acceptance with God,

according as their work is done, not according to the share they have in the blood of Christ. "Therefore have we fasted, say they, and you see not?" They value themselves on their performances and attainments; yes, their very opinions in religion, Phil. 3:4, 7, taking to themselves what they rob from Christ the great High priest.

Proof 3. The natural man, going to God in duties, will always be found either to go without a Mediator, or with more than the one only Mediator, Jesus Christ. Nature is blind, and therefore venturesome; it sets men a-going immediately to God without Christ; to rush into his presence, and put their petitions in his hand, without being introduced by the secretary of heaven, or putting their requests into his hand. So fixed is this disposition in the unrenewed heart, that when many hearers of the gospel are conversed with upon the point of their hopes of salvation, the name of Christ will scarcely be heard from their mouths. Ask them how they think to obtain the pardon of sin? they will tell you they beg and look for mercy, because God is a merciful God; and that is all they have to confide in. Others look for mercy for Christ's sake—but how do they know that Christ will take their plea in hand? Why, as the papists have their mediators with the Mediator, so have they. They know he cannot but do it; for they pray, confess, mourn, and have great desires, and the like; and so have something of their own to commend them unto him—they were never made poor in spirit, and brought empty-handed to Christ, to lay the stress of all on his atoning blood.

3rdly, The natural man is an enemy to Christ in his KINGLY office. The Father has appointed the Mediator, "King in Zion," Psalm 2:6. All to whom the gospel comes are commanded, on their highest peril, "to kiss the Son," and submit themselves unto him, verse 12. But the natural voice of mankind is, "Away with him;" as you may see, verse 2, 3, "They will not have him to reign over them," Luke 19:14.

Proof 1. The workings of corrupt nature would wrest the government out of his hands. No sooner was he born—but, being born a King, Herod persecuted him, Matt. 2. And when he was crucified, they "set up over his head his accusation written, This is Jesus, the King of the Jews," Matt. 27:37. Though his kingdom is a spiritual kingdom, and not of this world—yet they cannot allow him a kingdom within a kingdom, which acknowledges no other head or supreme but the Royal Mediator. They make bold with his royal prerogatives, changing his laws, institutions, and ordinances; modeling his worship according to the devices of their own hearts, introducing new offices and officers into his kingdom, not to be found in "the book of the manner of his kingdom;" disposing of the external government thereof, as may best suit their carnal designs. Such is the enmity of the hearts of men against Zion's King.

Proof 2. How unwilling are men, naturally, to submit unto, and be hedged in by, the laws and discipline of his kingdom! As a king, he is a lawgiver, Isaiah 33:22, and has appointed an external government, discipline, and censures, to control the unruly, and to keep his professed subjects in order, to be exercised by officers of his own appointment, Matt. 18:17, 18; 1 Cor. 12:28; 1 Tim. 5:17; Heb. 13:17. But these are the great eye-sores of the carnal world, who love sinful liberty, and therefore cry out, "Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us," Psalm 2:3. Hence this work is found to be, in a special manner, a striving against the stream of corrupt nature, which, for the most part, puts such a face on the church, as if there were no king in Israel, everyone doing that which is right in his own eyes.

Proof 3. However natural men may be brought to feign submission to the King of saints—yet lusts always retain the throne and dominion in their hearts, and they are serving divers lusts and pleasures, Titus 3:3. None—but those in whom Christ is formed, do really put the crown on his head, and receive the kingdom of Christ within them. His crown is "the crown wherewith his mother crowned him on the day of his espousals." Who are they, whom the power of

grace has not subdued, who will not allow him to set up, and to put down, in their souls, as he will? Nay, as for others, will never absolutely resign themselves to his government, until conquered in a day of power. Thus you may see, that the natural man is an enemy to Jesus Christ in all his offices.

But O, how hard it is to convince men in this point! They are very loath to believe. And, in a special manner, the enmity of the heart against Christ in his priestly office seems to be hidden from the view of most of the hearers of the gospel. There appears to be a peculiar malignity in corrupt nature against this office of his. It may be observed, that the Socinians, those enemies of our blessed Lord, allow him to be properly a Prophet and a King—but deny him to be properly a Priest. And this is agreeable enough to the corruption of our nature—for, under the covenant of works, the Lord was known as a Prophet or Teacher, and also as a King or Ruler; but not at all as a Priest. So man knows nothing of the mystery of Christ, as the way to the Father, until it is revealed to him—and when it is revealed, the will rises up against it; for corrupt nature is opposed to the mystery of Christ, and the great contrivance of salvation, through the crucified Savior, revealed in the gospel. For clearing of which weighty truth, let these four things be considered:

[1.] The soul's falling in with the grand scheme of salvation by Jesus Christ, and setting the matters of salvation on that footing before the Lord, is declared by the Scriptures of truth to be an undoubted mark of a real saint, who is happy here, and shall be happy hereafter, Matt. 11:6, "Blessed is he whoever shall not be offended in me." 1 Cor. 1:23, 24, "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." Phil. 3:3, "For we are the circumcision who worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." Now, how could this be, if nature could comply with that grand device?

[2.] Corrupt nature is the very reverse of the gospel plan. In the gospel, God proposes Jesus Christ as the great means of re-uniting man to himself; he has named him as the Mediator, one in whom he is well pleased, and will have none but him, Matt. 17:5; but nature will have none of him, Psalm 71:11. God appointed the place of meeting for the reconciliation, namely, the flesh of Christ; accordingly, God was in Christ, 2 Cor. 5:19, as the tabernacle of meeting, to make up the peace with sinners—but natural men, although they should die forever, will not come to Christ, John 5:40, "You will not come to me that you might have life." In the way of the gospel, the sinner must stand before the Lord in an imputed righteousness—but corrupt nature is for an inherent righteousness; and, therefore, so far as natural men follow after righteousness, they follow after "the law of righteousness," Romans 9:31, 32; and not after "the Lord our righteousness." Nature is always for building up itself, and to have some ground for boasting; but the great design of the gospel is to exalt grace, to depress nature, and exclude boasting, Romans 3:27. The sum of our natural religion is, to do good from and for ourselves, John 5:44; the sum of the gospel religion is, to deny ourselves, and to do good from and for Christ, Phil. 1:21.

[3.] Everything in nature is against believing in Jesus Christ. What beauty can the blind man discern in a crucified Savior, for which he is to be desired? How can the will, naturally impotent, yes, and averse to good, make choice of him? Well may the soul then say to him in the day of the spiritual siege, as the Jebusite said to David in another case, "Except you take away the blind and the lame, you shall not come in hither," 2 Sam. 5:6. The way of nature is to go into oneself for all; according to the fundamental maxim of unsanctified morality, "That a man should trust in himself;" which, according to the doctrine of faith, is mere foolishness—for so it is determined, Proverbs 28:26, "He who trusts in his own heart is a fool." Now faith is the soul's going out of itself for all—and this, nature, on the other hand, determines to be foolishness, 1 Cor.

1:18-23. Therefore there is need of the working of mighty power to cause sinners to believe, Eph. 1:19; Isaiah 53:1. We see the promises of welcome to sinners, in the gospel-covenant, are ample, large, and free, clogged with no conditions, Isaiah 55:1; Rev. 22:17. If they cannot believe his bare word, he has given his oath upon it, Ezek. 33:11; and, for their greater assurance, he has annexed seals to his sworn covenant, namely, the holy sacraments—so that no more could be demanded of the most faithless person in the world, to make us believe him, than the Lord has condescended to give us, to make us believe himself. This plainly speaks nature to be against believing; and those who flee to Christ for a refuge, to have need of strong consolation, Heb. 6:18, to balance their strong doubts, and propensity to unbelief. Farther, also, it may be observed, how in the word sent to a secure, graceless generation, their objections are answered beforehand; and words of grace are heaped one upon another, as you may read, Isaiah 55:7-9; Joel 2:13. Why? Because the Lord knows, that when these secure sinners are thoroughly awakened, doubts, fears, and carnal reasonings against believing, will be getting into their breasts, as thick as dust in a house, raised by sweeping a dry floor.

[4.] Corrupt nature is bent towards the way of the law, or covenant of works; and every natural man, so far as he sets himself to seek after salvation, is engaged in that way, and will not leave it, until beat from it by divine power. Now the way of salvation by works, and that of free grace in Jesus Christ, are inconsistent. Romans 11:6, "And if by grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace; otherwise work is no more work." Gal. 3:12, "And the law is not of faith; but the man that does them shall live in them." Therefore, if the will of man naturally inclines to the way of salvation by the law, it lies cross to the gospel plan. And that such is the natural bent of our hearts, will appear, if these following things be considered:

(1st.) The law was Adam's covenant; and he knew no other, as he was the head and representative of all mankind, who were brought

into it with him, and left under it by him, though without strength to perform the condition thereof. Hence, this covenant is interwoven with our nature; and though we have lost our father's strength—yet we still incline to the way he was set upon, as our head and representative in that covenant—that is, by doing, to live. This is our natural religion, and the principle which men naturally take for granted, Matt. 19:16, "What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?"

(2ndly.) Consider the opposition that has always been made in the world, against the doctrine of free grace in Jesus Christ--by men setting up the way of works; thereby discovering the natural tendency of the heart. It is manifest, that the great design of the gospel plan is to exalt the free grace of God in Jesus Christ, Romans 4:16, "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace." See Eph. 1:6, and chapter 2:7-9. All gospel truths center in Christ—so that to learn the truth, is to learn Christ, Eph. 4:20, and to be truly taught it, is to be taught as "the truth is in Jesus," verse 21. All dispensations of grace and favor from heaven, whether to nations or particular people, have still had something about them proclaiming the freedom of grace; as in the very first separation made by the divine favor, Cain, the elder brother is rejected, and Abel, the younger, accepted. This shines through the whole history of the Bible—but, as true it is, this has been the point principally opposed by corrupt nature. One may well say, that, of all errors in religion, since Christ the seed of the woman was preached, this of works, in opposition to free grace in him, was the first that lived, and, it is likely, will be the last that dies. There have been vast numbers of errors, which have sprung up, one after another; whereof, at length, the world became ashamed and weary, so that they died away—but this has continued, from Cain, the first author of this heresy, unto this day; and never lacked some who clave to it, even in the times of greatest light.

I do not, without ground, call Cain the author of it; who, when Abel brought a sacrifice of atonement, a bloody offering of the firstlings

of his flock, like the publican smiting on his bosom, and saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner," advanced with his thank-offering of the fruit of the ground, Gen. 4:3, 4, like the proud Pharisee with his "God, I thank you," etc. For what was the cause of Cain's wrath, and of his murdering Abel? was it not that he was not accepted of God for his work? Gen. 4:4, 5. "And why did he slew him? Because his own works wore evil and his brother's righteous," 1 John 3:12; that is, done in faith, and accepted, when his were done without faith, and rejected, as the apostle teaches, Heb. 11:4. So he wrote his indignation against justification and acceptance with God through faith, in opposition to works, in the blood of his brother, to convey it down to posterity. And, since that time, the unbloody sacrifice has often swimmed in the blood of those who rejected it.

The promise made to Abraham, of the seed in which all nations should be blessed, was so overclouded among his posterity in Egypt, that the generality of them saw no need of that way of obtaining the blessing, until God himself confuted their error by a fiery law from Mount Sinai, which "was added because of transgressions, until the seed should come," Gal. 3:19. I need not insist on telling you, how Moses and the prophets had still much to do, to lead the people off from the conceit of their own righteousness. The ninth chapter of Deuteronomy is entirely spent on that purpose. They were very gross in that point in our Savior's time, in the time of the apostles, when the doctrine of free grace was most clearly preached, that error lifted up its head in the face of the clearest light; witness the epistles to the Romans and Galatians. And since that time it has not been lacking; Popery being the common sink of former heresies, and the heart and life of that delusion. And, finally, it may be observed, that always as the church declined from her purity otherwise, the doctrine of free grace was obscured proportionably.

(3rdly.) Such is the natural propensity of man's heart to the way of the law, in opposition to Christ, that, as the tainted vessel turns the taste of the purest liquor put into it, so the natural man turns the

very gospel into law, and transforms the covenant of grace into a covenant of works. The ceremonial law was to the Jews a real gospel, which held blood, death, and translation of guilt, before their eyes continually, as the only way of salvation; yet their very table, that is, their altar, with the several ordinances pertaining thereto, Mal. 1:12, was a snare unto them, Romans 11:9, while they used it to make up the defects in their obedience to the moral law; and clave to it so, as to reject him, whom the altar and sacrifices pointed them to, as the subject of all—even as Hagar, whose duty was only to serve, was, by their father, brought into her mistress's bed; not without a mystery in the purpose of God, "for these are the two covenants," Gal. 4:24. Thus is the doctrine of the gospel corrupted by papist and other enemies to the doctrine of free grace. And indeed, however natural men's heads may be set right in this point, as surely as they are out of Christ; their faith, repentance, and obedience, such as they are, are placed by them in the room of Christ and his righteousness; and so trusted to, as if by these they fulfilled a new law.

(4thly.) Great is the difficulty, in Adam's sons, of their parting with the law as a covenant of works. None part with it, in that respect—but those whom the power of the spirit of grace separates from it. The law is our first husband, and gets everyone's virgin love. When Christ comes to the soul, he finds it married to the law, so as it neither can nor will be married to another, until it be obliged to part with the first husband, as the apostle teaches, Romans 7:1-4. Now, that you may see what sort of a parting this is, consider,

[1st.] It is death, Romans 7:4; Gal. 2:19. Entreaties will not prevail with the soul here; it says to the first husband, as Ruth to Naomi, "The Lord do so to me, and more also, if anything but death parts you and me." And here sinners are true to their word; they die to the law, before they are married to Christ. Death is hard to everybody; but what difficulty, do you imagine, must a loving wife, on her deathbed, find in parting with her husband, the husband of her youth, and with the dear children she has brought forth to him? The

law is that husband; all the duties performed by the natural man are these children. What a struggle, as for life, will be in the heart before they are parted? I may have occasion to touch upon this afterwards; in the mean time, take the apostle's short but pithy description of it, Romans 10:3, "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God." They go about to establish their own righteousness, like an eager disputant in schools, seeking to establish the point in question; or, like a tormentor, extorting a confession from one upon the rack. They go about to establish it, to make it stand—their righteousness is like a house built on the sand; it cannot stand—but they would have it to stand. It falls; they set it up again—but still it tumbles down on them; yet they cease not to go about to make it stand.

But why all these pains about a tottering righteousness? Because, such as it is, it is their own. What sets them against Christ's righteousness? Why, that would make them free grace's debtors for all; and that is what the proud heart can by no means submit to. Here lies the stress of the matter, Psalm 10:4, "The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek," to read it without the supplement, in other terms, it means, "He cannot beg, and to beg he is ashamed." Such is the struggle before the soul dies to the law. But what speaks yet more of this woeful disposition of the heart, nature oft-times gets the mastery of the disease—insomuch that the soul, which was likely to have died to the law while convictions were sharp and piercing, fatally recovers of the happy and promising sickness; and, what is natural, cleaves more closely than ever to the law, even as a wife brought back from the gates of death, would cleave to her husband. This is the outcome of the exercises of many about their souls' case—they are indeed brought to follow duties more closely; but they are as far from Christ as ever, if not farther.

[2ndly.] It is a violent death, Romans 7:4, "you are become dead to the law," being killed, slain, or put to death, as the word bears. The law itself has a great hand in this; the husband gives the wound, Gal. 2:19, "I through the law am dead to the law." The soul that dies this death, is like a loving wife matched with a rigorous husband; she does what she can to please him—yet he is never pleased—but harasses and beats her until she breaks her heart, and death sets her free—this will afterwards more fully appear.

Thus it is made evident, that men's hearts are naturally bent to the way of the law, and lie cross to the gospel method—and the second article of the charge against you who are unregenerate is verified, namely, that you are enemies to the Son of God.

(3.) You are enemies to the SPIRIT of God. He is the Spirit of holiness—the natural man is unholy, and loves to be so, and therefore resists the Holy Spirit, Acts 7:51. The work of the Spirit is to convince the world of "sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment," John 16:8. But O, how do men strive to ward off these convictions, as much as they ward off a blow, threatening the loss of a right eye, or a right hand. If the Spirit of the Lord darts them in, so that they cannot avoid them; the heart says, in effect, as Ahab to Elijah, whom he both hated and feared, "Have you found me, O my enemy?" And indeed, they treat him as an enemy, doing their utmost to stifle convictions, and to murder these harbingers that come to prepare the Lord's way into the soul. Some fill their hands with business, to put their convictions out of their heads, as Cain, who set about building a city; some put them off with delays and fair promises, as Felix did; some will sport them away in company, and some sleep them away. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of sanctification; whose work it is to subdue lusts, and burn up corruption—how then can the natural man, whose lusts are to him as his limbs, yes, as his life, fail of being an enemy to him?

(4.) You are enemies to the LAW of God. Though the natural man desires to be under the law, as a covenant of works, choosing that

way of salvation, in opposition to the mystery of Christ; yet as it is a rule of life to him, requiring universal holiness, and forbidding all manner of impurity, he is an enemy to it—"is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be," Romans 8:7. For,

[1.] There is no unrenewed man, who is not wedded to some one lust or another, which his heart can by no means part with. Now, that he cannot bring up his inclinations to the holy law, he would fain have the law brought down to his inclinations—a plain evidence of the enmity of the heart against it. Therefore, "to delight in the law of God after the inward man," is proposed in the word as a mark of a gracious soul, Romans 7:22; Psalm 1:2. It is from this natural enmity of the heart against the law, that all the pharisaical glosses upon it have arisen; whereby the commandment, which is in itself exceeding broad, has been made very narrow, to the intent that it might be the more agreeable to the natural disposition of the heart.

[2.] The law, laid home on the natural conscience in its spirituality, irritates corruption. The nearer it comes, nature rises the higher against it. In that case it is as oil to the fire, which instead of quenching it, makes it flame the more—"When the commandment came, sin revived," says the apostle, Romans 7:9. What reason can be assigned for this—but the natural enmity of the heart against the holy law? Unmortified corruption, the more it is opposed, the more it rages.

Let us conclude then, that the unregenerate are heart-enemies to God, his Son, his Spirit, and his law; that there is a natural contrariety, opposition, and enmity in the will of man to God himself, and his holy will.

(5.) There is in the will of man contumacy against the Lord. Man's will is naturally wilful in an evil course; he will have his will, though it should ruin him—it is with him, as with the leviathan, Job 41:29, "Darts are counted as stubble; he laughs at the shaking of a spear." The Lord calls to him by his word; says to him, as Paul to the jailor, when he was about to kill himself, "Do

yourself no harm:" sinner, "why will you die?" Ezek. 18:31. But they will not hearken; everyone turns to his course, "as the horse rushes into the battle," Jer. 8:6. We have a promise of life, in form of a command, Proverbs 4:4, "Keep my commandments and live:" it speaks impenitent sinners to be self-destroyers, wilful self-murderers. They transgress the command of living; as if one's servant should willfully starve himself to death, or greedily drink a cup of poison, which his master commands him to forbear—even so do they; they will not live, they will die, Proverbs 8:36, "All those who hate me, love death."

O, what a heart is this! It is a **stony** heart, Ezek. 36:26, hard and inflexible as a stone—mercies melt it not, judgments break it not; yet it will break before it bend. It is an **insensible** heart—though there be upon the sinner a weight of sin, which makes the earth to stagger; although there is a weight of that wrath on him, which makes the devils to tremble; yet he goes lightly under the burden; he feels not the weight any more than a stone would, until the Spirit of the Lord quickens him so far as to feel it.

(6.) The unrenewed will is wholly perverse, in reference to man's chief and highest end. The natural man's chief end is not God—but himself. The being of man is merely relative, dependent, borrowed—he has neither being nor goodness originally from himself; but all he has is from his God, as the first cause and spring of all perfection, natural or moral. Dependence is woven into his very nature—so that if God were totally to withdraw from him, he would dwindle into a mere nothing. Seeing then whatever man is, he is by God, surely in whatever he is, he should be to God, as the waters which came from the sea, do of course return there again.

Thus man was created, directly looking to God, as his chief end—but, failing into sin, he fell off from God, and turned into himself; and, like a traitor usurping the throne, he gathers in the rents of the crown to himself. This infers **a total apostasy and universal corruption in man**; for where the chief and last end is changed,

there can be no goodness there. This is the case of all men in their natural state, Psalm 14:2, 3, "The Lord looked down to see if there were any that did seek God. They are all gone aside" from God; they seek not God—but themselves. Though many fair shreds of morality are to be found among them—yet "there is none who does good, no, not one;" for though some of them in appearance run well—yet they are still off the way; they never aim at the right mark. They are "lovers of their own selves," 2 Tim. 3:2, "more than God," ver. 4. Therefore Jesus Christ, having come into the world to bring men back to God again, came to bring them out of themselves in the first place, Matt. 16:24.

The godly groan under this woeful disposition of the heart—they acknowledge it, and set themselves against it, in its subtle and dangerous insinuations. The unregenerate, though most insensible of it, are under the power of self; and wherever they turn themselves, they cannot move beyond the circle of self—they seek themselves, they act for themselves; their natural, civil, and religious actions, from whatever springs they come, all run into, and meet in the dead sea of self.

Most men are so far from making God their chief end, in their natural and civil actions, that in these matters, God is not in all their thoughts. Their eating and drinking, and such like natural actions, are for themselves; their own pleasure or necessity, without any higher end, Zech. 7:6, "Did you not eat for yourselves?" They have no eye to the glory of God in these things, as they ought to have, 1 Cor. 10:31. They do not eat and drink to keep up their bodies for the Lord's service; they do them not because God has said, "You shall not kill:" neither do those drops of sweetness, which God has put into the creature, raise up their souls towards that ocean of delights that is in the Creator; though they be a sign hung out at heaven's door, to tell men of the fullness of goodness that is in God himself, Acts 14:17. But it is self, and not God, that is sought in them, by natural men. And what are the unrenewed man's civil actions, such as buying, selling, working, etc.—but fruit to

himself? Hos. 10:1. So marrying, and giving in marriage, are reckoned among the sins of the old world, Matt. 24:38, for they have no eye to God therein, to please him; but all they had in view was to please themselves, Gen. 6:3.

Finally, **self is natural men's highest end**, in their religious actions. They perform duties for a name, Matt. 6:1, 2, or some other worldly interest, John 6:26. Or if they be more refined, it is their peace, and at most their salvation from hell and wrath or their own eternal happiness, that is their chief and highest end, Matt. 19:16-22. Their eyes are blind, that they cannot see the glory of God. They seek God indeed—yet not for himself—but for themselves. They seek him not at all—but for their own welfare—so their whole life is woven into one web of practical blasphemy; making God the means, and self their end, yes, their chief end.

Thus I have given you a crude draught of man's will, in his natural state, drawn by scripture, and men's own experience. Call it no more Naomi—but Marah; for bitter it is, and a root of bitterness. Call it no more free-will—but slavish lust; free to evil—but free from good, until regenerating grace loosens the bands of wickedness. Now, since all must be wrong, and nothing can be right, where the understanding and will are so corrupt; I shall briefly dispatch what remains, as following, of course, on the corruption of these prime faculties of the soul.

3. The Corruption of the AFFECTIONS.

"Men loved **darkness**." John 3:19. "Lovers of **pleasure** rather than lovers of God." 2 Tim. 3:4. The affections are corrupted. The unrenewed man's affections are wholly disordered and distempered—they are as the unruly horse, that either will not receive, or violently runs away with, the rider. So man's heart naturally is a mother of abominations, Mark 7:21, 22, "For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality,

theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly." The natural man's affections are wretchedly misplaced; he is a spiritual monster. His heart is where his feet should be--fixed on the earth; his heels are lifted up against heaven--which his heart should be set on, Acts 9:5. His face is towards hell, his back towards heaven; and therefore God calls to him to turn. He loves what he should hate, and hates what he should love. He joys in what he ought to mourn for, and mourns for what he should rejoice in. He glories in his shame, and is ashamed of his glory. He abhors what he should desire, and desires what he should abhor, Proverbs 2:13-15.

They hit the point indeed, as Caiaphas did in another case, who cried out against the apostles, as men that turned the world upside down, Acts 17:6; for that is the work which the gospel has to do in the world, where sin has put all things so out of order, that heaven lies under, and earth a-top. If the unrenewed man's affections be set on lawful objects, then they are either excessive or defective. Lawful enjoyments of the world have sometimes too little—but mostly too much of them; either they get not their due, or, if they do, it is measure pressed down, and running over. Spiritual things have always too little of them. In a word, they are never right; only evil.

Now, here is a threefold cord against heaven and holiness, not easily to be broken--a blind mind, a perverse will, and disorderly distempered affections. The mind, swelled with self-conceit, says, the man should not stoop; the will, opposite to the will of God, says, he will not; and the corrupt affections, rising against the Lord, in defense of the corrupt will, say, he shall not. Thus the poor creature stands out against God and goodness, until a day of power comes, in which he is made a new creature.

4. Corruption of the CONSCIENCE.

The conscience is corrupt and defiled, "to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; in fact, both their mind and conscience are defiled." Titus 1:15. Conscience is an *evil* eye, which fills one's mind with much darkness and confusion; being naturally unable to do its office—until the Lord, by letting in new light to the soul, awakens the conscience, it remains sleepy and inactive. Conscience can never do its work—but according to the light it has to work by. Therefore, seeing the natural man cannot spiritually discern spiritual things, 1 Cor. 2:14, the conscience naturally is quite useless in that point; being cast into such a deep sleep, which nothing but saving illumination from the Lord can set it on work in that matter.

The light of the natural conscience in good and evil, sin and duty--is very defective; therefore, though it may check for grosser sins—yet, to the more subtle workings of sin, it cannot check them, because it discerns them not. Thus, conscience will fly in the face of many, if at any time they are drunk, swear, neglect prayer; or are guilty of any gross sin; who otherwise have a profound peace, though they live in the sin of unbelief, and are strangers to spiritual worship, and the life of saving faith. Natural light being but faint and languishing in many things which it reaches, conscience, in that case, shoots like a stitch in one's side, which quickly goes off—its incitements to duty, and checks for, and struggles against sin, are very remiss, which the natural man easily gets over. But because there is a false light in the dark mind, the natural conscience following the same, will call evil good, and good evil, Isaiah 5:20. So conscience is often like a blind and furious horse, which violently runs down himself, his rider, and all that comes in his way. John 16:2, "Whoever kills you, will think that he does God service."

When the natural conscience is awakened by the Spirit of conviction, it will indeed rage and roar, and put the whole man in a dreadful consternation; awfully summon all the powers of the soul to help in a strait; make the stiff heart to tremble, and the knees to bow; set the eyes weeping, the tongue confessing; and oblige the

man to cast out the goods into the sea, which he apprehends are likely to sink the ship of the soul, though the heart still goes after them. Yet it is an evil conscience which naturally leads to despair, and will do it effectually, as in Judas' case; unless either lusts prevail over it, to lull it asleep, as in the case of Felix, Acts 24:25, or the blood of Christ prevail over it, sprinkling and purging it from dead works, as in the case of all true converts, Heb. 9:14, and 10:22.

5. Corruption of the MEMORY.

Even the memory bears evident marks of sin and corruption. What is good and worthy to be remembered, makes but slender impression, so that impression easily wears off; the memory, as a leaking vessel, lets it slip. As a sieve that is full when in the water, lets all go when it is taken out--just so is the memory with respect to spiritual things.

But how does the memory retain what ought to be forgotten! Sinful things so bear in themselves upon it, that though men would sincerely have them out of mind--yet they stick there like glue! However forgetful men are in other things, it is hard to forget an injury. So the memory often furnishes new fuel to old lusts; makes men in old age remember the sins of their youth, while it presents them again to the mind with delight, which thereupon returns to its former lusts. Thus the memory is like a riddle--which lets through the pure grain, and keeps the refuse.

Thus far of the corruption of the **soul**--the mind, will, affections, conscience, and memory.

6. Corruption of the BODY.

"Their **throats** are open graves; their **tongues** practice deceit. The poison of vipers is on their **lips**. Their **mouths** are full of cursing

and bitterness. Their **feet** are swift to shed blood." Romans 3:13-15.

The body itself also is partaker of corruption and defilement. Therefore the Scripture calls it sinful flesh, Romans 8:3. The natural temper, or rather distemper of our bodies have a natural tendency to sin. The body incites to sin, betrays the soul into snares, yes, is itself a snare to the soul. The body is a furious beast, of such a temper, that it will not be beat down, kept under control, and brought into subjection. It will cast the soul into much sin and misery.

The body serves the soul in many sins. Its members are weapons of unrighteousness, whereby men fight against God. The eyes and ears are open doors, by which impure motions and sinful desires enter the soul. The tongue is "a world of iniquity," "an uncontrollable evil, full of deadly poison," by it the impure heart vents a great deal of its filthiness. The throat is "an open grave." The feet run the devil's errands. The belly is made a god, Phil. 3:19, not only by drunkards and riotous livers—but by every natural man. So the body naturally is an agent for the devil, and a storehouse of weapons against the Lord.

To conclude—man by nature is wholly corrupted, "from the sole of the foot, even unto the head, there is no soundness in him." As in a dunghill, every part contributes to the corruption of the whole, so the natural man grows still worse and worse--the soul is made worse by the body, and the body by the soul; and every faculty of the soul (the mind, will, affections, conscience and memory) serves to corrupt another more and more.

There is a vileness in the body, Phil. 3:21, which, as to the saints, will never be removed, until it is melted down in the grave, and cast into a new form at the resurrection, to come forth a spiritual body.

This much for the second general head.

III. I shall show HOW man's nature comes to be thus corrupted.

The heathens perceived that man's nature was corrupted; but **how** sin had entered, they could not tell. But the Scripture is very plain on that point, Romans 5:12, 19, "By one man--sin entered into the world. By one man's disobedience--many were made sinners." Adam's sin corrupted man's nature, and leavened the whole lump of mankind. We putrefied as in Adam as our root. The root was poisoned, and so the branches were envenomed—the vine turned into the vine of Sodom, and so the grapes became grapes of gall. Adam, by his sin, became not only guilty—but corrupt; and so transmits guilt and corruption to his posterity, Gen. 5:3; Job 14:4. By his sin he stripped himself of his original righteousness, and corrupted himself; we were in him representatively, being represented by him as our moral head in the covenant of works; we were in him seminally, as our natural head; hence we fell in him, and by his disobedience were made sinners, as Levi, in the loins of Abraham paid tithes, Heb. 7:9, 10.

His first sin is imputed to us; therefore, we are justly left under the lack of his original righteousness, which being given to him as a common person, he cast off by his sin—and this is necessarily followed, in him and us, by the corruption of the whole nature; righteousness and corruption being two contraries, one of which must needs always be in man, as a subject capable thereof. And Adam, our common father, being corrupt, we are so too; for "who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?"

Although it is sufficient to prove the righteousness of this dispensation, that it was from the Lord, who does all things well; yet, to silence the murmurings of proud nature, let these few things farther be considered.

1. In the covenant wherein Adam represented us, eternal happiness was promised to him and his posterity, upon condition of Adam's

perfect obedience, as the representative of all mankind—whereas, if there had been no covenant, they could not have pleaded eternal life upon their most perfect obedience—but might have been, after all, reduced to nothing; notwithstanding, by natural justice, they would have been liable to God's eternal wrath, in case of sin. Who in that case would not have consented to that representation?

2. Adam had a power to stand given him, being made upright. He was as capable of standing for himself and all his posterity, as any after him could be for themselves. This trial of mankind in their head would soon have been over, and the crown for them all, had he stood—whereas, had his posterity been independent of him, and everyone left to act for himself, the trial would have been continually carrying on, as men came into the world.

3. He had the strongest natural affection to engage him, being our common father.

4. His own stock was in the ship, his all lay at stake, as well as ours. He had no separate interest from ours; but if he forget ours, he must necessarily forget his own.

5. If he had stood, we would have had the light of his mind, the righteousness of his will, and holiness of his affections, with entire purity, transmitted unto us; we could not have fallen; the crown of glory, by his obedience, would have been forever secured to him and his descendants. This is evident from the nature of a federal representation, and no reason can be given why, seeing we are lost by Adam's sin, we would not have been saved by his obedience. On the other hand, it is reasonable, that he falling, we would with him bear the loss.

6. Those who quarrel with this dispensation, must renounce their part in Christ; for we are no otherwise made sinners by Adam, than we are made righteous by Christ, from whom we have both imputed and inherent righteousness. We no more made choice of the

second Adam for our head and representative in the second covenant, than we did of the first Adam in the first covenant.

Let none wonder that such a horrible change could be brought on by one sin of our first parents; for thereby they turned away from God, as their chief end, which necessarily infers a universal depravation. Their sin was a complication of evils, a total apostasy from God, a violation of the whole law—by it they broke all the ten commands at once.

1. They chose new gods. They made their belly their God--by their sensuality. Self became their God--by their ambition. Yes, and the devil their God--by believing him, and disbelieving their Maker.

2. Though they received—yet they observed not that ordinance of God about the forbidden fruit. They despised that ordinance so plainly enjoined them, and would needs carve out to themselves how to serve the Lord.

3. They took the name of the Lord their God in vain; despising his attributes, his justice, truth, power, etc. They grossly profaned the holy tree; abused his word, by not giving credit to it; abused that creature of his which they should not have touched; and violently misconstrued his providence, as if God, by forbidding them that tree, had been standing in the way of their happiness; therefore he did not allow them to escape his righteous judgment.

4. They remembered not the Sabbath to keep it holy—but put themselves out of a condition to serve God aright on his own day; neither kept they that state of holy rest wherein God had put them.

5. They cast off their relative duties—Eve forgets herself, and acts without the advice of her husband, to the ruin of both; Adam, instead of admonishing her to repent, yields to the temptation, and confirms her in her wickedness. They forgot all duty to their posterity. They honored not their Father in heaven; and therefore, their days were not long in the land which the Lord their God gave them.

6. They ruined themselves, and all their posterity.

7. They gave themselves up to lust and sensuality.

8. They took away what was not their own, against the express will of the great Owner.

9. They bore false witness, and lied against the Lord, before angels, devils, and one another; in effect giving out, that they were harshly dealt with, and that God grudged their happiness.

10. They were discontented with their lot, and coveted a forbidden object; which ruined both them and theirs.

Thus was the image of God on man defaced all at once.

IV. I shall now APPLY this doctrine of the corruption of nature.

Use 1. For INFORMATION. Is man's nature wholly corrupted? Then,

1. No wonder that the grave opens its devouring mouth for us, as soon as the womb has cast us forth; and that the cradle is turned into a coffin, to receive the corrupt lump—for we are all, in a spiritual sense, dead-born; yes, and filthy, Psalm 14:3, foul, vile, and stinking as a corrupt thing, as the word imports. Then let us not complain of the miseries we are exposed to at our entrance into the world, nor of the continuance of them while we are in the world. Here is the venom which has poisoned all the springs of earthly enjoyments we have to drink of. It is the corruption of man's nature, which brings forth all the miseries of human life, in churches, states, and families, and in men's souls and bodies.

2. Behold here, as in a mirror, the spring of all the wickedness, profanity, and formality, which is in the world; the source of all the disorders in your own heart and life. Everything acts like itself, agreeable to its own nature; and so corrupt man acts corruptly. You need not wonder at the sinfulness of your own heart and life, nor at

the sinfulness and perverseness of others—if a man be crooked, he cannot but halt; and if the clock be set wrong, how can it point the hour aright?

3. See here, why sin is so pleasant, and true religion such a burden to carnal men—sin is natural, holiness not so. Oxen cannot feed in the sea, nor fish in the fruitful fields. A swine brought into a palace would soon get away again, to wallow in the mire; and corrupt nature tends ever to impurity.

4. Learn from this, the nature and necessity of regeneration.

First, This discovers the **NATURE** of regeneration, in these two things:

1. It is not a partial—but a total change, though imperfect in this life. Your whole nature is corrupted; therefore, the cure must go through every part. Regeneration makes not only a new head, for knowledge—but a new heart, and new affections, for holiness. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new!" 2 Corinthians 5:17. If a man, having received many wounds, should be cured of them all, save one only, he might bleed to death by that one as well as by a thousand—so, if the change go not through the whole man, it is naught.

2. It is not a change made by human industry—but by the mighty power of the Spirit of God. A man must be born of the Spirit, John 3:5. Minor diseases may be cured by men; but those which are birth-defects, not without a miracle, John 9:32. The change wrought upon men by good education, or forced upon them by a natural conscience, though it may pass among men for a saving change—yet it is not so; for our nature is corrupt, and none but the God of nature can change it. Though a gardener, by ingrafting a pear branch into an apple tree, may make the apple tree bear pears—yet the art of man cannot change the nature of the apple tree. **So a**

man may fix a new life to his old heart—but he can never change the heart.

Secondly, This also shows the **NECESSITY** of regeneration. It is absolutely necessary, in order to salvation, John 3:4, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." No unclean thing can enter the New Jerusalem; but you are wholly unclean, while in your natural state. If every member of your body were disjointed, each joint must be loosened before the members can be set right again. This is the case of your soul, as you have heard—therefore, you must be born again; otherwise you shall never see heaven, unless it be afar off, as the rich man in hell did. Deceive not yourself; no mercy of God, no blood of Christ, will bring you to heaven in your unregenerate state—for God will never open a fountain of mercy to wash away his own holiness and truth; nor did Christ shed his precious blood, to blot out the truths of God, or to overturn God's measures about the salvation of sinners. Heaven! What would you do there, you who are not born again? you who are no ways fitted for Christ the head? That would be a strange sight! a holy head, and members wholly corrupt! a head full of treasures of grace, and members wherein are nothing but treasures of wickedness! a head obedient to the death, and heels kicking against heaven. You are no better adapted for the society above, than beasts are for converse with men. You are a hater of true holiness; and at the first sight of a saint there, would cry out, "Have you found me, O my enemy!" Nay, the unrenewed man, if it were possible he could go to heaven in that state, would go to it no otherwise than now he comes to the duties of holiness; that is, leaving his heart behind him.

Use 2. For LAMENTATION. Well may we lament your case, O natural man! for it is the saddest case one can be in out of hell. It is time to lament for you; for you are dead already, dead while you live—you carry about with you a dead soul in a living body; and because you are dead, you can not lament your own case. You are loathsome in the sight of God; for you are altogether corrupt; you

have no good in you. Your soul is a mass of darkness, rebellion, and vileness, before the Lord. You think, perhaps, that you have a good heart to God, good inclinations, and good desires; but God knows there is nothing good in you—"Every imagination of your heart is only evil continually." You can do no good; you can do nothing but sin. For,

1. You are the servant of sin, Romans 6:17, and therefore free from righteousness, ver. 20. Whatever righteousness is, poor soul, you are free from it; you do not, you can not meddle with it. You are under the dominion of sin; a dominion where righteousness can have no place. You are a child and servant of the devil, seeing you are yet in a state of nature, John 8:44, "You are of your father the devil." And, to prevent any mistake, consider, that sin and Satan have two sort of servants:

(1.) There are some employed, as it were, in coarser work; those bear the devil's mark on their foreheads, having no form of godliness; but are profane, grossly ignorant, mere moralists, not so much as performing the external duties of religion—but living as sons of this world, only attending to earthly things, Phil. 3:19.

(2.) There are some employed in a more refined sort of service to sin, who carry the devil's mark in their right hand; which they can and do hide from the eyes of the world. These are secret hypocrites, who sacrifice as much to the corrupt mind, as the others to the flesh, Eph. 2:3. These are ruined by a more secret trade of sin—pride, unbelief, self-seeking, and the like, swarm in, and prey upon their corrupted, wholly corrupted souls. Both are servants of the same house; the latter as far as the former from righteousness.

2. How is it possible that you should be able to do any good, you whose nature is wholly corrupt? Can fruit grow where there is no root? or, Can there be an effect without a cause? "Can the fig-tree bear olive berries? either a vine, figs?" If your nature is wholly corrupt, as indeed it is, all you do is bear fruit according to your

nature; for no effect can exceed the virtue of its cause. "Can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit?" Matt. 7:18.

Ah! what a miserable spectacle is he who can do nothing but sin! You are the man, whoever you are, that are yet in your natural state. Hear, O sinner, what is your case.

(1.) Innumerable sins compass you about; mountains of guilt are lying upon you; floods of impurities overwhelm you, living lusts of all sorts roll up and down in the dead sea of your soul, where no good can breathe, because of the corruption there. Your lips are unclean; the opening of your mouth is as the opening of an reeking grave, full of stench and rottenness, Romans 3:13, "Their throat is an open sepulcher." Your natural actions are sin; for "when you did eat, and when you did drink, did not you eat for yourselves and drink for yourselves?" Zech. 7:6. Your civil actions are sin, Proverbs 21:4, "The ploughing of the wicked is sin." Your religious actions are sin, Proverbs 15:8, "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord." The thoughts and imaginations of your heart are only evil continually. A deed may be soon done, a word soon spoken, a thought swiftly pass through the heart; but each of these is an item in your accounts. O, sad reckoning! as many thoughts, words, and actions, so many sins. The longer you live your accounts swell the more. Should a tear be dropped for every sin, your head must be waters, and your eyes a fountain of tears; for nothing but sin comes from you. Your heart frames nothing but evil imaginations—there is nothing in your life but what is framed by your heart; and, therefore, there is nothing in your heart or life but evil.

(2.) All your religion, if you have any, is lost labor, as to acceptance with God, or any saving effect on yourself. Are you yet in your natural state? Truly, then, your duties are sins, as was just now hinted. Would not the best wine be loathsome in a vessel wherein there is no pleasure? So is the religion of an unregenerate man. Under the law, the garment which the flesh of the sacrifice was carried in, though it touched other things, did not make them holy—

but he who was unclean, touching anything, whether common or sacred, made it unclean. **Even so, your duties cannot make your corrupt soul holy, though they in themselves are good; but your corrupt heart defiles them, and makes them unclean**, Hag. 2:12-14.

You were accustomed to divide your works into two sorts; some good, some evil—but you must count again, and put them all under one head; for God writes on them all "only evil." This is lamentable—it will be no wonder to see those beg in harvest, who fold their hands, and sleep in seed-time; but to be laboring with others in the spring, and yet have nothing to reap when the harvest comes, is a very sad case, and will be the case of all professors living and dying in their natural state.

(3.) You can not help yourself. What can you do, to take away your sin--you who are wholly corrupt? Nothing, truly but sin. If a natural man begins to relent, drops a tear for his sin, and reform, presently the corrupt nature takes merit itself; he has done much himself, he thinks, and God cannot but do more for him on that account. In the mean time, he does nothing but sin—so that the fitness of the merit is, that the leper be put out of the camp, the dead soul buried out of sight, and the corrupt lump cast into the pit. How can you think to recover yourself by anything which you can do? Will mud and filth wash out filthiness; and will you purge out sin by sinning? "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? No one!" Job 14:4. This is the case of your corrupt soul; not to be recovered but by Jesus Christ. "O Israel, you have destroyed yourself—but in me is your help," Hos. 13:9. You are poor indeed, extremely "miserable and poor," Rev. 3:17. You have no shelter—but a refuge of lies. You have no garment for your soul—but filthy rags. You have nothing to nourish—but husks which cannot satisfy. And more than this, you did get such a bruise in the loins of Adam, as is not yet cured, so that **you are without strength, as well as ungodly**, Romans 5:6; unable to do, or work for yourself; nay, more than all this, you can

not so much as think aright—but are lying helpless, as an infant exposed in the open field, Ezek. 16:5.

Use 3. For EXHORTATION. I urge you to believe this sad truth. Alas! it is evident that it is very little believed in the world. Few are concerned to get their corrupt lives changed; but fewer, by far, to get their nature changed. Most men know not what they are, nor what spirits they are of; they are as the eye, which, seeing many things, never sees itself. But until you know the plague of his own heart, there is no hope of your recovery. Why will you not believe it? You have plain Scripture testimony for it; but you are loath to entertain a such an ill opinion of yourselves. Alas! this is the nature of your disease, Rev. 3:17, "You know not that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Lord, open their eyes to see it, before they die of it, and in hell lift up their eyes, and see what they will not see now.

I shall close this weighty point, of the corruption of man's nature, with a few words as to another doctrine from the text.

God's specially noticing our natural corruption.

Doctrine. God takes special notice of our natural corruption, or the sin of our nature. This he testifies two ways:

1. By his **WORD**, as in the text—"God **saw** that every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart was only evil continually." "The Lord **looks** down from heaven on the sons of men to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God. All have turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one." Psalm 14:2-3

2. By his **WORKS**. God marks his particular notice of it, and displeasure with it, as in many of his works, so especially in these two.

(1.) In the death of infants. Many miseries they have been exposed to—they were drowned in the deluge, consumed in Sodom by fire and brimstone; they have been slain with the sword, dashed against the stones, and are still dying ordinary deaths. What is the true cause of this? On what ground does a holy God thus pursue them? Is it the sin of their parents? That may be the occasion of the Lord's raising the process against them; but it must be their own sin that is the ground of the sentence passing on them—for "the soul that sins, it shall die," says God, Ezek. 18:4. Is it their own actual sin? They have none. But as men do with serpents, which they kill at first sight, before they have done any hurt, because of their venomous nature; so it is in this case.

(2.) In the birth of the elect children of God. When the Lord is about to change their nature, he makes the sin of their nature lie heavy on their spirits. When he means to let out their corruption, the lance goes deep into their souls, reaching to the root of sin, Romans 7:7-9. The flesh, or corruption of nature, is pierced, being crucified, as well as the affections and lusts, Gal. 5:24.

USE. Let us, then, have a special eye upon the corruption and sin of our nature. God sees it—O, that we saw it too, and that sin were ever before us! What avails it to notice other sins, while this mother-sin is not noticed? Turn your eyes inward to the sin of your nature. It is to be feared, that many have this work to begin yet; that they have shut the door, while the grand thief is yet in the house undiscovered. This is a weighty point; and in handling of it, I shall notice these four heads:

I. Men overlooking their natural sin. I shall, for conviction, point at some evidences of men's overlooking the sin of their nature, which yet the Lord takes particular notice of.

1. Men's looking on themselves with such confidence, as if they were in no hazard of gross sins. Many would take it very unkindly to get such a caution as Christ gave his apostles, Luke 21:34, "Take heed of carousing and drunkenness." If any should suppose them

to break out in gross abominations, each would be ready to say, "Am I a dog?" It would raise the pride of their hearts—but not their fear and trembling, because they know not the corruption of their nature.

2. Lack of tenderness towards those that fall. Many, in that case, cast off all feelings of Christian compassion, for they do not consider themselves, lest they also be tempted, Gal. 6:1. Men's passions are often highest against the faults of others, when sin sleeps soundly in their own breasts. David, even when he was at his worst, was most violent against the faults of others. While his conscience was asleep under his own guilt, in the matter of Uriah, the Spirit of the Lord takes notice, that his anger was greatly kindled against the man in the parable, 2 Sam. 12:5. And, on good grounds, it is thought it was at the same time that he treated the Ammonites so cruelly, as is related, ver. 31, "Putting them under saws, and under harrows of iron, and under axes of iron, and making them pass through the brick-kiln." Grace makes men zealous against sin in others, as well as in themselves—but eyes turned inward to the corruption of nature, clothe them with pity and compassion; and fill them with thankfulness to the Lord, that they themselves were not the people left to be such spectacles of human frailty.

3. There are many, who, if they be kept from afflictions in worldly things, and from gross out-breakings in their lives, know not what it is to have a repentant heart. If they meet with a cross, which their proud hearts cannot stoop to bear, they are ready to say, O to be gone! but the corruption of their nature never makes them long for heaven. Lusts, scandalously breaking out at a time, will mar their peace—but the sin of their nature never makes them a heavy heart.

4. Delaying of repentance, in hopes to set about it afterwards. Many have their own appointed time for repentance and reformation—as if they were such complete masters over their lusts, that they can allow them to gather more strength, and yet overcome them. They

take up resolutions to amend, without an eye to Jesus Christ, union with him, and strength from him; a plain evidence that they are strangers to themselves—so they are left to themselves, and their flourishing resolutions wither; for, as they see not the necessity, so they get not the benefit, of the dew from heaven to water them.

5. Men's venturing freely on temptations, and promising relief in their own strength. They cast themselves fearlessly into temptation, in confidence of their coming off fairly—but, were they sensible of the corruption of their nature, they would be cautious of entering on the devil's ground; as one girt about with bags of gunpowder, would be unwilling to walk where sparks of fire are flying, lest he should be blown up. Self-distrust well befits Christians. "Lord, is it I?" They that know the deceit of their bow, will not be very confident that they shall hit the mark.

6. Ignorance of heart-plagues. The knowledge of the plagues of the heart, is a rare attainment. There are, indeed, some of them written in such great characters, that he who runs may read them—but there are others more subtle, which few discern. How few are there, to whom the bias of the heart to unbelief is a burden? Nay, they perceive it not. Many have had sharp convictions of other sins, that were never to this day convinced of their unbelief; though that is the sin especially aimed at in a thorough conviction, John 16:8, 9, "He will reprove the world of sin, because they believe not on me." **A disposition to establish our own righteousness, is a weed which naturally grows in every man's heart**; but few labor at the plucking of it up—it lurks undiscovered. The bias of the heart to the way of the covenant of works, is a hidden plague of the heart to many. All the difficulty they find is, in getting up their hearts to duties—they find no difficulty in getting their hearts off them, and over them to Jesus Christ. How hard it is to bring men off from their own righteousness! Yes, it is very hard to convince them of their self-righteousness at all.

7. Pride and self-conceit. A view of the corruption of nature would be very humbling, and oblige him who has it, to reckon himself the chief of sinners. Under the greatest attainments and enlargements, it would be ballast to his heart, and hide pride from his eyes. The lack of thorough humiliation, piercing to the sin of one's nature, is the ruin of many professors—for digging deep makes the great difference between wise and foolish builders, Luke 6:48, 49.

II. Original sin to be specially noticed. I will lay before you a few things, in which you should have a special eye to original sin.

1. Have a special eye to it, in your application to Jesus Christ. Do you find any need of Christ, which sends you to him as the Physician of souls? O, forget not your disease when you are with the Physician. They never yet knew well their errand to Christ, who went not to him for the sin of their nature; for his blood to take away the **guilt** of it, and his Spirit to break the **power** of it. Though, in the bitterness of your souls, you should lay before him a catalogue of your sins of omission and commission, which might reach from earth to heaven—yet, if original sin were lacking in your confession, assure yourselves that you have forgot the chief part of the errand which a poor sinner has to the Physician of souls. What would it have availed the people of Jericho, to have set before Elisha all the vessels in their city, full of the water that was bad, if they had not led him forth to the spring, to cast in salt there? 2 Kings 2:19-21. The application is easy.

2. Have a special eye to it in your repentance, whether in its beginning or progress; in your first repentance, and in the renewing of your repentance afterwards. Though a man be sick, there is no fear of death, if the sickness strike not to his heart—and there is as little fear of the death of sin, as long as the sin of our nature is not touched. But if you would repent indeed, let the streams lead you up to the fountain; and mourn over your corrupt nature, as the cause of all sin, in heart, lip, and life, Psalm 51:4, 5, "Against you,

you only, have I sinned, and done this evil in your sight. Behold, I was shaped in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me."

3. Have a special eye upon it in your mortification, Gal. 5:24, "Those who are Christ's, have crucified the flesh." It is the *root* of bitterness that must be struck at; which the axe of mortification must be laid to, else we labor in vain. In vain do men go about to cleanse the stream, while they are at no pains about the muddy fountain—it is a vain religion to attempt to make the life truly good, while the corruption of nature retains its ancient vigor, and the power of it is not broken.

4. You are to eye it in your daily walk. **He who would walk aright must have one eye upward to Jesus Christ, and another inward to the corruption of his own nature.** It is not enough that we look about us, we must also look within us. Where the wall is weakest, there our greatest enemy lies; and there are grounds for daily watching and mourning.

III. WHY original sin is to be especially noticed. I shall offer some reasons, why we should especially notice the sin of our nature.

1. Because of all sins, original sin is the most extensive and diffusive. It goes through the whole man, and spoils all. Other sins mar particular parts of the image of God—but this at once defaces the whole. A disease affecting any particular member of the body is dangerous—but that which affects the whole, is worse. The corruption of nature is the poison of the old serpent cast into the fountain of action, which infects every action, and every breathing of the soul.

2. Original sin is the cause of all particular lusts, and actual sins, in our hearts and lives. It is the spawn which the great leviathan has left in the souls of men, from whence comes all the offspring of actual sins and abominations, Mark 7:21, "Out of the heart of men proceed evil thoughts, adulteries," etc. It is the bitter fountain—

particular lusts are but rivulets running from it, which bring forth into the life a part only, and not the whole of what is within. The fountain is always above the stream—and where the water is good, it is best in the fountain; where it is bad, it is worst there. The corruption of nature being that which defiles all, it must needs be the most abominable thing.

3. Original sin is virtually all sin—for it is the seed of all sins, which need but the occasion to set up their heads, being, in the corruption of nature, as the effect in the virtue of its cause. Hence it is called "a body of death," Romans 7:24, as consisting of the several members belonging to such "a body of sins," Col. 2:11, whose life lies in spiritual death. It is the cursed ground, fit to bring forth all manner of noxious weeds. As the whole nest of venomous creatures must needs be more dreadful than any few of them that come creeping forth; so the sin of your nature, that mother of abominations, must be worse than any particular lust which appears stirring in your heart and life.

Never did any sin appear in the life of the vilest wretch who ever lived; but look into your own corrupt nature, and there you may see the seed and root that sin--and every other sin. There is atheism, idolatry, blasphemy, murder, adultery, and whatever is vile--in your heart! Possibly none of these are apparent to you; but there is more in that unfathomable depth of wickedness than you know. Your corrupt heart is like an ant's nest, of which, while the stone lies on it, none of them appear; but take off the stone, and stir them up but with a straw, you will see what a swarm is there--and how lively they are! Just such a sight would your heart afford you, did the Lord but withdraw the restraint He has upon it, and allow Satan to stir it up by temptation!

4. The sin of our nature is, of all sins, the most fixed and abiding. Sinful actions, though the guilt and stain of them may remain—yet in themselves they pass away. The drunkard is not always at his cups, nor the unclean person always acting lewdness—but the

corruption of nature is an abiding sin; it remains with men in its full power, by night and by day; at all times fixed, as with bands of iron and brass, until their nature is changed by converting grace; and it remains even with the godly, until the death of the body, though not in its reigning power. **Pride, envy, covetousness, and the like, are not always stirring in you—but the proud, envious, carnal nature, is still with you**; even as the clock that is wrong is not always striking wrong—but the wrong bent continues with it without intermission.

5. Original sin is the reigning sin, Romans 6:12, "Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in the lusts thereof." There are three things which you may observe in the corrupt heart—

(1.) There is in the corrupt nature the corrupt bent of the heart, whereby men are unapt for all good, and fitted for all evil. This the apostle calls here "sin which reigns."

(2.) There are particular lusts, or dispositions of corrupt nature, which the apostle calls "the lusts thereof;" such as pride, covetousness, etc.

(3.) There is one among these, which is, like Saul among the people, higher by far than the rest, namely, "the sin which does so easily beset us," Heb. 12:1. This we usually call the "predominant sin," because it does, as it were, reign over other particular lusts; so that other lusts must yield to it.

These three are like a river which divides itself into many streams, whereof one is greater than the rest—the corruption of nature is the river head, that has many particular lusts in which it runs; but it chiefly disburdens itself into what is commonly called one's predominant sin. Now, all of these being fed by the sin of our nature, it is evident that it is the reigning sin, which never loses its superiority over particular lusts, which live and die with it, and by it. But, as in some rivers, the main stream runs not always in one and

the same channel, so particular ruling sins may be changed, as lust in youth may be succeeded by covetousness in old age. Now, what does it avail to reform in other things, while the reigning sin remains in its full power? What though some particular lusts are broken? If sin, the sin of our nature, keeps the throne--it will set up another in its stead; as when a water-course is stopped in one place, if the fountain is not closed up, it will stream forth another way. Thus some cast off their prodigality—but covetousness comes up in its stead; some cast away their profanity, and the corruption of nature sends not its main stream that way, as before—but it runs in another channel, namely, in that of a legal disposition, self-righteousness, or the like. So that people are ruined, by their not contemplating the sin of their nature.

6. Original sin is a hereditary evil, Psalm 51:5, "In sin did my mother conceive me." Particular lusts are not so—but in the virtue of their cause. A prodigal father may have a frugal son; but this disease of original sin is necessarily propagated in nature, and therefore hardest to cure. Surely, then, the word should be given out against this sin, as against the king of Israel, 1 Kings 22:31, "Fight neither with small nor great, but only with this sin!" For this sin being broken, all other sins are broken with it; and while it stands entire, there is no victory.

IV. How to get a view of the corruption of nature. That you may get a view of the corruption of your nature, I would recommend to you three things:

1. Study to know the spirituality and extent of the law of God, for that is the mirror wherein you may see yourselves.

2. Observe your hearts at all times—but especially under temptation. **Temptation is the fire which brings up the scum of the vile heart.** Carefully mark the first risings of corruption.

3. Go to God, through Jesus Christ, for illumination by his Spirit. Lay out your soul before the Lord, as willing to know the vileness of

your nature—say unto him, "That which I know not--teach me." And be willing to take light in from the word. Believe, and you shall see. It is by the word that the Spirit teaches; but without the Spirit's teaching, all other teaching will be to little purpose. Though the gospel were to shine about you like the sun at noon-day, and this great truth were ever so plainly preached, you would never see yourselves aright, until the Spirit of the Lord lights his candle within your bosom! **The fullness and glory of Christ, and the corruption and vileness of our nature, are never rightly learned—but where the Spirit of Christ is the teacher.**

To shut up this weighty point, let the consideration of what has been said, commend Christ to you all. You who are brought out of your natural state of corruption, unto Christ, be humble; still come to Christ, and improve your union with him, to the further weakening of your natural corruption. Is your nature changed? It is but in part so. If you are cured, remember the cure is not yet perfected, you still go halting. Though it were better with you than it is, the remembrance of what you are by nature should keep you humble.

You who are yet in your natural state, take this with you—believe the corruption of your nature; and let Christ and his grace be precious in your eyes. O, that you would at length be serious about the state of your souls! What do you intend to do? You must die; you must appear before the judgment-seat of God. Will you lie down and sleep another night at ease in this case? Do it not—for, before another day, you may be summoned before God's dread tribunal, in the grave-clothes of your corrupt state; and your vile souls be cast into the pit of destruction, as a corrupt lump, to be forever buried out of God's sight. For I testify unto you all, there is no peace with God, no pardon, no heaven, for you, in your natural state—there is but a step between you and eternal destruction from the presence of the Lord! If the brittle thread of your life, which may break with a touch before you are aware, be broken while you are in this state, you are ruined forever, without remedy! Come speedily

to Jesus Christ—he has cleansed souls as vile as yours! "Their bloodguilt, which I have not pardoned, I will pardon!" Joel 3:21

Thus far of the **sinfulness** of man's natural state.

2. The MISERY of man's natural state

"We were by nature the children of wrath,
even as others." Ephesians 2:3

Having shown you the sinfulness of man's natural state, I come now to lay before you the misery of it. A sinful state cannot but be a miserable state. **If sin goes before, wrath follows of course.** Corruption and destruction are so knit together, that the Holy Spirit calls destruction, even eternal destruction, "corruption," Gal. 6:8, "He who sows to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption," that is, everlasting destruction; as is clear from its being opposed to life everlasting, in the following clause.

The apostle, having shown the Ephesians their real state by nature, namely, that they were dead in sins and trespasses, altogether corrupt; he tells them, in the words of the text, their relative state, namely, that the pit was dug for them, while in that state of corruption—being dead in sins, they "were by nature children of wrath, even as others."

In the words we have four things:

1. The MISERY of a natural state; it is a state of wrath, as well as a state of sin. "We were," says the apostle, "children of wrath," bound over and liable to the wrath of God; under wrath in some measure; and, in wrath, bound over to more, even the full measure of it, in hell, where the floods of it go over the prisoners forever. Thus Saul, in his wrath, adjudging David to die 1 Sam. 20:31; and David, in his wrath, passing sentence of death against the man in the parable, 2 Sam. 12:5, says, each of them, of his supposed criminal, "He shall surely die;" or, as the words in the original language are, "He is a son of death." So the natural man is "a child

of wrath, a son of death." He is a malefactor, dead in law, lying in chains of guilt; a criminal, held fast in his fetters, until the day of execution; which will not fail to come, unless a pardon be obtained from his God, who is his judge and his opponent too. By that means, indeed, children of wrath may become children or the kingdom. The phrase in the text, however common in the holy language, is very significant. And as it is evident that the apostle, calling natural men the "children of disobedience," verse 2, means more than that they were disobedient children; for such may the Lord's own children be—no, to be children of wrath, is more than simply to be liable to, or under wrath. Jesus Christ was liable to, and under wrath; but I doubt whether we have any warrant to say he was a child of wrath.

The phrase seems to intimate, that men are, whatever they are in their natural state, under the wrath of God; that they are wholly under wrath—wrath is, as it were, woven into their very nature, and mixes itself with the whole of the man, who is, if I may so speak, a very lump of wrath, a child of hell, as the iron in the fire is all fire. For men naturally are children of wrath; they come forth, so to speak, out of the womb of wrath—as Jonah's gourd was the "son of a night," which we render, "came up in a night," Jonah 4:10; as if it had come out of the womb of the night, as we read of the "womb of the morning," Psalm 110:3. Thus sparks of fire are called "sons of the burning coal," Job 5:7, Isaiah 21:10, "O my thrashing, and the corn" or son "of my floor," thrashed in the floor of wrath, and, as it were, brought forth by it. Thus the natural man is a "child of wrath;" it "entered into his body like water, into his bones like oil," Psalm 109:18. For, though Judas was the only son of perdition among the apostles; yet all men, by nature, are of the same family.

2. Here is the ORIGIN of this misery; men have it by nature. They owe it to their nature, as vitiated and corrupted by the fall; to the wicked quality, or corruption of their nature, as before noticed, which is their principle of action, and, ceasing from action, the only principle in an unregenerate state. Now, by this nature, men are

children of wrath; as, in time of pestilential infection, one draws in death with the disease then raging. Therefore seeing, from our first being as children of Adam, we are corrupt children, shaped in iniquity, conceived in sin, we are also from that moment children or wrath.

3. The UNIVERSALITY of this misery. All are by nature children of wrath—"we," says the apostle, "even as others;" Jews as well as Gentiles. Those who are now, by grace, the children of God were, by nature, in no better case than those who are still in their natural state.

4. Here is a glorious and happy CHANGE intimated—we **were** children of wrath—but are not so now; grace has brought us out of that state. This the apostle says of himself, and other believers. And thus, it well becomes the people of God to be often standing on the shore, and looking back to the Red Sea, or the state of wrath, which they were once weltering in, even as others.

DOCTRINE. The state of nature is a state of wrath. Everyone, in a natural unregenerate state, is in a state of wrath. We are born children of wrath; and continue so, until we be born again. Nay, as soon as we are children of Adam, we are children of wrath.

I shall introduce what I am to say on this point, with a few observations, as to the **universality** of this state of wrath, which may serve to prepare the way for the word into your consciences.

Wrath has gone as wide as ever sin went. When angels sinned, the wrath of God broke in upon them like a flood. "God spared not the angels who sinned—but cast them down to hell," 2 Pet. 2:4. It was thereby demonstrated, that no natural excellence in the creature can shield it from the wrath of God, if it once becomes a sinful creature. The finest and nicest piece of the workmanship of heaven, if once the Creator's image upon it be defaced by sin, God can and will dash in pieces in his wrath, unless satisfaction be made to justice, and that image be restored; neither of which the sinner

himself can do. Adam sinned; and the whole lump of mankind was leavened, and bound over to the fire of God's wrath. From the text you may learn,

1. That ignorance of this state, cannot free men from it. The Gentiles, that know not God, "were by nature children of wrath, even as others." A man's house may be on fire, his wife and children perishing in the flames, while he knows nothing of it; and therefore is not concerned about it. Such is your case, O you who are ignorant of these things! Wrath is silently sinking into your souls while you are blessing yourselves, saying, "We shall have peace." You need not a more certain token that you are children of wrath, than that you never saw yourselves such. **You cannot be the children of God, who never yet saw yourselves the children of the devil.** You cannot be in the way to heaven, who never saw yourselves by nature in the high road to hell. You are grossly ignorant of your state by nature; and so ignorant of God and of Christ, and your need of him—and though you look on your ignorance as a covert from wrath—yet take it out of the mouth of God himself, that it will ruin you if it be not removed; Isaiah 27:11, "For this is a people without understanding; so their Maker has no compassion on them, and their Creator shows them no favor." See also 2 Thess. 1:8; Hos. 4:6.

2. No outward privileges can exempt men from this state of wrath, for the Jews, the children of the kingdom, God's peculiar people, were "children of wrath, even as others." Though you be church members, partakers of all church privileges; though you be descended of godly parents, of great and honorable families; be what you will, you are by nature heirs of hell, children of wrath.

3. No profession, no attainments in a profession of religion, do or can exempt men from this state of wrath. Paul was one of the strictest sect of the Jewish religion, Acts 26:5; yet a child of wrath, even as others, until he was converted. The religious hypocrite, and the profane, are alike as to their state, however different their

conversation be; and they will be alike in their fatal end, Psalm 125:5, "As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity."

4. Young ones, who are but setting out in the world, have nothing to do to make themselves children of wrath, by following the graceless multitude—they are children of wrath by nature; so it is done already. They were born heirs of hell; and they will indeed make themselves more so, if they do not, while they are young, flee from that wrath to which they are born, by fleeing to Jesus Christ.

5. Whatever men are now by grace, they were even as others by nature. This may be a sad meditation to those who have been at ease from their youth, and have had no changes.

Now these things being premised, I shall, in the first place, show **what** this state of wrath is; secondly, **confirm** the doctrine; and, thirdly, **apply** it.

I. I am to show WHAT the state of wrath is. But who can fully describe the wrath of an angry God? None can do it. Yet so much of it may be discovered, as may serve to convince men of the absolute necessity of fleeing to Jesus Christ, out of that state of wrath. Anger, in men, is a passion and commotion of the spirit, for an injury received; with a desire to resent the same. When it comes to a height, and is fixed in one's spirit, it is called wrath. Now there are no passions in God, properly speaking; they are inconsistent with his absolute unchangeableness, and independency—therefore, Paul and Barnabas, to remove the mistake of the Lycaonians, who thought they were gods, tell them, "they were men of like passions with themselves," Acts 14:15. Wrath, when it is attributed to God, must not be considered in respect of the passion of wrath—but the effects thereof. Wrath is a fire in the affections of men; tormenting the man himself—but there is no perturbation in God. His wrath does not in the least mar that infinite repose and

happiness which he has in himself. It is a most pure and undisturbed act of his will, producing dreadful effects against the sinner. It is little that we know of the infinite God; but, condescending to our weakness, he is pleased to speak of himself to us after the manner of men. Let us therefore notice *man's* wrath—but remove everything in our consideration of the wrath of God, that implies imperfection; and so we may attain to some view of it, however scanty. By this means we are led to consider the wrath of God against the natural man in these three particulars.

1. There is wrath in the HEART of God against him. The Lord approves him not—but is displeased with him. Every natural man lies under the displeasure of God; and that is heavier than mountains of brass. Although he be pleased with himself, and others be pleased with him too—yet God looks down on him displeased.

(1.) His **person** is under God's displeasure; "You hate all workers of iniquity," Psalm 5:5. A godly man's sin is displeasing to God—yet his person is still "accepted in the Beloved," Eph. 1:6. But "God is angry with the wicked every day," Psalm 7:11. There is a fire of wrath which burns continually against him in the heart of God. They are as dogs and swine—most abominable creatures in the sight of God. Though their natural state be gilded over with a shining profession—yet they are abhorred of God; and are to him as smoke in his nose, Isaiah 65:5, and lukewarm water, to be spewed out of his mouth, Rev. 3:16; whited sepulchers, Matt. 23:27; a generation of vipers, Matt. 12:34; and a people of his wrath, Isaiah 10:6.

(2.) He is displeased with all they **do**—it is impossible for them to please him, being unbelievers, Heb. 11:6. He hates their persons; and so has no pleasure in—but is displeased with their best works, Isaiah 66:3, "he who sacrifices a lamb, is as if he cut off a dog's neck," etc. Their duty as done by them, is "an abomination to the Lord," Proverbs 15:8. And as men turn their back on those with

whom they are angry, so when the Lord refuses communion with the natural man in his duties, it is a plain indication of his wrath.

2. There is wrath in the WORD of God against him. When wrath is in the heart, it seeks a vent by the lips—so God fights against the natural man with the sword of his mouth, Rev. 2:16. The Lord's word never speaks good of him—but always curses and condemns him. Hence it is, that when he is awakened, the word read or preached often increases his horror. It condemns all his actions, together with his corrupt nature. There is nothing he does—but the law declares it to be sin. It is a rule of perfect obedience, from which he always, in all things, declines; and so it rejects everything he does, as sinful. It pronounces his doom, and denounces God's curse against him, Gal. 3:10, "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse—for it is written, Cursed in everyone who continues not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." However well he may be in the world, it pronounces a woe from heaven against him, Isaiah 3:11. **The Bible is a quiver filled with arrows of wrath against him, ready to be poured in on his soul.** God's threatenings, in his word, hang over his head as a black cloud, ready to shower down on him every moment. The word is, indeed, the saint's security against wrath—but it binds the natural man's sin and wrath together, as a certain pledge of his ruin, if he continues in that state. So the conscience being awakened, and perceiving this tie made by the law, the man is filled with terrors in his soul.

3. There is wrath in the HAND of God against the natural man. He is under heavy strokes of wrath already, and is liable to more.

(1.) There is wrath on his BODY. It is a piece of cursed clay, which wrath is sinking into by virtue of the threatening of the first covenant, Gen. 2:17, "In the day that you eat thereof, you shall surely die." There is not a disease or pain that affects him—but it

comes on him with the sting of God's indignation in it. They are all cords of death, sent before to bind the prisoner.

(2.) There is wrath upon his SOUL.

[1.] He can have no communion with God; he is "foolish, and shall not stand in God's sight," Psalm 5:5. When Adam sinned, God turned him out of paradise—and natural men are, as Adam left them, banished from the gracious presence of the Lord; and can have no access to him in that state. There is war between heaven and them; and so all commerce is cut off. "They are without God in the world," Eph. 2:12. The sun is gone down on them, and there is not the least glimpse of favor towards them from heaven.

[2.] Hence the soul is left to pine away in its iniquity—the natural darkness of their minds, the averseness to good in their wills, the disorder of their affections, and distemper of their consciences, and all their natural plagues, are left upon them in a penal way; and, being so left, increase daily. **God casts a portion of this world's goods to them, more or less, as a bone is thrown to a dog**—but alas! his wrath against them appears, in that they get no grace. The Physician of souls comes by them, and goes by them, and cures others on each side of them, while they are consuming away in their iniquity, and ripening daily for utter destruction.

[3.] They lie open to fearful additional plagues on their souls, even in this life. Sometimes they meet with deadening strokes, silent blows from the hand of an angry God; arrows of wrath, that enter into their souls without noise. Isaiah 6:10, "Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes," etc. God strives with them for a while, and convictions enter their consciences; but they rebel against the light—and by a secret judgment they receive a blow on the head; so that, from that time, they do as it were live and rot above ground. Their hearts are deadened; their affections withered; their consciences stupefied; and their whole souls blasted; "cast forth as a branch, and withered," John 15:6. They are plagued with judicial

blindness. They shut their eyes against the light; and they are given over to the devil, the god of this world, to be blinded more, 2 Cor. 4:4. Yes, "God sends them strong delusions, that they should believe a lie," 2 Thess. 2:11. Even conscience, like a false light on the shore, leads them upon rocks—by which they are broken in pieces.

They harden themselves against God, and he leaves them to Satan and their own hearts, whereby they are hardened more and more. They are often given up unto "vile affections," Romans 1:26. They are left to run into all excess, as their furious lusts drive them. Sometimes they meet with sharp fiery strokes, whereby their souls become like mount Sinai, where nothing is seen but fire and smoke; nothing heard but the thunder of God's wrath, and the voice of the trumpet of a broken law, waxing louder and louder—which makes them, like Pashur, Jer. 20:4, "a terror to themselves." God takes the filthy garments of their sins, which they were accustomed to sleep in securely, overlays them with brimstone, and sets them on fire about their ears—so they have a hell within them.

(3.) There is wrath on the natural man's enjoyments. Whatever is lacking in his house, there is one thing that is never lacking there, Proverbs 3:33, "The Lord's curse is on the house of the wicked." Wrath is on all that he has, on the bread that he eats, the water he drinks, the clothes which he wears. "His basket and kneading bowl are cursed," Deut. 28:17. Some things fall wrong with him; and that comes to pass by virtue of this wrath—other things go according to his wish, and there is wrath in that too; for it is a snare to his soul, Proverbs 1:32, "The prosperity of fools shall destroy them." This wrath turns his blessings into curses, Mal. 2:2, "I will curse your blessings. Yes, I have already cursed them." The holy law is "a killing letter to him," 2 Cor. 3:6. The ministry of the gospel "a savor of death unto death," chapter 2:16. In the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, "he eats and drinks damnation to himself," 1 Cor. 11:29. Nay, more than all that, Christ himself is to him a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence," 1 Pet. 2:8.

Thus **wrath follows the natural man, as his shadow does his body.** "The plowing of the wicked, is sin." Proverbs 21:4

(4.) He is under the power of Satan, Acts 24:18. The devil has overcome him, so he is his by conquest, his lawful captive, Isaiah 49:24. The natural man is condemned already, John 3:18, and therefore under the heavy hand of "him who has the power of death, that is, the devil." He keeps his prisoners in the prison of a natural state, bound hand and foot, Isaiah 61:1, laden with various lusts, as chains with which he holds them fast. You need not, as many do, call on the devil to capture you; for he has a fast hold of you already, as a child of wrath. "Then they will come to their senses and escape from the Devil's trap. For they have been held captive by him to do whatever he wants." 2 Timothy 2:26

(5.) The natural man has no security for a moment's safety, from the wrath of God coming on him to the uttermost. The curse of the law, denounced against him, has already tied him to the stake—so that the arrows of justice may pierce his soul; and, in him, may meet all the miseries and plagues which flow from the avenging wrath of God. See how he is set as a mark to the arrows of wrath, Psalm 7:11-13, "God is angry with the wicked every day. If he does not repent, God will sharpen His sword; He has strung His bow and made it ready. He has prepared His deadly weapons; He tips His arrows with fire." Does he lie down to sleep? There is not a promise that he knows of, or can know, to secure him that he shall not be in hell before he awakens. Justice pursues, and cries for vengeance on the sinner; the law casts the fire-balls of its curses continually upon him. The abused and long-tired patience of God, is that which sustains his life. He walks amidst enemies armed against him—his name may rightly be called Magor-missabib, that is, terror round about, Jer. 20:3. Angels, devils, men, beasts, stones, heaven and earth, are in readiness, on a word of command from the Lord—to put him to death.

Thus the natural man lives—but he must die too; and DEATH is a dreadful messenger to him. It comes upon him armed with wrath, and puts three sad charges in his hand.

(1.) Death charges him to bid an eternal farewell to **all things in this world**; to leave it, and haste away to another world. Ah, what a dreadful charge must this be to a child of wrath! He can have no comfort from heaven, for God is his enemy—as for the things of the world, and the enjoyment of his lusts, which were the only springs of his comfort, these are in a moment dried up to him forever. He is not ready for another world—he was not thinking of dying so soon; or, if he was—yet he has no portion secured to him in the other world—but that which he was born to, and was increasing all his days, namely, a treasury of wrath. But go he must; his *clay-god*, the world, must be parted with, and what more does he have? There was never a glimmering of light, or favor from heaven, to his soul—the wrath which hung in the threatening, as a cloud like a man's hand, is darkening the whole heaven above him; if he "looks unto the earth," from whence all his light was accustomed to come, "behold trouble and darkness, dimness of anguish; and he shall be driven to darkness," Isaiah 8:22.

(2.) Death charges soul and **body** to part, until the great day of judgment. His soul is required of him, "You fool! This very night your soul will be demanded from you." Luke 12:20. O, what a miserable parting must this be to a child of wrath! Care was indeed taken to provide for the body things necessary for this life; but, alas! there is nothing laid up for another life, nothing to be a seed of a glorious resurrection—as it lived, so it must die, and rise again—sinful flesh, **fuel for the fire of God's wrath!** As for the soul, he was never solicitous to provide for it. It lay in the body, dead to God, and all holy things; and so must be carried out into the pit, in the grave-clothes of its natural state—for now that death comes, the *companions in sin* must part.

(3.) Death charges the soul to appear before the tribunal of God, while the body lies to be carried to the grave, Eccl. 12:7, "The spirit shall return unto God who gave it." Heb. 9:27, "It is appointed unto all men once to die—but after this the judgment." Well were it for the sinful soul, if it might be buried together with the body. But that cannot be; it must go, and receive its sentence; and shall be shut up in the prison of hell—while the cursed body lies imprisoned in the grave, until the day of the general judgment.

When the end of the world, as appointed by God, is come, the trumpet shall sound, and the dead arise. Then shall the weary earth, at the command of the Judge, cast forth the bodies, the cursed bodies, of those who lived and died in their natural state. "The sea, death, and hell, shall deliver up their dead," Rev. 20:13. Their miserable bodies and souls shall be reunited, and they summoned before the tribunal of Christ. Then shall they receive that fearful sentence, "Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels," Matt. 25:41. Whereupon "they shall go away into everlasting punishment," ver. 46. They shall be eternally shut up in hell, never to get the least drop of comfort, nor the smallest alleviation of their torment!

There they will be punished with the *punishment of **loss***, being excommunicated forever from the presence of God, his angels, and saints. All means of grace, all hopes of a delivery, will be forever cut off from their eyes. They shall not have a drop of water to cool their tongues, Luke 16:24, 25. They will be punished with a *punishment of **sense***. They must not only depart from God—but depart into fire; into everlasting fire! There the worm which shall gnaw them will never die; the fire which will scorch them, shall never be quenched. God will, through eternity, hold them up with the one hand, and pour the full vials of wrath into them with the other!

"The wrath of God abides on him." John 3:36. This is that state of wrath natural men live in; being under much of the wrath of God,

and liable to more. But, for a farther view of it, let us consider **the QUALITIES of this wrath**:

1. The wrath of God is **IRRESISTIBLE**, there is no standing before it; "Who can stand in your sight, when once You are angry?" Psalm 76:7. Can the worm or the moth defend itself against him who designs to crush it? Can the worm, man, stand before an angry God? Foolish man, indeed, practically bids a defiance to Heaven; but the Lord often, even in this world, opens such sluices of wrath upon them, as all their might cannot stop—they are carried away thereby, as with a flood! How much more will it be so in hell!

2. The wrath of God is **INSUPPORTABLE**. What a man cannot resist, he will try to endure—but who shall dwell in devouring fire? Who shall dwell with everlasting burnings? God's wrath is a weight that will sink men into the lowest hell. It is a burden which no man can stand under.

3. The wrath of God is **UNAVOIDABLE** to such as continue impenitently, and die in their sinful course. "He who, being often reproved, hardens his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy," Proverbs 29:1. We may now flee from it, indeed, by fleeing to Jesus Christ. But such as flee from Christ, will never be able to avoid it. Where can men flee from the avenging God? Where will they find a shelter? The hills will not bear them. The mountains will be deaf to their loudest supplications, when they cry to them to "hide them from the wrath of the Lamb."

4. The wrath of God is **POWERFUL** and **FIERCE** wrath, Psalm 90:11, "Who can comprehend the power of Your anger? Your wrath is as awesome as the fear You deserve." We are apt to fear the wrath of man more than we ought; but no man can apprehend the wrath of God to be more dreadful than it really is. The power of God's wrath can never be known to the utmost; for it is infinite, and, properly speaking, has no utmost limit. However fierce it is, either on earth or in hell, God can still carry it farther. Everything in God is most perfect in its kind; and therefore no wrath is so fierce as his. O

sinner! how will you be able to endure that wrath, which will tear you in pieces, Psalm 50:22, and grind you to powder! Luke 20:18. The history of the two bears, which came out of the woods and mauled forty-two boys, is an awful one, 2 Kings 2:23, 24. But the united force of the rage of lions, leopards, and bears bereaved of their cubs, is not sufficient to give us even a faint view of the power of the wrath of God; Hos. 13:7, 8, "So now I will attack you like a lion, or like a leopard that lurks along the road. I will rip you to pieces like a bear whose cubs have been taken away. I will tear you apart and devour you like a hungry lion!"

5. The wrath of God is **PENETRATING** and **PIERCING** wrath. It is burning wrath, and fiery indignation. There is no pain more intense than that which is caused by fire; and no fire so piercing as the fire of God's indignation, which burns unto the lowest hell, Deut. 32:22. The arrows of men's wrath can pierce flesh, blood, and bones—but cannot reach the soul; but the wrath of God will sink into the soul, and so pierce a man in the most tender part. Like as, when a person is thunderstruck, oft-times there is not a wound to be seen in the skin; yet life is gone, and the bones are melted, as it were—so God's wrath can penetrate into, and melt a man's soul within him, when his earthly comforts stand about him entire and untouched; as in Belshazzar's case, Dan. 5:6.

6. The wrath of God is **CONSTANT** wrath, running parallel with the man's continuance in an unregenerate state; constantly attending him from the womb to the grave. There are few days so dark—but the sun sometimes looks out from under the clouds. But the wrath of God is an abiding cloud on the objects of it; John 3:36, "The wrath of God abides on him" who believes not.

7. The wrath of God is **ETERNAL**. O, miserable soul! if you flee not from this wrath unto Jesus Christ; though your misery had a beginning—yet it will never have an end! Should devouring death wholly swallow you up, and forever hold you fast in the grave, it would be kind—but your body must be reunited to your immortal

soul, and live again, and never die; that you may be ever dying, in the hands of the living God. Death will quench the flame of man's wrath against us, if nothing else does. But God's wrath, when it has come on the sinner for millions of ages, will still be **the wrath to come**, Matt. 3:7; 1 Thess. 1:10; as the water of a river is still coming, however much has passed. While God is, He will pursue the quarrel.

8. However dreadful it is, and though it be eternal—yet it is most **JUST** wrath! It is a clear fire, without the least smoke of injustice. The sea of wrath, raging with greatest fury against the sinner, is clear as crystal. The Judge of all the earth can do no wrong—He knows no passion, for they are inconsistent with the perfection of his nature. "Is God unrighteous to inflict wrath? Absolutely not! Otherwise, how will God judge the world?" Romans 3:5, 6.

II. I shall CONFIRM the doctrine of the state of wrath. Consider,

1. How decided the threatening of the first covenant is. "In the day you eat thereof, you shall surely die," Gen. 2:17. *Hereby sin and punishment being connected, the veracity of God makes the execution of the threatening certain.* Now, all men being by nature under this covenant, the breach of it lays them under the curse.

2. **The justice of God requires that a child of sin be a child of wrath**; that the law being broken, the sanction thereof should take place. God, as man's ruler and judge, cannot but do right, Gen. 18:25. Now, it is "a righteous thing with God to recompense sin" with wrath, 2 Thess. 1:6. He "is of purer eyes than to behold evil," Hab. 1:13. And "he hates all the workers of iniquity," Psalm 5:5.

3. The horrors of a natural conscience prove this. Conscience, in the breasts of men, tells them that they are sinners, and therefore liable to the wrath of God. Let men, at any time, soberly

commune with themselves, and they will find that they have the witness in themselves, "knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death," Romans 1:32.

4. The pangs of the new birth, the work of the Spirit on elect souls, in order to their conversion, demonstrate this. Hereby their natural sinfulness and misery, as liable to the wrath of God, are plainly taught them, filling their hearts with fear of that wrath. As it is the Spirit's work to "convince of sin, righteousness, and judgment," John 16:8, this testimony must needs be true; for the Spirit of truth cannot witness an untruth. But true believers, being freed from the state of wrath, "receive not the spirit of bondage again to fear—but receive the Spirit of adoption," Romans 8:15. Therefore, if fears of that nature do arise, after the soul's union with Christ, they come from the saint's own spirit, or from a worse.

5. The sufferings of Christ plainly prove this doctrine. Why was the Son of God a son under wrath—but because the children of men were children of wrath? He suffered the wrath of God; not for himself—but for those who were liable to it in their own persons. Nay, this not only shows us to have been liable to wrath—but also that wrath must have a vent, in the punishment of sin. If this was done in the green tree, what will become of the dry? What a miserable case must a sinner be in, who is out of Christ; that is not vitally united to Christ, and partakes not of his Spirit! God, who spared not his own Son, surely will not spare such a one!

But the unregenerate man, who has no great value for the honor of God, will be apt to rise up against this Judge, and in his own heart condemn his procedure. Nevertheless, **the Judge being infinitely just—the sentence must be righteous**. Therefore, to stop your mouth, O proud sinner! and to still your clamor against your righteous Judge, consider,

1. You are a sinner by nature; and it is just, that wrath be as old as sin and guilt. Why should not God begin to vindicate his honor, as soon as vile worms attempt to impair it? Why shall not a serpent

bite the thief, as soon as he leaps over the hedge? Why should not the threatening take hold of the sinner, as soon as he casts away the command? The poisonous nature of the serpent affords a man sufficient ground to kill it, as soon as ever he can reach it; and by this time you may be convinced that your nature is a very compound of enmity against God.

2. You have not only enmity against God in your nature—but have revealed it by actual sins, which are, in his eye, acts of hostility. You have brought forth your lusts into the field of battle against your sovereign Lord. And because you are such a criminal, your condemnation is just—for, besides the sin of your nature, you have done that against Heaven, which if you had done against men, you must have suffered the penalty for it; and shall not wrath from Heaven overtake you?

(1.) You are guilty of high treason and rebellion against the King of heaven. The thought and wish of your heart, which he knows as well as the language of your mouth, has been, "No God," Psalm 14:1. You have rejected his government, blown the trumpet, and set up the standard of rebellion against him, being one of those that say, "We will not have this man to reign over us!" Luke 19:14. You have striven against, and quenched his Spirit; practically disowned his laws proclaimed by his messengers; stopped your ears at their voice, and sent them away mourning for your pride. You have conspired with his grand enemy, the devil. Although you are a servant of the King of glory, daily receiving of his favors, and living on his bounty, you are holding a correspondence, and have contracted a friendship, with his greatest enemy, and are acting for him against your Lord; for "the lusts of the devil you will do," John 8:44.

(2.) You are a murderer before the Lord. You have laid the stumbling-block of your iniquity before the blind world, and have ruined the souls of others by your sinful course. Though you do not see now, the time may come when you shall see the blood of your

relations, neighbors, acquaintances, and others upon your head, Matt. 18:7, "Woe unto the world because of offences. Woe to that man by whom the offence comes." Yes, you are a self-murderer before God; Proverbs 8:36, "He who sins against me, wrongs his own soul—all they that hate me, love death." Ezek. 18:31, "Why will you die?" The laws of men mark the self-murderer; what wonder is it, that the law of God is so severe against soul-murderers?

Is it unjust, that those who depart from God now, cost what it will, should be forced to depart from him at last, into everlasting fire? But, what is yet more criminal, you are guilty of the murder of the Son of God; for the Lord will reckon you among those that pierced him, Rev. 1:6. You have rejected him, as the Jews did; and by rejecting him, you have justified their deed. They, indeed, did not acknowledge him to be the Son of God—but you do. What they did against him, was in his state of humiliation; but you have acted against him, in his state of exaltation. These things will aggravate your condemnation. What wonder, then, if the voice of the lamb change to the roaring of the lion, against the traitor and murderer!

OBJECTION. But some will say, **"Is there not a vast disproportion between our sin, and that wrath you talk of?"**

I answer, "No! **God punishes no more than the sinner deserves**." To rectify your mistake in this matter, consider,

1. The vast rewards which God has annexed to obedience. His word is no more full of fiery wrath against sin, than it is of gracious rewards to the obedience it requires. If heaven be in the promises, it is altogether equal that hell is in the threatenings. If death were not in the balance with life, eternal misery with eternal happiness, where would be the proportion? Moreover, sin deserves the misery—but our best works do not deserve the happiness—yet both are set before us; sin and misery, holiness and happiness. What reason is there, then, to complain?

2. However severe the threatenings be—yet all have enough to do to reach the end of the law. "Fear him," says our Lord, "who after he has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say unto you, Fear him," Luke 12:5. This bespeaks our dread of divine power and majesty; yet how few fear him indeed! The Lord knows the hearts of sinners to be exceedingly intent upon fulfilling their lusts; they cleave so fondly to their beloved sins, that a small force does not suffice to draw them away from them. Those who travel through deserts, where they are in hazard from wild beasts, have need to carry fire along with them—so a holy law must be fenced with dreadful wrath in a world lying in wickedness. But who are those who complain of that wrath as too great—but those to whom it is too little to draw them off from their sinful courses? It was the man who pretended to fear his Lord, because he was an austere man, who kept his money laid up in a napkin; and so he was condemned out of his own mouth, Luke 19:20-22. You are that man, even you whose objection I am answering. How can the wrath which you are under, and liable to, be too great, when as yet it is not sufficient to awaken you to flee from it? Is it time to relax the penalties of the law, when men are trampling the commands of it under foot?

3. Consider how God dealt with his own Son, whom he spared not, Romans 8:32. The wrath of God seized on his soul and body both, and brought him into the dust of death. That his sufferings were not eternal, flowed from the quality of the Sufferer, who was infinite; and therefore able to bear at once the whole load of wrath; and, upon that account, his sufferings were infinite in value. But as the sufferings of a mere creature cannot be infinite in value, they must be protracted to an eternity. And what confidence can a rebel subject, have to quarrel with his part of a punishment executed on the King's Son?

4. The sinner does against God all that he can—"Behold, you have done evil things as you could," Jer. 3:5. That you have not done more, and worse, thanks to him who restrained you; to the chain by which the wolf was kept in, not to yourself. No wonder that

God shows his power on the sinner, who puts forth his power against God, as far as it will reach. The unregenerate man puts no period to his sinful course; and would put no bounds to it either, if he were not restrained by divine power, for wise ends—therefore, it is just that he be forever under wrath.

5. It is infinite majesty which sin strikes against; and so it is, in some sort, an infinite evil. Sin rises in its demerit, according to the quality of the party offended. If a man wound his neighbor, his goods must pay for it; but if he wound his prince, his life must pay for that. The infinity of God makes infinite wrath the just demerit of sin. God is infinitely displeased with sin; and when he acts, he must act like himself, and show his displeasure by proportionable means.

6. Those who shall lie forever under this wrath will be eternally sinning, and therefore must eternally suffer; not only in respect of divine judicial procedure—but because sin is its own punishment, in the same manner as holy obedience is its own reward.

III. I now proceed to APPLY this doctrine of the misery of man's natural state.

Use 1. Of INFORMATION. Is our state by nature a state of wrath? Then,

1. Surely we are not born innocent. Those chains of wrath, which by nature are upon us, show us to be born criminals. The swaddling-bands, wherewith infants are bound hand and foot as soon as they are born, may put us in mind of the cords of wrath, with which they are held prisoners, as children of wrath.

2. What desperate madness is it, for sinners to go on in their sinful course! What is it but to heap coals of fire on your own head! To lay more and more fuel to the fire of wrath! To "treasure up unto yourself wrath against the day of wrath!" Rom 2:5. You may perish, "when his wrath is kindled but a little," Psalm 2:12. Why will you increase it yet more? You are already bound with such cords of

death, as cannot easily be loosened; what need is there of more? Stand, careless sinner, and consider this.

3. You have no reason to complain, as long as you are out of hell. "Why does a living man complain?" Lam. 3:39. If one, who has forfeited his life, is banished from his native country, and exposed to many hardships, he may well bear all patiently, seeing his life is spared. Do you murmur, because you are under pain and sickness? Nay, bless God, you are not there where the worm never dies! Do you grudge, that you are not in so good a condition in the world as some of your neighbors are? Be thankful, rather, that you are not in the condition of the damned! Is your substance gone from you? Wonder that the fire of God's wrath has not consumed you! Kiss the rod, O sinner! and acknowledge mercy; for God "punishes us less than our iniquities deserve," Ezra 9:13.

4. Here is a memorandum, both for poor and rich.

(1.) The POOREST, who go from door to door, and have not one penny left them by their parents, were born to an inheritance. Their first father Adam left them "children of wrath:" and, continuing in their natural state, they cannot escape it; for "this is the portion of a wicked man from God, and the heritage appointed to him by God," Job 20:29. An heritage that will furnish them with a habitation, who have no where to lay their head; they shall be "cast into outer darkness," Matt. 25:30, for to them "is reserved the blackness of darkness forever," Jude, ver. 13, where their bed shall be sorrow; "they shall lie down in sorrow," Isaiah 50:11; their food shall be judgment, for God will "feed them with judgment," Ezek 34:16; and their drink shall be the red wine of God's wrath, "the dregs whereof all the wicked of the earth shall wring out, and drink them," Psalm 75:8.

I know that those who are destitute of worldly goods, and also void of the knowledge and grace of God, who therefore may be called **the devil's poor**, will be apt to say, "We hope God will make us suffer all our misery in this world, and that we shall be happy in

the next world;" as if their miserable outward condition, in time, would secure their happiness in eternity. A gross and fatal mistake! there is another inheritance which they have, namely, "Lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit," Jer. 16:19. But, "the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies," Isaiah 28:17. Do you think, O sinner, that God, who commands judges on earth "not to respect the person of the poor in judgment," Lev. 19:15, will pervert judgment for you? No! Know for certain, that however miserable you are here, you shall be eternally miserable hereafter, if you live and die in your natural state.

(2.) Many that have plenty in the world, have far more than they know of. You have, it may be, O unregenerate man! an estate, a good portion, a large stock, left you by your father; you have improved it, and the sun of prosperity shines upon you; so that you can say, with Esau, Gen. 33:9, "I have enough." But know, you have more than all that, an inheritance which you do not think of—you are a child of wrath, an heir of hell! That is a heritage which will abide with you amidst all the changes in the world, as long as you continue in an unregenerate state. When you shall leave your substance to others, this will go along with you into another world. It is no wonder a *slaughter ox* is fed to the full, and is not set to work as others are, Job 21:30, "The wicked is reserved to the day of destruction; they shall be brought forth to the day of wrath."

Well then, "Rejoice, let your heart cheer you, walk in the ways of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes." Live above reproofs and warning from the word of God; show yourself a man of learning, by casting off all fear of God; mock at seriousness; live like yourself, "a child of wrath," "an heir of hell." "But know, that for all these things God will bring you into judgment!" Eccl. 11:9. Assure yourself, your "breaking shall come suddenly at an instant," Isaiah 30:13. "For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of a fool," Eccl. 7:6. The fair blaze, and the great noise which they make, are quickly gone—so shall your mirth be. Then that wrath,

which is now silently sinking into your soul, shall make a fearful hissing.

5. Woe to him, that like Moab, "has been at ease from his youth, Jer. 48:11, and never saw the black cloud of wrath hanging over his head. There are many who "have no changes, therefore they fear not God," Psalm 55:19. They have lived in a good hope, as they call it, all their days; that is, they never had power to believe an ill report of their soul's state. Many have come by their religion too easily—and as it came lightly to them, so it will go from them, when the trial comes. Do you think men flee from wrath in a morning dream? Or will they flee from the wrath which they never saw pursuing them?

6. Think it not strange, if you see one in great distress about his soul's condition, who was accustomed to be as jovial, and as little concerned for salvation as any of his neighbors. Can one get a right view of himself, as in a state of wrath, and not be pierced with sorrows, terrors, and anxiety? When a weight quite above a man's strength, lies upon him, and he is alone, he can neither stir hand nor foot; but when one comes to lift it off him, he will struggle to get from under it. Thunderclaps of wrath from the word of God, conveyed to the soul by the Spirit of the Lord, will surely keep a man awake.

7. It is no wonder that wrath comes upon churches and nations, and upon us in this land, and that infants and children smart under it. Most of the society are yet children of wrath; few are fleeing from it, or taking the way to prevent it—but people of all ranks are helping it on. The Jews rejected Christ; and their children have been smarting under wrath these eighteen hundred years. God grant that the bad treatment given to Christ and his gospel, by this generation, be not pursued with wrath on the succeeding one.

Use 2. Of EXHORTATION. Here I shall drop a word,

1. To those who are yet in an unregenerate state.

2. To those who are brought out of it.

3. To all equally.

1. To you who are yet in an UNREGENERATE state, I would sound the alarm, and warn you to see to yourselves, while there is yet hope. O, you children of wrath take no rest in this dismal state; but flee to Christ, the only refuge; hasten and make your escape there. The state of wrath is too hot a climate for you to live in, Micah 2:10, "Arise and depart, for this is not your rest." O sinner, do you know where you are? Do you not see your danger? The curse has entered into your soul—wrath is your covering; the heavens are growing blacker and blacker above your head; the earth is weary of you, the pit is opening her mouth for you, and should the thread of your life be cut this moment, you are thenceforth past all hope forever!

Sirs, if we saw you putting a cup of poison to your mouth, we would run to you and snatch it out of your hands. If we saw the house on fire about you, while you were fast asleep in it, we would run to you, and drag you out of it. But alas! you are in ten thousand times greater hazard—yet we can do no more than tell you your danger; invite, exhort, and beseech you to look to yourselves; and lament your stupidity and obstinacy, when we cannot prevail with you to take warning. If there were no hope of your recovery, we would be silent, and would not torment you before the time—but though you be lost and undone, there is hope concerning this thing. Therefore, I cry unto you, in the name of the Lord, and in the words of the prophet, Zech. 9:12, "Turn to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope." Flee to Jesus Christ out of this, your natural state of sin and wrath.

Motive 1. While you are in this state, you must stand or fall according to the law, or covenant of works. If you understood this aright, it would strike through your hearts as a thousand darts. One had better be a slave to the Turks, condemned to the galleys, or under Egyptian bondage—than be under the covenant of works! All

mankind were brought under it in Adam, as we heard before; and you, in your unregenerate state, are still where Adam left you. It is true, there is another covenant brought in—but what is that to you, who are not brought into it?

You must needs be under one of the two covenants; either under the law, or under grace. That you are not under grace, the dominion of sin over you manifestly proves; therefore, you are under the law, Romans 6:14. Do not think God has laid aside the first covenant, Matt. 5:17, 18; Gal. 3:10. No, he will "magnify the law, and make it honorable." It is broken indeed on your part; but it is absurd to think, that therefore your obligation is dissolved. Nay, you must stand and fall by it, until you can produce your discharge from God himself, who is the party in that covenant; and this you cannot pretend to, seeing you are not in Christ.

Now, to give you a view of your misery, in this respect, consider these following things:

(1.) Hereby you are bound over to death, in virtue of the threatening of death in the covenant, Gen. 2:17. The condition being broken you fall under the penalty. So it concludes you under wrath.

(2.) There is no salvation for you under this covenant—but on a condition impossible to be performed by you. The justice of God must be satisfied for the wrong which you have done already. God has written this truth in characters of the blood of his own Son. Yes, and you must perfectly obey the law for the time to come. So says the law, Gal. 3:12, "The man who does them, shall live in them." Come then, O sinner! see if you can make a ladder, whereby you may reach the throne of God—stretch forth your arms, and try if you can fly on the wings of the wind, catch hold of the clouds, and pierce through these visible heavens; and then either climb over, or break through, the jasper walls of the city above. These things you may do, as well as be able to reach heaven in your natural state, under this covenant.

(3.) There is no pardon under this covenant. Pardon is the benefit of another covenant, with which you have nothing to do, Acts 13:39, "By him, all that believe are justified from all things, from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses." As for you, you are in the hands of a merciless creditor, who will take you by the throat, saying, "Pay what you owe!" and cast you into prison, there to remain until you have paid the utmost farthing—unless you be so wise as to get a surety in time, who is able to answer for all your debt, and get up your discharge. This Jesus Christ alone can do. You abide under this covenant, and plead mercy; but what is your plea founded on? There is not one promise of mercy or pardon in that covenant. Do you plead mercy for mercy's sake? Justice will step in between it and you, and plead God's covenant threatening, which he cannot deny.

(4.) There is no place for repentance in this covenant, so as the sinner can be helped by it. For as soon as ever you sin, the law lays its curse on you, which is a dead weight you can by no means throw off; no, not though your "head were waters, and your eyes a fountain of tears, to weep day and night" for your sin. That is what the law cannot do, in that it is "weak through the flesh," Romans 8:3. You are another profane Esau, who has sold the blessing; and there is no place for repentance, though you seek it carefully with tears, while under the covenant.

(5.) There is no acceptance of the will for the deed under this covenant, which was not made for good will—but good works. The mistake in this point ruins many. They are not in Christ—but stand under the first covenant; and yet they will plead this privilege. This is just like a man having made a feast for those of his own family, and when they sit down at table, another man's servant, who has run away from his master, presumptuously comes forward and sits down among them—would not the master of the feast give such a stranger that check, "Friend, why do you come in here?" and since he is none of his family, commanded him to be gone quickly.

Though a master accept the good-will of his own child for the deed, can a hired servant expect that privilege?

(6.) You have nothing to do with Christ while under that covenant. By the law of God, a woman cannot be married to two husbands at once—either death or divorce must dissolve the first marriage, before she can marry another. So we must first be dead to the law, before we can be married to Christ, Romans 7:4. The law is the first husband; Jesus Christ, who raises the dead, marries the widow, who was heartbroken, and slain by the first husband. But while the soul is in the house with the first husband, it cannot plead a marriage relation to Christ; nor the benefits of a marriage covenant, which is not yet entered into, Gal. 5:4, "Christ is become of no effect to you; whoever of you are justified by the law, you are fallen from grace." Peace, pardon, and such like benefits, are all benefits of the covenant of grace. You must not think to stand off from Christ, and the marriage covenant with him, and yet plead these benefits, any more than one man's wife can plead the benefit of a contract of marriage passed between another man and his wife.

(7.) See the bill of exclusion, passed in the court of Heaven, against all under the covenant of works, Gal. 4:30, "The son of the bond-woman shall not be heir." Compare ver. 24. Heirs of wrath must not be heirs of glory. Whom the first covenant has power to exclude out of heaven, the second covenant cannot bring into it.

OBJECTION. Then it is impossible for us to be saved.

Answer. It is so while you are in that state; but if you would be out of that dreadful condition, hasten out of that state. If a murderer be under sentence of death, so long as he lives within the kingdom, the laws will reach his life; but if he can make his escape, and get over the sea, into the dominions of another prince, our laws cannot reach him there. This is what we would have you to do; flee out of the kingdom of darkness, into the kingdom of God's dear Son; out of the dominion of the law, into the dominion of grace—then all the

curses of the law, or covenant of works, shall never be able to reach you.

Motive 2. O, you children of wrath, your state is wretched, for you have lost God, and that is an unspeakable loss. You are without God in the world, Eph. 2:12. Whatever you may call yours, you cannot call God yours. If we look to the earth, perhaps you can tell us, that land, that house, or that herd of cattle—is yours. But let us look upward to heaven; is that God, that grace, that glory, yours? Truly, you have neither part no lot in this matter. When Nebuchadnezzar talks of cities and kingdoms, O how big does he speak! "Great Babylon, that *I* have built – *my* power – *my* majesty;" but he tells a poor tale, when he comes to speak of God, saying, "*Your* God," Dan. 2:47, and 4:30. Alas, sinner! whatever you have, God is gone from you. O, the misery of a godless soul! Have you lost God? Then,

(1.) The sap and substance of all you have in the world is gone. The godless man, have what he will, is one who really has nothing, Matt. 25:29. I defy the unregenerate man to attain to soul satisfaction, whatever he possesses, since God is not his God. All his days he eats in darkness; in every condition there is a secret dissatisfaction which haunts his heart, like a Spirit. The soul wants something, though perhaps it knows not what; and so it will be always, until the soul returns to God, the fountain of satisfaction.

(2.) You can do nothing to purpose for yourself; for God is gone, his soul is departed from you, Jer. 6:8, like a leg out of joint hanging by, whereof a man has no use, as the word there used signifies. Losing God, you have lost the fountain of good; and so all grace, all goodness, all the saving influences of his Spirit. What can you do then? What fruit can you bring forth, more than a branch cut off from the stock? John 15:5. You are become unprofitable, Romans 3:12, as a filthy rotten thing, fit only for the ash-heap.

(3.) Death has come up into your windows, yes, and has settled on your face; for God, in whose favor life is, Psalm 30:5, is gone from

you, and so the life of your soul is departed. What a loathsome lump is the body, when the soul is gone! Far more loathsome is your soul in this case. You are dead while you live. Do not deny it, seeing your speech is laid, your eyes closed, and all spiritual motion in you ceased. Your true friends who see your case, lament, because you are gone into the land of silence.

(4.) You have not a steady friend among all the creatures of God; for now that you have lost the master's favor, all the family is set against you. Conscience is your enemy; the word never speaks good of you; God's people loathe so far as they see what you are, Psalm 15:4. The beasts and stones of the field are banded together against you, Job 5:23; Hos. 2:18. Your food, drink, and clothes, grudge being serviceable to the wretch that has lost God, and abuses them to his dishonor. The earth groans under you; yes, "the whole creation groans, and travails in pain together," because of you, and such as you are, Romans 8:22. Heaven will have nothing to do with you; for "there shall never enter into it, anything that defiles," Rev. 21:27. Only "hell from beneath, is eager to greet your coming," Isaiah 14:9.

(5.) Your hell is begun already. What makes hell—but exclusion from the presence of God? "Depart from me, you cursed." You are gone from God already, with the curse upon you. That which is now your choice, shall be your punishment at length, if you do not repent. As a gracious state is a state of **glory in the bud**; so a graceless state is **hell in the bud**, which, if it continue, will come at length to perfection.

Motive 3. Consider the dreadful instances of the wrath of God, and let them serve to awaken you to flee out of this state. Consider,

(1.) How it is fallen on men. Even in this world, many have been set up as monuments of Divine vengeance—that others might fear. Wrath has swept away multitudes, who have fallen together by the hand of an angry God. Consider how the Lord "spared not the old world – bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly. And

turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them with an overthrow, making them an example unto those who after would live ungodly," 2 Pet. 2:5, 6. But it is yet more dreadful to think of that weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth, among those who in hell lift up their eyes—but cannot get a drop of water to cool their tongues. Believe these things and be warned by them, lest destruction come upon you, for a warning to others.

(2.) Consider how wrath fell upon the fallen angels, whose case is absolutely hopeless. They were the first that ventured to break the hedge of the Divine law; and God set them up for monuments of his wrath against sin. They once "left their own habitation," and were never allowed to look in again at the keyhole of the door; but they are "reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day," Jude, ver. 6.

(3.) Behold how an angry God dealt with his own Son, standing in the place of elect sinners, Romans 8:32, "God spared not his Son." Sparing mercy might have been expected here—if any place at all. If any person could have obtained it, surely his own Son would have got it—but he spared him not. The Father's delight—is made a man of sorrows! He who is the wisdom of God—becomes sore amazed, ready to faint away in a fit of horror. The weight of this wrath makes him sweat great drops of blood. By the fierceness of this fire, his heart was melted like wax.

Behold, here, how severe God is against sin! The sun was struck blind with this terrible sight, rocks were rent, graves opened; death, as it were, in the excess of astonishment, letting its prisoners slip away. What is a deluge, a shower of fire and brimstone, on the people of Sodom, the terrible noise of a dissolving world, the whole fabric of heaven and earth disuniting at once, and angels cast down from heaven into the bottomless pit! What are all these, I say, in comparison with this—God in human nature suffering! groaning! dying upon a cross! Infinite holiness did it, to make sin look like

itself, that is, infinitely odious. And will men live at ease, while exposed to this wrath?

Motive 4. Unrepentant sinner! Consider what a God he is—with whom you have to do, and whose wrath you are liable unto. He is the God of **infinite knowledge and wisdom**; so that none of your sins, however secret, can be hidden from him. He infallibly finds out all means, whereby wrath may be executed, toward the satisfying of justice. He is of **infinite power**, and so can do what he will against the sinner. How heavy must the strokes of wrath be, which are laid on by an omnipotent hand! Infinite power can make the sinner its prisoner, even when he is in his greatest rage against Heaven. It can bring again the several parcels of dust out of the grave, put them together again, reunite the soul and body, summon them before the tribunal, hurry them away to the pit, and hold them up with the one hand, through eternity, while they are lashed with the other! He is infinitely **just**, and therefore must punish. It would be acting contrary to his nature—to allow the rebellious sinner to escape wrath. Hence the executing of this wrath is pleasing to him—for though the Lord has no delight in the death of a sinner, as it is the destruction of his own creature—yet he delights in it, as it is the execution of justice. "Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest." Mark the reason—"For the righteous Lord loves righteousness," Psalm 11:6, 7. "I will cause my fury to rest upon them, and I will be comforted," Ezek. 5:13. "I also will laugh at your calamity," Proverbs 1:26. Finally, He lives **forever**, to pursue the quarrel. Let us therefore conclude, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!"

Be awakened then, O young sinner! be awakened, O old sinner! You are yet in the state of wrath, in which you were born in! Your security is the sleep of death; rise out of it, before the pit closes its mouth upon you. It is true, you may put on a breastplate of iron, make your brow brass, and your heart as hard as adamant. But God will break that brazen brow, and make that adamantine heart at last to fly into a thousand pieces! You may, if you will, labor to put

these things out of your heads, that you may sleep in fancied safety, though in a state of wrath. You may run away, with the arrows sticking in your consciences, to your job, to work them away. You may go to your beds, to sleep them out; or to company, to sport and laugh them away—but convictions, so stifled, will have a fearful resurrection; and the day is coming, unless you take warning in time, when the arrows of wrath shall so stick in your soul, as you shall never be able to pluck them out through the ages of eternity!

But if any desire to flee from the wrath to come, and, for that end, to know what course to take—I offer them these few ADVICES; and implore and beseech them, as they love their own souls, to comply with them.

(1.) Retire to some secret place and there meditate on this, your misery. Believe it, and fix your thoughts on it. Let each put the question to himself, How can I live in this state? How can I die in it? How shall I rise again, and stand before the tribunal of God in it?

(2.) Consider seriously the sin of your nature, heart, and life. A proper sight of wrath flows from a deep sense of sin. Those who see themselves exceedingly sinful, will find no great difficulty to perceive themselves to be heirs of wrath.

(3.) Labor to justify God in this matter. To quarrel with God about it, and to rage like a wild bull in a net, will but fix you the more in it. Humiliation of soul before the Lord is necessary for an escape. God will not *sell* deliverance—but freely *gives* it to those who see themselves altogether unworthy of his favor.

(4.) Turn your eyes, O prisoners of hope, towards the Lord Jesus Christ; and embrace him, as he offers himself in the gospel. "There is no salvation in any other," Acts 4:12. God is a consuming fire; you are children of wrath—if the Mediator does not interpose between him and you—you are undone forever! If you would be safe, come under his shadow—one drop of that wrath

cannot fall there, for he "delivers us from the wrath to come," 1 Thess. 1:10. Accept of him in this covenant, wherein he offers himself to you; so you shall, as the captive woman, redeem your life, by marrying the conqueror. His blood will quench that fire of wrath which burns against you—in the white raiment of his righteousness you will be safe; for no storm of wrath can pierce it.

2. I shall drop a few words to the SAINTS.

"Remember that at that time you were without Christ . . . having no hope and without God in the world." Ephesians 2:12

(1.) "**REMEMBER**—that at that time," namely, when you were in your natural state, "you were without Christ – having no hope, and without God in the world." Call to mind the state you were in formerly; and review the misery of it. There are five memorials which I may thence give in to the whole assembly of the saints, who are no longer children of wrath—but "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ," though as yet in their minority.

[1.] Remember—that in the day our Lord first took you by the hand, you were in no better a condition than others. O, what moved Him to take you—when He passed by your neighbors? He found you children of wrath, even as others—but He did not leave you so. He came into the common prison, where you lay in fetters, even as others. From among the multitude of condemned malefactors, He picked you out, commanded your fetters to be taken off, put a pardon in your hand, and brought you into the glorious liberty of the children of God—while He left others in the devil's fetters!

[2.] Remember—there was nothing in you to engage Him to love you, in the day he appeared for your deliverance. You were children of wrath, even as others; fit for hell, and altogether unfit for heaven! Yet the King brought you into the palace; the King's Son made love to you, a condemned criminal, and espoused you to Himself, on the

day in which you might have been led forth to execution! "Even so, Father, for so it seems good in Your sight!" Matt. 11:26.

[3.] Remember—you were fitter to be loathed, than loved, in that day. Be amazed and wonder! that when He saw you in your blood, that He did not look upon you with abhorrence, and pass you by. Wonder, that ever such a time could be a time of love, Ezek. 16:8.

[4.] Remember—you are decked with borrowed garments. It is His loveliness which is upon you, ver. 14. It was He who took off your prison garments, and clothed you with robes of righteousness, garments of salvation; garments with which you are arrayed as the lilies, which toil not, neither do they spin. He took the chains from off your arms, the rope from about your neck; put you in such a dress, as you might be fit for the court of heaven, even to eat at the King's table!

[5.] Remember your faults this day, as Pharaoh's butler, who had forgotten Joseph. Mind how you have forgotten, and how unkindly you have treated Him who remembered you in your dreadful estate. Is this your kindness to your friend? In the day of your deliverance, did you think you could have thus requited Him, your Lord?

(2.) **PITY the children of wrath—the world which lies in wickedness.** Can you be unconcerned for them, you who were once in the same condition? You have got ashore, indeed—but your companions are yet in hazard of perishing; and will not you afford them all possible help for their deliverance? What they are—you formerly were. This may draw pity from you, and engage you to use all means for their recovery. See Titus 3:1-3.

(3.) **Admire that matchless love which brought you out of the state of wrath.** Christ's love was active love; He brought your soul from the pit of corruption! It was no easy work to purchase the life of the condemned sinner; but He gave His life for your life. He gave His precious blood to quench the flame of wrath, which otherwise would have consumed you! Men get the best view of the stars from

the bottom of a deep pit; from this pit of misery, into which you were cast by the fall of the first Adam, you may get the best view of the Sun of Righteousness, in all his dimensions. He is the second Adam, who took you out of the horrible pit, and out of the miry clay. How broad was that love, which covered such a multitude of sins! Behold the length of it, reaching from everlasting to everlasting, Psalm 103:17. The depth of it, going so low as to deliver you from the lowest hell, Ps. 86:13. The height of it, raising you up to sit in heavenly places, Eph. 2:6.

(4.) **Be HUMBLE, carry low sails, walk softly all your years.** Be not proud of your gifts, graces, privileges, or attainments; but remember you were children of wrath, even as others. The peacock walks slowly, hangs down his lovely feathers, while he looks to his black feet. "Look to the hole of the pit whence you are dug;" and walk humbly, as it becomes **free grace's debtors**.

(5.) **Be wholly for your Lord.** Every wife is obliged to be dutiful to her husband; but double ties lie upon her who was taken from a prison, or an ash-heap. If your Lord has delivered you from wrath, you ought, on that very account, to be wholly his; to act for him, to suffer tor him, and to do whatever he calls you to. **The saints have no reason to complain of their lot in the world, whatever it is.** Well may they bear the cross for Him—by whom the curse was borne away from them. Well may they bear the wrath of men in his cause—who has freed them from the wrath of God; and cheerfully go to a fire for him, by whom hell-fire is quenched as to them.

Soul and body, and all you had in the world, were formerly under wrath—he has removed that wrath; shall not all these be at his service? That your soul is not overwhelmed with the wrath of God, is owing purely to Jesus Christ; and shall it not be a temple for his Spirit? That your heart is not filled with horror and despair is owing to Him only; to whom then should it be devoted—but to him alone? That your eyes are not blinded with the smoke of the pit; your hands not fettered with chains of darkness; your tongue is not

broiling in the fire of hell; and your feet are not standing in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone—is owing purely to Jesus Christ! and shall not these eyes be employed for him, these hands act for him, this tongue speak for him, and these feet speedily run his errands? To him who believes that he was a child of wrath, even as others—but is now delivered by the blessed Jesus, nothing will appear too much, to do or suffer for his Deliverer, when he has a fair call to it.

3. To conclude with a word to ALL. Let no man think lightly of sin—which lays the sinner open to the wrath of God. Let not the sin of our nature—which wreathes the yoke of God's wrath so early about our necks—seem a small thing in our eyes. Fear the Lord because of his dreadful wrath. Tremble at the thought of sin, against which God has such fiery indignation. Look on his wrath—and stand in awe—and sin not! Do you think this is to press you to slavish fear? If it were so, one had better be a slave to God with a trembling heart, than a free man to the devil, with a seared conscience and a heart of adamant. But it is not so; you may love him, and thus fear him too; yes, you ought to do it, though you were saints of the first magnitude. See Psalm 119:120; Matt. 10:28; Luke 12:5; Heb. 12:28, 29. Although you have passed the gulf of wrath, being in Jesus Christ—yet it is but reasonable that your hearts should shiver when you look back to it. Your sin still deserves wrath, even as the sins of others; and it would be terrible to be in a fiery furnace, although by a miracle we were so protected against it, as that it could not harm us.

3. The INABILITY of man's natural state

"For when we were yet **without strength**, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Romans 5:6

"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him." John 6:44

We have now had a view of the total corruption of man's nature, and that load of wrath which lies on him, that gulf of misery into which he is plunged in his natural state. But there is one part of his misery that deserves particular consideration, namely, his utter inability to recover himself; the knowledge of which is necessary for the due humiliation of a sinner. What I design here, is only to propose a few things, whereby to convince the unregenerate man of this his inability; that he may see an absolute need of Christ and of the power of his grace.

As a man who is fallen into a deep pit cannot be supposed to help himself out of it—but by one of two ways; either by doing all himself alone, or taking hold of, and improving, the help offered him by others. Just so, an unconverted man cannot be supposed to help himself out of his natural state—but either in the way of the law, or covenant of works, by doing all himself without Christ; or else in the way of the Gospel, or covenant of grace, by exerting his own strength to lay hold upon, and to make use of the help offered him by a Savior. But, alas! the unconverted man is **dead** in the pit, and cannot help himself either of these ways. Not the first way; for the first text tells us, that when our Lord came to help us, "we were without strength," unable to recover ourselves. We were ungodly, therefore under a burden of guilt and wrath; yet "without strength," unable to stand under it; and unable to throw it off, or get from under it—so that all mankind would have undoubtedly perished, had not "Christ died for the ungodly," and brought help to those who could never have recovered themselves.

But when Christ comes and offers help to sinners, cannot they take it? Cannot they improve help when it comes to their hands? No! the second text tells, they cannot—"No man **can** come unto me," etc.; that is, believe in me, John 6:44, "unless the Father draws him." This is a drawing which enables them to come, who, until then could not come; and therefore could not help themselves by improving the help offered.

This is a drawing which is always effectual; for it can be no less than "hearing and learning the Father," which, whoever partakes of, comes to Christ, verse 45. Therefore, it is not drawing in the way of *mere moral persuasion*. This drawing is always is effectual. It is drawing by mighty power, Eph. 1:12, absolutely necessary for those who have no power in themselves to come and take hold of the offered help.

Hearken then, O unregenerate man, and be convinced that as you are in a most miserable state by nature, so you are utterly unable to recover yourself in any way. You are ruined; and what way will you go to work, to recover yourself? Which of the two ways will you choose? Will you try it alone--or will you make use of help? Will you fall on the way of works--or on the way of the Gospel? I know very well that you will not so much as try the way of the Gospel, until once you have found the recovery impracticable in the way of the law. Therefore, we shall begin where corrupt nature teaches men to begin, namely, at the way of the law of works.

I. Sinner, I would have you to believe that YOUR WORKING will never effect it. Work, and do your best; you will never be able to work yourself out of this state of corruption and wrath. You must have Christ, else you will perish eternally. It is only "Christ in you" that can be the hope of glory. But if you will needs try it, then I must lay before you, from the unalterable word of the living God, two things which you must do for yourself. If you can do them, it must be yielded, that you are able to recover yourself; but if not, then you can do nothing this way for your recovery.

1. "If you will enter into life keep the commandments," Matt. 19:17. That is, if you will by doing enter into life, then perfectly keep the ten commandments; for **the object of these words is to beat down the pride of the man's heart, and to let him see an absolute need of a Savior, from the impossibility of keeping the law**. The answer is given suitably to the address. Our Lord checks him for his compliment, "Good Master," ver. 16, telling him, "There is none good but one, that is God," ver. 17. As if he had said, You think yourself a good man, and me another; but where goodness is spoken of, men and angels may veil their faces before the good God. As to his question, wherein he discovered his legal disposition, Christ does not answer him, saying, "Believe and you shall be saved;" that would not have been so seasonable in the case of one who thought he could do well enough for himself, if he but knew "what good he should do;" but, suitable to the humor the man was in, he bids him "keep the commandments," keep them precisely and accurately, as those that watch malefactors in prison, lest any of them escape, and their life be taken for those which escape. See then, O unregenerate man, what you can do in this matter; for if you will recover yourself in this way, you must perfectly keep the commandments of God.

(1.) Your obedience must be perfect, in respect of the PRINCIPLE of it; that is, your soul, the principle of action, must be perfectly pure, and altogether without sin. For the law requires all moral perfection; not only actual—but habitual—and so condemns original sin; impurity of nature, as well as of actions. Now, if you can bring this to pass, you will be able to answer that question of Solomon, so as never one of Adam's posterity could yet answer it, "Who can say, I have made my heart clean?" Proverbs 20:9. But if you cannot, the very lack of this perfection is sin, and so lays you open to the curse and cuts you off from life. Yes, it makes all your actions, even your best actions, sinful. For "who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" Job 14:4. And do you think by sin--to help yourself out of sin and misery?

(2.) Your obedience must also be perfect in PARTS. It must be as broad as the whole law of God—if you lack one thing, you are undone; for the law denounces the curse on him who continues not in everything written therein, Gal. 3:10. You must give internal and external obedience to the whole law. You must keep all the commands in heart and life. If you break any one of them, that will ensure your ruin. A vain thought, or idle word, will still shut you up under the curse.

(3.) It must be perfect in respect of DEGREES; as was the obedience of Adam, while he stood in his innocence. This the law requires, and will accept of no less, Matt. 22:37, "You shall love the Lord your God, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." If one degree of that love, required by the law, be lacking; if each part of your obedience be not brought up to the greatest height commanded; that lack is a breach of the law, and so leaves you still under the curse. A man may bring as many buckets of water to a house that is on fire, as he is able to carry; and yet it may be consumed, and will be so, if he bring not as many as will quench the fire. Even so, although you should do what you are able, in keeping the commandments, if you fail in the least degree of obedience, which the law enjoins, you are certainly ruined forever; unless you take hold of Christ, renouncing all your own righteousness, as filthy rags. See Romans 10:5; Gal. 3:10.

(4.) It must be PERPETUAL, as the man Christ's obedience was, who *always* did the things which pleased the Father; for the tenor of the law is, "Cursed is he who continues not in all things written in the law to do them." Hence, though Adam's obedience was, for a while, absolutely perfect; yet because at length he failed in one point, namely, in eating the forbidden fruit, he fell under the curse of the law. If a man were to live a dutiful subject to his prince, until the close of his days, and then conspire against him, he must die for his treason. Even so, though you should, all the time of your life, live in perfect obedience to the law of God, and yet at the hour of death only entertain a vain thought, or pronounce an idle word, that

idle word, or vain thought, would blot out all your former righteousness, and ruin you; namely, in this way in which you are seeking to recover yourself.

Now, such is the obedience which you must perform, if you would recover yourself in the way of the law. But though you would thus obey, the law stakes you down in the state of wrath, until another demand of it be satisfied.

2. You must pay what you owe. It is undeniable that you are a sinner; and whatever you may be in time to come; justice must be satisfied for your sins already committed. The honor of the law must be maintained, by your suffering the denounced wrath. It may be you have changed your course of life, or are now resolved to do it, and to set about keeping the commands of God—but what have you done, or what will you do, with the old debt? Your obedience to God, though it were perfect, is a debt due to him, for the time wherein it is performed; and can no more satisfy for former sins, than a tenant's paying the current year's rent can satisfy the landlord for all arrears. Can the paying of new debts acquit a man from old accounts? Nay, deceive not yourselves; you will find these laid up in store with God, and sealed up among his treasures, Deut. 32:34. It remains then, that either you must bear that wrath, to which for your sin you are liable, according to the law; or else you must acknowledge that you can not bear it, and thereupon have recourse to the surety, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let me now ask you, Are you able to satisfy the justice of God? Can you pay your own debt? Surely not—for, as he is the infinite God, whom you have offended; the punishment, being suited to the quality of the offence, must be infinite. But your punishment, or sufferings for sin, cannot be infinite in value, for you are a finite creature—therefore, they must be infinite in duration or continuance; that is, they must be eternal. And so all your sufferings in this world are but an pledge of what you must suffer in the world to come.

Now, sinner, if you can answer these demands, you may recover yourself in the way of the law. But are you not conscious of your inability to do *any* of these things; much more to do them *all*? yet if you do not all, you do nothing. Turn, then, to what course of life you will, you are still in a state of wrath. Pitch up your obedience to the greatest height you can; suffer what God lays upon you; yes, and walk under all without the least impatience—yet all this will not satisfy the demands of the law; therefore, you are still a ruined creature. Alas, sinner! what are you doing, while you strive to help yourself—but do not receive, and unite with, Jesus Christ? You are laboring in the fire, wearying yourself for very vanity; laboring to enter into heaven, by the door which Adam's sin so bolted, that neither he, nor any of his lost posterity, can ever enter by it. Do you not see the flaming sword of justice, keeping you off from the tree of life? Do you not hear the law denouncing a curse on you, for all you are doing; even for your obedience, your prayers, your tears, your reformation of life, and so on—because, being under the law's dominion, your best works are not so good as it requires them to be, under the pain of the curse?

Believe it, sirs, if you live and die out of Christ, without being actually united to him as the second Adam, the life-giving Spirit, and without coming under the covert of his atoning blood; though you should do the utmost that any man can do, in keeping the commands of God, you can never see the face of God in peace. If you should, from this moment, bid an eternal farewell to this world's joys, and all the affairs thereof, and henceforth busy yourselves with nothing but the salvation of your souls; if you should go into some wilderness, live upon the grass of the field, and be companions to beasts and owls; if you should retire to some dark cavern of the earth, and weep there for your sins, until you had wept yourselves blind; if you should confess with your tongue, until it cleaves to the roof of your mouth; if you should pray, until your knees grow hard as horns; if you should fast, until your body become like a skeleton; and, after all this, give it to be burnt—the

word is gone out of the Lord's mouth in righteousness, and cannot return, that you shall perish forever, notwithstanding all this, as not being in Christ; John 14:6, "No man comes unto the Father—but by me." Acts 4:12, "Neither is there salvation in any other." Mark 16:16, "He who believes not, shall be damned."

OBJECTION. But God is a merciful God, and he knows that we are not able to answer these demands; we hope therefore to be saved, if we do as well as we can, and keep the commands as well as we are able.

Answer 1. Though you are able to do many things, you are not able to do one thing right—you can do nothing acceptable to God, being out of Christ, John 15:6, "Without me you can do nothing." **An unrenewed man, as you are, can do nothing but sin;** as we have already proved. **Your best actions are sin**, and so they increase your debt to justice—how then can it be expected they should lessen it?

Answer 2. Though God should offer to save men, upon condition that they did all they could do, in obedience to his commands—yet we have reason to think, that those who should attempt it, would never be saved—for where is the man that does as well as he can? Who sees not many false steps he has made, which he might have avoided? There are so many things to be done, so many temptations to carry us out of the road of duty, and our nature is so very apt to be set on fire of hell, that we surely must fail, even in some point that is within the compass of our natural abilities. But,

Answer 3. Though you should do all you are able to do, in vain do you hope to be saved in that way. What word of God is this hope of your founded on? It is neither founded on law nor gospel; therefore, it is but a delusion. It is not founded on the **Gospel**; for the Gospel leads the soul out of itself, to Jesus Christ for all; and it establishes the law, Romans 3:31. Whereas this hope of yours cannot be established—but on the ruins of the law, which God will magnify and make honorable. Hence it appears, that it is not founded on

the **law** either. When God set Adam a-working for happiness to himself and his posterity, perfect obedience was the condition required of him; and the curse was denounced in case of disobedience. The law being broken by him, he and his posterity were subjected to the penalty for sin committed; and withal were still bound to perfect obedience—for it is absurd to think, that man's sinning, and suffering for his sin, should free him from his duty of obedience to his Creator.

When Christ came in the place of the elect, to purchase their salvation, the terms were the same. Justice had the elect under arrest—if he is desirous to deliver them, the terms are known. He must satisfy the justice of God for their sin, by suffering the punishment due to it; he must do what they cannot do, namely, obey the law perfectly, and so fulfill all righteousness. Accordingly, all this he did, and so became "the end of the law for righteousness, to everyone who believes," Romans 10:4. And do you think that God will abate these terms as to you, when his own Son got no abatement of them? Expect it not, though you should beg it with tears of blood; for if they prevailed, they must prevail against the truth, justice, and honor of God, Gal. 3:10, "Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things, which are written in the book of the law to do them." Ver. 12, "And the law is not of faith—but, the man who does them, shall live in them."

It is true, that God is merciful—but cannot he be merciful, unless he saves you in a way that is neither consistent with his law, nor his Gospel? Have not his goodness and mercy sufficiently appeared, in sending the Son of his love, to do "what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh?" He has provided help for those who cannot help themselves—but you, insensible of your own weakness, must needs think to recover yourself by your own works, while you are no more able to do it, than to remove mountains of brass out of their place.

Therefore I conclude, that you are utterly unable to recover yourself, in the way of works, or by the law. O, that you would conclude the same concerning yourself!

II. Let us try, next, what the sinner can do to recover himself, in the way of the GOSPEL. It may be you think, that you can not do all by yourself alone—yet Jesus Christ offering you help, you can of yourself embrace it, and use it for your recovery. But, O sinner, be convinced of your absolute need of the grace of Christ—for truly, there is help offered—but you can not accept it; there is a rope cast out to draw shipwrecked sinners to land—but, alas! they have no hands to lay hold of it. *They are like infants exposed in the open field, who must starve, though their food be lying by them, unless some one put it in their mouths.* To convince natural men of this, let it be considered,

1. That although Christ is offered in the gospel—yet they cannot believe in him. Saving faith is the faith of God's elect; the special gift of God to them, wrought in them by his Spirit. Salvation is offered to those who will **believe** in Christ—but how can you believe? John 5:44. It is offered to those that will **come** to Christ; but "no man *can* come unto him, unless the Father draws him." It is offered to those that will **look** to him, as lifted on the pole of the gospel, Isaiah 45:22—but the natural man is spiritually blind, Rev. 3:17; and as to the things of the Spirit of God, he cannot know them, for they are spiritually discerned, 1 Cor. 2:14. Nay, whoever **will**, he is welcome; let him come, Rev. 22:17; but there must be a day of power on the sinner, before he can be willing, Psalm 110:3.

2. Man naturally has nothing with which to improve, for his recovery, the help brought in by the gospel. He is cast away in a state of wrath; and is bound hand and foot, so that he cannot lay hold of the cords of love thrown out to him in the gospel. The most skillful artificer cannot work without tools; neither can the most

skillful musician play well on an instrument that is out of tune. How can anyone believe, or repent--whose **understanding** is darkness, Eph. 5:8; whose **heart** is a stony heart, inflexible, insensible, Ezek. 36:26; whose **affections** are wholly disordered and distempered; who is averse to good, and bent to evil? The arms of natural abilities are too short to reach supernatural help—hence those who most excel in them, are often most estranged from spiritual things, Matt. 11:25, "You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent."

3. Man cannot work a saving change on himself—but so changed he must be, else he can neither believe nor repent, nor ever see heaven. No action can be without a suitable principle. Believing, repenting, and the like, are the product of the new nature; and can never be produced by the old corrupt nature. Now, what can the natural man do in this matter? He must be regenerate; begotten again unto a lively hope—but as the child cannot be active in his own generation, so a man cannot be active, but passive only, in his own regeneration. The heart is shut against Christ—man cannot open it; only God can do it by his grace, Acts 16:14. He is dead in sin; he must be quickened, raised out of his grave—who can do this but God himself? Eph. 2:1-5 . Nay, he must be "created in Christ Jesus, unto good works," Eph. 2:10. *These are works of omnipotence, and can be done by no less a power.*

4. Man, in his depraved state, is under an utter inability to do anything truly good, as was proved before at large—how, then, can he obey the gospel? His nature is the very reverse of the gospel—how can he, of himself, fall in with that plan of salvation, and accept the offered remedy? The corruption of man's nature infallibly includes his utter inability to recover himself in any way, and whoever is convinced of the one, must needs admit the other; for they stand and fall together. Were all the purchase of Christ offered to the unregenerate man, for one good thought, he cannot command it, 2 Cor. 3:5, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to think anything as of ourselves." Were it offered on condition of a

good word—yet "How can you, being evil, speak good things?" Matt. 12:35. Nay, were it left to yourselves, to choose what is easiest, Christ himself tells you, John 15:5, "Without me, you can do nothing."

5. The natural man always resists the Lord's offering to help him; yet that resistance is infallibly overcome in the elect, by converting grace. Can the stony heart but choose to resist the stroke? There is not only an **inability**—but an **enmity** and **obstinacy** in man's will by nature. God knows, O natural man, whether you know it or not, that "you are obstinate, and your neck is an iron sinew, and your brow brass," Isaiah 48:4, and cannot be overcome—but by him, who has "broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder." Hence, commonly speaking, there is such hard work in converting a sinner. Sometimes he seems to be caught in the net of the gospel; yet quickly he slips away again. The hook catches hold of him; but he struggles, until, getting free of it, he goes away with a bleeding wound. When good hopes are conceived of him, by those that travail in birth for the forming of Christ in him, there is oft-times nothing brought forth but wind. *The deceitful heart makes many contrivances to avoid a Savior, and cheat the man of his eternal happiness. Thus the natural man lies sunk in a state of sin and wrath, and utterly unable to recover himself.*

Objection 1. If we are under an utter inability to do any good, how can God require us to do it?

Answer. God making man upright, Eccl. 7:29, gave him a power to do everything that he should require of him; this power man lost by his own fault. We were bound to serve God, and do whatever he commanded us, as being his creatures; and also, we were under the superadded tie of a covenant, for that purpose. Now, we having, by our own fault, disabled ourselves, shall God lose his right of requiring our task, because we have thrown away the strength he gave us whereby to perform it? *Has the creditor no right to require*

payment of his money, because the debtor has squandered it away, and is not able to pay him? Truly, if God can require no more of us than we are able to do, we need no more to save us from wrath—but to make ourselves unable for every duty, and to incapacitate ourselves for serving God any manner of way, as profane men frequently do; and so the deeper a man is plunged in sin, he will be the more secure from wrath—for where God can require no duty of us, we do not sin in omitting it; and where there is no sin, there can be no wrath.

As to what may be urged by the unhumbled soul, against the putting our stock in Adam's hand, the righteousness of that dispensation was explained before. But moreover, the unrenewed man is daily throwing away the very remains of natural abilities, that rational light and strength which are to be found among the ruins of mankind. Nay, farther, he will not believe his own utter inability to help himself; so that out of his own mouth, he must be condemned. Even those who make their natural impotency too good a covert to their sloth, do, with others, delay the work of turning to God from time to time, and, under convictions, make large promises of reformation, which afterwards they never regard, and delay their repentance to a deathbed, as if they could help themselves in a moment; which shows them to be far from a due sense of their natural inability, whatever they pretend.

Now, if God can require of men the duty they are not able to do, he can in justice punish them for their not doing it, notwithstanding their inability. If he has power to exact the debt of obedience, he has also power to cast the insolvent debtor into prison, for his not paying it. Further, though unregenerate men have no *gracious* abilities—yet they lack not *natural* abilities, which nevertheless they will not improve. *There are many things they can do, which they do not; they will not do them, and therefore their damnation will be just.* Nay, all their inability to do good is voluntary; they will not come to Christ, John 5:40. They will not repent, they will die, Ezek. 18:31. So they will be justly condemned, because

they will neither turn to God, nor come to Christ; but love their chains better than their liberty, and darkness rather than light, John 3:19.

Objection 2. Why do you, then, preach Christ to us—call us to come to him, to believe, repent, and use the means of salvation?

Answer. Because it is our duty so to do. It is your duty to accept of Christ, as he is offered in the Gospel; to repent of your sins, and to be holy in all manner of conversation—these things are commanded you of God; and **his command, not your ability, is the measure of your duty.** Moreover, these calls and exhortations are the means that God is pleased to make use of, for converting his elect, and working grace in their hearts—to them, "faith comes by hearing," Romans 10:17, while they are as unable to help themselves as the rest of mankind are. Upon very good grounds may we, at the command of God, who raises the dead, go to their graves, and cry in his name, "Awake, you who sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light," Eph. 5:14. And seeing the elect are not to be known and distinguished from others before conversion; as the sun shines on the blind man's face, and the rain falls on the rocks as well as on the fruitful plains; **so we preach Christ to all, and shoot the arrow at a venture, which God himself directs as he sees fit.**

Moreover, these calls and exhortations are not altogether in vain, even to those who are not converted by them. Such people may be convinced, though they be not converted—although they be not sanctified by these means—yet they may be restrained by them, from running into that excess of wickedness, which otherwise they would arrive at. The means of grace serve, as it were, to embalm many dead souls, which are never quickened by them—though they do not restore them to life—yet they keep them from putrefying, as otherwise they would do.

Finally, Though you cannot recover yourselves, nor take hold of the saving help offered to you in the Gospel; yet even by the power of

nature, you may use the outward and ordinary means, whereby Christ communicates the benefit of redemption to ruined sinners, who are utterly unable to recover themselves out of the state of sin and wrath. You may and can, if you please, do many things that would set you in a fair way for help from the Lord Jesus Christ. You may go so far on, as not to be far from the kingdom of God, as the discreet Scribe had done, Mark 12:34, though, it should seem, he was destitute of supernatural abilities. Though you cannot cure yourselves—yet you may come to the pool, where many such diseased people as you are, have been cured; though you have none to put you into it—yet you may lie at the side of it—"Who knows but the Lord may return, and leave a blessing behind him?" as in the case of the impotent man, recorded in John 5:5-8.

I hope Satan does not chain you to your houses, nor stake you down in your fields on the Lord's day; but you are at liberty and can wait at the posts of wisdom's doors if you will. When you come there, I hope that Satan does not beat drums at your ears, that you cannot hear what is said; I hope there is no force upon you, obliging you to apply all you hear to others; I hope you may apply to yourselves what belongs to your state and condition.

When you go **home**, I hope you are not fettered in your houses, where perhaps no religious discourse is to be heard; but you may retire to some separate place, where you can meditate, and exercise your consciences with suitable questions upon what you have heard. I hope you are not possessed with a dumb devil, that you cannot get your mouths opened in prayer to God. I hope you are not so driven out of your beds to your worldly business, and, from your worldly business to your beds again—but you might, if you would, make some prayer to God upon the case of your perishing souls. I hope you may examine yourselves as to the state of your souls, in a solemn manner, as in the presence of God; I hope you may discern that you have no grace, and that you are lost and undone without it; and you may cry unto God for it. *These things are within the compass of natural abilities, and may be*

practiced where there is no grace. It must aggravate your guilt, that you will not be at so much pains about the state and case of your precious souls. If you do not what you can, you will be condemned, not only for the *lack* of grace—but for your *despising* it.

Objection 3. But all this is needless, seeing we are utterly unable to help ourselves out of the state of sin and wrath.

Answer. Give not place to that delusion, which puts asunder what God has joined, namely, the use of means, and a sense of our own impotency. *If ever the Spirit of God graciously influences your souls, you will become thoroughly sensible of your absolute inability,* and yet enter upon a vigorous use of means. You will do for yourselves, as if you were to do all; and yet overlook all you do, as if you had done nothing. Will you do nothing for yourselves, because you cannot do all? Lay down no such impious conclusion against your own souls. *Do what you can; and, it may be, while you are doing what you can for yourselves, God will do for you what you cannot.* "Do you understand what you read?" said Philip to the eunuch; "How can I," said he "except some man should guide me?" Acts 8:30, 31. He could not understand the scripture he read—yet he could read it—he did what he could, he read; and while he was reading, God sent him an interpreter.

The Israelites were in a great strait at the Red Sea; and how could they help themselves, when on the one hand were mountains, and on the other the enemy in pursuit; when Pharaoh and his host were behind them, and the Red Sea before them? What could they do? "Speak unto the children of Israel," says the Lord to Moses, "that they go forward," Exod. 14:15. For what end should they go forward? Can they make a passage to themselves through the sea? No; but let them go forward, says the Lord—though they cannot turn the sea to dry land—yet they can go forward to the shore. *So they did; and when they did what they could, God did for them what they could not do.*

Question. Has God promised to convert and save those who, in the use of means, do what they can towards their own relief?

Answer. We may not speak wickedly for God—natural men, being strangers to the covenant of promise, Eph. 2:12, have no such promise made to them. Nevertheless, they do not act rationally unless they exert the powers they have, and do what they can. For,

(1.) It is possible this course may succeed with them. If you do what you can, it may be, God will do for you what you cannot do for yourselves. This is sufficient to determine a man in a matter of the utmost importance, such as this is, Acts 8:22, "Pray God, if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you." Joel 2:14, "Who knows if he will return?" If success *may* be, the trial *should* be. If, in a wreck at sea, all the sailors and passengers betake themselves each to a broken board for safety; and one of them should see all the rest perish, notwithstanding their utmost endeavor to save themselves—yet the very possibility of escaping by that means, would determine that one still to do his best with his board. Why, then, do not you reason with yourselves, as the four lepers did, who sat at the gate of Samaria? 2 Kings 7:3, 4. Why do you not say, "If we sit still," not doing what we can, "we will surely die;" let us put it to a trial—if we can be saved, "we shall live;" if not "we shall but die?"

(2.) It is probable this course may succeed—God is good and merciful; he loves to surprise men with his grace, and is often "found by those who sought him not," Isaiah 65:1. If you do this, you are so far in the road of your duty; and you are using the means, which the Lord is accustomed to bless, for men's spiritual recovery—you lay yourselves in the way of the great Physician; and so it is probable you may be healed. Lydia went, with others, to the place "where prayer was accustomed to be made;" and "the Lord opened her heart," Acts 16:13, 14. You plough and sow, though nobody can tell you for certain that you will get so much as your seed again—you use means for the recovery of your health, though

you are not sure they will succeed. In these cases probability determines you; and why not in this also? Importunity, we see, does very much with men—therefore, pray, meditate, desire help of God; be much at the throne of grace, supplicating for grace; and do not faint. Though God regards you not, who in your present state are but one mass of sin, universally depraved, and vitiated in all the powers of your soul; yet he may regard prayer, meditation, and the like means of his own appointment, and he may bless them to you. Therefore, if you will not do what you can, you are not only dead—but you declare yourselves unworthy of eternal life.

To **CONCLUDE**. Let the **saints** admire the freedom and power of grace, which came to them in their helpless condition, made their chains fall off, the iron gate to open to them; raised the fallen creatures, and brought them out of the state of sin and wrath, wherein they would have lain and perished, had not they been mercifully visited.

Let the **natural man** be sensible of his utter inability to recover himself. Know, that you are without strength—and can not come to Christ, until you be drawn. You are lost, and can not help yourself. This may shake the foundation of your hopes, if you never saw your absolute need of Christ and his grace—but think to contrive for yourself by your civility, morality, drowsy wishes, and duties; and by a faith and repentance, which have sprung out of your natural powers, without the power and efficacy of the grace of Christ. O, be convinced of your absolute need of Christ, and his overcoming grace; believe your utter inability to recover yourself; that so you may be humbled, shaken out of your self-confidence, and lie down in dust and ashes, groaning out your miserable case before the Lord. **A proper sense of your natural impotence, the impotence of depraved human nature, would be a step towards a delivery.**

Thus far of man's natural state, the state of entire depravation.

State III.

The State of GRACE

1. **REGENERATION**

"Being born again, not of corruptible seed—but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which lives and abides forever." 1 Peter 1:23

We proceed now to the state of grace, the state of begun recovery of human nature, into which all who shall partake of eternal happiness are translated, sooner or later, while in this world. It is the result of a gracious change made upon those who shall inherit eternal life: which change may be taken up in these two particulars:

1. In opposition to their natural real state, the state of **corruption**, there is a change made upon them in regeneration; whereby their **nature** is changed.

2. In opposition to their natural relative state, the state of **wrath**, there is a change made upon them in their union with the Lord Jesus Christ; by which they are placed beyond the reach of **condemnation**.

These, therefore, regeneration and union with Christ, I desire to treat on as the great and comprehensive changes on a sinner, bringing him into the state of grace.

The first of these we have in the text; together with the outward and ordinary means by which it is brought about. The apostle here, to excite the saints to the study of holiness, and particularly of brotherly love, puts them in mind of their spiritual original. He tells them that they were born again; and that of incorruptible seed, the word of God. This shows them to be brethren, partakers of the same new nature: which is the root from which holiness, and particularly brotherly love, springs. **We have been once born sinners: we must be born again, that we may be saints.**

The simple word signifies "to be begotten;" and so it may be read, Matt. 11:11; "to be conceived," Matt. 1:20; and "to be born," Matt. 2:1. Accordingly, the compound word, used in the text, may be taken in its full latitude, the last idea presupposing the two former: so **regeneration is a supernatural real change on the whole man**, fitly compared to the natural birth, as will afterwards appear. The ordinary means of regeneration, called the "seed," whereof the new creature is formed, is not corruptible seed. Of such, indeed, our bodies are generated: but the spiritual seed of which the new creature is generated, is incorruptible; namely, "the word of God, which lives and abides forever." The sound of the word of God passes, even as other sounds do; but **the word lasts, lives, and abides, in respect of its everlasting effects, on all upon whom it operates.** *This "word, which by the gospel is preached unto you," ver. 25, impregnated by the Spirit of God, is the means of regeneration: and by it dead sinners are raised to life.*

Doctrine. All men in the state of grace, are born again. All gracious people, namely, such as are in a state of favor with God, and endowed with gracious qualities and dispositions, are regenerate people. In discoursing on this subject, I shall show,

1. What regeneration is.

2. Why it is so called.

3. Apply the doctrine.

I. Of the Nature of regeneration.

For the better understanding of the nature of regeneration, take this along with you, that as there are **false conceptions** in nature, so there are also in grace: by these many are deluded, mistaking some partial changes made upon them, for this great and thorough change. To remove such mistakes, let these few things be considered:

(1.) Many call the church their mother, whom God will not own to be his children, Cant. 1:6, "My mother's children," that is, false brethren, "were angry with me." All that are baptized, are not born again. Simon was baptized—yet still "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity," Acts 8:13, 23. Where Christianity is the religion of the country, many are called by the name of Christ, who have no more of him than the name: and no wonder, for **the devil had his goats among Christ's sheep**, in those places where but few professed the Christian religion, 1 John 2:19, "They went out from us—but they were not of us."

(2.) Good education is not regeneration. Education may chain up men's lusts—but cannot change their hearts. A wolf is still a ravenous beast, though it be in chains. Joash was very devout during the life of his good tutor Jehoiada; but afterwards he quickly showed what spirit he was of, by his sudden apostasy, 2 Chron. 24:2-18. Good example is of mighty influence to change the outward man: but that change often goes off, when a man changes his company; of which the world affords many sad instances.

(3.) A turning from open profanity, to civility and sobriety, falls short of this saving change. Some are, for a while, very loose, especially in their younger years; but at length they reform, and leave their profane courses. Here is a change—yet only such as may be found in men utterly void of the grace of God, and whose righteousness is so far from exceeding, that it does not come up to the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees.

(4.) One may engage in all the outward duties of religion, and yet not be born again. Though lead be cast into various shapes, it remains still but a base metal. Men may escape the pollutions of the world, and yet be but dogs and swine, 2 Pet. 2:20-22. All the external acts of religion are within the compass of natural abilities. Yes, hypocrites may have the counterfeit of all the graces of the Spirit: for we read of "**true** holiness," Eph. 4:24, and "**sincere** faith,"

1 Tim. 1:5; which shows us that there is counterfeit holiness, and a feigned faith.

(5.) Men may advance to a great deal of strictness in their own way of religion, and yet be strangers to the new birth, Acts 26:5, "After the most straitest sect of our religion, I lived a Pharisee." Nature has its own unsanctified strictness in religion. The Pharisees had so much of it, that they looked on Christ as little better than a mere libertine. A man whose conscience has been awakened, and who lives under the felt influence of the covenant of works, what will he not do that is within the compass of natural abilities? It is a truth, though it came out of a hellish mouth, that "skin for skin, yes all that a man has will he give for his life," Job 2:4.

(6.) A person may have sharp soul-exercises and pangs, and yet die in the birth. Many "have been in pain," that have but, "as it were, brought forth wind." There may be sore pangs of conscience, which turn to nothing at last. Pharaoh and Simon Magus had such convictions, as made them to desire the prayers of others for them. Judas repented: and, under terrors of conscience, gave back his ill-gotten pieces of silver. All is not gold that glitters. Trees may blossom fairly in the spring, on which no fruit is to be found in the harvest: and *some have sharp soul-exercises, which are nothing but foretastes of hell.*

The new birth, however in appearance hopefully begun, may be MARRED two ways.

(1.) Some have sharp convictions for a while: but these go off, and they become as careless about their salvation, and as profane as ever, and usually worse than ever; "their last state is worse than their first," Matt. 12:45. They get **awakening** grace—but not **converting** grace; and that goes off by degrees, as the light of the declining day, until it issues in midnight darkness.

Others come forth too soon; they are born, like Ishmael, before the time of the promise, Gen. 16:2; compare Gal. 4:22, etc. They take up with a mere law work, and stay not until the time of the promise of the gospel. They snatch at consolation, not waiting until it be given them; and foolishly draw their comfort from the law which wounded them. They apply the healing plaster to themselves, before their wound is sufficiently searched. The law, that rigorous husband, severely beats them, and throws in curses and vengeance upon their souls; then they fall to reforming, praying, mourning, promising, and vowing; which done, they fall asleep again in the arms of the law: but they are never shaken out of themselves and their own righteousness, nor brought forward to Jesus Christ.

(2.) There may be a wonderful moving of the affections in souls that are not at all touched with regenerating grace. When there is no grace, there may, notwithstanding, be a flood of tears, as in Esau, who "found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears," Heb. 12:17. There may be great flashes of joy; as in the hearers of the word, represented in the parable of the stony ground, who "with joy receive it," Matt. 13:20. There may be also great desires after good things, and great delight in them too; as in those hypocrites described in Isa. 58:2, "Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways – they take delight in approaching to God." See how high they may sometimes stand—who yet fall away, Heb. 6:4-6. They may be "enlightened, taste of the heavenly gift," "be partakers of the Holy Spirit, taste the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come." **Common operations** of the divine Spirit, like a land-flood, make a strange turning of things upside down: but when they are over, all runs again in the ordinary channel. All these things may be, where the sanctifying Spirit of Christ never rests upon the soul—*but the stony heart still remains; and in that case these affections cannot but wither, because they have no root.*

But **regeneration is a real, thorough change, whereby the man is made a new creature**, 2 Cor. 5:17. The Lord God makes the creature a new creature, as the goldsmith melts down a vessel of dishonor, and makes it a vessel of honor. Man is, in respect of his spiritual state, altogether disjointed by the fall; every faculty of the soul is, as it were, dislocated. In regeneration, the Lord loosens every joint, and sets it right again. Now this change made in regeneration, is,

1. A change of qualities or DISPOSITIONS. It is not a change of the substance—but of the qualities of the soul. Vicious qualities are removed, and the contrary dispositions are brought in, in their place. "The old man is put off," Eph. 4:22; "the new man is put on," ver. 24. Man lost none of the rational faculties of his soul by sin. He had an understanding still—but it was darkened; he had still a will—but it was contrary to the will of God. So in regeneration, there is not a new substance created—but new qualities or dispositions are infused; light instead of darkness, righteousness instead of unrighteousness.

2. It is a SUPERNATURAL change. He who is born again, is born of the *Spirit*, John 3:5. Great changes may be made by the power of *nature*, especially when assisted by external revelation. Nature may be so elevated by the common influences of the Spirit, that a person may thereby be turned into *another* man, as Saul was, 1 Sam. 10:6, who yet never becomes a new man. But in regeneration, nature itself is changed, and we become partakers of the divine nature; and this must needs be a supernatural change. How can we, who are dead in trespasses and sins, renew ourselves, any more than a dead man can raise himself out of his grave? Who but the sanctifying Spirit of Christ can form Christ in a soul, changing it into his same image? Who but the Spirit of sanctification can give the new heart? Well may we say, when we see a man thus changed, "This is the finger of God!"

3. It is a change into the LIKENESS OF GOD. 2 Cor. 3:18, "We beholding, as in a mirror, the glory of the Lord—are **changed** into the same image." Everything generates its like: the child bears the image of the parent; and they who are born of God, bear God's image. **Man aspiring to be as God, made himself like the devil.** In his natural state he resembles the devil, as a child does his father, John 8:44, "You are of your father the devil." But when this happy change comes, that image of Satan is defaced, and the image of God is restored. Christ himself, who is the brightness of his Father's glory, is the pattern after which the new creature is made, Rom. 8:29, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son." Hence Christ is said to be formed in the regenerate, Gal. 4:19.

4. It is a UNIVERSAL change. "All things become new," 2 Cor. 5:17. It is a blessed leaven—which leavens the whole lump—the whole spirit, and soul, and body. Original sin infects the whole man; and regenerating grace, which is the cure, goes as far as the disease. This fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness; goodness of the mind, goodness of the will, goodness of the affections, goodness of the whole man. He gets not only a new **head**, to know and understand true religion; or a new **tongue**, to talk of it; but a new **heart**, to love and embrace it, in the whole of his life. When the Lord opens the sluice of grace, on the soul's new-birth day, the waters run through the whole man, to purify and make him fruitful. In those natural changes spoken of before, there are, as it were, pieces of new cloth put into an old garment; new life to an old heart: but the gracious change is a thorough change; a change both of heart and life.

5. Yet, though every part of the man is renewed, there is no part of him which is perfectly renewed. As an infant has all the parts of a man—but none of them come to a perfect growth; so regeneration brings a perfection of parts, to be brought forward in the gradual advances of sanctification, 1 Pet. 2:2, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow

thereby." Although, in regeneration, there is heavenly light let into the **mind**; yet there is still some darkness there. Though the **will** is renewed, it is not perfectly renewed; there is still some of the old inclination to sin remaining: and thus it will be, until that which is in part is done away, and the light of glory come. Adam was created at his full stature; but those who are born, must have their time to grow up; so those who are born again, come forth into the new world of grace as new-born babes: Adam being created upright, was at the same time perfectly righteous, without the least mixture of sinful imperfection.

6. Nevertheless, it is a LASTING change, which never entirely dies off. The seed is incorruptible, says the text; and so is the creature who is formed of it. The life given in regeneration, whatever decays it may fall under, can never be utterly lost. "His seed remains in him" who "is born of God," 1 John 3:9. Though the branches should be cut down, the root abides in the earth; and being watered with the dew of heaven, shall spout again: for "the root of the righteous shall not be moved," Prov. 12:3.

But to come to particulars.

1. In regeneration the MIND is savingly enlightened. There is a light let into the understanding; so that those who were "once darkness, are now light in the Lord," Eph. 5:8. The beams of the light of life make their way into the dark dungeon of the heart: then the night is over, and the morning light is come, which will shine more and more unto the perfect day.

(1.) Now the man is illuminated, in the knowledge of GOD. He has far other thoughts of God, than ever he had before, Hos. 2:20, "I will even betrothe you unto me in faithfulness, and you shall know the Lord." The Spirit of the Lord brings him back to this question, "What is God?" and catechises him anew upon that grand point, so that he is made to say, "I have heard of you by the hearing of the ear; but now my eye sees you," Job 42:5. The spotless purity of God, his exact justice, his all-sufficiency, and other glorious

perfections revealed in his word, are by this new light discovered to the soul, with a plainness and certainty, which as far exceed the knowledge it had of these things before, as ocular viewing exceeds common report. For now he sees, what he only heard of before.

(2.) He is enlightened in the knowledge of SIN. He has different thoughts of it than he used to have. Formerly his sight could not pierce through the cover Satan laid over it: but now the Spirit of God removes it, wipes off the paint and varnish: and so he sees it in its natural colors, as the worst of evils, exceedingly sinful, Rom. 7:13. O, what deformed monsters—do formerly beloved lusts appear! Were they right eyes, he would pluck them out; were they right hands, he would consent to their being cut off. He sees how offensive sin is to God, how destructive it is to the soul; and calls himself a fool, for fighting so long against the Lord, and harboring that destroyer as a bosom friend!

(3.) He is instructed in the knowledge of HIMSELF. Regenerating grace brings the prodigal to himself, Luke 15:17, and makes men full of eyes within, knowing the plague of his own heart. The mind being savingly enlightened, the man sees how desperately corrupt his nature is; what enmity against God, and his holy law, has long lodged there: so that his soul loathes itself. No open sepulcher so vile and loathsome, in his eyes—as himself, Ezek. 36:31, "Then shall you remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight." He is no worse than he was before—but the sun is now shining; and so those pollutions are seen, which he could not discern before—when there was no dawning in him, as the word is, Isa. 8:20, while as yet there was no breaking of the day of grace with him.

(4.) He is enlightened in the knowledge of JESUS CHRIST. 1 Cor. 1: 23, 24, "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness: but unto those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God,

and the wisdom of God." The truth is, unregenerate men, though capable of preaching Christ, have not, properly speaking, the knowledge of him—but only an opinion, a good opinion, of him; as one has of many controverted points of doctrine, wherein he is far from certainty. As when you meet with a stranger on the road, who behaves himself discretely, you conceive a good opinion of him, and therefore willingly converse with him: but yet you will not commit your money to him; because, though you have a good opinion of the man, he is a stranger to you, you do not know him. So may they think well of Christ; but they will never commit themselves to him, seeing they know him not.

But **saving illumination carries the soul beyond opinion, to the certain knowledge of Christ and his excellency**, 1 Thess. 1:5, "For our Gospel came not unto you in word only—but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance." The light of grace thus discovers the suitableness of the mystery of Christ to the divine perfections, and to the sinner's case. Hence **the regenerate admire the glorious plan of salvation**, through Christ crucified; rest their whole dependence upon it, heartily acquiesce therein; for whatever he is to others, he is to them, "Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." But unrenewed men, not seeing this, are offended in him: they will not venture their souls in that vessel—but betake themselves to the broken boards of their own righteousness.

The same light convincingly discovers a superlative worth, a transcendent glory and excellence in Christ, which darkens all created excellencies—as the rising sun makes the stars hide their heads. It engages the "merchantman to sell all that he has, to buy the one pearl of great price," Matt. 12:45, 46; makes the soul heartily content to take Christ for all, and instead of all. An unskillful merchant, to whom one offers a pearl of great price, for all his petty wares, dares not venture on the bargain; for though he thinks that one pearl may be worth more than all he has—yet he is not sure of it: but when a jeweler comes to him and assures him it is worth

double all his wares, he then eagerly makes the bargain, and cheerfully parts with all he has, for that pearl.

Finally, **this illumination in the knowledge of Christ, convincingly discovers to men a fullness in him, sufficient for the supply of all their needs, enough to satisfy the boundless desires of an immortal soul.** And they are persuaded that such fullness is in him, and that in order to be communicated: they depend upon it as a certain truth; and therefore, their souls take up their eternal rest in him.

(5.) The man is instructed in the knowledge of the vanity of the WORLD. Psalm 119:96, "I have seen an end of all perfection." Regenerating grace elevates the soul, translates it into the spiritual world, from whence this earth cannot but appear a little, yes, a very little thing; even as heaven appeared before, while the soul was groveling in the earth. Grace brings a man into a new world: where this earthly world is reputed but a stage of vanity, a howling wilderness, a valley of tears.

God has hung the sign of *vanity* at the door of all created enjoyments: yet how do men throng into the house, calling and looking for something that is satisfying; even after it has been a thousand times told them, that there is no such thing in it, it is not to be found there, Isa. 57:10, "You are wearied in the greatness of your way: yet said you not, There is no hope." Why are men so foolish? The truth of the matter lies here—they do not see by the light of grace, they do not spiritually discern that sign of vanity. They have often, indeed, made a rational discovery of it: but can that truly wean the heart from the world? Nay, no more than painted fire can burn off the prisoner's bands. But the light of grace, is the light of life, powerful and efficacious.

(6.) To sum up all. In regeneration, the mind is enlightened in the knowledge of spiritual things. 1 John 2:20, "You have an unction from the Holy One," that is, from Jesus Christ, Rev. 3:18. It is an allusion to the sanctuary, whence the holy oil was brought to

anoint the priest, "and you know all things" necessary to salvation. Though men be not book-learned, if they are born again, they are Spirit-learned; for all such are taught of God, John 6:45. The Spirit of regeneration teaches them what they did not know before. And what they knew by the ear only, he teaches them over again as by the eye.

The light of grace is an overcoming light, determining men to assent to divine truths on the mere testimony of God. It is no easy thing for the mind of man to acquiesce in divine revelation. Many pretend great respect to the Scriptures; whom, nevertheless, the clear Scripture testimony will not divorce from their preconceived opinions. But this illumination will make men's minds run, as willing captives, after Christ's chariot wheels, which they are ready to allow to drive over, and "cast down" their "imaginations, and every high thing which exalts itself against the knowledge of God," 2 Cor. 10:5. It will bring them to "receive the kingdom of God as a little child," Mark 10:15, who thinks he has sufficient ground to believe anything—if his father do but say it is so.

2. The WILL is renewed. The Lord takes away the stony heart, and gives a heart of flesh, Ezek. 36:26, and so from stones—he raises up children to Abraham. **Regenerating grace is powerful and efficacious, and gives the will a new turn. It does not indeed force it—but sweetly, yet powerfully draws it**, so that his people are willing in the day of his power, Psalm 110:3. There is heavenly oratory in the Mediators lips to persuade sinners, Psalm 45:2, "Grace is poured into your liPsalm" There are cords of a man, and bands of love in his hands, to draw them after him, Hos. 11:4. Love makes a net for elect souls, which will infallibly catch them, and bring them to land. The cords of Christ's love are strong cords: and they need to be so, for every sinner is heavier than a mountain of brass; and Satan, together with the heart itself, draws the contrary way. But love is strong as death; and the Lord's love to the soul he

died for, is the strongest love; which acts so powerfully, that it must come off victorious.

(1.) The will is cured of its utter inability to will what is good. While the opening of the prison to those who are bound, is proclaimed in the gospel, the Spirit of God comes and opens the prison door, goes to the prisoner, and, by the power of his grace, makes his chains fall off; breaks the bonds of iniquity, with which he was held in sin, so as he could neither will nor do anything truly good; and brings him forth into a large place, "working in him both to will and to do of his good pleasure," Phil. 2:13. Then it is that the soul, that was fixed to the earth, can move heavenward; the withered hand is restored, and can be stretched out.

(2.) There is wrought in the will a fixed aversion to evil. In regeneration, a man gets a new spirit put within him, Ezek. 36:26; and that spirit strives against the flesh, Gal. 5:17. The sweet morsel of sin, so greedily swallowed down—he now loathes, and would sincerely be rid of it, even as willingly as one who had drunk a cup of poison would vomit it up again. When the spring is stopped, the mud lies in the well unmoved; but when once the spring is cleared, the waters, springing up, will work the mud away by degrees. Even so, while a man continues in an unregenerate state, sin lies at ease in the heart; but as soon as the Lord strikes the rocky heart with the rod of his strength, in the day of conversion, grace is "in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life," John 4:14, working away natural corruption, and gradually purifying the heart, Acts 15:9. The renewed will rises up against sin, strikes at the root thereof, and the branches too. Lusts are now grievous, and the soul endeavors to starve them; the corrupt nature is the source of all evil, and therefore the soul will be often laying it before the great Physician. O, what sorrow, shame, and self-loathing fill the heart, in the day that grace makes its triumphant entrance into it! For now the madman has come to himself, and the remembrance of his follies cannot but cut him to the heart.

(3.) The will is endowed with an inclination, bent, and propensity to good. In its depraved state, it lay quite another way, being prone and bent to evil only: but now, by the operation of the omnipotent, all-conquering arm, it is drawn from evil to good, and gets another turn. As the former was natural, so this is natural too, in regard to the new nature given in regeneration, which has its holy strivings, as well as the corrupt nature has its sinful lustings, Gal. 5:17. The will, as renewed, points towards God and godliness.

When God made man, his will, in respect of its *intention*, was directed towards God, as his chief end. In respect of its *choice*, it pointed towards that which God willed.

When man unmade himself, his will was framed to the very reverse hereof: he made himself his chief end, and his own will his law.

But when man is new made, in regeneration, grace rectifies this disorder in some measure, though not perfectly. because we are but renewed in part, while in this world. It brings back the sinner out of himself, to God, as his chief end, Psalm 73:25, "Whom have I in heaven but you? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides you." Phil. 1:21, "For me to live is Christ." It makes him to deny himself, and whatever way he turns, to point habitually towards God, who is the center of the gracious soul, its home, its "dwelling place in all generations," Psalm 90:1.

By regenerating grace, the will is brought into a conformity to the will of God. It is conformed to his **preceptive** will, being endowed with holy inclinations, agreeable to every one of his commands. The whole law is impressed on the gracious soul: every part of it is written on the renewed heart. Although remaining corruption makes such blots in the writing, that oft-times the man himself cannot read it—yet he who wrote it can read it at all times; it is never quite blotted out, nor can be. What he has written, he has written; and it shall stand: "For this is the covenant – I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts," Heb. 8:10. It is a covenant of salt, a perpetual covenant.

By regenerating grace, the will is also conformed to his **providential** will; so that the man would no more be master of his own direction, nor carve out his lot for himself. He learns to say, from his heart, "The will of the Lord be done." "He shall choose our inheritance for us," Psalm 47:4. Thus the will is disposed to fall in with those things which, in its depraved state, it could never be reconciled to. Particularly,

[1.] The soul is reconciled to the covenant of peace. The Lord God proposes a covenant of peace to sinners, a covenant which he himself has framed, and registered in the Bible: but they are not pleased with it. Nay, unregenerate hearts cannot be pleased with it. Were it put into their hands to frame it according to their minds, they would blot many things out of it which God has put in, and put in many things which God has kept out. But the renewed heart is entirely satisfied with the covenant, 2 Sam. 23:5, "He has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; this is all my salvation, and all my desire." Though the covenant could not be brought down to their depraved will, their will is, by grace, brought up to the covenant: they are well pleased with it; there is nothing in it which they would have out, nor is anything left out of it which they would have in.

[2.] The will is disposed to receive Christ Jesus the Lord. The soul is content to submit to him. Regenerating grace undermines, and brings down the towering imaginations of the heart, raised up against its rightful Lord; it breaks the iron sinew, which kept the sinner from bowing to him; and disposes him to be no more stiff-necked—but to yield. *He is willing to have on the yoke of Christ's commands, to take up the cross, and to follow him. He is content to take Christ on any terms*, Psalm 110:3, "Your people shall be willing in the day of your power."

The mind being savingly enlightened, and the will renewed, the sinner is thereby determined and enabled to answer the gospel call. So the chief work in regeneration is done; the fort of the heart is

taken; there is room made for the Lord Jesus Christ in the inmost parts of the soul; the inner door of the will being now opened to him, as well as the outer door of the understanding.

In one word, Christ is passively received into the heart; he is come into the soul, by his quickening Spirit, whereby spiritual life is given to the man, who in himself was dead in sin. His first vital act we may conceive to be an active receiving of Jesus Christ, discerned in his glorious excellencies; that is a believing on him, a closing with him, as discerned, offered and exhibited in the word of his grace, the glorious Gospel: the immediate effect of which is union with him, John 1:12, 13, "To as many as received him to them gave he power," or privilege, "to become the sons of God, even to those who believe on his name: which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man—but of God." Eph. 3:17, "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith."

Christ having taken the heart by storm, and triumphantly entered into it, in regeneration, the soul by faith yields itself to him, as it is expressed, 2 Chron. 30:8. Thus, this glorious King who came into the heart, by his Spirit, dwells in it by faith. The soul, being drawn, runs; and being effectually called, comes.

3. In regeneration there is a happy change made on the AFFECTIONS; they are both rectified and regulated.

(1.) Regeneration rectifies the affections, placing them on suitable objects. 2 Thess. 3:5, "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God." The regenerate man's desires are rectified; they are set on **God** himself, and the things above. He, who before cried with the world, "Who will show us any good?" has changed his note, and says, "Lord, lift up the light of your countenance upon us," Psalm 4:6. Before, he saw no beauty in **Christ**, for which he was to be desired; but now Christ is all he desires, he is altogether

lovely, Cant. 5:16. The main stream of his desires is turned to run towards God; for there is the one thing he desires, Psalm 27:4.

He **desires** to be holy as well as happy; and rather to be gracious than great.

His **hopes**, which before were low, and fastened down to things on earth—are now raised, and set on the glory which is to be revealed. He entertains the hope of eternal life, grounded on the word of promise, Tit. 1:2. Which hope he has, as an anchor of the soul, fixing the heart under trials, Heb 6:19. It puts him upon purifying himself, even as God is pure, 1 John 3:3. For he is begotten again unto a lively hope, 1 Pet. 1:3.

His **love** is raised, and set on God himself, Psalm 18:1; on his holy law, Psalm 119:97. Though it strikes against his most beloved lust, he says, "The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good," Rom. 7:12. He loves the ordinances of God," Psalm 84:1, "How amiable are your tabernacles, O Lord Almighty!" Being passed from death unto life, he loves the brethren, 1 John 3:14, the people of God, as they are called, 1 Pet. 2:10. He loves God for himself; and what is God's, for his sake. Yes, as being a child of God, he loves his own enemies. His heavenly Father is compassionate and benevolent; "He makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good; and sends rain on the justand on the unjust:" therefore, he is in like manner disposed, Matt. 5:44, 45.

His **hatred** is turned against sin—both in himself and others, Psalm 101:3, "I hate the work of those who turn aside, it shall not cleave to me." He groans under the body of it, and longs for deliverance, Rom. 7:24, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

His **joys** and delights are in God the Lord, in the light of his countenance, in his law, and in his people, because they are like him.

Sin is what he chiefly **fears**: it is a fountain of sorrow to him now, though formerly a spring of pleasure.

(2.) Regeneration regulates the affections, which are placed on SUITABLE objects. Our affections, when placed on the creature, are naturally exorbitant. When we joy in it, we are apt to overjoy; and when we sorrow, we are ready to sorrow overmuch: but grace bridles these affections, clips their wings, and keeps them within bounds, that they don't overflow all their banks. It makes a man "hate his father, and mother, and wife, and children; yes, and his own life also," comparatively; that is, to love them less than he loves God, Luke 14:26.

Grace also rectifies LAWFUL affections; bringing them forth from right principles, and directing them to right ends. There may be unholy desires after Christ and his grace; as when men desire Christ, not from any love to him—but merely out of love to themselves. "Give us of your oil," said the foolish virgins, "for our lamps are gone out," Matt. 25:8. There may be an unsanctified sorrow for sin; as when one sorrows for it, not because it is displeasing to God—but only because of the wrath annexed to it, as did Pharaoh, Judas, and others. So a man may love his father and mother from mere natural principles, without any respect to the command of God binding him thereto. But grace sanctifies the affections, in such cases, making them to run in a new channel of love to God, respect to his commands, and regard to his glory.

Again, **grace raises the affections where they are too low**. It gives the chief seat in them to God, and pulls down all other rivals, whether people or things, making them lie at his feet. Psalm 73:25, "Whom have I in heaven but you? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides you." He is loved for himself, and other people or things for his sake. What is lovely in them, to the renewed heart, is some ray of the divine goodness appearing in them: for unto gracious souls they shine only by borrowed light. This accounts for the saints loving all men; and yet hating those who hate God, and

despising the wicked as vile people. They hate and despise them for their wickedness; there is nothing of God in that, and therefore nothing lovely nor honorable in it: but they love them for their commendable qualities or perfections, whether natural or moral; because, in whomever these things are, they are from God, and can be traced to him as their fountain.

Finally, regenerating grace sets the affections so firmly on God, that the man is disposed, at God's command, to leave his hold of everything else, in order to keep his hold of Christ; to hate father and mother, in comparison with Christ, Luke 14:26. It makes even lawful enjoyments, like Joseph's mantle to hang loose about a man, that he may leave them, when he is in danger of being ensnared by holding them.

If the stream of our affections has never been turned, we are, doubtless, going down the stream into the pit. If "the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life," have the throne in our hearts, which should be possessed by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; if we never had so much love to God, as to ourselves; if sin has been somewhat bitter to us—but never so bitter as suffering, never so bitter as the pain of being weaned from it: truly we are strangers to this saving change of regeneration. For grace turns the affections upside down, whenever it comes into the heart.

4. The CONSCIENCE is renewed. As a new light is set up in the soul, in regeneration, conscience is enlightened, instructed and informed. That candle of the Lord, Prov. 20:27, is now snuffed and brightened; so that it shines, and sends forth its light into the most retired corners of the heart: discovering sins which the soul was not aware of before; and, in a special manner, discovering the corruption or depravity of nature—that seed and spawn whence all actual sins proceed. This produces the new complaint, Rom. 7:24, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

Conscience, which lay sleeping in the man's bosom before, is now awakened, and makes its voice to be heard through the whole soul; therefore, there is no more rest for him in the sluggard's bed; he must get up and be doing, arise, "haste, and escape for his life." It powerfully incites to obedience, even in the most spiritual acts, which lie not within the view of the natural conscience; and powerfully restrains from sin, even from those sins which do not lie open to the observation of the world. It urges the sovereign authority of God, to which the heart is now reconciled, and which it willingly acknowledges. And so it engages the man to his duty, whatever be the hazard from the world; for it fills the heart so with the fear of God—that the force of the fear of man is broken. This has engaged many to put their life in their hand, and follow the cause of Christ, which they once despised, and resolutely walk in the path they formerly abhorred, Gal. 1:23, "He who persecuted us in times past, now preaches the faith which once he destroyed."

Guilt now makes the conscience smart. It has bitter remorse for sins past—which fills the soul with anxiety, sorrow, and self-loathing. And every new reflection on these sins is apt to affect, and make its wounds bleed afresh with regret. It is made tender, in point of sin and duty, for the time to come: being once burnt, it dreads the fire, and fears to break the hedge where it was formerly bitten by the serpent.

Finally, the renewed conscience drives the sinner to Jesus Christ, as the only Physician who can draw out the sting of guilt; and whose blood alone can purge the conscience from dead works, Heb. 9:14, refusing all ease offered to it from any other hand. This is an evidence that the conscience is not only awakened—as it may be in an unregenerate state; but oiled also, with regenerating grace.

5. As the MEMORY lacked not its share of depravity, it is also bettered by regenerating grace. The memory is **weakened**, with

respect to those things that are not worth their room therein; and men are taught to forget injuries, and drop their resentments, Matt. 5:44, 45, "Do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who despitefully use you – that you may be," that is, appear to be, "the children of your Father who is in heaven."

It is **strengthened** for spiritual things. We have Solomon's receipt for an ill memory, Prov. 3:1, "My son," says he, "forget not my law." But how shall it be kept in mind? "Let your heart keep my commandments." **Grace makes a heart-memory, even where there is no good head-memory**, Psalm 119:11, "Your word have I hid in my heart." The heart, truly touched with the powerful sweetness of truth, will help the memory to retain what is so relished. If divine truths made deeper impressions on our hearts, they would impress themselves with more force on our memories, Psalm 119:93, "I will never forget your precepts, for with them you have quickened me."

Grace **sanctifies** the memory. Many have large—but unsanctified memories, which serve only to gather knowledge, whereby to aggravate their condemnation: but the renewed memory serves to "remember his commandments—to **do** them," Psalm 103:18. It is a sacred storehouse, from whence a Christian is furnished in his way to Zion; for faith and hope are often supplied out of it, in a dark hour. It is the storehouse of former experiences; and these are the believer's way-marks, by noticing of which he comes to know where he is, even in a dark time. Psalm 42:6, "O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember you from the land of Jordan," etc. It also helps the soul to godly sorrow and self-loathing, presenting old guilt anew before the conscience, and making it bleed afresh, though the sin be already pardoned; Psalm 25:7, "Remember not the sins of my youth." Where unpardoned guilt is lying on the sleeping conscience, it is often employed to bring in a word, which in a moment sets the whole soul on the stir; as when "Peter remembered the words of Jesus – he went out and wept bitterly," Matt. 26:75. The word of God laid up in a sanctified

memory, serves a man to resist temptations, puts the sword in his hand against his spiritual enemies, and is a light to direct his steps in the way of true religion and righteousness.

6. There is a change made on the BODY, and the members thereof, in respect of their use; they are consecrated to the Lord. Even "the body is – for the Lord," 1 Cor. 6:13. It is "the temple of the Holy Spirit," ver. 19. The members thereof, which were formerly "instruments of unrighteousness unto sin," become "instruments of righteousness unto God," Rom. 6:13, "servants to righteousness unto holiness," ver. 19. The **eye**, that conveyed sinful imaginations into the heart, is under a covenant, Job 31:1, to do so no more; but to serve the soul, in viewing the works of God, and reading the word of God. The **ear**, that had often been death's porter, to let in sin, is turned to be the gate of life, by which the word of life enters the soul. The **tongue**, that set on fire the whole course of nature, is restored to the office it was designed for by the Creator; namely, to be an instrument of glorifying him, and setting forth his praise. In a word, the whole man is for God, in soul and body, which by this blessed change are made his.

7. This gracious change shines forth in the LIFE. Even the outward man is renewed. A new heart makes newness of life. When "the king's daughter is all glorious within, her clothing is of wrought gold," Psalm 45:13. "The single eye" makes "the whole body full of light," Matt. 6:22. This change will appear in every part of a man's life; particularly in the following things.

(1.) In the change of his COMPANY. Formerly, he despised the company of the saints—but now they are "the excellent, in whom is all his delight," Psalm 16:3. "I am a companion of all who fear you," says the royal psalmist, Psalm 119:63. A renewed man joins himself with the saints; for he and they are like-minded, in that which is

their main work and business; they have all one new nature: they are all traveling to Immanuel's land, and converse together in the language of Canaan. In vain do men pretend to true religion, while ungodly company is their choice; for "a companion of fools shall be destroyed," Prov. 13:20. Religion will make a man shy of throwing himself into an ungodly family, or any unnecessary familiarity with wicked men; as one who is healthy will beware of going into an infected house.

(2.) In his RELATIVE capacity, he will be a new man. Grace makes men gracious in their several relations, and naturally leads them to the conscientious performance of relative duties. It does not only make good men and good women—but makes good subjects, good husbands, good wives, children, servants, and, in a word, good relatives in the church, commonwealth, and family. It is a just exception made against the religion of many, namely, that they are bad relatives, they are bad husbands, wives, masters, servants, etc. How can we prove ourselves to be new creatures, if we be just such as we were before, in our different relations? 2 Cor. 5:17, "Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

Real godliness will gain a testimony to a man, from the consciences of his nearest relations; though they know more of his sinful infirmities than others do, as we see in the case, 2 Kings 4:1, "Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that he did fear the Lord."

(3.) In the way of his following his worldly BUSINESS, there is a great change. It appears to be no more his all, as it was before. Though saints apply themselves to worldly business, as well as others—yet their hearts are not swallowed up in it. It is evident that they are carrying on a trade with heaven, as well as a trade with earth, Phil. 3:20, "For our conversation is in heaven." They go about their employment in the world, as a duty laid upon them by the Lord

of all, doing their lawful business as the will of God, Eph. 6:7, working, because he has said, "You shall not steal."

(4.) Such have a special concern for the advancement of the kingdom of Christ in the world: they espouse the interests of religion, and "prefer Jerusalem above their chief joy," Psalm 137:6. However privately they live, grace gives them a public spirit, will concern itself in the ark and work of God, in the Gospel of God, and in the people of God, even in those of them whom they never saw. As children of God, they naturally care for these things. They have a new concern for the spiritual good of others: no sooner do they taste of the power of grace themselves—but they are inclined to set up to be agents for Christ and holiness in the world; as appears in the case of the woman of Samaria, who when Christ had manifested himself to her, "went her way into the city, and said unto the men, Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" John 4:28, 29.

They have seen and felt the evil of sin, and therefore pity the world lying in wickedness. They would gladly pluck the brands out of the fire, remembering that they themselves were plucked out of it. They labor to commend religion to others, both by word and example; and rather deny themselves the liberty in indifferent things, than, by the uncharitable use of it, destroy others; 1 Cor. 8:13, "Therefore, if meat make my brother to sin, I will eat no flesh while the world stands, lest I make my brother to sin."

(5.) In their use of LAWFUL COMFORTS, there is a great change. They rest not in them, as their end; but use them as means to help them in their way. They draw their satisfaction from the higher springs—even while lower springs are running. Thus Hannah, having obtained a son, rejoiced not so much in the gift, as in the giver, 1 Sam. 2:1, "And Hannah prayed and said, My heart rejoices in the Lord." Yes, when the comforts of life are gone, they can exist without them, and "rejoice in the Lord although the fig-tree do not blossom," Hab. 3:17, 18.

Grace teaches to use the conveniences of the present life as pilgrims; and to show a holy moderation in all things. The heart, which formally reveled in these things without fear, is now shy of being over much pleased with them. Being apprehensive of danger, it uses them warily; as the dogs of Egypt run, while they lap their water out of the river Nile, for fear of the crocodiles that are in it.

(6.) This change shines forth in the man's performance of PIOUS DUTIES. He who lived in the neglect of them will do so no more, if once the grace of God enter into his heart. If a man be new-born, he will desire the sincere milk of the word 1 Pet. 2:2, 3. Whenever the prayerless person gets the Spirit of grace, he will be in him a Spirit of supplication, Zech. 12:10. **It is as natural for one that is born again to pray, as for the new-born babe to cry.** Acts 9:11, "Behold, he prays!" His heart will be a temple for God, and his house a church. His devotion, which before was superficial and formal, is now spiritual and lively; for as much as heart and tongue are touched with a live coal from heaven: and he rests not in the mere performance of duties, as careful only to get his task done—but in **every duty seeks communion with God in Christ**; justly considering them as means appointed of God for that end, and reckoning himself disappointed if he miss of it.

Thus far of the NATURE of regeneration.

II. I come to show WHY this change is called regeneration, a being born again. It is so called, because of the resemblance between natural and spiritual birth, which lies in the following particulars.

1. Natural birth is a MYSTERIOUS thing: and so is spiritual birth. John 3:8, "The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound thereof—but can not tell whence it comes and where it goes: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." **The work of the Spirit is**

felt; but his way of working is a mystery we cannot comprehend. A new light is let into the mind, and the will is renewed; but how that light is conveyed there, how the will is fettered with cords of love, and how the rebel is made a willing captive—we can no more tell, than we can tell "how the bones grow in the womb of her that is with child," Eccl. 11:5. As a man hears the sound of the wind, and finds it stirring—but knows not where it begins, and where it ends, "so is every one that is born of the Spirit." **He finds the change that is made upon him; but how it is produced he knows not.** One thing he may know, that whereas he was blind, now he sees. But "the seed of grace" "springs and grows up—he knows not how," Mark 4:26, 27.

2. In both, the creature comes to a being it had not before. The child is not, until it be born; and a man has no gracious being, no being in grace, until he is re-born. Regeneration is not so much the curing of a sick man, as "the quickening of a dead man," Eph. 2:1-5. Man in his depraved state, is a mere nonentity in grace, and is brought into a new being by the power of Him "who calls things that are, not as though they were;" being "created in Jesus Christ unto good works," Eph. 2:10. Therefore, our Lord Jesus, to give ground of hope to the Laodiceans, in their wretched and miserable state, proposes himself as "the beginning of the creation of God," Rev. 3:14, namely, the active beginning of it; "for all things were made by him" at first, John 1:3. From whence they might gather, that as he made them when they were nothing, he could make them over again, when worse than nothing; the same hand that made them his creatures, could make them new creatures.

3. As the child is PASSIVE in birth, so is the child of God in regeneration. The one contributes nothing to its own birth; neither does the other contribute anything, by way of efficiency, to its own regeneration: for though a man may lay himself down at the pool—yet he has no hand in moving the water, no power in performing the cure. One is born the child of a king, another the child of a beggar: the child has no hand at all in this difference. God leaves some in

their depraved state; others he brings into a state of grace, or regeneracy. If you be thus honored, no thanks to you; for "who makes you to differ from another? and what have you that you did not receive?" 1 Cor. 4:7.

4. There is a wonderful combination of parts in both births. Admirable is the structure of man's body, in which there is such a variety of organs; nothing lacking, nothing superfluous. The psalmist, considering his own body, looks on it as a piece of marvelous work; "I am fearfully and wonderfully made," says he, Psalm 139:14, "and marvelously wrought in the womb," ver. 15; where I know not how the bones grow, any more than I know what is doing in the lowest parts of the earth. In natural birth we are marvelously wrought, like a piece of needle-work; as the word imports: even so it is in regeneration. Psalm 45:14, "She shall be brought unto the King in raiment of needle-work," raiment marvelously wrought. It is the same word in both texts. What that raiment is, the apostle tells us, Eph. 4:24. It is "the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." This is the raiment which he says, in the same place, we must put on; not excluding the imputed righteousness of Christ. Both are marvelously wrought, as masterpieces of the manifold wisdom of God. O the wonderful combination of graces in the new creature! O glorious creature, new-made after the image of God! It is grace for grace in Christ, which makes up this new man, John 1:16; even as in bodily birth, the child has member for member in the parent; has every member which the parent has in a certain proportion.

5. All this, in both cases, has its rise from that which is in itself very small and inconsiderable. O the power of God, in making such a creature of the corruptible seed, and much more in bringing forth the new creature from such small beginnings! It is as "the little cloud, like a man's hand," which spread, until "heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain," 1 Kings 18:44, 45. A man gets a word from God at a sermon, which hundreds besides him hear, and let slip: but it remains with him,

works in him, and never leaves him, until the little world is turned upside down by it; that is, until he becomes a new man. It is like the dream which got up into Ahasuerus's head, and cut off sleep from his eyes, Esther 6:1, which proved a spring of such motions as never ceased, until Mordecai, in royal pomp, was brought on horseback through the streets, proud Haman trudging at his foot; the same Haman afterwards hanged, Mordecai advanced, and the church delivered from Haman's hellish plot. "The grain of mustard seed becomes a tree," Matt. 13:31, 32. God loves to bring great things out of small beginnings.

6. Natural birth is carried on by degrees. So is regeneration. It is with the soul, ordinarily, in regeneration, as with the blind man cured by our Lord, who first "saw men as trees walking," afterward "saw every man clearly," Mark 8:23-25. It is true, regeneration being, strictly speaking, a passage from death to life, the soul is quickened in a moment; like as when the embryo is brought to perfection in the womb, the soul is infused into the lifeless lump. Nevertheless, we may imagine somewhat like conception in spiritual regeneration, whereby the soul is prepared for quickening; and the new creature is capable of growth, 1 Peter 2:2, and of having life more abundantly, John 10:10.

7. In both there are new relations. The regenerate may call God, Father; for they are his children, John 1:12, 13, "begotten of him," 1 Pet. 1:3. The bride, the Lamb's wife, that is, the church, is their mother, Gal. 4:26. They are related, as brethren and sisters, to angels and glorified saints; "the family of heaven." They are of the heavenly stock: the lowest of them, "the base things of the world," 1 Cor. 1:28, the kinless things, as the word imports, who cannot boast of the blood that runs in their veins, are yet, by their new birth, near of kin with the excellent in the earth.

8. There is a likeness between the parent and the child. Everything that generates, generates its like; and the regenerate are "partakers of the divine nature," 2 Peter 1:4. The

moral perfections of the divine nature are, in measure and degree, communicated to the renewed soul: thus the divine image is restored; so that, as the child resembles the father, the new creature resembles God himself, being holy as he is holy.

9. As there is no birth without pain, both to the mother and to the child, so there is great pain in bringing forth the new creature. The children have more or less of these birth-pains, whereby they are "pricked in their heart," Acts 2:37. The soul has sore pains when under conviction and humiliation. "A wounded spirit who can bear?" The mother is pained; "Zion travails," Isaiah 66:8. She sighs, groans, cries, and has hard labor, in her ministers and members—to bring forth children to her Lord, Gal. 4:19, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again, until Christ be formed in you." Never was a mother more feelingly touched with "joy, that a child is born into the world," than she is upon the new birth of her children.

But, what is more remarkable than all this, we read not only of our Lord Jesus Christ's "travail," or toil "of soul," Isaiah 53:11—but, what is more directly to our purpose, of his "pains," or pangs, as of one travailing in childbirth; so the word used, Acts 2:24, properly signifies. Well might he call the new creature, as Rachel called her dear-bought son, *Benoni*, that is, the son of my sorrow; and as she called another, *Naphtali*, that is, my wrestling: for the pangs of that travail put him to "strong crying and tears," Heb. 5:7; yes, into an "agony and bloody sweat," Luke 22:44. And in the end he died of these pangs; they became to him "the pains of death," Acts 2:24.

III. I shall now APPLY this doctrine.

Use 1. By what is said, you may try whether you are in the state of grace or not. If you are brought out of the state of wrath or ruin, into the state of grace or salvation, you are new creatures, you are born again.

Objection. But you will say, How shall we know whether we are born again, or not?

Answer. Were you to ask me, if the sun were risen, and how you should know whether it were risen or not? I would bid you look up to the heavens, and see it with your eyes. And, would you know if the light be risen in your **heart**? Look in, and see. Grace is light, and discovers itself.

Look into your **mind**, see if it has been illuminated in the knowledge of God. Have you been inwardly taught what God is? Were your eyes ever turned inward to see yourself; the sinfulness of your depraved state, the corruption of your nature; the sins of your heart and life? Were you ever led into a view of the exceeding sinfulness of sin? Have your eyes seen King Jesus in his beauty; the manifold wisdom of God in him, his transcendent excellence, and absolute fullness and sufficiency, with the vanity and emptiness of all things else?

Next, What change is there on your **will**? Are the fetters taken off, wherewith it was formerly bound up from moving heavenward? Has your will got a new turn? Do you find an aversion to sin, and an inclination to good, wrought in your heart? Is your soul turned towards God, as your chief end? Is your will new-molded into some measure of conformity to the preceptive and providential will of God? Are you heartily reconciled to the covenant of peace, and fixedly disposed to the receiving of Christ, as he is offered in the gospel?

And as to a change on your **affections**, are they rectified, and placed on right objects? Are your desires going out after God? Are they to his name, and the remembrance of him? Isaiah 26:8.

Are your **hopes** in him? Is your love set upon him, and your hatred set against sin? Does your offending a good God affect your heart with sorrow, and do you fear sin more than suffering? Are your affections regulated? Are they, with respect to created comforts,

brought down, as being too high; and with respect to God in Christ, raised up, as being too low? Has he the chief seat in your heart? And are all your lawful worldly comforts and enjoyments laid at his feet?

Has your **conscience** been enlightened and awakened, refusing all ease—but from the application of the blood of a Redeemer? Is your **memory** sanctified, your **body** consecrated to the service of God? And are you now **walking** in newness of life? Thus you may discover whether you are born again or not.

But, for your farther help in this matter, I will discourse a little of another sign of regeneration, namely, the **love of the brethren**; an evidence whereby the weakest and most timorous saints have often had comfort, when they could have little or no consolation from other marks proposed to them. This the apostle lays down, 1 John 3:14, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." It is not to be thought that the apostle, by the brethren in this place means brethren by a common relation to the first Adam—but to the second Adam, Christ Jesus; because, however true it is, that universal benevolence, a good will to the whole race of mankind, takes place in the renewed soul, as being a lively lineament of the divine image—yet the whole context speaks of those that are "the sons of God," ver. 1, 2; "children of God," ver. 10; "born of God," ver. 9; distinguishing between "the children of God," and "the children of the devil," ver. 10; between those that are "of the devil," ver. 8, 12, and those that are "of God," ver. 10.

The text itself comes in as a reason why we should not marvel that the world hates the brethren, the children of God, ver. 13. How can we marvel at it, seeing the love of the brethren is an evidence of one's having passed from death to life? Therefore, it were absurd to look for that love among the men of the world, who are dead in trespasses and sins. They cannot love the brethren; no wonder,

then, that they hate them. Wherefore it is plain, that by brethren here, are meant brethren by regeneration.

Now, in order to set this mark of regeneration in a true light, consider these three things.

1. This love to the brethren, is a love to them as such. Then do we love them in the sense of the text, when the grace, or image of God in them, is the chief motive of our love to them. When we love the godly for their godliness, the saints for their sanctity or holiness, then we love God in them, and so may conclude were born of God; for "every one that loves him that begat, loves him also that is begotten of him," 1 John 5:1. Hypocrites may love saints, on account of civil relations to them; because of their obliging conversation; for their being of the same opinion as to outward religious matters; and on many other such like accounts, whereby wicked men may be induced to love the godly. But happy they who love them merely for grace in them; for their heaven-born temper and disposition; who can pick this pearl even out of infirmities in and about them; lay hold of it, and love them for it.

2. It is a love that will be given to all in whom the grace of God appears. Those who love one saint, because he is a saint, will have "love to all the saints," Eph. 1:15. They will love all, who, in their view, bear the image of God. Those who cannot love a gracious person in rags—but confine their love to those who wear rich clothing, have not this love to the brethren in them. Those who confine their love to a church party, to whom God has not confined his grace, are souls too narrow to be put among the children. In whatever points men differ from us, in their judgment or way; yet if they appear to agree with us, in love to God, and our Savior Jesus Christ, and in bearing his image, we shall love them as brethren, if we are of the heavenly family.

3. If this love be in us, the more grace any person appears to be possessed of, he will be the more beloved by us. The more vehemently the holy fire of grace does flame in any, the hearts of

true Christians will be the more warmed in love to them. It is not with the saints as with many other men, who make themselves the standards for others; and love them so far as they think they are like themselves. But, if they seem to outshine and darken them, their love is turned to hatred and envy, and they endeavor to detract from the due praise of their exemplary piety; because nothing is liked with them, in the practice of religion, that goes beyond their own measure; what of the life and power of religion appears in others, serves only to raise the serpentine grudge and envy in their pharisaical hearts.

But as for those who are born again, their love and affection to the brethren bears proportion to the degrees of the divine image they discern in them.

Now, if you would improve these to the knowledge of your state, I would advise you,

1. To set apart some time, when you are at home, for a review of your case, to try your state by what has been said. Many have comfort and clearness as to their state, at a sermon, who in a little time lose it again; because while they hear the word preached, they make application of it; but do not consider these things more deliberately and leisurely when alone. The impression is too sudden and short to give lasting comfort; and it is often so inconsiderate, that it has bad consequences. Therefore, set about this work at home, after earnest and serious prayer to God for his help in it. Complain not of your lack of time while the night follows the busy day; nor of place, while fields and houses are to be got.

2. Renew your repentance before the Lord. Guilt lying on the conscience, unrepented of, may darken all your evidences and marks of grace. It provokes the Spirit of grace to withdraw; and when he goes, our light ceases. It is not a fit time for a saint to read his evidences, when the candle is blown out by some conscience-wounding guilt.

3. Exert the powers of the new nature; let the graces of the divine Spirit discover themselves in you by action. If you would know whether there is sacred fire in your bosom, or not, you must blow the coal; for although it exist, and be a live coal—yet if it be under the ashes, it will give you no light. Settle in your hearts a firm purpose, through the grace that is in Christ Jesus, to comply with every known duty, and watch against every known sin, having readiness of mind to be instructed in what you know not.

If gracious souls would thus manage their inquiries into their state, it is likely that they would have a comfortable outcome. And if others would take such a solemn review, and make trial of their state, impartially examining themselves before the tribunal of their consciences, they might have a timely discovery of their own sinfulness; but the neglect of self-examination leaves most men under sad delusions as to their state, and deprives many saints of the comfortable sight of the grace of God in them.

But that I may afford some farther help to true Christians in their inquiries into their state, **I shall propose and briefly answer some cases or doubts**, which may possibly hinder some people from the comfortable view of their happy state. The children's bread must not be withheld; though, while it is held forth to them, the dogs should snatch at it.

Case 1. "I doubt if I be regenerate, because I know not the precise time of my conversion; nor can I trace the particular steps of the way in which it was brought to pass."

Answer. Though it is very desirable to be able to give an account of the beginning, and the gradual advances, of the Lord's work upon our souls, as some saints can distinctly do, the manner of the Spirit's working being still a mystery—yet this is not necessary to prove the truth of grace. Happy he who can say, in this case, as the blind man in the Gospel, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." As, when we see flame, we know there is fire, though we know not how or when it began; so **the truth of grace**

may be discerned in us, though we know not how or when it was dropped into our hearts. If you can perceive the happy change which is wrought on your soul; if you find your mind is enlightened, your will inclined to comply with the will of God in all things; especially to fall in with the divine plan of salvation, through a crucified Redeemer; in vain do you trouble yourself, and refuse comfort, because you know not how and what way it was brought about.

Case 2. "If I were a new creature, sin could not prevail against me as it does."

Answer. Though we must not lay pillows for hypocrites to rest their heads upon, who indulge themselves in their sins, and make the doctrine of God's grace subservient to their lusts, lying down contentedly in the bond of iniquity like men that are fond of golden chains; yet it must be owned, "the just man falls seven times a day;" and iniquity may prevail against the children of God.

But if you are groaning under the weight of the body of death, the corruption of your nature; loathing yourself for the sins of your heart and life; striving to mortify your lusts; fleeing daily to the blood of Christ for pardon; and looking to his Spirit for sanctification: though you may be obliged to say with the Psalmist, "Iniquities prevail against me;" yet you may add with him, "As for our transgressions you shall purge them away," Psalm 65:3. The new creature does not yet possess the house alone: it dwells by the side of an ill neighbor, namely, remaining corruption, the relics of depraved nature. They struggle together for the mastery. "The flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh," Gal. 5:17. And sometimes corruption prevails, bringing the child of God into captivity to the law of sin, Rom. 7:23. Let not therefore the prevailing of corruption make you, in this case, conclude you are none of God's children: but let it humble you, to be the more watchful, and to thirst the more intensely after Jesus Christ, his blood and Spirit; and that very disposition will evidence a principle

of grace in you, which seeks the destruction of sin that prevails so often against you.

Case 3. "I find the motions of sin in my heart more violent since the Lord began his work on my soul, than they were before that time. Can this consist with a change of my nature?"

Answer. Dreadful is the case of many, who, after God has had a remarkable dealing with their souls, tending to their reformation, have thrown off all bonds, and have become grossly and openly immoral and profane; as if the devil had returned into their hearts with seven spirits worse than himself. All I shall say to such people is, that their state is exceedingly dangerous; they are in danger of sinning against the Holy Spirit: therefore, let them repent, before it be too late.

But if it be not thus with you; though corruption is stirring itself more violently than formerly, as if all the forces of hell were raised, to hold fast, or bring back, a fugitive; yet these stirrings may consist with a change of your nature. *When the restraint of grace is newly laid upon corruption, it is no wonder if it acts more vigorously than before*, "warring against the law of the mind," Rom. 7:23. The motions of sin may really be most violent, when the new principle is brought in to cast it out. The sun sending its beams through the window, discovers the motes in the house, and their motions, which were not seen before; so **the light of grace may discover the risings and actings of corruption, in another manner than ever the man saw them before, though they really do not rise nor act more vigorously**.

Sin is not quite dead in the regenerate soul; it is but dying, and dying a lingering death, being crucified: no wonder there are great fightings, when it is sick at the heart, and death is at the door. Besides, temptations may be more in number, and stronger, while **Satan is striving to bring you back, who are escaped, than while he only endeavored to retain you**: "After you were

illuminated, you endured a great fight of affliction," says the apostle to the Hebrews, chap. 10:32. But "cast not away your confidence," ver. 35. Remember his "grace is sufficient for you," and "the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly."

Pharaoh and his Egyptians never made such a formidable appearance against the Israelites, as at the Red Sea, after they were brought out of Egypt: but then were the pursuers nearest to a total overthrow, Exod., chap. 14. Let not this case, therefore, make you raze the foundations of your trust; but be you emptied of self, and strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, and you shall come off victorious.

Case 4. "But when I compare my love to God with my love to some created enjoyments, I find the pulse of my affections beat stronger to the creature than to the Creator. How then can I call him Father? Nay, alas! those turnings of heart within me, and glowings of affection to him, which I had, are gone; so that I fear all the love which I ever had to the Lord has been but a fit and flash of affection, such as hypocrites often have.

Answer. **It cannot be denied, that the predominant love of the world is a certain mark of an unregenerate state**, 1 John 2:15, "If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." Nevertheless, those are not always the strongest affections which are most violent. A man's affections may be more moved, on some occasions, by an object that is little regarded, than by another that is exceedingly beloved; even as a little brook sometimes makes more noise than a great river. The strength of our affections is to be measured by the firmness and fixedness of the root, not by the violence of their actings.

Suppose a person meeting with a friend, who has been long abroad, finds his affections more vehemently acting towards his friend on that occasion, than towards his own wife and children; will he therefore say, that he loves his friend more than them? Surely not. Even so, although the Christian may find himself more moved

in his love to the creature, than in his love to God; yet it is not therefore to be said, that he loves the creature more than God, seeing love to God is always more firmly rooted in a gracious heart, than love to any created enjoyment whatever: as appears when competition arises in such a manner, that the one or other is to be foregone.

Would you, then, know your case? Retire into your own hearts, and there lay the two in the balance, and try which of them weighs down the other. Ask yourself, as in the sight of God, whether you would part with Christ for the creature, or part with the creature for Christ, if you were left to your choice in the matter? If you find your heart disposed to part with what is dearest to you in the world for Christ at his call, you have no reason to conclude you love the creature more than God; but, on the contrary, that you love God more than the creature, although you do not feel such violent motions in the love of God, as in the love of some created thing, Matt. 10:37, "He who loves father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me." Luke 14:26, "If any man comes to me, and hates not his father and mother – he cannot be my disciple." From which texts compared, we may infer, that he who hates, that is, is ready to part with, father and mother for Christ, is, in our Lord's account, one that loves them less than him, and not one who loves father and mother more than him.

Moreover, you are to **consider that there is a twofold love to Christ.**

1. There is a SENSIBLE love to him, which is felt as a dart in the heart, and makes a holy love-sickness in the soul, arising from lack of enjoyment, as in that case of the spouse, Cant. 5:8, "I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved, that you tell him that I am sick of love:" or else from the fullness of it, as in Cant. 2:5, "Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples; for I am sick of love." These glowings of affection are usually wrought in young

converts, who are ordinarily made "to sing in the days of their youth," Hos. 2:15.

While the fire-edge is upon the young convert, he looks upon others, reputed to be godly, and not finding them in such a temper or disposition as himself, he is ready to censure them; and to think there is far less religion in the world than indeed there is. *But when his own cup comes to settle below the brim, and he finds that in himself which made him question the state of others, he is more humbled, and feels more and more the necessity of daily recourse to the blood of Christ for pardon, and to the Spirit of Christ for sanctification; and thus grows downwards in humiliation, self-loathing, and self-denial.*

2. There is a RATIONAL love to Christ, which, without these sensible emotions felt in the former case, evidences itself by a dutiful regard to the divine authority and command. When one bears such a love to Christ, though the vehement stirrings of affection be lacking—yet he is truly tender of offending a gracious God; endeavors to walk before him unto all well pleasing; and is grieved at the heart for what is displeasing unto him, 1 John 5:3, "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments."

Now, although that sensible love does not always continue with you, you have no reason to deem it a hypocritical fit, while the rational love remains with you; any more than a loving and faithful wife needs question her love to her husband, when her fondness is abated.

Case 5. "The attainments of hypocrites and apostates are a terror to me, and come like a shaking storm on me, when I am about to conclude, from the marks of grace, which I seem to find in myself, that I am in the state of grace."

Answer. These things should, indeed, stir us up to a most serious and impartial examination of ourselves; but ought not to keep us in a continued suspense as to our state. Sirs, you see the outside of

hypocrites, their duties, their gifts, their tears, and so on—but you see not their inside; you do not discern their hearts, the bias of their spirits. Upon what you see of them, you found a judgment of charity as to their state; and you do well to judge charitably in such a case, because you cannot know the secret springs of their actions: but you are seeking, and ought to have, a judgment of certainty as to your own state; and therefore are to look into that part of religion, which none in the world but yourselves can discern in you, and which you can as little see in others.

A hypocrite's region may appear far greater than that of a sincere soul: but that which makes the greatest figure in the eyes of men, is often of least worth before God. I would rather utter one of those groans which the apostle speaks of, Rom. 8:26, than shed Esau's tears, have Balaam's prophetic spirit, or the joy of the stony-ground hearer. "The fire that shall try every man's work," will try, not of what bulk it is—but "of what kind it is," 1 Cor. 3:13. Though you may know what bulk of religion another has, and that it is more bulky than your own—yet God does not regard that; why, then, do you make such a matter of it? It is impossible for you, without divine revelation, certainly to know of what sort another man's religion is: but you may certainly know what sort your own is of, without extraordinary revelation; otherwise the apostle would not exhort the saints to "give diligence to make their calling and election sure," 2 Peter 1:10. Therefore, the attainments of hypocrites and apostates should not disturb you, in your serious inquiry into your own state.

I will tell you two things, wherein the lowest saints go beyond the most refined hypocrites:

1. In denying themselves; renouncing all confidence in themselves, and their own works; acquiescing in, being well pleased with, and venturing their souls upon, God's plan of salvation through Jesus Christ, Matt. 5:3, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." And, chap. 11:6,

"Blessed is he who shall not be offended in me." Phil. 3:3, "We are the true circumcision, who worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Jesus Christ, and have no confidence in the flesh."

2. In a real hatred of all sin; being willing to part with every lust, without exception, and to comply with every duty which the Lord makes, or shall make known to them, Psalm 119:6, "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all your commandments." Try yourselves by these.

Case 6. "I see myself fall so far short of the saints mentioned in the Scriptures, and of several excellent people of my own acquaintance, that, when I look on them, I can hardly look on myself as one of the same family with them."

Answer. It is, indeed, matter of humiliation, that we do not get forward to that measure of grace and holiness which we see is attainable in this life. This should make us more vigorously press towards the mark: but surely it is from the devil, that weak Christians make a rack for themselves, of the attainments of the strong. To yield to the temptation, is as unreasonable as for a child to dispute away his relation to his father, because he is not of the same stature with his elder brethren. **There are saints of several sizes in Christ's family;** some fathers, some young men, and some little children, 1 John 2:13, 14.

Case 7. "I never read in the word of God, nor did I ever know of a child of God, so TEMPTED, and so left of God, as I am; and therefore, no saint's case being like mine, I can only conclude that I am none of their number.

Answer. This objection arises to some from their ignorance of the Scriptures, and the experience of Christians. It is profitable, in this case, to impart the matter to some experienced Christian friend, or to some godly minister. This has been a blessed means of peace to some people; while their case, which appeared to them to be singular, has been proved to have been the case of other saints.

The Scriptures give instances of very horrid temptations, wherewith the saints have been assaulted. **Job** was tempted to blaspheme; this was the great thing the devil aimed at in the case of that great saint, Job 1:11, "He will curse you to your face." Chap. 2:9, "Curse God and die." **Asaph** was tempted to think it was in vain to be pious, which was in effect to throw off all religion, Psalm 73:13, "Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain." Yes, **Christ** himself was tempted to "cast himself down from a pinnacle of the temple," and to "worship the devil," Matt. 4:6-9. And many of the children of God have not only been attacked with—but have actually yielded to very gross temptation for a time. **Peter** denied Christ, and cursed and swore that he knew him not, Mark 14:71. **Paul**, when a persecutor, compelled even saints to blaspheme, Acts 26:10, 11.

Many of the saints can, from their sad experience, bear witness to very gross temptations, which have astonished their spirits, made their very flesh to tremble, and sickened their bodies. Satan's fiery darts make terrible work; and will cost some pains to quench them, by a vigorous managing of the shield of faith, Eph. 6:16. Sometimes he makes such desperate attacks, that never was one more put to it, in running to and fro; without intermission, to quench the fire-balls incessantly thrown into his house by an enemy, designing to burn the house about him, than the poor tempted saint is, to repel Satanical injections. But these injections, these horrid temptations, though they are a dreadful affliction, they are not the *sins* of the tempted, unless they make them theirs by consenting to them. They will be charged upon the tempter alone, if they be not consented to; and will no more be laid to the charge of the tempted party, than a bastard's being laid down at a chaste man's door will fix guilt upon him.

But suppose neither minister nor private Christian, to whom you go, can tell you of any who has been in your case; yet you ought not thence to infer that your case is singular, far less to give up hope: for it is not to be thought, that every godly minister, or private Christian, has had experience of all the cases which a child of God

may be in. We need not doubt that some have had distresses known only to God and their own consciences; and so to others these distresses are as if they had never been. Yes, and though the Scriptures contain suitable directions for every case which a child of God can be in, and these illustrated with a sufficient number of examples; yet it is not to be imagined that there are in the Scriptures perfect instances of every particular case incident to the saints. Therefore, though you cannot find an instance of your case in the Scripture—yet bring your case to it, and you shall find suitable remedies prescribed there for it.

Study rather to make use of Christ for your case, who has a remedy for all diseases, than to know if ever any was in your case. Though one should show you an instance of your case, in an undoubted saint; yet none could promise that it would certainly give you ease: for a scrupulous conscience would readily find out some difference. And if nothing but a perfect conformity of another's case to yours will satisfy, it will be hard, if not impossible, to satisfy you; for it is with people's cases, as with their natural faces: though the faces of all men are of one make, and some are so very like others, that, at first view, we are ready to take them for the same; yet if you view them more accurately, you will see something in every face, distinguishing it from all others; though possibly you cannot tell what it is. Therefore I conclude, that if you can find in yourselves the marks of regeneration, proposed to you from the word, you ought to conclude you are in the state of grace, though your case were singular, which is indeed unlikely.

Case 8. "The AFFLICTIONS I meet with are strange and unusual. I doubt if ever a child of God was tried with such dispensations of providence as I am."

Answer. Much of what was said on the preceding case, may be helpful in this. Holy Job was assaulted with this temptation, Job 5:1, "To which of the saints will you turn?" But he rejected it, and held fast his integrity. The apostle supposes that Christians may be

tempted to "think it strange concerning the fiery trial," 1 Pet. 4:12. But they have need of larger experience than Solomon's, who will venture to say, "See this is new," Eccl. 1:10. What though, in respect of the outward dispensations of providence, "it happen to you according to the work of the wicked?" yet you may be just notwithstanding; according to Solomon's observation, Eccl. 8:14. Sometimes we travel in ways where we can neither perceive the prints of the foot of man or beast; yet we cannot from thence conclude that there was never any there before us: so, though you can not perceive the footsteps of the flock, in the way of your affliction, you must not therefore conclude that you are the first that ever traveled that road.

But what if it were so? Some one saint or other must be first, in drinking of each bitter cup the rest have drunk of. What warrant have you or I to limit the Holy One of Israel to one trodden path, in his dispensations towards us? "Your way is in the sea, and your path in the great waters; and your footsteps are not known," Psalm 77:19. If the Lord should carry you to heaven by some retired road, so to speak, you would have no ground of complaint. Learn to allow sovereignty a latitude; be at your duty; and let no affliction cast a veil over any evidences you otherwise have for your being in the state of grace: for "no man knows either love or hatred by all that is before him," Eccl. 9:1.

Use 2. You who are strangers to this new birth, be convinced of the absolute necessity of it. Are all who are in the state of grace born again? then you have neither part nor lot in it, who are not born again. I must tell you in the words of our Lord and Savior, and O that he would speak them to your hearts! "You must be born again," John 3:7. For your conviction, consider these few things.

1. Regeneration is absolutely necessary to qualify you to do anything really good and acceptable to God. While you are not born again, your best works are but glittering sins; for though

the matter of them is good, they are quite marred in the performance. Consider,

(1.) That without regeneration there is no faith, and "without faith it is impossible to please God," Heb. 11:6. **Faith is a vital act of the new-born soul.** The evangelist, showing the different treatment which our Lord Jesus had from different people, some receiving him, some rejecting him, points at regenerating grace as the true cause of that difference, without which, never any one would have received him. He tells us, that "as many as received him," were those "who were born – of God," John 1:11-13. Unregenerate men may presume; but true faith they cannot have. **Faith is a flower that grows not in the field of nature.** As the tree cannot grow without a root, neither can a man believe without the new nature, whereof the principle of believing is a part.

(2.) Without regeneration a man's works are dead works. As is the principle, so must the effects be: if the lungs are rotten, the breath will be unsavoury; and he who at best is dead in sin, his works at best will be but dead works. "Unto those who are defiled and unbelieving, is nothing pure – being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate," Tit. 1:15, 16. Could we say of a man, that he is more blameless in his life than any other in the world; that he reduces his body with fasting; and has made his knees as hard as horns with continual praying; but he is not born again: that exception would mar all. As if one should say, There is a well proportioned body—but the soul is gone; it is but a dead lump. This is a melting consideration. You do many things materially good; but God says, All these things avail not—as long as I see the old nature reigning in the man. Gal. 6:15, "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision avails anything, nor uncircumcision—but a new creature."

If you are not born again,

(1.) All your REFORMATION is nothing in the sight of God. You have shut the door—but the thief is still in the house. It may be you

are not what once you were; yet you are not what you must be, if ever you would see heaven; for "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," John 3:3.

(2.) Your PRAYERS are an "abomination to the Lord," Prov. 15:8. It may be, others admire your seriousness; you cry as for your life; but God accounts of the opening of your mouth, as one would account of the opening of a grave full of rottenness, Rom. 3:13, "Their throat is an open sepulcher." Others are affected with your prayers; which seem to them, as if they would rend the heavens; but God accounts them but as the howling of a dog: "They have not cried unto me with their hearts, when they howled upon their beds," Hos. 7:14. Others take you for a wrestler and prevailer with God; but he can take no delight in you nor your prayers, Isaiah 66:3, "Their offerings will not be accepted. When such people sacrifice an ox, it is no more acceptable than a human sacrifice. When they sacrifice a lamb or bring an offering of grain, it is as bad as putting a dog or the blood of a pig on the altar! When they burn incense, it is as if they had blessed an idol." Why, because you are yet "in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity!"

(3.) All you have DONE for God, and his cause in the world, though it may be followed with temporal rewards—yet it is lost as to divine acceptance. This is clear from the case of Jehu, who was indeed rewarded with a kingdom, for his executing due vengeance upon the house of Ahab; as being a work good for the matter of it, because it was commanded of God, as you may see, 2 Kings 9:7; yet was he punished for it in his posterity, because he did it not in a right manner, Hos. 1:4, "I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu." God looks chiefly to the heart: and if so, truly, though the outward appearance be fairer than that of many others—yet the hidden man of your heart is loathsome; you look well before men—but are not, as Moses was, fair to God, as the margin has it, Acts 7:20. O, what a difference is there between the characters of Asa and Amaziah! "The high places were not removed; nevertheless, Asa's heart was perfect with the Lord all his

days," 1 Kings 15:14. "Amaziah did that which was right in the sight of the Lord—but not with a perfect heart," 2 Chron. 25:2. It may be you are zealous against sin in others, and do admonish them of their duty, and reprove them for their sin; and they hate you, because you do your duty: but I must tell you, God hates you too, because you do it not in a right manner; and that you can never do, while you are not born again.

(4.) All your STRUGGLES AGAINST SIN in your own heart and life, are nothing. The proud Pharisee afflicted his body with fasting, and God struck his soul, in the mean time, with a sentence of condemnation, Luke 18. Balaam struggled with his covetous temper, to that degree, that though he loved the wages of unrighteousness—yet he would not win them by cursing Israel: but he died the death of the wicked, Numb. 31:8. **All you do, while in an unregenerate state, is for yourself**: therefore, it will fare with you as with a subject, who having reduced the rebels, puts the crown on his own head, and loses all his good service and his head too.

Objection. "If it be thus with us, then we need never perform any religious duty at all."

Answer. The conclusion is not just. No inability of yours can excuse from the duty which God's law lays on you: and there is less evil in doing your duty, than there is in the omission of it. But there is a difference between omitting a duty, and doing it as you do it. A man orders the masons to build him a house. If they quite neglect the work, that will not be accepted; if they build on the old rotten foundation, neither will that please: but they must raze the foundation, and build on firm ground. "Go and do likewise." In the mean time, it is not in vain even for you to seek the Lord: for though he regards you not—yet he may have respect to his own ordinances, and do you good thereby, as was said before.

2. Without regeneration there is no communion with God. There is a society on earth, whose "fellowship is with the

Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ," 1 John 1:3. But out of that society, all the unregenerate are excluded; for they are all enemies to God, as you heard before at large. Now, "can two walk together, except they be agreed?" Amos 3:3. They are all unholy: and "what communion has light with darkness – Christ with Belial?" 2 Cor. 6:14, 15. They may have a show and semblance of holiness; but they are strangers to true holiness, and therefore "without God in the world." How sad is it, to be employed in religious duties—yet to have no fellowship with God in them! You would not be content with your food, unless it nourished you; nor with your clothes, unless they kept you warm: and how can you satisfy yourselves with your duties, while you have no communion with God in them?

3. Regeneration is absolutely necessary to qualify you for heaven. None go to heaven but those who are made meet for it, Col. 1:12. As it was with Solomon's temple, 1 Kings 6:7, so is it with the temple above. It is "built of stone made ready before it is brought there;" namely, of "living stones," 1 Pet. 2:5, "wrought for the selfsame thing," 2 Cor. 5:5; for they cannot be laid in that glorious building just as they come out of the quarry of depraved nature. Jewels of gold are not fit for swine, and far less jewels of glory for unrenewed sinners. Beggars, in their rags, are not fit for kings' houses; nor sinners to enter into the King's palace, without the raiment of needlework, Psalm 45:14, 15. What wise man would bring fish out of the water to feed in his meadows? or send his oxen to feed in the sea? Just as little are **the unregenerate fit for heaven, or heaven fit for them**. It would never be relished by them.

The unregenerate would find fault with heaven on several accounts. As,

(1.) That it is a strange country. Heaven is the renewed man's native country: his Father is in heaven; his mother is Jerusalem, which is above, Gal. 4:26. He is born from above, John 3:3. Heaven is his home, 2 Cor. 5:1; therefore, he looks on himself as a stranger

on this earth, and his heart is homeward, Heb. 11:16, "They desire a better country, that is, a heavenly country." But the unregenerate man is the man of the earth, Psalm 10:18; written in the earth, Jer. 17:13. Now, "Home is home, be it ever so homely:" therefore, he minds earthly things, Phil. 3:19. There is a peculiar sweetness in our native soil; and with difficulty are men drawn to leave it, and dwell in a strange country. In no case does that prevail more than in this; for unrenewed men would forfeit their pretensions to heaven, were it not that they see they cannot make a better bargain.

(2.) There is nothing in heaven that they delight in, as agreeable to the carnal heart, Rev. 21:27, "For there shall never enter into it anything that defiles." When Mahomet explained his paradise to be a place of sensual delights, his religion was greedily embraced; for that is the heaven men naturally choose. If the covetous man could get bags full of gold there, and the voluptuous man could promise himself his sensual delights, they might be reconciled to heaven, and fitted for it too; but since it is not so, though they may utter fair words about it, truly it has little of their hearts.

(3.) Every corner there is filled with that which of all things they have the least liking for; and that is holiness, true holiness, perfect holiness. Were one who abhors swine's flesh, bidden to a feast where all the dishes were of that sort of meat—but variously prepared, he would find fault with every dish at the table, notwithstanding all the art used to make them palatable. It is true, there is joy in heaven—but it is holy joy; there are pleasures in heaven—but they are holy pleasures; there are places in heaven—but it is holy ground: that holiness which in every place, and in everything there—would mar all to the unregenerate.

(4.) Were they carried there, they would not only change their place, which would be a great heart-break—but they would change their company too. Truly, they would never like the company there, who care not for communion with God here; nor value the fellowship of his people, at least in the vitals of practical godliness.

Many, indeed, mix themselves with the godly on earth, to procure a name to themselves, and to cover the sinfulness of their hearts; but that trade cannot be managed there.

(5.) They would never like the employment of heaven, they care so little for it now. The business of the saints there would be an intolerable burden to them, seeing it is not agreeable to their nature. To be taken up in beholding, admiring, and praising him that sits on the throne, and the Lamb, would be work unsuitable, and therefore unsavoury to an unrenewed soul.

(6.) They would find this fault with it, that the whole is of everlasting continuance. This would be a killing ingredient in it to them. How would such as now account the Sabbath day a burden, brook the celebration of an everlasting Sabbath in the heavens!

4. Regeneration is absolutely necessary to your being admitted into heaven, John 3:3. No heaven without it. Though carnal men could digest all those things which make heaven so unsuitable for them—yet God will never bring them there. Therefore, born again you must be, else you shall never see heaven; you shall perish eternally. For,

(1.) There is a bill of exclusion against you in the court of heaven, and against all of your sort; "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," John 3:3. Here is a bar before you, that men and angels cannot remove. To hope for heaven, in the face of this peremptory sentence, is to hope that God will recall his word, and sacrifice his truth and faithfulness to your safety; which is infinitely more than to hope that "the earth shall be forsaken for you, and the rock removed out of its place."

(2.) There is no holiness without regeneration. It is "the new man which is created in true holiness," Eph. 4:24. And no heaven without holiness; for "without holiness no man shall see the Lord," Heb. 12:14. **Will the gates of pearl be opened, to let in dogs and swine?** No; their place is outside, Rev. 22:15. God will

not admit such into the holy place of communion with him here; and will he admit them into the holiest of all hereafter? Will he take the children of the devil, and permit them to sit with him in his throne? Or, will he bring the unclean into the city, whose street is pure gold? Be not deceived; grace and glory are but two links of one chain, which God has joined, and no man shall put asunder. None are transplanted into the paradise above—but out of the nursery of grace below. If you are unholy while in this world, you will be forever miserable in the world to come.

(3.) All the unregenerate are without Christ, and therefore have no hope while in that case, Eph. 2:12. Will Christ prepare mansions of glory for those who refuse to receive him into their hearts? Nay, "Since you neglected all my counsel and did not accept my correction, I, in turn, will laugh at your calamity. I will mock when terror strikes you, when terror strikes you like a storm and your calamity comes like a whirlwind, when trouble and stress overcome you. Proverbs 1:25-27

(4.) There is an infallible connection between a finally unregenerate state and damnation, arising from the nature of the things themselves; and from the decree of heaven which is fixed and immovable, as mountains of brass, John 3:3; Rom. 8:6, "To be carnally minded is death.**" An unregenerate state is hell in the bud.** It is eternal destruction in embryo, growing daily, though you do not discern it. Death is painted on many a fair face, in this life. Depraved nature makes men fit to be partakers of the inheritance of the damned, in utter darkness.

[1.] **The heart of stone within you, is a sinking weight. As a stone naturally goes downward, so the hard stony heart tends downward to the bottomless pit.** You are hardened against reproof; though you are told your danger—yet you will not see it, you will not believe it. But remember that the conscience being now seared with a hot iron, is a sad presage of everlasting burnings.

[2.] Your **unfruitfulness** under the means of grace, fits you for the axe of God's judgments, Matt. 3:10, "Every tree that brings not forth good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire." The withered branch is fuel for the fire, John 15:6. Tremble at this, you despisers of the Gospel: if you be not thereby made fit for heaven, you will be like the barren ground, bearing briers and thorns, "near unto cursing, whose end is to be burned," Heb. 6:8.

[3.] The **hellish dispositions of mind**, which discover themselves in profanity of life, fit the guilty for the regions of horror. **A profane life will have a miserable end.** "Those who do such things, shall not inherit the kingdom of God," Gal. 5:19-21. Think on this, you prayerless people, you mockers of religion, you cursers and swearers, you unclean and unjust people, who have not so much as moral honesty to keep you from lying, cheating, and stealing. What sort of a tree do you think it is, upon which these fruits grow? Is it a tree of righteousness, which the Lord has planted? Or is it not such a one as cumbers the ground, which God will pluck up for fuel to the fire of his wrath?

[4.] Your being **dead in sin**, makes you fit to be wrapped in flames of brimstone, as a winding-sheet; and to be buried in the bottomless pit, as in a grave. **Great was the cry in Egypt, when the first-born in each family was dead; but are there not many families, where all are spiritually dead together?** Nay, many there are who are twice dead, plucked up by the root. Sometimes in their life they have been roused by apprehensions of death, and its consequences; but now they are so far on in their way to the land of darkness, that they hardly ever have the least glimmering of light from heaven.

[5.] The **darkness of your minds** presages eternal darkness. O, the horrid ignorance with which some are plagued; while others, who have got some rays of the light of reason in their heads, are utterly void of spiritual light in their hearts! If you knew your case, you would cry out, Oh! darkness! darkness! darkness! making way

for the blackness of darkness forever! The face-covering is upon you already, as condemned people; so near are you to everlasting darkness. It is only Jesus Christ who can stop the execution, pull the napkin off the face of the condemned malefactor, and put a pardon in his hand; Isa. 25:7, "He will destroy, in this mountain, the face of covering cast over all people," that is, the face-covering cast over the condemned, as in Haman's case, Esther. 7:8, "As the word went out of the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face."

[6.] The chains of darkness you are bound with in the prison of your depraved state, Isa. 61:1, fits you to be cast into the burning fiery furnace. Ah, miserable men! Sometimes their consciences stir within them, and they begin to think of amending their ways. But alas! they are in chains, they cannot do it. They are chained by the heart: their lusts cleave so fast to them, that they cannot, nay, they will not shake them off. Thus you see **what affinity there is between an unregenerate state, and the state of the damned, the state of absolute and irretrievable misery**. Be convinced, then, that you must be born again; put a high value on the new birth, and eagerly desire it.

The text tells you, that the word is the seed, whereof the new creature is formed: therefore, take heed to it, and entertain it, as it is your life. Apply yourself to the reading of the Scriptures. You who cannot read, get others to read it to you. Wait diligently on the preaching of the word, as by divine appointment the special mean of conversion; "for – it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save those who believe," 1 Cor. 1:21. Therefore cast yourselves in Christ's way; reject not the means of grace, lest you be found to judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life. Attend carefully to the word preached. Hear every sermon, as if you were hearing for eternity; take heed that the fowls of the air steal away this seed from you, as it is sown. "Give yourself wholly to it," 1 Tim. 4:15. "Receive it not as the word of men—but, as it is in truth, the word of God," 1 Thess. 2:13. Hear it with application, looking on it as a message sent from heaven, to you in particular; though not to

you only, Rev. 3:22, "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says unto the churches." Lay it up in your hearts; meditate upon it; and be not as the unclean beasts, which chew not the cud. But by earnest prayer, beg that the dew of Heaven may fall on your heart, that the seed may spring up there.

More particularly,

(1.) Receive the testimony of the word of God, concerning the misery of an unregenerate state, the sinfulness thereof, and the absolute necessity of regeneration.

(2.) Receive its testimony concerning God, what a holy and just One he is.

(3.) Examine your ways by it; namely, the thoughts of your heart, the expressions of your lips, and the tenor of your life. Look back through the several periods of your life; and see your sins from the precepts of the word, and learn, from its threatening, what you are liable to on account of these sins.

(4.) By the help of the same word of God, view the corruption of your nature, as in a mirror which manifests our ugly face in a clear manner. Were these things deeply rooted in the heart, they might be the seed of that fear and sorrow, on account of your soul's state, which are necessary to prepare and stir you up to look after a Savior. Fix your thoughts upon him offered to you in the Gospel, as fully suited to your case; having, by his obedience unto death, perfectly satisfied the justice of God, and brought in everlasting righteousness. This may prove the seed of humiliation, desire, hope and faith; and move you to stretch out the withered hand unto him, at his own command.

Let these things sink deeply into your hearts, and improve them diligently. Remember, whatever you are, you must be born again; else it had been better for you, that you had never been born. Therefore, if any of you shall live and die in an unregenerate state, you will be inexcusable, having been fairly warned of your danger.

2. **MYSTICAL UNION between Christ and Believers**

"I am the vine you are the branches." John 15:5

Having spoken of the change made by regeneration, on all those who will inherit eternal life, in opposition to their natural real state, the state of degeneracy; I proceed to speak of the change made on them, in their union with the Lord Jesus Christ, in opposition to their natural relative state, the state of misery. The doctrine of the saints' union with Christ, is very plainly and fully insisted on, from the beginning to the eighth verse of this chapter; which is a part of our Lord's farewell sermon to his disciples. Sorrow had now filled their hearts; they were apt to say, Alas! what will become of us, when our Master is taken from our head? Who will then instruct us? Who will solve our doubts? How shall we be supported under our difficulties and discouragements? How shall we be able to live without our accustomed communication with him? Therefore, our Lord Jesus Christ seasonably teaches them the mystery of their union with him, comparing himself to the vine, and them to the branches.

1. He compares himself to a VINE. "I am the vine." He had been celebrating, with his disciples, the sacrament of his supper, that sign and seal of his people's union with him; and had told them, "That he would drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until he should drink it new with them in his Father's kingdom:" and now he shows himself to be the vine, from whence the wine of their consolation should come. The vine has less beauty than many other trees—but it is exceedingly fruitful; fitly representing the low condition in which our Lord was in, bringing many sons to glory. But that which is chiefly aimed at, in his comparing himself to a vine, is to **represent himself as the supporter and nourisher of his people, in whom they live and bring forth fruit.**

2. He compares them to BRANCHES; you are the branches of that vine. You are the branches knit to, and growing on this stock, drawing all your life and sap from it. It is a beautiful comparison; as

if he had said, I am as a vine, you are as the branches of that vine. Now there are two sorts of branches. (1.) Natural branches, which at first spring out of the stock. These are the branches that are in the tree, and were never out of it. (2.) There are engrafted branches, which are branches cut off from the tree that first gave them life, and put into another, to grow upon it. Thus branches come to be on a tree, which originally were not on it. The branches mentioned in the text, are of the latter sort; branches broken off, as the word in the original language denotes, namely, from the tree which first gave them life. None of the children of men are natural branches of the second Adam, that is, Jesus Christ, the true vine; they are the natural branches of the first Adam, that degenerate vine: but the elect are all of them, sooner or later, broken off from their natural stock, and engrafted into Christ, the true vine.

DOCTRINE. **They who are in the state of grace, are engrafted in, and united to, the Lord Jesus Christ. They are taken out of their natural stock, cut off from it; and are now engrafted into Christ, as the new stock.**

In general, for understanding the union between the Lord Jesus Christ and his elect, who believe in him, and on him, I observe,

1. It is a SPIRITUAL union. Man and wife, by their marriage-union, become one flesh; Christ and true believers, by this union, become one spirit, 1 Cor. 6:17. As one soul or spirit actuates both the head and the members in the natural body, so the one Spirit of God dwells in Christ and the Christian; for, "if any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his," Romans 8:9. Earthly union is made by contact; so the stones in a building are united: but this is a union of another nature. Were it possible that we could eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ, in a corporeal and carnal manner, it would profit nothing, John 6:63. **It was not Mary's bearing him in her womb—but her believing on him, that made her a saint**, Luke 11:27, 28, "A woman in the crowd called out, "Blessed is the mother

who gave you birth and nursed you." He replied, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it."

2. It is a REAL union. Such is our weakness in our present state, so much are we sunk in sin, that in our mind, we are prone to suspect spiritual realities to be only a fiction. But nothing is more real than what is spiritual: as approaching nearest to the nature of him who is the fountain of all reality, namely, God himself. We do not see with our eyes the union between our own soul and body; neither can we represent it to ourselves truly, by imagination, as we do sensible things: yet the reality of it is not to be doubted. Faith is no fancy—but "the substance of things hoped for," Heb. 11:1. Neither is the union thereby made between Christ and believers imaginary—but most real: "For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones," Eph. 5:30.

3. It is a most close and INTIMATE union. Believers, regenerate people, who believe in him, and rely on him, have put on Christ, Gal. 3:27. If that be not enough, he is in them, John 17:23, formed in them as the child in the womb, Gal. 4:19. He is the foundation, 1 Cor. 3:11; they are the living stones built upon him, 1 Pet. 2:5. He is the head, and they the body, Eph. 1:22, 23. Nay, he lives in them, as their very souls live in their bodies, Gal. 2:20. And what is more than all this, they are one in the Father and the Son, as the Father is in Christ, and Christ in the Father, John 17:21, "That they all may be one; as you Father are in me, and I in you, that they also may be one in us."

4. Though it is not a mere LEGAL union—yet it is a union supported by law. Christ, as the surety, and Christians as the principal debtors, are one in the eye of the law. When the elect had run themselves, with the rest of mankind, in debt to the justice of God, Christ became surety for them, and paid the debt. When they believe on him, they are united to him in a spiritual marriage union; which takes effect so far, that what he did and suffered for them is reckoned in law, as if they had done and suffered it themselves.

Hence, they are said to be crucified with Christ, Gal. 2:20; buried with him, Col. 2:12; yes, raised up together, namely, with Christ, "and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus," Eph. 2:6. In which places, saints on earth, of whom the apostle there speaks, cannot be said to be sitting—but in the way of law reckoning.

5. It is an INDISSOLUBLE union. Once in Christ, ever in him. Having taken up his habitation in the heart, he never leaves. None can untie this happy knot. Who will dissolve this union?
Will **he** himself? No, he will not; we have his word for it; "I will not turn away from them," Jer. 32:40. But perhaps the **sinner** will do this mischief to himself? No, he shall not; "they shall not depart from me," says their God. Can **devils** do it? No, unless they be stronger than Christ and his Father too; "Neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand," says our Lord, John 10:28. "And none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand," verse 30. But what say you of **death**, which parts husband and wife; yes, separates the soul from the body? Will not death do it? No: the apostle, Romans 8:38, 39, is "persuaded that neither death," terrible as it is, "nor life," desirable as it is; "nor" devils, those evil "angels, nor" the devil's persecuting agents, though they be "principalities, nor powers" on earth; "nor" evil "things present," already lying on us; "nor" evil "things to come" on us; "nor" the "height" of worldly felicity; "nor depth" of worldly misery; "nor any other creature," good or evil, "shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

As death separated Christ's soul from his body—but could not separate either his soul or body from his divine nature; so, though the saints should be separated from their nearest relations in the world, and from all their earthly enjoyments; yes, though their souls should be separated from their bodies separated in a thousand pieces, their "bones scattered, as one cuts or cleaves wood;" yet soul and body shall remain united to the Lord Christ; for even in death, "they sleep in Jesus," 1 Thess. 4:14; and "he keeps all their

bones," Psalm 34:20. Union with Christ, is "the grace wherein we stand," firm and stable, "as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed."

6. It is a MYSTERIOUS union. The gospel is a doctrine of mysteries. It discovers to us the substantial union of the three persons in one Godhead, 1 John 5:7, "These three are one;" the hypostatic union, of the divine and human natures, in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, 1 Tim. 3:16, "God was manifest in the flesh;" and the mystical union, between Christ and believers; "This is a great mystery" also, Eph. 5:32. O, what mysteries are here! The head in heaven, the members on earth—yet really united! "Christ in the believer, living in him, walking in him:" and "the believer dwelling in God, putting on the Lord Jesus, eating his flesh, and drinking his blood!" This makes the saints a mystery to the world; yes, a mystery to themselves.

I come now more particularly to speak of this union with, and engrafting into, Jesus Christ.

I. I shall consider the natural stock, which the branches are taken out of.

II. The supernatural stock they are engrafted into.

III. What branches are cut off the old stock, and put into the new.

IV. How it is done. And,

V. The benefits flowing from this union and engrafting.

I. Let us take a view of the natural stock, which the branches are taken out of. The two Adams, that is, Adam and Christ, are the two stocks: for the Scripture speaks of these two, as if there had been no more men in the world than they, 1 Cor. 15:45, "The first man Adam was made a living soul, the last Adam was made a quickening spirit;" verse 47, "The first man is of the earth earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven." And the reason is, there never were any that were not branches of one of these two; all men being either in the one stock or in the other: for in these two sorts

all mankind stand divided, verse 48, "As is the earthy, such are they also which are earthy; and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly." The first Adam then, is the natural stock: on this stock are the branches found growing at first, which are afterwards cut off, and engrafted into Christ. As for the fallen angels, as they had no relation to the first Adam, so they have none to the second.

There are four things to be remembered here.

(1.) That all mankind, the man Christ excepted, are naturally branches of the first Adam, Romans 5:12, "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin: and so death passed upon all men."

(2.) The bond which knit us unto the natural stock, was the covenant of works. Adam, being our natural root, was made the moral root also, bearing all his posterity, as representing them in the covenant of works. For "by one man's disobedience many were made sinners," Romans 5:19. It was necessary that there should be a peculiar relation between that one man and the many, as a foundation for imputing his sin to them. This relation did not arise from the mere natural bond between him and us, as a father to his children; for so we are related to our immediate parents, whose sins are not thereupon imputed to us, as Adam's sin is: but it arose from a moral bond between Adam and us; the bond of a covenant, which could be no other than the covenant of works, wherein we are united to him, as branches to a stock. Hence Jesus Christ, though a son of Adam, Luke 3:23-38, was none of these branches; for as he came not of Adam, in virtue of the blessing of marriage, which was given before the fall, Gen. 1:28, "Be fruitful, and multiply," etc.—but in virtue of a special promise made after the fall, Gen. 3:15, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head," he could not be represented by Adam in a covenant made before his fall.

(3.) As it is impossible for a branch to be in two stocks at once, so no man can be at one and the same time, both in the first and second Adam.

(4.) Hence it evidently follows, that all who are not engrafted in Jesus Christ, are yet branches of the old stock; and so partake of the nature of the same.

Now, as to the first Adam, our natural stock, consider,

First, What a stock he was originally. He was a vine of the Lord's planting, a choice vine, a noble vine, wholly good. There was a consultation of the Trinity at the planting of this vine, Gen. 1:26, "Let us make man in our image, after our own likeness." There was no rottenness at the heart of it. There was sap and juice enough in it to have nourished all the branches, to bring forth fruit unto God. My meaning is, Adam was made able perfectly to keep the commandments of God, which would have procured eternal life to himself, and to all his posterity; for as all die by Adam's disobedience, all would have had life by his obedience, if he had stood. Consider,

Secondly, **What that stock now is. Ah! most unlike to what it was when planted by the Author of all good. A blast from hell, and a bite with the venomous teeth of the old serpent, have made it a degenerate stock; a dead stock; nay, a killing stock.**

1. It is a degenerate EVIL stock. Therefore, the Lord God said to Adam in that dismal day, "Where are you?" Gen. 3:9. In what condition are you now? "How are you turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me?" Or, "Where were you?" Why not in the place of meeting with me? Why so long in coming? What means this fearful change; this hiding of yourself from me? Alas! the stock is degenerate, quite spoiled, is become altogether evil, and brings forth wild grapes. Converse with the devil is preferred to communion with God. Satan is believed; and God, who is truth itself, disbelieved. He who was the friend of God is now in

conspiracy against him. Darkness is come in the place of light; ignorance prevails in the mind, where divine knowledge shone; the will, which was righteous and regular, is now turned rebel against its Lord: and the whole man is in dreadful disorder.

Before I go farther, let me stop and observe, Here is a mirror both for saints and sinners. Sinners, stand here and consider what you **are**; and saints, learn what you once **were**. You, sinners, are branches of a degenerate stock. Fruit you may bear indeed; but now that your vine is the vine of Sodom, your grapes must of course be grapes of gall, Deut. 32:32. The Scripture speaks of two sorts of fruit which grow on the branches of the natural stock; and it is plain that they are of the nature of their degenerate stock. (1.) The wild grapes of wickedness, Isaiah 5:2. These grow in abundance, by influence from hell. See Gal. 5:19-21. At its gates are all manner of these fruits, both new and old. Storms come from heaven to check them; but still they grow. They are struck at with the sword of the Spirit, the word of God; conscience gives them many a secret blow; yet they thrive. (2.) Fruit to themselves, Hos. 10:1. What else are all the unrenewed man's acts of obedience, his reformation, sober deportment, his prayers, and good works? They are all done chiefly for himself, not for the glory of God. These fruits are like the apples of Sodom, fair to look at—but full of ashes when handled and tried. You think you have not only the leaves of a profession—but the fruits of a holy practice too; but if you be not broken off from the old stock, and engrafted in Christ Jesus, God accepts not, and regards not your fruits.

Here I must take occasion to tell you, there are five faults will be found in heaven with your best fruits.

(1.) Their **bitterness**; your "clusters are bitter," Deut. 32:32. There is a spirit of bitterness, wherewith some come before the Lord, in religious duties, living in malice and envy; and which some professors entertain against others, because they outshine them in holiness of life, or because they are not of their opinion. This,

wherever it reigns, is a fearful symptom of an unregenerate state. But I do not so much mean this, as that which is common to all the branches of the old stock, namely, the *leaves of* ***hypocrisy***, Luke 12:1, which sours and embitters every duty they perform. Wisdom, which is full of good fruits, is without hypocrisy, James 3:17.

(2.) Their **ill savor**. Their works are abominable, for they themselves are corrupt, Psalm 14:1. They all savor of the old stock, not of the new. It is the peculiar privilege of the saints, that they are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, 2 Cor. 2:15. The unregenerate man's fruits savor not of love to Christ, nor of the blood of Christ, nor of the incense of his intercession; and therefore will never be accepted in heaven.

(3.) Their **unripeness**. Their grape is an unripe grape, Job 15:33. There is no influence on them from the Sun of righteousness to bring them to perfection. They have the *shape* of fruit—but no more. The matter of duty is in them—but they lack right principles and ends: their works are not in God, John 3:21. Their prayers drop from their lips, before their hearts are impregnated with the vital sap of the Spirit of supplication: their tears fall from their eyes before their hearts are truly softened; their feet turn to new paths, and their way is altered, while their nature still is unchanged.

(4.) Their **lightness**. Being weighed in the balances, they are found lacking, Dan. 5:27. For evidence whereof, you may observe that they do not humble the soul—but lift it up in pride. The good fruits of holiness bear down the branches they grow upon, making them to salute the ground, 1 Cor. 15:19, "I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I—but the grace of God which was with me." But the blasted fruits of unrenewed men's performances, hang lightly on branches towering up to heaven, Judges 17:13, "Now know I, that the Lord will do me good, seeing I have a Levite as my priest." They look, indeed, too high for God to behold them: "Why have we fasted, say they, and you see not" Isaiah 58:3. The more duties they do, and the better they seem to perform them, the less are

they humbled, and the more are they lifted up. This disposition of the sinner is the exact reverse of what is to be found in the saint. To men, who neither are in Christ, nor are solicitous to be found in him, their duties are like floating bladders, wherewith they think to swim ashore to Immanuel's land; but these must needs break, and they consequently sink, because they take not Christ for the lifter up of their heads, Psalm 3:3, 5. They are not all manner of pleasant fruits, Cant. 7:13. Christ, as a king, must be served with variety. Where God makes the heart his garden, he plants it as Solomon did his, with trees of all kinds of fruits, Eccl. 2:5. Accordingly, it brings forth the fruit of the Spirit in all goodness, Eph. 5:9. But the ungodly are not so; their obedience is never universal; there is always some one thing or other excepted. In one word, their fruits are fruits of an evil tree, which cannot be accepted in heaven.

2. Our natural stock is a DEAD stock, according to the threatening, Gen. 2:17, "In the day you eat thereof, you shall surely die." Our root is now rottenness; no wonder the blossom goes up as dust. The stroke has gone to the heart, the sap is let out, and the tree is withered. The curse of the first covenant, like a hot thunderbolt from heaven, has lighted on it, and ruined it. It is cursed now as that fig-tree, Matt. 21:19, "Let no fruit grow on you henceforward forever." Now it is good for nothing—but to cumber the ground, and furnish fuel for Tophet.

Let me enlarge a little here also. Every unrenewed man is a branch of a dead stock. When you see, O sinner, a dead stock of a tree, exhausted of all its sap, having branches on it in the same condition, look on it as a lively representation of your soul's state.

(1.) Where the stock is dead, the branches must needs be barren. Alas! the barrenness of many professors plainly discovers on what stock they are growing. It is easy to pretend to faith—but "I can't see your faith if you don't have good deeds." James 2:18.

(2.) A dead stock can convey no sap to the branches, to make them bring forth fruit. The covenant of works was the bond of our union

with the natural stock; but now it is become weak through the flesh; that is, through the degeneracy and depravity of human nature, Romans 8:3. It is strong enough to command, and to bind heavy burdens on the shoulders of those who are not in Christ—but it affords no strength to bear them. The sap, that was once in the root, is now gone: the law, like a merciless creditor, apprehends Adam's heirs, saying to each, "Pay what you owe;" when, alas! his effects are riotously spent.

(3.) All pains and cost are lost on the tree, whose life is gone. In vain do men labor to get fruit on the branches, when there is no sap in the root. The gardener's pains are lost: ministers lose their labor on the branches of the old stock, while they continue on it. Many sermons are preached to no purpose; because there is no life to give sensation. Sleeping men may be awakened; but the dead cannot be raised without a miracle; even so the dead sinner must remain, if he be not restored to life by a miracle of grace.

The influences of heaven are lost on such a tree: in vain does the rain fall upon it; in vain is it laid open to the winter cold and frosts. The Lord of the vineyard digs about many a dead soul—but it is not bettered. "Bruise the fool in a mortar, his folly will not depart." Though he meets with many crosses—yet he retains his lusts: let him be laid on a sick bed, he will lie there like a sick beast, groaning under his pain—but not mourning for, nor turning from, his sin. Let death itself stare him in the face, he will presumptuously maintain his hope. Sometimes there are common operations of the divine Spirit performed on him: he is sent home with a trembling heart, and with arrows of conviction sticking in his soul; but at length he prevails against these things, and becomes as secure as ever. Summer and winter are alike to the branches on the dead stock. When others about them are budding, blossoming, and bringing forth fruit, there is no change on them: the dead stock has no growing time at all.

Perhaps it may be difficult to know, in the winter, what trees are dead, and what are alive; but the spring plainly discovers it. There are some seasons wherein there is little life to be perceived, even among saints; yet times of reviving come at length. But even when "the vine flourishes, and the pomegranates bud forth," when saving grace is discovering itself by its lively actings wherever it is, the branches on the old stock are still withered. When the dry bones are coming together, bone to bone among saints, the sinner's bones are still lying about the grave's mouth. They are trees that cumber the ground, ready to be cut down; and will be cut down for the fire, if God in mercy does not prevent it—by cutting them off from that stock, and engrafting them into another.

3. Our natural stock is a KILLING stock. If the stock dies, how can the branches live? If the sap is gone from the root and heart, the branches must needs wither. "In Adam all die," 1 Cor. 15:22. The root died in Paradise, and all the branches in it, and with it. The root is poisoned, and from thence the branches are infected; "death is in the pot;" and all that taste of the pottage, are killed.

Know then, that every natural man is a branch of a killing stock. Our natural root not only gives us no life—but it has a killing power, reaching to all the branches thereof. There are four things which the first Adam conveys to all his branches, and they are abiding in, and lying on, such of them as are not engrafted in Christ.

(1.) A corrupt nature. He sinned, and his nature was thereby corrupted and depraved; and this corruption is conveyed to all his posterity. He was infected, and the contagion spread itself over all his descendents.

(2.) Guilt, that is, an obligation to punishment, Romans 5:12, "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for all have sinned." The threatenings of the law, as cords of death, are twisted about the branches of the old stock, to draw them over the hedge into the fire. And until they be

cut off from this stock by the pruning-knife, the sword of vengeance hangs over their heads, to cut them down.

(3.) This killing stock transmits the curse into the branches. The stock, as the stock (for I speak not of Adam in his personal and private capacity), being cursed, so are the branches, Gal. 3:10, "For as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse." The curse affects the whole man, and all that belongs to him, everything he possesses; and works three ways.

[1.] As poison, infecting; thus their blessings are cursed, Mal. 2:2. Whatever the man enjoys, it can do him no good—but evil, being thus poisoned by the curse. His prosperity in the world destroys him, Proverbs 1:32. The ministry of the gospel is a savor of death unto death to him, 2 Cor. 2:16. His seeming attainments in religion are cursed to him; his knowledge serves but to puff him up, and his duties to keep him back from Christ.

[2.] It works as a moth, consuming and wasting by little and little, Hos. 5:12, "Therefore will I be unto Ephraim as a moth." There is a worm at the root, consuming them by degrees. Thus the curse pursued Saul, until it wormed him out of all his enjoyments, and out of the very show he had of religion. Sometimes they decay like the fat of lambs, and melt away as the snow in the sunshine.

[3.] It acts as a lion rampant, Hos. 5:14, "I will be unto Ephraim as a lion." The Lord "rains on them snares fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest," in such a manner, that they are hurried away with the stream. He tears their enjoyments from them in his wrath, pursues them with terrors, rends their souls from their bodies, and throws the dead branch into the fire. Thus the curse devours like fire, which none can quench.

(4.) This killing stock transmits death to the branches upon it. Adam took the poisonous cup, and drank it off: this occasioned death to himself and us. We came into the world spiritually dead, thereby exposed to eternal death, and absolutely liable to temporal death.

This root is to us like the Scythian river, which, they say, brings forth little bladders every day, out of which come certain small flies, that are bred in the morning, winged at noon, and dead at night: a very lively emblem of our mortal state.

Now, sirs, is it not absolutely necessary to be broken off from this our natural stock? What will our fair leaves of a profession, or our fruits of duties, avail—if we be still branches of the degenerate, dead, and killing stock? But, alas! of the many questions among us, few are taken up about these, "Whether am I broken off from the old stock, or not? Am I engrafted in Christ, or not?" Ah! why all this waste of time? Why is there so much noise about religion among many, who can give no good account of their having laid a good foundation, being mere strangers to experimental religion? I fear, if God does not in mercy undermine the religion of many of us, and let us see that we have none at all, our root will be found rottenness, and our blossom go up as dust, in a dying hour. Therefore, let us look to our state, that we be not found fools in our latter end.

II. Let us now view the SUPERNATURAL stock, into which the branches cut off from the natural stock are engrafted. Jesus Christ is sometimes called "The Branch," Zech. 3:8. So he is in respect of his human nature, being a branch, and the top branch, of the house of David. Sometimes he is called a Root, Isaiah 11:10. We have both together, Rev. 21:16, "I am the root and the offspring of David;" David's root as God, and his offspring as man. The text tells us, that he is the vine, that is, he, as a Mediator, is the vine stock, whereof believers are the branches. As the sap comes from the earth into the root and stock, and from thence is diffused into the branches; so, by Christ as Mediator, divine life is conveyed from the fountain, unto those who are united to him by faith, John 6:57, "As the living Father has sent me, and I live by the Father; so, he who eats me, even he shall live by me." By Christ as Mediator, not as God only, as some have asserted; nor yet as man only, as the papists

generally hold: but as Mediator, God and man, Acts 20:28, "The church of God, which he has purchased with his own blood." Heb. 9:14, "Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God."

The divine and human natures have their distinct actings—yet a joint operation, in his discharging the office of Mediator. This is illustrated by the similitude of a fiery sword, which at once cuts and burns: cutting it burns, and burning it cuts; the steel cuts, and the fire burns. Therefore Christ, God-man, is the stock, whereof believers are the branches: and they are united to a whole Christ. They are united to him in his human nature, as being "members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones," Eph. 5:30. And they are united to him in his divine nature; for so the apostle speaks of this union, Col. 1:27, "Christ in you, the hope of glory." Those who are Christ's have the Spirit of Christ, Romans 8:9; and by him they are united to the Father, and to the Holy Spirit; 1 John 4:15, "Whoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwells in him, and he in God." Faith, the bond of this union, receives a whole Christ, God-man, and so unites us to him as such.

Behold here, O believers, your high privilege. You were once branches of a degenerate stock, even as others: but you have, by grace, become branches of the true vine, John 15:1. You are cut out of a dead and killing stock, and engrafted in the last Adam, who was made a quickening spirit, 1 Cor. 15:45. Your loss by the first Adam is made up, with great advantage, by your union with the second. Adam, at his best estate, was but a shrub, in comparison with Christ the tree of life. He was but a servant; Christ is the Son, the Heir, and Lord of all things, "the Lord from heaven." It cannot be denied, that grace was shown in the first covenant: but it is as far exceeded by the grace of the second covenant, as the twilight is by the light of the mid-day.

III. What BRANCHES are taken out of the natural stock, and grafted into this vine? Answer: These are the elect, and no others. They, and they alone, are grafted into Christ; and consequently, none but they are cut off from the killing stock. For them alone he intercedes, "That they may be one in him and his Father," John 17:9-23. Faith, the bond of this union, is given to none else; it is the faith of God's elect, Tit. 1:1. The Lord passes by many branches growing on the natural stock, and cuts off only here one, and there one, and grafts them into the true vine, according as His sovereign love has determined. Often does he pitch upon the most unlikely branch, leaving the top boughs; passing by the mighty and the noble, and calling the weak, base, and despised, 1 Cor. 1:26, 27. Yes, he often leaves the lovely and smooth, and takes the broken and knotty; "and such were some of you—but you are washed," etc., 1 Cor. 6:11.

If we inquire, "Why so?" we find no other reason, but because they were chosen in him, Eph. 1:4; "predestinated to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ," ver. 5. Thus are they gathered together in Christ, while the rest are left growing on their natural stock, to be afterwards bound up in bundles for the fire. Therefore, to whoever the Gospel may come in vain, it *will* have a blessed effect on God's elect, Acts 13:48, "as many as were ordained to eternal life, believed." Where the Lord has many people, the gospel *will* have much success, sooner or later. Such as are to be saved, *will* be added to the mystical body of Christ.

IV. I am now to show HOW the branches are cut off from the natural stock, the first Adam, and grafted into the true vine, the Lord Jesus Christ. Thanks to the Farmer, not to the branch, which is cut off from its natural stock, and grafted into a new one. The sinner, in his coming off from the first stock, is passive, and neither can nor will come off from it of his own accord—but clings to it, until almighty power makes him to fall off, John 6:44, "No man can come

unto me, except the Father, who has sent me, draw him." And chapter 5:40, "You will not come to me, that you might have life." The engrafted branches are "God's husbandry," 1 Cor. 3:9, "The planting of the Lord," Isaiah 61:3. The ordinary means he makes use of, in this work, is the ministry of the word, 1 Cor. 3:9, "We are laborers together with God." **But the efficacy thereof is wholly from him, whatever the minister's parts or piety is**, ver. 7, "Neither is he who plants anything, neither he who waters; but God that gives the increase." The apostles preached to the Jews—yet the body of that people remained in infidelity, Romans 10:16, "Who has believed our report?" Yes, Christ himself, who spoke as never man spoke, says concerning the success of his own ministry, "I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nothing," Isaiah 49:4. The branches may be hacked by the preaching of the word; but the stroke will never go through—until it is carried home by the omnipotent arm. However, God's ordinary way is, "by the foolishness of preaching to save those who believe," 1 Cor. 1:21.

The cutting of the branch from the natural stock, is performed by the pruning knife of the law, in the hand of the Spirit of God, Gal. 2:19, "For I, through the law, am dead to the law." It is by the bond of the covenant of works, as I said before, that we are knit to our natural stock: therefore, as a wife, unwilling to be put away, pleads and hangs by the marriage tie; so do men by the covenant of works. They hold by it, like the man who held the ship with his hands; and when one hand was cut off, held it with the other; and when both were cut off, held it with his teeth. This will appear from a distinct view of the Lord's works on men, in bringing them off from the old stock; which I offer in the following particulars:

1. When the Spirit of the Lord comes to deal with a person, to bring him to Christ, he finds him in Laodicea's case, in a sound sleep of security, dreaming of heaven and the favor of God, though full of sin against the Holy One of Israel, Rev. 3:17, "You don't know, that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Therefore, he darts in some beams of light into the dark soul; and

lets the man see that he is a lost man, if he does not become a new man, and betake himself to a new course of life. Thus, by the Spirit of the Lord, acting as a spirit of bondage, there is a criminal court erected in the man's bosom; where he is arraigned, accused, and condemned for breaking the law of God, "convicted of sin and judgment," John 16:8. And now he can no longer sleep securely in his former course of life. This is the first stroke which the branch gets, in order to cutting off.

2. Hereupon the man forsakes his former profane courses, his lying, swearing, Sabbath-breaking, stealing, and such like practices; though they are dear to him as right eyes, he will rather forsake them than ruin his soul. The ship is likely to sink, and therefore he throws his goods overboard, that he himself may not perish. Now he begins to bless himself in his heart, and looks joyfully on his evidences for heaven; thinking himself a better servant to God than many others, Luke 18:11, "God, I thank you, I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers," etc.

But he soon gets another stroke with the axe of the law, showing him that it is only he who does what is written in the law, who can be saved by it; and that his negative holiness is too scanty a covering from the storm of God's wrath. Thus, although his sins of commission only were heavy on him before, his sins of omission now crowd into his thoughts, attended with a train of law curses and vengeance. And each of the ten commandments discharges thunder-claps of wrath against him for his omission of required duties.

3. Upon this he turns to a positively holy course of life. He not only is not profane—but he performs religious duties: he prays, seeks the knowledge of the principles of religion, strictly observes the Lord's day, and, like Herod, does many things, and hears sermons gladly. In one word, there is a great conformity, in his outward conversation, to the letter of both tables of the law. There is a mighty change in the man, which his neighbors cannot miss taking

notice of. Hence he is cheerfully admitted by the godly into their society, as a praying person; and can confer with them about religious matters, yes, and about soul exercise, which some are not acquainted with; and their good opinion of him confirms his good opinion of himself. *This step in religion is fatal to many, who never get beyond it.*

But here the Lord gives the elect branch a farther stroke. Conscience flies in the man's face, for some wrong steps in his conversation, the neglect of some duty, or commission of some sin, which is a blot in his conversation; and then the flaming sword of the law appears again over his head, and the curse rings in his ears, for that he "continues not in all things written in the law, to do them," Gal. 3:10.

4. On this account, he is obliged to seek another remedy for his disease. He goes to God, confesses his sin, seeks the pardon of it, promising to watch against it for the time to come; and so finds case, and thinks he may very well take it, seeing the scripture says, "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins," 1 John 1:9; not considering that he grasps at a privilege, which is only theirs who are grafted into Christ, and under the covenant of grace, and which the branches yet growing on the old stock cannot plead. And here sometimes there are formal and express vows made against such and such sins, and binding to such and such duties. **Thus many go on all their days, knowing no other religion, than to perform duties, and to confess, and pray for pardon of that wherein they fail, promising themselves eternal happiness, though they are utter strangers to Christ.**

Here many elect ones have been cast down wounded, and many reprobrates have been slain, while the wounds of neither of them have been deep enough to cut them off from their natural stock. But the Spirit of the Lord gives yet a deeper stroke to the branch which is to be cut off, showing him, that, as yet, he is but an *outside saint*, and discovering to him the filthy lusts lodged in his heart, which he

took no notice of before, Romans 7:9, "When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." Then he sees his heart to be full of sinful lusts, covetousness, pride, malice, filthiness and the like. Now, as soon as the door of the chambers of his imagery is thus opened to him, and he sees what they do there in the dark, his *outside religion* is blown up as insufficient; and he learns a new lesson in religion, namely, "That he is not a Jew, who is one outwardly," Romans 2:28.

5. Upon this he goes farther, even to *inside religion*; sets to work more vigorously than ever, mourns over the evils of his heart, and strives to keep down the weeds which he finds growing in that neglected garden. He labors to curb his pride and passion, and to banish impurities of thought; prays more fervently, hears attentively, and strives to get his heart affected in every religious duty he performs; and thus he comes to think himself, not only an outside—but an inside Christian. Wonder not at this—for there is nothing in it beyond the power of nature, or what one may attain to under a vigorous influence of the covenant of works; therefore, another yet deeper stroke is given!

The law charges home on the man's conscience, that he was a transgressor from the womb; that he came into the world a guilty creature; and that in the time of his ignorance, and even since his eyes were opened, he has been guilty of many actual sins, either altogether overlooked by him or not sufficiently mourned over; for spiritual sores, not healed by the blood of Christ—but skinned over some other way, so as to be easily irritated, and soon to break out again; therefore, the law takes him by the throat, saying, "Pay what you owe!"

6. Then the sinner says in his heart, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you all;" and so falls to *work* to pacify an offended God, and to *atone* for those sins. He renews his repentance, such as it is; bears patiently the afflictions laid upon him; yes, he afflicts himself, denies himself the use of his lawful comforts, sighs deeply, mourns

bitterly, cries with tears for a pardon, until he has wrought up his heart to a conceit of having obtained it: having thus done penance for what is past, he resolves to be a good servant to God, and to hold on in outward and inward obedience, for the time to come.

But the stroke must go nearer the heart yet, before the branch falls off. The Lord discovers to him, in the glass of the law, how he sins in all he does, even when he does the best he can; and therefore the dreadful sound returns to his ears, Gal. 3:10, "Cursed is everyone who continues not in *all* things," etc. "When you fasted and mourned," says the Lord, "did you at all fast unto me, even to me?" *Will muddy water make clean clothes?* Will you satisfy for one sin with another? Did not your thoughts wander in such a duty? Were not your affections flat in another? Did not your heart give a sinful look to such an idol? And did it not rise in a fit of impatience under such an affliction? "Should I accept this of your hands? Cursed be the deceiver, who sacrifices to the Lord a corrupt thing," Mal. 1:13, 14. And thus he becomes so far broken off, that he sees he is not able to satisfy the demands of the law.

7. Hence, like a broken man, who finds he is not able to pay all his debt, he goes about to deal with his creditor. And, being in pursuit of ease and comfort, he does what he can to fulfill the law; and wherein he fails, he trusts that God will accept the will for the deed. Thus doing his duty, and having a will to do better, he cheats himself into persuasion of the goodness of his state: and hereby thousands are ruined.

But the elect get another stroke, which loosens their hold in this case. The doctrine of the law is borne in on their consciences, demonstrating to them, that exact and perfect obedience is required by it, under pain of the curse; and that it is doing, and not wishing to do—which will avail. Wishing to do better will not answer the law's demands; and therefore the curse sounds again, "Cursed is everyone that continues not – to do them;" that is, actually to do them. In vain is wishing then.

8. Being broken off from all hopes of fulfilling the law, he falls to *borrowing*. He sees that all he can do to obey the law, and all his desires to be and to do better—will not save his soul: therefore, he goes to Christ, entreating, that His righteousness may make up what is lacking in his own, and cover all the defects of his doings and sufferings; that so God, for Christ's sake, may accept them, and thereupon be reconciled. Thus doing what he can to fulfill the law, and looking to Christ to make up all his defects, he comes at length to sleep securely again. Many people are ruined this way. This was the error of the Galatians, which Paul, in his epistle to them, disputes against. But the Spirit of God breaks off the sinner from this hold also, by bringing home to his conscience that great truth, Gal. 3:12, "The law is not of faith—but the man who does them, shall live in them." There is no mixing of the law and faith in this business; the sinner must hold by one of them, and let the other go. The way of the law, and the way of faith, are so far different, that it is not possible for a sinner to walk in the one, unless he comes off from the other: and if he be for doing, he must do all alone; Christ will not do a part for him, if he does not all. A garment pieced up of sundry sorts of righteousness, is not a garment fit for the court of heaven. Thus the man is like one in a dream, who thought he was eating—but being awakened by a stroke, behold his soul is faint; his heart sinks in him like a stone, while he finds that he can neither bear his burden himself alone, nor can he get help under it.

9. What can he do who must needs pay, and yet has not enough of his own to bring him out of debt; nor can borrow so much, and is ashamed to beg? What can such a one do, I say—but sell himself, as the man under the law, who had become poor? Lev. 25:47. Therefore, the sinner, beat off from so many holds, attempts to make a bargain with Christ, and to sell himself to the Son of God, if I may so speak, solemnly promising and vowing, that he will be a servant to Christ, as long as he lives, if he will save his soul. And here, the sinner often makes a personal covenant with Christ,

resigning himself to him on these terms; yes, and takes the sacrament, to make the bargain sure. Hereupon the man's great care is—how to obey Christ, keep his commandments, and so fulfill his bargain. In this the soul finds a false, unsound peace, for a while; until the Spirit of the Lord gives another stroke, to cut off the man from this refuge of lies likewise. And that happens in this manner: when he fails of the duties he engaged to perform, and falls again into the sin he covenanted against, it is powerfully carried home on his conscience, that his covenant is broken; so all his comfort goes, and terrors afresh seize on his soul, as one who has broken covenant with Christ. Commonly the man to help himself, renews his covenant—but breaks it again as before. And how is it possible it should be otherwise, seeing he is still upon the old stock? Thus the work of many, all their days, as to their souls, is nothing but a making and breaking such covenants, over and over again.

Objection. Some perhaps will say, "Who lives, and sins not? Who is there that fails not of the duties he has engaged to? If you reject this way as unsound, who then can be saved?"

Answer. True believers will be saved, namely, all who do by faith take hold of God's covenant. But this kind of covenant is men's own covenant, devised of their own heart; not God's covenant, revealed in the gospel of his grace: and the making of it is nothing else but the making of a covenant of works with Christ, confounding the law and the Gospel; a covenant God will never subscribe to, though we should sign it with our heart's blood. Romans 4:14, 16, "For if those who are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of no effect. Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace, to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed." Chapter 11:6, "And if by grace, then is it no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace, otherwise work is no more work."

God's covenant is everlasting; once in and never out of it again; and the mercies of it are sure mercies, Isaiah 55:3. But that covenant of yours is a tottering covenant, never sure—but broken every day. It is a mere servile covenant, giving Christ *service* for salvation; but God's covenant is a filial covenant, in which the sinner takes Christ, and his salvation freely offered, and so becomes a son, John 1:12, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God:" and being become a son, he serves his Father, not that the inheritance may become his—but because it is his, through Jesus Christ. See Gal. 4:24, and onward. To enter into that false covenant, is to buy from Christ with money; but to take hold of God's covenant, is to buy of him without money and without price, Isaiah 55:1, that is to say, to beg of him. In that covenant men work for life; in God's covenant they come to Christ for life, and work from life. When a person under that covenant fails in his duty, all is gone; the covenant must be made over again. But under God's covenant, although the man fails in his duty, and for his failure falls under the discipline of the covenant, and lies under the weight of it, until such time as he has recourse anew to the blood of Christ for pardon, and renew his repentance; yet all that he trusted to, for life and salvation, namely, the righteousness of Christ, still stands entire, and the covenant remains firm. See Romans 7:24, 25; and chapter 8:1.

Now, though some men spend their lives in making and breaking such covenants of their own, the terror on the breaking of them becoming weaker and weaker, by degrees, until at last it creates them little or no uneasiness; yet the man, in whom the good work is carried on, until it be accomplished in cutting him off from the old stock, finds these covenants to be as rotten cords, broken at every touch; and the terror of God being thereupon redoubled on his spirit, and the waters at every turn getting in unto his very soul, he is obliged to cease from catching hold of such covenants and to seek help some other way.

10. Therefore, the man comes at length to beg at Christ's door for mercy; but yet he is a *proud beggar*, standing on his personal worth. For, as the papists have many mediators to plead for them, so the branches of the old stock have always something to produce, which they think may commend them to Christ, and engage him to take their cause in hand. They cannot think of coming to the spiritual market, without money in their hand. They are like people who have once had an estate of their own—but are reduced to extreme poverty, and forced to beg. When they come to beg, they still remember their former character; and though they have lost their substance—yet they retain much of their former spirit: therefore, they cannot think that they ought to be treated as ordinary beggars—but deserve a particular regard; and, if that be not given them, their spirits rise against him to whom they address themselves for a supply. Thus God gives the unhumbled sinner many common mercies, and shuts him not up in the pit according to his deserving; but all this is nothing in his eyes. He must be set down at the children's table, otherwise he reckons himself hardly dealt with, and wronged: for he is not yet brought so low, as to think God may be justified when he speaks against him, when he judges him according to his real demerit, Psalm 51:4.

He thinks, perhaps, that, even before he was enlightened, he was better than many others; he considers his reformation of life—his repentance; the grief and tears which his sin has cost him—his earnest desires after Christ, his prayers and wrestlings for mercy; and uses all these now as bribes for mercy, laying no small weight upon them in his addresses to the throne of grace. But here the Spirit of the Lord shoots his arrows quickly into the man's heart, whereby his confidence in these things is sunk and destroyed; and, instead of thinking himself better than many—he is made to see himself worse than any. The faults in his reformation of life are discovered; his repentance appears to him no better than the repentance of Judas; his tears like Esau's, and his desires after Christ to be selfish and loathsome, like those who sought Christ

because of the loaves, John 6:26. His answer from God seems now to be, "Away, proud beggar, How shall I put you among the children?" He seems to look sternly on him, for his slighting of Jesus Christ by unbelief, which is a sin he scarcely discerned before. But now at length he beholds it in its crimson colors, and is pierced to the heart, as with a thousand darts, while he sees how he has been going on blindly, sinning against the remedy of sin, and, in the whole course of his life, trampling on the blood of the Son of God. And now he is, in his own eyes, the miserable object of law vengeance, yes, and gospel vengeance too.

11. The man being thus far humbled, will no more plead, "he is worthy for whom Christ should do this thing;" but, on the contrary, looks on himself as unworthy of Christ, and unworthy of the favor of God. We may compare him, in this case, to the young man who followed Christ, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; who, when "the men laid hold on him," "left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked," Mark 14:51, 52. Even so the man had been following Christ, in the thin and cold garment of his own personal worthiness: but by it, even by it, which he so much trusted to, the law catches hold of him, to make him prisoner; and then he is hesitant to leave it, and flees away naked; yet not to Christ—but from him. If you now tell him he is welcome to Christ, if he will come to him; he is apt to say, Can such a vile and unworthy wretch as I, be welcome to the holy Jesus? If a plaster be applied to his wounded soul, it will not stick. He says, "depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord," Luke 5:8. No man needs speak to him of his repentance, for his comfort; he can quickly espy such faults in it as makes it worthless: nor of his tears; for he is assured they have never come into the Lord's bottle. He disputes himself away from Christ; and concludes, now that he has been such a slighter of Christ, and is such an unholy and vile creature, that he cannot, he will not, he ought not to come to Christ; and that he must either be in better case, or else he will never believe.

Hence he now makes the strongest efforts to amend what was amiss in his way before: he prays more earnestly than ever, mourns more bitterly, strives against sin in heart and life more vigorously, and watches more diligently, if by any means he may at length be fit to come to Christ. One would think the man is well humbled now: but, ah! *deep pride lurks under the veil of this seeming humility;* like a branch of the old stock, he adheres still, and will not submit to the righteousness of God, Romans 10:3. He will not come to the market of free grace, without money. He is bidden to the marriage of the King's Son, where the bridegroom himself furnishes all the guests with wedding garments, stripping them of their own: but he will not come, because he needs a wedding garment; although he is very busy in making one ready.

This is sad work; and therefore he must have a deeper stroke yet, else he is ruined. This stroke is given him with the axe of the law, in its irritating power. Thus the law, girding the soul with cords of death, and holding it in with the rigorous commands of obedience, under the pain of the curse; and God, in his holy and wise conduct, withdrawing his restraining grace, corruption is irritated, lusts become violent; and the more they are striven against, the more they rage, like a furious horse checked with the bit. Then corruptions set up their heads, which he never saw in himself before. Here oft-times, atheism, blasphemy, and, in one word, horrible things concerning God, terrible thoughts concerning the faith, arise in his bosom; so that his heart in a very hell within him. Thus, while he is sweeping the house of his heart, not yet watered with gospel grace, those corruptions which lay quiet before, in neglected corners, fly up and down in it like dust. He is as one who is mending the bank of a river, and while he is repairing breaches in it, and strengthening every part of it, a mighty flood comes down, and overturns his works, and drives all away before it, both that which was newly laid, and what was laid before. Read Romans 7:8-13. This is a stroke which goes to the heart: and by it, his hope of making himself more fit to come to Christ, is cut off.

12. Now the time is come, when the man, between hope and despair, resolves to go to Christ as he is; and therefore, like a dying man, stretching himself just before his breath goes out, he rallies the broken forces of his soul, tries to believe, and in some sort lays hold on Jesus Christ. And now the branch hangs on the old stock by one single tack of a natural faith, produced by the natural vigor of one's own spirit, under a most pressing necessity, Psalm 78:34, 35, "When he slew them, then they sought him, and they returned and inquired early after God. And they remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their Redeemer." Hos. 8:2, "Israel shall cry unto me, My God, we know you." But the Lord, never failing to perfect his work, fetches yet another stroke, whereby the branch falls quite off. The Spirit of God convincingly discovers to the sinner his utter inability to do anything that is good, and so he dies, Romans 7:9. That voice powerfully strikes through his soul, "How can you believe?" John 5:44. You can no more believe, than you can reach up your hand to heaven, and bring Christ down from thence. Thus at length he sees, that he can neither help himself by working, nor by believing; and having no more to hang by on the old stock, he therefore falls off. While he is distressed thus, seeing himself likely to be swept away with the flood of God's wrath, and yet unable so much as to stretch forth a hand to lay hold of a twig of the tree of life, growing on the bank of the river, he is taken up, and engrafted in the true vine, the Lord Jesus Christ giving him the Spirit of faith.

By what has been said upon this head, I design not to rack or distress tender consciences; for though there are but few such at this day—yet God forbid that I should offend any of Christ's little ones. But, alas! a dead sleep is fallen upon this generation, they will not be awakened, let us go ever so near to the quick: therefore, I fear that there is another sort of awakening abiding this sermon-proof generation, which shall make the ears of those who hear it tingle. However, I would not have this to be looked upon as the sovereign God's stinted method of breaking off sinners from the old

stock. But this I maintain as a certain truth, that all who are in Christ have been broken off from all these several confidences; and that they who were never broken off from them, are yet in their natural stock. Nevertheless, if the house be pulled down, and the old foundation razed, it is much the same whether it was taken down stone by stone, or whether it was undermined, and all fell down together.

Now it is that the branch is engrafted in Jesus Christ. And as *the law, in the hand of the Spirit of God, was the instrument to cut off the branch from the natural stock; so the Gospel, in the hand of the same Spirit, is the instrument used for engrafting it into the supernatural stock*, 1 John 1:3; "That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." See Isaiah 61:1-3. The Gospel is the silver cord let down from heaven, to draw perishing sinners to land. And though the preaching of the law prepares the way of the Lord; yet it is in the word of the Gospel that Christ and a sinner meet. Now, as in the natural grafting, the branch being taken up is put into the stock, and being put into it, becomes one with it, so that they are united; even so is the spiritual engrafting, Christ apprehends the sinner, and the sinner, being apprehended of Christ, apprehends him, and so they become one, Phil. 3:12.

First, Christ apprehends the sinner by his Spirit, and draws him to himself, 1 Cor. 12:13, "For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body." The same Spirit which is in the Mediator himself, he communicates to his elect in due time, never to depart from them—but to abide in them as a principle of life. The soul is now in the hands of the Lord of life, and possessed by the Spirit of life; how can it then but live? The man gets a ravishing sight of Christ's excellence in the mirror of the gospel: he sees him a full, suitable, and willing Savior; and gets a heart to take him for and instead of all. The Spirit of faith furnishes him feet to come to Christ, and

hands to receive him. What by nature he could not do, by grace he can, the Holy Spirit working in him the work of faith with power.

Secondly, The sinner, thus apprehended, apprehends Christ by faith, and is one with the blessed stock, Eph. 3:17, "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." The soul that before tried many ways of escape—but all in vain, now looks with the eye of faith, which proves the healing look. As Aaron's rod, laid up in the tabernacle, budded, and brought forth buds, Numb. 17:8; so the dead breach, apprehended by the Lord of life, put into, and bound up with the glorious quickening stock, by the Spirit of life buds forth in actual believing on Jesus Christ, whereby this union is completed. "We, having the same Spirit of faith – believe," 2 Cor. 4:13. Thus the stock and the graft are united, Christ and the Christian are married, faith being the soul's consent to the spiritual marriage covenant, which as it is proposed in the gospel to mankind-sinners indefinitely, so it is demonstrated, attested, and brought home to the man in particular, by the Holy Spirit: and so he, being joined to the Lord, is one Spirit with him. Hereby a believer lives in and for Christ, and Christ lives in and for the believer, Gal. 2:20, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless, I live; yet not I—but Christ lives in me." Hos. 3:3, "You shall not be for another man, so will I also be for you." The bonds, then, of this blessed union are—the Spirit on Christ's part, and faith on the believer's part.

Now both the souls and bodies of believers are united to Christ. "He who is joined to the Lord is one Spirit," 1 Cor. 6:17. The very bodies of believers have this honor put upon them, that they are "the temple of the Holy Spirit," ver. 19, and "the members of Christ," ver. 15. When they sleep in the dust, they sleep in Jesus, 1 Thess. 4:14; and it is in virtue of this union they shall be raised up out of the dust again, Romans 8:11, "He shall quicken your mortal bodies, by his Spirit who dwells in you." In token of this mystical union, the church of believers is called by the name of her Head and Husband, 1 Cor. 12:12, "For as the body is one, and has many members – so also is Christ."

USE. From what is said, we may draw the following inferences:

1. The preaching of the law is most necessary. He who would engraft, must needs use the pruning-knife. Sinners have many contrivances to keep them from Christ; many things by which they keep their hold of the natural stock; therefore, they have need to be closely pursued, and hunted out of their skulking holes, and refuges of lies.

2. Yet it is the Gospel that crowns the work: "The law makes nothing perfect." The law lays open the wound—but it is the Gospel that heals it. The law "strips a man, wounds him and leaves him half dead:" the Gospel "binds up his wounds, pouring in wine and oil," to heal them. By the law we are broken off—but it is by the Gospel we are taken up and implanted in Christ.

3. "If any man has not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his," Romans 8:9. We are told of a monster in nature, having two bodies differently animated, as appeared from contrary affections at one and the same time; but so united, that they were served with the self-same legs. Even so, however men may cleave to Christ, "call themselves of the holy city, and stay themselves upon the God of Israel," Isa 48:2, and may be bound up as branches in him, John 15:2, by the outward ties of sacraments; yet if the Spirit that dwells in Christ, dwell not in them, they are not one with him. There is a great difference between adhesion and engrafting. The ivy clasps and twists itself about the oak—but it is not one with it, for it still grows on its own root: so, to allude to Isaiah 4:1, many professors "take hold" of Christ, "and eat their own bread, and wear their own apparel, only they are called by his name." They stay themselves upon him—but grow upon their own root: they take them to support their hopes—but their delights are elsewhere.

4. The union between Christ and his mystical members is firm and indissoluble. Were it so that the believer only apprehended Christ—but Christ not apprehended him, we could promise little as the stability of such a union; it might quickly be dissolved: but as the

believer apprehends Christ by faith—so Christ apprehends him by his Spirit—and none shall pluck him out of his hand. Did the child only keep hold of the nurse, it might at length grow weary, and let go its hold, and so fall away: but if the nurse has her arms about the child, it is in no hazard of falling away, even though it be not actually holding by her. So, whatever sinful intermissions may happen in the exercise of faith; yet the union remains sure, by reason of the constant indwelling of the Spirit. Blessed Jesus! "All his saints are in your hand," Deut. 33:3. It is observed by some that the word Abba, is the same whether you read it forward or backward: whatever the believer's case be, the Lord is still to him, Abba, Father.

5. They have an unsafe hold of Christ, whom he has not apprehended by his Spirit. There are many half marriages here, where the soul apprehends Christ—but is not apprehended of him. Hence, many fall away, and never rise again; they let go their hold of Christ; and when that is gone, all is gone. These are "the branches in Christ that bear not fruit, which the farmer takes away," John 15:2.

Question. How can that be?

Answer. These branches are set in the stock by a profession, or an unsound hypocritical faith. They are bound up with it, in the external use of the sacraments; but the stock and they are never knit: therefore, they cannot bear fruit. And they need not be cut off, nor broken off; they are by the Farmer only taken away; or, as the word primarily signifies, lifted up, and so taken away, because there is nothing to hold them: they are, indeed, bound up with the stock—but were never united to it.

Question. How shall I know if I am apprehended of Christ?

Answer. You may be satisfied in this inquiry, if you consider and apply these two things:

(1.) When Christ apprehends a man by his Spirit, he is so drawn, that he comes away to Christ, with his whole heart: for true believing is believing with all the heart, Acts 8:37. Our Lord's followers are like those who followed Saul at first, men whose hearts God has touched, 1 Sam. 10:26. When the Spirit pours in overcoming grace, they pour out their hearts like water before him, Psalm 62:8. They flow unto him like a river, Isaiah 2:2, "All nations shall flow unto it," namely, to the "mountain of the Lord's house." It denotes not only the abundance of converts—but the disposition of their souls in coming to Christ; they come heartily and freely, as drawn with loving-kindness, Jer. 31:3; "Your people shall be willing in the day of your power," Psalm 110:3, that is, free, ready, open-hearted, giving themselves to you as free-will offering. When the bridegroom has the bride's heart, it is a right marriage: but **some give their hand to Christ, whodo not give not their heart**. Those who are only driven to Christ by terror, will surely leave him again when that terror is gone. Terror may break a heart of stone—but the pieces into which it is broken still continue to be stone; terrors cannot soften it into a heart of flesh. Yet terrors may begin the work which love crowns. The strong wind, and the earthquake, and the fire going before; the still small voice, in which the Lord is, may come after them. When the blessed Jesus is seeking sinners to match with him, they are bold and perverse: they will not speak with him, until he has wounded them, made them captives, and bound them with the cords of death. When this is done, then it is that he comes to them, and wins their hearts.

The Lord tells us, Hos. 2:16-20, that chosen Israel shall be married unto himself. But how will the bride's consent be won? Why, in the first place, he will bring her into the wilderness, as he did the people when he brought them out of Egypt, ver. 14. There she will be hardly dealt with, scorched with thirst, and bitten by serpents: and then he will speak comfortably to her; or, as the expression is, he will speak unto her heart. The sinner is first driven, and then drawn unto Christ. It is with the soul as with Noah's dove, she was forced

back again to the ark, because she could find nothing else to rest upon: but when she returned, she would have rested on the outside of it, if Noah had not "put forth his hand and pulled her in," Gen. 8:9. The Lord sends his avenger of blood in pursuit of the criminal, who with a sad heart leaves his own city, and with tears in his eyes parts with his old acquaintances, because he dare not stay with them, and he flees for his life to the city of refuge. This is not all his choice, it is forced work; necessity has no law. But when he comes to the gates, and sees the beauty of the place, the excellency and loveliness of it charm him; and then he enters it with heart and good-will, saying, "This is my rest, and here I will stay;" and, as one said in another case, "I had perished, unless I had perished."

(2.) When Christ apprehends a soul, the heart is disengaged from, and turned against sin. As in cutting off the branch from the old stock, the great idol self is brought down, the man is powerfully taught to deny himself; so, in apprehending the sinner by the Spirit, that union is dissolved which was between the man and his lusts, while he was in the flesh, as the apostle expresses it, Romans 7:5. His heart is loosened from them, though formerly as dear to him as the members of his body; as his eyes, legs, or arms; and, instead of taking pleasure in them as before, he longs to be rid of them. When the Lord Jesus comes to a soul, in the day of converting grace, he finds it like Jerusalem, in the day of her nativity, Ezek. 16:4, drawing its fulsome nourishment and satisfaction from its lusts: but he cuts off this communication, that he may impart to the soul his own consolations, and give it rest in himself. And thus the Lord wounds the head and heart of sin, and the soul comes to him, saying, "Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit," Jer. 16:19.

V. The BENEFITS flowing to true believers from their union with Christ. The chief of the particular benefits which believers have by it, are justification, peace, adoption, sanctification, growth in grace, fruitfulness in good works, acceptance of these works,

establishment in the state of grace, support and a special conduct of providence about them. As for communion with Christ, it is such a benefit, as being the immediate consequence of union with him, comprehends all the rest as mediate ones. For as the branch, immediately upon its union with the stock, has communion with the stock in all that is in it; so the believer, uniting with Christ, has communion with him; in which he launches forth into an ocean of happiness, is led into a paradise of pleasures, and has a saving interest in the treasure hid in the field of the Gospel—the unsearchable riches of Christ. As soon as the believer is united to Christ, Christ himself, in whom all fullness dwells, is his, Cant. 3:16, "My beloved is mine, and I am his." And "how shall he not with him freely give us all things?" Romans 8:32. "Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours," 1 Cor. 3:22. This communion with Christ is the great comprehensive blessing necessarily flowing from our union with him. Let us now consider the particular benefits flowing from it before mentioned.

1. The first particular benefit that a sinner has by his union with Christ, is **JUSTIFICATION**; for, **being united to Christ, he has communion with him in his righteousness**, 1 Cor. 1:30, "But of him are you in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness." He stands no more condemned—but justified before God, as being in Christ, Romans 8:1, "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." The branches hereof are, pardon of sin, and personal acceptance.

(1.) His sins are pardoned, the guilt of them is removed. The bond obliging him to pay his debt is cancelled. God the Father takes the pen, dips it in the blood of his Son, crosses off the sinner's accounts, and blots them out of his debt-book. The sinner outside of Christ is bound over to the wrath of God; he is under an obligation in law to go to the prison of hell, and there to lie until he has paid the utmost farthing. This arises from the terrible sanction with which the law is guarded, which is no less than death, Gen.

2:17. So that the sinner, passing the bounds assigned him, is as Shimei in another case, a man of death, 1 Kings 2:42.

But now, being united to Christ, God says, "Deliver him from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom!" Job 33:24. The sentence of condemnation is reversed, the believer is absolved, and set beyond the reach of the condemning law. His sins, which were set before the Lord, Psalm 90:8, so that they could not be hidden—God now takes and casts them all behind his back, Isaiah 38:17. Yes, he casts them into the depths of the sea, Micah 7:19. What falls into a brook may be retrieved—but what is cast into the sea cannot be recovered. But there are some shallow places in the sea; true—but their sins are not cast in there—but into the **depths** of the sea; and the depths of the sea are devouring depths, from whence they shall never come forth again. But what if they do not sink? He will cast them in with force, so that they shall go to the bottom, and sink as lead in the mighty waters of the Redeemer's blood.

They are not only forgiven—but forgotten, Jer. 31:34, "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." And though their after-sins do in themselves deserve eternal wrath, and do actually make them liable to temporal strokes, and fatherly chastisements, according to the tenor of the covenant of grace, Psalm 89:30-33—yet they can never be actually liable to eternal wrath, or the curse of the law; for they are dead to the law in Christ, Romans 7:4. They can never fall away from their union with Christ; neither can they be in Christ, and yet under condemnation at the same time, Romans 8:1, "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." This is an inference drawn from that doctrine of the believer's being dead to the law, set forth by the apostle, chapter 7:1-6; as is clear from the second, third, and fourth verses of this eighth chapter. In this respect the justified man is the blessed man, unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity, Psalm 32:2; as one who has no design to charge a debt on another, sets it not down in his account-book.

(2.) The believer is accepted as righteous in God's sight, 2 Cor. 5:21. For he is "found in Christ, not having his own righteousness—but that which is through faith of Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith," Phil. 3:9. He could never be accepted by God, as righteous, upon the account of his own righteousness; because, at best, it is but imperfect: and all righteousness, properly so called, which can abide a trial before the throne of God, is perfect. The very name of it implies perfection: for unless a work is perfectly conformable to the law, it is not right—but wrong; and so cannot make a man righteous before God, whose judgment is according to truth. Yet if justice demand a righteousness of one that is in Christ, upon which he may be accounted righteous before the Lord, "Surely shall" such a "one say, In the Lord have I righteousness," Isaiah 45:24. The law is fulfilled, its commands are obeyed, its sanction is satisfied. The believer's surety has paid the debt. It was exacted, and he answered for it.

Thus the person united to Christ is justified. You may conceive of the whole proceeding herein, in this manner. The avenger of blood pursuing the criminal; Christ, as the Savior of lost sinners, does by the Spirit apprehend him, and draw him to himself; and he, by faith, lays hold on Christ: so the Lord our righteousness, and the unrighteous creature, unite. From this union with Christ results a communion with him in his unsearchable riches, and consequently in his righteousness, that white raiment which he has for clothing of the naked, Rev. 3:18. Thus the righteousness of Christ becomes his; and because it is by his unquestionable title, it is imputed to him; it is reckoned his in the judgment of God, which is always according to truth. And so the believing sinner, having a righteousness which fully answers the demands of the law, he is pardoned and accepted as righteous. See Isaiah 45:22-24; Romans 3:24; and chapter 5:1.

Now he is a free man. Who shall lay anything to the charge of those whom God justifies? Can justice lay anything to their charge? No; for it is satisfied. Can the law? No; for it has obtained all its

demands on them in Jesus Christ, Gal. 2:20, "I am crucified with Christ." What can the law require more, after it has wounded their head, poured in wrath in full measure into their soul, and out of their life, and brought it into the dust of death, by doing all this to Jesus Christ, who is their head, Eph. 1:22; their soul, Acts 2:25-27; and their life, Col. 3:4? What is become of the sinner's own handwriting, which would prove the debt upon him? Christ has blotted it out, Col. 2:14. But it may be, justice may get its eye upon it again. No; he took it out of the way. But O, that it had been torn in pieces! may the sinner say. Yes, so it is; the nails that pierced Christ's hands and feet are driven through it; he nailed it. But what if the torn in pieces be put together again? They cannot be; for he nailed it to his cross, and his cross was buried with him, and will never rise again, seeing Christ dies no more. Where is the face-covering that was upon the condemned man? Christ has destroyed it, Isaiah 25:7. Where is death, that stood before the sinner with a grim face, and an open mouth, ready to devour him? Christ has swallowd it up in victory, ver. 8. Glory, glory, glory to him that thus "loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood."

2. The second benefit flowing from the same spring of union with Christ, and coming by the way of justification, is **PEACE**; peace with **God**, and peace of **conscience**, according to the measure of the sense the justified have of their peace with God, Romans 5:1, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God." Chapter 14:17, "For the kingdom of God is not food and drink—but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." Whereas God was their enemy before, now he is reconciled to them in Christ: they are in a covenant of peace with him; and, as Abraham was, so are they the friends of God. He is well pleased with them in his beloved Son. His word, which spoke terror to them formerly, now speaks peace, if they rightly understand the language. And there is love in all dispensations towards them, which makes all work together for their good.

Their CONSCIENCES are purged of that guilt and filthiness which lay upon them: his conscience-purifying blood streams through their souls, by virtue of their union with him, Heb. 9:14, "How much more shall the blood of Christ – purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" The bonds laid on their consciences by the Spirit of God, acting as the Spirit of bondage, are taken off, never more to be laid on, Romans 8:15, "For you have not received the Spirit of bondage again to fear." Hereby the conscience is quieted, as soon as the soul becomes conscious of the application of that blood; which falls out sooner or later, according to the measure of faith, and as the only wise God sees meet to time it.

Unbelievers may have troubled consciences, which they may get quieted again: but, alas! their consciences become peaceable before they become pure; so their peace is but the seed of greater horror and confusion. **Carelessness** may give ease for a while to a sick conscience; men neglecting its wounds, they skin-over again of their accord, before the impure matter is removed. Many bury their guilt in the grave of a **poor memory**: conscience smarts a little; at length the man forgets his sin, and there is an end of it; but that is only an ease before death. Business, or **the affairs of life**, often give ease in this case. When Cain is banished from the presence of the Lord, he falls a-building of cities. When the evil spirit came upon Saul, he calls not for his Bible, nor for the priests to converse with him about his case; but for music, to play it away. So many, when their consciences begin to be uneasy, they fill their heads and hands with business, to divert themselves, and to regain ease at any rate. Yes, some will sin contrary to their convictions, and so do get some ease to their consciences, as Hazael gave ease to his master by stifling him.

Again, the performance of **duties** may give some ease to disquieted consciences; and this is all which legal professors have recourse to for quieting their consciences. When conscience is wounded they will pray, confess, mourn, and resolve to do so no

more: and so they become whole again—without an application of the blood of Christ by faith.

But they whose consciences are rightly quieted, come for peace and purification to the blood of sprinkling. Sin leaves a sting behind it, which one time or other will create them no little pain.

Elihu shows us both the case and cure, Job 33. Behold the case which a man may be in, whom God has thoughts of love to. He darts convictions into his conscience; and makes them stick so fast, that he cannot rid himself of them, ver. 16, "He opens the ears of men, and seals their instruction." His very body sickens, ver. 19, "He is chastened also with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain " He loses his appetite, ver. 20, "His life abhors bread, and his soul dainty food." His body pines away, so that there is nothing on him but skin and bone," ver. 21, "His flesh is consumed away, that it cannot be seen, and his bones that were not seen stick out." Though he is not prepared for death, he has no hope of life, ver. 22, "His soul draws near unto the grave, and," which is the height of his misery, "his life to the destroyers;" he is looking every moment when devils, these destroyers, Rev. 9:11, these murderers, or manslayers, John 8:44, will come and carry away his soul to hell. O, dreadful case! Is there any hope for such? Yes, there is hope. God will "keep back his soul from the pit," Job 33:18, although he brings him forward to the brink of it.

Now, see how the sick man is cured. The physician's art cannot prevail here: the disease lies more inward than his medicines can reach. It is *soul trouble* which has brought the body into this disorder; and therefore, the remedies must be applied to the sick man's soul and conscience. The physician for this case must be a spiritual Physician; the remedies must be spiritual—a righteousness, a ransom, an atonement. Upon the application of these, the soul is cured, the conscience is quieted and the body recovers, ver. 23-26, "If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to show unto man his

uprightness: then he is gracious unto him, and says, 'Deliver him from going down into the pit, I have found a ransom!' His flesh shall be fresher than a child's, he shall return to the days of his youth. He shall pray unto God, and he shall be favorable unto him, and he shall see his face with joy."

The proper physician for this patient is a messenger, an interpreter, ver. 23, that is, as some expositors, not without ground, understand it, the great physician, Jesus Christ, whom Job had called his Redeemer, chapter 19:25. He is a messenger, the "messenger of the covenant of peace," Mal. 3:1, who comes seasonably to the sick man. He is an interpreter, the great interpreter of God's counsels of love to sinners, Job 33:23, "One among a thousand," even "the chief among ten thousand," Cant. 5:10. "One chosen out of the people," Psalm 89:19. One to whom "the Lord has given the tongue of the learned – to speak a word in season to him that is weary," Isaiah 50:4. It is he who is with him, by his Spirit, now, to "convince him of righteousness," John 16:8, as he was with him before, to "convince him of sin and of judgment." His work now is to show unto him his uprightness, or his righteousness, that is, the interpreter Christ's righteousness; which is the only righteousness, arising from the paying of a ransom, and upon which a sinner is delivered from going down to the pit, ver. 24. Thus Christ is said to declare God's name, Psalm 22:22, and to preach righteousness, Psalm 40:9. The phrase is remarkable: it is not to show unto the man—but unto man, his righteousness: which not obscurely intimates, that he is more than a man, who shows or declares this righteousness. Compare Amos 4:13, "He who forms the mountains, creates the wind, and reveals his thoughts to man, he who turns dawn to darkness, and treads the high places of the earth—the Lord God Almighty is his name." There seems to be in it a sweet allusion to the first declaration of this righteousness unto man, or, as the word is, unto Adam, after the fall, while he lay under terror from apprehensions of the wrath of God; which declaration was made by the messenger, the interpreter, namely, the eternal

Word, the Son of God, called, the voice of the Lord God, Gen. 3:8, and by him appearing, probably, in human shape.

Now, while he, by his Spirit, is the preacher of righteousness to the man, it is supposed that the man lays hold on the offered righteousness; whereupon the ransom is applied to him, and he is delivered from going down to the pit; for God has a ransom for him. This is intimated to him by the words, "Deliver him," Job 33:24. So his conscience being purified by the blood of atonement, is pacified, and sweetly quieted. "He shall pray unto God – and see his face with joy," which before he beheld with horror, ver. 26; that is in New Testament language, "Having a high priest over the house of God," he shall "draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having his heart sprinkled from an evil conscience," Heb. 10:21, 22. But then, what becomes of the body, the weak and weary flesh? Why, "his flesh shall be fresher than a child's, he shall return to the days of his youth," ver. 25. Yes, "All his bones," which were chastened with strong pain, ver. 19, "shall say, Lord, who is like unto you?" Psalm 35:10.

3. A third benefit flowing from union with Christ is **ADOPTION**. Believers, being united to Christ, become children of God, and members of the family of heaven. By their union with him, who is the Son of God by nature, they become the sons of God by grace, John 1:12. As when a branch is cut off from one tree, and grafted in the branch of another, the engrafted branch, by means of its union with the adopting branch, is made a branch of the same stock with that into which it is engrafted: so sinners, being engrafted into Jesus Christ, whose name is the Branch, his Father is their Father, his God their God, John 20:17. And thus **they, who are by nature children of the devil, become the children of God**. They have the Spirit of adoption, Romans 8:15, namely, the Spirit of his Son, which brings them to God, as children to a Father; to pour out their complaints in his bosom, and to seek necessary supplies, Gal. 4:6, "Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." Under all their weaknesses,

they have fatherly pity and compassion shown them, Psalm 103:13, "Like as a father pities his children; so the Lord pities those who fear him."

"In a desert land he found him, in a barren and howling waste. He shielded him and cared for him; he guarded him as the apple of his eye." Deuteronomy 32:10. Whoever pursues them, they have a refuge, Proverbs 14:26, "His children shall have a place of refuge." In a time of common calamity, they have chambers of protection, where they may be hid until the indignation is over and past, Isaiah 26:20. And he is not only their **refuge** for protection—but their **portion** for provision, in that refuge; Psalm 142:5, "You are my refuge, and my portion in the land of the living." They are provided for, for eternity, Heb. 11:16, "He has prepared for them a city." And what he sees they have need of for time, they shall not lack. "So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them." Matthew 6:31-32.

Seasonable **correction** is likewise their privilege as sons: so they are not allowed to pass with their faults, as others who are not children—but servants of the family, who at length will be turned out of doors for their miscarriages, Heb. 12:7, "If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chastens not?"

They are heirs of, and shall inherit the promises, Heb. 6:12. Nay, they are heirs of God, who himself is the portion of their inheritance, Psalm 16:5, "and joint-heirs with Christ," Romans 8:17. And because they are the children of the great King, and heirs of glory, they have angels for their attendants, who are "sent forth to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation," Heb. 1:14.

4. A fourth benefit is **SANCTIFICATION**, 1 Cor. 1:30, "But of him are you in Christ Jesus, who is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and **sanctification**." Being united to Christ, they partake of his Spirit, who is the Spirit of holiness. There is a fullness

of the Spirit in Christ, and it is not like the fullness of a vessel, which only retains what is poured into it; but it is the fullness of a fountain for diffusion and communication, which is always sending forth its waters, and yet is always full.

The Spirit of Christ, that spiritual sap, which is in the stock, and from thence is communicated to the branches, is the Spirit of grace, Zech. 12:10. And **where the Spirit of grace dwells, there will be found a confluence of all graces. Holiness is not one grace only—but all the graces of the Spirit; it is a constellation of graces; it is all the graces in their seed and root.** And as the sap conveyed from the stock into the branch goes through it, and through every part of it; so the Spirit of Christ sanctifies the whole man. The poison of sin was diffused through the whole spirit, soul, and body of the man; and sanctifying grace pursues it into every corner, 1 Thess. 5:23. Every part of the man is sanctified, though no part is perfectly sanctified. The *truth* we are sanctified by, is not held in the head, as in a prison—but runs, with its sanctifying influences, through heart and life.

There are indeed some graces, in every believer, which appear as top-branches above the rest: as meekness in Moses, patience in Job; but seeing there is in every child of God, **a holy principle** going along with the holy law, in all the parts thereof, loving and approving of it – as it appears from their universal respect to the commands of God – it is evident that they are endowed with all the graces of the Spirit; because there cannot be less in the effect, than there was in the cause.

Now, this sanctifying Spirit, whereof believers partake, is unto them,

(1.) A spirit of **MORTIFICATION**: "through the Spirit they mortify the deeds of the body," Romans 8:13. Sin is crucified in them, Gal. 5:24. They are planted together, namely, with Christ in the likeness of his death, which was a lingering death, Romans 6:6. Sin in the saint, though not quite dead—yet is dying. If it were dead, it would be taken down from the cross, and buried out of his sight: but it

hangs there as yet, working and struggling under its mortal wounds. As, when a tree has got such a stroke as reaches the heart of it, all the leaves and branches begin to fade and decay: so, where the sanctifying Spirit comes, and breaks the power of sin, there is a gradual ceasing from it, and dying to it, in the whole man; so that he "no longer lives in the flesh to the lusts of men." He does not make sin his trade and business; it is not his great design to seek himself, and to satisfy his corrupt inclinations: but he is seeking for Immanuel's land, and is walking in the highway to it, the way which is called the way of holiness; though the wind from hell, which was on his back before, blows now full in his face, makes his traveling uneasy, and often drives him off the highway.

(2.) This Spirit is a Spirit of **VIVIFICATION** to them; for he is the Spirit of life, and makes them live unto righteousness, Ezek. 36:27, "And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes." Those who have been "planted together," with Christ, "in the likeness of his death, shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection," Romans 6:5. At Christ's resurrection, when his soul was reunited with his body, every member of that blessed body was enabled again to perform the actions of life: so the soul, being influenced by the sanctifying Spirit of Christ, is enabled more and more to perform all the actions of spiritual life. And as the whole of the law, and not some scraps of it only, is written on the holy heart; so believers are enabled to transcribe that law, in their conversation. **Although they cannot write one line of it without blots—yet God, for Christ's sake, accepts of the performance, in point of sanctification**; they being disciples to his own Son, and led by his own Spirit.

This sanctified Spirit, communicated by the Lord Jesus to his members, is the **spiritual nourishment** the branches have from the stock into which they are engrafted; whereby the life of grace, given them in regeneration, is preserved, continued, and actuated. It is the nourishment whereby the new creature lives, and is nourished up towards perfection. Spiritual life needs to be fed, and

must have supply of nourishment: and believers derive the same from Christ their head, whom the Father has appointed the head of influence to all his members, Col. 2:19, "And not holding the head, from which all the body, by joints and bands, having nourishment ministered, or supplied," etc. Now this supply is "the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ," Phil. 1:19. The saints feed richly, "eating Christ's flesh, and drinking his blood," for their spiritual nourishment: yet our Lord himself teaches us, that "it is the Spirit who quickens," John 6:63, even that Spirit who dwells in his blessed body.

The human nature is united to the divine nature, in the person of the Son; and so, like the bowl in Zachariah's candlestick, chapter 4, lies at the fountain-head, as the glorious means of conveyance of influences from the fountain of Deity. He receives not the Spirit by measure—but ever has a fullness of the Spirit, by reason of that personal union. Hence believers, being united to the man Christ, as the seven lamps to the bowl, by their seven pipes, Zech. 4:2, his flesh is to them food indeed, and his blood drink indeed: for, feeding on that blessed body, that is, effectually applying Christ to their souls by faith, they partake more and more of that Spirit, who dwells therein, to their spiritual nourishment.

The holiness of God can never admit of an immediate union with the sinful creature, nor, consequently, an immediate communion with it: yet the creature could not live the life of grace without communion with the fountain of life. Therefore, that the honor of God's holiness and the salvation of sinners might jointly be provided for, the second person of the glorious trinity took into a personal union with himself a sinless human nature; that so this holy, harmless, and undefiled humanity, might immediately receive a fullness of the Spirit, of which he might communicate to his members, by his divine power and efficacy.

Suppose there were a tree, with its root in the earth, and its branches reaching to heaven; the vast distance between the root

and the branches would not interrupt the communication between the root and the top branch: even so, the distance between the man Christ, who is in heaven, and his members, who are on earth, cannot hinder the communication between them. What though the parts of mystical Christ, namely the head and the members, are not adjoining, as joined together in the way of corporal union; the union is not therefore the less real and effectual. Yes, our Lord himself shows us, that though we eat his flesh in a corporeal and carnal manner—yet it would profit nothing, John 6:63; we would not be one whit the holier thereby. But the members of Christ on earth are united to their head in heaven, by the invisible bond of the self-same Spirit dwelling in both; in him as the head, and in them as the members.

The wheels in Ezekiel's vision were not adjoining to the living creatures—yet were united to them by an invisible bond of one Spirit in both; so that, "when the living creatures went, the wheels went with them, and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up," Ezek. 1:19; "for," says the prophet, "the Spirit of the living creature was in the wheels," ver. 20.

Hence we may see the difference between true sanctification, and that shadow of it—which is to be found among some strict professors of Christianity, who yet are not true Christians, are not regenerated by the Spirit of Christ, and is of the same kind with what has appeared in many sober heathens. **True sanctification is the result of the soul's union with the holy Jesus**, the first and immediate receptacle of the sanctifying Spirit; out of whose fullness, his members do, by virtue of their union with him, receive sanctifying influences. The other is the mere product of the man's own spirit, which, whatever it has, or seems to have, of the matter of true holiness—yet does not arise from the supernatural principles, nor to the high aims and ends thereof: for, as it comes from self, so it runs out into the dead sea of self again; and lies as wide of true holiness, as nature does of grace. They who have this species of holiness, are like common boatmen, who serve

themselves with their own oars: whereas the ship bound for Immanuel's land, sails by the blowings of the divine Spirit.

How is it possible there should be true satisfaction without Christ? Can there be true sanctification without partaking of the Spirit of holiness? Can we partake of that Spirit—but by Jesus Christ, "the way, the truth, and the life?" The falling dew shall as soon make its way through the flinty rock, as the influences of grace come from God to sinners, any other way than through him whom the Father has appointed the head of influences, Col. 1:19, "For it pleased the Father, that in him should all fullness dwell:" and, chapter 2:19, "And not holding the head, from which all the body, by joints and bands, having nourishment ministered and knit together, increases with the increase of God." Hence see how it comes to pass, that many fall away from their *seeming sanctification*, and never recover: it is because they are not branches truly knit to the true vine. Meanwhile, others recover from their decays, because of their union with the life-giving stock, by the quickening Spirit, 1 John 2:19, "They went out from us—but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us."

5. A fifth benefit is **GROWTH IN GRACE**. "Having nourishment ministered, they increase with the increase of God," Col. 2:19. "The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon," Psalm 92:12. Grace is of a growing nature; in the way to Zion, they go from strength to strength. Though the holy man is at first a little child in grace—yet at length he becomes a young man; then a father, 1 John 2:13. Though he does but creep in the way to heaven sometimes—yet afterwards he walks, he runs, he mounts up with wings as eagles, Isaiah 40:31. If a branch grafted into a stock never grows, it is a plain evidence of its not having knit with the stock.

But some perhaps may say, "If all true Christians are growing ones, what shall be said of those who, instead of growing, are going backwards?" I answer,

First, **There is a great difference between the Christians growing simply, and his growing at all times**. All true Christians do grow—but I do not say that they grow at all times. A tree, that has life and nourishment, grows to its perfection—yet it is not always growing; it grows not in the winter. Christians also have their winters, wherein the influences of grace, necessary for their growth, cease, Cant. 5:2, "I sleep." It is by faith the believer derives gracious influences from Jesus Christ; as each lamp in the candlestick received oil from the bowl, by the pipe going between them, Zech. 4:2. Now, if that pipe is stopped up, if the saint's faith lies dormant and inactive, then all the rest of the graces will become dim, and seem ready to be extinguished. In consequence whereof, depraved nature will gather strength, and become active. What, then, will become of the soul? Why, there is still one sure ground of hope. The saint's faith is not as the hypocrite's, like a pipe laid short of the fountain, whereby there can be no conveyance: it still remains a bond of union between Christ and the soul; and therefore, because Christ lives, the believer shall live also, John 14:19. The Lord Jesus "puts in his hand by the hole of the door," and clears the means of conveyance; and then influences for growth flow, and the believer's graces look fresh and green again, Hos. 14:7, "They that dwell under his shadow shall return: they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine."

In the worst of times, the saints have a principle of growth in them, 1 John 3:9, "His seed remains in him." Therefore, after decays, they revive again: namely, when the winter is over, and the Sun of righteousness returns to them with his warm influences. Mud thrown into a pool may lie there at ease; but if it be cast into a fountain, the spring will at length work it out, and run as clear as formerly.

Secondly, **Christians may MISTAKE their growth**, and that two ways.

(1.) By judging of their case according to their present feeling. They observe themselves, and cannot perceive themselves to be growing; but there is no reason thence to conclude they are not growing, Mark 4:27, "The seed springs and grows up—he knows not how." Were a person to fix his eye ever so steadfastly on a growing tree, he would not see it growing; but if he compares the tree as it now is, with what it was some years ago, he will certainly perceive that it has grown. In like manner may the Christian know whether he be in a growing or declining state, by comparing his present with his former condition.

(2.) Christians may mistake their case, by measuring their growth by the advances of the top only, not of the root. Though a man be not growing taller, he may be growing stronger. If a tree be uniting with the ground, fixing itself in the earth, and spreading out its roots, it is certainly growing, although it be not higher than formerly. So, although a Christian may lack the sweet consolations and flashes of affection which he had; yet, if he is growing in humility, self-denial, and sense of needy dependence on Jesus Christ, he is a growing Christian, Hos. 14:5, "I will be as the dew unto Israel, he shall cast forth his roots as Lebanon."

Question. "But **do hypocrites grow at all?** And if so, how shall we distinguish between their growth, and true Christian growth?"

Answer. To the first part of the question, hypocrites do grow. The tares have their growth, as well as the wheat: the seed that fell among thorns did spring up, Luke 8:7. Only it brought no fruit to perfection, ver. 14. Yes, a true Christian may have a false growth. James and John seemed to grow in the grace of holy zeal, when their spirits grew so hot in the cause of Christ, that they would have burned a whole village, for not receiving their Lord and Master, Luke 9:54, "They said, Lord, command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, even as Elijah did!" But it was, indeed, no such thing; and therefore, he turned and rebuked them, ver. 55, and said, "You know not what manner of spirit you are of."

To the second part of the question, it is answered, that there is a peculiar beauty in the true Christian growth, distinguishing it from all false growth: it is universal, regular, proportionable. It is a "growing up into him in all things, which is the head," Eph. 4:15. The growing Christian grows proportionably, in all the parts of the new man. Under the kindly influences of the Sun of righteousness, believers "grow up as calves of the stall," Mal. 4:2.

You would think it a monstrous growth, in any creatures—if you saw their heads grow, and not their bodies; or if you saw one leg grow, and another not; if all the parts do not grow proportionably. Yes—but such is the growth of many in religion. They grow like rickety children, who have a big head—but a slender body; they get more knowledge into their heads—but no more holiness into their hearts and lives. They grow very hot outwardly—but very cold inwardly; like men in a fit of the ague. They are more taken up about the externals of religion than formerly; yet as great strangers to the power of godliness as ever.

If a garden is watered with the hand, some of the plants will readily get much, some little, and some no water at all; and therefore, some wither, while others are coming forward: but after a shower from the clouds, all come forward together. In like manner, all the graces of the Spirit grow proportionably, by the special influences of divine grace. The branches engrafted in Christ, growing aright, do grow in all the several ways of growth at once. They grow **inward**, growing into Christ, Eph. 4:15, uniting more closely with him; and cleaving more firmly to him, as the head of influences, which is the spring of all other true Christian growth. They grow **outward** in good works, in their life and conversation. They not only, with Naphtali, give goodly words; but, like Joseph, they are fruitful boughs. They grow upward in heavenly-mindedness, and contempt of the world; for their conversation is in heaven, Phil. 3:20. And finally, they grow **downward** in humility and self-loathing. The branches of the largest growth in Christ, are, in their own eyes, "less than the least of all saints," Eph. 3:8; "the chief of sinners," 1

Tim. 1:15; "more brutish than any man," Proverbs 30:2. They see that they can do nothing, no, not so much as "think anything, as of themselves," 2 Cor. 3:5; that they deserve nothing, being "not worthy of the least of all the mercies showed unto them," Gen. 32:10; and that they are nothing, 2 Cor. 12:11.

6. A sixth benefit is **FRUITFULNESS**. The branch engrafted into Christ is not barren—but brings forth fruit, John 15:6, "He who abides in me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit." For that very end are souls united to Christ, that they may bring forth fruit unto God, Romans 7:4. Those who are barren may be branches in Christ by profession—but not by real implantation. Whoever are united to Christ, bring forth the fruit of gospel-obedience and true holiness. Faith is always followed with good works. The believer is not only come out of the grave of his natural state; but he has put off his grave-clothes, namely, reigning lusts, in which he walked, like a spirit; being dead while he lived in them, Col. 3:7, 8. For Christ has said of him, as of Lazarus, "Loose him, and let him go." Now that he has put on Christ, he personates him, so to speak, as a beggar in borrowed robes represents a king on the stage, walking as he also walked. Now the fruit of the Spirit in him, is in all goodness, Eph. 5:9.

The fruits of holiness will be found in the hearts, lips, and lives of those who are united to Christ. The hidden man of the heart is not only a temple built for God, and consecrated to him; but used and employed for him, where love, fear, trust, and all the other parts of unseen religion, are exercised, Phil. 3:3, "For we are the true circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit." The heart is no more the devil's playground, where thoughts go free; for there even vain thoughts are hated, Psalm 119:113. But it is God's enclosure, hedged about as a garden for him, Cant. 4:16. It is true, there are weeds of corruption there, because the ground is not yet perfectly cleared: but the man, in the day of his new creation, is set to dress it, and keep it.

A live coal from the altar has touched his **lips**, and they are purified. Psalm 15:1-3, "Lord, who shall abide in your tabernacle? who shall dwell in your holy hill? He who speaks the truth in his heart; he who backbites not with his tongue, nor takes up a reproach against his neighbor." **There may be, indeed, a smooth tongue—where there is a false heart.** The voice may be Jacob's—while the hands are Esau's. But, "if any man among you seem to be religious, and bridles not his tongue—but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is vain," James 1:26. The power of godliness will rule over the tongue, though a world of iniquity. If one be a Galilean—his speech will betray him; he will not speak the language of Ashdod—but the language of Canaan. He will neither be silent in true religion, nor will his tongue walk at random, seeing, to the double guard which nature has given the tongue (the teeth and the lips), grace has added a third.

The fruits of holiness will be found in his outward life; for he has clean hands, as well as a pure heart, Psalm 24:4. He is a godly man, and piously discharges the duties of the first table of the law; he is a righteous man, and honestly performs the duties of the second table. In his life he is a good Christian, and a good neighbor too. **He behaves towards God, as if men's eyes were upon him; and towards men, as believing God's eyes to be upon him.** Those things which God has joined in his law, he dares not put asunder in his practice.

Thus the branches in Christ are full of good fruits. And those fruits are a cluster of vital actions, whereof Jesus Christ is the principle and end. The principle: for he lives in them, and "the life they live is by faith in the Son of God," Gal. 2:20. The end: for they live to him, and "to them to live is Christ," Phil. 1:21. The duties of true piety are in the world, like fatherless children, in rags: some will not take them in, because they never loved them nor their Father; some take them in, because they may be serviceable to them. But the saints take them in for their Father's sake, that is, for Christ's sake: and they are lovely in their eyes, because they are like him. O!

whence is this new life of the saints? Surely it could never have been hammered out of the natural powers of their souls, by the united force of all created power. In eternal barrenness would they have continued; but that being "married to Christ, they bring forth fruit unto God," Romans 7:4.

If you ask me, **"How can your nourishment, growth, and fruitfulness be forwarded?"** I offer these few advices:

(1.) Make sure work, as to your knitting with the stock by sincere faith; and beware of hypocrisy: a branch that is not sound at the heart will certainly wither. The trees of the Lord's planting are trees of righteousness, Isaiah 61:3. So, when false professors fade—they continue to bring forth fruit. Hypocrisy is a disease in the vitals of religion, which will consume all at length. It is a leak in the ship, which will certainly sink it. Sincerity of grace will make it lasting, be it ever so weak: as the smallest twig, which is sound at the heart, will draw nourishment from the stock and grow; while the greatest bough that is rotten can never recover, because it receives no nourishment.

(2.) Labor to be steadfast in the truths and way of God. An unsettled and wavering judgment is a great enemy to Christian growth and fruitfulness, as the apostle teaches, Eph. 4:14, 15, "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine. But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things into Christ—who is the head." A rolling stone gathers no moss, and a wavering judgment makes a fruitless life. Though a tree be ever so sound—yet how can it grow, or be fruitful, if you be always moving it out of one soil into another?

(3.) Endeavor to cut off the suckers, as gardeners do, that their trees may thrive. These are unmortified lusts; therefore, "mortify your members which are upon the earth," Col. 3:5. When the Israelites got food for their lusts, they got leanness to their souls. She that has many hungry children about her hand, and must be

still putting into their mouths, will have much ado to get a bit put into her own mouth. They must refuse the cravings of inordinate affections, who would have their souls to prosper.

(4.) Improve, for these ends, the ordinances of God. It is in the courts of our God where the trees of righteousness flourish, Psalm 92:13. The waters of the sanctuary are the means appointed of God, to cause his people to grow as willows by the water courses. Therefore, drink in with "desire, the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby," 1 Pet. 2:2. Come to these wells of salvation: not to look at them only—but to draw water out of them. The sacrament of the Lord's supper is in a special manner appointed for these ends. It is not only a solemn public profession, and a seal of our union and communion with Christ; but it is a means of most intimate communion with him, and strengthens our union with him, our faith, love, repentance, and other graces, 1 Cor. 10:16, "The cup of blessing, which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" And, chapter 12:13, "We have been all made to drink into one Spirit." Give yourselves unto prayer; open your mouths wide, and he will fill them.

By these means the branches in Christ may be farther nourished, grow up, and bring forth much fruit.

7. A seventh benefit is, **The acceptance of their fruits of holiness before the Lord.** Though they may be very imperfect, they are accepted, because they savor of Christ, the blessed stock, which the branches grow upon; while the fruits of others are rejected by God, Gen. 4:4, 5, "And the Lord had respect unto Abel, and his offering; but unto Cain and his offering he had no respect." Compare Heb. 11:3, "By faith, Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." O, how defective are the saints' duties in the eye of the law! The believer himself sees many faults in his best performances; yet the Lord graciously receives them.

There is no grace planted in the heart—but there is a weed of corruption near by its side, while the saints are in the lower world. Their very sincerity is not without a mixture of deception or hypocrisy, Gal. 2:13. Hence there are defects in the exercise of every grace; in the performance of every duty; depraved nature always drops something to stain their best works. There is still a mixture of darkness with their clearest light. Yet this does not mar their acceptance with God, Cant. 6:10, "Who is she that looks forth as the morning?" or, as the dawning? Behold how Christ's spouse is esteemed and accepted of her Lord, even when she looks forth as the dawn, whose beauty is mixed with the blackness of the night! "When the morning was looking out," as the word is, Jud. 19:26, that is, "In the dawning of the day," as we read it. So the very dawning of grace, and good will to Christ, grace peeping out from under a mass of darkness in believers, is pleasant and acceptable to him, as the break of day is to the weary traveler.

Though the remains of unbelief make the hand of faith to shake and tremble; yet the Lord is so well pleased with it, that he employs it to carry away pardons and supplies of grace, from the throne of grace, and the fountain of grace. His faith was effectual, who "cried out and said with tears, Lord, I believe, help you my unbelief!" Mark 9:24. Though the remains of sensual affections make the flame of their love weak and smoky; he turns his eyes from the smoke, and beholds the flame, how fair it is, Cant. 4:10, "How fair is your love, my sister, my spouse!" "The smell of their" under "garment" of inherent holiness, as imperfect as it is, "is like the smell of Lebanon," ver. 11; and that because they are covered with their elder brother's clothes, which makes the sons of God to "smell as a field which the Lord has blessed."

Their **good works** are accepted: their cups of cold water given to a disciple, in the name of a disciple, shall not lack a reward. Though they cannot offer for the tabernacle—gold, silver, and brass, and onyx stones—let them come forward with what they have: if it were but goats' hair, it shall not be rejected; if it were but ram's skins,

they shall be kindly accepted; for they are dyed red, dipped by faith in the Mediator's blood, and so presented unto God. A very ordinary work done in faith, and from faith, if it were but the building of a wall about the holy city, is a great work, Neh. 6:3. If it were but the bestowing of a box of ointment on Christ, it shall never be forgotten, Matt. 26:13. Even "a cup of cold water only given to one of Christ's little ones, in the name of a disciple, shall be rewarded," Matt. 10:42. Nay, not a good word for Christ shall drop from their mouths—but it shall be registered in God's "book of remembrance," Mal. 3:16.

Nor shall **a tear drop** from their eyes for him—but he will "put it in his bottle," Psalm 56:8. Their will is accepted for the deed; their sorrow for the lack of will, for the will itself, 2 Cor. 8:12, "For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man has, and not according to that he has not." Their groanings, when they cannot well express their desires, are heard in heaven; the meaning of those groans is well known there, and they will be returned like the dove with an olive branch of peace in her mouth. See Romans 8:26, 27. Their mites are better than other men's talents. Their lisping and broken sentences are more pleasant to their Father in heaven, than the most fluent or flourishing speeches of those who are not in Christ. Their voice is sweet, even when they are ashamed it should be heard; their countenance is lovely, even when they blush, and draw a veil over it, Cant. 2:14. The Mediator takes their petitions, blots out some parts, rectifies others, and then presents them to the Father, in consequence whereof they are accepted in the court of heaven.

Every true Christian is a temple to God. If you look for sacrifices, they are not lacking there; they offer the sacrifice of praise, and do good. With such sacrifices God is well pleased, Heb. 13:15, 16. Christ himself is the altar which sanctifies the gift, ver. 10. If we look for incense, it is there too. The graces of the Spirit are found in their hearts: and the Spirit of the crucified Christ fires them, and puts them in exercise; as the fire was brought from the altar of burnt-

offering, to set the incense in flame: then they mount heavenward, like pillars of smoke, Cant. 3:6. But the best of incense will leave *ashes* behind it; yes, indeed: but as the priest took away the ashes of the incense in a golden dish, and threw them out; so our great High Priest takes away the ashes and refuse of all the saint's services, by his mediation in their behalf.

8. An eighth benefit flowing from union with Christ, is **PRESERVATION**. The Christian cannot fall away—but must persevere unto the end; John 10:28, "they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." Indeed, if a branch does not knit with the stock, it will fall away when shaking winds arise: but the branch knit to the stock stands fast whatever wind blows.

Sometimes a stormy wind of temptation blows from hell, and shakes the branches in Christ, the true vine: but their union with him is their security; moved they may be—but removed they never can be. The Lord "will with the temptation, also make a way of escape," 1 Cor. 10:13. Calms are never of any continuance; there is almost always some wind blowing; and therefore, branches are rarely altogether at rest. But sometimes violent winds arise, which threaten to rend them from off their stock. Even so it is with saints; they are daily put to it to keep their ground against temptation: sometimes the wind from hell rises so high, and blows so furiously, that it makes even top branches to sweep the ground; yet being knit to Christ their stock, they get up again, in spite of the most violent efforts of the prince of the power of the air. Psalm 94:18, "When I said, my foot slips, your mercy, O Lord, held me up."

But the Christian improves by his trial; and is so far from being damaged, that he is benefitted by it, as it discovers what hold the soul has of Christ, and what hold Christ has of the soul. Look—as the wind in the bellows, which would blow out the candle, blows up the fire; even so it often comes to pass, that such temptations enliven the true Christian, awakening the graces of the Spirit in him;

and by that means, discover both the reality and the strength of grace in him. And hence, as Luther, that great man of God, says, "One Christian, who has had experience of temptation, is worth a thousand others."

Sometimes a stormy wind of **trouble** and **persecution** from the men of the world, blows upon the vine, that is, mystical Christ; but union with the stock is a sufficient security to the branches. In a time of the church's peace and outward prosperity, while the angels hold the winds, that they blow not, there are a great many branches taken up and put into the stock, which never knit with it, nor live by it, though they are bound up with it by the bonds of external ordinances. Now, these may stand a while on the stock, and stand with great ease while the *calm* lasts; but when once the *storms* arise, and the winds blow, they will begin to fall off one after another; and the stronger the wind rises, the greater will the number be, which fall. Yes, some strong boughs of that sort, when they fall, will, by their weight, carry others of their own kind, quite down to the earth with them; and will bruise and press down some true branches in such a manner, that they would also fall off—were it not for that fast hold which the stock has of them. Then it is that many branches, which before were high and eminent, are found lying on the ground withered, and fit to be gathered up and cast into the fire, Matt. 13:6, "When the sun was up, they were scorched: and because they had no root, they withered away." John 15:6, "If a man abides not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned."

But however violently the winds blow, none of the truly engrafted branches which are knit with the stock are found missing, when the storm is changed into a calm, John 17:12, "Those whom you gave me, I have kept, and none of them is lost." The least twig growing in Christ shall persevere; when the tallest cedars growing on their own root, shall be laid flat on the ground, Romans 8:35, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or

persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" See ver. 36-39. However severely *spiritual Israel* is "sifted—yet shall not the least grain," or, as it is in the original language, a little stone, "fall to the ground," Amos 9:9. It is an allusion to the sifting of fine pebble stones from among heaps of dust and sand: though the sand and dust falls to the ground, be blown away with the wind, and trampled under foot; yet there shall not fall to the ground so much as a little stone, such is the exactness of the sieve, and the care of the sifter. There is nothing more ready to fall on the earth than a stone: yet, if professors of religion be living stones, built on Christ, the chief corner-stone, although they be little stones, they shall not fall to the earth, whatever storm beats upon them. See 1 Pet. 2:4-6.

All the good grain in the church of Christ is of this kind: they are stones, in respect of solidity; and living stones in respect of activity. If men are solid, substantial Christians, they will not be like chaff tossed to and fro with every wind. And if they are lively Christians, whose spirits will stir in them, as Paul's did, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry, Acts 17:16, they will not lie like stones, to be turned over, hither and there, cut and carved, according to the lusts of men; having so much of the stone, as leaves nothing of liveliness in them.

Our God's house is a great house, wherein are not only vessels of gold—but also of earth, 2 Tim. 2:20. Both these are apt to contract filthiness; and therefore, when God brings trouble upon the church, he has an eye to both. As for the vessels of gold, they are not destroyed; but purified by a fiery trial in the furnace of affliction, as goldsmiths refine their gold, Isaiah 1:25, "And I will turn my hand upon you, and purely purge away your dross." But destruction is to the vessels of earth; they shall be broken in shivers, as a potter's vessel, ver. 28, "And the destruction," or breaking "of the transgressors, and of the sinners, shall be together." It seems to be an allusion to that law, for breaking the vessels of earth, when unclean; while vessels of wood, and consequently vessels of gold, were only to be rinsed, Lev. 15:12.

9. A ninth benefit is **SUPPORT**. If you are a branch engrafted in Christ, the root supports you. The believer leans on Christ, as a weak woman in a journey leaning upon her beloved husband, Cant. 8:5. He supports himself upon him, as a feeble old man stays himself on his staff, Isaiah 50:10. He rolls himself on him, as one rolls a burden he is not able to walk under, off his own back, upon another who is able to bear it, Psalm 22:8, marg. There are many weights to hang upon and press down the branches in Christ, the true vine. But you know, whatever weights hang on the branches, the stock bears all; it bears the branch, and the weight that is upon it too.

(1.) Christ supports believers in him, under a weight of **outward troubles**. That is a large promise, Isaiah 43:2, "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you: and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you." See how David was supported under a heavy load, 1 Sam. 30:6. His city Ziglag was burnt, his wives were taken captives, his men spoke of stoning him: nothing was left him but his God and his faith; but by his faith, he encouraged himself in his God. The Lord comes, and lays his cross on his people's shoulders; it presses them down, and they are likely to sink under it, and therefore cry, "Master, save us, we perish!" But he supports them under their burden; he bears them up, and they bear their cross. Thus the Christian, with a weight of outward troubles upon him, goes lightly under his burden, having the everlasting arms underneath him. The Christian has a spring of comfort, which he cannot lose; and therefore never lacks something to support him.

If a man has all his riches in money, robbers may take these away; and then what more has he? But if the landed proprietor is robbed of his money—yet his lands remain for his support. Those who build their comfort on worldly goods, may quickly be comfortless; but those who are united to Christ shall find comfort, when all the streams of worldly enjoyments are dried up, Job 6:13, "Is not my help in me? and is wisdom driven quite from me?" That is, Though my substance is gone; though my servants, my children, my health,

and soundness of body, are all gone; yet my grace is not gone! Though the Sabeans have driven away my oxen and donkeys, and the Chaldeans have driven away my camels; they have not driven away my faith, and my hope too: these are yet in me; they are not driven from me; so that by them I can fetch comfort from heaven, when I can have none from earth.

(2.) Christ supports his people under a weight of **inward troubles and discouragements**. Many times "heart and flesh fail them;" but then "God is the strength of their heart," Psalm 73:26. They may have a weight of guilt pressing them. This is a load that will make their backs bend, and their spirits sink: but he takes it off, and puts a pardon into their hand, while they cast their burden upon him. Christ takes the soul, as one marries a widow under a burden of debt: and so when the creditors come to Christ's spouse, she carries them to her husband, confesses the debt, declares she is not able to pay—and lays all upon him.

The Christian sometimes, through carelessness, losses his sense of pardon; he cannot find it, however he searches for it. The law takes that opportunity, and proceeds against him for a debt paid already. God hides his face, and the soul is distressed. Many arrows go through the heart now; many long accounts are laid before the man, which he reads and acknowledges. Often does he see the officers coming to apprehend him, and the prison door open to receive him. What else keeps him from sinking utterly under discouragements in this case—but the everlasting arms of a Mediator underneath him, and that he relies upon the great Surety.

Farther, they may have a weight of **strong lusts** pressing them. They have a body of death upon them. Death is a weight that presses the soul out of the body. A leg or an arm of death, if I may so speak, would be a terrible load. One lively lust will sometimes lie so heavy on a child of God, that he can no more remove it than a child could throw a giant from off him. How, then, are they supported under a whole body of death? Their support is from that

root which bears them, from the everlasting arm that is underneath them. "His grace is sufficient for them," 2 Cor. 12:9. The great stay of the believer is not the grace of God within him—that is a well whose streams sometimes run dry: but it is the grace of God without him—the grace that is in Jesus Christ; which is an ever-flowing fountain, to which the believer can never come amiss.

For the apostle tells us in the same verse, it is "the power of Christ." "Most gladly therefore," says he, "will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me," or "tabernacle above me," as the cloud of glory did on the Israelites, which God spread for a covering, or shelter, to them in the wilderness, Psalm 105: 39; compare Isaiah 4:5, 6. So that the believer in this combat, like the eagle, first flies aloft by faith, and then comes down on the prey, Psalm 34:5, "They looked to him—and were lightened."

Finally, they have a weight of **weakness and wants** upon them—but they "cast over that burden on the Lord," their strength, "and he sustains them," Psalm 55:22. With all their wants and weakness they are cast upon him; as the poor, weak, and naked babe coming out of the womb, is cast into the lap of its tender and affectionate mother, Psalm 22:10. Though they be destitute, as a shrub in the wilderness, which the foot of every beast may tread down, the Lord will regard and support them, Psalm 102:17. It is not surprising that the weakest plant should be safe in a garden: but our Lord Jesus Christ is a hedge for protection to his weak and destitute ones, even in a wilderness.

OBJECTION. "But if the saints be so supported, how is it that they fall so often under temptation and discouragements?

ANSWER. (1.) However low they fall at any time—they never fall off; and that is a great matter. They "are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation," 1 Pet. 1:5. Hypocrites may fall, so as to fall off, and fall into the pit, as a bucket falls into a well when the chain breaks. But, though the child of God may fall, and that so low that the waters go over his head—yet there is still a bond of union

between Christ and him; the chain is not broken: he will not go to the ground; he will be drawn up again, Luke 22:31, 32, "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not."

(2.) The falls of the saints flow from their not improving their union with Christ, their not making use of him by faith, for support or bearing them up, Psalm 27:13, "I had fainted, unless I had believed." While the nurse holds the child in her arms, it cannot fall to the ground; yet if the unwary child is not held by her, it may fall backwards in her arms, to its great hurt. Thus David's fall broke his bones, Psalm 51:8; but it did not break the bond of union between Christ and him: the Holy Spirit, the bond of that union, was not taken from him, ver. 11.

10. The last benefit I shall name, is, **the special care of the Farmer**, John 15:1, 2, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the farmer. Every branch that bears fruit, he purges it, that it may bring forth more fruit." **Believers, by virtue of their union with Christ, are the objects of God's special care and providence.** Mystical Christ is God's vine; other societies in the world are but wild olive trees. The men of the world are but God's out-field; the saints are his vineyard, which he has a special propriety in, and a special concern for, Cant. 8:12, "My vineyard, which is mine, is before me." He who slumbers not nor sleeps, is the keeper of it; he does keep it: lest any hurt it, he will keep it night and day; he, in whose hand is the dew of heaven, will water it every moment, Isaiah 27:3. He dresses and weeds it, in order to further its fruitfulness, John 15:2. He cuts off the unfruitful twigs, that mar the fruitfulness of the branch. This is done especially by the word, and by crosses or afflictions; the saints need the ministry of the word, as much as the vineyard needs one to dress and prune the vines, 1 Cor. 3:9, "We are laborers together with God; you are God's husbandry, you are God's building." And they need the cross too, 1 Pet. 1:6.

Therefore, if we were to reckon the cross among the benefits flowing to believers from their union with Christ, I judge that we should not reckon amiss. Sure I am, in their sufferings they "suffer with him," Romans 8:17. The assurances which they have of the cross, have rather the nature of a promise, than of a threatening, Psalm 89:30-33, "If his children forsake my law – then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless, my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor allow my faithfulness to fail." This looks like a tutor's engaging to a dying father, to take care of the children left with him; and to give them both nurture and admonition for their good. The covenant of grace truly beats the spears of affliction into pruning-hooks, to them that are in Christ, Isaiah 28:9, "By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is all the fruit to take away his sin."

Why, then, should we be angry with our cross? why should we be frightened at it? The believer must take up his cross, and follow his leader, the Lord Jesus Christ. He must take up his every-day's cross, Luke 9:23, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily." Yes, he must take up holy day's cross too, Lam. 2:22, "You have called, as in a solemn day, my terrors round about." The church of the Jews had of a long time many a pleasant meeting at the temple, on solemn days, for the worship of God; but they got a solemnity of another nature, when God called together, about the temple and city, the Chaldean army, that burnt the temple, and laid Jerusalem in heaps. And as the church of God is yet militant in this lower region, how can it be but the clouds will return after the rain? But *the cross of Christ*, by which appellation the saint's troubles are named, is a kindly name to the believer.

It is a cross indeed; not to the believer's graces—but to his corruptions. The hypocrite's seeming grace may indeed breathe out their last on a cross, as those of the stony-ground hearers did, Matt. 13:6, "When the sun" of persecution, ver. 21, "was up, they were

scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away;" but never did one of the real graces in a believer die upon the cross yet. Nay, as the candle shines brightest in the night, and the fire burns fiercest in intense frost; so **the believers graces are commonly most vigorous in a time of trouble.**

There is a certain pleasure and sweetness in the cross, to those who have their senses exercised to discern, and to find it out. There is a certain sweetness in a man's seeing himself upon his trial for heaven, and standing candidate for glory. There is a pleasure in traveling over those mountains, where the Christian can see the prints of Christ's own feet, and the footsteps of the flock, who have been there before him. How pleasant is it to a saint, in the exercise of grace, to see how a good God crosses his corrupt inclinations, and prevents his folly! How sweet is it to behold these thieves upon the cross! How refined a pleasure is there in observing how God draws away provision from unruly lusts, and so pinches them, that the Christian may get them governed! Truly, there is a paradise within this thorn-hedge.

Many a time the people of God are in bonds of sin; which are never loosed, until they are bound with cords of affliction. God takes them, and throws them into a fiery furnace—which burns off their bonds; and then, like the three children, Dan. 3:25, they are "free, walking in the midst of the fire." God gives his children a medicinal potion, with one bitter ingredient: if that will not work upon them, he will put in a second bitter ingredient, a third, and so on, as there is need, that they may work together for their good, Romans 8:28.
With *cross* winds he hastens them to their labor. They are often found in such ways, as that the cross is the happiest thing that they can meet with: and well may they salute it as David did Abigail, saying, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me," 1 Sam. 25:32.

Worldly things are often such a load to the Christian, that he moves but very slowly heavenward. God sends *a wind of trouble*, which

blows the burden off the man's back; he then walks more speedily on his way, after God has removed some gilded earth from him, which was drawing his heart away from God, Zeph. 3:12, "I will also leave in the midst of you an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord."

It was an observation of a heathen moralist, that "no history makes mention of any man, who has been made better by riches." I doubt whether our modern histories can supply the defect of ancient histories in this point. But sure I am, many have been the worse for riches: thousands have been hugged to death in the embraces of a smiling world; and many good men have got wounds from outward prosperity, that must be cured by the cross. I remember to have read of one, who having an internal abscess, had in vain used the help of physicians: but being wounded with a sword, the infection drained out; and his life was saved by that accident, which threatened immediate death. Often have spiritual abscesses gathered in the bosoms of God's people, in time of outward prosperity, and been thus broken and drained by the cross. It is beneficial for believers to be healed by stripes; although they are usually so weak as to cry out for fear, at the sight of the pruning-knife, as if it were the destroying axe; and to think that the Lord is coming to **kill** them, when he is indeed coming to cure them.

I shall now **CONCLUDE**, addressing myself in a few words, first, to saints, and next to sinners.

To you that are **SAINTS**, I say,

First, **Strive to obtain and keep up sincere communion and fellowship with Jesus Christ; that is, to be still deriving fresh supplies of grace from the fountain which is in him, by faith**: and making suitable returns of them, in the exercise of grace and holy obedience. Beware of estrangement between Christ and your souls. If it has gotten in already, which seems to be the case of many this day, endeavor to get it removed. There are multitudes in

the world who slight Christ, though you should not slight him: many that looked fair for heaven, have turned their backs upon him. **The warm sun of outward peace and prosperity has caused some to cast their cloak of religion from them, who held it fast when the wind of trouble was blowing upon them**: and "Will you also go away?" John 6:67. The basest ingratitude is stamped on your slighting communion with Christ, Jer. 2:31, "Have I been a wilderness unto Israel, a land of darkness? Why do my people say—We are lords, we will come no more unto you?" Oh! beloved, "Is this your kindness to your friend?" It is unfitting for any wife to slight converse with her husband—but her especially if she was taken from a prison or a ash-heap, as you were, by your Lord. It is not a time for you to be out of your prayer chambers, Isaiah 26:20.

Those who now are walking most closely with God, may have enough to do to stand when the trial comes: how hard will it be for others then, who are likely to be surprised with troubles, when guilt is lying on their consciences unremoved! To be awakened out of a sound sleep, and cast into a raging sea, as Jonah was, will be a fearful trial. To feel trouble before we see it coming; to be past hope before we have any fear—is a very sad case. Therefore break down your idols of jealousy, mortify those lusts, those irregular appetites and desires, that have stolen away your hearts, and left you like Samson without his hair, and say, "I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it better with me than now," Hos. 2:7.

Secondly, Walk as befits those who are united to Christ. Prove your union with him by "walking as he also walked," 1 John 2:6. If you are brought from under the power of darkness, let your light shine before men. "Shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life;" as the lantern holds the candle, which being in it, shines through it, Phil. 2:15, 16. Now you who profess Christ to be in you, let his image shine forth in your life, and remember that the business of your lives is to prove, by practical arguments, what you profess.

1. You know the character of a wife: "She who is married, cares how she may please her husband." Go—and do likewise; "walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing," Col. 1:10. This is the great business of life; you must please him, though it should displease all the world. What he hates must be hateful to you, because he hates it. Whatever lusts come to gain your hearts, deny them, seeing the grace of God has appeared, teaching us so to do, and you are joined to the Lord. Let him be a covering to your eyes; for you have not your choice to make, it is made already; and you must not dishonor your head.

A man takes care of his feet, because, if he catches cold there, it flies up to his head. "Shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of a harlot? God forbid," says the apostle, 1 Cor. 6:14. Will you take that heart of yours, which is Christ's dwelling-place, and lodge his enemies there? Will you take that body, which is his temple, and defile it, by using the members thereof as instruments of sin?

2. Be careful to bring forth fruit, and much fruit. The branch well laden with fruit—is the glory of the vine, and of the farmer too, John 15:8, "Herein is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit; so shall you be my disciples." A barren tree stands safer in a forest, than in an orchard; and branches in Christ, which do not bring forth fruit, will be taken away, and cast into the fire.

3. Be heavenly-minded, and maintain a holy contempt of the world. You are united to Christ; he is your head and husband, and is in heaven: therefore your hearts should be there also; Col. 3:1, "If you then are risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God." Let the serpent's seed go on their belly, and eat the dust of this earth: but let the members of Christ be ashamed to bow down, and feed with them.

4. Live and act dependently, depending by faith on Jesus Christ. That which grows on its own root, is a tree, not a branch. It is of the nature of a branch, to depend on the stock for all, and to

derive all its sap from thence. Depend on Jesus for life, light, strength, and all spiritual benefits, Gal. 2:20, "I live—yet not I—but Christ lives in me; and the life which I live now in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God." For this cause, in the mystical union, strength is united to weakness, that death and earth may mount up on borrowed wings. Depend on him for temporal benefits also; Matt. 6:11, "Give us this day our daily bread." If we have trusted him with our eternal concerns, let us be ashamed to distrust him in the matter of our provision in the world.

5. Be of a humble disposition, as being united to the meek Jesus. There is a prophecy to this purpose concerning the kingdom of Christ, Isa. 11:6, "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb; and the leopard shall lie down with the lamb." It is an allusion to the beasts in Noah's ark. The beasts of prey that were accustomed to kill and devour others, when once they came into the ark, lay down in peace with them: the lamb was in no hazard from the wolf there, nor the lamb from the leopard. There was a beautiful accomplishment of it in the primitive church, Acts 4:32, "And the multitude of those who believed, were of one heart and of one soul." And this prevails in all the members of Christ, according to the measure of the grace of God in them.

Man is born naked: he comes naked into this world, as if God designed him for the picture of peace; and surely, when he is born again, he comes not into the new world of grace with claws to tear, a sword to wound, and a fire in his hand to burn up his fellow-members in Christ, because they cannot see with his light. **Oh! it is sad to see Christ's lilies—as thorns in one another's sides; Christ's lambs devouring one another like lions, and God's diamonds cutting one another**: yet it must be remembered, that sin is no proper cement for the members of Christ, though Herod and Pontius Pilate may be made friends that way. The apostle's rule is plain, Heb. 12:14, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness." To follow peace no farther than our inclinations, credit, and such

like things will allow us, is too short: to pursue it farther than holiness allows us, that is, conformity to the Divine will, is too far.

Peace is precious—yet it may be bought too dearly: therefore we must rather lack it—than purchase it at any expense of truth or holiness. But otherwise it cannot be bought too dearly; and it will always be precious in the eyes of the sons of peace.

And now, **SINNERS**, what shall I say to you? I have given you some view of the privileges of those in the state of grace. You have seen them afar off; but alas! they are not yours, because you are not Christ's. The **sinfulness** of an unregenerate state is yours; and the **misery** of it is yours also: you have neither part nor lot in this matter. The **guilt** of all your sins lies upon you; you have no part in the righteousness of Christ. There is no peace to you, no peace with God, no true peace of conscience; for you have no saving interest in the great peace-maker. You are none of God's family; the adoption we spoke of, belongs not to you. You have no part in the Spirit of sanctification; and, in one word, you have no inheritance among those who are sanctified. All I can say to you in this matter, is, that the case is not desperate; these choice blessings may yet be yours, Rev. 3:20, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hears my voice, and opens the door, I will come into him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Heaven is proposing a union with earth still! The potter is making suit to his own clay! The gates of the city of refuge are not yet closed! O, that we could compel you to come in!

Thus far of the state of grace.

State IV.

THE ETERNAL STATE

DEATH

Section I. MAN'S LIFE IS VANITY

"For I know that you will bring me to **death**, and to the house appointed for all living." Job 30:23.

I come now to discourse of man's eternal state, into which he enters by death. Of this entrance, Job takes a solemn serious view, in the words of the text, which contain a general truth, and a particular application of it. The general truth is supposed; namely, that all men must, by death, remove out of this world; they must die. But where must they go? They must go to the house appointed for all living; to the grave, that darksome, gloomy, solitary house, in the land of forgetfulness. Wherever the body is laid up until the resurrection, there, as to a dwelling-house, death brings us home. While we are in the body, we are but in a lodging-house, in an inn, on our way homeward. When we come to our grave, we come to our home, our *long home*, Eccl. 12:5.

All living must be inhabitants of this house, good and bad, old and young. Man's life is a stream, running into death's devouring deeps. Those who now live in palaces, must leave them, and go home to this house; and those who have not where to lay their heads, shall thus have a house at length. It is appointed for all, by Him whose counsel shall stand. This appointment cannot be shifted; it is a law which mortals cannot transgress. Job's application of this general truth to himself, is expressed in these words: "For I know that you will bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living." He knew, that he must meet with death; that his soul and body must part; that God, who had set the time, would certainly see it kept. Sometimes Job was inviting death to come to him, and carry him home to its house; yes, he was in the hazard of running to it before the time– Job 7:15, "My soul chooses strangling, and death rather

than my life." But here he considers God would bring him to it; yes, bring him back to it, as the word imports. Whereby he seems to intimate, that we have no life in this world, but as runaways from death, which stretches out its cold arms, to receive us from the womb– but though we do then narrowly escape its clutches, we cannot escape long; we shall be brought back again to it. Job knew this, he had laid it down as a certainly, and was looking for it.

I. ALL MUST DIE. Although this doctrine is confirmed by the experience of all former generations, ever since Abel entered into the house appointed for all living, and though the living know that they shall die, yet it is needful to discourse of the certainty of death, that it may be impressed on the mind, and duly considered.

Therefore consider,

1. There is an unalterable statute of death, under which all men are concluded. "It is appointed unto men once to die," Heb. 9:27. It is laid up for them, as parents lay up for their children– they may look for it, and cannot miss it; seeing God has designed and reserved it for them. There is no peradventure in it; "we must die," II Sam. 14:14. Though some men will not *hear* of death, yet every man must *see* death, Psalm 89:48. Death is a champion all must grapple with– we must enter the lists with it, and it will have the mastery, Eccl. 8:8, "There is no man that has power over the spirit, to retain the spirit; neither has he power in the day of death." Those indeed who are found alive at Christ's coming, shall all be changed, I Cor. 15:51. But that change will be equivalent to death, will answer the purposes of it. All other people must go the common road, the way of all flesh.

2. Let us consult daily observation. Every man "sees that wise men die, likewise the fool and brutish person," Psalm 49:10. There is room enough on this earth for us, notwithstanding the multitudes that were upon it before us. They are gone, to make room for us; as we must depart, to make room for others. It is long since death began to transport men into another world, and vast multitudes are

gone there already– yet the work is going on still; death is carrying off new inhabitants daily, to the house appointed for all living. Who has ever heard the grave say, It is enough! Long has it been getting, but still it asks. This world is like a great fair or market, where some are coming in, others going out; while the assembly that is in it is confusion, and the most part know not why they are come together; or, like a town situated on the road to a great city, through which some travelers have passed, some are passing, while others are only coming in, Eccl. 1:4, "One generation passes away, and another generation comes– but the earth abides forever."

Death is an inexorable, irresistible messenger, who cannot be diverted from executing his orders by the force of the mighty, the bribes of the rich, or the entreaties of the poor. It does not reverence the hoary head, nor pity the harmless babe. The bold and daring cannot outbrave it; nor can the faint-hearted obtain a discharge in this war.

3. The human body consists of perishing materials, Gen. 3:19, "**Dust** you are, and unto dust you shall return." The strongest are but brittle earthen vessels, easily broken in shivers. The soul is but basely housed, while in this mortal body, which is not a house of *stone*, but a house of *clay*, the mud walls cannot but molder away; especially seeing the foundation is not on a rock, but in the dust; they are crushed before the moth, though this insect be so tender that the gentle touch of a finger will destroy it, Job 4:19.

These materials are like gunpowder; a very small spark lighting on them will set them on fire, and blow up the house– the seed of a raison, or a hair in milk, having choked men, and laid the house of clay in the dust. If we consider the frame and structure of our bodies, how fearfully and wonderfully we are made; and on how regular and exact a motion of the fluids, and balance of humors, our life depends; and that *death has as many doors to enter in by, as the body has pores*; and if we compare the soul and body together,

we may justly reckon, that there is somewhat more astonishing in our *life*, than in our *death*; and that it is *more strange to see dust walking up and down on the dust, than lying down in it.*

Though the lamp of our life may not be violently blown out, yet the flame must go out at length for lack of oil. What are those distempers and diseases which we are liable to, but death's harbingers, that come to prepare his way? They meet us, as soon as we set our foot on earth, to tell us at our entry, that *we do but come into the world to go out again.* Nevertheless, some are snatched away in a moment, without being warned by sickness or disease.

4. We have sinful souls, and therefore have dying bodies– death follows sin, as the shadow follows the body. The wicked must die, by virtue of the threatening of the covenant of works, Gen. 2:17, "In the day that you eat thereof, you shall surely die." And the godly must die too, that as death entered by sin, sin may go out by death. Christ has taken away the sting of death, as to them; though he has not as yet removed death itself. Therefore, though it fastens on them, as the viper did on Paul's hand, it shall do them no harm– but because the leprosy of sin is in the walls of the house, it must be broken down, and all the materials thereof carried forth.

5. Man's life in this world, according to the Scripture account of it, **is but a few degrees removed from death.** The Scripture represents it as a vain and empty thing, short in its continuance, and swift in its passing away.

First, Man's life is a vain and empty thing– while it is, it vanishes away; and lo! it is not. Job 7:6, "My days are vanity." If we suspect afflicted *Job* of partiality in this matter, hear the wise and prosperous *Solomon's* character of the days of his life, Eccl. 7:15, "All things have I seen in the days of my vanity," that is, my vain days. *Moses*, who was a very active man, compares our days to a sleep, Psalm 90:5, "They are as a sleep," which is not noticed until

it is ended. The resemblance is just– few men have right apprehensions of life, until death awaken them; then we begin to know that we were living. "We spend our years as a tale that is told," ver. 9. When an idle tale is telling it may affect a little; but when it is ended, it is remembered no more– and so is a man forgotten, when the *fable of his life* is ended. It is as a dream, or vision of the night, in which there is nothing solid; when one awakes, all vanishes; Job 20:8, "He shall fly away as a dream, and shall not be found; yes, he shall be chased away as a vision of the night." It is but a vain show or image; Psalm 39:6, "Surely every man walks in a vain show." Man, in this world, is but as it were a walking statue– his life is but an *image of life*, there is so much of death in it.

If we look on our life, in the several periods of it, we shall find it *a heap of vanities*. "**Childhood** and youth are vanity," Eccl. 11:10. We come into the world the most helpless of all animals– young birds and beasts can do something for themselves, but infant man is altogether unable to help himself. Our childhood is spent in pitiful trifling pleasures, which become the scorn of our after thoughts. **Youth** is a flower that soon withers, a blossom that quickly falls off; it is a space of time in which we are rash, foolish, and inconsiderate, pleasing ourselves with a variety of vanities, and swimming as it were through a flood of them.

But before we are aware it is past; and we are, in **middle age**, encompassed with a thick cloud of cares, through which we must grope; and finding ourselves beset with prickling thorns of difficulties, through them we must force our way, to accomplish the projects and contrivances of our riper thoughts. The more we solace ourselves in any earthly enjoyment we attain to, the more bitterness do we find in parting with it.

Then comes **old age**, attended with its own train of infirmities, labor, and sorrow, Psalm 90:10, and sets us down next door to the grave. In a word, "All flesh is like grass," Isa. 40:6. Every stage or

period in life, is vanity. "Man at his best state," his middle age, when the heat of youth is spent, and the sorrows of old age have not yet overtaken him, "is altogether vanity," Psalm 39:5. Death carries off some in the bud of childhood, others in the blossom of youth, and others when they are come to their fruit; few are left standing, until, like ripe corn, they forsake the ground– all die one time or other.

II. Man's life is a SHORT thing. It is not only a vanity, but *a short-lived vanity*. Consider,

1. How the life of man is reckoned in the Scriptures. It was indeed sometimes reckoned by hundreds of **years**– but no man ever arrived at a thousand, which yet bears no proportion to eternity. Now hundreds are brought down to scores; threescore and ten, or fourscore, is its utmost length, Psalm 90:10. But few men arrive at that length of life. Death does but rarely wait, until men be bowing down, by reason of age, to meet the grave. Yet, as if years were too big a word for such a small thing as the life of man on earth, we find it counted by **months**, Job 14:5. "The number of his *months* are with you." Our course, like that of the moon, is run in a little time– we are always waxing or waning, until we disappear.

But frequently it is reckoned by **days**; and these but few, Job 14:1, "Man, that is born of a woman, is of few *days*." No, it is but one day, in Scripture account; and that a hireling's day, who will precisely observe when his day ends, and give over his work, ver. 6, "Until he shall accomplish as an hireling his day."

Yes, the Scripture brings it down to the shortest space of time, and calls it a **moment**, II Cor. 4:17, "Our light affliction," though it last all our life long, "is but for a *moment*." Elsewhere it is brought down yet to a lower pitch, farther than which one cannot carry it, Psalm 39:5, "My age is as **nothing** before you." Agreeably to this, Solomon tells us, Eccl. 3:2, "There is a time to be *born*, and a time to *die*"; but makes no mention of a time to *live*, as if our life were but a skip from the womb to the grave.

2. Consider the various SIMILITUDES by which the Scripture represents the shortness of man's life. Hear Hezekiah, Isa. 38:12, "My age is departed, and is removed from me as a *shepherd's tent*; I am cut off like a *weaver's shuttle*." The shepherd's tent is soon removed; for the flocks must not feed long in one place; such is a man's life on this earth, quickly gone. It is a web which he is incessantly working; he is not idle so much as for one moment– in a short time it is wrought, and then it is cut off. Every breathing is a thread in this web; when the last breath is drawn, the web is woven out; he expires, and then it is cut off, he breathes no more.

Man is like *grass*, and like a *flower*, Isa. 40:6. "All flesh," even the strongest and most healthy flesh, "is *grass*, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field." The grass is flourishing in the morning; but, being cut down by the mowers, in the evening it is withered– so man sometimes is walking up and down at ease in the morning, and in the evening is lying a corpse, being struck down by a sudden blow, with one or other of death's weapons.

The *flower*, at best, is but a weak and tender thing, of short continuance wherever it grows– but observe, man is not compared to the flower of the garden; but to the flower of the field, which the foot of every beast may tread down at any time. Thus is our life liable to a thousand accidents every day, any of which may cut us off. But though we should escape all these, yet at length this grass withers, this flower fades by itself. It is carried off "as the *cloud* is consumed, and vanishes away," Job 7:9. It looks big as the morning cloud, which promises great things, and raises the expectation of the husbandman; but the sun rises, and the cloud is scattered; *death comes, and man vanishes!*

The apostle James proposes the question, "What is your life?" chapter 4:14. Hear his answer, "It is even a *vapor*, that appears for a little time, and then vanishes away." It is frail, uncertain, and does not last. It is as *smoke*, which goes out of the chimney, as if it would

darken the face of the heavens; but quickly it is scattered, and appears no more– thus goes man's life, and "where is he?" It is *wind*, Job 7:7, "O remember that my life is wind." It is but a passing blast, a short puff, "a wind that passes away, and comes not again," Psalm 78:39. Our *breath* is in our nostrils, as if it were always upon the wing to depart; ever passing and repassing, like a traveler, until it goes away, not to return until the heavens be no more.

III. Man's life is a SWIFT thing; not only a passing, but *a flying vanity*. Have you not observed how swiftly a shadow runs along the ground, in a cloudy and a windy day, suddenly darkening the places beautified before with the beams of the sun, but is suddenly disappearing? Such is the life of man on the earth, for "he flees as a shadow, and continues not," Job 14:2. A weaver's shuttle is very swift in its motion; in a moment it is thrown from one side of the web to the other; yet "our days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle," chap. 7:6. *How quickly is man tossed through time, into eternity!* See how Job describes the swiftness of the time of life, chap. 9:25-26. "Now my days are swifter than a runner; they flee away, they see no good. They are passed away as the swift ships; as the eagle that hastens to the prey." He compares his days with a *runner*, who runs speedily to carry tidings, and will make no stop. But though the runner were like Ahimaaz, who overrun Cushi, our days would be swifter than he; for they flee away, like a man fleeing for his life before the pursuing enemy; he runs with his utmost vigor, yet our days run as fast as he.

But this is not all; even he who is fleeing for his life, cannot run always– he must needs sometimes stand still, lie down, or turn in somewhere, as Sisera did into Jael's tent, to refresh himself– *but our time never halts!* Therefore it is compared to *ships*, that can sail night and day without intermission, until they reach their port; and to swift ships, ships of desire, in which men quickly arrive at their desired haven; or ships of pleasure, that sail more swiftly than ships

of burden. Yet the wind failing, the ship's course is checked– but *our time always runs with a rapid course!* Therefore it is compared to the *eagle* flying; not with his ordinary flight, for that is not sufficient to represent the swiftness of our days; but when he flies upon his prey, which is with an extraordinary swiftness. And thus, even thus, our days flee away.

Having thus discoursed of death, let us **APPLY** the subject in discerning the vanity of the world; in bearing up, with Christian contentment and patience under all troubles and difficulties in it; in mortifying our lusts; in cleaving unto the Lord with full purpose of heart, at all hazards, and in preparing for death's approach.

I. Let us hence, as in a looking-glass, **Behold the vanity of the world**, and of all those things in it, which men so much value and esteem; and therefore set their hearts upon. The rich and the poor are equally intent upon gaining this world; they bow the knee to it; yet it is but a *clay god*– they court the bulky vanity, and run eagerly to catch this shadow. The rich man is hugged to death in its embraces; and the poor man wearies himself in the fruitless pursuit. What wonder if the world's smiles overcome us, when we pursue it so eagerly, even while it frowns upon us!

But look into the grave! O man! consider and be wise; listen to the doctrine of death; and learn,

1. that, "hold as hard as you can, you shall be forced to let go your hold of the world at length." Though you load yourself with the fruits of this earth; yet all shall fall off when you come to creep into your hole, the house, under ground, appointed for all living. When death comes, you must bid an eternal farewell to your enjoyments in this world– you must leave your goods to another; Luke 12:20, "And whose shall those things be which you have provided?"

2. Your portion of these things shall be very little before long. If you lie down on the grass, and stretch yourself at full length, and

observe the print of your body when you rise, you may see how much of this earth will fall to your share at last. It may be you shall get a coffin, and a winding-sheet; but you are not sure of that; many who have had abundance of wealth, yet have not had so much when they took up their new house in the land of silence. But however that be, more you cannot expect.

It was a sobering lesson, which Saladin, when dying, gave to his soldiers. He called for his standard bearer, and ordered him to take his shroud upon a pole, and go out to the camp with it, and declare that of all his conquests, victories, and triumphs, he had nothing now left him, but that piece of linen to wrap his body in for burial.

3. "This world is a false friend," who leaves a man in time of greatest need, and flees from him when he has most to do. When you are lying on a deathbed, all your friends and relatives cannot rescue you; all your substance cannot ransom you, nor procure you a reprieve for one day; no, not for one hour! Yes, the more you possess of this world's goods, your sorrow at death is likely to be the greater; for though one may live more commodiously in a palace than in a cottage, yet he may die more easily in the cottage, where he has very little to make him fond of life.

II. It may serve as **a storehouse for Christian contentment and patience under worldly losses and crosses.** A close application of the doctrine of death is an excellent remedy against fretting, and gives some ease to a troubled heart. When Job had sustained very great losses, he sat down contented, with this meditation, Job 1:21, "Naked I came out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there; the Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." When Providence brings a mortality or disease among your cattle, how ready are you to fret and complain! but the serious consideration of your own death, to which you have a notable help from such providential occurrences, may be of use to silence your complaints, and quiet your spirits. Look to "the house appointed for all living," and learn,

1. That you must suffer a more severe tragedy than the loss of worldly goods. Do not cry out because of an illness in the leg or arm– for before long there will be a long home thrust at the heart. You may lose your dearest relations– the wife may lose her husband, and the husband his wife; the parents may lose their dear children and the children their parents; but if any of these trials happen to you, remember you must lose your own life at last; and "Why does a living man complain?" Lam. 3:39. It is always profitable to consider, under affliction, that our case might have been worse than it is. Whatever is consumed, or taken from us, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we ourselves are not consumed," ver. 22.

2. It is but for a short space of time that we are in this world. It is but a little that our necessities require in so short a space of time; when death comes, we shall stand in need of none of these things. Why should men rack their heads with cares how to provide for tomorrow; while they know not if they shall then need anything? Though a man's provision for his journey be nearly spent, he is not disquieted, if he thinks he is near home. Are you working by candle light, and is there *little* of your candle left? It may be there is as little sand in your glass; and if so, you have little use for it.

3. You have matters of great weight that challenge your care. Death is at the door, beware that you lose not your souls. If blood breaks out at one part of the body, they often open a vein in another part of it, to turn the stream of the blood, and to stop it. Thus the Spirit of God sometimes cures men of sorrow for earthly things, by opening the heart-vein to bleed for sin. Did we pursue heavenly things more vigorously when our affairs in this life prosper not, we should thereby gain a double advantage– our worldly sorrow would be diverted, and our best treasure increased.

4. Crosses of this nature will not last long. The world's smiles and frowns will quickly be buried together in everlasting forgetfulness. Its *smiles* go away like foam on the water; and

its *frowns* are as a passing ache in a man's side. Time flies away with swift wings, and carries our earthly comforts, and crosses too, along with it– neither of them will accompany us into "the house appointed for all living." "For in death the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest. Even prisoners are at ease in death, with no guards to curse them. Rich and poor are there alike, and the slave is free from his master." Job 3:17-19.

Cast a look into eternity, and you will see affliction here in this world, is but for a moment. The truth is, our time is so very short, that it will not allow either our joys or griefs to come to perfection. Therefore, let them "that weep be as though they wept not; and those who rejoice as though they rejoiced not," etc., I Cor. 7:29-31.

5. Death will put all men on the same level. The king and the beggar must dwell in one house, when they come to their journey's end; though their entertainment by the way may be very different. "The small and the great are there," Job 3:19. We are all in this world as on a stage; it is no great matter, whether a man acts the part of a prince or a peasant, for when they have acted their parts, they must both get behind the curtain, and appear no more.

6. If you are not in Christ, whatever your afflictions now be, "troubles a thousand times worse, are abiding you in another world." *Death will turn your crosses into pure unmixed curses!* and then, how gladly would you return to your former afflicted state, and purchase it at any rate, were there any possibility of such a return.

7. If you are in Christ, you may well bear your cross. *Death will put an end to all your troubles.* If *a man on a journey* is not well accommodated, where he lodges only for a night, he will not trouble himself much about the matter; because he is not to stay there, it is not his home. *You are on the road to eternity!* let it not distress you that you meet with some hardships in the 'inn of this world'. Fret not, because it is not so well with you as with some others. One man travels with a cane in his hand; his fellow traveler, perhaps, has but a common staff or stick– either of them will serve the turn. It

is no great matter which of them be yours; both will be laid aside when you come to your journey's end.

III. It may serve for a bridle, to curb all manner of lusts, particularly those conversant about the body. A serious visit made to cold death, and that solitary mansion, the grave, might be of good use to repress them.

(1.) It may be of use to cause men to cease from their INORDINATE CARE FOR THE BODY; which is to many the bane of their souls. Often do these questions, "What shall we eat? what shall we drink? and with what shall we be clothed?" leave no room for another of more importance, namely, "With what shall I come before the Lord?" The *soul* is put on the shelf, to answer these base questions in favor of the *body*; while its own eternal interests are neglected. But ah! why are men so busy to repair *the ruinous cottage*; leaving *the inhabitant* to bleed to death of his wounds, unheeded, unregarded? Why so much care for the body, to the neglect of the concerns of the immortal soul? O do not be so anxious for what can only serve your bodies; since, before long, the clods of cold earth will serve for back and belly too!

(2.) It may abate your pride on account of BODILY ENDOWMENTS, which vain man is apt to glory in. Value not yourselves on the blossom of **youth**; for while you are in your blooming years, you are *but ripening for a grave*; death gives the fatal stroke, without asking any body's age. Do not boast in your **strength**, it will quickly be gone– *the time will soon be, when you shall not be able to turn yourselves on a bed;* and you must be carried by your grieving friends to your long home. And what signifies your **healthful** constitution? Death does not always enter in soonest where it begins soonest to knock at the door; but makes as great dispatch with some in a few hours, as with others in many years.

Do not value yourselves on your **beauty**, which "shall consume in the grave," Psalm 49:14. Remember the change which death

makes on the fairest face, Job 14:20– "You always overpower them, and then they pass from the scene. You disfigure them in death and send them away." Death makes the greatest beauty so loathsome, that it must be buried out of sight. Could a mirror be used in "the house appointed for all living," it would be a terror to those who now look oftener into their mirrors than into their Bibles. And what though the body be gorgeously arrayed? The finest *clothes* are but badges of our sin and shame; and in a little time will be exchanged for a shroud, when the body will become a feast to the worms!

(3.) It may be A CHECK UPON SENSUALITY AND FLESHLY LUSTS. 1 Peter 2:11, "I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." It is hard to cause wet wood to take fire; and when the fire does take hold of it, it is soon extinguished. Sensuality makes men most unfit for divine communications, and is an effectual means to quench the Spirit. *Intemperance in eating and drinking* carries on the ruin of soul and body at once; and hastens death, while it makes the man most unfit for it. Therefore, "Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap." Luke 21:34

But O how often is the soul struck through with a dart, in gratifying the senses! At these doors destruction enters in. Therefore Job "made a covenant with his eyes," chap. 31:1. "The mouth of a strange woman is a deep pit– he that is abhorred of the Lord, shall fall therein," Prov. 22:14. "Let him that stands, take heed lest he fall," I Cor. 10:12. Beware of lustful pleasure; study modesty in your apparel, words, and actions. The ravens of the valley of death will at length pick out the lustful eye– the obscene filthy tongue will at length be quiet, in the land of silence; and grim death, embracing the body in its cold arms, will effectually allay the heat of all fleshly lusts!

(4.) In a word, it may CHECK OUR EARTHLY-MINDEDNESS; and at once knock down "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." Ah! if we must die why are we *so fond of temporal things*; so anxious to get them, so eager in the embraces of them, so mightily bothered with the loss of them?

Let me, upon a view of "the house appointed for all living," address the worldling in the words of Solomon. Prov. 23:5, "Will you set your eyes upon that which is not?" For riches certainly make themselves wings, "they flee away as an eagle towards heaven." Riches, and all worldly things are but 'a lovely nothing'; they are that which is not. They are not what they seem to be– they are but gilded vanities, that deceive the eye.

Comparatively, they are not; there is infinitely more of nothingness and non-being, than of being, or reality, in the best of them. *What is the world and all that is in it,* but a fashion, or fair show, such as men make on the stage– a passing show? I Cor. 7:31. Royal pomp is but gaudy show, or appearance, in God's account, Acts 25:23. The best name they get, is good things– but observe it, they are only the *wicked* man's good things, Luke 16:25, "You in your lifetime received your good things," says Abraham, in the parable, to the rich man in hell. Well may the men of the world call these things their goods; for there is no other good in them, about them, nor attending them.

Now, will you set your eyes upon empty shadows and fancies? Will you cause your eyes to fly on them, as the word is? Shall men's hearts fly out at their eyes upon them, as a ravenous bird on its prey? If they do, let them know, that at length these shall flee as fast away from them, as their eyes flew upon them– like a flock of fair-feathered birds, that settle on a fool's ground; which, when he runs to catch them as his own, do immediately take wing, fly away, and sitting down on his neighbor's ground, elude his expectation, Luke 12:20, "*You fool*, this night your soul shall be required of you; then whose shall these things be?"

Though *you* do not make wings to them, as many do; they themselves make wings, and fly away; not as a tame house-bird, which may be caught again; but as an eagle, which quickly flies out of sight, and cannot be recalled. Forbear then to seek these things. O mortal! there is no good reason to be given why you should set your eyes upon them. This world is a great *inn*, on the road to eternity, to which you are traveling. You are attended by those things, as servants belonging to the inn where you lodge– they wait upon you while you are there; and when you go away, they will convoy you to the door. But *they are not yours*, they will not go away with you; but return to wait on other strangers, as they did on you.

4. It may serve as a spring of CHRISTIAN RESOLUTION, to cleave to Christ, adhere to his truths, and continue in his ways; whatever we may suffer for so doing. It would much allay 'the fear of man, that brings a snare'. "Who are you, that you should be afraid of a man that shall die?" Isa. 51:12. Look on persecutors as pieces of brittle clay, that shall be dashed in pieces, for then shall you despise them as foes, that are mortal; whose terror to others in the land of the living, shall quickly die with themselves.

The serious consideration of the shortness of our time, and the certainty of death, will teach us, that all the advantage which we can make by our seeking the world, is not worth the while; it is not worth going out of our way to get it– and what we refuse to forgo for Christ's sake, may be quickly taken from us by death. But we can never lose it so honorably, as for the cause of Christ, and his gospel; for what glory is it, that you give up what you have in the world, when God takes it away from you by death, whether you will or not?

This consideration may teach us to undervalue life itself, and choose to forgo it, rather than to sin. The worst that men can do, is to take away that life, which we cannot long keep, though all the world should conspire to help us to retain the spirit. If we refuse to

offer it up to God when he calls for it in defense of his honor, he can take it from us another way; as it fared with him, who could not burn as a martyr for Christ, but was afterwards burned by an accidental fire in his house.

5. It may serve for a spur to INCITE US TO PREPARE FOR DEATH. Consider,

(1.) YOUR ETERNAL STATE WILL BE ACCORDING TO THE STATE IN WHICH YOU DIE– death will open the doors of heaven or hell to you. As the tree falls, so it shall lie through eternity. If the infant be dead born, the whole world cannot raise it to life again– and if one die out of Christ, in an unregenerate state, there is no more hope for him, forever.

(2.) SERIOUSLY CONSIDER WHAT IT IS TO GO INTO THE ETERNAL WORLD; a world of spirits, with which we are very little acquainted. How frightful is converse with spirits to poor mortals in this life! and how dreadful is the case, when men are hurried away into another world, not knowing but that devils may be their companions forever! Let us then give all diligence to make and advance our acquaintance with the Lord of that world.

(3.) IT IS BUT A SHORT TIME YOU HAVE TO PREPARE FOR DEATH– therefore now or never, seeing the time assigned for preparation will soon be over. Eccl. 9:10, "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might– for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, where you go." *How can we be idle, having so great a work to do, and so little time to do it in?* But if the time is short, the work of preparation for death, though hard work, will not last long. The shadows of the evening make the laborer work cheerfully; knowing the time to be at hand, when he will be called in from his labor.

(4.) MUCH OF OUR SHORT TIME IS OVER ALREADY; and the youngest of us all cannot assure himself, that there is as much of his time to come, as is past. *Our life in the world is but a short*

preface to long eternity; and much of the tale is told. Oh! shall we not double our diligence, when so much of our time is spent, and so little of our great work is done?

(5.) THE **PRESENT** TIME IS FLYING AWAY– and we cannot bring back time **past**, it has taken an eternal farewell of us– there is no kindling the fire again that is burned to ashes. The time **to come** is not ours– and we have no assurance of a share in it when it comes. We have nothing we can call ours, but the present moment; and that is flying away. How soon our time may be at an end, we know not. Die we must– but who can tell us when? If death kept one set time for all, we were in no hazard of a surprise– but daily observation shows us, that there is no such thing. The flying shadow of our life allows no time for loitering. The rivers run speedily into the sea, from where they came; but not so speedily as man to dust, from where he came. The stream of time is the swiftest current, and quickly runs out to eternity!

(6.) If once death carries us off, THERE IS NO COMING BACK to mend our matters, Job 14:14, "If a man dies, shall he live again?" Dying is a thing we cannot get a trial of; it is what we can only do once, Heb. 9:27, "It is appointed unto men *once* to die." And that which can be but once done, and yet is of so much importance that our all depends on our doing it right, we have need to use the utmost diligence that we may do it well. Therefore prepare for death.

If you who are unregenerate ask me, what you shall do to prepare for death, that you may die safely; I answer, I have told you already what must be done. Your nature and state must be changed– you must be united to Jesus Christ by faith. Until this is done, you are not capable of other directions, which belongs to a person's dying comfortably.

The difference between the Righteous and the Wicked in their death

"The **wicked** is driven away in his wickedness; but
the **righteous** has hope in his death." Proverbs 14:32.

This text looks like the cloud between the Israelites and Egyptians; having a dark side towards the latter, and a bright side towards the former. It represents death like Pharaoh's jailor, bringing the chief butler and the chief baker out of prison; the one to be restored to his office, and the other to be led to execution. It shows the difference between the godly and ungodly in their death; who, as they act a very different part in life, so, in death, have a very different exit.

As to the death of a WICKED man, here is,

1. The MANNER of his passing out of the world. He is "*driven* away;" namely, in his death, as is clear from the opposite clause. He is forcibly thrust out of his place in this world; driven away as chaff before the wind.

2. The STATE he passes away in. He dies also in a *sinful* and *hopeless* state.

A. In a **sinful** state– He is driven away in his wickedness. He lived in it, and he dies in it. His filthy garments of sin in which he wrapped up himself in his life are his prison garments, in which he shall lie wrapped up forever.

B. In a **hopeless** state– "but the righteous has hope in his death;" which plainly imports the hopelessness of the wicked in their death. Whereby is not meant, that no wicked man shall have *any* hope at all when he is dying, but shall die in despair. No– sometimes it is so indeed; but frequently it is otherwise; foolish virgins may, and often do, hope to the last breath. But the wicked man has no *solid* hope– as for the delusive hopes he entertains himself with, death will root them up, and he shall be forever irretrievably miserable.

As to the death of a righteous man, he has hope in his death. This is ushered in with a "but," importing the removal of these dreadful

circumstances, with which the wicked man is attended, who is driven away in his wickedness; but the godly are not so.

1. Not so, in the **manner** of their passing out of the world. The righteous are not driven away as chaff before the wind; but led away as a bride to the marriage chamber, carried away by the angels into Abraham's bosom, Luke 16:22.

2. Not so as to their **state**, when passing out of this life. The righteous man dies, not in a sinful, but in a **holy** state. He does not go away *in* his sin, but *out of* it. In his life he was putting off the old man, changing his prison garments; and now the remaining rags of them are removed, and he is adorned with robes of glory. Not in a hopeless, but a **hopeful** state. He has hope in his death; he has the grace of hope, and the well-founded expectation of better things than he ever had in this world– and though, the stream of his hope at death may run shallow, yet he has still so much of it as makes him venture his eternal interests upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

DOCTRINE 1. The WICKED dying, are driven away in their wickedness, and in a HOPELESS state. In speaking to this doctrine,

I. I shall show how, and in what sense, the wicked are "driven away in their wickedness" at death.

II. I shall prove the hopelessness of their state at death.

III. And then apply the whole.

I. How, and in what sense, the wicked are "driven away in their wickedness." In discoursing of this matter, I shall briefly inquire,

1. What is meant by their being "driven away."

2. Why they shall be driven, and where.

3. In what respects they may be said to be driven away "in their wickedness."

But before I proceed, let me remark, that you are mistaken if you think that no people are to be called wicked, but those who are avowedly vicious and profane; as if the devil could dwell in none but those whose name is Legion. In Scripture account, all who are not righteous, in the manner hereafter explained, are reckoned wicked. Therefore the the text divides the whole world into two sorts– "the righteous and the wicked," and you will see the same thing in Malachi 3:18, "Then shall you return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked." Therefore if you are not righteous, you are wicked. If you have not an *imputed* righteousness, and also an *implanted* righteousness, or united to Christ by faith, however moral and blameless in the eyes of men your conversation may be, you are the wicked who shall be driven away in their wickedness– if death finds you in that state. Now,

1. As to the MEANING of this phrase, "driven away," there are three things in it; the wicked shall be taken away suddenly, violently, and irresistibly.

(1.) Unrenewed men shall be taken away **SUDDENLY** at death. Not that all wicked men die suddenly; nor that they are all wicked that die so; God forbid. But,

1. Death commonly comes upon them **unexpectedly**, and so surprises them, as the deluge surprised the old world, though they were forewarned of it long before it came; and as travail comes on a woman with child, with surprising suddenness, although looked for and expected, 1 Thess. 5:3. Death seizes them, as a creditor does his debtor, to drag him to prison, Psalm 55:15, and that when they are not aware. Death comes in, as a thief, at the window, and finds them full of busy thoughts about this life which that very day perish.

2. Death always seizes them **unprepared** for it; the old house falls down about their ears, before they have another provided. When death casts them to the door, they have not where to lay their heads; unless it be on a bed of fire and brimstone. The soul and

body are as it were hugging one another in mutual embraces; when death comes like a whirlwind, and separates them.

3. Death hurries them away **in a moment** to destruction, and makes a most dismal change– the man for the most part never knows where he is, until "in *hell* he lift up his eyes," Luke 16:23. The floods of wrath suddenly overwhelm his soul; and before he is aware, he is plunged into the bottomless pit!

(2.) The unrenewed man is taken away out of the world **VIOLENTLY**. Driving is a violent action; he is "chased out of the world," Job 18:18. Gladly would he stay, if he could; but death drags him away, like a malefactor to the execution. He sought no other portion than the profits and pleasures of this world– he has no other; he really desires no other– how can he then go away out of it, if he were not *driven?*

Question. "But may not a wicked man be willing to die?" **Answer.** He may indeed be willing to die; but observe it is only in one of three cases.

1. In a fit of passion, by reason of some **trouble** that he is impatient to be rid of. Thus, many people, when their passion has got the better of their reason, and when, on that account they are most unfit to die, will be ready to cry, "O to be gone!" But should their desire be granted, and death came at their call, they would quickly show they were not in earnest; and that, if they go, they must be driven away against their wills.

2. When they are brim-full of **despair** may they be willing to die. Thus Saul murdered himself; and Spira wished to be in hell, that he might know the uttermost of what he believed he was to suffer. In this manner men may seek after death, while it flees from them. But fearful is the violence these undergo, whom the terrors of God do thus drive.

3. When they are **dreaming of happiness after death**. Foolish virgins, under the power of delusion, as to their state, may be

willing to die, having no fear of lying down in sorrow. How many are there, who can give no scriptural ground for their hope, who yet have no bands in their death! Many are driven to darkness 'sleeping'– they go off like lambs, who would roar like lions, did they but know what place they are going to; though the chariot in which they are, drives furiously to the depths of hell, yet they fear not, because they are fast asleep!

(3.) The unregenerate man is taken away **IRRESISTIBLY**. He **must** go, though sore against his will. Death will lake no refusal, nor admit of any delay; though the man has not lived half his days, according to his own computation. If he will not *bow*, it will *break* him. If he will not come forth, it will pull the house down about his ears; for there he must not stay. Although the physicians help, friends groan, the wife and children cry, and he himself use his utmost efforts to retain the spirit, his soul is required of him; yield he must, and go where he shall never more see light.

2. Let us consider, WHY they are driven, and WHERE.

When the wicked die,

(1.) They are driven **out of this world**, where they sinned, into the other world, where they must be judged, and receive their particular sentences, Heb. 9:27, "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." They shall no more return to their beloved earth. Though their hearts are wedded to their earthly enjoyments, they must leave them, they can carry nothing hence. How sorrowful must their departure be, when they have nothing in view so good as that which they leave behind them!

(2.) They are driven out of the society of the saints on earth, **into the society of the damned in hell**, Luke 16:22-23, "The rich man also died, and was buried. And in hell he lift up his eyes." What a multitude of the devil's goats do now take place among Christ's sheep! but at death they shall be "led forth with the workers of iniquity," Psalm 125:5. There is a *mixed* multitude in this world, but

no mixture in the other; each party is there set by themselves. Though hypocrites grow here as *tares* among the wheat, death will root them up, and they shall be bound in bundles for the fire.

(3.) They are driven **out of time into eternity!** While time lasts with them, there is hope; but when time goes, all hope goes with it. Precious time is now lavishly spent– it lies so heavy on the hands of many, that they think themselves obliged to take several ways to drive away time. But beware of being at a loss what to do in life– improve time for eternity, while you have it; for before long, death will drive it from you, and you from it, so as you shall never meet again.

(4.) They are driven **out of their specious 'pretenses to piety'.** Death strips them of the splendid robes of a fair profession, with which some of them are adorned; and turns them off the stage, in the rags of a wicked heart and life. The word "hypocrite" properly signifies a stage-player, who *appears* to be what indeed he is not. This world is the stage on which these children of the devil impersonate the children of God. Their 'show of religion' is the player's coat, under which one must look, who will judge of them aright. Death turns them out of their coat, and they appear in their native dress– it unveils them, and takes off their mask! There are none in the other world, who pretend to be better than they really are. Depraved nature acts in the regions of horror, undisguised!

(5.) They are driven away from all means of grace; and are set beyond the line, quite **out of all prospect of mercy**. There is no more an opportunity to buy oil for the lamp; it is gone out at death, and can never be lighted again. There may be offers of mercy and peace made, after they are gone; but they are to *others*, not to them– there are no such offers in the place to which they are driven; these offers are only made in that place from which they are driven away.

3. In what respects may they be said to be driven away in their wickedness?

Answer 1. In respect of their being driven away **in**

their sinful unconverted state. Having *lived* enemies to God, they *die* in a state of enmity to him– for none are brought into the eternal state of consummate happiness, but by the way of the state of grace in this life. The child that is dead in the womb, is born dead, and is cast out of the womb into the grave– so, "he who is dead while he lives", or is spiritually dead, is cast forth of the womb of time, in the same state of death, into the pit of utter misery. O miserable death, to die in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity! It had been incomparably better for such as die thus, that they had never been born!

Answer 2. In regard that **they die sinning**, acting wickedly against God, in contradiction to the divine law; for they can do nothing but sin while they live– so death takes them in the very act of sinning; violently draws them from the embraces of their lusts, and drives them away to the tribunal, to receive their sentence! It is a remarkable expression, Job 36:14, "They die in youth," the marginal reading is, "their soul dies in youth"– their lusts being lively, their desires vigorous, and expectations big, as is common in youth. "And their life is among the unclean;" or, "And the company" or herd "of them" dies "among the Sodomites," namely, is taken awny in the act of their sin and wickedness, as the men of Sodom were, Genesis 19; Luke 17:28, 29.

Answer 3. As they are driven away, **loaded with the guilt of all their sins**; this is the winding-sheet that shall lie down with them in the dust, Job 20:11. Their works follow them into the other world; they go away with the yoke of their transgressions wreathed about their necks. Guilt is a bad companion in life, but how terrible will it be in death! It lies now, perhaps, like cold brimstone on their benumbed consciences– but when death opens the way for sparks of divine vengeance, like fire, to fall upon it, it will make dreadful flames in the conscience, in which the soul will be, as it were, wrapped up forever!

Answer 4. The wicked are driven away in their wickedness, in so far as **they die under the absolute power of their wickedness.** While there is hope, there is some restraint on the worst of men; those moral endowments, which God gives to a number of men, for the benefit of mankind in this life, are so many restraints upon the impetuous wickedness of human nature. But all hope being cut off, and these gifts withdrawn, the wickedness of the wicked will then arrive at its perfection.

As the seeds of *grace*, sown in the hearts of the elect, come to their full maturity at death; so *wicked and hellish dispositions in the reprobate, come then to their highest pitch!* Their prayers to God will then be turned to horrible curses, and their praises to hideous blasphemies, Matthew 25:13, "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." This gives a *dismal*, but *correct* view of the state of the wicked in another world.

II. I shall discover the HOPELESSNESS of the state of unrenenewed men at death. It appears to be very hopeless, if we consider these four things.

1. Death cuts off their hopes and prospects of peace and pleasure in this life. Luke 12:19, 20, "Soul, you have much goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, You fool, this night your soul shall be required of you– then who shall have those things which you have provided?" They look for great matters in this world, they hope to increase their wealth, to see their families prosper, and to live at ease; but death comes like a stormy wind, and shakes off all their fond hopes, like green fruit from off a tree. "When he is about to fill his belly, God shall cast the fury of his wrath upon him," Job 20:23. He may begin a web of contrivances for advancing his worldly interest; but before he gets it wrought out, death comes and cuts it off. "His breath goes forth, he returns to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish." Psalm 146:4.

2. When death comes, they have no solid ground to hope for eternal happiness. "For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he has gained, when God takes away his soul?" Job 27:8. Whatever hopes they fondly entertain, they are not founded on God's word, which is the only sure ground of hope; if they knew their own case, they would see themselves only happy in a 'dream'. And indeed what hope can they have? The **law** is plain against them, and condemns them. The curses of it, those cords of death, are about them already. The **Savior** whom they slighted, is now their **Judge**; and their Judge is their **enemy**! How then can they hope? They have bolted the door of mercy against themselves, by their unbelief. They have despised the remedy, and therefore must die without mercy. They have no saving interest in Jesus Christ, the only channel of conveyance through which mercy flows– and therefore they can never taste it.

The 'sword of justice' guards the door of mercy, so as none can enter in, but the members of the mystical body of Christ, over whose head is a covert of atoning blood, the Mediator's blood. These indeed may pass without a harm, for justice has nothing to require of them. But others cannot pass, since they are not in Christ– death comes to them with the sting in it– the sting of unpardoned guilt. It is armed against them with all the force which the sanction of a holy law can give it. 1 Cor. 15:56, "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law." When that law was given on Sinai, "the whole mount quaked greatly," Exodus 19:18. When the Redeemer was making satisfaction for the elect's breaking it, "the earth did quake, and the rocks rent," Matt, 27:51.

What possible ground of hope, then, is there to the wicked man, when death comes upon him armed with the force of this law? How can he escape that fire, which "burnt unto the midst of heaven?" Deut. 4:11. How shall he be able to stand in that smoke, that "ascended up as the smoke of a furnace?" Exod. 19:18. How will he endure the terrible "thunders and lightnings," verse 16, and dwell in "the darkness, clouds, and thick darkness?" Deut. 4:11. All

these comparisons heaped together do but faintly represent the fearful tempest of wrath and indignation, which shall pursue the wicked to the lowest hell; and forever abide on those who are driven to darkness at death.

3. Death roots up their delusive hopes of eternal happiness; then it is that their covenant with death and agreement with hell, is broken. They are awakened out of their golden dreams, and at length lift up their eyes; Job 8:14, "Whose hope shall be cut off, and whose trust shall be a spider's web." They trust that all shall be well with them after death– but their trust is as a web woven out of their own bowels, with a great deal of art and industry. They wrap themselves up in their hope, as the spider wraps herself in her web. But it is a weak and slender defense; for however it may withstand the threatenings of the word of God; death, that broom of destruction, will sweep them and it both away, so as there shall not be the least shred of it left; and he, who this moment will not let his hope go, shall next moment be utterly hopeless. Death overturns the house built on the sand; it leaves no man under the power of delusion.

4. Death makes their state absolutely and forever hopeless. Matters cannot be retrieved and amended after death. For,

1. Time once gone can never be recalled. If cries or tears, price or pains, could bring time back again, the wicked man might have hope in his death. But tears of blood will not prevail! Nor will his *roaring* for millions of ages cause it to return! The sun will not stand still for the sluggard to awake and enter on his journey; and when once it is gone down, he needs not expect the night to be turned into day for his sake– he must lodge through the long night of eternity, where his time left him.

2. There is no returning to this life, to amend what is amiss; it is a state of probation and trial, which terminates at death; therefore we cannot return to it again; it is but once we thus live, and once we

die. Death carries the wicked man to "his own place," Acts 1:25. This life is our working day. Death closes our day and our work together. We may readily admit the wicked might have some hope in their death, if, after death has opened their eyes, they could return to life, and have but the trial of one Sabbath, one offer of Christ, one day, or but one hour more, to make up their peace with God– but "man lies down, and rises not until the heavens be no more; they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep," Job 14:12.

3. In the other world, men have no access to get their ruined state and condition retrieved, though they be ever so desirous of it. "For there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, where you go," Eccl. 9:10. *Now* a man may flee from the wrath to come; he may get into a refuge. But when once death has done its work, "the door is shut!" there are no more offers of mercy, no more pardons– where the tree is fallen, there it must lie.

Let what has been said be carefully pondered; and that it may be of use, let me exhort you,

First, To take heed that you entertain no hopes of heaven, but what are built on a solid foundation– tremble to think what fair hopes of happiness death sweeps away, like cobwebs; how the hopes of many are cut off, when they seem to themselves to be at the very threshold of heaven; how, in the moment they expected to be carried by angels into Abraham's bosom, into the regions of bliss and peace; they are carried by devils into the society of the damned in hell, into the place of torment, and regions of horror!

I beseech you to BEWARE–

1. Of a hope built upon ground that was never cleared. The wise builder dug deep, Luke 6:48. Were your hopes of heaven never shaken; but have you had good hopes all your days? Alas for it! you may see the mystery of your case explained, Luke 11:21, When a strong man armed keeps his palace, his goods are at peace. But if

they have been shaken, take heed lest some breaches only have been made in the old building, which you have got repaired again, by ways and means of your own. I assure you, that your hope, however fair a building it is, is not fit to trust to, unless your old hopes have been razed, and you have built on a foundation quite new.

2. Beware of that hope which looks bright in the dark, but loses all its luster when it is set in the light of God's word, when it is examined and tried by the touchstone of divine revelation, John 3:20, 21, "for every one that does evil hates the light, neither comes to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that does the truth, comes to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God." That hope, which cannot abide *scripture trial*, but sinks when searched into by sacred truth, is a delusion, and not a true hope– for God's word is always a friend to the graces of God's Spirit, and an enemy to delusion.

3. Beware of that hope, which stands without being supported by scriptural evidences. Alas! many are big with hopes, who cannot give, because they really have not, any scripture grounds for them. You hope that all will be well with you after death– but what word of God is it, on which you have been caused to hope? Psalm 119:49. What scriptural evidence have you to prove that yours is not the hope of the hypocrite? What have you, after impartial self-examination, as in the sight of God, found in yourself, which the word of God determines to be a sure evidence of his right to eternal life, who is possessed of it? Numbers are ruined with such hopes as stand unsupported by scriptural evidence. Men are fond and tenacious of these hopes; but death will throw them down, and leave the self-deceiver hopeless.

4. Beware of that hope of heaven, which does not prepare and dispose you for heaven, which never makes your soul more holy, 1 John 3:3, "Every man that has this hope in him, purifies himself, even as he is pure." The hope of the most part of men, is rather a

hope to be free from pain and torment in another life; than a hope of true happiness, the nature whereof is not understood and discerned. Therefore it rests in sloth and indolence, and does not excite to mortification and a heavenly life. So far are they from hoping aright for heaven, that they must own, if they speak their genuine sentiments, removing out of this world into any other place whatever, is rather their *fear* than their *hope*.

The glory of the heavenly city does not at all draw their hearts upwards to it, nor do they lift up their heads with joy, in the prospect of arriving at it. If they had the true hope of the marriage day, they would, as the bride, the "Lamb's wife," be "making themselves ready for it," Rev. 19:7. But their hopes are produced by their sloth, and their sloth is nourished by their hopes. Oh, Sirs, as you would not be driven away helpless in your death, beware of these hopes! Raze them now, and build on a new foundation, lest death leave not one stone of them upon another, and you never be able to hope any more.

Secondly, Hasten, O sinners, out of your wickedness, out of your sinful state, and out of your wicked life, if you would not at death be *driven* away in your wickedness! Remember the fatal end of the wicked as the text represents it. I know there is a great difference in the death of the wicked, as to some circumstances– but ALL of them, in their death, agree in this, that they are driven away in their wickedness. Some of them die **resolutely**, as if they scorned to be afraid; some in raging **despair**, so filled with horror that they cry out as if they were already in hell; others in sullen **despondency**, oppressed with fears, so that their hearts sink within them, at the remembrance of misspent time, and the view which they have of eternity, having neither head nor heart to do anything for their own relief. And others die **stupidly**; they live like beasts, and they die like beasts, without any concern on their spirits, about their eternal state. They groan under their *bodily* distress but have no sense of the danger of their *soul!* One may, with almost as much prospect of success, speak to a stone, as speak to them; vain is the attempt to

teach them; nothing that can be said moves them. To discourse to them, either of the joys of heaven on the torments of hell, is to plough on a rock, or beat the air. Some die like the **foolish** virgins, dreaming of heaven; their foreheads are steeled against the fears of hell, with presumptuous hopes of heaven. The business of those who would be useful to them, is not to answer doubts about the case of their souls, but to discover to them their own false hopes. But which way soever the unconverted man dies, he is "driven away in his wickedness."

O dreadful case! Oh, let the consideration of so horrid a departure out of this world, move you to flee to Jesus Christ, as the all-sufficient Savior, an almighty Redeemer. Let it prevail to drive you out of your wickedness, to holiness of heart and life. Though you reckon it pleasant to live in wickedness, yet you cannot but own, it is bitter to die in it. And if you leave it not in time, you must go on in your wickedness to hell, the *proper* place of it, that it may be set there on its own base. For when you are passing out of this world, all your sins, from the first to the last of them, will swarm about you, hang upon you, accompany you to the other world, and, as so many furies, surround you there forever.

Thirdly, O be concerned for *others*, especially for your relations, that they may not continue in their sinful natural state, but be brought into a state of salvation; lest they be driven away in their wickedness at death. What would you not do to prevent any of your friends dying an untimely and violent death? But, alas! do you not see them in hazard of being driven away in their wickedness! Is not death approaching them, even the *youngest* of them? And are they not strangers to true Christianity, remaining in that state which they came into the world? Oh! make haste to pluck the brand out of the fire, lest it be burned to ashes! The death of relations often leaves a sting in the hearts of those they leave behind them, because they did not do for their souls as they had opportunity; and because the opportunity is forever taken out of their hands.

The state of the GODLY in death is a HOPEFUL state

We have seen the dark side of the cloud looking towards ungodly men, passing out of the world; let us now take a view of the bright side of it, shining on the godly, as they enter on their eternal state. In discoursing on this subject, I shall **confirm** this doctrine, answer an **objection** against it, and then make some **practical improvement** of the whole.

I. For CONFIRMATION, let it be observed, that although the passage out of this world by death has a frightful aspect to poor mortals, and to miscarry in it must needs be of fatal consequence; yet the following circumstances make the state of the godly in their death, happy and hopeful.

1. They hare a trusty good Friend before them in the other world. Jesus Christ, their best Friend, is Lord of the land to which death carries them. When Joseph sent for his father to come down to him to Egypt, telling him, "God had made him lord over all Egypt," Gen. 45:9, "And Jacob "saw the wagons Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob revived," verse 27. He resolves to undertake the journey.

I think, when the Lord calls a godly man out of the world, he sends him such glad tidings, and such a kind invitation into the other world, that, he has faith to believe it, his spirit must revive, when he sees the 'wagon of death' which comes to carry him there. It is true, indeed, he has a weighty trial to undergo– after death the judgment. But the case of the godly is altogether hopeful; for the *Lord* of the land is their *husband*, and their husband is the *judge*. "The Father has committed all judgment unto the Son," John 5:22. Surely the case of the wife is hopeful, when her own husband is her judge, even such a husband as hates divorce. No husband is so loving and so tender of his spouse, as the Lord Christ is of his. One would

think it would be a very bad land, which a wife would not willingly go to, where her husband is the ruler and judge.

Moreover, their judge is the *advocate*, 1 John 2:1, "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Therefore they need not fear their being put back, and falling into condemnation. What can be more favorable? Can they think, that he who pleads their cause, will himself pass sentence against them?

Yet further, their advocate is their *Redeemer*; they are "redeemed with the precious blood of Christ," 1 Pet. 1:18, 19. So when he pleads for them, he is pleading his own cause. Though an advocate may be careless of the interest of one who employs him, yet surely he will do his utmost to

defend his *own* right, which he has purchased with his money– and shall not their advocate defend the purchase of his own blood?

But more than all that, their Redeemer is their *head*, and they are his members, Eph. 5:23, 30. Though one were so silly as to let his own *purchase* go, without standing up to defend his right, yet surely he will not part with a *limb* of his own body. Is not their case then hopeful in death, who are so closely linked and allied to the Lord of the other world, who are "the keys of hell and of death?"

2. They shall have a safe passage to another world. They must indeed go through "the valley of the shadow of death;" but though it be in itself a 'dark and shady valley', it shall be a 'valley of hope' to them– they shall not be driven through it, but be as men in perfect safety, who fear no evil, Psalm 23:4.

Why should they thus fear? They have the Lord of the land's safe conduct, his pass sealed with his own blood; namely, the blessed covenant, which is the saint's death-bed comfort, 2 Sam. 23:5, "Although my house be not so with God, yet he has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure– for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to

grow." Who then can harm them? It is safe riding in Christ's chariot, Cant. 3:9, both through life and death. They have good and honorable attendants– a guard, even a guard of angels. These encamp about them in the time of their *life*; and surely will not leave them in the day of their *death*. These happy ministering spirits are attendants on their Lord's bride, and will doubtless convey her safe home to his house.

When friends in mournful mood stand by the saint's bedside, waiting to see him draw his last breath, his soul is waited for by angels, to be carried into Abraham's bosom, Luke 16:22. The captain of the saint's salvation is the captain of this holy guard– he was their guide even unto death, and he will be their guide through it too, Psalm 23:4, "Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for you are with me." They may, without fear, pass that 'river', being confident it shall not overflow them; and they may walk through that 'fire', being sure they shall not be burnt by it.

Death can do them no harm! It cannot even hurt their bodies– for though it separate the soul from the body, it cannot separate the body from the Lord Jesus Christ. Even death is to them but 'sleep in Jesus', 1 Thess. 4:14. They continue members of Christ, though in a grave. Their dust is precious dust; laid up in the grave as in their Lord's cabinet. They lie in a grave 'mellowing', as precious fruit laid up to be brought forth to him at the resurrection. The husbandman has corn in his barn, and corn lying in the ground– the latter is more precious to him than the former, because he looks to get it returned with increase. Even so the dead bodies of the saints are valued by their Savior– they are "sown in corruption," to be "raised in incorruption"; "sown in dishonor," to be "raised in glory," 1 Cor. 15:42, 43. It cannot hurt their souls. It is with the souls of the saints at death, as with Paul and his company in their voyage, whereof we have the history, Acts, chapter 27. The ship was broken to pieces, but the passengers got all safe to land.

When the dying saint's speech is stopped, his eyes set, and his last breath drawn, the soul gets safe away into the heavenly paradise, leaving the body to return to its earth, but in the joyful hope of a reunion at its glorious resurrection. But how can death hurt the godly? It is a foiled enemy– if it casts them down, it is only that they may rise more glorious. "Our Savior Jesus Christ has abolished death," 2 Tim. 1:10. The soul and life of it is gone– it is but a 'walking shadow' that may *fright*, but cannot *hurt* saints– it is only the 'shadow of death' to them– it is not the thing itself; their dying is 'but as dying', or 'somewhat like dying'.

The apostle tells us, "It is Christ that died," Rom. 8:34. Stephen, the first Christian martyr, though stoned to death, yet only 'fell asleep', Acts 7:60. Certainly the nature of death is quite changed, with respect to the saints. It is not to them, what it was to Jesus Christ their head– it is not the venomed ruining thing, wrapped up in the sanction of the first covenant, Gen. 2:17, "In the day you eat thereof, you shall surely die." It comes to the godly without a sting– they may meet it with that salutation, "O death, where is your sting?" Is this Mara? Is this 'bitter' death? It went out full into the world, when the first Adam opened the door to it, but the second Adam has brought it again empty to his own people.

I feel a *sting*, may the dying saint say– yet it is but a bee sting, slinging only through the *skin*– but, O death, where is your sting, your old sting, the serpent's sting, that stings to the *heart* and *soul?* The sting of death is sin– but that is taken away. If death arrests the saint, and carries him before the Judge, to answer for the debt he contracted, the debt will be found paid by the glorious Surety; and he has the discharge to show. The *thorn of guilt* is pulled out of the man's conscience; and his name is blotted out of the black roll, and written among the living in Jerusalem.

It is true, it is a great journey through the valley of the shadow of death– but the saint's burden is taken away from his back, his

iniquity is pardoned, he may walk at ease– "No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast," the redeemed may walk at leisure there, free from all apprehensions of danger.

3. They shall have a joyful entrance into the other world. Their arrival in the regions of bliss, will be celebrated with rapturous hymns of praise to their glorious Redeemer. A *dying* day is a *good* day to a godly man. Yes, it is his *best* day; it is better to him than his birth-day, or than the most joyous day which he ever had on earth. "A good name," says the wise man, is "better than precious ointment– and the day of death, than the day of one's birth," Eccl. 7:1.

The notion of the immortality of the soul, and of future happiness, which obtained among some pagan nations, had wonderful effects on them. Some of them, when they mourned for the dead, did it in women's apparel; that, being moved with the indecency of the garb, they might the sooner lay aside their mourning. Others buried them without any lamentation or mourning; but had a sacrifice, and a feast for friends, upon that occasion. Some were used to mourn at births, and rejoice at burials. But the practice of some Indian nations is yet more strange, where, upon the husband's decease, his wife, or wives, with a cheerful countenance, enter the flames prepared for the husband's corpse.

But however *false notions* of a future state, assisted by pride, affectation of applause, apprehensions of difficulties in this life, and such like principles proper to depraved human nature, may influence crude uncultivated minds, when strengthened by the arts of hell; O what solid joy and consolation may they have, who are true Christians, being in Christ, who "has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel!" 2 Tim. 1:10. Death is one of those "all things," that "work together for good to those who love God," Rom. 8:28. When the *body* dies, the *soul* is perfected– the 'body of death' goes off at the 'death of the body'.

What harm did the jailer to Pharaoh's butler, when he opened the prison door to him, and let him out? Is the bird in worse case, when at liberty, than when confined in a cage? Thus, and no worse, are the souls of the saints treated by death. It comes to the godly man, as Haman came to Mordecai, with the royal apparel and the horse, Esther 6:11, with commission to do them honor, however awkwardly it be performed. I question not but Haman performed the ceremony with a very ill mien, a pale face, a downcast look, and a cloudy countenance, and like one who came to hang him, rather than to honor him. But he whom the king delighted to honor, must be honored; and Haman, Mordecai's grand enemy, must be the man employed to put this honor upon him. Glory, glory, glory, blessing and praise to our Redeemer, our Savior, our Mediator, by whose death, 'grim devouring death' is made to do such a good office to those whom it might otherwise have hurried away in their wickedness, to utter and eternal destruction!

A dying day is, in itself, a *joyful* day to the godly; it is their redemption day, when the captives are delivered, when the prisoners are set free. It is the day of the pilgrims coming home from their pilgrimage; the day in which the heirs of glory return from their travels, to their own country, and their Father's house; and enter into actual possession of the glorious inheritance. It is their marriage day– now is the time of espousals; but then the marriage is consummated, and a marriage feast begun, which has no end. If so, is not the state of the godly in death, a *hopeful* state?

II. Objection– "But if the state of the godly in their death be so hopeful, how comes it to pass that many of them, when dying, are full of fears, and have little hope?"

Answer– It must be owned, that saints do not all die in one and the same manner; there is a diversity among them, as well as among the wicked; yet the *worst* case of a dying saint is indeed a *hopeful* one. Some die triumphantly, in a fnli assurance of faith. 2 Timothy 4:6-8, "The time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a

good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness." They get a taste of the joys of heaven, while here on earth; and begin the songs of Zion, while yet in a strange land.

Others die in a solid dependence of faith on their Lord and Savior– though they cannot sing triumphantly, yet they can, and will say confidently, "The Lord is their God." Though they cannot triumph over death, with old Simeon, having Christ in his arms, and saying, "Lord now let your servant depart in peace, according to your word– for my eyes have seen your salvation," Luke 2:29, 30; yet they can say with dying Jacob, "I have waited for your salvation, Lord," Gen. 49:18. His left hand is under their head, to support them, though his right hand does not embrace them– they firmly believe, though they are not filled with joy in believing. They can plead the covenant, and hang by the promise, although their house is not so with God as they could wish.

But the dying day of some saints may be like that day mentioned in Zechariah 14:7, "Not day, nor night." They may die under great doubts and fears; setting as it were in a cloud, and going to heaven in a mist. They may go mourning without the sun, and never put off their spirit of heaviness, until death strips them of it. They may be carried to heaven through the confines of hell; and may be pursued by the devouring lion, even to the very gates of the new Jerusalem; and may be compared to a ship almost wrecked in sight of the harbor, which yet gets safe into her port, 1 Cor. 3:15, "If any man's work shall be burnt, he shall suffer loss– but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire." There is safety amid their fears, but danger in the wicked's strongest confidence; and there is a blessed seed of gladness in their greatest sorrows– "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart," Psalm 97:11.

Now, saints are liable to such perplexity in their death, because, though they are Christians indeed, yet they are men of like passions with others; and *death is a frightful object in itself*,

whatever dress it appears in– the stern countenance with which it looks at mortals, can hardly fail of causing them to shrink. Moreover, the saints are of all men the most jealous of themselves. They think of eternity, and of a tribunal, more deeply than others do; with them it is a more serious thing to die, than the rest of mankind are aware of. They know the deceits of the heart, the subtleties of depraved human nature, better than others do. Therefore they may have much to do to keep up hope on a death-bed; while others pass off quietly, like sheep to the slaughter; and the rather, that Satan, who uses all his art to support the hopes of the hypocrite, will do his utmost to mar the peace, and increase the fears, of the saint.

And finally, the bad frame of spirit, and ill condition, in which death sometimes seizes a true Christian, may cause this perplexity. By his being in the state of grace, he is indeed always habitually prepared for death, and his dying safely is ensured– but yet there is more necessary to his actual preparation and dying comfortably, his spirit must be in good condition too.

Therefore there are **three cases, in which death cannot but be very uncomfortable to a child of God–**

1. If it seizes him at a time when the guilt of some particular sin, unrepented of, is lying on his conscience– and death comes on that very account, to take him out of the land of the living; as was the case of many of the Corinthian believers, 1 Cor. 11:30, "For this cause," namely, of unworthy communicating, "many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." If a person is surprised with the approach of death, while lying under the guilt of some unpardoned sin, it cannot but cause a mighty consternation.

2. When death catches him napping. The midnight cry must be frightful to sleeping virgins. The man who lies in a ruinous house, and awakes not until the timbers begin to crack, and the stones to drop down about his ears, may indeed get out of it safely, but not without fears of being crushed by its fall. When a Christian has

been going on in a course of security and backsliding, and awakens not until death comes to his bedside, it is no wonder that he gets a fearful awakening.

3. When he has lost sight of his saving interest in Christ, and cannot produce evidences of his title to heaven. It is hard to meet death without some evidences of a title to eternal life at hand; hard to go through the dark valley without the candle of the Lord shining upon the head. It is a terrible adventure to launch out into eternity, when a man can make no better of it than a leap in the dark, not knowing where he shall land, whether in heaven or hell.

Nevertheless the state of the saints, in their death, is always in itself hopeful. The presumptuous hopes of the ungodly, in their death, cannot make their state hopeful; neither can the fears of a saint make his state hopeless– for God judges according to the truth of the thing, not according to men's opinions about it. Therefore the saints can be no more altogether without hope, than they can be altogether without faith. Their faith may be very weak, but it fails not; and their hope very low, yet they will, and do hope to the end. Even while the godly seem to be carried away with the stream of doubts and fears, there remains still as much hope as determines them to lay hold on the tree of life that grows on the banks of the river. Jonah 2:4, "Then I said, I am cast out of your sight– yet I will look again toward your temple."

USE–

This speaks **comfort to the godly against the fear of death**. A godly man may be called a happy man before his death, because, whatever befalls him in life, he shall certainly be happy at death. You who are in Christ, who are true Christians, have hope in your end; and such a hope as may comfort you against all those fears which arise from the consideration of a dying hour. This I shall branch out, in answering some cases briefly–

Case 1– "The prospect of death," will some of the saints say, "is uneasy to me, not knowing what shall become of my family when I am gone."

Answer. The righteous has hope in his death, as to his family, as well as himself. Although you have little, for the present, to live upon; which has been the condition of many of God's chosen ones, 1 Cor. 4:11, "We," namely, the apostles, "both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place;" and though you have nothing to leave them, as was the case of that son of the prophets, who feared the Lord, and yet died in debt which he was unable to pay, as his poor widow represents, 2 Kings 4:2; yet you have a good Friend to leave them to; a covenant God, to whom you may confidently commit them. "Leave your fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let your widows trust in me." Jer. 49:11.

The world can bear witness of signal settlements made upon the children of providence; such as by their pious parents have been cast upon God's providential care. It has been often remarked, that they lacked neither provision nor education. Moses is an eminent instance of this. He, though he was an outcast infant, Exod. 2:3, yet became learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, Acts 7:22, and became king in Jeshurun, Deut. 33:5. O! may we not be ashamed, that we do not confidently trust him with the concerns of our families, to whom, as our Savior and Redeemer, we have committed our eternal interests?

Case 2– "Death will take us away from our dear friends; yes, we shall not see the Lord in the land of the living, in the blessed ordinances."

Answer– It will take you to your best Friend, the Lord Christ. The friends you leave behind you, if they be indeed people of worth, you will meet again, when they come to heaven, and you will never be separated any more. If death takes you away from the temple below, it will carry you to the temple above. It will indeed take you

from the *streams*, but it will set you down by the *fountain*. If it puts out your candle, it will carry you where there is no night, where there is an eternal day.

Case 3– "I have so much to do, in time of health, to satisfy myself as to my interest in Christ, about my being a real Christian, a regenerate man, that I judge it is almost impossible I should die comfortably."

Answer– If it is thus with you, then double your diligence to make your calling and election sure. Endeavor to grow in knowledge, and walk closely with God– be diligent in self-examination; and pray earnestly for the Holy Spirit, whereby you may know the things freely given you of God. If you are enabled, by the power and Spirit of Christ, thus diligently to prosecute your spiritual concerns, though the time of your life be neither day nor night, yet at evening time it may be light.

Many weak Christians indulge doubts and fears about their spiritual state, as if they placed at least some part of religion in their imprudent practice; but towards the end of life, they think and act in another manner. The traveler, who reckons that he has time to spare, may stand still debating with himself, whether this or the other be the right way– but when the sun begins to set, he is forced to lay aside his scruples, and resolutely to go forward in the road which he judges to be the right one, lest he lie all night in the open fields. Thus some Christians, who perplex themselves much, throughout the course of their lives, with jealous doubts and fears, content themselves when they come to die, with such evidences of the safety of their state, as they could not be satisfied with before; and by disputing less against themselves, and believing more, court the peace they formerly rejected, and gain it too.

Case 4– "I am under a sad decay, in respect of my spiritual condition."

Answer– Bodily consumptions may make death easy– but it is not so in spiritual decays. I will not say, that a godly man cannot be easy in such a case, when he dies, but I believe it is rarely so. Ordinarily, I suppose a cry comes to awaken sleeping virgins, before death comes. Samson is set to grind in the prison, until his locks grow again. David and Solomon fell under great spiritual decays; but before they died, they recovered their spiritual strength and vigor. However, bestir yourselves without delay, to strengthen the things that remain– your fright will be the less, for being awakened from spiritual sleep before death comes to your bedside– and you ought to lose no time, seeing you know not how soon death may seize you.

Case 5– "It is terrible to think of the other world, that world of spirits, which I have so little acquaintance with."

Answer– Your best friend is Lord of that other world. Abraham's bosom is kindly even to those who never saw his face. After death, your soul becomes capable of converse with the blessed inhabitants of that other world. The spirits of just men made perfect, were once such as your spirit now is. And as for the angels, however superior their nature in the rank of beings, yet our nature is dignified above theirs, in the man Christ, and they are all of them your Lord's servants, and so your fellow-servants.

Case 6– "The pangs of death are terrible."

Answer– Yet not so terrible as pangs of conscience, caused by a piercing sense of guilt, and apprehensions of divine wrath, with which I suppose them to be not altogether unacquainted. But who would not endure bodily sickness, that the soul may become sound, and every whit whole? Each pang of death will set sin a step nearer the door; and with the last breath, the body of sin will breathe out its last. The pains of death will not last long; and the Lord your God will not leave, but support you under them.

Case 7– "But I am likely to be cut off in the midst of my days."

Answer– Do not complain, you will be the sooner at home– you thereby have the advantage of your fellow-laborers, who were at work before you in the vineyard. God, in the course of his providence, hides some of his saints early in the grave, that they may be taken away from the evil to come. An early removal out of this world, prevents much sin and misery. They have no ground of complaint, who get the residue of their years in Immanuel's land. Surely you shall live as long as you have work cut out for you by the great Master, to be done for him in this world– and when that is at an end, it is high time to be gone.

Case 8– "I am afraid of sudden death."

Answer– You may indeed die so. Good Eli died suddenly, 1 Sam. 4:18. Yet death found him watching, ver. 13. "Watch, therefore, for you know not what hour the Lord does come," Matt. 24:42. But be not afraid, it is an inexpressible comfort, that death, come when it will, can never catch you out of Christ; and therefore can never seize you, as a jailor, to hurry you into the prison of hell. Sudden death may hasten and facilitate your passage to heaven, but can do you no prejudice.

Case 9– "I am afraid it will be my lot to die lacking the exercise of reason."

Answer– I make no question but a child of God, a true Christian, may die in this case. But what harm? There is no hazard in it, as to his eternal state– a disease at death may divest him of his reason, but not of his religion. When a man, going on a long voyage, has put his affairs in order, and put all his goods aboard, he himself may he carried on board the ship sleeping– all is safe with him, although he knows not where he is, until he awake in the ship. Even so the godly man, who dies in this case, may die uncomfortably, but not unsafely.

Case 10– "I am naturally timorous, and the very thoughts of death are terrible to me."

Answer– The less you think on death, the thoughts of it will be the more frightful– make it familiar to you by frequent meditations upon it, and you may thereby quiet your fears. Look at the white and bright side of the cloud– take faith's view of the city that has foundations; so shall you see hope in your death. Be duly affected with the body of sin and death, the frequent interruptions of your communion with God, and with the glory which dwells on the other side of death– this will contribute much to remove slavish fear.

It is a pity that saints should be so fond of life as they often are– they ought to be always on good terms with death. When matters are duly considered, it might be well expected that every child of God, every regenerate man, should generously profess concerning this life, what Job did, chap. 7:16, "I loath it, I would not live always." In order to gain their hearts to this desirable temper, I offer the following additional considerations.

I. Consider the SINFULNESS that attends life in this world. While you live here, you sin, and see others sinning. You breathe infectious air. You live in pest-house. Is it at all strange to loathe such a life?

1. Your **own** plague sores are running on you. Does not the sin of your nature make you groan daily? Are you not sensible, that though the cure is begun, it is far from being perfected? Has not the leprosy got into the walls of the house, which cannot be removed without pulling it down? Is not your nature so vitiated, that no less than the separation of the soul from the body can root out the disease? Have you not your sores without, as well as your sickness within? Do you not leave marks of your pollution on whatever passes through your hands? Are not all your actions tainted and blemished with defects and imperfections? Who, then, should be much in love with life, but such whose sickness is their health, and who glory in their shame?

2. The loathsome sores of **others** are always before your eyes, go where you will. The follies and wickedness of men are everywhere

conspicuous, and make but an unpleasant scene. This sinful world is but an unsightly company, a disagreeable crowd, in which the most loathsome are the most numerous.

3. Are not your own sores often breaking out again after healing? Frequent **relapses** may well cause us remit of our fondness for this life. To be ever struggling, and anon falling into the mire again, makes weary work. Do you never wish for cold death, thereby effectually to cool the heat of these lusts, which so often take fire again, even after a flood of godly sorrow has gone over them?

4. Do not you sometimes **infect** others, and others infect you? There is no society in the world, in which every member of it does not sometimes lay a stumbling-block before the rest. The best carry about with them the tinder of a corrupt nature, which they cannot be rid of while they live, and which is liable to be kindled at all times, and in all places– yes, they are apt to inflame others, and become the occasions of sinning. Certainly these things are apt to embitter this life to the saints.

II. Consider the MISERY and TROUBLES that attend it. Rest is desirable, but it is not to be found on this side of the grave. Worldly troubles attend all men in this life. This world is a sea of trouble, where one wave rolls upon another. They who fancy themselves beyond the reach of trouble, are mistaken– no state, no stage of life, is exempted from it. The *crowned head* is surrounded by thorny cares. *Honor* many times paves the way to deep disgrace. *Riches*, for the most part, are kept to the hurt of the owners. The fairest rose lacks not prickles; and the heaviest cross is sometimes wrapped up in the greatest earthly comfort.

Spiritual troubles attend the saints in this life. They are like travelers journeying in a cloudy night, in which the moon sometimes breaks out from under one cloud, but quickly hides her head again under another– no wonder they long to be at their journey's end. The sudden alterations which the best frame of spirit is liable to, the perplexing doubts, confounding fears, short-lived joys, and long-

running sorrows, which have a certain affinity with the present life, must needs create in the saints *a desire to be with Christ, which is best of all.*

III. Consider the great IMPERFECTIONS attending this life. While the soul is lodged in this cottage of clay, the necessities of the body are many– it is always craving. The mud walls must be repaired and patched up daily, until the clay cottage falls down for good and all. Eating, drinking, sleeping, and the like, are, in themselves, but base employments for a rational creature; and will be reputed such by the heaven-born soul. They are 'badges of imperfection', and, as such, unpleasant to the mind aspiring unto that life and immortality which is brought to light through the gospel; and would be very grievous, if this state of things were of long continuance.

Does not the gracious *soul* often find itself yoked with the *body*, as with a companion in travel, unable to keep pace with it? When the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak. When the soul would mount upward, the body is a clog upon it, and a stone tied to the foot of a bird attempting to fly. The truth is, O believer, your soul in this body is, at best, but like a diamond in a ring, where much of it is obscured; it is far sunk in the vile clay, until relieved by death.

I conclude this subject with a few **DIRECTIONS how to prepare for death**, so that we may die comfortably. I speak not here of habitual preparation for death, which a true Christian, in virtue of his gracious state, never lacks, from the time he is born again, and united to Christ; but of actual preparation, or readiness in respect of his particular case, frame, and disposition of mind and spirit; the lack of which makes even a saint very unfit to die.

First, Let it be your constant care to **keep a clean conscience**, "A conscience void of offence toward God, and toward man," Acts 24:16. Beware of a standing controversy between God and you, on the account of some iniquity regarded in the heart. When an honest

man is about to leave his country, and not to return, he settles accounts with those he had dealings with, and lays down methods for paying his debts in due time, lest he be reckoned a bankrupt, and arrested by an officer when he is going off. Guilt lying on the conscience, is a fountain of fears, and will readily sting severely, when death stares the criminal in the face. Hence it is, that many, even of God's children, when dying, wish passionately, and desire eagerly, that they may live to do what they ought to have done before that time.

Therefore, walk closely with God; be diligent, strict, and exact in your course– beware of loose, careless, and irregular conversation; as you would not lay up for yourselves anguish and bitterness of spirit, in a dying hour. And because, through the infirmity cleaving to us, in our present state of imperfection, in many things we offend all, renew your repentance daily, and be ever washing in the Redeemer's blood. As long as you are in the world, you will need to wash your feet, John 13:10, that is, to make application of the blood of Christ anew, for purging your consciences from the guilt of daily miscarriages. Let death find you at the 'fountain'; and, if so, it will find you ready to answer at its call.

Secondly, **Be always watchful, waiting for your change**, "like unto men that wait for their Lord– that when he comes and knocks, they may open unto him immediately," Luke 12:36. Beware of "slumbering and sleeping, while the bridegroom tarries." To be awakened out of spiritual slumber, by a surprising call to pass into another world, is a very frightful thing– but he who is daily waiting for the coming of his Lord, will comfortably receive the 'grim messenger', while he beholds him ushering in him, of whom he may confidently say, "This is my God, and I nave waited for him." The way to die comfortably, is, to die daily! Be often essaying, as it were, to die. Bring yourselves familiarly acquainted with death, by making many visits to the grave, in serious meditations upon it. This was Job's practice, chapter 27:13, 14, "I have made my bed in the darkness." Go and do likewise; and when death comes, you shall

have nothing to do but to lie down. "I have said to corruption, You are my father– to the worm, You are my mother and my sister." You say so too; and you will be the fitter to go home to their house.

Be frequently reflecting upon your conduct, and considering what course of life you wish to be found in, when death arrests you; and act accordingly. When you do the duties of your station in life, or are employed in acts of worship, think with yourselves, that, it may be, this is the last opportunity; and therefore do it as if you were never to do more of that kind. When you lie down at night, compose your spirits, as if you were not to awake until the heavens be no more. And when you awake in the morning, consider that new day as your last; and live accordingly. Surely that night comes, of which you will never see the morning; or that morning, of which you will never see the night. But which of your mornings or nights will be such, you know not.

Thirdly, **Employ yourselves much in weaning your hearts from the world.** The man who is making ready to go abroad, busies himself in taking leave of his friends. Let the mantle of earthly enjoyments hang loose about you; that it may be easily dropped, when death comes to carry you away into another world. Moderate your affections towards your lawful comforts of life– let not your hearts be too much taken with them. The traveler acts unwisely, who allows himself to be so allured with the 'conveniences of the inn' where he lodges, as to make his necessary departure from it grievous. Feed with fear, and walk through the world as pilgrims and strangers. Just as, when the corn is forsaking the ground, it is ready for the sickle; when the fruit is ripe, it falls off the tree easily; so, when a Christian's heart is truly weaned from the world, he is prepared for death, and it will be the more easy to him. A heart disengaged from the world is a heavenly one– we are ready for heaven when our heart is there before us, Matt. 6:21.

Fourthly, **Be diligent in gathering and laying up evidences of your title to heaven**, for your support and comfort at the hour of

death. The neglect thereof mars the joy and consolation which some Christians might otherwise have at their death. Therefore, examine yourselves frequently as to your spiritual state; that evidences which lie hid and unobserved, may be brought to light and taken notice of. And if you would manage this work successfully, make solemn, serious work of it. Set apart some time for it. And, after earnest prayer to God, through Jesus Christ, for the enlightening influences of his Holy Spirit, whereby you are enabled to understand his own word, and to discern his own work in your souls; examine yourselves before the tribunal of your own consciences, that you may judge yourselves, in this weighty matter.

And, in the first place, let the marks of a regenerate state be fixed from the Lord's Word– have recourse to some particular text for that purpose; such as Prov. 8:17, "I love those who love me." Compare Luke 14:26, "If any man comes to me, and hates not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." Psalm 119:6, "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all your commandments." Psalm 18:23, "I was also upright before him; and I kept myself from my iniquity." Compare Romans 7:22, 23, "For I delight in the law of God, after the inward man– but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind." 1 John 3:3, "Every man that has this hope in him, purifies himself, even as he is pure." Matt. 5:3, "Blessed are the poor in spirit– for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Phil. 3:3, "For we are the circumcision, which worship," or serve "God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."

The sum of the evidence arising from these texts, lies here– a real Christian is one who loves God for himself, as well as for his benefits; and that with a supreme love, above all persons, and all things; he has an weighty and impartial regard to God's commands; he opposes and wrestles against that sin, which of all others most easily besets him; he approves and loves the holy law, even in that very point wherein it strikes against his own beloved lust; his hope

of heaven engages him to the study of universal holiness; in which he aims at perfection, though he cannot reach it in this life; he serves the Lord, not only in acts of worship, but in the whole of his conversation; and as to both, is spiritual in the principle, motives, aims, and ends of his service; yet he sees nothing in himself to trust to, before the Lord; Christ and his fullness are the stay of his soul; his confidence is cut off from all that is not Christ, or in Christ, in point of justification or acceptance with God, and in point of sanctification too. Everyone, in whom these characters are found, has a title to heaven, according to the word. It is convenient and profitable to mark such texts, for this special use, as they occur, while you read the Scriptures, or hear sermons.

The marks of a regenerate state thus fixed, in the next place **impartially search and test your own hearts** thereby, as in the sight of God, with dependence on him for spiritual discernment, that you may know whether they be in you or not. When you find them, form the conclusion deliberately and distinctly; namely, that therefore you are regenerated, and have a title to heaven. Thus you may gather evidences. But be sure to have recourse to God in Christ, by earnest prayer, for the testimony of the Spirit, whose office it is to "bear witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God," Rom. 8:16.

Moreover, carefully observe the course and method of **providence** towards you; and likewise, how your soul is affected under the same, in the various steps thereof– compare both with Scripture doctrines, promises, threatenings, and examples– so shall you perceive if the Lord deals with you as he always does unto those who love his name, and if you are going forth by the footsteps of the flock. This may afford you comfortable evidence. Walk tenderly and circumspectly, and the Lord will manifest himself to you, according to his promise, John 14:21, "He who has my commandments, and keeps them, he it is that loves me; and he that loves me, shall be loved of my Father; and I will love him, and

will manifest myself to him." But it is in vain to think of successful self-examination, if you are loose and irregular in your walk.

Lastly, Dispatch the work of your day and generation with speed and diligence. David, "after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep" Acts 13:36. God has allotted us certain pieces of work of this kind, which ought to be dispatched before the time of working be over, Eccl. 9:10, "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might– for there is no work, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, where you are going." Gal. 6:10, "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto those who are of the household of faith." If a passenger, after he has gotten on ship, and the ship is getting under sail, remembers that he has omitted to dispatch a piece of necessary business when be was ashore, it must needs be uneasy to him. Even so, reflection in a dying hour upon neglected seasons, and lost opportunities, cannot fail to disquiet a Christian. Therefore, whatever is incumbent upon you to do for God's honor, and the good of others, either as the duty of your station, or by special opportunity put into your hand, perform it seasonably, if you would die comfortably.

THE RESURRECTION

"Marvel not at this– for the hour is coming, in which **all** who are in the graves shall hear his voice– and shall come forth; those who have done good, unto the **resurrection of life**; and those who have done evil, unto the **resurrection of damnation**." John 5:28-29

These words are part of the defense which our Lord Jesus Christ makes for himself, when persecuted by the Jews, for curing the impotent man and ordering him to carry away his bed on the Sabbath; and for vindicating his conduct, when accused by them of having thereby profaned that day. On this occasion he professes himself not only the Lord of the Sabbath, but also Lord of life and death; declaring, in the words of the text, the resurrection of the dead to be brought to pass by his power. This he introduces with these words, as with a solemn preface, "Marvel not at this,"– at this strange discourse of mine– do not wonder to hear me, whose appearance is so very base in your eyes; for the day is coming, in which the dead shall be raised by my power.

Observe in this text,

1. The **doctrine** of the resurrection asserted, "All that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth." The dead bodies, which are reduced to dust, shall revive, and evidence life by hearing and moving.

2. The **author** of it– Jesus Christ, "the Son of man," verse 27. The dead shall hear his voice, and be raised thereby.

3. The **number** that shall be raised, "All that are in the graves," that is, all the dead bodies of men, howsoever differently disposed of, in different kinds of graves; or all the dead, good and bad. They are not all buried in graves, properly so called– some are burnt to ashes; some drowned, and buried in the bellies of fish; yes, some devoured by man-eaters, called cannibals; but, wherever the matter

or substance of which the body was composed is to be found, thence they shall come forth.

4. The great **distinction** that shall be made between the godly and the wicked– they shall indeed both rise again in the resurrection. None of the godly shall be missing; though, perhaps, they either had no burial, or a very obscure one; and all the wicked shall come forth; their vaulted tombs shall hold them no longer than the voice is uttered. But the former have a joyful resurrection to life, while the latter have a dreadful resurrection to damnation.

5. The set **time** of this great event– there is an hour, or certain fixed period of time, appointed of God for it. We are not told when that hour will be, but that it is coming; for this, among other reasons, that we may always be ready.

Doctrine. There shall be a resurrection of the dead.

In discoursing of this subject, I shall–

I. Show the **certainty** of the resurrection.

II. I shall inquire into the **nature** of it.

III. And, Lastly, make some **practical improvement** of the whole.

I. In showing **the CERTAINTY of the resurrection**, I shall evince, 1. That God **can** raise the dead. 2. That he **will** do it; which are the two grounds or topics laid down by Christ himself, when disputing with the Sadducees, Matt. 22:29, "Jesus answered and said unto them, you do err, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God."

Seeing God is almighty, surely he can raise the dead. We have instances of this powerful work of God, both in the Old and New Testament. The son of the widow in Sarepta was raised from the dead, 1 Kings 17:22; the Shunammite's son, 2 Kings 4:35; and the man "cast into the sepulcher of Elisha," chapter 13:21. In which we may observe a gradation, the second of these miraculous events being more illustrious than the first, and the third than the second.

The first of these persons was raised when he was but newly dead; the prophet Elijah, who raised him being present at his decease. The second, when he had lain dead a considerable time; namely, while his mother traveled from Shunem, to mount Carmel, reckoned about the distance of sixteen miles, and returned from thence to her house, with Elisha, who raised him. The last, not until they were burying him, and the corpse was cast into the prophet's grave. In like manner, in the New Testament, Jairus's daughter, Mark 5:41, and Dorcas, Acts 9:40, were both raised to life, when lately dead; the widow's son in Nain, when they were carrying him out to bury him, Luke 12:11-15; and Lazarus, when putrid in the grave, John 11:39, 44.

Can men make curious glasses out of ashes, reduce flowers into ashes, and raise them again out of these ashes, restoring them to their former beauty? And cannot the great Creator, who made all things of nothing, raise man's body, after it is reduced into the dust? If it be objected, "How can men's bodies be raised up again, after they are reduced to dust, and the ashes of many generations are mingled together?" Scripture and reason furnish the answer, "With men it is impossible, but not with God." It is absurd for men to deny that God can do a thing, because they see not how it may be done. How small a portion do we know of his ways! How absolutely incapable are we of conceiving distinctly of the extent of almighty power, and much more of comprehending its actings, and method of procedure! I question not, but many illiterate men are as great unbelievers as to many chemical experiments, as some learned men are to the doctrine of the resurrection– and as these last are ready to deride the former, so, "the Lord will have them in derision."

What a mystery was it to the Indians, that the Europeans could, by a piece of paper, converse together at the distance of some hundreds of miles! How much were they astonished to see them, with their guns, produce as it were thunder and lightning in a moment, and at pleasure kill men afar off! Shall some men do such things as are wonders in the eyes of others because they cannot

comprehend them, and **shall men confine the infinite power of God within the narrow boundaries of their own shallow capacities**, in a matter no ways contrary to reason! An inferior nature has but a very imperfect conception of the power of a superior. Brutes do not conceive of the actings of reason in men; and men have but imperfect notions of the power of angels– how low and inadequate a conception, then, must a finite nature have of the power of that which is infinite! Though we cannot conceive how God acts, yet we ought to believe he can do above what we can think or conceive.

Therefore, let the bodies of men be laid in the grave; let them rot there, and be reduced into the most minute particles– or let them be burnt, and the ashes cast into rivers, or thrown up into the air, to be scattered by the wind– let the dust of a thousand generations be mingled, and the steams of the dead bodies wander to and fro in the air– let birds or wild beasts eat the bodies, or the fish of the sea devour them, so that the parts of human bodies, thus destroyed, pass into substantial parts of birds, beasts or fish; or, what is more that that, let man-eaters, who themselves must die and rise again, devour human bodies, and let others devour them again, and then let our modern Sadducees propose the questions in these cases, as the ancient Sadducees did in the case of the woman who had been married to seven husbands successively, Matt. 22:28. We answer, as our blessed Lord and Savior did, ver. 29, "You do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God." We believe God to be omniscient and omnipotent; infinite in knowledge and in power– and hence, agreeably to the dictates of reason, we conclude the possibility of the resurrection, even in the cases supposed.

Material things may change their forms and shapes, may be reduced to the principles of which they are formed– but they are not annihilated, or reduced to nothing; nor can they be so, by any created power. God is omniscient, his understanding is infinite; therefore he knows all things; what they were at any time, what

they are, and where they are to be found. Though the countryman, who comes into the apothecary's shop, cannot find out the drug he wants; yet the apothecary himself knows what he has in his shop, whence it came, and where it is to be found. And, in a mixture of many different seeds, the expert gardener can distinguish between each of them. Why then may not Omniscience distinguish between dust and dust? Can he, who knows all things to perfection, be liable to any mistake about his own creatures? Whoever believes an infinite understanding, must needs own, that no mass of dust is so jumbled together, but God perfectly comprehends, and infallibly knows, how the most minute particle, and every one of them is to be matched.

II. I shall inquire into **the NATURE of the resurrection**, showing,

1. **Who** shall be raised.

2. **What** shall be raised.

3. **How** the dead shall be raised.

1. WHO shall be raised? Our text tells us who they are; namely "all that are in the graves," that is, all mankind who are dead. As for those people who are found alive at the second coming of Christ, they shall not die, and soon after be raised again; but such a **change** shall suddenly pass upon them as shall be to them instead of dying and rising again; so that their bodies shall become like lo those bodies which are raised out of their graves, 1 Cor. 15:51, 52, "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed– in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." Hence those who are to be judged at the great day, are distinguished into living and dead, Acts 10:42. All the dead shall arise, whether godly or wicked, just or unjust, Acts 24:15, old or young; the whole race of mankind, even those who never saw the sun, but died in their mother's womb– Rev. 20:12, "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand

before God." The sea and earth shall give up their dead without reserve, none shall be kept back.

2. WHAT shall be raised? The **bodies** of mankind. A man is said to die, when the soul is separated from the body, "and returns onto God who gave it," Eccl. 12:7. But it is the body only which is laid in the grave, and can be properly said to be raised– therefore the resurrection, strictly speaking, applies to the body only. Moreover, it is the **same** body that dies, which shall rise again. At the resurrection, men shall not appear with other bodies, as to substance, than those which they now have, and which are laid down in the grave; but with the self-same bodies, endowed with other qualities. The very notion of a resurrection implies this, since nothing can be said to rise again, but that which falls.

3. HOW shall the dead be raised? The same Jesus, who was crucified outside the gates of Jerusalem, shall, at the last day, to the conviction of all, be declared both Lord and Christ– appearing as Judge of the world, attended with his mighty angels, 2 Thess. 1:7, "He shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God," 1 Thess. 4:16, "The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised, and those who are alive, changed," 1 Cor. 15:52. Whether this shout, voice, and trumpet, denote some audible voice, or only the workings of Divine power, for the raising of the dead, and other dreadful purposes of that day, though the former seems probable, I will not positively determine. There is no question but this coming of the Judge of the world will be in greater majesty and terror than we can conceive– yet that dreadful grandeur, majesty, and state, which was displayed at the giving of the law, namely, thunders heard, lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount seen, the Lord descending in fire, the whole mount quaking greatly, and the voice of the trumpet waxing louder and louder, Exod. 19:16-19, may help us to form a becoming thought of it. However, the sound of this trumpet shall be heard all the world over; it shall reach to the depths of the sea, and of the earth. At this loud alarm, bones shall come together, bone to his

bone– the scattered dust of all the dead shall be gathered together, dust to his dust; "neither shall one thrust another, they shall walk every one in his path;" and, meeting together again, shall make up that very same body which crumbled into dust in the grave. At the same alarming voice shall every soul come again into its own body, never more to be separated. The dead can stay no longer in their graves, but must bid an eternal farewell to their long homes– they hear His voice, and must come forth, and receive their final sentence.

Now as there is a great difference between the godly and the wicked, in their life, and in their death; so will there be also in their resurrection.

The godly shall be raised out of their graves, by virtue of the Spirit of Christ, the blessed bond of their union with him, Rom. 8:11, "He that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his Spirit that dwells in you." Jesus Christ arose from the dead, as the "first-fruits of those who slept," 1 Cor. 15:20, So those who are Christ's shall follow at his coming, ver. 23. The mystical head having got above the waters of death, he cannot but bring forth the members after him, in due time.

They shall come forth with inexpressible joy; for then shall that passage of Scripture, which, in its immediate scope, respected the Babylonish captivity, be fully accomplished in its most extensive meaning, Isa. 26:19, "Awake and sing, you that dwell in the dust." As a bride adorned for her husband, goes forth of her bedchamber unto the marriage– so shall the saints go forth of their graves, unto the marriage of the Lamb. Joseph had a joyful coming out from the prison, Daniel from the lion's den, and Jonah from the whale's belly– yet these are but faint representations of the saint's coming forth from the grave, at the resurrection. Then shall they sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb, in highest strains; death being quite swallowed up in victory. They had, while in this life, sometimes sung, by faith the triumphant song over death and the grave, "O

death, where is your sting? O grave where is your victory?" But then they sing the same, from sight and sense; the black band of doubts and fears, which frequently disturbed them, and disturbed their minds, is forever dispersed and driven away.

May we not suppose the soul and body of every saint, as in mutual embraces, to rejoice in each other, and triumph in their happy meeting again; and **the BODY to address the soul thus–** "O my soul, have we got together again, after so long a separation! are you come back to your old habitation, never more to remove! O joyful meeting! how unlike is our present state to what our case was, when a separation was made between us at death! Now is our mourning turned into joy; the light and gladness sown before, are now sprung up; and there is a perpetual spring in Immanuel's land. Blessed be the day in which I was united to you; whose chief care was to get Christ in us the hope of glory, and to make me a temple for his Holy Spirit. O blessed soul, which in the time of our pilgrimage, kept your eye to the land then afar off, but now near at hand! you took me into secret places, and there made me to bow these knees before the Lord, that I might bear a part in our humiliation before him– and now is the time that I am lifted up. You did employ this tongue in confessions, petitions, and thanksgivings, which henceforth shall be employed in praising for evermore. You made these sometimes weeping eyes, sow that seed of tears, which is now sprung up in joy that shall never end. I was happily beat down by you, and kept in subjection, while others pampered their flesh, and made their bellies their gods, to their own destruction– but now I gloriously arise, to take my place in the mansions of glory, while they are dragged out of their graves to be cast into fiery flames. Now, my soul, you shall complain no more of a sick and pained body; you shall be no more clogged with weak and weary flesh; I shall now keep pace with you in the praises of our God for evermore."

And may not the SOUL say– "O happy day in which I return to dwell in that blessed body, which was, and is, and will be forever, a

member of Christ, a temple of the Holy Spirit! Now I shall be eternally knit to you– the silver cord shall never be loosed more– death shall never make another separation between us. Arise then, my body, and come away! And let these eyes, which were used to weep over my sins, behold with joy the face of our glorious Redeemer; lo! this is our God, and we have waited for him. Let these ears, which were used to hear the word of life in the temple below, come and hear the hallelujahs in the temple above. Let these feet, that carried me to the congregation of saints on earth, take their place among those in heaven. And let this tongue, which confessed Christ before men, and used to be still dropping something to his commendation, join the choir of the upper house, in his praises for evermore. You shall fast no more, but keep an everlasting feast; you shall weep no more, neither shall your countenance be overclouded; but you shall shine forever, as a star in the skies. We took part together in the fight; come, let us go together to receive and wear the crown."

But on the other hand, the WICKED shall be raised by the power of Christ, as a just Judge, who is to render vengeance to his enemies. The same divine power which shut up their souls in hell, and kept their bodies in the grave, as in a prison, shall bring them forth, that soul and body together may receive the dreadful sentence of eternal damnation, and be shut up together in the prison of hell.

They shall come forth from their graves with unspeakable horror and consternation. They shall be dragged forth, as so many malefactors out of a dungeon, to be led to execution crying to the mountains and to the rocks to fall on them, and hide them from the face of the Lamb. Fearful was the cry in Egypt, that night on which the destroying angel went through, and slew their first-born. Dreadful were the shouts, at the earth opening her mouth, and swallowing up Dathan and Abiram, and all that appertained to them. What hideous crying then must there be, when at the sound of the last trumpet, the earth and sea shall open their mouths, and cast forth all the wicked world, delivering them up to the dreadful Judge!

How will they cry, roar, and tear themselves! How will the jovial companions weep and howl, and curse one another! How will the earth be filled with their doleful shrieks and lamentations, while they are pulled out like sheep for the slaughter!

They who, while they lived in this world, were profane, debauchees, covetous worldlings, or formal hypocrites, shall then, in anguish of mind, wring their hands, beat their breasts, and bitterly lament their case, roaring forth their complaints, and calling themselves beasts, fools, and madmen, for having acted so mad a part in this life, in not believing what they then heard. They were driven away in their wickedness at death– and now all their sins rise with them; and, like so many serpents, twist themselves about their wretched souls, and bodies too, which have a frightful meeting, after a long separation.

Then we may suppose **the miserable BODY thus to accost the soul–** "Have you again found me, O mine enemy, my worst enemy, savage soul, more cruel than a thousand tigers. Cursed be the day that ever we met. O that I had remained a lifeless lump, rotted in the womb of my mother, and had never received sense, life, and motion! O that I had rather been the body of a toad, or serpent, than your body; for then had I lain still, and had not seen this terrible day. If I was to be necessarily yours, O that I had been your donkey, or one of your dogs, rather than your body; for then would you have taken more true care of me than you did! O cruel kindness! have you thus hugged me to death, thus nourished me to the slaughter? Is this the effect of your tenderness for me? Is this what I am to reap of your pains and concern about me? What do riches and pleasures avail now, when this fearful reckoning is come! of which you had fair warning? O cruel grave! why did you not close your mouth upon me forever? Why did you not hold fast your prisoner? Why have you shaken me out, while I lay still and was at rest? Cursed soul, wherefore did you not abide in your place, wrapped up in flames of fire? Wherefore are you come back, to take me also down to the bars of the pit? You made me an instrument of unrighteousness; and now I must be thrown into the

fire. This tongue was by you employed in mocking at religion, cursing, swearing, lying, backbiting, and boasting; and withheld from glorifying God– and now it must not have so much as a drop of water to cool it in the flames! You withdrew mine ears from hearing the sermons which gave warning of this day. You found ways and means to stop them from attending to seasonable exhortations, admonitions, and reproofs. But why did you not stop them from hearing the sound of this dreadful trumpet? Why do you not rove and fly away on the wings of imagination, thereby, as it were, transporting me during these frightful transactions; as you were used to do, when I was set down at sermons, communions, prayers, and godly conferences; that I might now have as little sense of the one, as I formerly had of the other? But ah! I must burn forever, for your love to your lusts, your profanity, your sensuality, your unbelief, and hypocrisy."

But may not **the SOUL answer–** "Wretched and vile carcass! I am now driven back into you. O that you had lain forever in your grave! Had I not torment enough before? Must I be knit to you again, that, being joined together as two dry sticks for the fire, the wrath of God may burn us up? It was by caring for you, that I lost myself. It was your appetites, and the gratifying of your senses, which ruined me. How often was I ensnared by your ears! how often betrayed by your eyes! It was to spare you, that I neglected opportunities of making peace with God, loitered away Sabbaths, lived in the neglect of prayer; went to the house of mirth, rather than to the house of mourning; and that I chose to deny Christ, and forsake his cause and interest in the world; and so am fallen a sacrifice to your cursed ease. When at any time my conscience began to awake, and I was setting myself to think of my sins, and the misery which I have felt since we parted, and now feel, it was you that diverted me from these thoughts, and drew me off to make provision for you. O wretched flesh! by your silken cords of fleshly lusts, I was drawn to destruction, in defiance of my light and conscience– but now they are turned into iron chains, with which I am to be held under wrath

for evermore. Ah wretched profits! ah cursed pleasures! for which I must lie forever in utter darkness!"

But no complaints will then avail. O that men were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!

As to **the qualities with which the bodies of the SAINTS** shall be endowed at the resurrection, the apostle tells us, they shall be raised incorruptible, glorious, powerful, and spiritual, 1 Cor. 15:42-44, "It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body."

1. The bodies of the saints shall be raised INCORRUPTIBLE. They are now, as the bodies of others, a mass of corruption, full of the seeds of diseases and death; and, when dead, become so offensive, even to their dearest friends, that they must be buried out of their sight, and cast into the grave, where they are to rot, and be consumed– yes, loathsome sores and diseases make some of them very unsightly, even while alive. But, at the resurrection, they leave all the seeds of corruption behind them in the grave; and rise incorruptible, incapable of the least indisposition, sickness, or sore, and much more, of dying. External violences and inward causes of pain, shall forever cease– they shall feel it no more– yes, they shall have an everlasting youth and vigor, being no more subject to the decays which age produced in this life.

2. They shall be GLORIOUS bodies; not only beautiful, lovely, and well-proportioned, but full of splendor and brightness. The most beautiful face, and best proportioned body, that now appears in the world, is not to be named in comparison with the body of the lowest saint at the resurrection; for "then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun," Matt. 13:43. If there was a dazzling glory on Moses' face, when he came down from the mount; and if Stephen's face was "as it had been the face of an angel," when he stood before the council; how much more shall the faces of the saints be beautiful and

glorious, full of sweet agreeable majesty, when they have put off all corruption, and shine as the sun! But observe, this beauty of the saints is not restricted to their faces, but diffuses itself through their whole bodies– for the whole body is raised in glory, and shall be fashioned like unto their Lord and Savior's glorious body, in whose transfiguration, not only did his face shine as the sun, but his clothing also was white as the light, Matt. 17: 2. Whatever defects or deformities the bodies of the saints had when laid in the grave, occasioned by accidents in life, or arising from secret causes in their formation in the womb, they shall rise out of the grave free of all these.

But suppose the marks of the Lord Jesus, the scars or prints of the wounds and bruises which some of the saints received while on earth, for his sake, should remain in their bodies after the resurrection; the same as the print of the nails remained in the Lord Jesus' body after his resurrection– these marks will rather be badges of distinction, and add to their glory, than detract from their beauty. But however that be, surely Isaac's eyes shall not then be dim, nor will Jacob halt– Leah shall not be tender-eyed, nor Mephibosheth lame of his legs. For as the goldsmith melts down the old broken vessel, and casts it over again in a new mold, bringing it forth with a new luster; so shall the vile body, which lay dissolved in the grave, come forth at the resurrection, in perfect beauty and lovely proportion.

3. They shall be POWERFUL and strong bodies. The strongest men on earth, being frail and mortal, may justly be reckoned weak and feeble; for their strength, however great, is quickly worn out and consumed. Many of the saints now have weaker bodies than others; but "the feeble among them," to allude to Zechariah 12:8, at that day shall be "as David, and the house of David shall be as God." A grave divine says, that one shall be stronger at the resurrection than a hundred, yes, than thousands are now. Certainly great, and vastly great, must the strength of glorified bodies be; for they shall bear up under an exceeding and eternal

weight of glory. The mortal body is not at all adapted to such a state. Do transports of joy occasion death, as well as excessive grief, and can it bear up under a weight of glory? Can it exist in union with a soul filled with heaven's rapture? Surely not. The mortal body would sink under that load, and such fullness of joy would make the earthen pitcher to fly all in pieces.

The Scripture has plainly told us, "That flesh and blood," namely, in their present frail state, though it were the flesh and blood of a giant, "cannot inherit the kingdom of God," 1 Cor. 15:50. How strong must the bodily eyes be, which, to the soul's eternal comfort, shall behold the dazzling glory and splendor of the New Jerusalem; and steadfastly look at the transcendent glory and brightness of the man Christ, the Lamb, who is the light of that city, the inhabitants whereof shall shine as the sun! The Lord of heaven does now in mercy "hold back the face of his throne, and spreads his clouds upon it;" that mortals may not be confounded with the rays of glory which shine forth from it, Job 26:9. But then the veil shall be removed, and they made able to behold it, to their unspeakable joy. How strong must their bodies be, who shall not rest night nor day, but be, without intermission, forever employed in the heavenly temple, to sing and proclaim the praises of God without weariness, which is a weakness incident to the frail mortal, but not to the glorified body!

4. They shall be SPIRITUAL bodies. Not that they shall be changed into spirits, but they shall be spiritual as to their spirit-like qualities and endowments. The body shall be absolutely subservient to the soul, subject to it, and influenced by it, and therefore no more a clog to its activity, nor the animal appetites a snare to it. There will be no need to beat it down, nor to drag it to the service of God. The soul, in this life is so much influenced by the body, that, in Scripture style, it is said to be carnal; but then the body shall be spiritual, readily serving the soul in the business of heaven, and in that only, as if it had no more relation to earth than a spirit. It will have no further need of the now necessary supports of

life, namely, food, and clothing, and the like. "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more," Rev. 7:16. "For in the resurrection, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven." Then shall the saints be strong without food or drink, warm without clothes, ever in perfect health without medicine, and ever fresh and vigorous, though they shall never sleep, but serve him night and day in his temple, Rev. 7:15. They will need none of these things, any more than spirits do. They will be nimble and active as spirits, and of a most refined constitution. The body, that is now lumpish and heavy, shall then be most sprightly. No such thing as melancholy shall be found to make the heart heavy, and the spirits flag and sink. I shall not further dip into this matter– the day will declare it.

As to **the qualities of the bodies of the WICKED at the resurrection**, I find the Scripture speaks but little of them. Whatever they may **need**, they shall not get a drop of water to cool their tongues, Luke 16:24, 25. Whatever may be said of their weakness, it is certain they will be continued forever in life, that they may be ever dying; they shall bear up, however unwillingly under the load of God's wrath, and shall not faint away under it. "The smoke of their torment ascends up forever and ever. And they have no rest day nor night." Surely they shall not partake of the glory and beauty of the saints. All their glory dies with them, and shall never rise again. Daniel tells us, they shall awake to shame and everlasting contempt, chap. 12:2. Shame follows sin, as the shadow follows the body.

But the wicked in this world walk in the dark, and often under a disguise– nevertheless, when the Judge comes in flaming fire at the last day, they will be brought to the light; their mask will be taken off, and the **shame** of their nakedness will clearly appear to themselves and others, and fill their faces with confusion. Their shame will be too deep for blushes– all faces shall gather blackness at that day, when they shall go forth from their graves, as malefactors out of their prisons to execution– for their resurrection

is the resurrection of damnation. The greatest beauties, who now pride themselves in their loveliness of body, not regarding their deformed souls, will then appear with a ghastly countenance, a grim and death-like visage. Their looks will be frightful, and they will be horrible spectacles, coming forth from their graves, like infernal furies out of the pit.

They shall rise also to everlasting **contempt**. They shall then be the most contemptible creatures, filled with contempt from God, as vessels of dishonor, whatever honorable employments they had in this world; and filled also with contempt from men. They will be most despicable in the eyes of the saints; even of those saints who gave them honor here, either for their high station, the gifts of God in them, or because they were of the same human nature with themselves. But then their bodies shall be as so many loathsome carcasses, which they shall go forth and look upon with abhorrence; yes, "They shall be an abhorring unto all flesh," Isaiah 66:24. The word here rendered "an abhorring," is the same which in the other text is rendered "contempt," and Isaiah and Daniel point at one and the same thing, namely, the **loathsomeness** of the wicked at the resurrection. They will be loathsome in the eyes of one another. The unclean wretches were never so lovely to each other, and then they will be loathsome; dear companions in sin will then abhor each other; and the great and honorable men who were wicked, shall be no more regarded by their wicked subjects, their servants, their slaves, than the mire in the streets.

Use I. Of COMFORT to the people of God. The doctrine of the resurrection is a spring of consolation and joy unto you. Think on it, O believers, when you are in the house of mourning, for the loss of your godly relations or friends, "that you sorrow not, even as others which have no hope;" for you will meet again, 1 Thess. 4:13, 14. They are but laid down to **rest** in their beds for a little while, Isa. 57:2; but in the morning of the resurrection they will awake again, and come forth out of their graves. The vessel of honor was but coarse, it had much alloy of base metal in it; it was too weak, too

dim and inglorious, for the upper house, whatever luster it had in the lower one. It was cracked, it was polluted; and therefore it must be melted down, to be refined and fashioned more gloriously. Do but wait a while, and you shall see it come forth out of the furnace of earth, vying with the stars in brightness; no, as the sun when he goes forth in his might. Have you laid your infant children in the grave? You will see them again. Your God calls himself "the God of your seed;" which, according to our Savior's exposition, secures the glorious resurrection of the body. Therefore, let the covenant you embraced for yourselves and your babes now in the dust, comfort your heart, in the joyful expectation, that by virtue thereof, they shall be raised up in glory– and that as being no more infants of days, but brought to a full and perfect stature, as generally supposed.

Be not discouraged by reason of a weak and sickly body– there is a day coming, when you shall be entirely whole. At the resurrection, Timothy shall bo no more liable to his often infirmities; his body, that was weak and sickly, even in youth, shall be raised in power. Lazarus shall healthy and sound, his body being raised incorruptible. Although perhaps, your weakness will not allow you now to go one furlong to meet the Lord in public ordinances, yet the day comes, when your body shall be no more a clog to you, but you shall "meet the Lord in the air," 1 Thess. 4:17. It will be with the saints coming up from the grave, as with the Israelites when they came out of Egypt– "There was not one feeble person among their tribes."

Have you an unlovely or deformed body? There is a glory within, which will then set all right without, according to all the desire of your heart. It shall rise a glorious, beautiful, handsome, and well-proportioned body. It's unloveliness or deformities may go with it to the grave, but they shall not come back with it. O that those, who are now so desirous to be beautiful and handsome, would not be too hasty to effect it with their foolish and sinful arts, but wait and study the heavenly art of beautifying the body, by endeavoring now to become all glorious within, with the graces of God's Spirit! This

would at length make them admirable and everlasting beauties. You must indeed, O believer, grapple with death, and shall get the first fall– but you shall rise again, and come off victorious at last. You must go down to the grave; but, though it be your **long** home, it will not be your **everlasting** home. You will not hear the voice of your friends there; but you shall hear the voice of Christ there. You may be carried there with mourning, but you shall come up from it rejoicing. Your friends, indeed, will leave you there, but your God will not. What God said to Jacob, concerning his going down to Egypt, Gen. 46:3, 4, he says to you, on your going down to the grave, "Fear not to go down– I will go down with you– and I will also surely bring you up again." O solid comfort! O glorious hopes! "Therefore comfort" yourselves, and "one another with these words," 1 Thess. 4:18.

Use 2. Of TERROR to all unregenerate men. You who are yet in your natural state, look at this view of the eternal state; and consider what will be your part in it, if you be not in time brought into a state of grace. Think, O sinner, on that day when the trumpet shall sound, at the voice of which the bars of the pit shall be broken asunder, the doors of the grave shall fly open, the devouring depths of the sea shall throw up their dead, the earth cast forth hers; and death every where, in the excess of astonishment, shall let go its prisoners; and your wretched soul and body shall be re-united, to be summoned before the tribunal of God. Then, if you had a thousand worlds at your disposal, you would gladly give them all away, on condition that you might lie still in your grave, with the hundredth part of that ease, with which you have sometimes lain at home on the Lord's day; or, if that cannot be obtained, that you might be but a spectator of the transactions of that day; as you have been at some solemn occasions, and rich gospel feasts; or, if even that is not to be purchased, that a mountain or a rock might fall on you, and cover you from the face of the Lamb.

Ah! how are men infatuated, thus to trifle away their precious time of life, in almost as little concern about death, as if they were like

the beasts that perish! Some will be telling where their corpse must be laid; while yet they have not seriously considered, whether their graves shall be their **beds**, where they shall awake with joy, in the morning of the resurrection; or their **prisons**, out of which they shall be brought to receive the fearful sentence. Remember, now is your seed-time; and as yon sow, so shall you reap. God's seed-time begins at death; and at the resurrection, the bodies of the wicked, that were sown "full of sins, that lie down with them in the dust," Job 20:11, shall spring up again– sinful, wretched, and vile.

Your bodies, which are now instruments of sin, the Lord will lay aside for fire, at death, and bring them forth for the fire, at the resurrection. That body, which is now employed in God's service, but is abused by uncleanness and lasciviousness, will then be brought forth in all its vileness, thenceforth to lodge with unclean spirits. The body of the drunkard shall then stagger, by reason of the wine of the wrath of God poured out to him, and poured into him, without mixture. Those who now please themselves in their reveling, will reel to and fro and another rate, when, instead of their songs and music, they shall hear the sound of the last trumpet. Many weary their bodies for worldly gain, who will be loath to distress them for the benefit of their souls; by labor, unreasonably hard, they will quite unfit themselves for the service of God; and, when they have done, will reckon it a very good reason for shifting duty, that they are already tired out with other business; but that day comes, when they will be made to abide a yet greater distress. Many will go several miles for food and clothing, who will not go half the way for the good of their immortal souls; many will be sickly and unable on the Lord's day, who will be tolerably well all the rest of the week.

But when that trumpet sounds, the dead shall find their feet, and none shall be missing in that congregation. When the bodies of the saints shine as the sun; frightful will the looks of their persecutors be. Fearful will their condition be, who shut up the saints in nasty prisons, stigmatized, burnt them to ashes, hanged them, and stuck

up their heads and hands in public places, to frighten others from the way of righteousness, which they suffered for. Many faces, now fair, will then gather blackness. They shall be no more admired and caressed for that beauty, which has a worm at the root, that will cause it to issue in loathsomeness and deformity. Ah! what is that beauty, under which there lurks a monstrous, deformed, and graceless heart? What, but a sorry paint, a slight varnish; which will leave the body so much the more ugly, before that flaming fire, in which the Judge shall be "revealed from heaven, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel?" 2 Thess. 1:7, 8. They shall be stripped of all their ornaments, and not have a rag to cover their nakedness– their carcasses shall be an abhorrence to all flesh, and serve as a foil to set off the beauty and glory of the righteous, and make it appear the brighter.

Now is the time to secure, for yourselves, a part in the resurrection of the just– which if you would do, unite with Jesus Christ by faith, rising spiritually from sin, and glorifying God with your bodies. He is the "resurrection and the life," John 11:25. If your bodies be members of Christ, temples of the Holy Spirit, they shall certainly arise in glory. Get into this ark now, and you shall come forth with joy into the new world. Rise from your sins; cast away these grave-clothes, putting off your former lusts. How can anyone imagine, that those who continue dead while they live, shall come forth, at the last day, unto the resurrection of life? But that will be the privilege of all those who, having first consecrated their souls and bodies to the Lord by faith, do glorify him with their bodies, as well as their souls; living and acting to him, and for him, yes, and suffering for him too, when he calls them to it.

The General Judgment

"When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, He will sit on His throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on His right and the goats on His left. Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed by My Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.'" Matthew 25:31-34

"Then He will say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.' Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life." Matthew 25:41, 46

The **dead** being **raised**, and those found alive at the coming of the Judge changed, then follows the general **judgment**, plainly and solemnly described in this portion of Scripture; in which we shall take notice of the following particulars:

1. The coming of the Judge. "When the Son of Man comes in His glory," etc. The Judge is Jesus Christ, by whose almighty power, the dead will be raised. He is also called the King, verse 34, the judging of the world being an act of the royal Mediator's kingly office. He will come in glory; glorious in His own person, and having a glorious retinue, even all the holy angels with Him, to minister unto Him at this great solemnity.

2. The mounting the tribunal. He is a King, and therefore it is a throne, a glorious throne, "He will sit on His throne in heavenly glory," verse 31.

3. The appearance of the parties. These are--all nations; all and every one, small and great, of whatever nation, who ever were, are, or shall be on the face of the earth. All shall be gathered before Him, summoned before His tribunal.

4. The separating of them. He shall separate the elect sheep and reprobate goats, setting each group by themselves. The godly He will set on His right hand, as the most honorable place; the wicked on the left, verse 33.

5. The sentencing of the parties, and that according to their works; the righteous being absolved, and the wicked condemned, verse 34-41.

6. The execution of both sentences, in the driving away of the wicked into hell, and carrying the godly to heaven, verse 46.

Doctrine. There shall be a general judgment. This doctrine, I shall,

I. Confirm.

II. Explain.

III. Apply.

I. The CONFIRMATION of this great truth—that there shall be a general judgment.

1. It is evident from plain Scripture testimonies. The world has in all ages been told of it. Enoch, before the flood, taught it in his prophecy, related in Jude, verse 14, 15, "Behold the Lord comes with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all," etc. Daniel describes it, chapter 7:9, 10, "I watched as thrones were put in place and the Ancient One sat down to judge. His clothing was as white as snow, his hair like whitest wool. He sat on a fiery throne with wheels of blazing fire, and a river of fire flowed from his presence. Millions of angels ministered to him, and a hundred million stood to attend him. Then the court began its session, and the books were opened." The apostle is very express, Acts 17:31, "He has appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he has ordained." See Matt. 16:27; 2 Cor. 5:10; 2 Thess. 1:7-10; Rev. 20:11-15. God not only said it, but he has sworn it, Romans 14:10, 11, "We must all stand

before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, as I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue confess to God." So that the truth of God is most solemnly pledged for it.

2. The perfect justice and goodness of God, the sovereign ruler of the world, necessarily require it, inasmuch as they require its being well with the righteous, and ill with the wicked. Yet we often see wickedness exalted, while truth and righteousness fall in the streets; piety oppressed, while profanity and irreligion triumph. This is so very common, that everyone who sincerely embraces the way of holiness, must and does lay his account with the loss of all he has, which the world can take away from him, Luke 14:26, "If any man comes to me, and hates not his father, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." But it is inconsistent with the justice and goodness of God, that the affairs of men should always continue in the state which they appear in, from one generation to another; and that every man should not be rewarded according to his works: and since that is not done in this life, there must be a judgment to come; "God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels." 2 Thess. 1:6, 7. There will be a day in which the tables will be turned; and the wicked shall be called to an account for all their sins, and suffer the due punishment of them; and the pious shall be prosperous: for, as the apostle argues for the happy resurrection of the saints, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable," 1 Cor. 15:19.

It is true, God sometimes punishes the wicked in this life: that men may know, "He is a God who judges in the earth;" but yet much wickedness remains unpunished and undiscovered, to be a pledge of the judgment to come. If none of the wicked were punished here, they would conclude that God had utterly forsaken the earth; if all of them were punished in this life, men would be apt to think there

were no after reckoning. Therefore, in the wisdom of God some are punished now, and some not. Sometimes the Lord smites sinners, in the very act of sin; to show unto the world, that he is witness to all their wickedness, and will call them to an account for it. Sometimes he delays long before he strikes, that he may discover to the world that he forgets not men's ill deeds, though he does not immediately punish them. Besides all this, the sins of many outlive them; and the impure fountain opened by them, runs long after they are dead and gone. As in the case of Jeroboam, the first king of the ten tribes, whose sin ran all along unto the end of that unhappy kingdom, 2 Kings 17:22, 23, "The children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam, which he did; they departed not from them; until the Lord removed Israel out of his sight."

3. The resurrection of Christ is a certain proof, that there shall be a day of judgment. This argument Paul uses to convince the Athenians, that Jesus Christ will be the Judge of the world: "Whereof," says he, "he has given assurance to all men, in that he has raised him from the dead," Acts 17:38. The Judge is already named, his patent written and sealed, yes, and read before all men, in his rising again from the dead. Hereby God has given assurance of it: by raising Christ from the dead, he has exhibited his credentials as Judge of the world. When, in the days of his humiliation, he was cited before a tribunal, arraigned, accused, and condemned by men; he plainly told them of this judgment, and that he himself would be the Judge, Matt. 26:64, "Hereafter shall you see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." And now that he is raised from the dead, though condemned as a blasphemer on this very head, is it not an undeniable proof, from Heaven, of the truth of what he asserted? Moreover, this was one of the great ends of Christ's death and resurrection: "For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be the Lord," that is, "the Lord Judge," as is evident from the context, "both of the dead and of the living," Romans 14:9.

4. Every man bears about with him a witness to this within his own bosom, Romans 2:15, "Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing, or else excusing one another." There is a tribunal erected within every man, where conscience is accuser, witness, and judge, binding over the sinner to the judgment of God. This fills the most profligate wretches with horror, and inwardly stings them, upon the commission of some atrocious crime; in effect summoning them to answer for it, before the Judge of the living and dead. And thus it does, even when the crime is secret, and hidden from the eyes of the world. It reaches those, whom the laws of men cannot reach, because of their power or craftiness. Men have fled from the judgment of their fellow-creatures; yet go where they will, conscience as the supreme Judge's officer, still keeps hold of them, reserving them in its chains, to the judgment of the great day. And whether they escape punishment from men, or fall by the hand of public justice, when they perceive death's approach, they hear from within, of this after reckoning; being constrained to hearken thereto, in these the most serious minutes of their lives.

If there are some, in whom nothing of this does appear, we have no more ground thence to conclude against it, than we have to conclude, that because some men do not groan, therefore they have no pain; or that dying is a mere jest, because there have been some who seemed to make little else of it. A good face may be put upon an bad conscience; the more hopeless men's case is, they reckon it more their interest to make no reflections on their state and case. But everyone, who will consult himself seriously, will find in himself the witness to the judgment to come. Even the heathens had a notion of it, though mixed with fictions of their own. Hence, though some of the Athenians, "when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, mocked," yet there is no account of their mocking, when they heard of the general judgment, Acts 17:31, 32.

II. The EXPLANATION of this great truth—that there shall be a general judgment. For explanation, the following particulars may serve to give some view of the transactions of that great day.

1. God shall judge the world by Jesus Christ. "He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he has ordained," Acts 17:31. The psalmist tells us, that God is judge himself, Psalm 50:6. The holy blessed Trinity – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – is Judge, in respect to judicial authority, dominion, and power: but the Son incarnate is the Judge, in respect of dispensation, and special exercise of that power. The judgment shall be exercised or performed by him as the royal Mediator; for he has delegated power of judgment from the Father, as his servant, "his King," whom he has "set upon his holy hill of Zion," Psalm 2:6, and to whom he "has committed all judgment," John 5:22. This is a part of the Mediator's exaltation, given him in consequence of his voluntary humiliation, Phil. 2:8-10, "He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted him, and gave him a name which is above every name," that is, power and authority over all, namely, "That at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow." This is explained by the apostle himself, of "standing before the judgment-seat of Christ," Romans 14:10, 11. So he who was judged and condemned of men, shall be the Judge of men and angels.

2. Jesus Christ the Judge, descending from heaven into the air. 1 Thess. 4:16, 17, "He shall come in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory," Matt. 24:30. This his coming will be a mighty **surprise** to the world, which will be found in deep security; foolish virgins sleeping, and the wise slumbering. There will then be much luxury and debauchery in the world, little sobriety and watchfulness; a great throng of business, but a great scarcity of faith and holiness. "Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man. People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered

the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all. It was the same in the days of Lot. People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. But the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all. It will be just like this on the day the Son of Man is revealed." Luke 17:26-30

The coming of the Judge will surprise some at markets, buying and selling; others at table, eating and drinking, and making merry; others busy with their new plantings; some building new houses; nay, the wedding-day of some will be their own and the world's judgment-day. But the Judge comes! the markets are marred; the buyer throws away what he has bought; the seller casts down his money; they are raised from the table, and their mirth is extinguished in a moment; though the tree be set in the earth, the gardener cannot stay to cast the earth about it; the workmen throw away their tools, when the house is half built, and the owner regards it no more; the bridegroom, bride, and guests, must leave the wedding day, and appear before the tribunal; for, "Behold, he comes with clouds, and every eye shall see him," Rev. 1:7.

He shall come most **gloriously**; for he will "come in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels," Mark 8:38. When he came in the flesh, to die for sinners, he laid aside the robes of his glory, and was despised and rejected of men: but when he comes again, to judge the world, such shall be his visible glory and majesty, that it shall cast an eternal veil over all earthy glory, and fill his greatest enemies with fear and dread. Never had prince and potentate in the world such a glorious train, as will accompany this Judge: all the holy angels shall come with him, for his honor and service. Then He, who was led to the cross with a band of soldiers, will be gloriously attended to the place of judgment, by not a *multitude* of the heavenly angels, but by "*all* his holy angels," says the text.

3. At the coming of the Judge, the summons is given to the parties by the sound of the last trumpet; at which the dead are

raised, and those found alive are changed; see 1 Thess. 4:16, 17. O loud trumpet, that shall be heard at once, in all corners of the earth, and of the sea! O wonderful voice, that will not only disturb those who sleep in the dust, but effectually awaken, rouse them out of their sleep, and raise them from death! Were trumpets sounding now, drums beating, furious soldiers crying and killing men, women and children running and shrieking, the wounded groaning and dying; those who are in the graves would have no more disturbance than if the world were in most profound peace. Yes, were stormy winds casting down the lofty oaks, the seas roaring and swallowing up the ships, the most dreadful thunders going along the heavens, lightnings everywhere flashing, the earth quaking, trembling, opening, and swallowing up whole cities, and burying multitudes at once; the dead would still enjoy a perfect repose, and sleep soundly in the dust, though their own dust should be thrown out of its place. But at the sound of this trumpet, they shall all awake. The morning is come, they can sleep no longer; the time for the dead to be judged: they must get out of their graves, and appear before the Judge.

4. The Judge shall sit down on the tribunal; he shall sit on the throne of his glory. He stood before a tribunal on earth, and was condemned as a malefactor: now he shall sit on his own tribunal, and judge the world. He once hung upon the cross, covered with shame; now he shall sit on a throne of glory. What this throne shall be, whether a bright cloud, or what else, I shall not inquire. Our eyes shall answer to that question at length. John "saw a great white throne," Rev. 20:11. "His throne," says Daniel, "was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire," chap 7:9. Whatever it be, doubtless it will be a throne glorious beyond expression; and in comparison with which, the most glorious throne on the earth is but a seat on a dunghill; and the sight of it will equally surprise kings who sat on thrones in this life, and beggars who sat on dunghills. It will be a throne, for stateliness and glory, suited to the quality of him

who shall sit on it. Never had a judge such a throne, and never had a throne such a judge on it.

Leaving the discovery of the nature of the throne until that day, it concerns us more nearly to consider **what a JUDGE will sit on it**; a point on which we are not left to uncertain conjectures. The Judge on the throne will be,

(1.) A Judge VISIBLE to our bodily eyes, Rev. 1:7, "Every eye shall see him." When God gave the law on mount Sinai, the people "saw no similitude, only heard a voice:" but when he calls the world to an account how they observed his law, the man Christ being Judge, we shall see our Judge with our eyes, either to our eternal comfort, or to our eternal confusion, according to the treatment which we give him now. That very body which was crucified outside the gates of Jerusalem, between two thieves, shall then be seen on the throne, shining in glory. We now see him symbolically, in the sacrament of his supper; the saints see him by the eye of faith; then all shall see him with those eyes now in their heads.

(2.) A Judge having full AUTHORITY and POWER to render unto everyone according to his works, Christ, as God, has authority of himself; and as Mediator he has a judicial power and authority, which his Father has invested him with, according to the covenant between the Father and the Son for the redemption of sinners. His divine glory will be light, by which all men shall see clearly to read his commission for this great and honorable employment. "All power is given to him in heaven and in earth," Matt. 28:18. He has "the keys of hell and of death," Rev. 1:18. There can be no appeal from his tribunal: sentence once passed there, must stand forever; there is no reversing it. All appeals are from an inferior to a superior court: but when God gives sentence against a man, where can he find a higher court to bring his process to? This judgment is the Mediator's judgment, and therefore the last judgment. If the Intercessor is against us, who can be for us? If Christ condemns us, who will absolve us?

(3.) A Judge of infinite WISDOM. His eyes will pierce into, and clearly discern the most intricate cases. His omniscience qualifies him for judging the most retired thoughts, as well as the words and works. The most subtle sinner shall not be able to deceive him, nor, by any artful management, to palliate the crime. He is the searcher of hearts, to whom nothing can be hidden or perplexed; but all things are naked and open unto his eyes, Heb. 4:13.

(4.) A most JUST Judge; a Judge of perfect integrity. He is the righteous Judge, 2 Tim. 4:8, and his throne a great white throne, Rev. 20:11, from whence no judgment shall proceed, but what is pure and spotless. The Thebans painted justice blind, and without hands; because judges ought not to respect people, nor take bribes. The Areopagites judged in the dark; that they might not regard who spoke, but what was spoken. With the Judge on his throne, there will be no respect of people; he will neither regard the rich, nor the poor: but just judgment shall go forth, in everyone's cause.

(5.) An OMNIPOTENT Judge, able to put his sentence in execution. The united force of devils and wicked men will be altogether unable to withstand him. They cannot retard the execution of the sentence against them one moment; far less can they stop it altogether. "Thousand thousands of angels minister unto him," Dan. 7:10. And, by the breath of his mouth, he can drive the cursed herd where he pleases.

5. The PARTIES shall appear. These are men and **DEVILS**. Although the fallen angels were, from the first moment of their sinning, subjected to the wrath of God, and were cast down to hell, and wherever they go they carry their hell about with them; yet it is evident that they are *reserved* unto judgment, 2 Pet. 2:4, namely, unto the judgment of the great day, Jude, verse 6. Then they shall be solemnly and publicly judged, 1 Cor. 6:3, "Know you not that we shall judge angels?" At that day they shall answer for their trade of sinning, and tempting to sin, which they have been carrying on from

the beginning. And they shall receive the due reward of all the dishonor which they have done to God, and of all the mischief which they have done to men. Those wicked spirits now in chains, though not in such strait custody, but that they go about, like roaring lions, seeking whom they may devour, shall then receive their final sentence, and be shut up in their den, in the prison; where they shall be held in extreme and unspeakable torment, through all eternity, Rev. 20:10, "And the devil who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever." In prospect of which, the devils said to Christ, "Have you come here to torment us before the time?" Matt. 8:29.

But what we are chiefly concerned to take notice of, is the case of **MEN** at that day. All men must appear before this tribunal. All of each gender, of every age, quality, and condition; the great and small, noble and ignoble; none are excepted. Adam and Eve, with all their sons and daughters, everyone who has had – or, to the end of the world, shall have – a living soul united to a body, will make up this great congregation. Even those who refused to come to the throne of grace, shall be forced to the bar of justice: for there can be no hiding from the all-seeing Judge, no flying from him who is present everywhere, no resisting of him who is armed with almighty power, "We must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ," 2 Cor. 5:10. "Before him shall be gathered all nations," says the text. This is to be done by the ministry of angels. By them shall the elect be gathered, Mark 13:27, "Then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds." And they also shall gather the reprobate, "As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Matthew 13:40-42. From all corners of the world shall the

inhabitants thereof be gathered unto the place where he shall set his throne for judgment.

6. There shall be a SEPARATION made between the righteous and the wicked; the elect sheep being set on Christ's right hand, and the reprobate goats on his left. There is no necessity to wait for this separation, until the trial is over; since the parties will rise out of their graves with plain outward marks of distinction, as was mentioned before. The separation seems to be effected by that double gathering, before mentioned; the one of the elect, Mark 13:2, the other of those who do iniquity, Matt. 13:41. The elect being "caught up together in the clouds, meet the Lord in the air," 1 Thess. 4:17, and so are set on his right hand; and the reprobate left on the earth, are placed upon the Judge's left hand.

Here is now a total separation of two parties, who were always opposite to each other in their principles, aims, and manner of life; who, when together, were a burden the one to the other, under which the one groaned, and the other raged: but now they are finally parted, never to come together any more. The righteous and wicked, like the iron and clay, which could never mix (see Dan. 2:41-43), are quite separated: the one being drawn up into the air, by the attractive virtue of "the stone cut out of the mountain," namely, Jesus Christ; and the other left upon its earth, to be trod under foot.

Now let us look to **the elect sheep on the right hand**, and there we shall see a glorious company of saints shining, as so many stars in their orbs; and with a cheerful countenance beholding Him who sits upon the throne. Here will be two wonderful sights, which the world never saw.

(1.) A great congregation of saints, in which there will not be so much as one hypocrite. There was a bloody Cain in Adam's family; a cursed Ham in Noah's family, in the ark; a treacherous Judas in Christ's own family: but in that company there will be none but

sealed ones, members of Christ, having all one Father. This is a sight reserved for that day.

(2.) All the godly upon one side. Seldom or never do the saints on earth make such harmony, but there are some jarring strings among them. It is not to be expected, that men who see but in part, though they are all going to one city, should agree as to every step in the way: no, we must not look for it, in this state of imperfection. But at that day, Paul and Barnabas shall meet in peace and unity, though once "the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder, the one from the other," Acts 15:39. There shall be no more divisions, no more separate standing among those who belonged to Christ. All the godly, of the different parties, shall then be upon one side; seeing, whatever were their differences in lesser things, while in the world, yet even then they met and concerted all in one Lord Jesus Christ, by a true and lively faith, and in the one way of holiness, or practical godliness. And vile hypocrites, of whatever party, shall be led forth with the workers of iniquity.

Look to **left hand**, and there you will see the cursed goats, all the wicked ones, from Cain to the last ungodly person who shall be in the world, gathered together into one most miserable congregation. There are many assemblies of the wicked now; then there shall be but one. But all of them shall be present there, brought together, as one herd for the slaughter, bellowing and roaring, weeping and howling, for the miseries come, and that are coming on them. And remember, you shall not be a mere spectator, to look at these two such different companies; but must yourself take your place in one of the two, and shall share with the company, whatever hand it be on. Those who now abhor no society so much as that of the saints, would then be glad to be allowed to get in among them, though it were but to lie at their feet. But then not one tare shall be found with the wheat; He will thoroughly purge his floor. Many of the right-hand men of this world, will be left-hand men in that day. Many, who must have the door on the right hand of those who are better than they, if

the righteous be more excellent than his neighbor, shall then be turned to the left hand, as most despicable wretches!

O, how terrible will this separation be to the ungodly! How dreadful will this gathering them together into one company be! What they will not believe, they will then see, namely, that but few are saved. They think it enough now to be neighbor-like, and can securely follow the multitude: but the multitude on the left hand will yield them no comfort. How will it sting the ungodly church-goer, to see himself set on the same hand with Turks and Pagans! How will it gall profane Protestants, to stand with idolatrous Papists; praying people, with their profane neighbors, who mocked at religious exercises; formal professors, strangers to the new birth and the power of godliness, with persecutors! Now there are many opposite societies in the world; but then all the ungodly shall be in one society. And how dreadful will the faces of companions in sin be to one another there! What doleful shrieks, when the drunkards, who have had many a jovial day together, shall see one another face to face; when the husband and wife, the parents and children, masters and servants, and neighbors, who have been snares and stumbling-blocks to one another, to the ruin of their own souls and those of their relatives, shall meet again in that miserable society! Then there will be curses instead of greetings; and tearing of themselves, and raging against one another, instead of their usual embraces.

7. The parties shall be tried. The trial cannot be difficult, seeing the Judge is omniscient, and nothing can be hidden from him. But, that his righteous judgment may be made evident to all, he will set the hidden things of darkness in the clearest light at that trial, 1 Cor. 4:5. Men shall be tried,

(1.) Upon their WORKS; for "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil," Eccl. 12:14. The Judge will try every man's life, and set his deeds done in the body, with all the circumstances thereof, in a true

light. Then will many actions, commended and applauded of men, as good and just, be discovered to have been evil and abominable in the sight of God; and many works, now condemned by the world, will be approved and commended by the great Judge, as good and just. Secret things will be brought to light; and what was hidden from the view of the world, shall be laid open. Wickedness, which has been kept hidden and secret, in spite of all human search, will then be brought forth to the glory of God, and the confusion of impenitent sinners, who hid it. The world appears now very vile in the eyes of those who are exercised to godliness; and it will then appear a thousand times more vile, when that which is done of men in secret comes to be discovered. Every good action shall then be remembered; and the hidden piety and good works, most industriously concealed by the saints from the eyes of men, shall no more lie hidden: for though the Lord will not allow men to proclaim everyone his own goodness, yet he himself will do it in due time.

(2.) Their WORDS shall be judged, Matt. 12:37, "For by your words you shall be justified, and by your words you shall be condemned." Not a word spoken for God and his cause in the world, from love to himself, shall be forgotten. They are all kept in remembrance, and shall be brought forth as evidences of faith, and of an interest in Christ. Mal. 3:16, 17, "Then those who feared the Lord spoke often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it; and a book of remembrance was written before him. And they shall be mine, says the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels." The tongue, which did run at random, shall then confess to God; and the speaker shall find it to have been followed, and every word noted which dropped from the unsanctified lips. "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment," Matt. 12:36. And if they shall give account of idle words, that is, words spoken to no good purpose, neither for God's glory, nor their own nor their neighbor's good; how much more shall men's wicked words, their sinful oaths, curses, lies, filthy communications, and bitter words, be called over again in

that day! The tongues of many shall then fall upon themselves, and ruin them.

(3.) Men's THOUGHTS shall be brought into judgment: the Judge will make manifest the counsels of the hearts, 1 Cor. 4:5. Thoughts go free from man's judgment, but not from the judgment of the heart-searching God, who knows men's thoughts, without the help of signs to discern them by. The secret springs of men's actions will then be brought to light; and the sins, which never came further than the heart, will then be laid open. O, what a picture will man's corrupt nature present, when his inmost thoughts are revealed, and all his speculative impurities are exposed! The rottenness that is within many a whited sepulcher, the speculative filthiness and wantonness, murder and malignity, now lurking in the hearts of men, as in the chambers of imagery, will then be revealed, and what good was in the hearts of any shall no more lie concealed. If it was in their hearts to build a house to the Lord, they shall hear, that they did well that it was in their heart.

This TRIAL will
be **righteous** and **impartial**, **accurate** and **searching**, **clear** and **e vident**. The Judge is the righteous Judge, and he will do right to everyone. He has a just balance for good and evil actions, and for honest and false hearts. The fig-leaf cover of hypocrisy will then be blown aside, and the hypocrite's nakedness will appear; as when the Lord came to judge Adam and Eve "in the cool," or, as the word is, "in the wind of the day," Gen. 3:8. "The fire," which tries things most exquisitely, "shall try every man's work, of what sort it is," 1 Cor. 3:13. Man's judgment is often perplexed and confused: but here the whole process shall be clear and evident, as written with a sunbeam. It shall be clear to the Judge, to whom no case can be intricate; to the parties, who shall be convinced, Jude, verse 15. And the multitudes on both sides shall see that the Judge is clear when he judges; for then "the heavens shall declare his righteousness," in the audience of all the world; and so it shall be universally known, Psalm 50:6.

On these accounts it is, that this trial is held out in the Scripture, under the notion of "opening of books;" and men are said to be "judged out of those things written in the books," Rev. 20:12. The judge of the world, who infallibly knows all things, has no need of books to be laid before him, to prevent mistakes in any point of law or fact; but the expression points at his proceedings as most clear, accurate, just and well grounded, in every step of them. Now, there are **FOUR BOOKS** that shall be opened in that day.

(1.) The book of God's remembrance, or omniscience, Mal. 3:16. This is an exact record of every man's state, thoughts, words, and deeds, good or evil: it is, as it were, a ledger, in which the Lord puts down all that passes in men's hearts, lips, and lives; and it is a reckoning up every day that one lives. In it are recorded men's sins and good works, secret and open, with all their circumstances. Here are registered all their privileges, temporal and spiritual mercies, often made ready to their hand; the checks, admonitions, and rebukes, given by teachers, neighbors, afflictions, and men's own consciences; everything in its due order. This book will serve only as a bill of indictment, in respect of the ungodly; but it will be for another use in respect of the godly, namely, for a memorial of their good. The opening of it is the Judge's bringing to light what is written in it; the reading, as it were, of the bill and memorial, respectively, in their hearing.

(2.) The book of CONSCIENCE will be opened, which shall be as a thousand witnesses to prove the fact, Romans 2:15, "Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness." Conscience is a censor going with every man wherever he goes, taking an account of his deeds done in the body, and, as it were, noting them in a book. Much is written in it, which cannot be read now; the writing of conscience being, in many cases, like to that which is made with the juice of lemons, not to be read until it is held before the fire; but then men shall read it clearly and distinctly: the fire which is to try every man's work, will make the book of conscience legible in every point.

Though the book be sealed now, the conscience blind, dumb, and deaf, the seals will then be broken, and the book opened. There shall be no more a silent conscience, and far less a seared conscience, among all the ungodly crew: but their conscience shall be most quick-sighted, and most lively, in that day. None shall then call good evil, or evil good. Ignorance of what sin is, and what things are sins, will have no place among them: and the subtle reasonings of men, in favor of their lusts, will then be forever baffled by their own conscience. None shall have the favor, if I may so speak, of lying under the soft cover of delusion; but they shall all be convicted by their conscience. Whether they will or not, they must look on this book, read, be confounded, and stand speechless, knowing that nothing is charged upon them by mistake; since this is a book which was always in their own custody. Thus shall the Judge make every man see himself in the mirror of his own conscience, which will make quick work.

(3.) The book of the LAW shall be opened. This book is the standard and rule, by which is known what is right, and what is wrong; as also, what sentence is to be passed accordingly, on those who are under it. As to the opening of this book, in a statute, which shows what is sin, and what is duty; it agrees with the opening of the book of conscience. For conscience is set, by the sovereign lawgiver, in every man's bosom, to be his private teacher, to show him the law; and his private pastor, to make application of the same: and at that day, it will be perfectly fit for its office; so that the conscience, which is most stupid now, shall then read to the man most accurate, but dreadful lectures on the law.

But what seems principally pointed at by the opening of this book, is the opening of that part of it which determines the reward of men's works. Now the law promises life, upon perfect obedience: but none can be found on the right hand, or on the left, who will pretend to that, when once the book of conscience is opened. It threatens death upon disobedience, and will effectually bring it upon all under its dominion. And this part of the book of the law,

determining the reward of men's works, is opened, only to show what must be the portion of the ungodly, and that there they may read their sentence, before it is pronounced.

But it is not opened for the sentence of the saints; for no sentence absolving a sinner could ever be drawn out of it. The law promises life, not as it is a rule of actions, but as a covenant of works; therefore, innocent man could not have demanded life upon his obedience, until the law was reduced into the form of a covenant; as was shown before. But the saints, having been, in this life, brought under a new covenant, namely, the covenant of grace, were dead to the law as a covenant of works, and it was dead to them. Therefore, as they shall not now have any fear of death from it; so they can have no hope of life from it, since "they are not under the law, but under grace," Romans 6:14. But, for their sentence, "another book is opened."

Thus the book of the law is opened, for the sentence against all those on the left hand: and by it they will clearly see the justice of the judgment against them, and how the Judge proceeds therein according to law. Nevertheless, there will be this difference, namely, that those who had only the natural law, and lived not under any special revelation, shall be judged by that law of nature they had in their hearts; which law declares "that they which commit such things," as they will stand convicted of, "are worthy of death," Romans 1:32. But those who had the written law, to whom the word of God came, sounding in the visible church, shall be judged by that written law. So says the apostle, Romans 2:12, "For as many as have sinned without" the written "law, shall also perish without" the written "law: and as many as have sinned in the law," that is, under the written law, "shall also be judged by the" written "law."

(4.) "Another book" shall be "opened, which is **the book of LIFE**," Rev. 20:12. In this the names of all the elect are written, as Christ said to his disciples, Luke 10:20, "Your names are written in

heaven." This book contains God's gracious and unchangeable purpose, to bring all the elect to eternal life; and that, in order thereto, they be redeemed by the blood of his Son, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and raised up by him at the last day without sin. It is now lodged in the Mediator's hand, as the book of "the manner of the kingdom:" and having perfected the work the Father gave him to do, he shall, on the great day, produce and open the book, and present the people therein named, "faultless before the presence of his glory," Jude, verse 24; "not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing," Eph. 5:27. Not one of those who are named in the book will be missing. They shall be found qualified according to the order of the book, redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, raised up, without spot: what remains then, but, according to the same book, they obtain the great end, namely, everlasting life? This may be gathered from that precious promise, Rev. 3:5, "He who overcomes, the same shall be clothed in white raiment," being raised in glory; "and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father:" it shall be, as it were, read out, among the rest of God's elect, "and before his angels." Here is now the ground of the saints' absolution, the ground of the blessed sentence they shall receive. The book of life being opened, it will be known to all, who are elected, and who are not. Thus far of the trial of the parties.

8. Then shall the Judge pronounce this blessed sentence on the saints, "Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world," Matt. 25:34. It is most probable, the man Christ will pronounce it with an audible voice: which not only all the saints, but all the wicked likewise, shall hear and understand. Who can conceive the inexpressible joy, with which these happy ones will hear these words? Who can imagine that fullness of joy, which will be poured into their hearts, with these words reaching their ears? And who can conceive how much of hell shall break forth into the hearts of all the ungodly crew, by these words of heaven? It is certain that this sentence shall be

pronounced, before the sentence of damnation. "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, you blessed," etc., Matt. 25:34. "*Then* shall he say also to them on the left hand, Depart from me, you cursed," etc., verse 41. There is no need of this order, that the saints may, without fear, hear the other sentence on the reprobate: they who are raised in glory, caught up to meet the Lord in the air, presented without spot, and whose souls, for the far greater part of them, have been so long in heaven before, shall not be capable of any such fear. But hereby they will be brought in orderly, to sit in judgment, as Christ's assessors, against the ungodly; whose torment will be aggravated by it. It will he a hell to them to be kept out of hell, until they see the doors of heaven opened to receive the saints, who once dwelt in the same world with them; and perhaps in the same parish, country, or town, and sat under the same ministry with themselves. Thus will they see heaven afar off, to make their hell the hotter: like that unbelieving master, 2 Kings 7:19, 20, they "shall see" the plenty "with their eyes, but shall not eat thereof." Every word of the blessed sentence shall be like an envenomed arrow shot into their hearts while they see what they have lost, and from thence gather what they are to expect.

This sentence passes on the saints, "*according* to their works," Rev. 20:12; but not *for* their works, nor for their faith, as if eternal life were merited by them. The sentence itself overthrows this absurd conceit. The kingdom which they are called to, was "prepared for them, from the foundation of the world;" not left to be merited by themselves, who were but of yesterday. They inherit it as sons, but procure it not to themselves as servants do the reward of their work. They were redeemed by the blood of Christ, and clothed with his spotless righteousness, which is the proper cause of the sentence. They were also qualified for heaven, by the sanctification of his Spirit; and hence it is "according to their works:" so that the ungodly world shall see now, that the Judge of the living and dead does good to those who were good. Therefore, it is added to the

sentence, "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me," verse 35, 36; which does not denote the *ground*, but the *evidence* of their right to heaven: as if a judge should say, he absolves a man pursued for debt, for the witnesses depose that it is paid already.

So the apostle says, 1 Cor. 10:5, "But with many of them God was not well pleased; for they were overthrown in the wilderness." Their overthrow in the wilderness was not the ground of God's displeasure with them, but it was an evidence of it. And thus our Lord teaches us the necessary connection between glory and good works, namely, works evangelically good; works having a respect to Jesus Christ, and done out of faith in him, and love to him, without which they will not be regarded in that day. And the saints will so far be judged according to such works, that the degrees of glory among them shall be according to these works. For it is an eternal truth, "He who sows sparingly, shall reap sparingly," 2 Cor. 9:6.

Thus shall the good works of the godly have a glorious, but a gratuitous reward; a reward of grace, not of debt; which will fill them with wonder at the riches of free grace, and at the Lord's condescending to take any notice, especially such public notice, of their poor worthless works: which seems to be the import of what they are said to answer, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?" verse 37-39.

They will be amazed to see themselves set down at the marriage supper of the Lamb, and to hear him acknowledge a little food or drink, such as they had, which they gave to a hungry member of Christ, for his sake! O, plentiful harvest, following upon the seed of

good works! Rivers of pleasures, in exchange for a cup of cold water, given to a disciple, in the name of a disciple! Eternal mansions of glory, in exchange for a night's lodging given to a saint, who was a stranger! Everlasting robes of glory, in exchange for a new coat, or, it may be, an old one, bestowed on some saint, who had not necessary clothing! A visit to the sick saint, repaid by Christ himself, coming in the glory of his Father, with all his holy angels! A visit made to a poor prisoner for the cause of Christ, repaid with a visit from the Judge of all, taking away the visitant with him to the palace of heaven, there to be forever with himself! These things will be matter of everlasting amazement; and should stir up all to sow liberally in time, while seed-time of good works lasts. But it is Christ's stamp on good works, that puts a value on them, in the eye of our gracious God; which seems to be the import of our Lord's reply, verse 40, "Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me."

9. Now the saints having received their own sentence, **"they shall judge the world,"** 1 Cor. 6:2. This was *not* fulfilled, when the empire became Christian, and Christians were made magistrates. No, the psalmist tells us, "This honor have *all* the saints," Psalm 149:9. And the apostle in the forecited place, adds, "And if the world shall be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters?" verse 3, "Know you not that we shall judge angels?" Being called, they come to receive their kingdom, in the view of angels and men: they go, as it were—from the bar to the throne, "To him who overcomes, I will grant to sit with me in my throne," Rev. 3:21. They shall not judge the world, in Christ their head, by way of communion with him, by their works compared with those of the ungodly, or by way of testimony against them; but they shall be assessors to Jesus Christ the Judge, giving their voice against them, consenting to his judgment as just, and saying *Amen* to the doom pronounced against all the ungodly: as is said of the saints, upon the judgment of the great whore, Rev. 19:1, 2, "Hallelujah – for true and righteous are his judgments."

Thus, the upright shall have dominion over them, in the morning," of the resurrection, Psalm 49:14. Then, and not until then, shall that be fully accomplished, "May the praise of God be in their mouths and a double-edged sword in their hands, to inflict vengeance on the nations and punishment on the peoples, to bind their kings with fetters, their nobles with shackles of iron, to carry out the sentence written against them. This is the glory of *all* his saints. Praise the Lord." Psalms 149:6-9

O! what a strange turn of affairs will appear here! What an astonishing sight will it be, to see wicked men, formerly their unjust judges, standing as criminals before the saints, whom formerly they condemned as heretics, rebels, and traitors! To see men of riches and power stand pale-faced, before those whom they oppressed! To see the mocker stand trembling before those whom he mocked! the worldly wise man, before those whom he accounted fools! Then shall the despised faces of the saints be dreadful faces to the wicked; and those, who sometimes were the song of the drunkards, shall then be a terror to them. All wrongs must be righted at length, and everyone set in his proper place.

10. The Judge will pronounce the sentence of damnation on all the ungodly multitude. "Then He will also say to those on the left—Depart from Me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the Devil and his angels!" Matthew 25:41. Fearful doom! and that from the same mouth from whence proceeded the sentence of absolution before. It was an aggravation of the misery of the Jews, when their city was destroyed, that they were ruined by one who was accounted the darling of the world. O, what an aggravation of the misery of the wicked will it be also, that Christ will pronounce this sentence! To hear the curse from mount Zion, must needs be most terrible. To be condemned by him who came to save sinners, must be double damnation But thus it will be. The Lamb of God shall roar, as a lion, against them: he shall excommunicate, and cast them out of his presence forever, by a sentence from the throne, saying, "Depart from Me, you who are

cursed." He shall adjudge them to everlasting fire, and the society of devils for evermore.

And this sentence also, we suppose, will be pronounced with an audible voice, by the man Christ. And all the saints shall say, "Hallelujah, for true and righteous are his judgments!" None were so compassionate as the saints when on earth, during the time of God's patience. But now that time is at an end: **their compassion for the ungodly is swallowed in joy in the Mediator's glory**, and his executing just judgment, by which his enemies are made his footstool. Though, when on earth, the righteous man wept in secret places for their pride, and because they would not hear; yet "The righteous will rejoice when he sees the retribution; he will wash his feet in the blood of the wicked." Psalm 58:10. No pity shall then be shown them from their nearest relations. The godly wife shall applaud the justice of the Judge, in the condemnation of her ungodly husband! The godly husband shall say *Amen!* to the condemnation of her who lay in his bosom. The godly parents shall say *Hallelujah!* at the passing of the sentence against their ungodly child. And the godly child shall, from the bottom of his heart, approve the condemnation of his wicked parents, the father who begat him, and the mother who bore him. The sentence is just; they are judged "according to their works," Rev. 20:12. "And again they shouted: Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up for ever and ever." Revelation 19:3 "Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns!" Revelation 19:6

There is no wrong done to them, "For I was hungry and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty and you gave Me nothing to drink; I was a stranger and you didn’t take Me in; I was naked and you didn’t clothe Me, sick and in prison and you didn’t take care of Me." verse 42, 43. These are not only evidences of their ungodly and cursed state, but most proper grounds of their condemnation: for **though good works do not merit salvation, yet evil works**

merit damnation. Sins of one kind only, namely, of omission, are here mentioned; not that these alone shall be then discovered, for the books lay all open: but because these, though there were no more, are sufficient to condemn unpardoned sinners. And if men are condemned for sins of omission, much more for sins of commission. The omission of works of charity and mercy, is mentioned in particular, to stop the mouths of the wicked; for it is most just that he "have judgment without mercy, that has showed no mercy," James 2:13. Taking notice of the omission of acts of charity and mercy towards the distressed members of Christ, intimates, that it is the judgment of those who have heard of Christ in the gospel, that is principally intended in this portion of Scripture; and that the slighting of Christ will be the great cause of the ruin of those who hear the gospel: but the enmity of the hearts of the wicked against Christ himself, is discovered by the treatment they now give to his members.

In vain will they say, "Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or without clothes, or sick, or in prison, and not help You?" verse 44. For the Lord reckons, and will reckon, the world's unkindness to his people, unkindness to himself; "I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me," verse 45. Food and drink unhappily spared, when a member of Christ was in need of it! O, wretched neglect, that the stranger saint was not taken in! It had been better for them if they had left their own room, and their own bed, than that he lacked lodging.

O, cursed clothing, may the wicked say, that was in my house, locked up in my chest, or hanging in my wardrobe, and was not brought out to clothe such a one! O, that I had stripped myself, rather than he had gone away without clothing! Cursed business that diverted me from visiting such a saint! O, that I had rather watched whole nights with him! Wretch that I was! Why did I sit at ease in my house, when he was in prison, and did not visit him? But now the tables are turned: Christ's servants shall eat—but I

shall be hungry; his servants shall drink—but I shall be thirsty; they rejoice—but I am ashamed, Isaiah 65:13. They are taken in—but I am cast out, and bid to depart; they are clothed with robes of glory—but I "walk naked, and they see my shame," Rev. 16:15. They are now raised up on high, beyond the reach of sickness or pain—but I must now "lie down in sorrow," Isaiah 50:11. **Now they will go to the palace of heaven—but I must go to the prison of hell.**

But if our Lord thus resents men's neglecting to help his people under these, and the like distresses; what may they expect who are the authors and instruments of them? If they shall be fed with wrath, who fed them not when they were hungry; what shall become of those, who robbed and took advantage of them? What a full cup of wrath shall be the portion of those, who were so far from giving them food or drink when hungry or thirsty, that they made it a crime for others to entertain them, and made themselves drunken with their blood! They must lodge with devils for evermore, who took not in the Lord's people, when strangers: then, what a lodging shall those have, who drove them out of their own houses, out of their native land, and made them strangers! Men will be condemned for not clothing them, when naked: then, how heavy must the sentence of those be, who have stripped them, and made them go without clothing! Surely, if not visiting them in sickness, or in prison, shall be so severely punished; those shall not escape a most heavy doom, who have cast them into prisons, and have put them under such hardships, as have impaired their health, brought sickness on them, and cut short their days in prison, or out of prison.

To put a face upon such wicked practices, men will pretend to retain an honor for Christ and religion, while they thus treat his members, walking in his way, and keeping the truth. They are here represented to say, "Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or without clothes, or sick, or in prison, and not help You?" verse 44. As if they should say, Our bread, drink, lodging,

clothing, and visits, were indeed refused, but not to Christ; but to a set of men of a bad character, men who "turned the world upside down," Acts 17:6; who troubled Israel, 1 Kings 18:7; a strange and fanatic sort of people, having laws diverse from all people, factious and rebellious; they did not keep the king's laws, and were therefore a dangerous set of men; it was not for the king's profit to tolerate them, Esther 3:8. But although men cast iniquity upon the godly, and give them evil names, that they may treat them as criminals, all these pretenses will avail them nothing, in the great day, before the righteous Judge, nor before their own consciences; but the real ground of their enmity against the saints will be found, to their own conviction, to be their enmity against Christ himself. This seems to be the import of the objection of the damned, verse 44, and of the answer to it, verse 45, "'I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me."

11. Sentence being passed on both parties, the full execution of the same follows, verse 46, "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into eternal life." The condemned shall get no reprieve, but go to their place without delay; they shall be driven away from the judgment-seat into hell: and the saints "shall enter into the King's palace," Psalm 45:15, namely, into heaven, the seat of the blessed. But our Lord Christ, and his glorious company, shall keep the field that day and see the backs of all their enemies; for the condemned go off first.

In this day of the Lord, the great day, shall be the general conflagration; by which these visible heavens, the earth, and sea, shall pass away. Not that they shall be annihilated, or reduced to nothing, that is not the operation of fire; but they shall be purified by that fire, from all the effects of sin, and of the curse, upon them; and then renewed, and made more glorious and stable. Of this conflagration, the apostle Peter speaks, 2 Pet. 3:10, "But the day of the Lord will come, as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be

burnt up." See also verse 7, 12. And of the renewing of the world, he adds, verse 13, "Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens, and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness."

It seems most agreeable to the Scriptures, and to the nature of the thing, to conceive this conflagration to follow after the general judgment; sentence being passed on both parties before it. And I think it probable, that it will fall in with the putting of the sentence in execution against the damned; so as they shall, according to their sentence, depart, and the heavens and the earth pass away, together and at once, at that furious rebuke from the throne, driving them away, out of the world (in this fire) to the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels. Even as, in the deluge, with which the apostle Peter compares the conflagration, or burning of the world, 2 Pet. 3: 6, 7, the world itself, and the wicked upon it, perished together; the same water which destroyed the earth, sweeping away the inhabitants. For it is not likely that the wicked shall at all stand on the new earth, "wherein dwells righteousness," 2 Pet. 3:13.

And as for this earth, it shall "flee away," which seems to denote a very quick dispatch, and it shall "flee from his face, who sits on the throne," Rev. 20:11, "And I saw a great white throne, and him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away." The execution of the sentence on the wicked is also thus expressed; they "shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence," or "from the face of the Lord," 2 Thess. 1:9. The original word is the same in both texts, which, being compared, seem to say, that these creatures, abused by the wicked, being left to stand as witnesses against them in the judgment, are, after sentence passed on their abusers, made to pass away with them from the face of the Judge. It is true, the fleeing away of the earth and the heavens is narrated, Rev. 20:11, before the judgment; but that does not prove its going before the judgment, any more than the

narrating of the judgment, verse 12, before the resurrection, verse 13, will prove the judgment to be before it.

Further, it is remarkable, in the execution of the sentence, Rev. 20:14, 15, that not only the reprobate are "cast into the lake," but "death and hell" are cast into it likewise: all effects of sin and of the curse are removed out of the world, for which very cause shall the conflagration be, and they are confined to the place of the damned.

Besides all this, it is evident that the end of the world is by the conflagration: and the apostle tells us, 1 Cor. 15:24, 25, "Then comes the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet." Which last, as it must be done before the end, so it seems not to be done, but by putting the sentence in execution, passed in the day of judgment, against the wicked.

Now, if the burning of Sodom and Gomorrah, which is set forth for an example, Jude, verse 7, was so dreadful, how terrible will that day be, when the whole world shall be at once in flames! How will wretched worldlings look, when their darling world shall be all on fire! Then shall strong castles and towering palaces, with all their rich furniture, go up together in one flame with the poorest cottages. What heart can fully conceive the terror of that day to the wicked, when the whole fabric of heaven and earth shall at once be dissolved by that fire? when that miserable company shall be driven from the tribunal—to the pit, with fire within them, and outside of them on every hand; and fire awaiting them in the lake; where this fire, may also follow them.

As for the particular **PLACE** of this judgment, though some point us to the valley of Jehoshaphat for it; yet our Lord, who infallibly knew it, being asked the question by his disciples, "Where, Lord?" only said, "Wherever the body is, there shall the eagles be gathered together," Luke 17:37. After which answer, it is too much for men to renew the question.

As for the **TIME**, when it shall be, in vain do men search for what the Lord has purposely kept secret, Acts 1:7, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father has put in his own power." The apostle Paul, after having very plainly described the second coming of Christ, 1 Thess. 4:16, 17, adds, chapter 5:1, 2, "But of the times and seasons, brethren, you have no need that I write unto you: for yourselves know perfectly, that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night." Nevertheless, some, in several ages, have made very bold with the time; and several particular years, which are now past, have been given out to the world, for the time of the end, by men who have pried into the secrets of God. Time has proclaimed to the world, their rashness and folly; and it is probable they will be no more happy in their conjectures, whose determinate time is yet to come. Let us rest in that, "He will come."

God has kept the day hidden from us, that we may be every day ready for it, Matt. 25:13, "**Watch**, therefore; for you know neither the day nor the hour, wherein the Son of man comes." And let us remember, that the last day of our life, will determine our state in the last day of the world. As we die—so shall we be judged.

III. The APPLICATION of this great truth—that there shall be a general judgment. I shall now conclude this subject, with some application of what has been said.

Use 1. Of comfort to all the SAINTS. Here is abundance of consolation to all who are in the state of grace. Whatever be your afflictions in the world, this day will make up all your losses. "Though you have lain among the pots; yet shall you be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold," Psalm 68:13. Though the world reproaches, judges, and condemns you; the Judge will at that day absolve you, and bring forth your righteousness as the light. The *world's fools* will then appear to have been the only wise men who were in it. Though the

cross be heavy, you may well bear it, in expectation of the crown of righteousness, which the righteous Judge will then give you. If the world despises you, and treats you with the utmost contempt, regard it not: the day is coming wherein you shall sit with Christ on his throne.

Be not discouraged by reason of manifold temptations. But resist the devil in confidence of a full and complete victory; for you shall judge the tempter at last. Though you have hard wrestling now with the body of sin and death; yet you shall get all your enemies under your feet at length, and be presented faultless before the presence of his glory. Let not the terror of that day dispirit you, when you think upon it; let those who have slighted the Judge, and continue enemies to him, and to the way of holiness, droop and hang down their heads, when they think of his coming: but lift you up your heads with joy, for the last day will be your best day. The Judge is your Head and Husband, your Redeemer, and your Advocate. You must appear before the judgment-seat, but you "shall not come into condemnation," John 5:24. His coming will not be *against* you—but *for* you. He came in the flesh, to remove the lawful impediments of the spiritual marriage, by his death; he came in the gospel to you, to espouse you to himself; he will come, at last, to solemnize the marriage, and take the bride home to his Father's house. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

Use 2. Of terror to all UNBELIEVERS. This may serve to awaken a secure generation, a world lying in wickedness, as if they were never to be called to an account for it; and slighting the Mediator, as if he were not to judge them. Ah! how few have lively impressions of the judgment to come! Most men live as if what is said of it from the word of God, were but idle tales. The *profane lives* of many speak the thoughts of it to be far from their hearts, and in very deed make a mock of it before the world, saying, in effect, "Where is the promise of his coming?" The *hypocrisy* of others, who blind the eyes of the world with being a splendid profession, being in appearance Christ's sheep, while they are indeed the devil's goats,

proves that the great separation of the sheep from the goats is very little laid to heart. How do many indulge themselves in secret wickedness, of which they would be ashamed before witnesses; not considering, that their most secret thoughts and actions will, at that day, be revealed before the great congregation!

How eagerly are men's hearts set on the world—as if it were to be their everlasting habitation! The solemn assemblies, and public ordinances, wherein the Judge is upon a transaction of peace with the criminals, are undervalued: many hearts swim like feathers in the waters of the sanctuary, that sink like stones to the bottom in cares of this life; they will be very serious in trifles of this world, and trifle in the most serious and weighty things of another world. But, O, consider the day that is approaching, in which Christ will come to judgment! the world shall be summoned, by the sound of the last trumpet, to appear before his tribunal. The Judge will sit on his throne, and all nations will be summoned before him; the separation will be made between the godly and the wicked; the books opened, and the dead judged out of them; one party will be adjudged to everlasting life, and the other to everlasting fire, according to their works.

It would be a sight, of admirable curiosity, if you could wrap up yourself in some dark cloud, or hide yourself in the cleft of some high rock, from whence you might espy wicked kings, princes, judges, and **great ones** of the earth, rising out of their marble tombs, and brought to the bar, to answer for all their cruelty, injustice, oppression, profanity, without any marks of distinction, but what their wickedness puts upon them. Profane, unholy, and **unfaithful ministers**, pursued with the curses of their ruined people, from their graves to the judgment seat, and charged with the blood of souls, to whom they gave not faithful warning. **Mighty men** standing trembling before the Judge, unable to recover their usual boldness, to outwit him with their subtleties, or defend themselves by their strength. **Delicate women** cast forth of their graves, as abominable branches, dragged to the tribunal, to answer

for their ungodly lives. The **ignorant**, suddenly taught in the law to their cost; and the **learned** declared before the world, to be fools and laborious triflers. The **atheist** convinced,
the **hypocrite** unmasked, and the **profane** at length turned serious about his eternal state. Secret murders, adulteries, thefts, cheats, and other works of darkness, which defied all human search, discovered and laid open before the world, with their most minute circumstances. No special regard given to the rich, no pity shown to the poor. The scales of the world turned; oppressed and despised piety set on high, and prosperous wickedness at last brought low. All not found in Christ, arraigned, convicted, and condemned, without respect of persons, and driven from the tribunal to the bottomless pit; while those found in him, at that day, being absolved before the world, go with him into heaven. Nay, but you can not so escape. Whoever you are, not being in Christ, you must bear a part in this tragic and alarming scene!

Sinner, that same Lord Christ, whom you now despise, whom you wound through the sides of his messengers, and before whom you do prefer your lusts—will be your Judge. The neglected Savior will be a severe Judge. O! what mountain, what rock, will you get to fall on you—to hide you from the face of Him who sits on the throne? You have now a rock within you, a heart of adamant, so that you can count the darts of the word as stubble, and laugh at the shaking of the spear: but that rock will rend at the sight of the Judge; that hard heart will then break, and you will weep and wail, when weeping and waiting will be to no purpose. Death's bands will fall off, the grave will cast you out; and the mountains shall skip from you, and the rocks refuse to grind you to powder. How will your cursed eyes abide the sight of the Judge? Behold, he comes! Where is the profane swearer, who tore his wounds? The wretched worldling, now abandoned of his God? The formal hypocrite, who kissed him and betrayed him? The despiser of the gospel, who sent him away in his messengers groaning, profaned his ordinances, and trampled under foot his precious blood? O murderer, the slain

man is your Judge—it is he whom you did so maltreat. Behold the neglected Lamb of God appearing as a lion against you. How will your heart endure the darts of his fiery looks? That rocky heart, which now holds out against him, shall then be blown up; that face, which refuses to blush now, shall then gather blackness: arrows of wrath shall pierce where arrows of conviction cannot enter now.

What will you answer him, when he rises up, and charges you with your unbelief and impenitence? Will you say, you were not warned? Conscience within you will give you the lie; the secret groans and weariness of those who warned you, will witness the contrary. If a child or a fool did tell you that your house was on fire, you would immediately run to quench it: but, in matters of eternal concern, men will first fill their hearts with prejudices against the messengers, and then cast their message behind their backs. But these silly excuses and pretenses will not avail in the day of the Lord. How will these cursed ears, now deaf to the call of the gospel, inviting sinners to come to Christ, hear the fearful sentence, "Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels?" No sleepy hearer shall be there; no man's heart will then wander; their hearts and eyes will then be fixed on their misery, which they will not now believe. O, that we knew, in this our day, the things that belong to our peace!

Lastly, Be exhorted to believe this great truth; and believe it so that you may prepare for the judgment. Set up a secret tribunal in your own breasts, and often call yourselves to an account there. Make the Judge your friend in time, by closing with him in the offer of the gospel; and give all diligence, that you may be found in Christ at that day. Cast off the works of darkness; and live, as believing you are, at all times, and in all places, under the eye of your Judge, who "will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing." Be fruitful in good works, knowing that as you sow, you shall reap. Study piety towards God, righteousness and charity towards men. Lay up in store plenty of works of charity and mercy towards those who are in distress, especially such as are of the household of faith;

that they may be produced, at that day, as evidences that you belong to Christ. Shut not up your affections of mercy, now, towards the needy; lest you then find no mercy. Take heed, that in all your works you be single and sincere; aiming, in them all, at the glory of the Lord, a testimony of your love to him, and in obedience to his command. Leave it to hypocrites, who have their reward, to proclaim every man his own goodness; and to sound a trumpet when they do their alms. It is a base and unchristian spirit, which cannot have satisfaction in a good work unless it be exposed to the view of others: it is utterly unworthy of one who believes that the last trumpet shall call together the whole world, before whom the Judge himself shall publish works truly good, however secretly they were done. Live in a believing expectation of the coming of the Lord. Let your loins be always girt, and your lamps burning; so when he comes, whether in the last day of your life, or in the last day of the world, you shall be able to say with joy, "Lo, this is our God, and we have waited for him."

The Kingdom of Heaven

"Then the King will say to those on His right—Come, you who are blessed by My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Matthew 25:34

Having, from this portion of Scripture, which the text is a part of, discoursed of the general judgment; and being to speak of the everlasting happiness of the saints, and the everlasting misery of the wicked, from the respective sentences to be pronounced upon them in the great day, I shall take them in the order wherein they lie before us.

The words of the text contain the joyful sentence itself, together with an historical introduction thereto, which gives us an account of the Judge pronouncing the sentence, "the King," Jesus Christ; the parties on whom it is given, "those on his right hand;" and the time when, "then," as soon as the trial is over. Of these I have spoken already. It is the sentence itself we are now to consider, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father," etc. Stand back, O you profane goats! away all unregenerate souls, not united to Jesus Christ! this is not for you. Come, O you saints, brought out of your natural state into the state of grace! behold here the state of glory awaiting you. Here is glory let down to us in words and syllables; a looking-glass, in which you may see your everlasting happiness; a picture of Christ's Father's house, wherein there are many mansions.

This glorious sentence bears two things.

1. The complete happiness to which the saints are adjudged, "the kingdom."

2. Their solemn admission to it, "Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit," etc.

1. Their complete happiness is a kingdom. A **kingdom** is the top of worldly felicity; there is nothing on earth greater than a kingdom:

therefore, the hidden weight of the glory in heaven is held forth to us under that notion. But it is not an ordinary kingdom, it is "**the** kingdom;" the kingdom of heaven, surpassing all the kingdoms of the earth in glory, honor, profit, and pleasure, infinitely more than they do in these excel the low and inglorious condition of a beggar in rags, and on a ash-heap.

2. There is a solemn admission of the saints into this their kingdom, "Come, you who are blessed by My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." In view of angels, men, and devils, they are invested with royalty, and solemnly inaugurated before the whole world, by Jesus Christ, the heir of all things, who has "all power in heaven and in earth." Their right to the kingdom is solemnly recognized and owned. They are admitted to it as undoubted heirs of the kingdom, to possess it by inheritance. And because this kingdom is the Father's kingdom, therefore they are openly acknowledged, in their admission to it, to be the blessed of Christ's Father: which blessing was given them long before this sentence, but it is now solemnly recognized and confirmed to them by the Mediator, in his Father's name. It is observable, he says not—You who are blessed by *the* Father, but—You who are blessed by *My* Father; to show us, that all blessings are derived by us from the Father, the fountain of blessing, as he is "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," through whom we are blessed, Eph. 1:3. And, finally, they are admitted to this kingdom, as that which was "prepared for them from the foundation of the world," in God's eternal purpose, before they, or any of them, had any being; that all the world may see eternal life to be the free gift of God.

Doctrine. The saints shall be made completely happy in the possession of the kingdom of heaven.

Three things I shall here inquire into:

I. The nature of this kingdom.

II. The admission of the saints thereto.

III. And then I shall make some practical improvement of the whole.

I. As to the NATURE of the kingdom of heaven, our knowledge of it is very imperfect; for "eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man—the things which God has prepared for those who love him," 1 Cor. 2:9. As, by familiar resemblances, parents instruct their little children concerning things of which otherwise they can have no tolerable notion; so our gracious God, in consideration of our weakness, is pleased to represent to us heaven's happiness under similitudes taken from earthly things, glorious in the eyes of men; since discoveries of the heavenly glory, divested of earthly resemblances, would be too bright for our weak eyes, and we should but lose ourselves in them. Therefore now we can but speak as children of these things, which the day will fully discover.

The state of glory is represented under the idea of a kingdom; a kingdom, among men, being that in which the greatest number of earthly good things center. Now, **every saint shall, as a king, inherit a kingdom.** All Christ's subjects shall be kings, each one with his crown upon his head: not that the great King shall divest himself of his royalty, but he will make all his children partakers of his kingdom.

1. The saints shall have kingly POWER and AUTHORITY given them. Our Lord gives not empty titles to his favorites; he makes them kings indeed. The dominion of the saints will be a dominion far exceeding that of the greatest monarch who ever was on earth. They will be absolute masters over sin, which had the dominion over them. They will have a complete rule over their own spirits; an entire management of all their affections and inclinations, which now create them so much molestation: the turbulent root of corrupt affections shall be forever expelled out of that kingdom, and never be able any more to give them the least disturbance. They shall have power over the nations, the ungodly of all nations, "and shall

rule them with a rod of iron," Rev 2:26, 27. The whole world of the wicked shall be broken before them: "Satan shall be bruised under their feet," Romans 16:20. He shall never be able to fasten a temptation on them any more: but he will be judged by them; and, in their sight, cast with the reprobate crew into the lake of fire and brimstone. So shall they rule over their oppressors. Having fought the good fight, and gotten the victory, Christ will entertain them as Joshua did his captains, causing them to "come near, and put their feet on the necks of kings," Josh. 10:24.

2. They shall have the ensigns of royalty. For a **THRONE**, Christ will grant them "to sit with him on his throne," Rev. 3:21. They will be advanced to the highest honor and dignity that they are capable of; and in the enjoyment of it, they will have an eternal undisturbed repose, after all the tossings which they met with in the world, in their way to the throne. For a **CROWN**, they shall "receive a crown of **glory**, which never fades away," 1 Pet. 5:4. Not a crown of flowers, as subjects, being conquerors or victors, sometimes have gotten: such a crown quickly fades, but their crown never fades! Not a crown of gold, such as earthly kings wear: even a crown of gold is often stained, and at best can never make those who wear it happy. But it shall be "a crown of glory." A crown of glory is "a crown of life," Rev. 3:10, that life which knows no end: a crown which death can never make to fall off one's head. It must be an **abiding** crown; for it is a "crown of righteousness," 2 Tim. 4:8. It was **purchased** for them by "Christ's righteousness," which is imputed to them; they are qualified for it by inherent righteousness; God's righteousness, or faithfulness, secures it to them. They shall have "a **SCEPTER**, a rod of iron," Rev. 2:27, terrible to all the wicked world. And a **SWORD** too, "a two-edged sword in their hand, to execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people," Psalm 149:6, 7.

They shall have royal **APPAREL**. The royal robes in this kingdom are white robes, Rev. 3:4, "They shall walk with me in white." Which, in a very particular manner, points at the inconceivable glory

of the state of the saints in heaven. The Lord is pleased often to represent unto us the glorious state of the saints, by speaking of them as clothed in "white garments." It is promised to the conqueror, that he shall be "clothed in white garments," Rev. 3:5. The elders about the throne are "clothed in white garments," chapter 4:4. The multitude before the throne are "clothed with white robes," chapter 7:9; "arrayed in white robes," verse 13; "made white in the blood of the Lamb," verse 14. I own, the last two testimonies respect the state of the saints on earth; yet the terms are borrowed from the state of the church in heaven. All garments, properly so called, being badges of sin and shame, shall be laid aside by the saints when they come to their state of glory. But if we consider on what occasions white garments were accustomed to be put on, we shall find much of heaven under them.

(1.) The Romans, when they made their bond-servants free, gave them a white garment as a badge of their FREEDOM. So shall the saints that day receive their white robes; for it is the day of "the glorious liberty of the children of God," Romans 8:21, the day of "the redemption of their body," verse 23. They shall no more see the house of bondage, nor lie any more among the pots. If we compare the state of the saints on earth with that of the wicked, it is indeed a state of freedom, whereas the other is a state of slavery; but, in comparison with their state in heaven, it is but a servitude. A saint on earth is indeed a young prince, and heir to the crown; but his motto may be, "I serve;" "for he differs nothing from a servant, though he be master of all," Gal. 4:1. What are the groans of a saint, the sordid and base work which he is sometimes found employed in, the black and tattered garments which he walks in, but badges of this comparative servitude? But from the day the saints come to the crown, they receive their complete freedom, and serve no more.

They shall be **fully freed from sin**, which of all evils is the worst, both in itself, and in their apprehension too; how great then must that freedom be, when these "Egyptians, whom they see today,"

they "shall see them again no more forever!" They shall be free from all temptation to sin: Satan can have no access to tempt them any more, by himself, or by his agents. A full answer will then be given to that petition they have so often repeated, "Lead us not into temptation." No hissing serpent can come into the paradise above; no snare or trap can be laid there, to catch the feet of the saints: they may walk there without fear, for they can be in no hazard; there are no lions' dens, no mountains of leopards, in the promised land. Nay, they shall be set beyond the possibility of sinning, for they shall be confirmed in goodness. It will be the consummate freedom of their will, to be forever unalterably determined to good.

And they shall be freed from all the effects of sin: "God will remove all of their sorrows, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. For the old world and its evils are gone forever!" Revelation 21:4. What kingdom is like unto this? Death makes its way now into a palace, as easily as into a cottage; sorrow fills the heart of one who wears a crown on his head: royal robes are no defense against pain, and crying by reason of pain. But in this kingdom no misery can have place. All reproaches shall be wiped off; and never shall a tear drop any more from their eyes. They shall not complain of desertions again; the Lord will never hide his face from them: but the Sun of Righteousness shining upon them in his meridian brightness, will dispel all clouds, and give them an everlasting day, without the least mixture of darkness. A deluge of wrath, after a fearful thunder-clap from the throne, will sweep away the wicked from before the judgment-seat, into the lake of fire: but they are, in the first place, like Noah, brought into the ark, and out of harm's way.

(2.) White garments has been a token of PURITY. Therefore, "the Lamb's wife is arrayed in fine linen, clean and white," Rev. 19:8. And those who stood before the throne "washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb," chapter 7:14. The saints shall then put on the robes of perfect purity, and shine in spotless holiness, like the sun in his strength, without the least

cloud to intercept his light. Absolute innocence shall then be restored, and every appearance of sin banished far from this kingdom.

The guilt of sin, and the reigning power of it are *now* taken away in the saints; nevertheless, sin dwells in them, Romans 7:20. But *then* it shall be no more in them: the corrupt nature will be quite removed; that root of bitterness will be plucked up, and no vestiges of it left in their souls; their nature shall be altogether pure and sinless. There shall be no darkness in their minds; but the understanding of every saint, when he is come to his kingdom, will be as a globe of pure and unmixed light. There shall not be the least aversion to good, nor the least inclination to evil, in their wills; but they will be brought to a perfect conformity to the will of God; blessed with angelic purity, and fixed therein. Their affections shall not be liable to the least disorder or irregularity; it will cost no trouble to keep them right: they will get such a fixed habit of purity, as they can never lose. They will be so refined from all earthly dross, as never more to savor of anything but of heaven. Were it possible for them to be set again amidst the ensnaring objects of an evil world, they would walk among them without the least defilement; as the sun shines on the dunghill, yet is untainted; and as the angels preserved their purity in the midst of Sodom. Their graces shall then be perfected; and all the imperfection now cleaving to them done away. There will be no more ground for complaints of weakness of grace: none in that kingdom shall complain of an ill heart, or a corrupt nature. "It does not yet appear what we shall be, but when he shall appear, we shall be like him," 1 John 3:2.

(3.) Among the Jews, those who desired to be admitted into the PRIESTLY office, being tried, and found to be of the priest's line, and without blemish, were clothed in white, and enrolled among the priests. This seems to be alluded to, Rev. 3:5, "He who overcomes, the same shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life." So the saints shall not be kings

only, but priests also; for they are a "royal priesthood," 1 Pet. 2:9. They will be priests upon their thrones. They are judicially found descended from the Great High Priest of their profession, begotten of him by his Spirit, of the incorruptible seed of the word, and without blemish: so the trial being over, they are admitted to be priests in the temple above, that they may dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

There is nothing upon earth more *glorious* than a kingdom; nothing more *venerable* than the priesthood; and both meet together in the glorified state of the saints. "The general assembly of the first-born," Heb. 12:23, whose is the priesthood and the double portion, appearing in their white robes of glory, will be a reverend and glorious company. That day will show them to be the people whom the Lord has chosen out of all the tribes of the earth, to be near unto him, and to enter into his temple, even into his holy place. Their priesthood, begun on earth, shall be brought to its perfection, when they shall be employed in offering the sacrifice of praise to God and the Lamb forever and ever. They got not their portion in the earth with the rest of the tribes; but the Lord himself was their portion, and will be their double portion, through the ages of eternity.

(4.) They were accustomed to wear white garments in a time of TRIUMPH; to which also there seems to be an allusion, Rev. 3:5, "He who overcomes, the same shall be clothed in white garments." And what is heaven but an everlasting triumph? None get there but such as fight, and overcome too. Though Canaan was given to the Israelites as an inheritance, they were required to conquer it, before they could be possessors of it. The saints, in this world, are in the field of battle; often in red garments, garments rolled in blood: but the day approaches, in which they shall "stand before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands," Rev. 7:9, having obtained a complete victory over all their enemies. The palm was used as a sign of victory; because that tree, though oppressed with weights, yet still shoots upwards. And

palm trees were carved on the doors of the most holy place, 1 Kings 6:32, which was a special type of heaven; for heaven is the place which the saints are received into as conquerors.

Behold the joy and peace of the saints in their white robes! The joys arising from the view of past dangers, and of riches and honors gained at the very door of death, does most sensibily touch one's heart: and this will be an ingredient in the everlasting happiness of the saints, which could have had no place in the heaven of innocent Adam, and his sinless offspring, supposing him to have stood. Surely the glorified saints will not forget the treatment which they met with in the world; it will be to the glory of God to remember it, and will also heighten their joy.

The Sicilian king, by birth the son of a potter, acted a wise part, in that he would be served at his table with earthen vessels; which could not but put an additional sweetness in his meals, not to be relished by one born heir to the crown. Can food ever be so sweet to any, as to the hungry man? Or can any have such a relish of plenty, as he who has been under pinching straits? **The more difficulties the saints have passed through in their way to heaven, the place will be the sweeter to them when they come to it.** Every happy stroke, struck in the spiritual warfare, will be a jewel in their crown of glory. Each victory obtained against sin, Satan, and the world, will raise their triumphant joy the higher. The remembrance of the cross will sweeten the crown, and the remembrance of their travel through the wilderness, will put an additional verdure on the fields of glory; while they walk through them, looking back on the day when they went mourning without the sun.

And now that they appear triumphing in white robes, it is a sign they have obtained an honorable PEACE; such a peace as their enemies can disturb no more. So everything peculiarly adapted to their militant condition is laid aside. The sword is laid down; and they betake themselves to the pen of a ready writer, to

commemorate the praises of Him by whom they overcame. Public ordinances, preaching, sacraments, shall be honorably laid aside; there is no temple there, Rev. 21:22. On earth these were sweet to them: but the travelers being all arrived at home, the *inns*, appointed for their entertainment by the way, are shut up; the candles are put out when the sun is risen; and the tabernacle used in the wilderness is folded up, when the temple of glory is come in its place.

Many of the saints' duties will then be laid aside, as one gives his staff out of his hand, when he is come to the end of his journey. Praying shall then be turned to praising: and there being no sin to confess, no needs to seek the supply of, confession and petition shall be swallowed up in everlasting thanksgiving. There will be no mourning in heaven. They have sown in tears: the reaping time of joy is come, and, "God shall wipe all tears from their eyes," Rev. 21:4. No need of mortification of sin there; and self-examination is then at an end. They will not need to watch any more; the danger is over. Patience has had its perfect work, and there is no use for it there. Faith is turned into sight, and hope is swallowed up in the ocean of sensible and full enjoyment. All the rebels are subdued, and the saints quietly sit on their throne; and so the forces, needful in the time of the spiritual warfare, are disbanded; and they carry on their triumph in the profoundest peace.

(5.) White garments were worn on FESTIVAL days, in token of JOY. And so shall the saints be clothed in white garments; for they shall keep an everlasting Sabbath to the Lord, Heb. 4:9, "There remains therefore a rest," or keeping of a Sabbath, "to the people of God." The Sabbath, in the esteem of saints, is the queen of days: and they shall have an endless Sabbath and rest in the kingdom of heaven; so shall their garments be always white. They will have an eternal rest, with an uninterrupted joy: for heaven is not a resting place, where men may sleep out an eternity; there they rest not day nor night, but their work is their rest, and continual recreation; and toil and weariness have no place there. They rest there in God, who

is the center of their souls. Here they find the completion, or satisfaction, of all their desires; having the full enjoyment of God, and uninterrupted communion with him. This is the point, unto which, until the soul come, it will always be restless: but that point reached, it rests; for he is at the last end, and the soul can go no farther. It cannot understand, will, nor desire more; but in him it has what is commensurable to its boundless desires. This is the happy end of all the labors of the saints; their toil and sorrows issue in a joyful rest.

The Chaldeans, measuring the natural day, put the day first, and the night last: but the Jews counted the night first, and the day last. Even so the wicked begin with a day of rest and pleasure, but end with a night of everlasting toil and sorrow: but God's people have their gloomy night first, and then comes their day of eternal rest. Which Abraham, in the parable, observed to the rich man in hell, Luke 16:25, "Son, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and you are tormented."

3. If any inquire WHERE the kingdom of the saints lies? it is not in this world; it lies in a better country, "that is, a heavenly one," Heb. 11:16, a country better than the best of this world; namely, the heavenly Canaan, Immanuel's land, where nothing is lacking to complete the happiness of the inhabitants. This is the happy country; blessed with a perpetual spring, and which yields all things for necessity, convenience, and delight. There men shall eat angels' food; they shall be entertained with the hidden manna, Rev. 2:17, without being set to the painful task of gathering it: they will be fed to the full, with the product of the land falling into their mouths, without the least toil to them.

That land enjoys everlasting day, for there is "no night there," Rev. 21:25. Eternal sunshine beautifies this better country, but there is no scorching heat there. No clouds shall be seen there forever: yet it is not a land of drought; the trees of the Lord's planting are set by

the rivers of water, and shall never lack moisture, for they will have an eternal supply of the Spirit, by Jesus Christ, from his Father. This is the only country, from whence our Lord came, and where he is gone again; the country which all the holy patriarchs and prophets had their eye upon while on earth; and which all the saints, who have gone before us, have fought their way to; and unto which the martyrs have joyfully swam through a sea of blood. This earth is the place of the saint's pilgrimage; that is their country, where they find their everlasting rest.

4. The royal city, is that great city, the holy Jerusalem, described at large, Rev. 21:10, to the end of the chapter. It is true, some learned divines place this city in the earth: but the particulars of this description seem to me to favor another world. The saints shall reign in that city, whose wall is of "jasper," verse 18; "and the foundations of the wall garnished with all manner of precious stones," verse 19; and "the street of pure gold," verse 21. So that their feet shall be set on that which the men of this world set their hearts upon. This is the city which God "has prepared for them," Heb. 11:16; "a city that has foundations," verse 10; "a continuing city," chapter 13:14, which shall stand and flourish, when all the cities of the world are laid in ashes; and which shall not be moved, when the foundations of the world are overturned. It is a city that never changes its inhabitants: none of them shall ever be removed out of it; for life and immortality reign there, and no death can enter into it. It is blessed with a perfect and perpetual peace, and can never be in the least disturbed. Nothing from without can annoy it; the gates therefore are not shut at all by day, and there is no night there, Rev. 21:25. There can nothing from within trouble it. No lack of provision there, no scarcity; no discord among the inhabitants. Whatever contentions are among the saints now, no vestige of their former jarrings shall remain there. Love to God, and to one another, shall be perfected; and those of them who stood at the greatest distance here, will joyfully embrace and delight in one another there.

5. The royal palace is Christ's Father's house, in which "are many mansions," John 14:2. There shall the saints dwell forever. This is the house prepared for all the heirs of glory, even those who dwell in the poorest cottage now, or have nowhere to lay their heads. As the Lord calls his saints to a kingdom, he will provide them a house suitable to the dignity he puts upon them. Heaven will be a convenient, spacious, and glorious house—for those whom the King delights to honor. Never was a house purchased at so great a rate as this, being the purchase of the Mediator's blood; and for no less could it be afforded to them: never was there so much to do, to fit the inhabitants for a house. The saints were, by nature, utterly unfit for this house, and human art and industry could not make them fit for it. But the Father gives the designated inhabitants to the Son, to be by him redeemed; the Son pays the price of their redemption, even his own precious blood; justice gives them access to the house; and the Holy Spirit sanctifies them by his grace; that they may be fit to come in there, where no unclean thing can enter. And no wonder, for it is the King's palace they enter into, Psalm 45:15; the house of the kingdom, where the great King keeps his court, where he has set his throne, and shows forth his glory, in a singular manner, beyond what mortals can conceive.

6. Paradise is their palace garden. "This day shall you be with me in paradise," said our Savior to the penitent thief on the cross, Luke 23:43. Heaven is a paradise for pleasure and delight, where there is both wood and water: "A pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb; and on either side of the river, the tree of life, which bears twelve manner of fruits, and yields her fruits every month, Rev. 22:1, 2. How happy might innocent Adam have been in the earthly paradise, where there was nothing lacking for use or delight! Eden was the most pleasant spot of the uncorrupted earth, and paradise the most pleasant spot of Eden: but what is earth in comparison of heaven? The glorified saints are advanced to the heavenly paradise. There they shall not only see, but "eat of the tree of life, which is in the

midst of the paradise of God," Rev. 2:7. They shall behold the Mediator's glory, and be satisfied with his goodness. No flaming sword shall be there, to keep the way of that tree of life; but they shall freely eat of it, and live forever. They shall "drink from Your rivers of delight," Psalm 36:8, the sweetest and purest pleasures which Immanuel's land affords, and shall swim in an ocean of unmixed delight forevermore!

7. They shall have royal treasures, sufficient to support the dignity to which they are advanced. Since the street of the royal city is pure gold, and the twelve gates thereof are twelve pearls: their treasure must be of that which is better than gold or pearl. It is an "eternal weight of glory," 2 Cor. 4:17. O, precious treasure! a treasure not liable to insensible corruption, by moths or rust; a treasure which none can steal from them, Matt. 6:20. Never did any kingdom afford such a precious treasure, nor a treasure of such variety; for "He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son. Revelation 21:7. No treasures on earth are stored with all things: if they were all put together in one, there would be far more valuable things lacking in that one, than found in it. This, then, is the peculiar treasure of the kings who inherit the kingdom of heaven. **They shall lack nothing that may contribute to their full satisfaction.** Now they are rich in hope; but then they will have their riches in hand. Now all things are theirs in respect of right; then all shall be theirs in possession. They may go forever through Immanuel's land, and behold the glory and riches thereof, with the satisfying thought, that all they see is eternally their own. It is a pity those should ever be uneasy under the lack of earthly good things, who may be sure they shall inherit all things at length.

8. Though there is no material temple therein, no serving of God in the use of ordinances, as here on earth; yet, **as for this kingdom, "The Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple of it**," Rev. 21:22. As the temple was the glory of Canaan, so will the celestial temple be the glory of heaven. The saints shall be brought in there as a royal priesthood, to dwell in the house of the Lord

forever; for Jesus Christ will then make every saint "a pillar in the temple of God, and he shall go no more out," Rev. 3:12, as the priests and Levites did, in their courses, go out of the material temple. There the saints shall have the cloud of glory, the divine presence, with most intimate, uninterrupted communion with God: there they shall have Jesus Christ, as the true ark, wherein the fiery law shall be forever hid from their eyes; and the mercy-seat, from which nothing shall be breathed but everlasting peace and good will towards them; the cherubim, the society of holy angels, who shall join with them in eternal admiration of the mystery of Christ; the golden candlestick, with its seven lamps, for "the glory of God" does "enlighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof," Rev. 21:23; the incense altar, in the intercession of Christ, who "ever lives to make intercession for them," Heb. 7:25, eternally exhibiting the manner of his death and suffering, and efficaciously willing forever, that those whom the Father has given him, be with him; and the table of show-bread, in the perpetual feast they shall have together in the enjoyment of God. This leads me more particularly to consider,

9. The INHABITANTS in this kingdom. What would royal power and authority, ensigns of royalty, richest treasures, and all other advantages of a kingdom, avail, without comfortable society? Some crowned heads have had but a wretched life, through the lack of it; their palaces have been unto them as prisons, and their badges of honor, as chains on a prisoner: while, hated of all, they had none they could trust in, or whom they could have comfortable fellowship with. But **the chief part of heaven's happiness lies in the blessed society which the saints shall have there.**

(1.) The society of the SAINTS, among themselves, will be no small part of heaven's happiness. The communion of saints on earth is highly prized by all those who are traveling through the world to Zion; and companions in sin can never have such true pleasure and delight in one another, as sometimes the Lord's people have in praying together, and in conversing about those things which the

world is a stranger to. Here the saints are but few in a company at best: and some of them are so situated, as that they seem to themselves to dwell alone; having no access to such as they would freely embosom themselves to, in spiritual matters, they sigh and say, "Woe is me! for I am as when they have gathered the summer-fruits – there is no cluster to eat – the good man has perished out of the earth," Micah 7:1, 2.

But in the general assembly of the first born in heaven, none of all the saints, who ever were or will be on the earth, shall be missing. They will be all of them together in one place, all possess one kingdom, and all sit down together to the marriage supper of the Lamb. Here on earth, the best of the saints have their sinful imperfections, making their society less comfortable: but there they shall be perfect, without "spot or wrinkle, or any such thing," Eph 5:27. All natural, as well as sinful imperfections, will be done away; they "shall shine as the brightness of the firmament," Dan. 12:3.

There we shall see Adam and Eve in the heavenly paradise freely eating of the tree of life; Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the holy **patriarchs**, no more wandering from land to land, but come to their everlasting rest; all the **prophets** feasting their eyes on the glory of Him, of whose coming they prophesied; the twelve **apostles** of the Lamb, sitting on their twelve thrones; all the holy **martyrs** in their long white robes, with their crowns on their heads; the godly kings advanced to a kingdom which cannot be moved; and those that turn many to righteousness, shining as the stars forever and ever. There we shall see our godly friends, relations, and acquaintances, pillars in the temple of God, to go no more out from us.

And it is most probable, that the saints will know one another in heaven; at least they will know their friends, relatives, and those they were acquainted with on earth, and such as have been most eminent in the Church; yet that knowledge will be purified from all earthly thoughts and affections. This seems to be included in that

perfection of happiness to which the saints shall be advanced. If Adam knew who and what Eve was, at first sight, when the Lord God brought her to him, Gen. 2:23, 24, why should one question but husbands and wives, parents and children, will know each other in glory? If the Thessalonians, converted by Paul's ministry, shall be his "crown of rejoicing in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming," 1 Thess. 2:19, why may we not conclude, that ministers shall know their people, and people their ministers, in heaven? And if the disciples, on the mount of transfiguration, knew Moses and Elijah, whom they had never seen before, Matt. 17:4, we have reason to think that we shall know them too, and such as them, when we come to heaven.

The communion of saints shall be most intimate there; "they shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven," Matt. 8:11. Lazarus was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom, Luke 16:23; which denotes most intimate and familiar fellowship. And though diversity of tongues shall cease, 1 Cor. 13:8, I make no question, but there will be the use of speech in heaven; and that the saints will glorify God in their bodies there, as well as in their spirits, speaking forth his praises with an audible voice. As for the language, we shall understand what it is, when we come there. When Paul was caught up to the third heaven, the seat of the blessed, he heard there unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter, 2 Cor. 12:4. Moses and Elijah, on the mount with Christ, "talked with him," Matt. 17:3, and "spoke of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem," Luke 9:31.

(2.) The saints will have the society of all the HOLY ANGELS there. An innumerable company of angels shall be companions to them in their glorified state. Happy were the shepherds who heard the song of the heavenly multitudes when Christ was born! but thrice happy they, who shall join their voices with them in the choir of saints and angels in heaven, when he shall be glorified in all who shall be about him there! Then shall we be brought acquainted with those blessed spirits, who never sinned. How bright will these morning

stars shine in the holy place! they were ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation; loved them for their Lord and Master's sake; encamped round about them, to preserve them from danger: how joyfully will they welcome them to their everlasting habitations; and rejoice to see them come at length to their kingdom, as the tutor does in the prosperity of his pupils! The saints shall be no more afraid of them, as at times they were accustomed to be: they shall then have put off mortality, and the infirmities of the flesh, and be themselves as the angels of God, fit to enjoy communion and fellowship with them. And both being brought under one head, the Lord Jesus Christ, they shall join in the praises of God and of the Lamb "saying, with a loud voice—Worthy is the Lamb who was slain," etc., Rev. 5:11, 12. Whether the angels shall, as some think, assume ethereal bodies, that they may be seen by the bodily eyes of the saints, and be in a nearer capacity to converse with them, I know not: but, as they have ways of converse among themselves, we have reason to think, that conversation between them and the saints shall not be forever blocked up.

(3.) They shall have society with the LORD HIMSELF in heaven, glorious communion with God in Christ, which is the perfection of happiness. I choose to speak of communion with God and the man Christ, together; because, as we derive our grace from the Lamb so we shall derive our glory from him too, the man Christ being, if I may be allowed the expression, the center of the divine glory in heaven, from whence it is diffused unto all the saints. This seems to be taught us by the Scriptures which express heaven's happiness by "being *with Christ*," Luke 23:43, "This day you shall be *with Me* in paradise." John 17:24, "Father, I will that these also, whom you have given me, be *with Me*," and remarkably to this purpose is what follows, "that they may behold my glory." 1 Thess. 4:17, "So shall we be ever with the Lord," that is, the Lord Christ whom we shall meet in the air.

This also seems to be the import of the Scriptures, wherein God and the Lamb, the slain Savior, are jointly spoken of, in point of the

happiness of the saints in heaven, Rev. 7:17, "For the Lamb, who is in the *center* of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Chapter 21:3, "Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them," as in a tabernacle, so the word signifies, that is, in the flesh of Christ: compare John 1:14; and verse 22, "The Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb are the temple of it." Here lies the chief happiness of the saints in heaven, without which they never could be happy, though lodged in that glorious place, and blessed with the society of angels there. What I will venture to say of it, shall be comprised in three things:

First, The saints in heaven shall have the glorious presence of God, and of the Lamb: God himself shall be with them, Rev. 21:3, and they shall forever be with the Lord. God is everywhere present in respect of his essence: the saints militant have his special gracious presence; but in heaven they have his glorious presence. There they are brought near to the throne of the great King, and stand before him, where he shows his inconceivable glory. There they have the tabernacle of God, on which the cloud of glory rests, the all-glorious human nature of Christ, wherein the fullness of the Godhead dwells; not veiled, as in the days of his humiliation, but shining through that blessed flesh, that all his saints may behold his glory, and making that body more glorious than a thousand suns. So that the city has no need of the sun, nor of the moon, but "the glory of God does enlighten it, and the lamb is the light thereof," properly, "the candle thereof," Rev. 21:23, that is, the Lamb is the luminary or luminous body, which gives light to the city; as the sun and moon now give light to the world, or as a candle enlightens a dark room: and the light proceeding from that glorious luminary of the city, is the glory of God. Sometimes on earth that candle burns very dimly: it was hidden under a bushel in the time of his humiliation; only now and then it darted out some rays of this light, which dazzled the eyes of the spectators. But now it is set on high, in the city of God, where it shines, and shall shine forever, in

perfection of glory. It was sometimes laid aside, as a stone disallowed of the builders: but now it is and forever will be, "the light," or luminary of that city; and that, "like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal," verse 11.

Who can conceive the happiness of the saints in the presence chamber of the great King, where he sits in his regal throne, making his glory eminently to appear in the man Christ? His gracious presence makes a mighty change upon the saints in this world: his glorious presence in heaven, then, must needs raise their graces to perfection, and elevate their capacities. The saints experience that the presence of God, now on earth with them in his grace, can make a little heaven out of a sort of hell. How great, then, must the glory of heaven be, by his presence there in his glory! If a candle, in some sort, beautifies a cottage or prison, how will the shining sun beautify a palace or paradise! The gracious presence of God made a wilderness lightsome—to Moses; the valley of the shadow of death—to David; a fiery furnace—to the three children: what a ravishing beauty, then, shall arise from the Sun of righteousness, shining in his meridian brightness on the street of the city paved with pure gold!

This glorious presence of God in heaven, will put a glory on the saints themselves. The most pleasing garden is devoid of beauty, when the darkness of the night sits down on it; but the shining sun puts a glory on the blackest mountains: so those who are now as bottles in the smoke, when set in the glorious presence of God, will be glorious both in soul and body.

Secondly, The saints in heaven shall have the full enjoyment of God and of the Lamb! This is it, which perfectly satisfies the rational creature; and here is the saints' everlasting rest. This will make up all their wants, and fill the desires of their souls, which, after all here obtained, still cry, "Give, give," not without some anxiety; because, though they do enjoy God, yet they do not enjoy him fully. As to the way and manner of this enjoyment, our Lord tells

us, John 17:3, "This is life eternal, that they might know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent." Now there are two ways, in which a desirable object is known most perfectly and satisfyingly; the one is by sight, the other by experience. Sight satisfies the understanding, and experience satisfies the will. Accordingly, one may say, that the saints enjoy God and Lamb in heaven, [1.] By an intuitive knowledge; [2.] By an experimental knowledge; both of them being perfect. I mean, in respect of the capacity of the creature; for otherwise a creature's perfect knowledge of an infinite Being is impossible.

The saints below enjoy God, in that knowledge they have of him by report, from his holy word, which they believe; they see him likewise darkly in the glass of ordinances, which do, as it were, represent the Bridegroom's picture, or shadow, while he is absent. They have also some experimental knowledge of him; they taste that God is good, and that the Lord is gracious. But the saints above shall not need a good report of the King, they shall see him; therefore, faith ceases: they will behold his own face; therefore, ordinances are no more. They shall drink, and drink abundantly, of that whereof they have tasted; and so hope ceases, for they are at the utmost bounds of their desires.

[1.] The saints in heaven shall enjoy God and the Lamb, by sight, and that in a most perfect manner, 1 Cor. 13:12, "Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known." Here our sight is but mediate, as by a mirror, in which we see not things themselves, but the images of things: but there we shall have an immediate view of God and the Lamb. Here our knowledge is but obscure: there it shall be clear, without the least mixture of darkness. The Lord now converses with his saints through the lattices of ordinances; but then shall they be in the presence chamber with him. There is a veil now on the glorious face, as to us: but when we come to the upper house, that veil, through which some rays of beauty are now darted, will be found

entirely taken off; and then shall glorious excellencies and perfections, not seen in him by mortals, be clearly discovered, for we shall see his face, Rev. 22:4. The phrase seems to be borrowed from the honor put on some in the courts of monarchs, to be attendants on the king's person. We read, Jer. 52:25, of "seven men that were" (Hebrew: "seers of the king's face," that is, as we read it) "near the king's person." O, unspeakable glory! the great king keeps his court in heaven: and the saints shall all be his courtiers ever near the king's person, seeing his face. "The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall serve him; and they shall see his face," Rev. 22:3, 4.

They shall see Jesus Christ, God and man, with their bodily eyes, as he will never lay aside the human nature. They will behold that glorious, blessed body, which is personally united to the divine nature, and exalted above principalities and powers, and every name that is named. There we shall see, with our eyes, that very body which was born of Mary at Bethlehem, and crucified at Jerusalem between two thieves: the blessed head, that was crowned with thorns; the face, that was spit upon; the hands and feet, that were nailed to the cross; all shining with inconceivable glory. The glory of the man Christ will attract the eyes of all the saints, and he will be forever admired by all who believe, 2 Thess. 1:10.

The wise men fell down, and worshiped him, when they saw him "a young child, with Mary his mother in the house." But O, what a ravishing sight will it be to see him in his kingdom, on his throne, at the Father's right hand! "The Word was made flesh," John 1:14, and the glory of God shall shine through that flesh, and the joys of heaven spring out from it, unto the saints, who shall see and enjoy God in Christ. For since the union between Christ and the saints is never dissolved, but they continue his members forever; and the members cannot draw their life, but from their head; seeing that which is independent on the head, as to vital influence, is no member: therefore, Jesus Christ will remain the everlasting bond of

union between God and the saints; from whence their eternal life shall spring, John 17:2, 3, "You have given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as you have given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know you the only true God," etc. Verse 22, 23, "And the glory which you gave me, I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and you in me, that they may be made perfect in one." Therefore the immediate enjoyment of God in heaven, is to be understood in respect of the laying aside of word and sacraments, and such external means, as we enjoy God by in this world; but not as if the saints should then cast off their dependence on their Head for vital influences: nay, "the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and lead them unto living fountains of waters," Rev. 7:17.

Now when we shall behold him, who died for us, that we might live for evermore, whose matchless love made him swim through the Red Sea of God's wrath, to make a path in the midst of it for us, by which we might pass safely to Canaan's land; then we shall see what a glorious one he was, who suffered all this for us; what treatment he had in the upper house; what hallelujahs of angels could not hinder him to bear the groans of a perishing multitude on earth, and to come down for their help; and what glory he laid aside for us. Then shall we be more "able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge," Eph. 3:18, 19. When the saints shall remember, that the waters of wrath which he was plunged into, are the wells of salvation from whence they draw all their joy; that they have received the cup of salvation in exchange for the cup of wrath his Father gave him to drink, which his sinless human nature shivered at; how will their hearts leap within them, burn with seraphic love, like coals of juniper, and the arch of heaven ring with their songs of salvation!

The Jews, celebrating the feast of tabernacles, which was the most joyful of all their feasts, and lasted seven days, went once every

day about the altar, singing hosanna with their myrtle, palm, and willow branches in their hands – the two former, signs of victory; the last, of chastity – in the mean time bending their boughs towards the altar. When the saints are presented as a chaste virgin to Christ, and as conquerors have got their palms in their hands, how joyfully will they compass the altar evermore, and sing their hosannas, or rather their hallelujahs about it, bending their palms towards it, acknowledging themselves to owe all unto the Lamb that was slain, and who redeemed them with his blood! To this agrees what John saw, Rev. 7:9, 10, "A great multitude stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God, which sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb."

They shall see God, Matt. 5:8. They will be happy in seeing the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: not with their bodily eyes, in respect of which God is invisible, 1 Tim. 1:17, but with the eyes of their understanding; being blessed with the most perfect, full, and clear knowledge of God, and divine things, which the creature is capable of. This is called the beatific vision, and is the perfection of understanding, the utmost term thereof. It is but an obscure delineation of the glory of God, that mortals can have on earth; a sight, as it were, of "his back parts," Exod. 33:23. But there they will see his face, Rev. 22:4. They shall see him in the fullness of his glory, and behold him fixedly; whereas it is but a passing view they can have of him here, Exod. 34:6. There is a vast difference between the sight of a king in his common clothing, quickly passing by us; and a fixed leisurely view of him, sitting on his throne in his royal robes, his crown on his head, and his scepter in his hand: such a difference will there be, between the greatest manifestation of God that ever a saint had on earth, and the display of his glory in heaven. There the saints **shall eternally, without interruption, feast their eyes upon him, and be ever viewing his glorious perfections.** And as their bodily eyes shall be strengthened and fitted to behold the glorious majesty of the man Christ; as eagles

gaze on the sun, without being blinded thereby; so their minds shall have such an elevation, as will fit them to see God in his glory: their capacities shall be enlarged, according to the measure in which he shall be pleased to communicate himself unto them, for their complete happiness.

This blissful sight of God, being quite above our present capacities, we must needs be much in the dark about it. But it seems to be something else than the sight of that glory, which we shall see with our bodily eyes, in the saints, and in the man Christ, or any other splendor or refulgence from the Godhead whatever: for no created thing can be our chief good and happiness, nor fully satisfy our souls; and it is plain that these things are somewhat different from God himself. Therefore, I conceive, that the souls of the saints shall see God himself: so the Scriptures teach us, that we shall "see face to face, and know even as we are known," 1 Cor. 13:12; and that "we shall see him as he is," 1 John 3:2.

Yet the saints can never have an adequate conception of God: they cannot comprehend that which is infinite. They may touch the mountain, but cannot grasp it in their arms. They cannot, with one glance of their eye, behold what grows on every side: but the divine perfections will be an unbounded field, in which the glorified shall walk eternally, seeing more and more of God; since they can never come to the end of that which is infinite. They may bring their vessels to this ocean every moment, and fill them with new waters. What a ravishing sight would it be, to see all the perfections, and lovely qualities, that are scattered here and there among the creatures, gathered together into one! But even such a sight would be infinitely below this blissful sight the saints shall have in heaven. For they shall see God, in whom all these perfections shall eminently appear infinitely more, whereof there is no vestige to be found in the creatures. In him shall they see everything desirable, and nothing but what is desirable.

Then shall they be perfectly satisfied as to the love of God towards them, which they are now ready to question on every turn. They will no more find any difficulty to persuade themselves of it, by marks, signs, and testimonies: they will have an intuitive knowledge of it. They shall, with the profoundest reverence be it spoken, look into the heart of God, and there see the love he bore to them from all eternity, and the love and goodness he will bear to them for evermore.

The glorified shall have a most clear and distinct understanding of **divine truths**, for in his light we shall see light, Psalm 36:9. The light of glory will be a complete commentary on the Bible, and untie all the hard and knotty questions in divinity. There is no joy on earth comparable to that which arises from the discovery of truth; no discovery of truth comparable to the discovery of Scripture truth, made by the Spirit of the Lord unto the soul: "I rejoice at your word," says the psalmist, "as one who finds great spoil," Psalm 119:162. Yet, while here, it is but an imperfect discovery. How ravishing then will it be, to see the opening of all the treasure which was hidden in that field!

They shall also be led into the understanding of the **works of God**. The beauty of the works of creation and providence will then be set in due light. Natural knowledge will be brought to perfection by the light of glory. The mysterious **web of providence** will then be cut out, and laid before the eyes of the saints: and it will appear a most beautiful mixture; so as they shall all say together, on the view of it, "He has done all things well."

But, in a special manner, the **work of redemption** shall be the eternal wonder of the saints, and they will admire and praise the glorious plan forever. Then shall they get a full view of its suitableness to the divine perfections, and to the case of sinners; and clearly read the covenant that passed between the Father and the Son, from all eternity, concerning their salvation. They shall forever wonder and praise, and praise and wonder, at the mystery

of wisdom and love, goodness and holiness, mercy and justice, appearing in the glorious scheme. Their souls shall be eternally satisfied with the sight of God himself, of their election by the Father, their redemption by the Son, and application thereof to them by the Holy Spirit.

[2.] The saints in heaven shall enjoy God in Christ by experimental knowledge, which is, when the object itself is given and possessed. This is the participation of the divine goodness in full measure; which is the perfection of the will, and utmost term thereof. "The Lamb shall lead them unto living fountains of waters," Rev. 7:17. These are no other but God himself, "the fountain of living waters," who will fully and freely communicate himself unto them. **He will pour out his goodness eternally into their souls**: then shall they have a most lively sensation, in the innermost part of their souls, of all that goodness they heard of, and believe to be in him, and of what they shall see in him by the light of glory. This will be an everlasting practical exposition of that word, which men and angels cannot sufficiently unfold, namely, "God himself shall – be their God," Rev. 21:3. God will communicate himself unto them fully: they will no more be set to taste of the *streams* of divine goodness in ordinances, as they were accustomed, but shall drink at the fountain-head. They will be no more entertained with sips and drops, but filled with all the fullness of God. And this will be the entertainment of every saint: for, though in created things, what is given to one is withheld from another; yet this infinite good can fully communicate itself to all, and fill all.

Those who are heirs of God, the great heritage, shall then enter into a full possession of their inheritance: and the Lord will open his treasures of goodness unto them, that their enjoyment may be full. They shall not be stinted to any measure: but the enjoyment shall go as far as their enlarged capacities can reach. As a narrow vessel cannot contain the ocean, so neither can the finite creature comprehend the infinite good: but no measure shall be set to the enjoyment, but what arises from the capacity of the creature. So

that, although there are degrees of glory, yet all shall be filled, and have what they can hold; though some will be able to hold more than others. There will be no lack to any of them; all **shall be fully satisfied, and perfectly blessed in the full enjoyment of divine goodness**, according to their enlarged capacities: as when bottles of different sizes are filled, some contain more, others less; yet all of them have what they can contain.

The glorified shall have all in God, for the satisfaction of all their desires. No created thing can afford satisfaction to all our desires: clothes may warm us, but they cannot feed us; the light is comfortable, but cannot nourish us. But in God we shall have all our desires, and we shall desire nothing without him. They shall be the happy ones—who desire nothing but what is truly desirable; they shall have all they desire. God will be all in all to the saints: he will be their life, health, riches, honor, peace, and all good things. He will communicate himself freely to them: the door of access to him shall never be shut again for one moment. They may, when they will, take of the fruits of the tree of life, for they will find it on each side of the river, Rev. 22:2. There will be no veil between God and them, to be drawn aside; but his fullness shall never stand open to them. No door to knock at in heaven; no asking to go before receiving; the Lord will allow his people an unrestrained familiarity with himself there.

Now they are in part made "partakers of the divine nature!" but then they shall perfectly partake of it; that is to say, God will communicate to them his own image, make all his goodness not only pass before them, but pass into them, and stamp the image of all his own perfections upon them, so far as the creature is capable of receiving the same: from whence shall result a perfect likeness to him in all things in or about them; which completes the happiness of the creature. This is what the psalmist seems to have had in view, Psalm 17:15, "I shall be satisfied, when I awake with your likeness;" the perfection of God's image following upon the beatific vision. And so says John, 1 John 3:2, "We shall be like him; for we

shall see him as he is." Hence there shall be a most close and intimate union between God and the saints: God shall be in them, and they in God, in a glorious and most perfect union; for then shall their dwelling in love be made perfect. "God is love; and he who dwells in love, dwells in God, and God in him," 1 John 4:16. How will the saints be united to God and he to them, when he shall see nothing in them but his own image; when their love shall arrive at its perfection, no nature but the divine nature being left in them; and all imperfection being swallowed up in their glorious transformation into the likeness of God! Their love to the Lord, being purified from the dross of self-love, shall be most pure; so as they shall love nothing but God, and in God. It shall no more be faint and languishing, but burn like coals of juniper. It will be a light without darkness, a flaming fire without smoke. As the live coal, when all the moisture is gone out of it, is all fire, so will the saints be all love, when they come to the full enjoyment of God in heaven, by intuitive and experimental knowledge of him, by sight and full participation of the divine goodness.

Thirdly, From this glorious presence and enjoyment shall arise an unspeakable joy, which the saints shall be filled with. "In your presence is fullness of joy," Psalm 16:11. The saints sometimes enjoy God in the world; but when their eyes are darkened, so as not to perceive it, they have not the comfort of the enjoyment: but then, all mistakes being removed, they shall not only enjoy God, but rest in the enjoyment with inexpressible delight and satisfaction. The desire of earthly things causes torment, and the enjoyment of them often ends in loathing. But though the glorified saints shall ever desire more and more of God, their desires shall not be mixed with the least anxiety, since the fullness of the Godhead stands always open to them; therefore, they shall hunger no more, they shall not have the least uneasiness in their eternal appetite after the hidden manna. Neither shall continued enjoyment cause loathing; they shall never think they have too much: therefore, it is added, "neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat," Rev. 7:16. The

enjoyment of God and the Lamb will be ever fresh and new to them, through the ages of eternity: for they shall drink of living fountains of waters, where new waters are continually springing up in abundance, verse 17. They shall eat of the tree of life, which, for variety, affords twelve manner of fruits, and these always new and fresh, for it yields every month, Rev. 22:2. Their joy shall be pure and unmixed, without any dregs of sorrow; not slight and momentary, but solid and everlasting, without interruption.

They will enter into joy, Matt. 25:21, "Enter into the joy of your Lord." The expression is somewhat unusual, and brings to my recollection this word of our suffering Redeemer, Mark 14:34, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death." His soul was beset with sorrows, as the word there used will bear; the floods of sorrow went round about him, encompassing him on every hand: wherever he turned his eyes, sorrow was before him; it flowed in upon him from heaven, earth, and hell—all at once. Thus was he entered into sorrow, and therefore says, Psalm 69:2, "I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me." Now, why all this, but that his own people might enter into joy? Joy sometimes enters into us now, but has much to do to get access, while we are encompassed with sorrows: but then joy shall not only enter into us, but we shall enter into it, and swim forever in an ocean of joy, where we shall see nothing but joy wherever we turn our eyes. The presence and enjoyment of God and the Lamb will satisfy us with pleasures for evermore: and the glory of our souls and bodies, arising from thence, will afford us everlasting delight. The spirit of heaviness, how closely soever it cleaves to any of the saints now, shall drop off then: their weeping shall be turned into songs of joy, and bottles of tears shall issue in rivers of pleasure. Happy they, who now sow in tears, which shall spring up in joy in heaven, and will encircle their heads with a weight of glory.

Thus far of the society in this kingdom of the saints.

10. In the last place, the kingdom shall endure FOREVER. As everything in it is eternal, so the saints shall have undoubted certainty, and full assurance, of the eternal duration of the same. This is a necessary ingredient in perfect happiness; for the least *uncertainty as to the continuance of any good*, is not without some fear, anxiety, and torment; and therefore is utterly inconsistent with perfect happiness. But the glorified shall never have fear, nor cause of fear, of any loss: they shall be "ever with the Lord," 1 Thess. 4:17. They shall all attain the full persuasion, that nothing shall be able to separate them from the love of God, nor from the full enjoyment of him forever. The inheritance "reserved in heaven is **incorruptible**;" it has no principle of corruption in itself, to make it liable to decay, but endures for evermore. It is **undefiled**; nothing from without can mar its beauty, nor is there anything in itself to offend those who enjoy it. Therefore, it **fades not away**, but ever remains in its native luster, and primitive beauty, 1 Pet. 1:4. Hitherto of the nature of the kingdom of heaven.

II. We now proceed to speak of the admission of the saints into this their new kingdom. I shall briefly touch upon two things:

1. The formal admission, in the call upon them from the Judge to come into their kingdom.

2. The quality in which they are admitted and introduced to it.

1. Their admission, the text shows to be, by a voice from the throne: the King calling to them, from the throne, before angels and men, to come to their kingdom. *Come* and *Go* are but short words: but they will be such as will afford matter of thought to all mankind, through the ages of eternity; since everlasting happiness turns upon one, and everlasting misery on the other.

Now, our Lord bids the worst of sinners, who hear the gospel, Come; but the most part will not come unto him. Some few, whose hearts are touched by his Spirit, embrace the call, and their souls

within them say, "Behold, we come unto you." They give themselves to the Lord, forsake the world and their lusts for him: they bear his yoke, and cast it not off; no, not in the heat of the day, when the weight of it, perhaps, makes them sweat the blood out of their bodies. *Behold the fools!* says the carnal world. But stay a little, O foolish world! From the same mouth whence they had the call they are now following, another call shall come, that will make amends for all: "Come you who are blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom."

The saints shall find an inexpressible sweetness in this call, *Come*.

(1.) Hereby Jesus Christ shows his desire of their society in the upper house, that they may be ever with him there. Thus he will open his heart unto them, as sometimes he did to his Father concerning them, saying, "Father, I will they be with me, where I am," John 17:24. Now, the travail of his soul stands before the throne; not only the souls, but the bodies, he has redeemed; and they must come, for he must be completely satisfied.

(2.) Hereby they are solemnly invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb. They were invited to the lower table by the voice of the servants, and the sacred workings of the Spirit within them; and they came, and did partake of the feast of divine communications in the lower house: but Jesus Christ in person shall invite them, before all the world, to the highest table.

(3.) By this he admits them into the mansions of glory. The keys of heaven hang at the belt of our royal Mediator. "All power in heaven" is given to him, Matt. 28:18; and none get in there but whom he admits. When they were living on earth with the rest of the world, he opened the doors of their hearts, entered into them, and shut them again; so as sin could never re-enter, to *reign* there as formerly: now he opens heaven's doors to them, draws his doves into the ark, and shuts them in; so as the law, death, and hell, can never get them out again. The saints in this life were still laboring to

enter into that rest; but Satan was always pulling them back, their corruptions always drawing them down; insomuch that they have sometimes been left to hang by a *hair of promise*, if I may be allowed the expression, not without fear of falling into the lake of fire: but now Christ gives the word for their admission, they are brought in, and put beyond all hazard.

(4.) He speaks to them as the person introducing them into the kingdom, into the presence-chamber of the great King, and unto the throne. Jesus Christ is the great Secretary of heaven, whose office it is to bring the saints into the *gracious* presence of God now, and to whom alone it belongs to bring them into the *glorious* presence of God in heaven. Truly heaven would be a strange place to them, if Jesus were not there; but the Son will introduce his brethren into his Father's kingdom; they shall go in with him to the marriage, Matt. 25:10.

2. Let us consider in what quality they are introduced by him.

(1.) He brings them in as the blessed of his Father; so runs the call from the throne, "Come, you who are blessed of my Father," etc. It is Christ's Father's house they are to come into: therefore, he puts them in mind that they are blessed of the Father; dear to the Father, as well as to himself. This it is that makes heaven home to them, namely, that it is Christ's Father's house, where they may be assured of welcome, being married to the Son, and being his Father's choice for that very end. He brings them in for his Father's sake, as well as for his own: they are the blessed of his Father; who, as he is the fountain of the Deity, is also the fountain of all blessings conferred on the children of men.

They are those whom God loved from eternity. They were blessed in the eternal purpose of God, being elected to everlasting life. At the opening of the book of life, their names were found written therein; so that by bringing them to the kingdom, he does but bring them to what the Father, from all eternity, designed for them: being saved by the Son, they are saved according to the Father's

purpose, 2 Tim. 1:9. They are those to whom the Father has spoken well. He spoke well to them in his word, which must now receive its full accomplishment. They had his promise of the kingdom, lived and died in the faith of it; and now they come to receive the thing promised. Unto them he has done well.

A gift is often in Scripture called a blessing; and God's blessing is ever real, like Isaac's blessing, by which Jacob became his heir: they were all by grace justified, sanctified, and enabled to persevere to the end; now they are raised up in glory, and being tried, stand *accepted* in the judgment. What remains, then, but that God should crown his own work of grace in them, in giving them their kingdom, in the full enjoyment of himself forever?

Finally, they are those whom God has consecrated; the which also is a Scripture term of blessing, 1 Cor. 10:16. God set them apart for himself, to be kings and priests unto him; and the Mediator introduces them, as such, to their kingdom and priesthood.

(2.) Christ introduces them, as heirs of the kingdom, to the actual possession of it. "Come, you who are blessed—inherit the kingdom." They are the children of God by regeneration and adoption; "And if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ," Romans 8:17. Now is the general assembly of the first-born before the throne: their minority is overpast; and the time appointed of the Father for their receiving their inheritance, is come. The Mediator purchased the inheritance for them with his own blood; their rights and evidences were drawn long ago, and registered in the Bible; nay, they have investment of their inheritance in the person of Christ, as their proxy, when he ascended into heaven, "Where the forerunner is for us entered," Heb. 6:20. Nothing remains, but that they enter into personal possession thereof, which, begun at death, is perfected at the last day; when the saints in their bodies, as well as their souls, go into their kingdom.

(3.) They are introduced to it as those it was prepared for, from the foundation of the world. The kingdom was prepared for them in the eternal purpose of God, before they, or any of them, had a being; which shows it to be a gift of free grace to them. It was from eternity, the divine purpose, that there should be such a kingdom for the elect; and that all impediments which might oppose their access to it, should be removed out of the way: and also, by the same eternal decree, everyone's place in it was determined and set apart, to be reserved for him, that each of the children coming home at length into their Father's house, might find his own place awaiting him, and ready for him; as at Saul's table, David's place was empty, when he was not there to occupy it himself, 1 Sam. 20:25. And now the appointed time is come, they are brought in, to take their several places in glory.

I shall conclude my discourse on this subject with a word of **APPLICATION**:

1. To all who *claim* a right to this kingdom.

2. To those who *have indeed* a right to it.

3. To those who have *no* right thereto.

1. To all who CLAIM a right to this kingdom. Since it is evident there is no promiscuous admission into the kingdom of heaven, and none do obtain it but those whose claim to it is solemnly tried by the great Judge, and, after trial, supported as good and valid; it is necessary that all of us impartially try and examine, whether, according to the laws of the kingdom, contained in the Holy Scriptures, we can verify and make good our claim to this kingdom. The hopes of heaven, which most men have, are built on such sandy foundations, as can never abide the trial; having no ground whatever but in their own deluded imagination: such hopes will leave those who entertain them, miserably disappointed at last. Therefore, it is not only our duty, but our interest, to put the matter

to a fair trial in time. If we find we have no right to heaven, we are yet in the way; and what we have not, we may obtain: but if we find we have a right to it, we shall then have the comfort of a happy prospect into eternity; which is the greatest comfort one is capable of in the world.

If you inquire, **how you may know whether you have a right to heaven or not**, I answer, You may know that by the state you are now in. If you are yet in your natural state, you are children of wrath, and not children of this kingdom; for that state, to those who live and die in it, issues in eternal misery. If you be brought into the state of grace, you have a just claim to the state of glory; for *grace will certainly issue in glory* at length. This kingdom is an inheritance, which none but the children of God can justly claim. Now, we become the children of God by regeneration, and union with Christ his Son; "And if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ," Rom. 8:17. These, then, are the great points upon which our evidences for the state of glory depend. Therefore, I refer you to what is said on the state of grace, for satisfying you as to your right to glory.

If you are heirs of glory, "the kingdom of God is within you," by virtue of your regeneration and union with Christ.

(1.) The kingdom of heaven has the throne in your heart, if you have a right to that kingdom: Christ is in you, and God is in you; and having chosen him for your portion, your soul has taken up its everlasting rest in him, and gets no true rest but in him; as the dove, until she came into the ark. To him the soul habitually inclines, by virtue of the new nature, the divine nature, which the heirs of glory are partakers of, Psalm 73:25, "Whom have I in heaven but you? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides you."

(2.) The laws of heaven are in your heart, if you are an heir of heaven, Heb. 8:10, "I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts." Your mind is enlightened in the knowledge of

the laws of the kingdom, by the Spirit of the Lord, the instructor of all the heirs of glory; for whoever may lack instruction, surely an heir to a crown shall not lack it. "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God," John 6:45. Therefore, though father and mother leave them early, or are in no concern about their Christian education, and they be soon put to work for their daily bread, yet they shall not lack teaching.

Your heart is changed, and you bear God's image, which consists in "righteousness and true holiness," Eph. 4:24. Your soul is reconciled to the whole law of God, and at war with all known sin. *In vain do they pretend to the holy kingdom, who are not holy in heart and life*; for "without holiness no man shall see the Lord," Heb. 12:14. If heaven is a rest, it is for spiritual laborers, not for loiterers. If it is an eternal triumph, they are not in the way to it who avoid the spiritual warfare, and are in no care to subdue corruption, resist temptation, and to cut their way to it through the opposition made by the devil, the world, and the flesh.

(3.) The treasure in heaven is the chief in your esteem and desire; for it is your treasure, and "where your treasure is, there will your heart be also," Matt. 6:21. If it is not the things that are seen, but the things that are not seen, which your heart is in the greatest care and concern to obtain; if you are driving a trade with heaven, and your chief business lies there; it is a sign that your treasure is there, for your heart is there. But if you are of those who wonder why so much ado is made about heaven and eternal life, as if less might serve the turn, you are like to have nothing to do with it at all. Carnal men value themselves most on their treasures upon earth; with them, the things that are not seen are weighed down by the things that are seen, and no losses so much affect them as earthly losses: but the heirs of the crown of glory value themselves most on their treasures in heaven, and will not put their private estate in the balance with their eternal kingdom; nor will the loss of the former go so near their hearts, as the thoughts of the loss of the latter. Where these first-fruits of heaven are to be found, the eternal

weight of glory will surely follow after; while the lack of them must be admitted according to the word, to be an incontestable evidence of an heir of wrath.

2. Let the heirs of the kingdom behave themselves suitably to their character and dignity. Live as having the faith and hope of this glorious kingdom: let your heart be in heaven, Phil. 3:20. Let your souls delight in communion with God while you are on earth, since you look for your happiness in communion with him in heaven. Let your speech and actions savor of heaven; and in your manner of life, look like the country to which you are going: that it may be said of you, as of Gideon's brethren, Judges 8:18, "Each one resembled the children of a king." Maintain a holy contempt of the world, and of the things of the world. Although others, whose earthly things are their best things, set their hearts upon them, yet it befits you to set your feet on them, since your best things are above. This world is but the country through which lies your road to Immanuel's land. Therefore, pass through it as pilgrims and strangers; and do not immerse yourself in the encumbrances of it, so as to retard you in your journey. It is unworthy of one born to a palace, to set his heart on a poor cottage, to dwell there. It is unworthy of one running for a prize of gold, to depart from his way to gather pebbles and sticks. How much more is it unworthy of an heir of the kingdom of heaven, to be groveling among the baubles of this world—when he should be going on to receive his crown.

The prize set before you challenges your utmost zeal, activity, and diligence; and holy courage, resolution, and magnanimity, befit those who are to inherit the crown. You cannot come to it without fighting your way to it, through difficulties from without and from within: but the kingdom before you is sufficient to balance them all, though you should be called to resist even unto blood. Prefer Christ's cross before the world's crown, and want in the way of duty, before ease and wealth in the way of sin: "Choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season," Heb. 11:25. In a common inn, strangers perhaps fare

better than the children; but here lies the difference: the children are to pay nothing for what they receive; but the strangers get their bill, and must pay completely for all they have had. Did we consider the after-reckoning of the wicked for all the smiles of common providence they meet with in the world, we would not grudge them their good things here, nor take it amiss that God keeps our best things last. **Heaven will make up all the saints' losses, and there all tears will be wiped away from their eyes.**

It is worth observing, that there is such a variety of Scripture notions of heaven's happiness, as may suit every afflicted case of the saints. Are they oppressed? The day comes in which they shall have the dominion. Is their honor laid in the dust? A throne to sit upon, a crown on their head, and a scepter in their hand, will raise it up again. Are they reduced to poverty? Heaven is a treasure. If they be forced to leave their own homes, yet Christ's Father's house is ready for them. Are they driven to the wilderness? There is a city prepared for them. Are they banished from their native country? They shall inherit a better country. If they are deprived of public ordinances, the Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple there, where they are going; a temple, the doors of which none can shut. If their life is full of bitterness, heaven is a paradise for pleasure. If they groan under the remains of spiritual bondage, there is a glorious liberty abiding them. Do their defiled garments make them ashamed? The day comes, in which their robes shall be white, pure, and spotless. The battle against flesh and blood, principalities and powers, is indeed sore: but a glorious triumph awaits them. If the toil and labors of the Christian life be great, there is an everlasting rest for them in heaven. Are they judged unworthy of the society of angels in heaven? Do they complain of frequent interruptions of their communion with God? There they shall go no more out, but shall see his face for evermore. If they are in darkness here, eternal light is there. If they grapple with death, there they shall have everlasting life. And, to sum up all in one word, "He who overcomes shall inherit all things," Rev. 21:7. He

shall have peace and plenty, profit and pleasure, everything desirable; full satisfaction to his most enlarged desires. Let the expectants of heaven, then, lift up their heads with joy; let them gird up their loins, and so run that they may obtain; trampling on everything that may hinder them in their way to the kingdom. Let them never account any duty too hard, nor any cross too heavy, nor any pains too great, so that they may attain the crown of glory.

3. Let those who have no right to the kingdom of heaven, be stirred up to seek it with all diligence. Now is the time, wherein the children of wrath may become heirs of glory: when the way to everlasting happiness is opened, it is no time to sit still and loiter. Raise up your hearts towards the glory that is to be revealed; and be not always in search of rest in this perishing earth.

What can all your worldly enjoyments avail you, while you have no solid ground to expect heaven after this life is gone? The riches and honors, profits and pleasures, which must be buried with us, and cannot accompany us into another world—are but a wretched portion, and will leave men comfortless at length. Ah! why are men so eager in their lifetime to receive their good things? Why are they not rather careful to secure a saving interest in the kingdom of heaven, which would never be taken from them, but afford them a portion to make them happy through the ages of eternity? If you desire **honor**, there you may have the highest honor, which will last when the world's honors are laid in the dust! If you desire **riches**, heaven will yield you a treasure; and there are pleasures for evermore. O! be not despisers of the pleasant land, neither judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life; close with Christ, as he is offered to you in the gospel, and you shall inherit all things. Walk in the way of holiness, and it will lead you to the kingdom. Fight against sin and Satan, and you shall receive the crown. Forsake the world, and the doors of heaven will be opened to receive you!

HELL

"Then He shall say unto those on the left hand--**Depart from me, you cursed ones, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels!**" Matthew 25:41

INTRODUCTION

Were there no other place of eternal lodging but heaven, I should here have closed my discourse of man's eternal state; but as in the other world there is a prison for the wicked, as well as a palace for saints, we must also inquire into that state of everlasting misery; which the worst of men may well bear with, without crying– 'Are you come to torment us before the time?' since there is yet access to flee from the wrath to come; and all that can be said of it comes short of what the dammed will feel; for 'who knows the power of God's anger?'

The last thing which our Lord did, before He left the earth, was, 'He lifted up his hands, and blessed his disciples' (Luke, 24:50,51). But the last thing He will do, before He leaves the throne, is to curse and condemn His enemies; as we learn from the text which contains the dreadful sentence wherein the everlasting misery of the wicked is declared. In which, three things may be taken notice of–

1. The 'quality' of the condemned– 'you cursed.' The Judge finds the 'curse of the law' upon them as transgressors, and sends them away with it, from His presence, into hell, there to be fully executed upon them.

2. The 'punishment' which they are sentenced to, and to which they were always bound over by virtue of the curse. And it is twofold– the punishment of 'loss', in separation from God and Christ– 'Depart from Me;' And the punishment of 'sense'– in most poignant and extreme torments– Depart from Me 'into fire.'

3. The 'aggravations' of their torments–
a. They are ready for them, they are not to expect a moment's respite. The fire is prepared and ready to catch hold of those who are thrown into it.

b. They will have the society of devils in their torments, being shut up with them in hell. They must depart into the same fire, prepared for Beelzebub, the prince of devils, and his angels; namely, other reprobate angels who fell with him, and became devils. It is said to be prepared for them; because the demons sinned and were condemned to hell before man sinned.

This speaks further terror to the damned, that they must go into the same torments, and place of torment, with the devil and his angels. They hearkened to his temptations, and they must partake in his torments– his works they would do, and they must receive the wages, which is death.

In this life they joined with devils, in malice against God and Christ, and the way of holiness. And in eternity, they must lodge with them.

Thus all the goats shall be shut up together– for that name is common to devils and wicked men, in Scripture (Lev 17:7), where the word rendered devils properly signifies hairy ones, or goats, in the shape of which creatures, devils delighted much to appear to their worshipers.

c. The last aggravation of their torment is the eternal duration thereof; they must depart into 'everlasting' fire. This is what puts the top-stone upon their misery, namely, that it shall never have an end.

DOCTRINE– **THE WICKED SHALL BE SHUT UP UNDER THE CURSE OF GOD, IN EVERLASTING MISERY, WITH THE DEVILS IN HELL!**

After having proved that there shall be a resurrection of the body and a general judgment, I think it is not needful to insist on proving

the truth of future punishment. The same conscience there is in men of a future judgment, bears witness also of the truth of future punishment. (And that the punishment of the damned shall not be annihilation, or a reducing them to nothing, will be clear in the progress of our discourse.) In treating of this awful subject I shall inquire into these four things–

I. The **curse** under which the damned shall be shut up.
II. Their **misery** under that curse.
III. Their **society** with devils in this miserable state.
IV. The **eternity** of the whole.

I. THE "CURSE" UNDER WHICH THE DAMMED SHALL BE SHUT UP IN HELL–

It is the terrible sentence of the law by which they are bound over to the wrath of God, as transgressors. This curse does not first come upon them when standing before the tribunal to receive their sentence; but they were born under it, they led their lives under it in this world, they died under it, and rose with it out of their graves. And the Judge finding the curse upon them, sends them away with it into the pit, where it shall lie on them through all the ages of eternity.

By nature all men are under the curse. But it is removed from the elect by virtue of their union with Christ. It abides on the rest of sinful mankind, and by it they are devoted to destruction, and separated to evil.

Thus shall the damned forever be persons devoted to destruction! separate and set apart from the rest of mankind, unto evil, as vessels of wrath! set up as marks for the arrows of divine wrath! and made the common receptacle and shore of eternal vengeance!

This curse has its first-fruits on earth, which are a pledge of the whole lump that is to follow. Hence it is, that temporal and eternal miseries on the enemies of God, are sometimes included under one and the same expression in the threatening. What is that judicial blindness to which many are given up, 'whom the god of this

world has blinded' (2 Cor 4:4), but the first fruits of hell and of the curse? Their sun is going down at noon-day, their darkness increasing, as if it would not stop until it issue in utter darkness.

Many a lash in the dark, does conscience give the wicked, which the world does not hear of– and what is that but the never-dying worm already begun to gnaw them? And there is not one of these but they may call it Joseph, for 'the Lord shall add another'; or rather Gad, for 'a troop comes.'

These drops of wrath are terrible forebodings of the full shower which is to follow. Sometimes they are given up to their vile affections, that they have no more command over them (Rom 1:26). So their lusts grow up more and more towards perfection, if I may so speak.

As in heaven grace comes to its perfection, so in hell sin arrives at its highest pitch; and as sin is thus advancing upon the man, he is the nearer and likelier to hell.

There are three things that have a fearful aspect here–
1. When everything that might do good to men's souls, is blasted to them; so that their blessings are cursed– sermons, prayers, admonitions, and reproofs, which are powerful towards others, are quite ineffectual to them.

2. When men go on in sinning still, in the face of plain rebukes from the Lord, in ordinances and providences. God meets them with rods in the way of their sin, as it were striking them back; yet they rush forward. What can be more like hell, where the Lord is always smiting and the damned always sinning against Him?

3. When everything in one's lot is turned into fuel for one's lusts. Thus, adversity and prosperity, poverty and wealth, the lack of ordinances and the enjoyment of them, do all but nourish the corruptions of many. Their vicious stomachs corrupt whatever they receive, and all does but increase noxious humors.

But the full harvest follows, in that misery which they shall forever lie under in hell; that wrath which, by virtue of the curse, shall come upon them to the uttermost– which is the curse fully executed. This black cloud opens upon them, and the terrible thunderbolt strikes them, by that dreadful voice from the throne, 'Depart from me, you cursed', which will give the whole wicked world a dismal view of what is in the bosom of the curse.

1. It is a voice of extreme indignation and wrath, a furious rebuke from the Lion of the tribe of Judah! His looks will be most terrible to them; His eyes will cast flames of fire on them; and His words will pierce their hearts, like envenomed arrows! When He will thus speak them out of His presence for ever, and by His word chase them away from before the throne, they will see how keenly wrath burns in His heart, against them for their sins!

2. It is a voice of extreme disdain and contempt from the Lord. Time was when they were pitied, admonished to pity themselves, and to be the Lord's; yet they despised Him, they would have none of Him– but now they shall be buried out of His sight, under everlasting contempt!

3. It is a voice of extreme hatred. Hereby the Lord shuts them out of His affections of love and mercy. 'Depart, you cursed.' I cannot endure to look at you; there is not one purpose of good to you in My heart; nor shall you ever hear one word more of hope from Me.

4. It is a voice of eternal rejection from the Lord. He commands them to be gone and so casts them off forever. Thus the doors of heaven are shut against them; the gulf is fixed between them and it, and they are driven to the pit.

Now, were they to cry with all possible earnestness– 'Lord, Lord, open to us;' they will hear nothing but– 'Depart, depart you cursed ones.' Thus shall the dammed be shut up under the curse.

Application– Let all those who being yet in their natural state, are under the curse, consider this, and flee to Jesus Christ in time, that

they may be delivered from it. How can you sleep in that state, being under the curse!

Jesus Christ is 'now' saying unto you– 'Come you cursed, I will take the curse from off you, and give you the blessing.' The waters of the sanctuary are now running, to heal the cursed ground; take heed to improve them for that end to your own souls, and fear it as hell to get no spiritual advantage thereby.

Remember that 'the miry places,' which are neither sea nor dry land, are a fit emblem of hypocrites; 'and the marshes,' that neither breed fish, nor bear trees, but the waters of the sanctuary leave them, as they find them, in their barrenness, 'shall not be healed,' seeing they spurn the only remedy. 'They shall be given to salt,' – left under eternal barrenness, set up for the monuments of the wrath of God, and concluded forever under the curse! (Ezek 47:11).

Let all CURSERS consider this, whose mouths are filled with cursing themselves and others. He who 'clothes himself with cursing,' shall find the curse 'come into his affections like water, and oil into his bones' (Ps.109:18), if repentance prevent it not. He shall get all his imprecations against himself fully answered, in the day wherein he stands before the tribunal of God– and shall find the killing weight of the curse of God, which he now makes light of.

II. THE MISERY OF THE DAMNED, under that curse–
It is a misery which the tongues of men and angels cannot sufficiently express. God always acts like Himself– as no favors can be compared to His, so also His wrath and terrors are without a parallel.

As the saints in heaven are advanced to the highest pitch of happiness, so the damned in hell arrive at the height of misery.

Two things here I shall soberly inquire into– the punishment of 'loss', and the punishment of 'sense', in hell. But since these also are such things as eye has not seen, nor ear heard, we must, as

geographers do, leave a large void for the unknown land, which that day will discover.

A. THE PUNISHMENT OF 'LOSS' WHICH THE DAMNED SHALL UNDERGO IS SEPARATION FROM THE LORD. 'Depart from me, you cursed.' This will be a stone upon their grave's mouth, as 'the talent of lead' (Zech 5:7,8), that will hold them down forever.

They shall be eternally separated from God and Christ. Christ is the way to the Father– but the way, as for them, shall be everlastingly blocked up. The bridge shall be drawn, and the great gulf fixed; so shall they be shut up in a state of eternal separation from God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

They will be 'locally' separated from the man Christ and shall never come into the seat of the blessed, where He appears in His glory; but they will be cast out into outer darkness (Mt 22:13).

They cannot indeed be locally separated from God, they cannot be in a place where He is not; since He is, and will be present everywhere– 'If I make my bed in hell,' says the psalmist, 'behold you are there' (Psalm 139:8). But they shall be miserable beyond expression, in a 'relative' separation from God. Though He will be present in the very center of their souls, (if I may so express it), while they are wrapped up in fiery flames, in utter darkness– it shall only be to feed them with the vinegar of His wrath, and to punish them with the emanations of His revenging justice.

They shall never more taste of His goodness and bounty, nor have the least glimpse of hope from Him. They will see His heart to be absolutely alienated from them, and that it cannot be favorable towards them; that they are the party against whom the Lord will have indignation forever. They shall be deprived of the glorious presence and enjoyment of God– they shall have no part in the beatific vision; nor see anything in God towards them but one wave of wrath rolling after another! This will bring upon them overwhelming floods of sorrow for evermore.

They shall never taste of the rivers of pleasures which the saints in heaven enjoy; but shall have an everlasting winter and a perpetual night, because the Sun of Righteousness has departed from them and so they are left in utter darkness. So great as heaven's happiness is, so great will their loss be– for they can have none of it forever.

1. This separation will be AN **INVOLUNTARY** SEPARATION. 'Now' they depart from Him. They will not come to Him, though they are called and entreated to come.

But 'then' they shall be driven away from Him, when they would gladly abide with Him. Although the question 'What is your beloved more than another beloved?' is frequent now among the despisers of the Gospel, there will be no such question among all the damned; for then they will see that man's happiness is only to be found in the enjoyment of God, and that the loss of Him is a loss that can never be balanced.

2. IT WILL BE A TOTAL AND **UTTER** SEPARATION. Though the wicked are, in this life, separated from God, yet there is a kind of interchange between them– He gives them many good gifts, and they give Him, at least, some good words; so that the peace is not altogether hopeless.

But 'then' there shall be a total separation, the damned being cast into utter darkness, where there will not be the least gleam of light or favor from the Lord; which will put an end to all their fair words to Him.

3. IT WILL BE A **FINAL** SEPARATION. They will part with Him, never more to meet, being shut up under everlasting horror and despair. The match between Jesus Christ and unbelievers, which has so often been carried forward, and put back again, shall then be broken up forever; and never shall one message of favor or goodwill go between the parties anymore.

This punishment of loss, in a total and final separation from God, is a misery beyond what mortals can conceive, and which the dreadful experience of the damned can only sufficiently unfold. But that we may have some conception of the horror of it, let these following things be considered–
(1) God is the chief good; therefore, to be separated from Him, must be the chief evil. Our native country, our relations, and our life, are good, and therefore to be deprived of them we reckon a great evil; and the better anything is, so much the greater evil, is the loss of it. Wherefore, God being the chief good, and no good comparable to Him, there can be no loss so great as the loss of God.

The full enjoyment of Him is the highest pinnacle of happiness the creature is capable of arriving at. To be fully and finally separated from Him, must then be the lowest step of misery which the rational creature can be reduced to. To be cast off by men, by good men, is distressing; what must it then be, to be rejected of God, of goodness itself?

(2) God is the fountain of all goodness, from which all goodness flows to the creatures and by which it is continued in them, and to them. Whatever goodness or perfection, natural as well as moral, is in any creature– it is from God, and depends upon Him, as the light is from, and depends on, the sun. For every created being, as such, is a dependent one.

Wherefore, a total separation from God, wherein all comfortable communication between God and a rational creature is absolutely blocked up, must of necessity bring along with it a total eclipse of all light of comfort and ease whatever. If there is but one window, or open place, in a house, and that be totally shut up, it is evident there can be nothing but darkness in that house.

Our Lord tells us (Matt 19:17), 'There is none good but one, that is, God.' Nothing good or comfortable is originally from the creature– whatever good or comfortable thing one finds in one's self, as

health of body, peace of mind– whatever sweetness, rest, pleasure, or delight, one finds in other creatures, as in food, drink, arts and sciences– all these are but some faint rays of Divine perfections, communicated from God unto the creature, and depending on a constant influence from Him for their being; which failing, they would immediately be gone– for it is impossible that any created thing can be to us more or better than what God makes it to be.

All the rivulets of comfort we drink of, within or outside of ourselves, come from God as their spring-head. If the course of which towards us being stopped, of necessity they must all dry up. So that when God goes, all that is good and comfortable goes with Him, all ease and quiet of body and mind (Hos 9:12), 'Woe also to them, when I depart from them.'

When the wicked are totally and finally separated from Him, all that is comfortable in them, or about them, returns to its fountain– as the light goes away with the sun, and darkness succeeds in the room thereof. Thus, in their separation from God, all peace is removed far away from them, and pain in body and anguish of soul, succeed to it.

All joy goes, and unmixed sorrow settles in them. All quiet and rest separate from them and they are filled with horror and rage. Hope flies away, and despair seizes them. Common operations of the Spirit, which now restrain them, are withdrawn forever, and sin comes to its utmost height. Thus we have a dismal view of the horrible spectacle of sin and misery, which a creature proves when totally separated from God and left to itself; and we may see this separation from God to be the very hell of hell.

Being separated from God, they are deprived of all good. The good things which they set their hearts upon in this world are beyond their reach there. The covetous man cannot enjoy his wealth there; nor the ambitious man his honors; nor the sensual man his pleasures– no, not a drop of water to cool his tongue (Luke 16:24,25).

No food or drink there to strengthen the faint; no sleep to refresh the weary– and no music, or pleasant company, to comfort and cheer up the sorrowful. And as for those holy things they despised in the world, they shall never more hear of them, nor see them.

No offer of Christ there, no pardon, no peace; no wells of salvation in the pit of destruction. In one word, they shall be deprived of whatever might comfort them, being totally and finally separated from God, the fountain of all goodness and comfort.

(3) Man naturally desires to be happy, being conscious to himself that be is not self-sufficient. He forever has a desire of something outside of himself, to make him happy; and the soul being, by its natural make and constitution, capable of enjoying God, and nothing else being commensurable to its desires, it can never have true and solid rest until it rests in the enjoyment of God. This desire of happiness the rational creature can never lay aside, no, not even in hell.

Now, while the wicked are on earth, they seek their satisfaction in the creature. And when one thing fails, they go to another– thus they spend their time in the world, deceiving their own souls with vain hopes.

But, in the next world, all comfort in the creatures failing, and the shadows which they are now pursuing having all vanished in a moment, they shall be totally and finally separated from God, and see they have thus lost Him.

So the doors of earth and heaven both are shut against them at once. This will create them unspeakable anguish, while they shall live under an eternal gnawing hunger after happiness, which they certainly know shall never be in the least measure satisfied, all doors being closed on them.

Who then can imagine how this separation from God shall cut the damned to the heart! How they will roar and rage under it! How it will sting and gnaw them through the ages of eternity!

(4) The damned shall know that some are perfectly happy, in the enjoyment of that God from whom they themselves are separated; and this will aggravate the sense of their loss– that they can never have any share with those happy ones.

Being separated from God, they are separated from the society of the glorified saints and angels. They may see Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom, but can never come into their company; being, as unclean lepers, thrust outside of the camp, and excommunicated from the presence of the Lord, and of all His holy ones.

It is the opinion of some, that every person in heaven or hell shall hear and see all that passes in either state. Whatever is to be said for this, we have ground from the Word to conclude that the damned shall have a very accurate knowledge of the happiness of the saints in heaven; for what else can be meant of the rich man in hell seeing Lazarus in Abraham's bosom?

One thing is plain in this case, that their own torments will give them such notions of the happiness of the saints, as a sick man has of health, or a prisoner has of liberty. And as they cannot fail of reflecting on the happiness of those in heaven, without any hope of attaining to contentment with their own lot, so every thought of that happiness will aggravate their loss.

It would be a mighty torment to a hungry man, to see others liberally feasting, while he is so chained up as not to have one crumb to stop his gnawing appetite.

To bring music and dancing before a man laboring under extreme pains, would but increase his anguish. How then will the songs of the blessed, in their enjoyment of God, make the damned mourn under their separation from Him!

(5) They will remember that time was when they might have been made partakers of the blessed company of saints, in their enjoyment of God– and this will aggravate their sense of the loss.

All will remember that there was once a possibility of it; that they were once in the world, in some corners of which the way of salvation was laid open to men's view– and may wish they had gone round the world, until they had found it out.

Despisers of the Gospel will remember, with bitterness, that Jesus Christ, with all His benefits, was offered to them– that they were exhorted, entreated, and pressed to accept, but would not; and that they were warned of the misery they now feel, and exhorted to flee from the wrath to come, but they would not hearken.

The Gospel offer slighted will make a hot hell, and the loss of an offered heaven, will be a sinking weight on the spirits of unbelievers in the pit.

Some will remember that there was a probability of their being eternally happy; that once they seemed to stand fair for it, and were not far from the kingdom of God; that they had once almost consented to the blessed bargain– the pen was in their hand, as it were, to sign the marriage contract between Christ and their souls; but unhappily they dropped it, and turned away from the Lord, to their lusts again.

Others will remember that they thought themselves sure of heaven, but, being blinded with pride and self-conceit, they were above ordinances, and beyond instruction, and would not examine their state– which was their ruin. But then they will in vain wish that they had reputed themselves the worst of the congregation, and curse the fond conceit they had of themselves, and that others had of them too.

Thus it will sting the damned, that they might have escaped this loss.

(6) They will see the loss to be irrecoverable– that they must eternally lie under it, never, never to be repaired.

Might the damned, after millions of ages in hell, regain what they have lost, it would be some ground of hope; but the prize is gone, and never can be recovered.

There are two things which will pierce them to the heart–
1. That they never knew the worth of it, until it was irrecoverably lost– Should a man give away an earthen pot full of gold for a trifle, not knowing what was in it until it was quite gone from him, and past recovery, how would this foolish action gall him, upon the discovery of the riches in it!

Such a one's case may be a faint resemblance of the case of despisers of the Gospel, when in hell they lift up their eyes, and behold that to their torment, that which they will not see now to their salvation.

2. That they have lost it for dross and dung– sold their part of heaven, and not enriched themselves with the price. They have lost heaven for earthly profits and pleasures, and now both are gone together from them.

The drunkard's cups are gone, the covetous man's gain, the voluptuous man's carnal delights, and the sluggard's ease are gone– nothing is left to comfort them now. The happiness they lost remains indeed, but they can have no part in it forever.

Application– Sinners! be persuaded to come to God through Jesus Christ, uniting with Him through the Mediator; that you may be preserved from this fearful separation from Him. Oh, be afraid to live in a state of separation from God, lest that which you now make your choice become your eternal punishment hereafter.

Do not reject communion with God, cast not off the communion of saints, for it will be the misery of the damned to be driven out from that communion.

Cease to build up the wall of separation between God and yourself, by continuing in your sinful courses. Repent rather, in the present

time, and so pull the wall down, lest the topstone be laid upon it, and it stand forever between you and happiness.

Tremble at the thought of rejection and separation from God. By whomsoever men are rejected upon earth, they ordinarily find some pity; but, if you be thus separated from God, you will find all doors shut against you.

You will find no pity from any in heaven; neither saints nor angels will pity those whom God has utterly cast off. None will pity you in hell, where there is no love, but only loathing– all being loathed of God, loathing Him, and loathing one another.

This is a day of losses and fears. I show you a loss you would do well to fear in time– be afraid lest you lose God; for if you do, eternity will be spent in roaring out lamentations for this loss.

Oh horrid stupidity! Men are in a mighty care and concern to prevent worldly losses; but they are in danger of losing the enjoyment of God forever and ever; in danger of losing heaven, the communion of the blessed, and all good things for soul and body in another world; yet they are as careless in that matter as if they were incapable of thought!

Oh compare this present day with the day our text aims at. Today heaven is opened for those who hitherto have rejected Christ; and yet there is room, if they will come. But in that day the doors shall be shut.

'Now' Christ is saying unto you, 'Come!' 'Then' be will say– 'Depart!' seeing you would not come when you were invited. 'Now' pity is shown; the Lord pities you, His servants pity you, and tell you that the pit is before you, and cry to you, that you do yourselves no harm. But 'then' you shall have no pity from God or man.

B. THE DAMNED SHALL BE PUNISHED IN HELL WITH THE PUNISHMENT OF **'SENSE'** AS THEY MUST DEPART FROM GOD INTO EVERLASTING FIRE.

I am not disposed to dispute what kind of fire it is into which they shall depart, to be tormented forever, whether a material fire or not. Experience will more than satisfy the curiosity of those who are disposed rather to dispute about it, than to seek how to escape it.

Neither will I meddle with the question, **Where** is it? It is enough that the worm that never dies, and the fire that is never quenched, will be found somewhere by impenitent sinners.

1. But, first, I shall prove that, whatever kind of fire it is– it is more vehement and terrible than any fire we on earth are acquainted with.

Burning is the most terrible punishment, and brings the most intense pain and torment with it. By what reward could a man be induced to hold but his hand in the flame of a candle for one hour?

All imaginable pleasures on earth will never prevail with the most voluptuous man, to venture to lodge but one half hour in a burning fiery furnace!

Nor would all the wealth in the world prevail with the most covetous man to do it. Yet, on much lower terms do most men, in effect, expose themselves to everlasting fire in hell, which is more vehement and terrible than any fire we on earth are acquainted with; as will appear by the following considerations–

(a) As in heaven, grace being brought to its perfection, profit and pleasure also arrive at their height there. So sin, being come to its height in hell, the punishment of evil also arrives at its perfection there.

Therefore, as the joys of heaven are far greater than any joys which the saints obtain on earth, so the punishments of hell must be greater than any earthly torments whatever– not only in respect of the continuance of them, but also in respect of vehemence and intenseness.

(b) Why are the things of another world represented to us in an earthly dress, in the Word, but because the weakness of our capacities in such matters, which the Lord is pleased to condescend unto, requires it. It being always supposed, that the things of the other world are in their kind more perfect than those by which they are represented.

When heaven is represented to us under the notion of a city, with gates of pearl and the street of gold, we do not expect to find gold and pearls there, which are so mightily prized on earth, but something more excellent than the finest and most precious things in this world.

When therefore, we hear of hell-fire, it is necessary we understand by it something more vehement, piercing, and tormenting, than any fire ever seen by our eyes.

And here it is worth considering, that the torments of hell are held forth under several other notions than that of fire alone. And the reason of it is plain– namely, that hereby what of horror is lacking in one notion of hell, is supplied by another.

Why is heaven's happiness represented under the various notions of a treasure, a paradise, a feast, a rest, and so forth; but that there is not one of these things sufficient to express it?

Even so, hell-torments are represented under the notion of 'fire' which the damned are cast into. A dreadful representation indeed, yet not sufficient to express the misery of the state of sinners in them!

Therefore, we hear also of 'the second death', for the damned in hell shall be ever dying.

And the 'wine-press of the wrath of God', wherein they will be trodden in anger, trampled in the Lord's fury, pressed, broken and bruised, without end.

And 'the worm that does not die', which shall eternally gnaw them.

And 'a bottomless pit,' where they will be ever sinking.

It is not simply called 'a fire,' but the 'lake' of fire and brimstone, 'a lake of fire burning with brimstone'– which one can imagine nothing more dreadful.

Yet, because fire gives light; and light, as Solomon observes (Ecc.11:7), is sweet; there is no light there, but only darkness, utter darkness!

For they must have an everlasting night, since nothing can be there which is in any measure comfortable or refreshing.

(c) Our fire cannot affect a spirit, but by way of sympathy with the body to which it is united. But hell-fire will not only pierce into the bodies, but also go directly into the souls of the damned, for it is 'prepared for the devil and his angels,' those wicked spirits, whom no fire on earth can hurt.

Job complains heavily, under the chastisements of God's fatherly hand, saying, 'The arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinks up my spirit' (Job 6:4).

But how will the spirits of the damned be pierced with the arrows of revenging justice! How will they be drunk up with the poison of the curse of these arrows!

How vehement must that fire be which pierces directly into the soul, and makes an everlasting burning in the spirit, the most lively and tender part of a man, wherein wounds or pains are most intolerable!

(d) The preparation of this fire proves the inexpressible vehemency and dreadfulness of it. The text calls it, 'prepared' yes, 'the prepared fire,' by way of eminence.

As the three children were not cast into ordinary fire, but a fire prepared for a particular purpose which therefore was exceeding hot, the furnace being heated seven times more than ordinary, so

the damned shall find in hell a prepared fire, the like to which was never prepared by human are.

It is a fire of God's own preparing– the product of infinite wisdom, with a particular purpose– to demonstrate the most strict and severe divine justice against sin; which may sufficiently evidence to us the inconceivably intenseness thereof.

God always acts in a peculiar way, becoming His infinite greatness, whether for or against the creature– therefore, as the things He has prepared for them that love Him are great and good beyond expression or conception, so one may conclude that the things He has prepared against those who hate Him are great and terrible beyond what men can either say or think of them!

The pile of Tophet is 'fire and much wood;' the coals of that fire are 'coals of juniper,' a kind of wood which, set on fire, burns most fiercely (Psalm 120:4); 'and the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, does kindle it' (Isa 30:33).

Fire is more or less violent, according to the substance of it, and the breath by which it is blown. What heart, then, can fully conceive the horror of coals of juniper, blown up with the breath of the Lord?

No, God Himself will be a consuming fire (Deut 4:24) to the damned; intimately present, as a devouring fire, in their souls and bodies.

It is a fearful thing to fall into a fire, or to be shut up in a fiery furnace, on earth! But the terror of these vanishes, when we consider how fearful it is to fall into the hands of the living God, which is the lot of the damned! For 'Who shall dwell with devouring fire? Who shall dwell with everlasting burnings?' (Isa 33:14).

2. As to the second point proposed, namely, the properties of the fiery torments in hell–
(a) They will be universal torments, every part of the creature being tormented in that flame. When one is cast into a fiery furnace, the

fire makes its way into the very heart, and leaves no member untouched.

What part, then, can have ease, when the damned 'swim' in a lake of fire, burning with brimstone? There will their bodies be tormented and scorched forever.

And as they sinned, so shall they be tormented, in all the parts thereof, that they shall have no sound side to turn to– for what soundness or ease can there be to any part of that body, which being separated from God, and all refreshment from Him, is still in the pangs of the second death, ever dying, but never dead?

But as the soul was chief in sinning, it will be chief in suffering too, being filled quite full of the wrath of a sin-avenging God.

The damned shall be forever under the deepest impressions of God's vindictive justice against them– and this fire will melt their souls within them, like wax.

Who knows the power of that wrath which had such an effect on the Mediator standing in the room of sinners (Psalm 22:14)– 'My heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of me.'

Their minds shall be filled with the terrible apprehensions of God's implacable wrath– and whatever they can think upon, past, present, or to come, will aggravate their torment and anguish.

Their will shall be crossed in all things for evermore. As their will was ever contrary to the will of God's precepts, so God, in His dealing with them in the other world, shall have war with their will forever. What they would like to have, they shall not in the least obtain. But what they do not want, shall be bound upon them without remedy.

Hence, no pleasant affection shall ever spring up in their hearts any more; their love of comfort, joy, and delight, in any object whatever, shall be plucked up by the root. They will be filled with hatred, fury, and rage against God, themselves, and their fellow-creatures,

whether happy in heaven, or miserable in hell, as they themselves are.

They will be sunk in sorrow, racked with anxiety, filled with horror, galled to the heart with fretting, and continually darted with despair– which will make them weep, gnash their teeth, and blaspheme forever.

'Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth' (Matt 22:13). 'And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent– and men blasphemed God because of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great,.' (Rev 16:21).

Conscience will be a worm to gnaw and prey upon them; remorse for their sins shall seize them and torment them forever, and they shall not be able to shake it off, as once they did; for 'in hell their worm does not die.' (Mark 9:44,46).

Their memory will serve but to aggravate their torment and every new reflection will bring another pang of anguish (Luke 16:25), 'But Abraham said,' to the rich man in hell, 'Son, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things.'

(b) The torments in hell are manifold. Imagine the case that a man were, at one and the same time, under the violence of the gout, stone, and whatever diseases and pains have ever met together in one body– the torment of such a one would be but light in comparison to the torments of the dammed.

For, as in hell there is an absence of all that is good and desirable, so there is the convergence of all evils there; since all the effects of sin and of the curse take their place in it, after the last judgment. (Rev 20:14), 'And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire.'

There they will find a prison they can never escape out of; a lake of fire, where they will be ever swimming and burning; a pit, of which

they will never find a bottom. The worm that does not die shall feed on them, as on bodies which are interred. The fire that is not quenched shall devour them, as dead bodies which are burned. Their eyes shall be kept in blackness of darkness, without the least comfortable gleam of light. Their ears shall be filled with frightful yellings of the infernal crew. They shall taste nothing but the sharpness of God's wrath, the dregs of the cup of His fury! The stench of the burning lake of brimstone will be the smell there. And they shall feel extreme pains for evermore.

(c) They will be most intense and vehement torments, causing 'weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth' (Matt 13:42, 22:13). They are represented to us under the notion of pangs in childbirth, which are very sharp and acute.

So says the rich man in hell (Luke 16:24), 'I am tormented,' that is, as one in the pangs of child-bearing, 'in this flame.' Ah! dreadful pangs! Horrible travail, in which both soul and body are in pangs together! Helpless anguish, hopeless and endless!

The word used for hell (Matt 5:22), and in various other places of the New Testament, properly denotes the valley of Hinnom, the name being taken from the valley of the children of Hinnom, in which was Tophet (2 Kings 23:10), where idolaters offered their children to Moloch. This is said to have been a great bronze idol, with arms like a man's– which being heated by fire within it, the child was set in the burning arms of the idol. And, that the parent might not hear the shrieks of the child burning to death, they beat drums in the time of the horrible sacrifice; whence the place had the name of Tophet.

Thus th**e intenseness of the torments** in hell are pointed out to us.

Some have endured grievous tortures on earth with surprising obstinacy and undaunted courage. But men's courage will fail them

there, when they find themselves fallen into the hands of the living God– and no escape to be expected forever.

It is true, there will be degrees of torments in hell– 'It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon than for Chorazin and Bethsaida' (Matt 11:21,22). But the least load of wrath there will be insupportable; for how can the heart of the creature endure, or his hands be strong, when God Himself is a consuming fire to him?

When the tares are bound in bundles for the fire, there will be "bundles" of covetous persons, of drunkards, profane sweaters, unclean persons, formal hypocrites, unbelievers, and despisers of the Gospel, and the like.

The several "bundles" being cast into hell-fire, some will burn more vehemently than others, according as their sins have been more heinous than those of others– a fiercer flame shall seize the bundle of the profane, than the bundle of unsanctified moralists.

The furnace will be hotter to those who have sinned against light, than to those who lived in darkness (Luke 12:47,48), "That servant which knew his lord's will, and did not do it, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he who knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes.'

But the sentence common to them all– (Matt 13:30), 'Bind them in bundles to burn them,' speaks of the great vehemency and fierceness of the lowest degree of torment in hell.

(d) The torments will be uninterrupted. There is no intermission there– no ease, no, not for a moment. They 'shall be tormented day and night forever and ever'. Few are so troubled in this world, but sometimes they get rest. But the damned shall get none. They took their rest in the time appointed of God for their labor.

Storms are rarely seen, without some space between the showers. But there is no intermission in the storm that falls on the wicked in hell. There, deep will be calling unto deep, and the waves of wrath

continually rolling over them. There, the heavens will be always black to them, and they shall have a perpetual night, but no rest (Rev 14:11), "They have no rest day nor night.'

(e) They will be unpitied. The punishments inflicted on the greatest malefactors on earth draw forth some compassion from the spectators. But the damned shall have none to pity them.

God will not pity them, but laugh at their calamity (Prov 1:26). The blessed company in heaven shall rejoice in the execution of God's righteous judgment, and sing while their smoke rises up forever and ever (Rev 19:3), 'And again they said, Hallelujah! And her smoke rose up forever and ever.'

No compassion can be expected from the devil and his angels, who delight in the ruin of the children of men, and are and will be forever void of pity. Neither will one person pity another there, where every one is weeping and gnashing his teeth, under his own insupportable anguish and pain.

There, natural affection will be extinguished– parents will not love their children, nor children their parents; the mother will not pity the daughter in these flames, nor will the daughter pity the mother; the son will show no regard to his father there, nor the servant to his master, where every one will be groaning under his own torment.

(f) To complete their misery, their torments shall be eternal! 'And the smoke of their torments ascends up forever and ever.' Ah! what a frightful case is this– to be tormented in the whole body and soul, and that not with one kind of torment, but many; all of these most acute, and all this without any intermission, and without pity from any!

What heart can conceive those things without horror? Nevertheless, if this most miserable case were at length to have an end, that would afford some comfort.

But the torments of the damned will have no end!

Application–

1. Learn from this the evil of sin. It is a stream that will carry down the sinner, until he is swallowed up in the ocean of wrath!

The pleasures of sin are bought too dear, at the rate of everlasting burnings. What did the rich man's purple clothing and sumptuous food avail him, when in hell he was encircled by purple flames, and could not have a drop of water to cool his tongue?

Alas! that men should indulge themselves in sin which will bring such bitterness in the end! That they should drink so greedily of the poisonous cup, and hug that serpent in their bosom that will sting them to the heart!

2. What a God He is with whom we have to do! What hatred He bears to sin, and how severely He punishes it!

Know that the Lord is most just, as well as most merciful, but do not think that He is such an one as you are! Away with the fatal mistake before it be too late (Ps 50:21-2), "You thought that I was altogether such an one as yourself– but I will reprove you, and set them in order before your eyes. Now consider this, you that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver."

The fire prepared for the devil and his angels, dark as it is, will discover God to be a severe revenger of sin. See the absolute necessity of fleeing to the Lord Jesus Christ by faith; and also the same necessity of repentance, and holiness of heart and life.

The avenger of blood is pursuing you, O sinner! Haste and escape to the city of refuge! Wash now in the fountain of the Mediator's blood, that you may not perish in the lake of fire! Open your heart to Him, lest the pit close its mouth on you! Leave your sins, else they will ruin you; kill them, else they will be your death forever!

Let not the terror of hell-fire put you upon hardening your heart more, as it may do, if you entertain that wicked thought, 'There is no hope' (Jer 2:25), which, perhaps, is more common among the

hearers of the gospel than many are aware of. But there is hope for the worst of sinners, who will come to Jesus Christ!

If there are no good qualifications in you, as certainly there can be none in a sinful man, none in any man but what are received from Christ; know that He has not suspended your welcome on any good qualifications– take Him and His salvation freely offered to all to whom the Gospel comes. 'Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely' (Rev 22:17). 'Him that comes to me I will in no wise cast out' (John 6:37).

It is true, you are a sinful creature, and cannot repent; you are unholy, and cannot make yourself holy. No, you have attempted to repent, to forsake sin, and to be holy, but still failed of repentance, reformation, and holiness; and therefore, you said– 'There is no hope. No, for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go.' Truly, no wonder that the success has not answered your expectation, since you have always begun your work amiss. But first of all honor God, by believing the testimony He has given of His Son, namely, that eternal life is in Him– and honor the Son of God, by believing in Him, that is– embracing and falling in with the free offer of Christ, and of His salvation from sin and from wrath, made to you in the Gospel; trusting in Him confidently for righteousness to your justification, and also for sanctification; seeing 'of God he is made unto us' both 'righteousness and sanctification' (1 Cor 1:30). Then, if you have as much credit to give to the Word of God, as you would allow to the word of an honest man, offering you a gift, and saying, 'Take it, and it is yours'; you may believe that God is your God, Christ is yours, His salvation is yours, your sins are pardoned, you have strength in Him for repentance and for holiness; for all these are made over to you in the free offer of the gospel.

Believing on the Son of God, you are justified, the curse is removed. But while it lies upon you, how is it possible you should bring forth the fruits of holiness? But, if the curse is removed, that death which seized on you with the first Adam, according to the

threatening (Gen 2:17), is taken away. In consequence of which, you will find the bands of wickedness, now holding you fast in impenitence, broken asunder, as also the bands of death. So as you will be able to repent indeed from the heart– you will find the spirit of life returned to your soul, on whose departure that death ensued, so as thenceforth you will be enabled to live unto righteousness.

No man's case is so bad, but it may be mended this way, in time, to be perfectly right in eternity. And no man's case is so good, but, another way being taken, it will be ruined for time and eternity too.

III. THE DAMNED SHALL HAVE THE SOCIETY OF DEVILS IN THEIR MISERABLE STATE IN HELL–

For they must depart into "fire prepared for the devil and his angels." O horrible company! O frightful association! Who would choose to dwell in a palace haunted by devils? To be confined to the most pleasant spot of earth, with the devil and his infernal furies, would be a most terrible confinement. How would men's hearts fail them, and their hair stand up, finding themselves environed with the hellish crew!

But, ah! how much more terrible must it be, to be cast with the devils into one fire, locked up with them in one dungeon, shut up with them in one pit!

To be closed up in a den of roaring lions, girded about with serpents, surrounded with venomous asps, and to have the heart eaten out by vipers, altogether and at once, is a comparison too low to show the misery of the damned, shut up in hell with the devil and his angels!

They go about now as roaring lions, seeking whom they may devour. But then they shall be confined in their den with their prey. They shall be filled with the wrath of God, and receive the full

torment (Matt 8:29), which they tremble in expectation of (James 2:19), being cast into the fire prepared for them.

How will these lions roar and tear! How will these serpents hiss! These dragons cast out fire! What horrible anguish will seize the damned, finding themselves in the lake of fire with the devil who deceived them! drawn there with the silken cords of temptation by these wicked spirits! and bound with them in everlasting chains under darkness!

'And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever.' (Rev 20:10)

O that men would consider this in time, renounce the devil and his lusts, and join themselves to the Lord in faith and holiness! Why should men choose such company in this world, and delight in such society, as they would not desire to associate with in the next world? Those who like not the company of the saints on earth will get none of it in eternity; but, as godless company is their delight now, they will afterwards get enough of it, when they have eternity to pass in the roaring and blaspheming society of devils and reprobates in hell! Let those who use to invocate the devil to take them, soberly consider that the company so often invited will be terrible at last, when come.

IV. THE ETERNITY OF THE WHOLE–

And, Lastly, Let us consider the eternity of the whole, the everlasting continuance of the miserable state of the damned in hell.

A. If I could, I would show WHAT ETERNITY IS, I mean, the creature's eternity. But who can measure the waters of the ocean? Or who can tell you the days, years, and ages of eternity, which are infinitely more than the drops of the ocean?

None can comprehend eternity but the eternal God. Eternity is an ocean whereof we shall never see the shore; it is a deep where we can find no bottom; a labyrinth from whence we cannot extricate ourselves, and where we shall ever lose the door. There are two things we may say of it–

1. It has a beginning. God's eternity has no beginning, but the creature's has. Once there was no lake of fire; and those who have been there for some hundreds of years, were once in time, as we now are.

2. It shall never have an end. The first who entered into the eternity of woe is as far from the end of it as the last who shall go there will be at his entry. They who have launched out furthest into that ocean are as far from land as they were the first moment they went into it– and, thousands of ages after this they will be as far from it as ever. Wherefore eternity, which is before us, is a duration that has a beginning but no end.

It is a beginning without a middle, a beginning without an end. After millions of years passed in it, still it is beginning! God's wrath in hell will ever be the wrath to come! There is no middle in eternity! When millions of ages are past in eternity, what is past bears no proportion to what is to come– no, not so much as one drop of water, falling from the tip of one's finger, as compared to all the waters of the ocean.

There is no end of it– while God is, it shall be. It is an entry without an end to it, a continual succession of ages, a glass always running, which shall never run out.

Observe the continual succession of hours, days, months, and years, how one still follows upon another; and think of eternity, wherein there is a continual succession without end. When you go out at night and behold the stars of heaven, how they cannot be numbered for multitude, think of the ages of eternity; consider also, there is a certain definite number of stars, but no number of the ages of eternity.

When you see water running in a river, think how vain a thing it would be to sit down by it, and wait until it should run out, that you may pass over; observe how new water still succeeds to that which passes by you– and therein you have an image of eternity, which is a river that never dries up.

They who wear rings have an image of eternity on their fingers; and they who handle the wheel have an emblem of eternity before them– for to whichever part of the ring or wheel we look, one will still see another part beyond it; and on whatever moment of eternity you meditate, there is still another beyond it.

When you are abroad in the fields, and behold the blades of grass on the earth, which no man can reckon, think with yourselves, that, were as many thousands of years to come, as there are blades of grass on the ground, even those would have an end at length; but eternity will have none.

When you look to a mountain, imagine in your hearts how long would it be before that mountain should be removed by a little bird coming but once every thousand years, and carrying away but one grain of the dust of it– the mountain would at length be removed that way, and brought to an end; but eternity will never end.

Suppose this with respect to all the mountains of the earth, no, with respect to the whole globe itself– the grains of dust of which the whole of it is made up are not infinite; and therefore the last grain would, at length, come to be carried away, as seen above– yet eternity would be, in effect, but beginning.

These are some crude emblems of eternity! And now add misery and woe to this eternity, what tongue can express it? What heart can conceive it? In what balance can that misery and that woe be weighed?

B. Let us take A VIEW OF WHAT IS ETERNAL, IN THE STATE OF THE DAMNED IN HELL– Whatever is included in the fearful torments of their state, is everlasting– therefore all the doleful

ingredients of their miserable state will be everlasting–they will never end.

The text expressly declares the fire, into which they must depart, to be everlasting fire. And our Lord elsewhere tells us, that in hell, the fire never shall be quenched (Mark 9:43). He had an eye to the valley of Hinnom, in which, besides the before mentioned fire for burning the children to Molech, there was also another fire burning continually, to consume the dead carcasses and filth of Jerusalem– so the Scripture, representing hell-fire by the fire of that valley, speaks of it not only to be most intense, but also everlasting. Seeing, then, the damned must depart, as cursed ones, into everlasting fire, it is evident that–

(1) The damned themselves shall be eternal; they will have a being for ever, and will never be substantially destroyed or annihilated.

To what end is the fire eternal, if those who are cast into it be not eternally in it? It is plain, the everlasting continuance of the fire is an aggravation of the misery of the damned. But, surely, if they be annihilated, or substantially destroyed, it would be all the same to them, whether the fire be everlasting or not. No, but they depart into everlasting fire, to be everlastingly punished in it. (Matt 25:46), 'These shall go away into everlasting punishment.' Thus the execution of the sentence is a certain discovery of the meaning of it.

The worm, that dies not, must have a subject to live in– they, who shall have no rest, day nor night (Rev 14:11), but shall be 'tormented day and night forever and ever' (Rev 20:10). They will certainly have a being for ever and ever, and not be brought into a state of eternal rest in annihilation.

Destroyed indeed they shall be– but their destruction will be an everlasting destruction (2 Thess 1:9); a destruction of their well-being, but not of their being. What is destroyed is not therefore annihilated– 'Are you come to destroy us?' said the devil unto

Jesus Christ (Luke 4:34). The devils are afraid of torment, not of annihilation (Matt 8:29), 'Are you come here to torment us before the time?'

The state of the damned is indeed a state of death; but such a death it is as is opposite only to a happy life, as is clear from other notions of their state, which necessarily include eternal existence. As they who are dead in sin are dead to God and holiness, yet alive to sin– so dying in hell they live, but separated from God and His favor, in which is life (Psalm 30:5). They shall ever be under the pangs of death; ever dying, but never dead, or absolutely void of life.

How desirable would such a death be to them! But it will flee from them forever. Could they kill one another there, or could they, with their own hands, tear themselves into lifeless pieces, their misery would quickly be at an end. But there they must live, whom chose death and refused life; for there death lives, and the end ever begins.

(2) The curse shall lie upon them eternally, as the everlasting chain to hold them in the everlasting fire– a chain that shall never be loosed, being fixed forever about them by the dreadful sentence of the eternal judgment. This chain, which spurns the united force of devils held fast by it, is too strong to be broken by men, who being solemnly anathematized and devoted to destruction., can never be recovered to any other use.

(3) Their punishment shall be eternal. 'These shall go away into everlasting punishment.' They will be forever separated from God and Christ, and from the society of the holy angels and saints, between them an impassable gulf will be fixed– 'And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.'

They shall forever have the horrible society of the devil and his angels. There will be no change of company forever in that region of darkness. Their torment in the fire will be everlasting– they must live forever in it.

Several authors, both ancient and modern, tell us of earth-flax, or salamander's hairs, that cloth made of it, being cast into the fire, is so far from being burnt or consumed, that it is only made clean thereby, as other things are by washing. But however that is, it is certain the damned shall be tormented forever and ever in hell-fire, and not substantially destroyed (Rev 20:10). And indeed nothing is annihilated by fire, but only dissolved. Of whatever nature hell-fire is, no question, the same God who kept the bodies of the three children from burning in Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace, can also keep the bodies of the damned from any such dissolution by hell-fire as may infer privation of life.

(4) Their knowledge and 'sense' of their misery shall be eternal, and they shall assuredly know that it will be eternal. How desirable would it be to them to have their 'sense' forever locked up, and to lose the consciousness of their own misery–as one may rationally suppose it to fare at length with some, in the punishment of death inflicted on them on earth, and as it is with some insane people; but that agrees not with the notion of torment forever and ever, nor the worm that dies not.

No, they will ever have a lively feeling of their misery, and strongest impressions of the wrath of God against them. And that dreadful intimation of the eternity of their punishment, made to them by their Judge, in their sentence, will fix such impressions of the 'eternity of their miserable state' upon their minds, as they will never be able to lay it aside; but will continue with them evermore, to complete their misery.

This will fill them with everlasting despair; a most tormenting passion, which will continually rend their hearts, as it were, in a thousand pieces.

To see floods of wrath ever coming, and never to cease; to be forever in torment, and to know that there shall never, never be a release, will be the topstone put on the misery of the damned!

If hope deferred makes the heart sick' (Prov 13:12), how killing will it be for hope to be rooted up, slain outright, and buried forever out of the creature's sight!

This will fill them with hatred and rage against God, their known irreconcilable enemy; and under it, they will roar forever, like wild bulls in a net, and fill the pit with blasphemies evermore.

I might here show the reasonableness of the eternity of the punishment of the damned– but, having already spoken of it, in vindicating the justice of God, in His subjecting men in their natural state to eternal wrath, I only remind you of three things–
1. The infinite dignity of the party offended by sin requires an infinite punishment to be inflicted for the vindication of His honor, since the demerit of sin rises according to the dignity and excellence of the person against whom it is committed.

The party offended is the great God, the chief good– the offender a vile worm; in respect to perfection, infinitely distant from God, to whom he is indebted for all the good that he ever had. This then requires an infinite punishment to be inflicted on the sinner; which, since it cannot in him be infinite in value, must needs be infinite in duration, that is to say, eternal.

Sin is a kind of infinite evil, as it wrongs an infinite God; and the guilt and defilement of it is never taken away, but endures forever, unless the Lord Himself in mercy remove it.

God, who is offended, is eternal; His being never comes to an end– the sinful soul is immortal, and the man shall live forever. The sinner, being without strength (Rom 5:6) to expiate his guilt, can never put away the offence; therefore it ever remains, unless the Lord put it away Himself, as in the elect, by His Son's blood.

Therefore the party offended, the offender, and the offence, forever remaining, the punishment cannot but be eternal!

2. The sinner would have continued the course of his provocations against God forever without end, if God had not put a check to it by death. As long as they were capable of acting against Him in this world, they did it– and therefore justly will He act against them, while He is; that is, forever.

God, who judges of the will, intents, and inclinations of the heart, may justly do against sinners, in punishing, as they would have done against Him in sinning.

3. Though I put not the stress of the matter here, yet it is just and reasonable that the damned suffer eternally, since they will sin eternally in hell, gnashing their teeth (Matt 8:12), under their pain, in rage, envy, and grudge (compare Acts 7:54; Psalm 112:10; Luke 13:28), and blaspheming God there (Rev 16:21) while they are driven away in their wickedness (Prov 14:32).

That the wicked be punished for their wickedness is just, and it is in no way inconsistent with justice that the being of the creature be continued forever– wherefore it is just that the damned, continuing wicked eternally, do suffer eternally for their wickedness.

The misery, under which they sin, can neither free them from the debt of obedience, nor excuse their sinning and make it blameless. The creature, as a creature, is bound unto obedience to his Creator; and no punishment inflicted on him can free him from it, any more than the malefactor's prison, irons, whipping, and the like, set him at liberty again, to commit the crimes for which he is imprisoned or whipped.

Neither can the torments of the dammed excuse, or make blameless, their horrible sinning under them, any more than exquisite pains, inflicted upon men on earth, can excuse their murmuring, fretting, and blaspheming against God under them.

It is not the wrath of God, but their own wicked nature, that is the true cause of their sinning under it; for the holy Jesus bore the wrath of God without so much as one unbecoming thought of God, and far less any one unbecoming word.

Application

1. Here is a measuring rod– O that men would apply it! Apply it to your own time in this world, and you will find your time to be very short. A prospect of much time to come, proves the ruin of many souls. Men will be reckoning their time by 'years', like that rich man (Luke 12:19-20), when, it may be, there are not many 'hours' of it to run. But reckon as you will, laying your time to the measuring reed of eternity, you will see your age is as nothing. What a small and inconsiderable point is sixty, eighty, or a hundred years, in respect of eternity! Compared with eternity, there is a greater disproportion than between a hair's breadth and the circumference of the whole earth.

Why do we then sleep in such a short day, while we are in danger of losing rest through the long night of eternity?

Apply it to your endeavors for salvation, and they will be found very scanty. When men are pressed to diligence in their salvation work, they are ready to say, 'To what purpose is this waste?'

Alas! if it were to be judged by our diligence, what end it is that we have in view; as to the most part of us, no man could thereby conjecture that we have eternity in view. If we duly considered eternity, we could not but conclude, that, to leave no appointed means of God untried until we get our salvation secured– to refuse rest or comfort in anything, until we are sheltered under the wings of the Mediator– to pursue our great interest with the utmost vigor to cut off lusts dear as right hands and right eyes– to set our faces resolutely against all difficulties– and fight our way through all opposition made by the devil, the world, and the flesh. These are, all of them together, little enough for eternity.

2. Here is a balance of the sanctuary, by which we may understand the lightness of what is falsely thought weighty; and the weight of some things, by many reckoned to be very light.

Some things seem very weighty, which, weighed in this balance, will be found very light–
(a) Weigh the world, and all that is in it, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, and the whole will be found light in the balance of eternity.

Weigh herein all worldly profits, gains, and advantages; and you will quickly see, that a thousand worlds will not compensate for an eternity of woe! 'For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?' (Matt 16:26). Weigh the pleasures of sin, which are but for a season, with the fire that is everlasting, and you show yourself to be fools and madmen, to run the hazard of losing the one for the other.

(b) Weigh your afflictions in this balance, and you will find the heaviest of them very light, in respect of the weight of eternal anguish. Impatience under affliction, especially when worldly troubles so embitter men's spirits that they cannot relish the glad tidings of the Gospel, speaks great regardlessness of eternity.

As a small and inconsiderable loss will be very little at heart with him who sees himself in danger of losing his whole estate; so troubles in the world will appear but light to him who has a lively view of eternity. Such a one will stoop and take up his cross, whatever it be, thinking it enough to escape eternal wrath.

(c) Weigh the most difficult and uneasy duties of religion here, and you will no more reckon the yoke of Christ insupportable.

Repentance and bitter mourning for sin, on earth, are very light in comparison of eternal weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth in hell! To wrestle with God in prayer, weeping and making supplication for the blessing in time, is far easier than to lie under

the curse through all eternity! Mortification of the most beloved lust is a light thing in comparison with the second death in hell!

(d) Weigh your convictions in this balance. O how heavy do those lie upon many until they get them shaken off! They are not disposed to continue with them, but strive to get clear of them as of a mighty burden. But the worm of a bad conscience will neither die nor sleep in hell, though we may now lull it asleep for a time.

And certainly it is easier to entertain the sharpest convictions in this life, so that they lead us to Christ, than to have them fixed forever in the conscience, and to be in hell totally and finally separated from Him.

But, on the other hand, weigh sin in this balance, and, though now it seems but a light thing to you, you will find it a weight sufficient to turn up an eternal weight of wrath upon you.

Even idle words, vain thoughts, and unprofitable actions, weighed in this balance, and considered as following the sinner into eternity, will each of them be heavier than the sand of the sea! Time idly spent will make a weary eternity!

Now is your seedtime; thoughts, words, and actions, are the seed sown, eternity is the harvest. Though the seed now lies under the clod, disregarded by most men, even the least grain shall spring up at length; and the fruit will be according to the seed (Gal 6:8), 'For he that sows to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption, (that is, destruction), but he that sows to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.'

Weigh in this balance your time and opportunities of grace and salvation, and you will find them very weighty. Precious time and seasons of grace, Sabbaths, communions, prayers, sermons, and the like, are by many, now-a-days made light of; but the day is coming when one of these will be reckoned more valuable than a thousand worlds by those who now have the least value for them!

When they are gone forever, and the loss cannot be retrieved, those will see the worth of them who will not now see it.

3. Be warned and stirred up to flee from the wrath to come! Mind eternity, and closely ply the work of your salvation. What are you doing, while you are not so doing? Is heaven a fable, or hell a false alarm? Must we live eternally, and shall we be at no more pains to escape everlasting misery? Will faint wishes take the kingdom of heaven by force? Will such drowsy endeavors as most men satisfy themselves with, be accounted fleeing from the wrath to come?

You who have already fled to Christ, up, and be doing. You who have begun the work, go on and loiter not, but 'work out your salvation with fear and trembling'. 'Fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell'. Remember you are not yet ascended into heaven; you are but in your middle state.

The everlasting arms have drawn you out of the gulf of wrath you were plunged into, in your natural state; they are still underneath you, that you can never fall down into it again. Nevertheless, you have not yet got up to the top of the rock; the deep below you is frightful– look at it, and hasten your ascent.

You who are yet in your sinful state, lift up your eyes and take a view of the eternal state. Arise, you profane persons, you ignorant ones, you formal hypocrites, strangers to the power of godliness, and flee from the wrath to come!

Let not the young venture to delay a moment longer, nor the old put off this work any more– 'Today if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts;' lest He swear in His wrath that you shall never enter into His rest.

It is no time to linger in a state of sin, as in Sodom, when fire and brimstone are coming down on it from the Lord. Take warning in time. They who are in hell are not troubled with such warnings, but are enraged against themselves, because they slighted the warning when they had it.

Consider, I beg you, how uneasy it is to lie one whole night on a soft bed in perfect health, when we gladly would have sleep but cannot get it, sleep being departed from us. How often do we in that case, wish for rest! how full of tossings to and fro!

But ah! how dreadful must it be to lie in sorrow, wrapped up in scorching flames throughout eternity, in that place where they have no rest day nor night!

How terrible would it be to live under violent pains of the cholic or stone for forty or sixty years together without any intermission! Yet that is but a very small thing compared with eternal separation from God, the worm that never dies, and the fire that is never quenched!

Eternity is an awful thought! O long, long endless eternity! But will not every moment in eternity of woe seem a month, and every hour a year, in that most wretched and desperate condition? Hence, 'ever and ever', as it were, a double eternity.

The sick man in the night, tossing to and fro on his bed, says it will never be day, and complains that his pain ever continues– it never, never abates. Are these 'petty time-eternities', which men form to themselves in their own imaginations, so very grievous? Alas! then, how grievous, how utterly insupportable, must a real eternity of woe, and all manner of miseries, be!

There will be space enough there to reflect on all the ills of our heart and life, which we cannot get time to think of now; and to see that all that was said of the impenitent sinner's hazard was true, and that the half was not told. There will be space enough in eternity to carry on delayed repentance, to lament one's follies when it is too late; and in a state past remedy to speak forth these fruitless wishes– O that I had never been born! that the womb had been my grave, and I had never seen the sun!

O that I had taken warning in time, and fled from this wrath while the door of mercy was standing open to me! O that I had never

heard the Gospel, that I had lived in some corner of the world where a Savior and the great salvation were not once named!

But all in vain. What is done cannot be undone; the opportunity is lost, and can never be retrieved; time is gone, and can never be recalled. Therefore, improve time while you have it, and do not willfully ruin yourself by stopping your ear to the Gospel call.

And now, if you would be saved from the wrath to come, and never go into this place of torment, take no rest in your natural state; believe the sinfulness and misery of it, and labor to get out of it quickly, fleeing unto Jesus Christ by faith.

Sin in you is the seed of hell– and if the guilt and reigning power of it be not removed in time, they will bring you to the second death in eternity.

There is no way to get them removed, but by receiving Christ as He is offered in the Gospel, for justification and sanctification– and He is now offered to you with all His salvation (Rev 22:12,17), 'And behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come; and let him that hears say, Come; and let him that is thirsty come. And whoever will, let him take the water of life freely.'

Jesus Christ is the Mediator of peace, and the fountain of holiness– He it is who delivers us from the wrath to come. 'There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit' (Rom 8:1).

The terrors of hell, as well as the joys of heaven, are set before you, to stir you up to a cordial receiving of Him, with all His salvation; and to incline you to the way of faith and holiness, in which alone you can escape the everlasting fire.

May the Lord Himself make them effectual to that end!