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**SAINT'S EVERLASTING REST:**

OR,

**A TREATISE**

OF THE

**BLESSED STATE OF THE SAINTS,**

IN

**THEIR ENJOYMENT OF GOD IN GLORY.**

EXTRACTED FROM THE WORKS OF  
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Misses Ida and Sara W. Simpson

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The first part of the document  
 discusses the general principles  
 of the system and the  
 various methods of  
 application. It is  
 intended to be a  
 practical guide for  
 the student. The  
 second part of the  
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 a list of the  
 various methods of  
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APPENDIX

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TO THE  
INHABITANTS OF KIDDERMINSTER.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,—If either I or my labours have any thing of public use or worth, it is wholly (though not only) yours. And I am convinced by Providence, that it is the will of God it should be so. This I clearly discerned in my first coming to you, in my former abode with you, and in the time of my forced absence from you. When I was separated by the miseries of the late unhappy war, I durst not fix in any other congregation, but lived in a military displeasing state, lest I should forestall my return to you. The offers of greater worldly accommodations were no temptation to me once to question whether I should leave you: your free invitation of my return, your obedience to my doctrine, the strong affection which I have yet toward you above all people, and the general hearty return of love which I find from you, do all persuade me, that I was sent into the world especially for the service of your souls: and that even when I am dead I might be yet a help to your salvation, the Lord hath forced me, quite beside my own resolution, to write this treatise, and leave it in your hands. It was far from my thoughts ever to have become thus public, and burthened the world with any writing of mine; therefore have I often resisted the request of my reverend brethren, and some superiors, who might else have commanded much more at my hands. But see how God overruleth and crosseth our resolutions!

Being in my quarters far from home, cast into extreme languishing, (by the sudden loss of about a gallon of blood, after many years foregoing weakness,) and having no acquaintance about me, nor any book but my Bible, and living in continual expectation of death, I bent my thoughts on my everlasting rest: and because my memory, through extreme weakness, was imperfect, I took my pen and began to draw up my own funeral sermon, or some help for my own meditations of heaven, to sweeten both the rest of my life, and my death. In this condition God was pleased to continue me about five months from home; where, being able for nothing else, I went on with this work, which lengthened to this which you here see. It is no wonder, therefore, if I be too abrupt in the beginning, seeing I then intended but the length of a sermon or two. Much less may you wonder if the whole be very imperfect, seeing it was written, as it were, with one foot in the grave, by a man that was betwixt the living and dead, that wanted strength of nature to quicken invention, or affection, and

had no book but his Bible, while the chief part was finished. But how sweet is this Providence now to my review, which so happily forced me to that work of meditation, which I had formerly found so profitable to my soul! and showed me more mercy, in depriving me of other helps, than I was aware of! and hath caused my thoughts to feed on this heavenly subject, which hath more benefited me than all the studies of my life.

And now, dear friends, such as it is, I here offer it you; and upon the knees of my soul, I offer up my thanks to the merciful God, who hath fetched up both me and it, as from the grave, for your service: who reversed the sentence of present death, which by the ablest physicians was passed upon me: who interrupted my public labours for a time, that he might trace me to do you a more lasting service, which else I had never been like to have attempted! That God do I heartily bless and magnify, who hath rescued me from the many dangers of four years war, and after so many tedious nights and days, and so many doleful sights and tidings, hath returned me, and many of yourselves, and reprieved us now to serve him in peace! And though men be ungrateful, and my body ruined beyond hope of recovery, yet he hath made up all in the comforts I have in you. To the God of mercy I do here offer up my most hearty thanks, who hath not rejected my prayers, but hath by a wonder delivered me in the midst of my duties; and hath supported me these fourteen years in a languishing state, wherein I have scarce had a waking hour free from pain: who hath above twenty several times delivered me when I was near death. And though he hath made me spend my days in groans and tears, and in a constant expectation of my change, yet he hath not wholly disabled me for his service; and hereby hath more effectually subdued my pride, and made this world contemptible to me, and forced my dull heart to more importunate requests, and occasioned more rare discoveries of his mercy than ever I could have expected in a prosperous state.

THE

**SAINT'S EVERLASTING REST.**

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"There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God," Hebrews iv, 9.

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**CHAPTER I.**

**THIS REST DEFINED.**

IT was not only our interest in God, and actual fruition of him, which was lost in Adam's fall; but all spiritual knowledge of him, and true disposition toward such felicity. Man hath now a heart too suitable to his estate; a low state, and a low spirit. As the poor man that would not believe that any one man had such a sum as a hundred pounds, it was so far above what he possessed; so man will hardly now believe, that there is such a happiness as once he had, much less as Christ hath now procured.

The apostle bestows most of this epistle in proving to the Jews, that the end of all ceremonies and shadows, is to direct them to Jesus Christ, the substance; and that the rest of sabbaths, and Canaan, should teach them to look for a future rest. My text is his conclusion after divers arguments to that end; a conclusion so useful to a believer, as containing the ground of all his comforts, the end of all his duty and sufferings, that you may easily be satisfied why I have made it the subject of my present discourse. What more welcome to men under afflictions, than rest? What more welcome news to men under public calamities? Hearers, I pray God your entertainment of it be but half answerable to the excellency of the subject; and then you will have cause to bless God, while you live, that ever you heard it, as I have that ever I studied it.

Let us see, 1. What this rest is. 2. What these people of God, and why so called. 3. The truth of this from other scripture arguments. 4. Why this rest must yet remain. 5. Why only to the people of God. 6. What use to make of it.

And though the sense of the text includes, in the word *rest*, all that ease and safety which a soul, wearied with the burden of sin and suffering, and pursued by law, wrath, and conscience, hath with Christ in this life, the rest of grace; yet because it chiefly intends the rest of eternal glory, I shall confine my discourse to this.

The rest here in question is, the most happy estate of a Christian having obtained the end of his course: or, it is the perfect endless fruition of God by the perfected saints, according to the measure of their capacity, to which their souls arrive at death; and both soul and body most fully after the resurrection and final judgment.

1. I call it the estate of a Christian, to note both the active and passive fruition, wherein a Christian's blessedness lies, and the established continuance of both. Our title will be perfect, and perfectly cleared; ourselves, and so our capacity perfected; our possession and security for its perpetuity perfect; our reception from God perfect; and therefore our fruition of him, and consequently our happiness, will then be perfect. And this is the estate which we now briefly mention, and shall afterwards more fully describe.

2. I call it the most happy estate, to difference it not only from all seeming happiness which is to be found in the enjoyment of creatures, but also from all those beginnings, foretastes, and imperfect degrees which we have in this life.

3. I call it the estate of a Christian, where I mean only the sincere, regenerate, sanctified Christian, whose soul having discovered that excellency in God through Christ, closeth with him, and is cordially set upon him.

4. I add, That this happiness consists in obtaining the end where I mean the ultimate and principal end, not any subordinate or less principal end. O how much doth our everlasting state depend on our right judgment and estimation of our end!

But it is a doubt with many, whether the attainment of this glory may be our end? Nay, concluded, that it is mercenary; yea, that to make salvation the end of duty, is to be a legalist, and act under a covenant of works, whose tenor is, "Do this and live." And many that think it may be our end, yet think it may not be our ultimate end; for that should be only the glory of God. I shall answer these briefly.

1. It is properly called mercenary, when we expect it as wages for work done; and so we may not make it our end. Otherwise it is only such a mercenariness as Christ commandeth. For consider what this end is; it is the fruition of God in Christ; and if seeking Christ be mercenary, I desire to be so mercenary.

2. It is not a note of a legalist neither. It hath been the ground of a multitude of late mistakes in divinity, to think that "Do this and live," is only the language of the covenant of works. It is true, in some sense it is; but in other, not. The law of works only saith, *Do this* (that is, perfectly fulfil the whole law,) *and live*; (that is, for so doing.) But the

law of grace saith, "Do this and live," too: that is, believe in Christ, seek him, obey him sincerely, as thy Lord and King: forsake all, suffer all things, and overcome, and by so doing, or in so doing, you shall live. If you set up the abrogated duties of the law again, you are a legalist; if you set up the duties of the gospel in Christ's stead, in whole or in part, you err still. Christ hath his place and work; duty hath its place and work too: set it but in its own place, and expect from it but its own part, and you go right: yea more, (how unsavoury soever the phrase may seem,) you may, so far as this comes to, trust to your duty and works, that is, for their own part; and many miscarry in expecting nothing from them, (as to pray, and to expect nothing the more,) that is, from Christ in a way of duty. For if duty have no share, why may we not trust Christ as well in a way of disobedience as duty? In a word, you must both use and trust duty in subordination to Christ, but neither use them nor trust them in co-ordination with him. So that this derogates nothing from Christ; for he hath done, and will do, all his work perfectly, and enableth his people to do theirs; yet he is not properly said to do it himself; he believes not, repents not, but worketh these in them; that is, enableth and exciteth them to it. No man must look for more from duty than God hath laid upon it; and so much we may and must.

3. If I should quote all the scriptures that plainly prove this, I should transcribe a great part of the Bible: I will therefore only desire you to study what tolerable interpretation can be given of the following places, which will not prove that life and salvation may be, yea, must be, the end of duty. John v, 40, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." Matt. xii, 12, "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." Matt. vii, 13; Luke xiii, 24, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." Phil. ii, 12, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." Romans ii, 7, 10, "To them who by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life. Glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good." 1 Cor. ix, 24, "So run that ye may obtain." 2 Tim. ii, 12, "If we suffer with him, we shall reign with him." 1 Tim. vi, 12, "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life." 1 Tim. vi, 18, 19, "That they do good works, laying up a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life." Revelation xxii, 14, "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and enter in by the gates into the city." Matt. xxv, 34-36, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit," &c. "For

I was a hungered, and ye," &c. Luke xi, 28, "Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it." Yea, the escaping of hell is a right end of duty to a believer: Heb. iv, 1, "Let us fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should come short of it." Luke xii, 5, "Fear him that is able to destroy both soul and body in hell; yea," (whatsoever others say) "I say unto you, fear him." 1 Cor. ix, 27, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." Multitudes of scriptures and scripture arguments might be brought, but these may suffice to any that believe Scripture.

4. For those that think this rest may be our end, but not our ultimate end, that must be God's glory only: I will not gainsay them. Only let them consider, "What God hath joined, man must not separate." The glorifying himself, and the saving of his people, (as I judge,) are not two ends with God, but one; to glorify his mercy in their salvation; so I think they should be with us together intended: we should aim at the glory of God not alone considered without our salvation, but in our salvation. Therefore I know no warrant for putting such a question to ourselves, as some do, Whether we could be content to be damned, so God were glorified? Christ hath put no such questions to us, nor bid us put such to ourselves. Christ had rather that men would inquire after their true willingness to be saved, than their willingness to be damned. Sure I am, Christ himself is offered to faith, in terms for the most part respecting the welfare of the sinner, more than his own abstracted glory. He would be received as a Saviour, mediator, redeemer, reconciler, and intercessor. And all the precepts of Scripture being backed with so many promises and threatenings, every one intended of God as a motive to us, imply as much.

5. I call a Christian's happiness the end of his course, thereby meaning, as Paul, 2 Tim. iv, 7, the whole scope of his life. For salvation may and must be our end; and not only the end of our faith, (though that principally,) but of all our actions: for as whatsoever we do must be done to the glory of God, so must they all be done to our salvation.

6. *Lastly.* I make happiness to consist in this end obtained; for it is not the mere promise of it that immediately makes perfectly happy, nor Christ's mere purchase, nor our mere seeking, but the apprehending and obtaining, which sets the crown on the saint's head.

## CHAPTER II.

## WHAT THIS REST PRESUPPOSETH.

FOR the clearer understanding the nature of this rest, you must know,

I. There are some things presupposed to it.

II. Some things contained in it.

I. All these things are presupposed to this rest.

1. A person in motion, seeking rest. This is man here in the way: angels have it already; and the devils are past hope.

2. An end toward which he moveth for rest. This can be only God. He that taketh any thing else for happiness, is out of the way the first step. The principal damning sin is, to make any thing besides God our end or rest. And the first true saving act is, to choose God only for our end and happiness.

3. A distance is presupposed from this end, else there can be no motion toward it. This sad distance is the case of all mankind since the fall: it was our God that we principally lost, and were shut out of his gracious presence, and since are said to be *without him in the world*: nay, in all men at age here, is supposed not only a distance, but also a contrary motion. When Christ comes with regenerating, saving grace, he finds no man sitting still, but all posting to eternal ruin; till by conviction, he first brings them to a stand, and by conversion, turns first their hearts, and then their lives to himself.

4. Here is presupposed the knowledge of the true ultimate end and its excellency; and a serious intending it. For so the motion of the rational creature proceedeth. An unknown end is no end; it is a contradiction. We cannot make that our end which we know not; nor that our chief end which we know not, or judge not, to be the chief good. Therefore, where this is not known that God is this end, there is no obtaining rest in any ordinary way, whatsoever may be in ways that by God are kept secret.

5. Here is presupposed, not only a distance from this rest, but also the true knowledge of this distance. If a man have lost his way, and know it not, he seeks not to return: therefore they that never knew they were without God, never yet enjoyed him: and they that never knew they were actually in the way to hell, did never yet know the way to heaven. Nay, there will not only be a knowledge of this distance and lost estate, but affections answerable. Can a man find himself on the brink of hell, and not tremble? Or find he hath lost his God and his soul, and not cry out, *I am undone?*

6. Here is also presupposed a superior moving cause, else should we all stand still, and not move a step forward toward our rest, no more than the inferior wheels in the watch would stir if you take away the spring, or the first mover. This is God. If God move us not, we cannot move. Therefore it is a most necessary part of our Christian wisdom to keep our subordination to God, and dependence on him; to be still in the path where he walks, and in that way where his Spirit doth most usually move.

7. Here is presupposed an internal principle of life in the person. God moves not man like a stone, but by enduing him first with life, not to enable him to move without God, but thereby to qualify him to move himself, in subordination to God, the first mover.

8. Here is presupposed also such a motion as is rightly ordered and directed toward the end. Not all motion or labour brings to rest. Every way leads not to this end; but he whose goodness hath appointed the end, hath in his wisdom, and by his sovereign authority, appointed the way. Christ is the door, the only way to this rest. Some will allow nothing else to be called the way, lest it derogate from Christ. The truth is, Christ is the only way to the Father; yet faith is the way to Christ; and gospel obedience, or faith and works, the way for those to walk in, that are in Christ.

9. There is supposed also a strong and constant motion, which may reach the end. The lazy world, that think all too much, will find this to their cost one day. They that think less ado might have served, do but reproach Christ for making us so much to do. They that have been most holy, watchful, painful to get to heaven, find, when they come to die, all too little. We see daily the best Christians, when dying, repent their negligence: I never knew any then repent his holiness and diligence. It would grieve a man's soul to see a multitude of mistaken sinners lay out their care and pains for a thing of nought, and think to have eternal salvation with a wish. If the way to heaven be not far harder than the world imagines, Christ and his apostles knew not the way; for they have told us, "That the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence; that the gate is strait and the way narrow, and we must strive, if we will enter; for many shall seek to enter, and not be able;" (which implies the faintness of their seeking, and that they put not strength to the work,) and that "the righteous themselves are scarcely saved."

I have seen this doctrine also thrown by with contempt by others, who say, What! do ye set us a working for heaven! Doth our duty do any thing? Hath not Christ



done all? Is not this to make him a half Saviour, and to preach the law?

*Answer.* It is to preach the law of Christ; his subjects are not lawless: it is to preach duty to Christ. None a more exact requirer of duty, or hater of sin, than Christ. Christ hath done, and will do, all his work; and therefore is a perfect Saviour: but yet leaves us a work to do. He hath paid all the price, and left us none to pay; yet he never intended his purchase should put us into absolute title to glory, in point of law, much less into immediate possession. He hath purchased the crown to bestow only on condition of believing, denying all for him, suffering with him, persevering, and overcoming. He hath purchased justification to bestow only on condition of believing, yea, repenting and believing: though it is Christ that enableth also to perform the condition. It is not a Saviour offered, but received also, that must save. It is not the blood of Christ shed only, but applied also, that must fully deliver; nor is it applied to the justification or salvation of a sleepy soul. Nor doth Christ carry us to heaven in a chair of security. Our righteousness, which the law of works requireth, and by which it is satisfied, is wholly in Christ, and not one grain in ourselves: nor must we dare to think of patching up a legal righteousness of Christ's and our own together; that is, that our doings can be the least part of satisfaction for our sins. But yet ourselves must personally fulfil the conditions of the new covenant, and so have the perfect evangelical righteousness, or never be saved by Christ's righteousness. Therefore say not it is not duty, but Christ; for it is Christ in a way of duty. As duty cannot do it without Christ, so Christ will not do it without duty.

And as this motion must be strong, so must it be constant, or it will fall short of rest. To begin in the spirit, and end in the flesh, will not bring to the end of the saints. Men as holy as the best of us, have fallen off. Read but the promises, Revelation ii and iii, "to him that overcometh." Christ's own disciples must be commanded to continue in his love, and that by keeping his commandments; and to abide in him, and his word in them: see John xv, 4-7, 9, 10.

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### CHAPTER III.

#### WHAT THIS REST CONTAINETH.

THERE is contained in this rest,

1. A cessation from motion or action. Not from all action, but of that which implies the absence of the end. When we have obtained the haven, we have done sailing: when we

are at our journey's end, we have done with the way. Therefore prophesying ceaseth, tongues fail, and knowledge shall be done away; that is, so far as it was imperfect. There shall be no more prayer, because no more necessity, but the full enjoyment of what we prayed for. Neither shall we need to fast, and weep, and watch any more, being out of the reach of sin and temptations. Nor will there be use for instructions and exhortations. Preaching is done: the ministry of man ceaseth: sacraments useless: the labourers called in, because the harvest is gathered: the unregenerate past hope, the saints past fear, for ever. Much less shall there be any need of labouring for inferior ends, as here we do, seeing they shall all devolve themselves into the ocean of the ultimate end, and the lesser good be swallowed up in the greatest.

2. This rest containeth a perfect freedom from all the evils that accompany us through our course, and which necessarily follow our absence from the chief good; besides our freedom from those eternal flames, which the neglecters of Christ must endure. There is no such a thing as grief and sorrow known there; nor is there such a thing as a pale face, a languid body, feeble joints, unable infancy, decrepit age, peccant humours, painful sickness, griping fears, consuming cares, nor whatsoever deserves the name of evil. Indeed a gale of groans and sighs, a stream of tears, accompanied us to the very gates, and there bid us farewell for ever. "We did weep and lament, when the world did rejoice; but our sorrow is turned into joy, and our joy shall no man take from us."

3. This rest containeth the highest degree of perfection, both of soul and body. This qualifies them to enjoy the glory, and thoroughly to partake the sweetness of it. Were the glory never so great, and themselves not made capable of it, it would be little to them. But the more perfect the appetite, the sweeter the food. The more musical the ear, the more pleasant the melody. The more perfect the soul, the more joyous those joys, and the more glorious is that glory. Nor is it only sinful imperfection that is removed, nor only that which is the fruit of sin, but that which adhered to us in our pure nature. There is far more procured by Christ, than was lost by Adam. It is the misery of wicked men here, that all without them is mercy, but within them a heart full of sin shuts the door against all, and makes them but the more miserable. When all is well within, then all is well indeed. Therefore will God, as a special part of his saints' happiness, perfect themselves as well as their condition.

4. This rest containeth, as the principal part, our nearest

fruition of God. As all good whatsoever is comprised in God, and all in the creature are but drops of this ocean, so all the glory of the blessed is comprised in their enjoyment of God; and if there be any mediate joys there, they are but drops from this. If men and angels should study to speak the blessedness of that estate, in one word, what can they say beyond this, That it is the nearest enjoyment of God? Say they have God, and you say they have all that is worth the having. O the full joys offered to a believer in that one sentence of Christ's! I would not for all the world that verse had been left out of the Bible; "Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me," John xvii, 24. Every word is full of life and joy. If the queen of Sheba had cause to say of Solomon's glory, "Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants that stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom;" then sure they that stand continually before God, and see his glory, and the glory of the Lamb, are somewhat more than happy. To them will Christ "give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God," Rev. ii, 7.

5. This rest containeth a sweet and constant action of all the powers of the soul and body in this fruition of God. But great will the change of our bodies and senses be; even so great as now we cannot conceive. If grace makes a Christian differ so much from what he was, that the Christian could say to his companion, *Ego non sum ego*, "I am not the man I was," how much more will glory make us differ? We may then say much more, This is not the body I had, and these are not the senses I had. Yet because we have no other name for them, let us call them senses; call them eyes and ears, seeing and hearing; but conceive, that as much as a body spiritual, above the sun in glory, exceedeth these frail, noisome, diseased lumps of flesh that we now carry about us; so far shall our senses of seeing and hearing exceed these we now possess: for the change of the senses must be conceived proportionable to the change of the body. And doubtless as God advanceth our sense, and enlargeth our capacity, so will he advance the happiness of those senses, and fill up with himself all that capacity. And certainly the body should not be raised up, if it should not share in the glory; for as it hath shared in the obedience and sufferings, so shall it also do in the blessedness; and as Christ bought the whole man, so shall the whole partake of the everlasting benefits of the purchase.

And if the body shall be thus employed, O how shall the soul be taken up! As its powers and capacities are greatest, so its actions are strongest, and its enjoyments sweetest.

As the bodily senses have their proper aptitude and action, whereby they receive and enjoy their object; so doth the soul in its own action enjoy its own object, by knowing, by thinking, and remembering, by loving, and by delightful joying; by these eyes it sees, and by these arms it embraceth. If it might be said of the disciples with Christ on earth, much more that behold him in his glory, "Blessed are the eyes that see the things that you see, and the ears that hear the things that you hear: for many princes and great ones have desired (and hoped) to see the things that you see, and have not seen them," &c, Matt. xiii, 16, 17.

Knowledge of itself is very desirable. As far as the rational soul exceeds the sensitive, so far the delights of a philosopher, in discovering the secrets of nature, and knowing the mystery of sciences, exceeds the delights of the glutton, the drunkard, and of all voluptuous sensualists whatsoever; so excellent is all truth. What then is their delight, who know the God of truth? What would I not give, so that all the uncertain principles in logic, natural philosophy, metaphysics, and medicine, were but certain? And that my dull, obscure, notions of them were but quick and clear? O what then would I not perform or part with, to enjoy a clear and true apprehension of the most true God! How noble a faculty of the soul is the understanding! It can compass the earth; it can measure the sun, moon, stars, and heaven; it can foreknow each eclipse to a minute, many years before: yea, but this is the top of all its excellency, it can know God, who is infinite, who made all these; a little here, and much more hereafter. O the wisdom and goodness of our blessed Lord! He hath created the understanding with a natural bias to truth and its object; and to the prime truth as its prime object: and, lest we should turn aside to any creature, he hath kept this as his own divine prerogative, not communicable to any creature, viz. to be the prime truth.

Didst thou never look so long upon the Son of God, till thine eyes were dazzled with his astonishing glory? and did not the splendour of it make all things below seem black and dark to thee; when thou lookedst down again, especially in the days of suffering for Christ? (when he usually appears most manifestly to his people.) Didst thou never see "one walking in the midst of the fiery furnace with thee, like the Son of God?" If thou know him, value him as thy life, and follow on to know him; and thou shalt know incomparably more than this. Or if I do but renew thy grief, to tell thee what thou once didst feel, but now hast lost, I counsel thee to "remember whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works, and be watchful, and strengthen the things

which remain ;” and I dare promise thee (because God hath promised) thou shalt see and know that which here thine eye could not see, nor thy understanding conceive. Believe me, Christians, yea, believe God, you that have known most of God in Christ here, it is nothing to that you shall know : it scarce, in comparison of that, deserves to be called knowledge. The difference betwixt our knowledge now, and our knowledge then, will be as great as that between our fleshly bodies now, and our spiritual bodies then. For as these bodies, so that knowledge must cease, that a more perfect may succeed. Our silly childish thoughts of God, which now is the highest we can reach to, must give place to a more manly knowledge.

Marvel not, therefore, how it can be “life eternal to know God and his Son Jesus Christ :” to enjoy God and his Christ is eternal life, and the soul’s enjoying is in knowing. They that savour only of earth, and have no way to judge but by sense, and never were acquainted with this knowledge of God, think it a poor happiness to know God. Let them have health, and wealth, and worldly delights, and take you the other. Alas, poor men ! they that have made trial of both, do not envy your happiness. O that you would come near, and taste and try as they have done, and then judge ; then continue in your former mind, if you can. For our parts we say with that knowing apostle, (though the speech may seem presumptuous,) 1 John v, 19, 20, “We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness : and we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true ; and we are in him that is true, in his Son Jesus Christ : this is the true God and eternal life.” *The Son of God is come to be our head and fountain of life, and hath given us an understanding, that the soul may be made capable to know him (God) that is true, the prime truth ; and we are brought so near to this enjoyment, that we are in him that is true ; we are in him, by being in his Son Jesus Christ : this is the true God, and so the fittest object for our understanding ; and this knowing of him, and being in him, in Christ, is eternal life.*

And doubtless the memory will not be idle in this blessed work ; if it be but by looking back, to help the soul to value its enjoyment. Our knowledge will be enlarged, not diminished ; therefore the knowledge of things past shall not be taken away. From that height the saint can look behind him and before him : and to compare past with present things, must needs raise in the blessed soul an inconceivable sense of its condition. To stand on that mount, whence we can see the wilderness and Canaan both at once ; to stand

in heaven and look back on earth, and weigh them together in the balance, how must it transport the soul, and make it cry out, Is this the purchase that cost so dear as the blood of God? O blessed price, and thrice blessed love! Is this the end of believing? Is this the end of the Spirit's workings? Have the gales of grace blown me into such a harbour? Is it hither that Christ hath enticed my soul? O blessed way, and thrice blessed end! Is this the glory which the Scriptures spoke of, and ministers preached of so much? Now I see the gospel indeed is good tidings, even "tidings of great joy to all nations!" Are my mourning, my fasting, my heavy walking, groanings, and complainings, come to this? Are all my afflictions and fears, all Satan's temptations, and the world's scorns, come to this? O vile nature, that resisted such a blessing! Unworthy soul! is this the place thou camest so unwilling to? Was the world too good to lose? Didst thou stick at leaving all, denying all, and suffering any thing, for this? O false heart! that had almost betrayed me to eternal flames, and lost me this glory! O base flesh! that would needs have been pleased, though to the loss of this felicity! Didst thou make me to question the truth of this glory? Didst thou draw me to distrust the Lord? My soul, art thou not ashamed that ever thou didst question that love that hath brought thee hither? That thou wast jealous of the faithfulness of thy Lord? That thou suspectedst his love, when thou shouldst have only suspected thyself? That thou didst not live continually transported with thy Saviour's love? and that ever thou quenchedst a motion of his Spirit? Art thou not ashamed of all thy hard thoughts of such a God? Of all thy misinterpreting those providences, and repining at those ways that have such an end? Now thou art convinced that the ways thou calledst hard, and the cup thou calledst bitter, were necessary: that thy Lord meant thee better than thou wouldst believe: and that thy Redeemer was saving thee, as well when he crossed thy desires as when he granted them; as well when he broke thy heart, as when he bound it up. No thanks to thee for this crown; but to *Jehovah and the Lamb for ever.*

Thus as the memory of the wicked will eternally promote their torment to look back on the sin committed, the grace refused, Christ neglected, and time lost; so will the memory of the saints for ever promote their joys.

But O the full, the near, the sweet enjoyment, is that of the affections, love and joy; it is near, for love is the essence of the soul, and love is the essence of God. "God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." The acting of this affection wheresoever, carrieth much delight with it, especially when the object appears

deserving, and the affection is strong. But what will it be when perfect affections shall have the strongest perfect acting upon the most perfect object? Now the poor soul complains, O that I could love Christ more! But I cannot, alas, I cannot: yea, but then thou canst not choose but love him; I had almost said, forbear if thou canst. Now thou knowest little of his amiableness, and therefore lovest little: then thine eye will affect thy heart, and the continual viewing of that perfect beauty, will keep thee in continual ravishments of love. Now thy salvation is not perfected, nor all the mercies purchased, yet given in; but when "the top-stone is set on, thou shalt with shoutings cry, Grace, grace." Christians, doth it now stir up your love, to remember all the experiences of his love; to look back upon a life of mercies? Doth not kindness melt you? and the sunshine of Divine goodness warm your frozen hearts? What will it do then when you shall live in love, and have all in him who is all? O the high delights of love! of this love! the content that the heart findeth in it! the satisfaction it brings along with it! Surely love is both work and wages.

And if this were all, what a high favour, that God will give us leave to love him! That he will vouchsafe to be embraced by such arms that have embraced sin before him. But this is not all, he returneth love for love: nay, a thousand times more as perfect as we shall be, we cannot reach his measure of love. Christian, thou wilt then be brimful of love; yet love as much as thou canst, thou shalt be ten thousand times more beloved. Dost thou think thou canst over-love him? What, love more than love itself! Were the arms of the Son of God open upon the cross, and an open passage made to his heart by the spear? and will not arms and heart be open to thee in glory? Did he begin to love before thou lovedst, and will he not continue now? Did he love thee an enemy? thee a-sinner? thee who even loathedst thyself! and own thee when thou didst disclaim thyself? and will he not now unmeasurably love thee a son? thee a perfect saint? thee who returnest love for love? Thou wast wont injuriously to question his love: doubt of it now if thou canst. As the pains of hell will convince the rebellious sinner of God's wrath, who would never before believe it: so the joys of heaven will convince thee thoroughly of that love which thou wouldst so hardly be persuaded of. He that in love wept over the old Jerusalem near her ruin, with what love will he rejoice over the new Jerusalem in her glory? Methinks I see him groaning and weeping over dead Lazarus, till he forced the Jews that stood by to say, "Behold how he loved him!" Will he not then much more, by rejoicing over us, make all

(even the damned, if they see it,) say, "Behold how he loveth them!"

Here is the heaven of heaven! the fruition of God: in these mutual embracements of love doth it consist. To love and be beloved: "These are the everlasting arms that are underneath: his left hand is under their heads, and with his right hand doth he embrace them."

Stop here and think a while what a state this is. Is it a small thing to be beloved of God? To be the son, the spouse, the love, the delight, of the King of glory? Believe this, and think on it: thou shalt be eternally embraced in the arms of that love which was from everlasting, and will extend to everlasting; of that love, which brought the Son of God's love from heaven to earth, from earth to the cross, from the cross to the grave, from the grave to glory; that love which was weary, hungry, tempted, scorned, scourged, buffeted, spit upon, crucified, pierced; which did fast, pray, teach, heal, weep, sweat, bleed, die; that love will eternally embrace them. When perfect created love, and most perfect uncreated love meet together, O the blessed meeting! It will not be like Joseph and his brethren, who lay upon one another's necks weeping: it will break forth into pure joy, not a mixture of joy and sorrow: it will be loving and rejoicing, not loving and sorrowing: yet will it make Pharaoh's (Satan's) court to ring with the news that Joseph's brethren are come; that the saints are arrived safe at the bosom of Christ, out of the reach of hell for ever.

And now are we not left in the apostle's admiration? "What shall we say to these things?" Infinite love must needs be a mystery to a finite capacity. No wonder if angels desire to pry into the mystery; and if it be the study of the saints here, "to know the height, and breadth, and length, and depth, of this love, though it passeth knowledge;" this is the saint's rest in the fruition of God by love.

*Lastly.* The affection of joy hath not the least share in this fruition. The inconceivable complacency which the blessed feel in their seeing, knowing, loving, and being beloved of God. The delight of the senses here, cannot be known by expressions as they are felt; how much less this joy: This is "the white stone, which none knoweth but he that receiveth:" and if there be any joy which the stranger meddleth not with, then surely this, above all, is it. All Christ's ways of mercy tend to, and end in, the saints' joys. He wept, sorrowed, suffered, that they might rejoice; he sendeth the Spirit to be their comforter; he multiplieth promises, he discovers their future happiness, that their joy might be full; he aboundeth to them in mercies of all sorts; "He maketh them lie down in green pastures, and leadeth



them by the still waters ;” yea, “ openeth to them the fountain of living waters, that their joy may be full, that they may thirst no more, and that it may spring up in them to everlasting life ;” he causeth them to suffer, that he may cause them to rejoice ; and chasteneth them, that he may give them rest ; and maketh them (as he did himself) “ To drink of the brook in the way, that they may lift up the head,” Psalm cx, 7. And lest after all this they should neglect their own comforts, he maketh it their duty, commanding them “ to rejoice in him alway.” And he never brings them into so low a condition wherein he leaves them not more cause of joy than of sorrow. And hath the Lord such a care for us here, where, the Bridegroom being from us, we must mourn? O! what will that joy be, where, the soul being perfectly prepared for joy, and joy prepared by Christ for the soul, it shall be our work, our business, eternally to rejoice?

And it seems the saints’ joy shall be greater than the damned’s torment: for their torment is the torment of creatures “ prepared for the devil and his angels :” but our joy is *the joy of our Lord*, even our Lord’s own joy shall we enter. “ And the same glory which the Father giveth him, doth the Son give them,” John xvii, 22. “ And to sit down with him in his throne, even as he is set down in his Father’s throne,” Rev. iii, 21. Thou that now spendest thy days in sorrow, who knowest no garments but sackcloth, no food but the bread and water of afflictions, what sayest thou to this great change? from all sorrow to more than all joy? Thou poor soul, who prayest for joy, complainest for want of joy, then thou shalt have full joy, as much as thou canst hold, and more than ever thou thoughtest on, or thy heart desired.

And in the mean time walk carefully, watch constantly, and then let God measure out thy times and degrees of joy. It may be he keeps them till thou hast more need ; thou mayest better lose thy comfort than thy safety. As the joy of the hypocrite, so the fears of the upright are but for a moment. “ Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.” O blessed morning ! Poor drooping soul, how would it fill thee with joy now, if a voice from heaven should assure thee of thy part in these joys ! What then will thy joy be, when thy actual possession shall convince thee of thy title : when the angels shall bring thee to Christ, and when Christ shall (as it were) take thee by the hand, and lead thee into thy purchased possession ! Wilt thou not be almost ready to draw back, and to say, What I, Lord, I, the unworthy neglecter of thy grace ! I, the unworthy disesteemer of thy blood, and slighter of thy love ! must I have

this glory? "Make me a hired servant, I am no more worthy to be called a son:" but love will have it so; therefore thou must enter into his joy.

And it is not thy joy only; it is a mutual joy, as well as mutual love: is there such joy in heaven at thy conversion, and will there be none at thy glorification? Will not the angels welcome thee thither, and congratulate thy safe arrival? Yea, it is the joy of Jesus Christ: for now he hath the end of his labour, suffering, dying, when we have our joys; "when he is glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe. We are his seed, and the fruit of his soul's travail, which when he seeth, he will be satisfied:" he will rejoice over his purchased inheritance, and his people shall rejoice in him.

Yea, the Father himself puts on joy too, in our joy: as we grieve his Spirit, and weary him with our iniquities; so he is rejoiced in our good. O how quickly here doth he spy a returning prodigal, even afar off! How doth he run and meet him, fall on his neck, and kiss him! This is indeed a happy meeting: but nothing to the joy of that last and great meeting.

And now look back upon all this; I say to thee as the angel to John, "What hast thou seen?" Or if yet thou perceive not, draw nearer, come up higher, *Come and see*: dost thou fear thou hast been all this while in a dream? Why, *These are the true sayings of God*. Dost thou fear (as the disciples) that thou hast seen but a ghost instead of Christ? a shadow instead of the rest? Come near and feel: a shadow contains not those substantial blessings, nor rests upon such a sure word of promise, as you have seen these do. Go thy way now, and tell the disciples, and tell the drooping souls thou meetest with, that thou hast, in this glass, seen heaven: that "the Lord indeed is risen, and hath here appeared to thee; and behold he is gone before us into rest; and that he is now preparing a place for them, and will come again, and take them to himself, that "where he is, there they may be also."

But alas! my fearful heart dare scarce proceed. Methinks I hear the Almighty's voice saying to me, as to Elihu, Job xxxviii, 2, "Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?"

But pardon, O Lord, thy servant's sin: I have not pried into unrevealed things, nor curiously searched into thy counsels; but indeed I have dishonoured thy holiness, wronged thine excellency, disgraced thy saints' glory, by my disproportionable portraying: I will bewail from my heart that my apprehensions are so dull, my thoughts so mean, my affections so stupid, and my expressions so low.

But I have only heard by the hearing of the ear; O let thy servant see thee, and possess these joys, and then I shall have more suitable conceivings, and shall give thee fuller glory. "I have now uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me which I knew not. Yet I believed, and therefore spake. Remember with whom thou hast to do: what canst thou expect from dust, from corruption, but defilement? Our foul hands will leave, where they touch, the marks of their uncleanness; and most on those things that are most pure. "I know thou wilt be sanctified in them that come nigh thee, and before all the people thou wilt be glorified: and if thy jealousy excluded from that land of rest thy servants Moses and Aaron, because they sanctified thee not in the midst of Israel, what then may I expect? But though the weakness be the fruit of my own corruption, yet the fire is from thine altar, and the work of thy commanding. I looked not into thine ark, nor put forth my hand unto it without thee. O therefore wash away these stains also in the blood of the Lamb.

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## CHAPTER IV.

### THE FOUR GREAT PREPARATIONS TO OUR REST.

HAVING thus showed you a small glimpse of that resemblance of the saint's rest which I had seen in the gospel glass; it follows, that we proceed to view a little the blessed properties of this rest. And why doth my trembling heart draw back? Surely the Lord is not now so inaccessible, nor the ways so blocked up, as when the law and curse reigned. Wherefore, finding the flaming sword removed, I shall look again into the paradise of our God.

And first, let us consider the great preparations; for the porch of this temple is exceeding glorious. Let us observe,

1. The most glorious coming of the Son of God.
2. His raising our bodies, and uniting them again with the soul.
3. His solemn proceedings in their judgment, where they shall be justified before all the world.
4. His enthroning them in glory.

1. And well may the coming of Christ be reckoned with those ingredients that compound this precious rest; for to this end it is intended, and to this end it is of apparent necessity. For his people's sake he sanctified himself to his office: for their sake he came into the world, suffered, died, rose, ascended; and for their sake it is that he will return. To this end will Christ come again to receive his people to himself, "that where he is, they may be also," John

xiv, 3. He that would come to suffer, will surely come to triumph; and he that would come to purchase, will surely come to possess.

But why stayed he not with his people while he was here? Why; must not the Comforter be sent? Was not the work on earth done? Must he not receive the recompense of reward, and enter into his glory? Must he not take possession in our behalf? Must he not go to prepare a place for us? Must he not intercede with the Father, and plead his sufferings, and be filled with the Spirit to send it forth, and receive authority to subdue his enemies? Our abode here is short: if he had stayed on earth, what would it have been to enjoy him for a few days, and then die? But he hath more in heaven to dwell among: even the spirits of the just of many generations, there made perfect. O what a day will that be! when we, who have been kept prisoners by the grave, shall be fetched out by the Lord himself; when Christ shall come from heaven to plead with his enemies, and set his captives free? It will not be such a coming as his first was, in meanness, and poverty, and contempt. He will not come to be spit upon, and buffeted, and scorned, and crucified again. He will not come, O careless world, to be slighted by you any more. And yet that coming, which was in infirmity and reproach for our sakes, wanted not its glory. If the angels of heaven must be the messengers of that coming, as being *tidings of joy to all people*; and the heavenly host must accompany his nativity, and must praise God with that solemnity; O with what shoutings will angels and saints at that day proclaim, "Glory to God, and peace and good will toward men!" If the stars of heaven must lead men to come to worship a child in a manger, how will the glory of his next appearing constrain all the world to acknowledge his sovereignty! If, when he was in the form of a servant, they cry out, "What manner of man is this, that both wind and sea obey him!" what shall they say when they shall see him coming in his glory, and the heavens and earth obey him? "Then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven, and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."

This coming of Christ is frequently mentioned in the prophets, as the great support of his people's spirits till then. And whenever the apostles would quicken to duty, or encourage to patient waiting, they usually do it by mentioning Christ's coming. Why then do we not use more this cordial consideration, whenever we want support and comfort? Shall the wicked with inconceivable horror behold him, and cry out, "Yonder is he whose blood we

neglected, whose grace we resisted, whose counsels we refused, whose government we cast off!" And shall not the saints, with inconceivable gladness, cry out, "Yonder is he whose blood redeemed us, whose Spirit cleansed us! Yonder comes he in whom we trusted, and now ye see he hath not deceived our trust: he for whom we long waited, and now we see we have not waited in vain! O how should it then be the character of a Christian "to wait for the Son of God from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come," 1 Thess. i, 10; and with all faithful diligence to prepare to meet our Lord with joy. And seeing his coming is of purpose "to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe," what thought should glad our hearts more than the thought of that day? A little while indeed we have not "seen him, but yet a little while and we shall see him," for he hath said, "I will not leave you comfortless, but will come unto you." We were comfortless should he not come. And while we daily gaze and look up to heaven after him, let us remember what the angel said, "This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." Let every Christian that heareth and readeth say, Come; and our Lord himself saith, "Surely I come quickly; amen: even so, come, Lord Jesus."

The second stream that leadeth to paradise, is that great work of Jesus Christ, in raising our bodies from the dust, uniting them again unto the soul. What, saith the atheist, shall all these scattered bones and dust become a man? Thou fool, dost thou dispute against the power of the Almighty! Dost thou object difficulties to infinite strength? Thou blind mole! Thou little piece of creeping, breathing, clay! But come thy way, let me take thee by the hand, and with reverence (as Elihu) plead for God; and for that power whereby I hope to arise. Seest thou this great massy body of the earth? Upon what foundation doth it stand? Seest thou this vast ocean of waters? What limits them, and why do they not overflow and drown the earth? Whence is that constant ebbing and flowing of her tides? Wilt thou say from the moon, or other planets? and whence have they that influence? Must thou not come to a cause of causes, that can do all things? And doth not reason require thee to conceive of that cause as a perfect intelligence, and voluntary agent, and not such a blind worker and empty notion as that nothing is which thou callest nature? What thinkest thou? Is not that power able to effect thy resurrection, which doth all this? Is it not as easy to raise the dead, as to make heaven, and earth, and all, out of nothing? But if

thou be unpersuadable, all I say to thee more is as the prophet to the prince of Samaria, 2 Kings vii, 19, "Thou shalt see that day with thine eyes, but little to thy comfort; for that which is the day of relief to the saints, shall be a day of revenge on thee."

Come then, fellow Christians, let us commit these carcasses to the dust: that prison shall not long contain them. Let us lie down in peace, and take our rest: it will not be an everlasting night, or endless sleep. What if we go out of the troubles and stirs of the world, and enter into those chambers of dust, and the doors be shut upon us, and we hide ourselves, as it were, for a little moment "until the indignation be overpast?" Yet, "behold the Lord cometh out of his place, to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: and then the earth shall disclose us, and the dust shall hide us no more. As sure as we awake in the morning, when we have slept out the night, so sure shall we then awake.

Lay down then cheerfully this lump of corruption: thou shalt undoubtedly receive it again in incorruption. Lay down freely this terrestrial, this natural body: thou shalt receive it again a celestial, a spiritual body. Though thou lay it down with great dishonour, thou shalt receive it in glory: and though thou art separated from it through weakness, it shall be raised again in mighty power. When the trumpet of God shall sound the call, "Come away, rise, ye dead," who shall then stay behind? Who can resist the powerful command of our Lord? When he shall call to the earth and sea, "O earth, O sea, give up thy dead," the first that shall be called are the saints that sleep; and then the saints that are alive shall be changed. For "they which are alive, and remain till the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then they which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord." Triumph, now, O Christian! in these promises; thou shalt shortly triumph in their performance: for this is the day that the Lord will make; "We shall be glad and rejoice therein." The grave that could not keep our Lord, cannot keep us. He arose for us, and by the same power will cause us to arise. "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." Therefore let our hearts be glad, and our glory rejoice, and our flesh also rest in hope; for he will not leave us in the grave, nor suffer us still to see cor-

ruption. Yea, "therefore let us be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know our labour is not in vain in the Lord."

The third part of this prologue to the saint's rest, is the solemn process at their judgment, where they shall first themselves be justified; and then with Christ judge the world. All the world must there appear, young and old, of all estates and nations, that ever were from the creation to that day. The judgment shall be set, and the books opened, and the book of life produced: "and the dead shall be judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works; and whosoever is not found written in the book of life, is cast into the lake of fire." O terrible! O joyful day! Terrible to those that have not watched, but forgot the coming of their Lord! joyful to the saints, whose waiting and hope was to see this day! Then shall the world behold the goodness and severity of the Lord; on them who perish, severity; but to his chosen, goodness. When every one must give account of his stewardship: and every talent of time, health, wit, mercies, affliction, means, warnings, must be reckoned for. When the sins of youth, and those which they had forgotten, and their secret sins, shall be laid open before angels and men. When they shall see all their friends, wealth, old delights, all their confidence and false hopes, forsake them. When they shall see the Lord Jesus whom they neglected, whose word they disobeyed, whose ministers they abused, whose servants they hated, now sitting to judge them. When their own consciences shall cry out against them, and call to their remembrance all their misdoings. Remember, at such a time, such or such a sin; at such a time, Christ sued hard for thy conversion; the minister pressed it home to thy heart, thou wast touched to the quick with the word; thou didst purpose and promise returning, and yet thou didst cast off all. O which way will the wretched sinner look! O who can conceive the thoughts of his heart! Now the world cannot help him; his old companions cannot help him; the saints neither can nor will; only the Lord Jesus can: but there is the misery, he will not; nay, without violating the truth of his word, he cannot: though otherwise, in regard of his absolute power, he might. The time was, sinner, when Christ would, and you would not; and now fain would you, and he will not. What then remains but to cry to the mountains, "Fall on us; and the hills, cover us from the presence of him that sits upon the throne!" But all in vain! for thou hast the Lord of mountains and hills for thine enemy, whose voice they will obey, and not thine. Sinner, make not light of this; for as thou livest, (except a

thorough change prevent it,) thou shalt shortly, to thy inconceivable horror, see that day.

Poor careless sinner, I did not think here to have said so much to thee: but if these lines fall into thy hands, "I charge thee, before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing, and his kingdom," that thou make haste and get alone, and set thyself sadly to ponder these things. Ask thy heart, is this true, or is it not? Is there such a day, and must I see it? What do I then! Is it not time, full time, that I had made sure of Christ and comfort long ago? Should I sit still another day, who have lost so many? Friend, I profess to thee from the word of the Lord, that of all thy sweet sins, there will then be nothing left but the sting in thy conscience, which will be never out through all eternity.

But why tremblest thou, O gracious soul! He that would not overlook one Lot in Sodom; nay, that could do nothing till he went forth; will he forget thee at that day? "Thy Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to reserve the unjust to the day of judgment to be punished." He knoweth how to make the same day the greatest terror to his foes, and yet the greatest joy to his people. "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." And, "who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect!" Shall the law? Why, "whatsoever the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law; but we are not under the law, but under grace; for the law of the spirit of life, which is in Christ Jesus, hath made us free from the law of sin and death." Or shall conscience? We were long ago justified by faith, and so have peace with God, and have our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience: and the Spirit bearing witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God. "It is God that justifieth, who shall condemn?" If our Judge condemn us not, who shall? He that said to the adulterous woman, "Hath no man condemned thee? Neither do I condemn thee;" he will say to us, (more faithfully than Peter to him,) "Though all men deny thee, or condemn thee, I will not. Thou hast confessed me before men, and I will confess thee before my Father and the angels in heaven."

What inexpressible joy may this afford a believer? Our dear Lord shall be our Judge. Will a man fear to be judged by his dearest friend, by a brother, by a father, or a wife by her own husband? Did he come down, and suffer, and weep, and bleed, and die for thee; and will he now condemn thee? Was he judged and condemned, and executed in thy stead, and now will he condemn thee? Hath it cost him so dear to save thee! and will he now destroy thee? Hath he done the



most of the work already, in justifying, preserving, and perfecting thee? and will he now undo all again? O what an unreasonable sin is unbelief, that will charge our Lord with such absurdities! Well then, fellow Christians, let the terror of that day be never so great, our Lord can mean no ill to us in all. Let it make the devils tremble; and the wicked tremble; but it shall make us leap for joy. And it must needs affect us deeply with the sense of our mercy and happiness, to behold the contrary condition of others. To see most of the world tremble with terror, while we triumph with joy: to see them thrust into hell, when we are proclaimed heirs of the kingdom; to see our neighbours that lived in the same towns, came to the same congregations, dwelt in the same houses, and were esteemed more honourable in the world than ourselves; now so differenced from us, and by the Searcher of hearts eternally separated. This, with the great magnificence and dreadfulness of the day, doth the apostle pathetically express, in 2 Thess. i, 6-10, "It is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled, rest with us; when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power." And now is not here enough to make that day a welcome day, and the thoughts of it delightful to us? But yet there is more. We shall be so far from the dread of that judgment, that ourselves shall become the judges. Christ will take his people, as it were into commission with him; and they shall sit and approve his righteous judgment.

"Do you not know that the saints shall judge the world?" Nay, "Know you not that we shall judge angels?" Surely, were it not the word of Christ that speaks it, this advancement would seem incredible; yet even Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of this; saying, "Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and convince all that are ungodly among them, of their ungodly deeds, which they have ungodly committed; and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him," Jude 14, &c. Thus shall the saints be honoured, and the "righteous have dominion in the morning." O that the careless world were "but wise to consider this," and "that they would remember their latter end!" That they would be now of the same mind, as they will be when they shall see the "heavens pass away with a great noise, and the elements melt with fervent heat; the earth also and the works that are therein be burnt up!" When

all shall be on fire about their ears, and all earthly glory consumed. For "the heavens and the earth which are now by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men. Seeing then all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness; looking for, and hasting to the coming of the day of God; wherein the heavens being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements melt with fervent heat."

The fourth antecedent to the saints' advancement is, their solemn coronation, and receiving into the kingdom. For as Christ, their head, is anointed both king and priest; so under him are his people made unto God both kings and priests: "To reign and to offer praises for ever," Rev. v, 10: "The crown of righteousness which was laid up for them, shall by the Lord, the righteous judge, be given them, at that day," 2 Tim. iv, 8: "They have been faithful to the death, and therefore shall receive the crown of life:" and according to the improvement of their talents here, so shall their rule and dignity be enlarged. So that they are not dignified with empty titles, but real dominions. For "Christ will take them and set them down with himself, in his own throne; and will give them power over the nations, even as he received of his Father: and will give them the morning star." The Lord himself will give them possession with these applauding expressions: "Well done, good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." And with this solemn and blessed proclamation shall he enthrone them; "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Every word is full of life and joy. ["Come."] This is the holding forth of the golden sceptre; to warrant our approach unto this glory. Come now as near as you will: fear not the Bethshemites' judgment: for the enmity is utterly taken away. This is not such a "Come" as we were wont to hear, "Come, take up your cross and follow me:" though that was sweet, yet this is much more so. ["Ye blessed."] Blessed indeed, when that mouth shall so pronounce us. For though the world hath accounted us accursed, yet certainly those that he blesseth are blessed: and those whom he curseth only, are cursed: and his blessing shall not be revoked. But he hath blessed us, and we shall be blessed. ["Of my Father."] Blessed in the Father's love as well as the Son's; for they are one: the Father hath testified his love, in sending Christ and accepting his ransom; as the Son hath also testified his. ["Inherit."] No longer bondmen, nor servants only, nor children under age

who differ not in possession, but only in the title from servants; but now, we are "heirs of the kingdom, co-heirs with Christ." ["The kingdom."] No less than the kingdom! Indeed to be King of kings, and Lord of lords, is our Lord's own title: but to be kings and reign with him, is ours: the fruition of this kingdom, is as the fruition of the light of the sun, each hath the whole, and the rest never the less. ["Prepared for you."] God is the *Alpha*, as well as the *Omega* of our blessedness. Eternal love hath laid the foundation. He prepared the kingdom for us, and then prepared us for the kingdom. This is the preparation of his counsel; for the execution whereof Christ was yet to make a further preparation. ["For you."] Not for believers only in general, but for you in particular. ["From the foundation of the world."] Not only from the promise after Adam's fall, but from eternity.

But a difficulty ariseth in our way. In what sense is our improvement of our talent, our well doing, our overcoming, our harbouring, visiting, feeding Christ in his little ones, alleged as a reason of our coronation and glory? Is it not the purchased possession, and mere fruit of Christ's blood? If every man must be judged according to his works, and receive according to what they have done in the flesh, whether good or evil; if God "will render to every man according to his deeds," Rom. ii, 6, 7, and give eternal life to all men, if they patiently continue in well doing; if he will give right to the tree of life, Rev. xxii, 14, and entrance into the city, to the doers of his commandments; and if this last absolving sentence be the completing of our justification; and so "the doers of the law be justified," Rom. ii, 13, then what is become of free grace? or justification by faith only? of the sole righteousness of Christ to make us accepted? I answer,

1. Let not the names of men draw thee one way or other, nor make thee partial in searching for the truth: dislike the men for their unsound doctrine; but call not doctrine unsound, because it is theirs: nor sound because of the repute of the writer.

2. Know this, that as an unhumbed soul is far apter to give too much to duty and personal righteousness, than to Christ; so an humble self-denying Christian is as likely to err on the other hand, in giving less to duty than Christ hath given, and laying all the work from himself on Christ, for fear of robbing Christ of the honour; and so much to look at Christ without him, and think he should look at nothing in himself; that he forgets Christ within him.

3. Our giving to Christ more of the work than Scripture doth, or rather our ascribing it to him out of the Scripture way, doth but dishonour, and not honour him; and depress,

but not exalt his free grace; while we deny the inward sanctifying work of his Spirit, and extol his free justification, which are equal fruits of his merit, we make him an imperfect Saviour.

4. But to arrogate to ourselves any part of Christ's prerogative, is most desperate of all, and no doctrine more directly overthrows the gospel almost, than that of justification by the merits of our own, or by works of the law.

And thus we have seen the Christian safely landed in paradise; and conveyed honourably to his rest. Now let us a little further view those mansions, consider his privileges, and see whether there be any glory like unto this glory.

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## CHAPTER V.

### THE EXCELLENCIES OF OUR REST.

LET US see more immediately from the pure fountain of the Scriptures, what further excellencies this rest affordeth. And the Lord hide us in the clefts of the rock, and cover us with the hands of indulgent grace, while we approach to take this view.

And first, it is a most singular honour of the saint's rest, to be called the *purchased possession*; that it is the fruit of the blood of the Son of God: yea, the chief fruit: yea, the end and perfection of all the fruits of that blood. Surely love is the most precious ingredient in the whole composition; and of all the flowers that grow in the garden of love, can there be brought one more sweet than this blood? Greater love than this there is not, to lay down the life of the lover. And to have this our Redeemer ever before our eyes, and the liveliest sense and freshest remembrance of that dying bleeding love still upon our souls; O how will it fill our souls with perpetual ravishments, to think that in the streams of this blood, we have swam through the violence of the world, the snares of Satan, the seducements of the flesh, the curse of the law, the wrath of an offended God, the accusations of a guilty conscience, and the doubts and fears of an unbelieving heart, and are passed through all and arrived safely at the breast of God! Now we are stupified with vile and senseless hearts, that can hear all the story of this love, and read all the sufferings of love; and all with dulness, and unaffectedness. He cries to us, "Behold and see, is it nothing to you, O all ye that pass by? Is there any sorrow like unto my sorrow?" And we will scarce hear or regard the voice; or turn aside to view the wounds of him who healed our wounds at so dear a rate. But oh! then our perfected souls will feel as well as hear,

and with feeling apprehensions flame in love for love. Now we set his picture wounded and dying before our eyes, but can get it no nearer our hearts, than if we believed nothing of what we read. But then when the obstructions between the eye and the understanding are taken away, and the passage opened between the head and heart, surely our eyes will everlastingly affect our heart! And while we view with one eye our slain revived Lord, and with the other eye our lost recovered souls, these views will eternally pierce us, and warm our very souls. And those eyes through which folly hath so often stolen into our hearts, let in the love of our dearest Lord for ever.

We shall then leave these hearts of stone and rock behind us, and the sin that here so close besets us, and the sottish unkindness that followed us so long, shall not be able to follow us into glory. But we shall behold, as it were, the wounds of love, with eyes and hearts of love for ever. Now his heart is open to us, and ours shut to him: but when his heart shall be open, and our hearts open, oh the blessed congress that will then be! What a passionate meeting is there between our new risen Lord, and the first sinful woman that he appears to! How doth love struggle for expressions? and the straitened fire shut up in the breast, strive to break forth? Mary! saith Christ: Master! saith Mary: and presently she clasps about his feet, having her heart as near to his heart as her hands were to his feet. What a meeting of love then will there be, between the newly glorified saint, and the glorious Redeemer! But I am here at a loss, my apprehensions fail me, and fall too short. Only this I know, it will be the singular praise of our inheritance, that it was bought with the price of that blood; and the singular joy of the saints, to behold the purchaser and the price, together with the possession: neither will the views of the wounds of love renew our wounds or sorrow: He whose first words after his resurrection were to a great sinner, "Woman, why weepest thou?" knows how to raise love and joy by all those views, without raising any cloud of sorrow. If a dying friend deliver but a token of his love, how carefully do we preserve it? and still remember him when we behold it, as if his own name were written on it? And will not then the death and blood of our Lord everlastingly sweeten our possessed glory? Well then, Christians, as you use to do in your books, and on your goods, to write down the price they cost you: so on your righteousness, and on your glory, write down the price, *the precious blood of Christ*.

Yet understand this rightly: not that this highest glory was in the strictest sense purchased, so as that it was the most

immediate effect of Christ's death; we must take heed that we conceive not of God as a tyrant, who so delighteth in cruelty as to exchange mercies for stripes. God was never so pleased with the sufferings of the innocent, much less of his Son, as to sell his mercy properly for their sufferings. But the sufferings of Christ were primarily and immediately to satisfy justice, and to bear what was due to the sinner, and so to restore him to the life he lost, and the happiness he fell from: but this dignity, which surpasseth the first, as it were, from the redundancy of his merit, or a secondary fruit of his death. The work of his redemption so well pleased the Father, that he gave him power to advance his chosen to a higher dignity than they fell from; and to give them the glory which was given to himself; and all this according to the good pleasure of his own will.

2. The second *pearl in the saint's diadem*, is, that it is free. This seemeth, as Pharaoh's second kine, "to devour the former." But the seeming discord is but a pleasing diversity which constitutes the melody. These two attributes, purchased and free, are the two chains of gold which make up the wreath for the head of the pillars in the temple of God. It was dear to Christ, but free to us. When Christ was to buy, silver and gold were nothing worth; prayers and tears could not suffice; nor any thing below his blood; but when we come to buy, our buying is but receiving: we have it freely, "without money and without price." Nor do the gospel conditions make it the less free. If the gospel conditions had been such as are the laws, or payment of the debt required at our hands, the freeness then were more questionable. Yea, if God had said to us, "*Sinners, if you will satisfy my justice for one of your sins, I will forgive you all the rest,*" it would have been a hard condition on our part, and the grace of the covenant not so free, as our disability doth require. But if all the condition be our cordial acceptance, surely we deserve not the name of purchasers. Thankfully accepting of a free acquittance, is no paying of the debt. If life be offered to a condemned man, upon condition that he shall not refuse the offer, the favour is nevertheless free. Nay, though the condition were, that he should beg, and wait before he have his pardon, and take him for his Lord who hath thus redeemed him, this is no satisfying the justice of the law: especially when the condition is also given by God. Surely then here all is free: if the Father freely give the Son, and the Son freely pay the debt; and if God freely accept that way of payment, when he might have required it of the principal; and if both Father and Son freely offer us the purchased life upon those fair conditions; and if they also freely send the Spirit to enable us to perform those

conditions, then what is here that is not free? O the everlasting admiration that must needs surprise the saints to think of this freeness! What did the Lord see in me, that he should judge me meet for such a state? that I, who was but a poor despised wretch, should be clad in the brightness of this glory? that I, a silly creeping worm, should be advanced to this high dignity? He that durst not lift up his eyes to heaven, but stood afar off smiting his breast, and crying, "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner!" now to be lifted up to heaven himself! He who was wont to write his name in Bradford's style, *the unthankful, the hard hearted, the unworthy sinner!* and was wont to admire that patience could bear so long, and justice suffer him to live: sure he will admire at this alteration, when he shall find, by experience, that unworthiness could not hinder his salvation, which he thought would have bereaved him of every mercy. Ah! Christian, there is no talk of our worthiness or unworthiness. If worthiness were our condition for admittance, we might sit down with St. John and weep, "because none in heaven or on earth is found worthy. But the Lion of the tribe of Judah is worthy, and hath prevailed; and by that title must we hold the inheritance." We shall offer there the offering that David refused, "even praise for that which cost us nothing." Here our commission runs, "Freely ye have received, freely give." But Christ hath dearly received, yet freely gives. Yet this is not all. If it were only for nothing, and without our merit, the wonder were great: but it is moreover against our merit, and against our long endeavouring our own ruin. The broken heart that hath known the desert of sin, doth both understand and feel what I say. What an astonishing thought it will be, to think of the unmeasurable difference between our deservings and our receivings! between the state we should have been in, and the state we are in! to look down upon hell, and see the vast difference that free grace hath made betwixt us and them! to see the inheritance there, which we were born to, so different from that which we are adopted to! Oh! what pangs of love will it cause within us, to think, yonder was the place that sin would have brought me to; but this is it that Christ hath brought me to! Yonder death was the wages of my sin; but this "eternal life is the gift of God, through Jesus Christ my Lord." Doubtless this will be our everlasting admiration, that so rich a crown should fit the head of so vile a sinner! That such high advancement, and such long unfruitfulness and unkindness can be the state of the same persons! and that such vile rebellions can conclude in such most precious joys! But no thanks to us: nor to any of our duties and labours, much less to our

neglects and laziness ; we know to whom the praise is due, and must be given for ever. And indeed to this very end it was, that Infinite Wisdom did cast the whole design of man's salvation into the mould of PURCHASE and FREENESS, that the love and joy of man might be perfected, and the honour of grace most highly advanced : that the thought of merit might neither cloud the one, nor obstruct the other ; and that on these two hinges the gates of heaven might turn. So then let [DESERVED] be written on the door of hell, but on the door of heaven and life, [THE FREE GIFT.]

A third comfortable adjunct of this rest is, that it is the fellowship of the blessed saints and angels of God. Not so singular will the Christian be, as to be solitary. Though it be proper to the saints only, yet is it common to all the saints. For what is it, but an association of blessed spirits in God? A corporation of perfected saints, whereof Christ is the head? The communion of saints completed? For those that have prayed, and fasted, and wept, and watched, and waited together ; now to enjoy, and praise together, methinks should much advance their pleasure. He who mentioneth the qualifications of our happiness, of purpose that our joy may be full, and maketh so oft mention of our conjunction in his praises, sure doth hereby intimate to us, that this will be some advantage to our joys. Certain I am of this, fellow Christians, that as we have been together in labour, duty, danger, and distress, so shall we be in the great recompense : and as we have been scorned and despised, so shall we be crowned and honoured together ; and we who have gone through the day of sadness, shall enjoy together that day of gladness. And those who have been with us in persecution and prison, shall be with us also in that place of consolation. When I look in the faces of the people of God, and believingly think of this day, what a refreshing thought is it ! Shall we not there remember our fellowship in duty and in sufferings? How oft our groans made as it were one sound, our tears but one stream, and our desires but one prayer? And now all our praises shall make up one melody ; and all our churches one church ; and all ourselves but one body ; for we shall be one in Christ, even as he and the Father are one. It is true, we must be very careful that we look not for that in the saints, which is alone in Christ, and that we give them not his prerogative ; nor expect too great a part of our comfort in the fruition of them : we are prone enough to this kind of idolatry. But yet he who commands us so to love them now, will give us leave, in the same subordination to himself, to love them then, when himself hath made them much more lovely. And if we may love them, we shall surely rejoice in them ; for love



cannot stand without an answerable joy. If the forethought of sitting down with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, may be our lawful joy; then how much more that real sight and actual possession! It cannot but be comfortable to me to think of that day, when I shall join with Moses in his song, with David in his psalms of praise, and with all the redeemed in the "song of the Lamb for ever." When we shall see Enoch walking with God; Noah enjoying the end of his singularity; Joseph, of his integrity; Job, of his patience; Hezekiah, of his uprightness; and all the saints the end of their faith. O happy day, when I shall depart out of this crowd, and sink and go to that same council of souls! I know that Christ is all in all, and that it is the presence of God that maketh heaven to be heaven. But yet it much sweeteneth the thoughts of that place to me, to remember that there are such a multitude of my most dear and precious friends in Christ: "with whom I took sweet counsel, and with whom I went up to the house of God, who walked with me in the fear of God, and integrity of their hearts:" in the face of whose conversation there was written the name of Christ: whose sensible mention of his excellencies hath made my heart to burn within me. To think such a friend that died at such a time, and such a one at another time, and that all these are entered into rest: and we shall surely go to them. It is a question with some, whether we shall know each other in heaven or no? Surely, there shall no knowledge cease which now we have; but only that which implieth our imperfection. And what imperfection can this imply? Nay, our present knowledge shall be increased beyond belief: it shall indeed be done away, but as the light of the stars is done away by the rising of the sun; which is more properly doing away our ignorance than our knowledge. Indeed we shall not know each other after the flesh; but by the image of Christ, and spiritual relation, and former faithfulness in improving our talents, beyond doubt, we shall know and be known. Nor is it only our old acquaintance, but all the saints of all ages, whose faces in the flesh we never saw, whom we shall there both know and comfortably enjoy. Yea, and angels as well as saints will be our blessed acquaintance. Those who now are willingly ministerial spirits for our good, will willingly then be our companions in joy for the perfecting of our good: and they who had such joy in heaven for our conversion, will gladly rejoice with us in our glorification. I think, Christian, this will be a more honourable assembly than ever you have beheld; and a more happy society than you were ever of before. Then we shall truly say as David, "I am a companion of all

them that fear thee: when we are come to mount Sion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels; to the general assembly, and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant." So then I conclude, this is one singular excellency of the rest of heaven: "That we are fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God."

4. Another excellent property of our rest will be, that the joys of it are immediately from God: "We shall see God face to face, and stand continually in his presence; and consequently derive our life and comfort immediately from him. Whether God will make use of any creatures for our service then; or if any, of what creatures, and what use, is more than I yet know: but it is certain, that at least our greatest joys will be immediate, if not all. Now we have nothing at all immediately, but at the second or third hand, or how many who knows? From the earth, from man, from the sun and moon, from the influence of the planets, from the ministration of angels, and from the spirit of Christ; and doubtless, the further the stream runs from the fountain, the more impure it is. It gathers some defilement from every unclean channel it passeth through. Though it savours not in the hand of angels, of the imperfection of sinners, yet it doth of the imperfection of creatures; and as it comes from man, it savours of both. How quick and piercing is the word in itself! Yet many times it never enters, being managed by a feeble arm. O what weight and worth is there in every passage of the blessed gospel! enough, one would think, to enter and force the dullest soul, and wholly possess its thoughts and affections: and yet how oft doth it drop as water upon a stone? The things of God which we handle are divine: but our manner of handling is human: and there is little or none that ever we touch, but we leave the print of our fingers behind us; but if God should speak this word himself, it would be a piercing melting word indeed.

If an angel from heaven should preach the gospel, yet could he not deliver it according to its glory; much less we who never saw what they have seen, and keep this treasure in earthen vessels. The comforts that flow through sermons, sacraments, reading, conference, and creatures, are but half comforts, in comparison of those which the Almighty shall speak with his own mouth, and reach forth with his own hand. The Christian knows by experience now, that his most immediate joys are his sweetest joys; which have least of man, and are most directly from the Spirit. That is

one reason, I conceive, why Christians, who are much in secret prayer and meditation, are men of greatest life; because they are nearer the well head, and have all more immediately from God himself. And that I conceive the only reason why we are more indisposed to those secret duties, and can easier bring our hearts to hear and read, than to secret prayer, self examination, and meditation; because in the former is more of man, and in these we approach the Lord alone, and our natures draw back from the most spiritual duties. Not that we should therefore cast off the other, and neglect any ordinance of God: to live above them while we use them, is the way of a Christian. But to live above ordinances, so as to live without them, is to live without the government of Christ. It is then we shall have light without a candle; and a perpetual day without the sun: "For the city hath no need of the sun, neither the moon to shine in it: for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof," Rev. xxi, 23. Nay, "There shall be no night there, and they need no candle, nor light of the sun, for the Lord God giveth them light, and they shall reign for ever and ever." We shall then have rest without sleep, and be kept from cold without our clothing, and need no fig leaves to hide our shame: for God will be our rest, and Christ our clothing, and shame and sin will cease together. We shall then have health without physic, and strength without the use of food; for the Lord God will be our strength, and the light of his countenance will be health to our souls, and marrow to our bones. We shall then (and never till then) have enlightened understandings without Scripture, and be governed without a written law. For the Lord will perfect his law in our hearts, and we shall be all perfectly taught of God: his own will shall be our law, and his own face shall be our light for ever. We shall then have communion without sacraments, when Christ shall drink with us of the fruit of the vine new, that is, refresh us with the comforting wine of immediate fruition in the kingdom of his Father.

5. A further excellency of this rest is this: it will be a suitable rest:—suited, 1. To our natures. 2. To our desires. 3. To our necessities.

1. To our natures. If suitableness concur not with excellency, the best things may be bad to us; for it is not that which makes things good in themselves, to be good to us. In our choice of friends, we often pass by the more excellent, to choose the more suitable; every good agrees not with every nature. The choicest dainties which we feed upon ourselves, would be to our beasts as an unpleasing, so an insufficient, sustenance.

Now here is suitableness and excellency conjoined. The new nature of the saints doth suit their spirits to this rest: and indeed their holiness is nothing else but a spark taken from this element, and by the spirit of Christ kindled in their hearts, the flame whereof, as mindful of its divine original, doth ever mount aloft and tend to the place from whence it comes. Gold and earthly glory, temporal crowns and kingdoms, could not make a rest for saints. As they were not redeemed with so low a price, so neither are they endued with so low a nature. As God will have from them a spiritual worship, suitable to his own spiritual being; so will he provide them a spiritual rest, suitable to his people's spiritual nature.

A heaven of the knowledge of God, and his Christ; and a delightful complacency in that mutual love and everlasting rejoicing in the fruition of our God, a perpetual singing of his high praises: this is a heaven for a saint; a spiritual rest, suitable to a spiritual nature. Then we shall live in our element. We are now as the fish in some small vessel of water, that hath only so much as will keep him alive: but what is that to the full ocean? We have a little air let into us to afford us breathing: but what is that to the sweet and fresh gales upon mount Sion? We have a beam of the sun to lighten our darkness, and a warm ray to keep us from freezing: but then we shall live in its light, and be revived by its heat for ever.

2. It is suitable to the desires of the saints: for such as is their nature, such are their desires; and such as their desires, such will be their rest. Indeed we have now a mixed nature: and from contrary principles, arise contrary desires. But it is the desires of our renewed nature, which this rest is suited to. Whilst our desires remain corrupt and misguided, it is a far greater mercy to deny, yea, to destroy them, than to satisfy them: but those which are spiritual are of his own planting, and he will surely water them, and give the increase. He quickened our hunger and thirst for righteousness, that he might make us happy in a full satisfaction.

Christian, this is a rest after thy own heart. It containeth all that thy heart can wish, that which thou longest for, prayest for, labourest for, there thou shalt find it all. Thou hadst rather have God in Christ, than all the world: why there thou shalt have him. Desire what thou canst, and ask what thou wilt, as a Christian, and it shall be given thee; not only to half of the kingdom, but to the enjoyment of both kingdom and king. This is a life of desire and prayer; but that is a life of satisfaction and enjoyment.

3. This rest is suitable to the saints' necessities also, as well as to their natures and desires. It contains whatsoever

they truly wanted ; not supplying them with gross created comforts, which, like Saul's armour on David, are more burden than benefit : but they shall there have the benefit without the burden ; and the pure spirits extracted (as it were) shall make up their cordial, without the mixture of any drossy or earthly substance. It was Christ and perfect holiness, which they most needed, and with these shall they be supplied.

4. Another excellency of our rest will be this, that it will be absolutely perfect and complete ; and this both in the sincerity and universality of it. We shall then have joy without sorrow, and rest without weariness : as there is no mixture of our corruption with our graces, so no mixture of sufferings with our solace : there is none of these waves in that harbour which now toss us up and down. To-day we are well, to-morrow sick : to-day in esteem, to-morrow in disgrace : to-day we have friends, to-morrow none : nay, we have wine and vinegar in the same cup. If revelation should raise us up to the third heaven, the messenger of Satan must presently buffet us : but there is none of this inconstancy in heaven. If perfect love cast out fear, then perfect joy must needs cast out sorrow, and perfect happiness exclude all the relicks of misery. There will be a universal perfecting of all our parts and powers, and a universal removal of all our evils. And though the positive part be the sweetest, and that which draws the other after it, even as the rising of the sun excludes the darkness ; yet is not the negative part to be slighted, even our freedom from so many and great calamities. Let us therefore look over these more punctually, and see what it is we shall there rest from. In general, it is from all evil. Particularly, *first*, from sin. *Secondly*, suffering.

*First*, It excludeth nothing more directly than sin ; whether original, and of nature ; or actual, and of conversation ; for "there entereth nothing that defileth, nor that worketh abomination, nor that maketh a lie." What need Christ have died, if heaven could have contained imperfect souls ? For "to this end came he into the world, that he might put away the works of the devil." His blood and Spirit have not done all this, to leave us after all, defiled : "For what communion hath light with darkness ? And what fellowship hath Christ with Belial ?" He that hath prepared for sin the torments of hell, will never admit it into the blessedness of heaven. Therefore, Christian, never fear this : if thou be once in heaven, thou shalt sin no more. Is not this glad news to thee, who hast prayed, and watched, and laboured against it so long ? I know if it were offered to thy choice, thou wouldst rather choose to be freed from sin, than to be

made heir of the world. Thou shalt have thy desire: that hard heart, those vile thoughts, which thou couldst no more leave behind thee, than leave thyself behind thee, shall be now left behind for ever. If they accompany thee to death, they cannot proceed a step further. Thy understanding shall never more be troubled with darkness: ignorance and error are inconsistent with this light. Now thou walkest like a man in the twilight, ever afraid of being out of the way: but then will all darkness be dispelled, and our blind understandings fully opened.

O what would we give to know clearly all the profound mysteries in the doctrine of redemption, of justification, of the nature of grace, of the Divine attributes! What would we give to see all dark scriptures made plain; to see all seeming contradictions reconciled! Why, when glory hath taken away the veil from our eyes, all this will be known in a moment; we shall then see clearly into all the controversies about doctrine or discipline that now perplex us. The poorest Christian is presently there a more perfect divine, than any is here. We are now, through our ignorance, subject to such mutability, that in points not fundamental we change as the moon: but when once our ignorance is perfectly healed, then shall we be settled, resolved men; then shall our reproach be taken from us, and we shall never change our judgment more. Our ignorance now doth lead us into error, to the grief of our more knowing brethren, to the disturbing the church's quiet, to the scandalizing of others, and weakening ourselves. How many a faithful soul is seduced into error! Loath they are to err, God knows; and therefore read and pray, and yet err still. And in lesser and more difficult points, how can it be otherwise.

Can it be expected, that men void of learning and strength of parts, unstudied and untaught, should at the first onset know those truths, which they are almost incapable of knowing at all, when the greatest divines of clearest judgment acknowledge so much difficulty, that they could almost find in their hearts sometimes to profess them quite beyond their reach? But O that happy approaching day, when error shall vanish away for ever, when our understanding shall be filled with God himself, whose light will leave no darkness in us! His face shall be the Scripture, where we shall read the truth: and himself, instead of teachers and counsellors, to perfect our understandings, and acquaint us with himself. No more error, no more scandal to others, no more disquiet to our own spirits, no more mistaken zeal for falsehood. Many a good man hath here in his mistaken zeal, been a means to deceive and pervert his brethren; and when he sees his own error, cannot again tell how to unde-

ceive them ; but there we shall all conspire in one truth, as being one in him who is the truth.

And as we shall rest from all the sin of our understanding, so of our wills, affections, and conversation. We shall no more retain this rebelling principle, which is still withdrawing us from God. We shall no more be oppressed with the power of our corruptions, nor vexed with their presence : no pride, passion, slothfulness, senselessness, shall enter with us ; no strangeness to God, and things of God ; no coldness of affections, nor imperfections in our love ; no uneven walking, nor grieving of the Spirit ; no scandalous action, or unholy conversation : we shall rest from all these for ever. Then shall our understandings receive their light from the face of God, as the full moon from the open sun : then shall our wills correspond to the Divine will, *as face answers face in the glass* ; and his will shall be our law and rule, from which we shall never swerve again. I conclude, therefore, with the words next my text, "He that is entered into his rest, has ceased from his own works, as God from his." So that there is a perfect rest from sin.

*Secondly.* It is a perfect rest from suffering. When the cause is gone, the effect ceaseth. Our sufferings were but the consequents of our sinning, and here they shall cease together.

1. We shall rest from all the temptations of Satan. What a grief is it to a Christian, though he yield not to the temptation, yet to be still solicited to deny his Lord ? That such a thought should be cast into his heart ? That he can set about nothing that is good, but Satan is still dissuading him from it, distracting him in it, or discouraging him after it ? What a torment, as well as a temptation is it, to have such horrid motions made to his soul ? Sometime cruel thoughts of God ; sometime undervaluing thoughts of Christ ; sometime unbelieving thoughts of Scripture ; sometime injurious thoughts of Providence : to be tempted sometime to turn to present things ; sometime to play with the baits of sin ; sometime to venture on the delights of the flesh ; and sometime to Atheism itself ! Especially when we know the treachery of our own hearts, that they are as tinder, ready to take fire as soon as one of these sparks shall fall upon them : but when the day of our deliverance comes, we shall fully rest from these temptations. Satan is then bound up, the time of tempting is done ; the time of torment to himself, and his conquered captives, is then come ; and the victorious saints shall have triumph from temptation. Now we walk among his snares, and are in danger to be circumvented with his wiles : but then we are quite above his snares. He hath power here to tempt us in the wilderness, but he

entereth not the holy city : he may set us on the pinnacle of the temple in the earthly Jerusalem, but the new Jerusalem he may not approach. Perhaps he may bring us to an exceeding high mountain ; but the mount Sion, and city of the living God, he cannot ascend. Or if he should, yet all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, would be but a poor bait to the soul which is possessed of the kingdom of our Lord.

2. We shall rest from all our temptations which we now undergo from the world and the flesh, as well as Satan : and that is a number inexpressible. O the hourly dangers that we here walk in ! Every sense is a snare ; every member a snare ; every creature a snare ; every mercy a snare ; and every duty a snare to us. We can scarce open our eyes but we are in danger : if we behold them above us, we are in danger of envy : if we see sumptuous buildings, pleasant habitations, honour, and riches, we are in danger to be drawn away with covetous desires : if the rags and beggary of others, we are in danger of self-applauding thoughts, or unmercifulness : if we see beauty, it is a bait to lust ; if deformity, to loathing and disdain. We can scarcely hear a word spoken, but contains to us matter of temptation. How soon do slanderous reports, vain jests, or wanton speeches, creep into the heart ? How strong and prevalent a temptation is our appetite ? And how constant and strong a watch doth it require ? Have we comeliness and beauty ? what fuel for pride ! Are we deformed ? what an occasion of repining ! Have we strength of reason and learning ? O how hard is it not to be puffed up ! to hunt after applause ! to despise our brethren ! Are we unlearned, of shallow heads, and slender parts ? how apt then to despise what we have not ! and to undervalue that which we do not know ! and to err with confidence because of our ignorance ! And if conceitedness and pride do but strike in, to become a zealous enemy to truth, and a leading troubler of the church's peace, under pretences of truth ! Are we men of eminency and authority ? how strong is our temptation to slight our brethren ! to abuse our trust ! to seek ourselves ! to stand upon our honour and privileges ! to forget ourselves, our poor brethren, and the public good ! how hard to devote our power to his glory, from whom we have received it ! how prone to make our wills our law ! Are we inferiors ? how prone to grudge at others' pre-eminence ! and to bring their actions to the bar of our judgment ! Are we rich, and not too much exalted ? Are we poor, and not discontented ? Do we set upon duties ? they are snares too : either we are stupid and lazy, or rest in them, and turn from Christ. In a word, not one word that falls



from the mouth of a minister or Christian, but is a snare ; nor a place we come into : not a word that our tongues speak, not any mercy we possess, nor a bit we put into our mouths, but they are snares ; not that God hath made them so, but through our own corruption they become so to us. So that what a sad case are we in ? especially they that discern them not ! For it is almost impossible they should escape them. It was not for nothing that our Lord cried out, "What I say to one, I say to all, Watch." We are like the lepers at Samaria, "If we go into the city, there is nothing but famine ; if we sit still, we perish."

But for ever blessed be omnipotent Love, which saves us out of all these, and makes our straits but the advantages of the glory of his grace ! And "blessed be the Lord, who hath not given our souls for a prey : our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowler ; the snare is broken, and we are escaped." Now, our houses, our clothes, our sleep, our food, our physic, our father, mother, wife, children, friends, goods, lands, are all so many temptations ; and ourselves the greatest snare to ourselves : but in heaven, the danger and trouble is over : there is nothing but what will advance our joy. Now every companion is beckoning us to sin, and we can scarce tell how to say to them, Nay ; but our rest will free us from all these. As Satan hath no entrance there, so neither any thing to serve his malice : but all things there with us conspire the praises of our great Deliverer.

3. And as we rest from temptations, so also from all abuses and persecutions which we suffer at the hands of wicked men. We shall be scorned, derided, imprisoned, banished by them no more. The prayers of the souls under the altar will then be answered, and God "will avenge their blood on those that dwell on the earth." This is the time for crowning with thorns, buffeting, spitting on : that is the time for crowning with glory. Now the law is decreed on, "That whosoever will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecutions : then they that suffered with him, shall be glorified with him." Now we must be "hated of all men for Christ's name sake : " then "will Christ be admired in his saints" that were thus hated. We are here as the scorn and offscouring of all things ; as men set up for a gazing stock to angels and men, even for signs and wonders amongst professing Christians ; they put us out of their synagogues, and cast out our name as evil, and separate us from their company : but we shall then be as much gazed at for our glory, and they will be shut out of the church of the saints, and separated from us, whether they will or no. They now "think it strange that we run not with them to all excess of

riot:" they will then think more strange that they ran not with us in the despised ways of God. We can now scarce pray in our families, or sing praise to God, but our voice is a vexation to them: how must it torment them then, to see us praising and rejoicing, while they are howling and lamenting?

Brethren, you that now can attempt no work of God without resistance, and find you must either lose the love of the world, and your outward comforts, or else the love of God, and your eternal salvation, consider you shall in heaven have no discouraging company, nor any but those who will further your work, and gladly join heart and voice with you in your everlasting joy and praise. Till then "possess your souls in patience:" bind all reproaches as a crown to your heads: esteem them greater riches than the world's treasure: "account it matter of joy when ye fall into tribulation." You have seen that our God is able to deliver us; but this is nothing to our final deliverance: "he will recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you that are troubled, rest with Christ."

4. We shall then also rest from all our sad divisions and unchristian quarrels with one another. As he said, who saw the carcasses lie together, as if they had embraced each other, who had been slain by each other in a duel, "How lovingly do they embrace one another, who perished through their mutual enmity!" so, how lovingly do thousands live together in heaven, who lived in divisions on earth! As he said, who beheld how quietly and peaceably the bones and dust of mortal enemies did lie together, "You did not live together so peaceably;" so we may say of multitudes in heaven now all of one mind, one heart, and one employment, you lived not on earth in so sweet familiarity. There is no contention, because none of this pride, ignorance, or other corruption: Paul and Barnabas are now fully reconciled. There they are not every man conceited of his own understanding, and in love with the issue of his own brain; but all admiring the Divine perfection, and in love with God and one another. As old Gryneus wrote to his friend, "If I see you no more on earth, yet we shall there meet, where Luther and Zuinglius are now well agreed." There is no recording our brethren's infirmities; nor raking into the sores which Christ died to heal. There is no plotting to strengthen our party; nor deep designing against our brethren.

And is it not a shame and pity, that our course is now so contrary? Surely, if there be sorrow or shame in heaven, we shall then be both sorry and ashamed to look one another in the face: and to remember all this carriage on earth, even as the brethren of Joseph were to behold him, when

they remembered their former unkind usage. Is it not enough that all the world is against us, but we must also be against ourselves? Did I ever think to have heard Christians so to reproach and scorn Christians? and men professing the fear of God, to make so little conscience of censuring, vilifying, and disgracing one another? O what hellish things are ignorance and pride, that can bring men's souls to such a case as this! Paul knew what he said, when he commanded, that "a novice should not be a teacher, lest being lifted up he fall into the condemnation of the devil," 1 Tim. iii, 6. He discerned that such young Christians that have got but a little smattering knowledge in religion, lie in greatest danger of this pride and condemnation. Who but Paul could have foreseen, that among the very teachers and governors of so choice a church as Ephesus, there were some that afterwards should be notorious sect masters? "That of their own selves men should arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them," Acts xx, 30. Who then can expect better from any society now, how knowing and holy soever? To-day they may be unanimous, and joined in love: and perhaps within a few weeks be divided, and at bitter enmity, through their doating on questions that tend not to edify.

5. We shall then rest from all which we now undergo, by participating with our brethren in their calamities. Alas, if we had nothing upon ourselves to trouble us, yet what heart could lay aside sorrows, that lives in the sound of the church's sufferings? If Job had nothing upon his body to disquiet him, yet the message of his children's overthrow must needs grieve the most patient soul. Except we are turned into steel or stone, and have lost both Christian and human affection, there needs no more than the miseries of our brethren to fill our hearts with sorrows. The church on earth is a mere hospital; which way soever we go, we hear complaining; and into what corner soever we cast our eyes, we behold objects of pity: some groaning under a dark understanding, some under a senseless heart, some languishing under unfruitful weakness, and some bleeding for miscarriages and wilfulness, and some in a lethargy, that they are past complaining; some crying out of their pining poverty, some groaning under pains and infirmities, and some bewailing a whole catalogue of calamities, especially in days of common sufferings: but our day of rest will free us and them from all this. Now we may enter many a poor Christian's cottage, and see poverty possessing and filling all: how much better is that day, when we shall see them filled with Christ, clothed with glory, and equal with the greatest princes?

But a far greater grief it is to our spirits, to see the spiritual miseries of our brethren; to see such a one, with whom we took sweet counsel, now falling off to sensuality, turned drunkard, worldling, or a persecutor, and these trying times have given us too large occasion for such sorrows! To see our dearest friends turned aside from the truth of Christ, and confident in the flesh, continue their neglect of Christ and their souls, and nothing waking them out of their security; and to think how certainly they shall be in hell for ever, if they die in their present state: and will it not be a blessed day, when we shall rest from all these sorrows? "When the people shall be all righteous, even the work of God's hands, the branch of his planting, that he may be glorified?" Thus shall we rest from our participation of our brethren's sufferings.

6. We shall rest from all our personal sufferings. And though this may seem a small thing to those that live in continual ease, and abound in all kind of prosperity; yet methinks, to the daily afflicted soul, it should make the forethoughts of heaven delightful: and I think I shall meet with few of the saints, but will say that this is their own case.

Though we are reconciled by the blood of the covenant, and the price is paid for our full deliverance, yet our Redeemer sees fit to leave this measure of misery upon us, to mind us of what we would else forget; to be serviceable to his wise and gracious designs, and advantageous to our full and final recovery. As all our senses are the inlets of sin, so they are the inlets of sorrow. Grief creeps in at our eyes, at our ears, and almost every where: it seizeth upon our heads, our hearts, our flesh, our spirits; and what part doth escape it? Fears devour us, and darken our delights, as the frost nips the buds: cares feed upon our spirits, as the scorching sun doth wither the delicate flowers. Or, if any hath fortified his inwards against these, yet he is naked still without.

What tender pieces are these dusty bodies? What brittle glasses do we bear about us? And how many thousand dangers are they hurried through? And how hardly cured if once cracked? O the multitude of slender veins, of tender membranes, nerves, fibres, muscles, arteries; and all subject to obstructions, tensions, contractions, resolutions, ruptures, or one thing or other to cause their grief! Every one is a fit subject for pain, and fit to communicate that pain to the whole: but sin, and flesh, and dust, and pain, will all be left behind together.

O the blessed tranquillity of that region, where there is nothing but sweet continued peace! No succession of joy there, because no intermission. Our lives will be but one

joy, as our time will be changed into one eternity. O healthful place, where none are sick! O fortunate land, where all are kings! O place most holy, where all are priests! How free a state, where none are servants, save to their supreme monarch! Our face shall no more be pale or sad: our groans and sighs will be done away, and God "shall wipe away all tears from our eyes." No more parting of friends, nor voice of lamentation heard in our dwellings; no more breaches nor disproportion in our friendship, nor any trouble accompanying our relations: no more care of masters for servants, or parents for children, or magistrates over subjects, or ministers over people. O what room can there be for any evil, where the whole is perfectly filled with God! "Then shall the ransomed of the Lord return and come to Sion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away," Isaiah xxxv, 10. Hold out then a little longer, O my soul; bear with the infirmities of thine earthly tabernacle; endure that share of sorrows that the love of thy Father shall impose; submit to his indignation also, because thou hast sinned against him; it will be thus but a little while; the sound of thy Redeemer's feet is even at the door; and thine own deliverance nearer than many others. And thou who hast often cried in the language of the divine poet,

"Sorrow was all my soul; I scarce believed,  
Till grief did tell me roundly, that I lived;"

shalt then feel that God and joy is all thy soul; the fruition of whom, with thy freedom from all these sorrows, will more sweetly and more feelingly make thee know, and to his eternal praise acknowledge, that thou livest. And thus we shall rest from all afflictions.

The last blessed attribute of this rest is, that it is an *eternal rest*. This is the crown of our crown; without which all were comparatively nothing. The very thought of leaving it would embitter all our joys; and the more, because of the singular excellencies we must forsake. It would be a hell in heaven to think of once losing heaven: as it would be a kind of heaven to the damned, had they but hopes of once escaping.

It makes our present life of little value, (were it not for the reference it hath to eternity,) to think that we must shortly lay it down. How can we take delight in any thing, when we remember how short that delight will be? But, O blessed eternity! where our lives are perplexed with no such thoughts, nor our joys interrupted with any such fears! O what do I say when I talk of eternity? Can my shallow thoughts conceive it? To be eternally blessed, and so

blessed! Surely this, if any thing, is the resemblance of God; eternity as a piece of infiniteness. Then, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" Days, and nights, and years, time, and end, and death, are words which there have no signification; nor are used, except perhaps to extol eternity; as the mention of hell, to extol heaven. All the years of our Lord, and the years of our life, are swallowed up and lost in this eternity.

While we were servants we held by lease; and that but for the term of transitory life: "But the on sabideth in the house for ever." Our earthly paradise in Eden had a way out, but none, that ever we could find, in again: but this eternal paradise hath a way in, (a milky way to us, but a bloody way to Christ,) but no way out again: "For they that would pass from hence to you," saith Abraham, "cannot:" a strange phrase! Would any pass from such a place, if they might? Could they endure to be absent from God again one hour? No: but upon supposal they would, yet they could not. O then, my soul, let go thy dreams of present pleasures; and loose thy hold of earth and flesh. Fear not to enter that estate, where thou shalt ever after cease thy fears. Sit down, and sadly once a day bethink thyself of this eternity. Among all the arithmetical numbers, study the value of this infinite cipher, which though it stand for nothing in the vulgar account, doth yet contain all our millions, as much less than a simple unit. Lay by the perplexed and contradicting chronological tables, and fix thine eye on this eternity; and the lines which remote thou couldst not follow, thou shalt see altogether here concentrated. Study less these tedious volumes of history, which contain but the silent narration of dreams, and are but the pictures of the actions of shadows: and instead of all, study frequently, study thoroughly, this one word [*eternity*,] and when thou hast thoroughly learned that one word, thou wilt never look on books again. What! live and never die! Rejoice, and ever rejoice! O what sweet words are these! This word [*everlasting*] contains the accomplished perfection of our glory. O that the wicked sinner would but soundly study this word [*everlasting* ;] methinks it would startle him out of his deep sleep! O that the gracious soul would believingly study this word [*everlasting* ;] methinks it should revive him in the deepest agony! And must I, Lord, thus live for ever? Then will I also love for ever. Must my joys be immortal? And shall not my thanks be also immortal? Surely, if I shall never lose my glory, I will never also cease thy praises. If thou wilt both perfect and perpetuate me, and my glory; as I shall be thine, and not mine own, so shall my glory be thy glory; and as they did take

their spring from thee, so all shall devolve to thee again : and as thy glory was thine ultimate end in my glory, so shall it also be mine end, when thou hast crowned me with that glory which hath no end. And to " thee, O King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God. shall be the honour, and glory, for ever and ever. Amen."

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE PEOPLE OF GOD DESCRIBED.

HAVING thus performed my first task of describing the saints' rest: it remains that now I proceed to the second, and show you what these people of God are, and why so called ; for whom this blessed rest remaineth.

Regeneration is the first and great qualification of the people of God. To be the people of God without regeneration, is as impossible as to be the children of men without generation ; seeing we are born God's enemies, we must be new born his sons, or else remain his enemies still.

Christ hath spoken it with his mouth, that " Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." The greatest reformation of life, without this new life, wrought in the soul, may procure our further delusion, but never our salvation.

But by what acts doth this new life discover itself?

The first work I call conviction, which comprehends the knowledge of what the Scripture speaks against sin and sinners ; and that this Scripture which speaks so, is the word of God himself. It comprehends also, some knowledge of ourselves, and our own guilt, and an acknowledgment of the verity of those consequences, which, from the practice of sin in us, and threats in Scripture, conclude us miserable.

2. As there must be conviction, so also sensibility. God works on the heart, as well as the head ; both were corrupted and out of order. The principle of new life doth quicken both. All true spiritual knowledge doth pass into the affections. The great things of sin, of grace, and Christ, and eternity, which are of weight, one would think, to move a rock : yet shake not the heart of the carnal professor, nor pierce his soul to the quick : though he should be a constant preacher of them to others, yet they little affect himself : when he is pressing them upon the hearts of others, you would little think how insensible is his own soul : his invention procureth him zealous and moving expressions, but they cannot procure him answerable affections.

The things that the soul is thus convinced and sensible of, are especially these :

1. The evil of sin. The sinner is made to know and feel that the sin which was his delight, is a more loathsome thing than toads or serpents, and a greater evil than plague or famine, or any other calamities: it being a breach of the righteous law of the Most High God, dishonourable to him, and destructive to the sinner.

Now the sinner reads and hears the reproofs of sin, as words of course; but when you mention his sin, he feels you speak at his very heart, and yet is contented you should show him the worst: he was wont to marvel, what made men keep such a stir against sin, what harm it was for a man to take a little pleasure; he saw no such heinousness in it. But now the case is altered: God hath opened his eyes to see its inexpressible vileness.

2. The soul in this great work is convinced and sensible, as of the evil of sin, so of its own misery by reason of sin. They who before read the threats of God's law, as men do the stories of foreign wars; now find it is their own story, and perceive they read their own doom, as if they found their names written in the curse, or heard the law say, as Nathan, "Thou art the man." The wrath of God seemed to him but as a storm to a man in a dry house: but now he finds the disease is his own, and feels the pains in his own bowels. In a word, he finds himself a condemned man, dead and damned in point of law, and that nothing is wanting but mere execution to make him absolutely and irrecoverably miserable.

Whether you will call this a work of the law or gospel, it is a work of the Spirit wrought in some measure in all the regenerate: and though some judge it unnecessary bondage, yet it is beyond my conceiving, how he should come to Christ for pardon, that first found not himself guilty and condemned: "The whole need not the physician, but they that are sick." Yet I deny not, but the discovery of the remedy as soon as the misery, may prevent a great part of the trouble, and the distinct effect on the soul, to be with much more difficulty discerned: nay, the actings of the soul are so quick, and oft so confused, that the distinct order of these workings may not be apprehended or remembered at all; and perhaps the joyful apprehensions of mercy may make the sense of misery the sooner forgotten.

3. So doth the Spirit also convince the soul of the creature's vanity and insufficiency. Every man naturally is a flat idolater. Our hearts were turned from God in our first fall; and ever since the creature hath been our God: this is the grand sin of nature: when we set up to ourselves a wrong end, we must needs err in all the means. The creature is, to every unregenerate man, his god: he ascribeth to



it the Divine prerogatives, and alloweth it the highest room in his soul; or if ever he come to be convinced of misery, he fleeth to it as his saviour. Indeed God and his Christ have usually the name; but the real expectation is from the creature, and the work of God is laid upon it. His pleasure, his profit, and his honour, is the natural man's trinity; and his self, that is these in unity: indeed, it is that flesh that is the principal idol; the other three are deified in their relation to ourselves. It was our first sin, to aspire to be as gods; and it is the greatest sin that runs in our blood, and is propagated in our nature from generation to generation.

When God should guide us, we guide ourselves; when he should be our sovereign, we rule ourselves. The laws which he gives us, we find fault with; and if we had had the making of them, we would have made them otherwise: when he should take care of us, (and must, or we perish,) we will care for ourselves: when we should depend on him daily, we had rather keep our stock ourselves, and have our portion in our own hands: when we should stand at his disposal, we would be at our own: and when we should submit to his providence, we usually quarrel at it: as if we knew better what is good for us than he, or how to dispose all things more wisely. This is the language of a carnal heart, though it doth not always speak out. When we should study God, we study ourselves; when we should mind God, we mind ourselves; when we should love God, we love ourselves; when we should trust God, we trust ourselves; when we should honour God, we honour ourselves; when we should ascribe to God, and admire him, we ascribe to, and admire ourselves; and instead of God, we would have all men's eyes and dependence on us, and all men's thanks returned to us, and would gladly be the only men on earth admired and extolled by all.

And thus we are naturally our own idols; but down falls this Dagon, when God does once renew the soul: it is the great business of that great work to bring the heart back to God. He convinceth the sinner, 1. That the creature can neither be his God to make him; 2. Nor yet his Christ, to recover him from his misery, to restore him to God, who is his happiness. This God doth, not only by preaching, but by providence also; because words will hardly take off the raging senses, therefore doth God make his rod to speak, and continue speaking, till the sinner hear, and hath learned this great lesson.

This is the great reason why affliction doth so ordinarily concur in the work of conversion: these real arguments which speak to the quick, will force a hearing when the most powerful words are slighted. When a sinner made

his credit his God, and God shall cast him into the lowest disgrace; or bring him that idolized his riches, into a condition wherein they cannot help him, or cause them to take wings and fly away; what a help is here to this work of conviction? When a man that made his pleasure his God, whether ease, or sports, or mirth, or company, or gluttony, or drunkenness, or clothing, or buildings; or whatsoever a ranging eye, a curious ear, a raging appetite, or a lustful heart could desire, and God shall take these from him, or give him their sting and curse with them, and turn them all into gall and wormwood, what a help is here to conviction? When God shall cast a man into a languishing sickness, and inflict wounds and anguish on his heart, and stir up against him his own conscience, and then as it were take him by the hand, and lead him to credit, to riches, to pleasure, to company, to sports, to whatsoever was dearest to him, and say, Now try if these can help you; can these heal thy wounded conscience? Can they now support thy tottering cottage? Can they keep thy departing soul in thy body? or save thee from mine everlasting wrath? Will they prove to thee eternal pleasure? or redeem thy soul from the eternal flames? Cry aloud to them, and see now whether these will be instead of God and his Christ unto thee. O how this works with the sinner! when sense itself acknowledgeth the truth, and even the flesh is convinced of the creature's vanity.

4. The fourth thing that the soul is convinced and sensible of, is the absolute necessity, the full sufficiency, and perfect excellency of Jesus Christ.

This conviction is not by mere argumentation, as a man is convinced of some unconcerning consequence by dispute; but also by the sense of our desperate misery, as a man in a famine of the necessity of food; or a man that had read or heard his condemnation, is convinced of the absolute necessity of a pardon. Now the sinner finds himself in another case than ever he was aware of: he feels an insupportable burden upon him, and sees there is none but Christ can take it off: he perceives that he is under the wrath of God, and that the law proclaims him a rebel and outlaw, and none but Christ can make his peace: he is as a man pursued by a lion, that must perish if he find not present sanctuary: he feels the curse doth lie upon him, and upon all he hath, for his sake, and Christ alone can make him blessed: he is now brought to this dilemma, either he must have Christ to justify him, or be eternally condemned; he must have Christ to save him, or burn in hell for ever; he must have Christ to bring him again to God, or to be shut out of his presence everlastingly. And no wonder, if he cry, as the martyr

Lambert, "None but Christ: none but Christ." It is not gold but bread that will satisfy the hungry: nor any thing but pardon, that will comfort the condemned. "All things are now but dross and dung: and what he counted gain, is now but loss in comparison of Christ:" for as the sinner seeth his utter misery, and the disability of himself, and all things to relieve him; so he doth perceive, that there is no saving mercy out of Christ. There is none found in heaven or on earth that can open the sealed book, save the Lamb; without his blood there is no remission, and without remission there is no salvation. Could the sinner now make any shift without Christ, or could any thing else supply his wants, and save his soul, then might Christ be disregarded: but now he is convinced, that there is no other name, and the necessity is absolute.

2. And as the soul is thus convinced of the necessity of Christ, so also of his full sufficiency: he sees, though the creature cannot, and himself cannot, yet Christ can. Though the fig leaves of our own unrighteous righteousness are too short to cover our nakedness, yet the righteousness of Christ is large enough: ours is disproportionable to the justice of the law, but Christ's doth extend to every tittle: his sufferings being a perfect satisfaction to the law, and "all power in heaven and earth being given to him," he is now able to supply every of our wants, and "to save to the uttermost all that come to him."

3. The soul is also here convinced of the perfect excellency of Jesus Christ, both as he is considered in himself, and as considered in relation to us: both as he is the only way to the Father, and as he is the end, being one with the Father. Before, he knew Christ's excellency as a blind man knows the light of the sun; but now as one that beholdeth his glory.

And thus doth the Spirit convince the soul.

4. After this sensible conviction, the will discovereth also its change; and that in regard of all the forementioned objects.

1. The sin which the understanding pronounceth evil, the will doth turn from with abhorrency. Not that the sensitive appetite is changed, or any way made to abhor its object; but when it would carry us to sin against God; this disorder and evil the will abhorreth.

2. The misery also which sin hath procured, as he discerneth, so he bewaileth. It is impossible that the soul now living, should look either on its trespass against God, or its own self-procured calamity, without some compunction. He that truly discerneth that he hath killed Christ, and killed himself, will surely in some measure be pricked to

the heart. If he cannot weep, he can heartily groan; and his heart feels what his understanding sees.

3. The creature he now renounceth as vain, and turneth it out of his heart with disdain. Not that he undervalueth it, or disclaimeth its use; but its idolatrous abuse, and its unjust usurpation.

There is a two-fold error very common in the description of the work of conversion. The one, of those who only mention the sinner's turning from sin to God, without mentioning the receiving Christ by faith. The other, of those who only mention a sinner's believing, and then think they have said all: nay, they blame them as legalists, who make any thing but the bare believing of the love of God in Christ to us, to be part of the work; and would persuade poor souls to question all their former comforts, and conclude the work to have been only legal, because they have made their change of heart, and turning from sin, part of it; and have taken up part of their comfort from the reviewing of these.

Indeed, should they take up here without Christ, or take such a change instead of Christ, in whole or in part, the reprehension were just. But can Christ be the way, where the creature is the end; is he not the only way to the Father? Can we seek to Christ to reconcile us to God, while in our hearts we prefer the creature before him? In the soul of every unregenerate man, the creature is both God and Christ. Can Christ be believed in, where our own righteousness, or any other thing, is trusted as our saviour?

The truth is: as turning from the creature to God, and not by Christ, is no true turning; so believing in Christ, while the creature hath our hearts, is no true believing. And therefore, in the work of self examination, whoever would find in himself a thorough sincere work, must find an entire work; even the one of these as well as the other.

In the review of which entire work, there is no doubt but his soul may take comfort. And it is not to be made so light of, as most do, that Scripture doth so ordinarily put repentance before faith, and make them jointly conditions of the gospel; which repentance contains those acts of the will before expressed.

It is true, if we take faith in the largest sense, then it contains repentance in it; but if we take it strictly, no doubt there are some acts of it go before repentance, and some follow after.

4. And as the will is thus averted from the forementioned objects; so at the same time doth it cleave to God the Father, and to Christ. Its first acting consists especially in intending and desiring God for his portion and chief good; having before been convinced that nothing else can be his

happiness, he now finds it in God; and therefore looks toward it. But it is yet rather with desire than hope. For alas, the sinner hath already found himself to be a stranger and an enemy to God, under the guilt of sin, and curse of the law, and knows there is no coming to him in peace till his case be altered; and therefore, having before been convinced also, that only Christ is able and willing to do this, and having heard this mercy in the gospel freely offered, his next act is, to accept of Christ as his Saviour and Lord.

Therefore both mistake: they who only mention our turning to Christ, and they who only mention our turning to God, in this work of conversion. St. Paul's preaching was "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." And "life eternal consists, first in knowing the only true God," and then "Jesus Christ whom he hath sent," John xvii, 3. The former is the natural part of the covenant, to take the Lord only for our God. The latter is the supernatural part, to take Christ only for our Redeemer. The former is first necessary, and implied in the latter.

Though repentance and good works are required to our full justification at judgment, as subservient to, or concurrent with, faith; yet is the nature of this justifying faith itself contained, in accepting of Christ for Saviour and Lord. I call it accepting, it being principally an act of the will; but yet also of the whole soul. This accepting being that which the gospel presseth to, and calleth the receiving or accepting Christ. I call it an affectionate accepting, though love seem distinct from faith, yet I take it as essential to that faith that justifies. To accept Christ without love, is not justifying faith. Nor doth love follow as a fruit, but immediately concur: as essential to a true accepting.

It is an accepting him for our Saviour and Lord. For in both relations will he be received, or not at all. It is not only to acknowledge his sufferings, and accept of pardon and glory, but to acknowledge his sovereignty, and submit to his government and way of saving.

The work (which Christ thus accepted of, to perform,) is, to bring the sinners to God, that they may be happy in him; and this both really by his Spirit, and relatively in reconciling them, and making them sons; and to present them perfect before him at last, and to possess them of the kingdom. The obtaining of these are the sinner's lawful ends in receiving Christ; and to these uses doth he offer himself to us.

5. To this end doth the sinner now enter into a cordial covenant with Christ. But he was never strictly, nor comfortably, in covenant with Christ till now. He is sure Christ

doth consent, and now doth he cordially consent himself; and so the agreement is fully made.

6. With this covenant, concurs a mutual delivery; Christ delivereth himself in all comfortable relations to the sinner, and the sinner delivereth up himself to be saved and ruled by Christ. Now doth the soul resolvedly conclude, I have been blindly led by the flesh, the world, and the devil, too long, almost to my destruction; I will now be wholly at the disposal of my Lord, who hath bought me with his blood, and will bring me to his glory. And thus the complete work of saving faith consisteth in this covenanting, or mystical marriage, of the sinner to Christ.

Thus you have a naked enumeration of the essentials of this people of God: not a full portraiture of them in all their excellencies, nor all the notes whereby they be discerned. And though it will be part of the following application to put you upon trial; yet because the description is now before your eyes, and these evidencing works are fresh in your memory, it will not be unseasonable to take an account of your own estates, and to view yourselves exactly in this glass, before you pass. And I beseech thee, reader, as thou hast the hope of a Christian, yea, or the reason of a man, to deal thoroughly, and search carefully, and judge thyself as one that must shortly be judged by the righteous God: and faithfully answer to these few questions:

And first, Hast thou been thoroughly convinced of a universal deprivation through thy whole soul? And a universal wickedness through thy whole life? and how vile a thing this sin is? and that by the tenor of that covenant which thou hast transgressed, the least sin deserves eternal death? Dost thou consent to this law, that it is true and righteous? Hast thou perceived thyself sentenced to this death by it, and been convinced of thy undone condition? Hast thou further seen the utter insufficiency of every creature, either to be itself thy happiness, or the means of curing this thy misery, and making thee happy in God? Hast thou been convinced, that thy happiness is only in God as the end? and only in Christ as the way to him? and that thou must be brought to God by Christ, or perish eternally? Hast thou seen hereupon an absolute necessity of enjoying Christ? and the full sufficiency that is in him, to do for thee whatsoever thy case requireth, by reason of the fulness of his satisfaction, the greatness of his power, the dignity of his person, and the freeness of his promises? Hast thou discovered the excellency of this pearl, to be worth thy selling all to buy it? Hath all this been joined with some sensibility? As the convictions of a man that thirsteth, of the worth of drink? And not been only a change of opinion

produced by reading and education, as a bare notion in the understanding? Hath it proceeded to an abhorring sin? Have both thy sin and misery been a burden to thy soul? and if thou couldst not weep, yet couldst thou groan under the insupportable weight of both? Hast thou renounced all thine own righteousness? Hast thou turned thy idols out of thy heart; so that the creature hath no more the sovereignty; but God and Christ? Dost thou accept of Christ as thy only Saviour, and expect thy justification, recovery, and glory, from him alone? Dost thou take him also for thy Lord and King? And are his laws the most powerful commanders of thy soul? Do they ordinarily prevail against the commands of the flesh, of Satan, of the greatest on earth that shall countermand? and against the interest of thy credit, profit, pleasure, or life; so that thy conscience is directly subject to Christ alone? Hath he the highest room in thy affections; so that though thou canst not love him as thou wouldst, yet nothing else is loved so much? Hast thou made a hearty covenant to this end? and delivered up thyself to him? and takest thyself for his, and not thine own? Is it thy utmost care, and watchful endeavour, that thou mayest be found faithful in this covenant? If this be truly thy case, thou art one of the people of God, and as sure as the promise of God is true, this blessed rest remains for thee. Only see thou abide in Christ, and continue to the end: "For if any draw back, his soul will have no pleasure in them."

#### THE CONCLUSION.

And thus I have explained to you the subject of my text: and showed you darkly, what this rest is, and briefly who are this people of God. O that the Lord would now open your eyes, to discern, and be affected with the glory revealed! That he would take off your hearts from those dung hill delights, and ravish them with the views of these everlasting pleasures! That he would bring you into the state of his holy and heavenly people, for whom alone this rest remaineth! That you would exactly try yourselves by the foregoing description! That no soul of you might be so damnably deluded, as to take your natural or acquired parts, for the characters of a saint! O happy, and thrice happy you, if these sermons might have such success with your souls, that so you might "die the death of the righteous, and your last end be like his!"

THE  
SAINT'S EVERLASTING REST.

PART II.

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" There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God," Hebrews iv, 9.

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CHAPTER I.

I HAVE been hitherto presenting to your understandings, the excellency of the rest of the saints. Let your hearts now cheerfully embrace it, and improve it, and I shall present it to you in its respective uses.

I will lay together all those uses that most concern the ungodly, and then those that are proper to the godly themselves.

THE INCONCEIVABLE MISERY OF THE UNGODLY IN THEIR LOSS  
OF THIS REST.

And first, If this rest be for none but the people of God, what tidings is this to the ungodly world? That there is so much glory, but none for them: so great joys for the saints of God, while they must consume in perpetual sorrows! If thou who readest these words art a stranger to Christ, and to the holy nature and life of his people, and shall live and die in the condition thou art now in; I am a messenger of the saddest tidings to thee, that ever yet thy ears did hear: that thou shalt never partake of the joys of heaven, nor have the least taste of the saints' eternal rest. I may say to thee, as Ehud to Eglon, I have a message to thee from God: but it is a mortal message, that as sure as the word of God is true, thou shalt never see the face of God with comfort. This sentence I am commanded to pass upon thee! Take it as thou wilt, and escape it if thou canst. I know, if thy heart and life were thoroughly changed, thy relation to Christ and eternity would be changed also; he would then acknowledge thee for one of his people, and give thee a portion in the inheritance of his chosen. But if thou end thy days in thy present condition, as sure as the heavens are over thy head, and the earth under thy feet; as sure as thou livest and breathest in this air, so sure shalt thou be shut out of this rest of the saints, and receive thy portion in everlasting fire. I expect that thou shouldst, in the pride of thy heart, turn upon me, and say, And when did God show you the book of life, or tell you who they are that shall be saved, and who shut out?



I will not answer thee according to thy folly : but plainly discover this thy folly to thyself, that if there be yet any hope, thou mayest recover thy understanding, and return to God and live : First, I do not name thee nor any other ; I only conclude of the unregenerate in general, and of thee conditionally, if thou be such a one. Secondly, I do not go about to determine who shall repent, and who shall not, much less, that thou shalt never repent, and come to Christ. These things are unknown to me ; I had far rather show thee what hopes thou hast before thee, if thou wilt not sit still and lose them : and I would far rather persuade thee to hearken in time, before the door is shut against thee, that so thy soul may return and live, than tell thee that there is no hope of thy repenting and returning. But if the foregoing description of the people of God does not agree with the state of thy soul ; it is then a hard question, whether thou shalt ever be saved ! Even as hard a question as whether God be true ! Do I need to ascend up into heaven, to know, that “without holiness none shall see God ?” or that “only the pure in heart shall see God ?” or that “except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God ?” Cannot these be known without searching into God’s counsels ? And yet dost thou ask me, how I know who shall be saved ? What need I go up to heaven to inquire that of Christ, which he came down to earth to tell us ? and sent his Spirit in his prophets and apostles to tell us ? and hath left upon record to all the world ? And though I do not know the secrets of thy heart, and therefore cannot tell thee by name, whether it be thy state or no ; yet if thou art but willing or diligent, thou mayest know thyself, whether thou art an heir of heaven, or not. And that is the main thing that I desire, that if thou be yet miserable, thou mayest discern it, and escape it. But canst thou escape, if thou neglect Christ and salvation ? “If thou love father, mother, wife, children, houses, lands, or thine own life, better than Christ ; if so, thou canst not be his disciple.” And consequently canst never be saved by him. Is it not as impossible for thee to be saved, “except thou be born again,” as it is for the devils themselves to be saved ? Nay, God hath more plainly and frequently spoken it in the Scripture, that such sinners as thou shalt never be saved, than he hath done, that the devils shall never be saved. And do not these tidings go cold to thy heart ? Methinks, but that there is yet life and hope before thee, and thou hast yet time and means to have thy soul recovered, the sight of thy case should even strike thee dead with amazement. But because I would fain have thee, if it be possible, to lay it to heart, I will here stay a little longer, and show thee, first,

the greatness of thy loss; secondly, the aggravations of thy unhappiness in this loss; thirdly, the positive miseries that thou must endure, with their aggravations.

*First,* The ungodly, in their loss of heaven, lose all that glorious personal perfection, which the people of God there enjoy. They lose that shining lustre of the body, surpassing the brightness of the sun. Though even the bodies of the wicked will be raised incorruptible, yet that will be so far from being happiness to them, that it only makes them capable of the more exquisite torments. They would be glad then, if every member were a dead member, that it might not feel the punishment inflicted on it; and the whole body were a rotten carcass, or might again lie down in dust and darkness. Much more do they want that moral perfection which the blessed partake of; those holy dispositions; that blessed conformity to the holiness of God; that cheerful readiness to do his will; that perfect rectitude of all their actions: instead of these, they have their old ulcerous deformed souls, that perverseness of will, that disorder in their faculties, that loathing of good, that love to evil, that violence of passion, which they had on earth. It is true, their understandings will be much cleared, both by the ceasing of temptation and deluding objects, and by the sad experience which they will have in hell, of the falsehood of their former conceits and delusions. But the evil disposition is never the more changed; they have the same disposition still, and fain would commit the same sins, if they could; they want but opportunity. Certainly they shall have none of the glorious perfections of the saints, either in soul or body. There will be a greater difference between these wretches and the glorified Christians, than there is betwixt a toad and the sun in the firmament.

*Secondly,* But the great loss of the damned, will be their loss of God; they shall have no comfortable relation to him, nor communion with him. As "they did not like to retain God in their knowledge;" but bid him "depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways:" so God will abhor to retain them in his household, or to give them entertainment in his fellowship and glory. He will never admit them to the inheritance of his saints, nor endure them to stand amongst them in his presence; but bid them "depart from me, ye workers of iniquity, I know you not." Now these men dare belie the Lord, if not blaspheme, in calling him by the title of their Father; how boldly and confidently do they daily approach him with their lips, and indeed reproach him in their formal prayers, with that appellation? as if God would father the devil's children; or, as if the slights of Christ, the friends of the world, the haters of

godliness, or any that delight in iniquity, were the offspring of heaven! They are ready now to lay confident claims to Christ, as if they were sincere believers. But when that time is come, and Christ will separate his followers from his foes, and his faithful friends from his deceived flatterers, where then will be their presumptuous claim? Then they shall find that God is not their father, but their foe, because they would not be his people. And as they would not consent that God should, by his Spirit, dwell in them, so shall not these evil doers dwell with him: The tabernacles of wickedness shall have no fellowship with him; nor the wicked inhabit the city of God: "for without are dogs, sorcerers, whoremongers, murderers, idolaters, and whatsoever loveth and maketh a lie." God is first enjoyed in part on earth, before he be fully enjoyed in heaven. It is only they that walked with him here, who shall live and be happy with him there. Oh, little doth the world know what a loss that soul hath, who loseth God! What were the world but a dungeon, if it had lost the sun? What were the body but a loathsome carrion, if it had lost the soul? Yet all these are nothing to the loss of God. So that as the enjoyment of God is the heaven of the saints; so the loss of God is the hell of the ungodly. And as the enjoying of God is the enjoying of all; so the loss of God is the loss of all.

*Thirdly,* As they lose God, so they lose all those delightful affections and actions, by which the blessed feed on God: that transporting knowledge; those ravishing views of his glorious face; the inconceivable pleasure of loving God; the apprehensions of his infinite love to us; the constant joys which his saints are taken up with; and the rivers of consolation wherewith he doth satisfy them. Is it nothing to lose all this? The employment of a king in ruling a kingdom, doth not so far exceed the employment of the vilest slave, as this heavenly employment exceedeth his.

*Fourthly,* They shall be deprived of the blessed society of angels and glorified saints. Instead of being companions of those happy spirits, and numbered with those joyful and triumphing kings, they must now be members of the corporation of hell, where they shall have companions of a far different nature. While they lived on earth, they loathed the saints; they imprisoned, banished them, and cast them out of their societies, or at least they would not be their companions in labour and in sufferings; and therefore they shall not now be their companions in their glory. Now you are shut out of that company, from which you first shut out yourselves; and are separated from them whom you would not be joined with. You could not endure them in your houses, nor in your town, nor scarce in the kingdom;

you took them as Ahab did Elias, for the "troublers of the land;" and as the apostles were taken for "men that turned the world upside down:" if any thing fell out amiss, you thought all was through them. When they were dead, or banished, you were glad they were gone; and thought the country was well rid of them. They molested you with their faithful reproving your sin; their holy conversation troubled you. You scarce ever heard them pray or sing praises in their families, but it was a vexation to you; and you envied their liberty of worshipping God. And is it then any wonder if you be separated from them hereafter! The day is near when they will trouble you no more: betwixt them and you will be a great gulf set, that those that would pass from thence to you (if any had a desire to ease you with a drop of water) cannot, neither can they pass to them, who would go from you.

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## CHAPTER II.

### THE AGGRAVATION OF THE LOSS OF HEAVEN TO THE UNGODLY.

I KNOW many will be ready to think, if this be all, they do not much care. What care they for losing the perfections above? What care they for losing God, his favour, or his presence? They lived merrily without him on earth, and why should it be so grievous to be without him hereafter? And what care they for being deprived of that love, and joy, and praising of God? They never tasted sweetness in the things of that nature; or what care they for being deprived of the fellowship of angels and saints? They could spare their company in this world well enough, and why may they not be without it in the world to come? To make these men therefore understand the truth of their future condition, I will here annex these two things:

1. I will show you why this loss will be intolerable, and most tormenting then, though it seem as nothing now.

2. I will show you what other losses will accompany these; which, though they are less in themselves, yet will now be more sensibly apprehended.

1. Then, that this loss of heaven will be most tormenting, may appear by these considerations:

1. The understandings of the ungodly will be then cleared, to know the worth of that which they have lost. Now they lament not their loss of God, because they never knew his excellency, nor the loss of that holy employment and society, for they were never sensible what they were worth. A man that hath lost a jewel, and took it but for a common stone,

is never troubled at his loss; but when he comes to know what he has lost, then he lamenteth it.

Though the understandings of the damned will not then be sanctified; yet will they be cleared from a multitude of errors. They think now that their honour, their estates, their pleasures, their health and life, are better worth their labour, than the things of another world; but when these things which had their hearts, have left them in misery, when they know, by experience, the things which before they did but read and hear of, they will be quite in another mind. They would not believe that water would drown, till they were in the sea; nor that the fire would burn, till they were cast into it: but when they feel it, they will easily believe. All that error of their mind, which made them set light by God, and abhor his worship, and vilify his people, will then be removed by experience; their knowledge shall be increased, that their sorrows may be increased. Doubtless those poor souls would be comparatively happy, if their understandings were wholly taken from them, if they had no more knowledge than idiots, or brute beasts; or if they knew no more in hell, than they did upon earth, their loss and misery would then less trouble them.

How happy would they now think themselves, if they did not know there is such a place as heaven? Now, when their knowledge would help to prevent their misery, they will not know; but then, when their knowledge will but feed their consuming fire, they shall know whether they will or no.

2. The loss of heaven will more torment them then, because, as the understanding will be clearer, so it will be more enlarged, and made more capacious, to conceive of the worth of that glory which they have lost. The strength of their apprehensions, as well as the truth of them, will then be increased. What deep apprehensions of the wrath of God, of the madness of sinning, of the misery of sinners, have these souls that now endure this misery, in comparison of those on earth that do but hear of it? What sensible apprehensions of the worth of life, hath the condemned man that is going to be executed, in comparison of what he was wont to have in the time of his prosperity? Much more will the actual deprivation of eternal blessedness make the damned exceeding apprehensive of the greatness of their loss: and as a large vessel will hold more water than a shell, so will their more enlarged understandings contain more matter to feed their torment, than now their shallow capacity can do.

3. And as the damned will have deeper apprehensions of the happiness they have lost, so will they have a closer

application of this doctrine to themselves, which will exceedingly tend to increase their torment. It will then be no hard matter for them to say, this is my loss, and this is my everlasting misery. The want of this is the main cause why they are now so little troubled at their condition: they are hardly brought to believe that there is such a state of misery, but more hardly to believe that it is like to be their own. This makes so many sermons to be lost, and all threatenings and warnings prove in vain. Let a minister of Christ show them their misery never so plainly, they will not be persuaded that they are so miserable. Let him tell them of the glory they must lose, and the sufferings they must feel, and they think it is not they whom he means. We find in all our preaching, by sad experience, that it is one of the hardest things in the world to bring a wicked man to know that he is wicked; a man that is in the way to hell, to know that he is in that way; or to make a man see himself in a state of wrath and condemnation. How seldom do we hear men, after the plainest discovery of their condemned state, cry out, "I am the man!" or to acknowledge, that if they die in their present condition, they are undone for ever.

There is no persuading men of their misery till they feel it, except the Spirit of the Almighty persuade them.

Oh, but when they find themselves suddenly in the land of darkness; perceive, by the execution of the sentence, that they were indeed condemned, and feel themselves in the scorching flames; and see that they are shut out of the presence of God for ever; it will then be no such difficult matter to convince them of their misery. This particular application of God's anger to themselves, will then be the easiest matter in the world: then they cannot choose but know and apply it, whether they will or no.

4. Again, As the understandings and consciences of sinners will be strengthened, so will their affections be more lively and enlarged: as judgment will be no longer blinded, nor conscience stifled, so the affections will be no longer stupified. A hard heart now makes heaven and hell seem but trifles: and when we have showed them everlasting glory and misery, they are as men half asleep, they scarce take notice what we say; our words are cast as stones against a hard wall, which fly back in the face of him that casteth them. We talk of terribly astonishing things, but it is to dead men that cannot apprehend it: we speak to rocks rather than to men: the earth will as soon tremble as they. But when these dead wretches are revived, what passionate sensibility! what working affections! what pangs of horror! what depth of sorrow will there then be! How violently

will they fly in their own faces! How will they rage against their former madness! The lamentations of the most passionate wife for the loss of her husband, or of the tenderest mother for the loss of her children, will be nothing to theirs for the loss of heaven. Oh, the self-accusing and self-tormenting fury of those forlorn wretches! How they will even tear their own hearts, and be God's executioners upon themselves! I am persuaded, as it was none but themselves that committed the sin, and themselves that were the meritorious cause of their sufferings, so themselves will be the chief executioners of those sufferings; God will have it so for the clearing of his justice; even Satan himself, as he was not so great a cause of their sinning as themselves, so will he not be so great an instrument of their torment. How happy would you think yourselves then if you were turned into rocks, or any thing that had neither passion nor sense! How happy were you, if you could now feel as lightly as you were wont to hear! And if you could sleep out the time of execution, as you did the time of the sermons that warned you of it! But your stupidity is gone, it will not be.

5. Moreover, it will much increase the torment of the damned, that their memories will be as large and strong as their understandings and affections. Were their loss never so great, and their sense of it never so passionate, yet if they could but lose the use of their memory, those passions would die, and that loss, being forgotten, would little trouble them. But as they cannot lay by their life and being, so neither can they lay aside any part of that being. Understanding, conscience, affections, memory, must all live to torment them, which should have helped to their happiness. And as by these they should have fed upon the love of God, and drawn forth perpetually the joys of his presence; so by these must they now feed upon the wrath of God, and draw forth continually the pains of his absence.

And yet these men would never be brought to consider. But in the latter days, saith the Lord, they shall perfectly consider it: when they are ensnared in the work of their own hands; when God hath arrested them, and judgment is passed upon them, and vengeance is poured out upon them, to the full, then they cannot choose but consider it, whether they will or no. Now they have no leisure to consider, nor any room in their memories for the things of another life. But then, they shall have leisure enough, they shall be where they have nothing else to do; their memories shall have no other employment; it shall be engraven upon the tables of their hearts. God would have had the doctrine of their eternal state to have been written on the posts of their doors, on their houses, on their hands,

and on their hearts: and seeing they rejected this counsel of the Lord, therefore shall it be written always before them in the place of their thralldom, that which way soever they look, they may still behold it.

I will briefly lay down some of those considerations which will thus feed the anguish of these damned wretches.

1. It will torment them to think of the greatness of the glory which they have lost. O if it had been that which they could have spared, it had been a small matter; or if it had been a loss reparable with any thing else; if it had been health, or wealth, or friends, or life, it had been nothing; but to lose "that exceeding and eternal weight of glory!"

2. It will torment them to think of the possibility that once they were in of obtaining it. Then they will remember, the time was, when I was in as fair a possibility of the kingdom as others; I was set upon the stage of the world; if I had played my part wisely and faithfully, now I might have had possession of the inheritance; I might have been amongst yonder blessed saints, who am now tormented with these damned fiends! The Lord did set before me life and death, and having chosen death, I deserve to suffer it. The prize was once held out before me; if I had run well, I might have obtained it; if I had striven, I might have had the mastery; if I had fought valiantly, I had been crowned.

3. It will yet more torment them to remember, not only the possibility, but the great probability that once they were in, to obtain the crown. It will then wound them to think, why I had once the gales of the Spirit ready to have assisted me. I was fully purposed to have been another man, to have cleaved to Christ, and to have forsook the world: I was almost resolved to have been wholly for God: I had even cast off my old companions, and yet I turned back, and lost my hold, and broke my promises, and slacked my purposes; almost God had persuaded me to be a real Christian, and yet I conquered those persuasions. What workings were in my heart, when a faithful minister pressed home the truth! O how fair was I once for heaven? I had almost had it, and yet I have lost it; if I had but followed on to seek the Lord, and blown up the sparks of desire which were kindled in me, I had now been blessed among the saints.

4. Yet further, it will much add to their torment to remember, that God himself did condescend to entreat them; how long he did wait, how freely he did offer, how lovingly he did invite, and how importunately he did solicit them! how the Spirit did continue striving with their hearts, as if he were loath to take a denial: how Christ stood knocking at the door of their hearts, sermon after sermon, and one sab-



bath after another, crying out, Open, sinner, open thy heart to the Saviour, and "I will come in and sup with thee, and thou with me." Why dost thou thus delay? What dost thou mean, that thou dost not open to me? How long shall it be till thou attain to innocency? "How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?" Wo to thee, O unworthy sinner! Wilt thou not be made clean? Wilt thou not be pardoned, and sanctified, and made happy? When shall it once be? O that thou wouldst hearken to my word, and obey my gospel! "Then should thy peace be as the river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea: though thy sins were as red as crimson, I would make them as white as the snow: O that thou were but wise to consider this! and that thou wouldst in time remember thy latter end, before the evil days come upon thee, and the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say of all thy vain delights, I have no pleasure in them!" Why, sinner! shall thy Maker thus bespeak thee in vain? Shall the God of all the world beseech thee to be happy, and beseech thee to have pity upon thine own soul, and wilt thou not regard him? Why did he make thy ears; but to hear his voice? Why did he make thy understanding, but to consider? Or thy heart, but to entertain the Son in love? "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Consider thy ways."

O how all these passionate pleadings of Christ will passionately transport the damned with self indignation! That they will be ready to tear out their own hearts! How fresh will the remembrance of them be still in their minds, lancing their souls with renewed torments! What self-condemning pangs will it raise within them, to remember how oft Christ would have gathered them to himself, "even as the hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but they would not?" Then will they cry out against themselves, How justly is all this befallen me! Must I tire out the patience of Christ? Must I make the God of heaven to follow me in vain, till I had wearied him with crying to me, *Repent, return?* Must the Lord of all the world thus wait upon me, and all in vain? O how justly is that patience now turned into fury, which falls upon my soul with irresistible violence! When the Lord cried out to me in his word, "How long will it be before thou wilt be made clean and holy?" my heart, or at least my practice, answered, *Never*; I will never be so precise: And now, when I cry out, "How long will it be till I be freed from this torment, and saved with the saints?" how justly do I receive the answer, *Never, never!* Oh sinner, I beseech thee, for thy own sake, think of this while the voice of mercy soundeth in thine ears! Yet patience continueth waiting upon thee; canst thou think it will do so still? Yet the offers of Christ and life are made to thee in the gospel,

and the hand of God is stretched out to thee; but will it still be thus? The Spirit hath not yet done striving with thy heart; but dost thou know how soon he may turn away, and give thee over to a reprobate mind? Thou hast yet life, and time, and strength, and means; but dost thou think that this life will always last? Oh "seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near: he that hath an ear to hear, let him hear," what Christ now speaketh to his soul. And "to-day, while it is called to-day, harden not your hearts, lest he swear in his wrath that you shall never enter into his rest." For ever blessed is he that hath a hearing heart and ear, while Christ hath a calling voice.

5. Again, It will be a most cutting consideration to these to remember on what easy terms they might have escaped their misery. If their work had been to remove mountains, to conquer kingdoms, then the impossibility would somewhat assuage the rage of their self-accusing conscience. If their conditions for heaven had been the satisfying of justice for all their transgressions, the suffering of all the law did lay upon them, or bearing the burden which Christ was fain to bear; this were nothing but to suffer hell to escape hell. But their conditions were of another nature. The yoke was light, and the burden was easy, which Jesus Christ would have laid upon them; his commandments were not grievous. It was but to repent, and accept him as their Saviour; to study his will, and seek his face; to renounce all other happiness but that which he procureth us, and to take the Lord alone for our supreme good; to renounce the government of the world and the flesh, and to submit to his meek and gracious government; to forsake the ways of our own devising, and to walk in his holy delightful way; to engage ourselves to this by covenant with him, and to continue faithful in that covenant.

These were the terms on which they might have enjoyed the kingdom. And was there any thing unreasonable in all this? Was it a hard bargain to have heaven upon these conditions?

When the poor wretch shall look back upon these easy terms which he refused, and compare the labour of them with the pains and loss which he there sustaineth, it cannot be now conceived how it will rent his very heart! Ah, thinks he, how justly do I suffer all this, who would not be at so small pains to avoid it. Where was my understanding when I neglected thy gracious offer; when I called the Lord a hard master, and thought his pleasant service to be a bondage, and the service of the devil and my flesh to be the only freedom? Was I not a thousand times worse than mad, when I censured the holy way of God as needless

preciseness? and cried out on it, as an intolerable burden? When I thought the laws of Christ too strict; and all too much that I did for the life to come? O, what had all the trouble of duty been, in comparison of the trouble I now sustain? or all the sufferings for Christ and well doing, in comparison of these sufferings that I must undergo for ever? What if I had spent my days in the strictest life? What if I had lived still upon my knees? What if I had lost my credit with men? and been hated of all men for the sake of Christ? and borne the reproach of the foolish? What if I had been imprisoned, or banished, or put to death? O, what had all this been to the miseries that I now suffer! Would not the heaven which I have lost, have recompensed all my losses? and should not all my sufferings have been there forgotten? What if Christ had bid me do some great matter; as to live in continual tears and sorrow, to suffer death a hundred times over; (which yet he did not;) should I not have done it? How much more, when he said, but "believe, and be saved: seek my face, and thy soul shall live: love me above all, walk in my sweet and holy way, take up thy cross and follow me, and I will save thee from the wrath of God, and I will give thee everlasting life." O gracious offer! O easy terms! O cursed wretch, that would not be persuaded to accept them!

6. This also will be a most tormenting consideration, to remember what they sold their eternal welfare for. When they compare the value of the pleasures of sin, with the value of the recompense of reward, how will the vast disproportion astonish them! To think of a few pleasant cups, or sweet morsels, a little ease, or low delight to the flesh; and then to think of everlasting glory! What a vast difference between them will then appear! To think, this is all I had for my soul, my God, my hopes of blessedness! It cannot possibly be expressed how these thoughts will tear his heart. Then will he exclaim against his folly, O miserable wretch! Did I set my soul to sale for so base a price? Did I part with my God for a little dirt and dross? and sell my Saviour, as Judas, for a little silver? O for how small a matter have I parted with my happiness! I had but a dream of delight, for my hopes of heaven: and now I am awaked, it is all vanished: where are now my honours and attendance? My morsels are now turned to gall, and my cups to wormwood. They delighted me no longer than while they were passing down: and is this all I have had for the inestimable treasure? O what a mad exchange did I make! What if I had gained all the world, and lost my soul? But, alas, how small a part of the world was it, for which I gave up my part of glory! O that sinners would think of this,

when they are swimming in delights, and studying to be rich and honourable! When they are desperately venturing upon known transgression, and sinning against the checks of conscience!

7. Yet much more will it add unto their torment, when they consider that all this was their own doings, and that they wilfully procured their own destruction: had they been forced to sin, it would much abate the rage of their consciences, or if they were punished for another man's transgressions: or if any other had been the chief author of their ruin: but to think, that it was the choice of their own wills, and that God had set them in so free a condition, that none in the world could have forced them to sin against their wills, this will be a griping thought. What! (thinks this wretched creature,) had I not enemies enough in the world, but I must be an enemy to myself? God would give neither the devil, nor the world, so much power over me, as to force me to commit the least transgression. If I had not consented, their temptations had been in vain; they could but entice me, it was myself that yielded, and did the evil; and I must needs lay hands upon my own soul, and imbrue my hands in my own blood. Who should pity me, who pitied not myself, and who brought all this upon mine own head? Never did God do me any good, or offer me any for the welfare of my soul, but I resisted him: he hath heaped mercy upon me, and renewed one deliverance after another, to entice my heart to him, and yet was I never heartily willing to serve him: he hath gently chastised me, and made me groan under the fruit of my disobedience, and yet, though I promised largely in my affliction, I was never unfeignedly willing to obey him.

Thus will it gnaw the hearts of these wretches, to remember that they were the cause of their undoing; and that they wilfully and obstinately persisted in their rebellion, and were mere volunteers in the service of the devil. They would venture, they would go on, they would not hear him that spoke against it: God called to them to hear and stay, but they would not: men called, conscience called, and said to them, (as Pilate's wife,) *Have nothing to do with that hateful sin; for I have suffered many things because of it:* but they would not hear; their will was their law, their rule, and their ruin.

8. *Lastly,* It will yet make the wound in their consciences much deeper, when they shall remember, that it was not only their own doing, but that they were at so much cost and pains for their own damnation. What great undertakings did they engage in to effect their ruin, to resist God, to conquer the Spirit, to overcome the power of mercies,

judgments, and the word itself, to silence conscience? All this they did take upon them and perform. What a number of sins did they manage at once! What difficulties did they set upon! Even the conquering the power of reason itself. What dangers did they adventure on! Though they walked in continual danger of the wrath of God, and knew he could lay them in the dust in a moment; though they knew they lived in danger of eternal perdition, yet would they run upon all this. What did they forsake for the service of Satan, and the pleasures of sin? They forsook their God, their conscience, their best friends, their hopes of salvation.

Oh the labour that it costeth poor wretches to be damned! Sobriety they might have at a cheaper rate, and a great deal of health and ease too; and yet they will rather have gluttony and drunkenness, with poverty, and shame, and sickness, with the outcries and lamentations of wife, and children, and conscience itself. Contentedness they might have, with ease and delight: yet will they rather have covetousness and ambition; though it cost them study, and cares, and fears, and labour of body and mind, and continual unquietness, and destruction of spirit. Though their anger be nothing but a tormenting themselves, and revenge and envy consume their spirits, and keep them upon a continual rack; though uncleanness destroy their bodies, and estates, and names; yet will they do and suffer all this, rather than suffer their souls to be saved.

O how the reviews of this will feed the flames in hell! With what rage will these damned wretches curse themselves, and say, Was damnation worth all this cost and pains? Was it not enough that I perished through my negligence, and that I sat still while Satan played his game, but I must seek so diligently my own perdition? Might I not have been damned on free cost, but I must purchase it so dearly? I thought I could have been saved without so much ado: and could I not have been destroyed without so much ado? How well is all my care, and pains, and violence, now requited! Must I work out so laboriously my own damnation, when God commanded me to work out my salvation? O, if I had done as much for heaven as I did for hell, I had surely had it. I cried out of the tedious way of godliness; and yet I could be at more pains for Satan, and for death. If I had loved Christ as strongly as I did my pleasures, and profits, and honours, and thought on him as often, and sought him as painfully, O how happy had I now been! But justly do I suffer the flames of hell, who would rather buy them so dear, than have heaven when it was purchased to my hands.

Thus I have showed you some of those thoughts which

will aggravate the misery of these wretches for ever. O that God would persuade thee, who readest these words, to take up these thoughts now, for the preventing that inconceivable calamity, so that thou mayest not take them up in hell as thy own tormentor.

### CHAPTER III.

THEY SHALL LOSE ALL THINGS THAT ARE COMFORTABLE, AS WELL AS HEAVEN.

HAVING showed you those considerations, which will then aggravate their misery, I am next to show you their additional losses, which will aggravate it. For as "godliness hath the promise both of this life, and that which is to come;" and as God hath said, "That if we first seek his kingdom and righteousness, all things else shall be added to us;" so also are the ungodly threatened with the loss both of spiritual and of corporal blessings; and because they sought not first Christ's kingdom and righteousness, therefore shall they lose both it, and that which they did seek, and there shall be taken from them even that little which they have. If they could but have kept their present enjoyments, they would not have much cared for the loss of heaven: but catching at the shadow for the substance, they now find they have lost both; and that when they rejected Christ, they rejected all things. If they had lost and forsaken all for Christ, they would have found all again in him; for he would have been all in all to them: but now they have forsaken Christ for other things, they shall lose Christ, and that also for which they did forsake him.

But I will particularly open to you some of their other losses.

1. They shall lose their present conceit of their interest in God, and of his favour toward them, and of their part in the merits and sufferings of Christ. This false belief doth now support their spirits, and defend them from the terrors that would else seize upon them: but what will ease their trouble when this is gone? When they can believe no longer, they will be quiet no longer. If a man conceit that he is in safety, his conceit may make him cheerful till his misery comes, and then both his conceit and comforts vanish.

There is none of this believing in hell; nor any persuasion of pardon or happiness, nor any boasting of their honesty, nor justifying themselves. This was but Satan's stratagem, that, being blindfold, they might follow him the more

boldly; but then he will uncover their eyes, and they shall see where they are.

2. Another addition to the misery of the damned will be this: that with the loss of heaven, they shall lose all their hopes. In this life, though they were threatened with the wrath of God, yet their hope of escaping it did bear up their hearts. We can now scarce speak with the vilest drunkard, or swearer, or scorner, but he hopes to be saved for all this. O happy world! if salvation were as common as this hope; even those whose hellish nature is written in the face of their conversation, whose tongues plead the cause of the devil, and speak the language of hell, yet strongly hope for heaven; though the God of heaven hath told them no such shall ever come there. Nay, so strong are men's hopes, that they will dispute the cause with Christ himself at judgment, and plead "their eating and drinking in his presence, their preaching in his name, and casting out devils;" (and these are more probable arguments than our baptism, and common profession and name of Christians;) they will stiffly deny that ever they "neglected Christ in hunger, nakedness, or prison," till Christ confute them with the sentence of their condemnation. Though the heart of their hopes will be broken at their death; yet, it seems, they would fain plead for such hope at the general judgment.

But, O the sad state of these men, when they must bid farewell to all their hopes! when their hopes shall all perish with them! "The eyes of the wicked shall fail, and their hope shall be as the giving up of the ghost." The giving up of the ghost is a fit, but terrible, resemblance of a wicked man's giving up his hopes.

For, *first*, As the soul departeth not from the body without the greatest pain, so doth the hope of the wicked depart. O the pangs that seize upon the soul of the sinner at death and judgment, when he is parting with all his hopes!

*Secondly*, The soul departeth from the body suddenly, in a moment, which hath there delightfully continued so many years; just so doth the hope of the wicked depart.

*Thirdly*, The soul which then departed, will never return to live with the body in this world any more; and the hope of the wicked, when it departeth, taketh an everlasting farewell of his soul. A miracle of resurrection shall again conjoin the soul and body, but there shall be no such miraculous resurrection of the damned's hope.

Methinks it is the most doleful spectacle that this world affords, to see an ungodly person dying; his soul and hopes departing together! With what a sad change he appears in another world! Then if a man could but speak with that hopeless soul, and ask it, Are you now as confident of sal-

vation as you were wont to be? Do you now hope to be saved as soon as the most godly? O what a sad answer would he return!

O that careless sinners would be awakened to think of this in time! If thou be one of them, who art reading these lines, I do here, as a friend, advise thee, that as thou wouldst not have all thy hopes deceive thee, when thou hast most need, thou presently try them, whether they will prove current at the touchstone of the Scripture; and if thou find them unsound, let them go, whatsoever sorrow they cost thee. Rest not till thou canst give a reason of all thy hopes; till thou canst prove that they are the hopes which grace, and not nature, hath wrought; that they are grounded upon Scripture promises; that they purify thy heart; that they quicken, and not cool, thy endeavours in godliness; that the more thou hopest, the less thou sinnest, and the more painful thou art in following on the work, and not grown more loose and careless by the increasing of thy hopes; that thou art willing to have them tried, and fearful of being deceived; that they stir up thy desires of enjoying what thou hopest for, and the deferring thereof is the trouble of thy heart.

There is a hope which is a singular grace and duty; and there is a hope which is a notorious, dangerous sin: so consequently there is a despair which is a grievous sin; and there is a despair which is absolutely necessary to thy salvation.

I would not have thee despair of the sufficiency of the blood of Christ to save thee, if thou believe and heartily obey him; nor of the willingness of God to pardon and save thee, if thou be such a one; nor yet absolutely of thy own salvation, because while there is life and time, there is hope of thy conversion, and so of thy salvation; nor would I draw thee to despair of finding Christ, if thou do but heartily seek him: but this is the despair that I would persuade thee to, as thou lovest thy soul; that thou despair of ever being saved, except thou be born again; or of seeing God, without holiness; or escaping perishing, except thou suddenly repent; or of ever having part in Christ, except thou love him above father, mother, or thy own life; or of ever truly loving God, or being his servant, while thou lovest the world, and servest it.

These things I would have thee despair of, and whatever else God hath told thee shall never come to pass. And when thou hast sadly searched into thy own heart, and findest thyself in any of these cases, I would have thee despair of ever being saved in that state thou art in. This kind of despair is one of the first steps to heaven.



Consider, if a man be quite out of his way, what must be the first means to bring him in again? Why, a despair of ever coming to his journey's end in the way that he is in. If his home be eastward, and he be going westward, as long as he hopes he is in the right, he will go on; and as long as he goes on hoping, he goes further amiss. Therefore when he meets with somebody that assures him that he is clean out of his way, and brings him to despair of coming home except he turn back again; then he will return, and then he may hope.

Why, sinner, just so it is with thy soul; thou art out of the way to heaven, and in that way thou hast proceeded many a year; yet thou goest on quietly, and hopest to be saved, because thou art not so bad as many others. Why, I tell thee, except thou throw away these hopes, and see that thou hast all this while been quite out of the way to heaven: I say, till thou be brought to this, thou wilt never return and be saved. Who will turn out of his way while he hopes he is right? Remember what I say; till thou feel God conrincing thee, that the way which thou hast lived in will not serve thy turn, and so break down thy former hopes, there is yet no saving work wrought upon thee, how well soever thou mayest hope of thyself. Yea, thus much more, if any thing keep thy soul out of heaven, there is nothing in the world likelier to do it, than thy false hopes of being saved, while thou art out of the way to salvation.

3. Another additional loss, aggravating their loss of heaven, is this, they shall lose all their carnal mirth; they will say to themselves, (as Solomon doth,) "of their laughter, thou art mad; and of their mirth, what didst thou?" Eccles. ii, 2. Their pleasant conceits are then ended, and their merry tales are all told; "their mirth was but as the crackling of thorns under a pot," Eccles. vii, 6. It made a blaze for a while, but it was presently gone, and will return no more. They scorned to entertain any saddening thoughts: the talk of death and judgment was irksome to them, because it damped their mirth: they could not endure to think of their sin or danger, because these thoughts did sad their spirits: they knew not what it was to weep for sin, or to humble themselves under the mighty hand of God: they could laugh away sorrow, and sing away cares, and drive away these melancholy thoughts: they thought if they should meditate, and pray, and mourn, as the godly do, their lives would be a continual misery.

Alas, poor souls! What a misery then will that life be, where you shall have nothing but sorrow; intense, heart-piercing, multiplied sorrow? When you shall have neither the joys of the saints, nor your own former joys? Do you

think there is one merry heart in hell? or one joyful countenance, or jesting tongue? You cry now, "A little mirth is worth a great deal of sorrow:" but surely a little godly sorrow, which would have ended in eternal joy, had been more worth than a great deal of your foolish mirth, which will end in sorrow.

4. Another additional loss will be this: they shall lose all their sensual delights; that which they esteemed their chief good, their heaven, their false god, must they lose, as well as God himself.

O what a fall will the proud ambitious man have from the top of his honours! As his dust and bones will not be known from the dust and bones of the poorest beggars: so neither will his soul be honoured or favoured any more than theirs. What a number of the great, noble, and learned, are now shut out of the presence of Christ! They are shut out of their well contrived houses, and sumptuous buildings; their comely chambers, with costly hangings; their soft beds, and easy couches. They shall not find their gallant walks, their curious gardens, with variety of beauteous fruits and flowers; their rich pastures, and pleasant meadows, and plenteous harvest, and flocks, and herds. Their tables will not be so spread and furnished, nor they so punctually attended and observed. They have not their variety of dainty fare, or several courses, to please their appetites to the full. The rich man there fareth not deliciously every day, neither shall he wear there his purple and fine linen.

O that sinners would remember this in the midst of their jollity, and say to one another, We must shortly reckon for this. Will the remembrance of it then be comfortable or terrible? Will these delights accompany us to another world? How shall we look each other in the face, if we meet in hell? Will not the memorial of them be then our torment? Come, as we have sinned together, let us pray together before we stir, that God would pardon us, and let us enter into a promise with one another that we will do thus no more, but will meet together in the worship of God, and help one another toward heaven, as oft as we have met for our sinful merriments, in helping to deceive and destroy each other. This would be the way to prevent this sorrow, and a course that would comfort you, when you look back upon it hereafter.

## CHAPTER IV.

## THE GREATNESS OF THE TORMENTS OF THE DAMNED DISCOVERED.

HAVING thus showed you how great their loss is, who are shut out of rest, and how it will be aggravated by those additional losses which will accompany it; I should next here show you the greatness of those positive sufferings which will accompany this loss. But I will not meddle with the quality of those sufferings, but only show their greatness in some few discoveries, lest the careless sinner, while he hears of no other punishment but that of loss, should think he can bear that well enough. That there are, besides the loss of happiness, actual, sensible torments for the damned, is a matter beyond all doubt; and that they will be exceeding great, may appear by these arguments following:

1. From the principal author of them, which is God himself: as it was no less than God whom the sinners had offended, so it is no less than God that will punish them for their offences. He hath prepared those torments for his enemies. His continued anger will still be devouring them. His breath of indignation will kindle the flames. His wrath will be an intolerable burden to their souls. If it were but a creature that they had to do with, they might better bear it. But wo to him that falls under the strokes of the Almighty! They shall feel to their sorrow, "that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." It were nothing in comparison to this, if all the world were against them, or if the strength of all the creatures were united in one to inflict their penalty. What a consuming fire is his wrath! "If it be kindled here, and that but a little," how do we wither before it, "as the grass that is cut down before the sun!" How soon doth our strength decay, and turn to weakness, and our beauty to deformity! The flames do not so easily run through the dry stubble, as the wrath of God will feed upon these wretches. Oh, they that could not bear a prison, or a gibbet, for Christ, scarce a few scorns, how will they now bear the devouring fire!

2. The place or state of torment is purposely ordained for the glorifying God's justice. As all the works of God are great and wonderful, so those above all which are specially intended for the eminent advancing of some of his attributes. When he will glorify his power, he makes the worlds. The comely order of all and singular creatures, declares his wisdom. His providence is shown in sustaining all things, and maintaining order, and attending his excellent ends, amongst the confused, perverse, tumultuous agitations of a

world of wicked, foolish, self-destroying miscreants. When a spark of his wrath doth kindle upon the earth, the whole world, save only eight persons, are drowned; Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim, are burned with fire from heaven to ashes; the sea shuts her mouth upon some; the earth doth open and swallow others; the pestilence destroyeth them by thousands. The present deplorable state of the Jews may fully testify this to the world. And yet the glorifying of the two great attributes of mercy and justice, is intended most eminently for the life to come. As therefore when God will purposely glorify his mercy, he will do it in a way that is now beyond the comprehension of the saints that must enjoy it; so that the blood of his Son, and the enjoyment of himself immediately in glory, shall not be thought too high an honour for them: so also, when the time comes that he will purposely manifest his justice, it shall appear to be indeed the justice of God. The everlasting flames of hell will not be thought too hot for the rebellious; and when they have there burned through millions of ages, he will not repent him of the evil which is befallen them. Oh, wo to the soul that is thus set up for a butt, for the wrath of the Almighty to shoot at! and for a bush, that must burn in the flames of his jealousy, and never be consumed!

3. Consider who shall be God's executioners of their torment: and that is, first, Satan; secondly, themselves. First, He that was here so successful in drawing them from Christ, will then be the instrument of their punishment, for yielding to his temptations. It was a pitiful sight to see the man possessed, that was bound with chains, and lived among tombs; and that other that would be cast into the fire, and into the water: but, alas! that was nothing to the torment that Satan puts them to in hell: that is the reward he will give them for all their service; for their rejecting the commands of God, and forsaking Christ, and neglecting their souls at his persuasion. Ah, if they had served Christ, as faithfully as they did Satan, he would have given them a better reward. Secondly, And it is most just also, that they should there be their own tormentors, that they may see that their whole destruction is of themselves: and they who were wilfully the meritorious cause, should also be the efficient in their own sufferings; and then who can they complain of but themselves?

4. Consider also that their torment will be universal, not upon one part alone, while the rest are free; but as all have joined in the sin, so must all partake of the torment. The soul, as it was the chief in sinning, shall be the chief in suffering: and as it is of a more spiritual and excellent nature

than bodies are, so will its torments far exceed bodily sufferings. And as the joys of the soul far surpass all sensual pleasures, so the pains of the soul surpass corporal pains.

And it is not only a soul, but a sinful soul, that must suffer: the guilt which still remains upon it, will make it fit for the wrath of God to work upon. As fire will not burn, except the fuel be combustible; but if the wood be dry, how fiercely will it burn then! The guilt of their sins will be as tinder to gunpowder to the damned soul, to make the flames of hell take hold upon them with fury.

And as the soul, so also the body must bear its part. That body that must needs be pleased, whatsoever became of its eternal safety, shall now be paid for its unlawful pleasures. That body which was so carefully looked to, so tenderly cherished; that body which could not endure heat or cold, or an ill smell, or a loathsome sight: Oh what must it now endure! How are its haughty looks now taken down! how little will those flames regard its comeliness and beauty! But as death did not regard it, nor the worms regard it, but as freely fed upon the face of the proud and lustful dames, and the heart of the most ambitious lords and princes, as if they had been but beggars; so will their tormentors then as little pity their tenderness, or reverence their lordliness. Those eyes which were wont to be delighted with curious sights, must then see nothing but what shall amaze and terrify them; an angry God above them, and those saints whom they scorned, enjoying the glory which they have lost; and about them will be only devils and damned souls. Ah! then how sadly will they look back and say, Are all our feasts, our games, and revels come to this! Then those ears which were wont to be delighted with music, shall hear the shrieks and cries of their damned companions; children crying out against their parents, that gave them encouragement and example in evil; husbands crying out upon their wives, and wives upon their husbands; masters and servants cursing each other; ministers and people, magistrates and subjects, charging their misery upon one another, for discouraging in duty, conniving at sin, and being silent or formal when they should have plainly told one another of their misery, and forewarned them of their danger. Thus will soul and body be companions in calamity.

5. And the greater by far will their torments be, because they shall have no comfort left to mitigate them. In this life, when a minister told them of hell, or conscience began to trouble their peace, they had comforts enough at hand to relieve them: their carnal friends were all ready to comfort them; but now they have not a word of comfort, either for him or themselves. Formerly they had their business, their

company, their mirth, to drive away their fears; they could drink away their sorrows, or play them away, or sleep them away, or at least, time did wear them away; but now all these remedies are vanished. They had a hard, a presumptuous, unbelieving heart, which was a wall to defend them against troubles of mind; but now their experience hath banished these, and left them naked to the fury of those flames. Yea, formerly Satan himself was their comforter, and would unsay all that the minister said against them, as he did to our first mother: "Hath God said, Ye shall not eat? Ye shall not surely die." So doth he now: Doth God tell you that you shall lie in hell? it is no such matter; God is more merciful: he doth but tell you so to fright you from sinning: or if there be a hell, what need you fear it? Are not you Christians? and shall you not be saved by Christ? Was not his blood shed for you? Ministers may tell you what they please; they would make men believe that they shall all be damned except they will fit themselves to their humour. Thus as the Spirit of Christ is the comforter of the saints, so Satan is the comforter of the wicked: for he knows if he should now disquiet them, they would no longer serve him: or if fears or doubts should trouble them, they would bethink themselves of their danger. Never was a thief more careful lest he should awake the people, when he is robbing the house, than Satan is, not to awaken a sinner. But when the sinner is dead, and he hath his prey, then he hath done flattering and comforting them. While the sight of sin and misery might have helped to save them, he took all the pains he could to hide it from their eyes; but when it is too late, and there is no hope left, he will make them see and feel to the utmost. Oh, which way will the forlorn sinner then look for comfort! They that drew him into the snare, and promised him safety, now forsake him, and are forsaken themselves. His ancient comforts are taken from him, and the righteous God, whose forewarning he made light of, will now make good his word against him to the least tittle.

6. But the great aggravation of this misery will be its eternity. That when a thousand millions of ages are past, their torments are as fresh to begin as at the first day. If there were any hope of an end, it would ease them to foresee it; but when it must be for ever so, that thought is intolerable: much more will the misery itself be. They never heartily repented of their sin, and God will never repent him of their suffering. They broke the laws of the eternal God, and therefore shall suffer eternal punishment. They knew it was an everlasting kingdom which they refused; and therefore what wonder if they be everlastingly shut

out of it? It was their immortal souls that were guilty of the trespass, and therefore must immortally suffer the pains. What happy men would they think themselves, if they might have lain still in their graves, or continued dust, or suffered no worse than the gnawing of those worms! Oh that they might but there lie down again! What a mercy now would it be to die! And how will they call and cry out for it? O death! whither art thou gone? Now come and cut off this doleful life. O that these pains would break my heart, and end my being! O that I might once die at last! O that I had never had a being! These groans will the thoughts of eternity wring from their hearts. They were wont to think the sermon long, and prayer long; how long then will they think these endless torments? What difference is there betwixt the length of their pleasures and of their pains? The one continueth but a moment, the other endureth through all eternity. Oh that sinners would lay this thought to heart. Remember how time is almost gone. Thou art standing all this while at the door of eternity; and death is waiting to open the door, and put thee in. Go sleep out but a few more nights, and stir up and down on earth a few more days, and then thy nights and days shall end: thy thoughts, and cares, and pleasures, and all, shall be devoured by eternity: thou must enter upon the state which shall never be changed. As the joys of heaven are beyond our conceiving, so also are the pains of hell. Everlasting torment is inconceivable torment.

But methinks I perceive the obstinate sinner desperately resolving, If I must be damned, there is no remedy; rather than I will live so precisely, I will put it to the venture; I shall escape as well as the rest of my neighbours, and we will even bear it as well as we can. Alas, poor creature! would thou didst but know what it is that thou dost so boldly venture on: I dare say thou wouldst sleep this night but very unquietly. Wilt thou leave thyself no room for hope? Art thou such an implacable enemy to Christ, and thy own soul? And dost thou think indeed, that thou canst bear the wrath of God, and go away so easily with these eternal torments? Yet let me beg this of thee, that before thou dost so flatly resolve, thou wouldst lend thine attention to these few questions:

*First*, Who art thou that thou shouldst bear the wrath of God! Art thou a god; or art thou a man? What is thy strength to undergo so much? Is it not as the strength of wax or stubble to resist the fire? or as chaff to the wind? or as dust before the whirlwind? Was he not as stout a man as thyself, who cried to God, "Wilt thou break a leaf driven to and fro? And wilt thou pursue the dry stubble?" If thy

strength were as iron, and thy bones as brass, thou couldst not bear. If thy foundation were as the earth, and thy power as the heavens, yet shouldst thou perish at the breath of his indignation. How much more when thou art but a little, creeping, breathing clay, kept a few days from stinking, and from being eaten with worms, by the mere support and favour of him whom thou thus resistest?

*Secondly*, If thou be so strong, and thy heart so stout, why do those small sufferings so dismay thee? If thou have but a fit of the gout or stone, what groans dost thou utter? The house is filled with thy complaints. If thou shouldst but lose a leg or an arm, thou wouldst make a great matter of it. If thou lose thine estate, and fall into poverty and disgrace; how heavily wouldst thou bear any one of these? And yet all these laid together, will be one day accounted a happy state, in comparison of that which is suffered in hell. Let me see thee make as light of convulsive, gouty, rheumatic pains, when they seize upon thee, and then the strength of thy spirit will appear. Alas, how many such boasters as thyself have I seen made to stoop, and eat their words! And when God hath but let out a little of his wrath, that Pharaoh, who before asked, "Who is the Lord?" hath cried, "I have sinned."

*Thirdly*, If all this be nothing, go try thy strength by some corporal torment; as Bilney, before he went to the stake, would first try his finger in the candle: so do thou; hold thy finger awhile in the fire, and feel there whether thou canst endure the fire of hell. Austin mentioned a chaste Christian woman, who being tempted to uncleanness by a lewd ruffian, she desired him for her sake to hold his finger one hour in the fire; he answered, "It is an unreasonable request." "How much more unreasonable is it," said she, "that I should burn in hell for the satisfying your lust?" So say I to thee; if it be an intolerable thing to suffer the heat of the fire for a year, or a day, or an hour, what will it be to suffer ten thousand times more for ever? What if thou wert to suffer Lawrence's death, to be roasted upon a grid-iron; or to be scraped or pricked to death, as other martyrs were? If thou could not endure such things as these, how wilt thou endure the eternal flames?

*Fourthly*, If thou be so fearless of that eternal misery, why is the least foretaste of it so terrible! Didst thou never feel such a thing as a tormenting conscience? If thou hast not, thou shalt do. Didst thou never see and speak with a man that lived in desperation, or in some degree of these wounds of spirit that was near despair? How uncomfortable was their conference! How burdensome their lives! Nothing doth them good which they possess; the sight of



friends, or house, or goods, which refresheth others, is a trouble to them : they feel no sweetness in meat or drink ; they are weary of life, and fearful of death. What is the matter with these men ? If the misery of the damned itself can be endured, why cannot they more easily endure these little sparks ?

*Fifthly*, Tell me faithfully, what if thou shouldst but see the devil appear to thee in some terrible shape, would it not daunt thee ? What if thou shouldst meet him in thy way home, or he should show himself to thee at night in thy bed chamber, would not thy heart fail thee, and thy hair stand on end ? I could name thee those that have been as confident as thyself, who, by such a sight have been so appalled, that they were in danger of being driven out of their wits. Or what if some damned soul of thy former acquaintance should appear to thee, would not this amaze thee ? Alas ! what is this to the torments of hell ? Canst thou not endure a shadow to appear before thee ? O how wilt thou endure to live with them for ever, where thou shalt have no other company but devils and the damned ; and shalt not only see them, but be tormented with them and by them ?

*Lastly*, Let me ask thee, if the wrath of God be to be made so light of, why did the Son of God himself make so great a matter of it ? When he had taken upon him the payment of our debt, and bore that punishment we had deserved, it makes him sweat water and blood ; it makes the Lord of life to cry, " My soul is heavy, even to the death." It makes him cry out upon the cross, " My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ?" Surely if any one could have borne these sufferings, it would have been Jesus Christ. He had another measure of strength to bear it than thou hast.

Wo to poor sinners for their mad security ! Do they think to find that tolerable to them which was so heavy to Christ ? Nay, the Son of God is cast into a bitter agony, and bloody sweat, under the curse of the law only ; and yet the feeble, foolish creature makes nothing to bear also the curse of the gospel. The good Lord bring these men to their right minds by repentance, lest they buy their wit at too dear a rate.

And thus I have shown you somewhat of their misery, who miss of this rest prepared for the saints. And now, reader, I demand thy resolution, what use thou wilt make of all this ? Shall it all be lost to thee ? or wilt thou consider it in good earnest ? Thou hast cast by many a warning of God, wilt thou do so by this also ? Take heed what thou dost, and how thou resolvest. God will not always stand warning and threatening. The hand of revenge is lifted up ;

the blow is coming, and wo to him on whom it lighteth. Little thinkest thou how near thou standest to thy eternal state, and how near the pit thou art dancing in thy jollity. If thy eyes were but opened, as they will be shortly, thou wouldst see all this that I have spoken before thine eyes, without stirring from the place in which thou standest. Dost thou throw by the book, and say, It speaks of nothing but hell and damnation? Thus thou usest also to complain of the minister; but wouldst thou not have us tell thee of these things? Should we be guilty of the blood of thy soul, by keeping silent that which God hath charged us to make known? Wouldst thou perish in ease and silence, and also have us to perish with thee, rather than displease thee, by speaking the truth? If thou wilt be guilty of such inhuman cruelty, God forbid we should be guilty of such sottish folly!

There are few preachers so simple, but they know that this kind of preaching is the ready way to be hated of their hearers; and the desire of the favour of men is so natural, that few delight in such a displeasing way. But I beseech thee, consider, are these things true, or are they not? If they were not true, I would heartily join with thee against any minister that should offer to preach them, and to affright poor people when there is no cause. But if these threatenings be the word of God, what a wretch art thou that wouldst not hear it, or consider it. Why, what is the matter? If thou be sure that thou art one of the people of God, this doctrine will be a comfort to thee: but if thou be yet unregenerate, methinks thou shouldst be as fearful to hear of heaven as of hell, except the bare name of heaven or salvation be sufficient. Sure there is no doctrine concerning heaven in all the Scripture, that can give thee any comfort, but upon the supposal of thy conversion; what comfort is it to thee, to hear that there is a rest remaining to the people of God, except thou be one of them? Nay, what more terrible, than to read of Christ and salvation for others, when thou must be shut out? Therefore, except thou wouldst have a minister to preach a lie, it is all one to thee, for any comfort thou hast in it, whether he preach of heaven or hell to thee. His preaching heaven and mercy to thee, can be nothing else but to entreat thee to seek them; but he can make thee no promise of it, but upon condition of thy obeying the gospel; and his preaching hell, is but to persuade thee to avoid it. And is not this doctrine fit for thee to hear? Indeed if thou wert quite past hope of escaping it, then it were in vain to tell thee of hell, but rather let thee take a few merry hours whilst thou mayest; but as long as thou art alive, there is hope of thy recovery, and therefore all means must be used to awake thee from thy lethargy.

O that some son of thunder, who could speak as Paul, till the hearers tremble, were now to preach this doctrine to thee! Alas! as terrible as you think I speak, yet it is not the thousandth part of what must be felt; for what heart can now conceive, or what tongue express, the pains of those souls that are under the wrath of God? Ah, that ever blind sinners should wilfully bring themselves to such unspeakable misery! You will then be crying to Jesus Christ, Oh mercy! Oh pity! Why I do now, in the name of the Lord Jesus, cry to thee, O have mercy, have pity upon thine own soul! Shall God pity thee, who wilt not be entreated to pity thyself? If thy horse see but a pit before him, thou canst scarcely force him in; and wilt thou so obstinately cast thyself into hell, when the danger is foretold thee! "O who can stand before the Lord, and who can abide the fierceness of his anger!" Methinks thou shouldst need no more words, but presently cast away thy sins, and deliver up thyself to Christ. Resolve on it immediately, and let it be done, that I may see thy face in rest among the saints. The Lord persuade thy heart to it without longer delay: but if thou be hardened unto death, and there be no remedy, yet do not say another day, but that thou wast faithfully warned, and that thou hadst a friend that would fain have prevented thy damnation.

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## CHAPTER V.

THE SECOND USE REPREHENDING THE GENERAL NEGLECT OF THIS REST, AND EXCITING TO DILIGENCE IN SEEKING IT.

I COME now to the second use. If there be so certain and glorious a rest, why is there no more seeking after it! One would think that a man that did but once hear of such unspeakable glory, and did believe what he heareth to be true, should be transported with desire after it, should almost forget to eat or drink, and mind and care for nothing else, and speak of and inquire after nothing, but how to get this treasure! And yet people who hear it daily, and profess to believe it, do as little mind it, or care, or labour for it, as if they had never heard of any such thing, or did not believe one word that they hear.

I shall apply this reproof more particularly to four sorts of men: First, the worldly minded, who is so taken up in seeking the things below, that he hath neither heart nor time to seek this rest.

May I not well say to these men, as Paul to the Galatians in another case, Foolish sinners! "who hath bewitched you?" It is not for nothing that divines used to call the

world a witch : for as in witchcraft, men's lives, senses, goods, or cattle, are destroyed by a strange, secret, unseen power of the devil, of which a man can give no natural reason ; so here, men will destroy their own souls in a way quite against their own knowledge. Would not a man wonder, that is in his right senses, to see what riding and running, what scrambling and catching, there is for a thing of nought, while eternal rest lies by neglected ! What contriving and caring, what fighting and bloodshed, to get a step higher in the world than their brethren, while they neglect the kingly dignity of the saints ! What insatiable pursuit of fleshly pleasures, whilst they look upon the praises of God, which is the joy of angels, as a burden ! What unwearied diligence is there in raising their posterity, enlarging their possessions, gathering a little silver or gold ! Yea, perhaps for a poor living from hand to mouth, while in the meantime their judgment is drawing near ; and yet how it shall go with them then, or how they shall live eternally, did never put them to one hour's sober consideration.

What rising up early, sitting up late, labouring and caring year after year, to maintain themselves and children in credit till they die ; but what shall follow after, that they never think on ; and yet these men cry to us, May not a man be saved without so much ado ? How early do they rouse up their servants to their labour ! [Up, come away to work, we have this to do, and that to do ;] but how seldom do they call them [Up, you have your soul to look to, you have everlasting life to provide for ; up to prayer, to the reading of the Scripture.]

What a gadding up and down the world is here, like a company of ants upon a hillock, taking incessant pains to gather a treasure, which death will spurn abroad, as if it were such an excellent thing to die in the midst of wealth and honours ! Or as if it would be such a comfort to a man in another world, to think that he was a lord, or a knight, or a gentleman, or a rich man, on earth ? What hath this world done for its lovers and friends, that it is so eagerly followed, and painfully sought after, while Christ and heaven stand by, and few regard them ? Or what will the world do for them for the time to come ? The common entrance into it is through anguish and sorrow. The passage through it is with continual care and labour. The passage out of it is with the greatest sharpness and sadness of all. What then doth cause men so much to follow and affect it ? O unreasonable, bewitched men ! Will mirth and pleasure stick close to you ? Will gold and worldly glory prove fast friends to you in the time of your greatest need ? Will they hear your cries in the day of your calamity ? If a man

should say to you, as Elias did to Baal's priests, "Cry aloud:" O riches, or honour, now help us! Will they either answer or relieve you? Will they go along with you to another world, and bribe the Judge, and bring you off clear; or purchase you a room among the blessed? Why then did so rich a man want a drop of water to cool his tongue? Or are the sweet morsels of present delight and honour of more worth than eternal rest? and will they recompense the loss of that enduring treasure? Can there be the least hope of any of these? What then is the matter? Is it only a room for our dead bodies, that we are so much beholden to the world for? Why this is the last and longest courtesy that we shall receive from it. But we shall have this whether we serve it or no; and even that homely, dusty dwelling, it will not afford us always neither; it shall possess our dust but till the resurrection. How then doth the world deserve so well at men's hands, that they should part with Christ and their salvation, to be its followers? Ah vile deceitful world! how oft have we heard thy faithfullest servants at last complaining, Oh the world hath deceived me, and undone me! And yet succeeding sinners will take no warning.

So this is the first sort of neglecters of heaven which fall under this reproof.

2. The second sort here to be reprov'd, are the profane, ungodly, presumptuous multitude, who will not be persuaded to be at so much pains for salvation, as to perform the common outward duties of religion. Yea, though they are convinced that these duties are commanded, yet will they not be brought to the common practice of them. If they have the gospel preached in the town where they dwell, it may be they will give the hearing to it one part of the day, and stay at home the other; or if the master come to the congregation, yet part of his family must stay at home. If they want the plain and powerful preaching of the gospel, how few are there in a whole town who will travel a mile or two to hear abroad, though they will go many miles to the market for their bodies.

And though they know the Scripture is the law of God, by which they must be acquitted or condemned in judgment; and that it is the property of every blessed man to delight in this law, and to meditate in it day and night, yet will they not be at the pains to read a chapter once a day, nor to acquaint their families with this doctrine of salvation. But if they carry a Bible to church, and let it lie by them all the week, this is the most use that they make of it. And though they are commanded to "pray without ceasing;" and to "pray always, and not to faint;" to "continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving;" yet will

they not pray constantly with their families, or in secret. You may hear in their houses two oaths for one prayer. Or if they do any thing this way, it is usually but a running over a few formal words which they have got on their tongues' end, as if they came on purpose to make a jest of prayer, and to mock God and their own souls.

Alas! he that only reads in a book that he is miserable, and what his soul stands in need of, but never felt himself miserable, or felt his several wants, no wonder if he must also fetch his prayer from his book only, or at farthest from the strength of his memory. Solomon's request to God was, that "what prayer or supplication soever should be made by any man, or by all the people, when every man shall know his own sore, and his own grief, and shall spread forth his hands before God, that God would then hear and forgive," 2 Chron. vi, 29, 30. If these men did thus know and feel every man the sore, and the grief of his own soul, we should neither need so much to urge them to prayer, nor to teach them how to perform it. Whereas now they invite God to be backward in giving, by their backwardness in asking; and to be weary of relieving them, by their own being weary of begging; and to be seldom and short in his favours, as they are in their prayers; and to give them but common and outward favours, as they put up but common and outside requests. Yea, their cold and heartless prayers invite God to a flat denial: for among men it is taken for granted, that he who asks but slightly and seldom, cares not much for what he asks. Do not these men judge themselves unworthy of heaven, who think it not worth their more constant and earnest requests? If it be not worth asking for, it is worth nothing. And yet if one should go from house to house, through town and parish, and inquire at every house as you go, whether they do morning and evening call their family together, and earnestly seek the Lord in prayer; how few would you find that constantly and conscientiously practise this duty? If every door were marked where they do not thus call upon the name of God, that his wrath might be poured out upon that family, our towns would be as places overthrown by the plague, the people being dead within, and the mark of judgment without. I fear where one house would escape, ten would be marked out for death; then they might teach their doors to pray, *Lord have mercy upon us*; because the people would not pray themselves. But especially if you could see what men do in their secret chambers, how few should you find in a whole town that spend one quarter of an hour, morning and night, in earnest supplication to God for their souls? Oh how little do these men set by eternal rest!

Thus do they slothfully neglect all endeavours for their own welfare, except some public duty in the congregation, which custom or credit doth engage them to. Persuade them to read good books, and they will not be at so much pains. Persuade them to learn the grounds of religion in some catechism, and they think it toilsome slavery, fit for school boys. Persuade them to sanctify the Lord's day, and to spend it wholly in hearing the word, and repeating it with their families, and prayer and meditation, and to forbear all their worldly thoughts and speeches; and what a tedious life do they take this to be; and how long may you preach to them, before they will be brought to it? As if they thought heaven were not worth all this ado.

3. The third sort that fall under this reproof, are those self-cozening, formal, lazy professors of religion, who will be brought to any outward duty, but to the inward work they will never be persuaded. They will preach, or hear, or read, or talk of heaven, or pray customarily or constantly in their families, and take part with the persons and causes that are good; and desire to be esteemed among the godly; but you can never bring them to the more spiritual duties: as to be constant and fervent in secret prayer; to be conscientious in the duty of self-examination, to be constant in meditation, to be heavenly minded, to watch constantly over their heart, and words, and ways, to deny their bodily senses and their delights, to mortify the flesh, and not make provision for it, to fulfil its lusts; to love and heartily forgive an enemy, and to prefer their brethren heartily before themselves. The outside hypocrites will never be persuaded to any of these. Above all other, two sorts there are of these hypocrites:—

1. The superficial opinionative hypocrite.

2. The worldly hypocrite.

The former entertaineth the doctrine of the gospel with joy; but it is only in the surface of his soul; he never gives the seed any depth of earth. He changeth his opinion, and thereupon engageth for religion, as the right way, but it never melted and new moulded his heart, nor set up Christ there in full power and authority: as his religion is but opinion, so is his study, and conference, and chief business, all about opinion. He is usually an ignorant, proud, bold inquirer and babbler about controversies, rather than an humble embracer of the known truth, with love and subjection. You may conjecture, by his bold and forward tongue, and conceitedness in his own opinions, and slighting the judgments and persons of others, and seldom talking of the great things of Christ with seriousness and humility, that his religion dwelleth in the brain, and not in his heart;

where the wind of temptation assaults him, he easily yieldeth, and it carrieth him away as a feather, because his heart is empty, and not balanced and established with Christ and grace. If this man's judgment lead him in the ceremonious way, then doth he employ his chief zeal for ceremonies. If his judgment be against ceremonies, then his strongest zeal is employed in studying, talking, disputing against them, and censuring the users of them. For, not having the essentials of Christianity, he hath only the mint and cummin, the smaller matters of the law, to lay out his zeal upon. You shall never hear any humble and hearty bewailings of his soul's imperfections, or any heart bleeding acknowledgments of his unkindnesses to Christ, of any pantings and longings after him, from this man; but that he is of such a judgment, or such a religion, or society, or a member of such a church: herein doth he gather his greatest comforts; but the inward and spiritual labours of a Christian he will not be brought to.

The like may be said of the worldly hypocrite, who choketh the doctrine of the gospel with the thorns of worldly cares and desires. His judgment is convinced that he must be religious, or he cannot be saved; and therefore he reads, and hears, and prays, and forsakes his former company and courses; but because his belief of the gospel doctrine is but wavering and shallow, he resolves to keep his hold of present things; and yet to be religious, that so he may have heaven when he can keep the world no longer. This man's judgment may say, God is the chief good, but his heart and affections never said so, but looked upon God as to be tolerated rather than the flames of hell, but not desired before the felicity on earth. In a word, the world hath more of his affections than God, and therefore is his god. This he might easily know and feel, if he would judge impartially, and were but faithful to himself. And though this man does not gad after novelties in religion as the former, yet will he set his sails to the wind of worldly advantage. And as a man whose spirits are seized on by some pestilential malignity, is feeble, and faint, and heartless in all that he does; so this man's spirits being possessed by the plague of this malignant, worldly disposition, how faint is he in secret prayer! how superficial in examination and meditation! how feeble in heart watchings, and humbling, mortifying endeavours! how nothing at all in loving and walking with God, rejoicing in him, or desiring him! So that both these, and many other sorts of lazy hypocrites there are, who, though they will trudge on with you in the easy outside of religion, yet will never be at the pains of inward and spiritual duties.



4. And even good men themselves deserve this reproof, for being too lazy seekers of everlasting rest. Alas, what a disproportion is there between our light and our heat! our professions and prosecutions! Who makes that haste, as if it were for heaven? How still we stand! How idly we work! How we talk, and jest, and trifle away our time! How deceitfully we do the work of God! How we hear, as if we heard not; and pray, as if we prayed not; and confer, and examine, and meditate, and reprove sin, as if we did it not; and used the ordinances, as if we used them not; and enjoy Christ, as if we enjoyed him not; as if we had learned to use the things of heaven, as the apostle teacheth us to use the world! Who would think that stood by us, and heard us pray in private or public, that we were praying for no less than everlasting glory? Should heaven be sought no more earnestly than thus? Methinks we are none of us all in good sadness for our souls. We do but dally with the work of God, and play with Christ, as children play with their meat when they should eat it; we hang upon ordinances from day to day, but we stir not ourselves to seek the Lord.

I see a great many very constant in hearing and praying, but they do not hear and pray as if it were for their lives. Oh, what a frozen stupidity hath benumbed us! The plague of Lot's wife is upon us, as if we were changed into lifeless and immovable pillars; we are dying, and we know it, and yet we stir not! we are at the door of eternal happiness or misery, and yet we perceive it not: death knocks, and we hear it not: Christ calls and knocks, and we hear not: God cries to us, "To-day, if you will hear my voice, harden not your hearts. Work while it is day, for the night cometh when none can work." Now ply your business, now labour for your lives; now lay out all your strength. Now or never; and yet we stir no more than if we were half asleep. What haste do death and judgment make! How fast do they come on! They are almost at us, and yet what little haste make we! The spur of God is in our side; we bleed, we groan, and yet we do not mend our pace. Lord, what a senseless, sottish, earthly, hellish thing, is a hard heart! That we will not go roundly and cheerfully toward heaven without all this ado! No, nor with it neither! Where is the man that is serious in his Christianity? Methinks men every where make but a trifle of their eternal state. They look after it but a little by the by; they do not make it the task and business of their lives.

To be plain with you, I think nothing undoes men so much as complimenting and jesting in religion. Oh, if I were not sick myself of the same disease, with what tears

would I mix this ink ; and with what groans should I express these sad complaints ; and with what heart's grief should I mourn over this universal deadness ! Do the magistrates among us seriously perform their portion of the work ? are they zealous for God ? do they build up his house ? are they tender of his honour ? do they second the word ? encourage the good ? relieve the oppressed ? compassionate the distressed ? and fly at the face of sin and sinners, as being the disturbers of our peace, and the only cause of all our miseries ? Do they study how to do the utmost they can for God ? to improve their power, and parts, and wealth, and honour, and all their interest for their greatest advantage to the kingdom of Christ, as men that must shortly give an account of their stewardship ? or do they build their own houses, and seek their advancements, and contest for their own honours, and do no more for Christ than needs they must, or than lies in their way, or than is put by others into their hands, or than stands with the pleasing of their friends, or with their worldly interest ?

And how thin are those ministers that are serious in their work ! Nay, how mightily do the very best fail in this ! Do we cry out of men's disobedience to the gospel, in the evidence and power of the Spirit, and deal with sin, as that which is the fire in our towns and houses, and by force pull men out of this fire ? Do we persuade our people, as those that know the terrors of the Lord should do ? Do we press Christ, and regeneration, and faith, and holiness, as men that believe indeed, that without these they shall never have life ? Do our bowels yearn over the ignorant, and the careless, and the obstinate multitude, as men that believe their own doctrine ? When we look them in the face, do our hearts melt over them, lest we should never see their faces in rest ? Do we, as Paul, tell them weeping, of their fleshly and earthly disposition ? and teach them publicly, and from house to house, night and day with tears ? And do we entreat them, as if it were indeed for their lives ! that when we speak of the joys and miseries of another world, our people may see us affected accordingly, and perceive that we mean as we speak ? Or rather, do we not study words ? As if a minister's business were but to tell them a smooth tale of an hour long, and so look no more after them till the next sermon.

Oh the formal, frozen, lifeless sermons which we daily hear preached upon the most weighty, piercing subjects in the world ! How gently do we handle those sins, which will handle so cruelly our people's souls ! And how tenderly do we deal with their careless hearts, not speaking to them

as men that must be awakened or damned! We tell them of heaven and hell in such a sleepy tone, and slight way, as if we were but acting a part in a play; so that we usually preach our people asleep with those subjects, which one would think should rather endanger the driving some beside themselves.

In a word, our want of seriousness about the things of heaven, doth charm the souls of men into formality, and hath brought them to this customary, careless hearing, which undoes them. The Lord pardon the great sin of the ministry in this thing, and in particular my own.

And are the people any more serious than magistrates and ministers? How can it be expected? Reader, look but to thyself, and resolve the question. Ask conscience, and suffer it to tell thee truly. Hast thou set thine eternal rest before thine eyes, as the great business which thou hast to do in this world? Hast thou studied, and cared, and watched, and laboured with all thy might, lest any should take thy crown from thee? Hast thou made haste, lest thou shouldst come too late, and die before the work be done? Hath thy heart been set upon it, and thy desires and thoughts run out this way? Hast thou pressed on through crowds of opposition "toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus?" When you have set your hand to the work of God, have you done it with all your might? Can conscience witness your secret cries, and groans, and tears? Can your families witness that you have taught them the fear of the Lord, and warned them all with earnestness and unweariedness to remember God and their souls? Or that you have done but as much for them, as that damned glutton would have had Lazarus do for his brethren on earth, to warn them that they come not to that place of torment! Can your ministers witness that they have heard you cry out, "What shall we do to be saved?" And that you have followed them with complaints against your corruptions, and with earnest inquiries after the Lord? Can your neighbours about you witness, that you are still learning of them that are able to instruct you? And that you plainly and roundly reprove the ungodly, and take pains for the saving of your brethren's souls? Let all these witnesses judge this day between God and you, whether you are in good earnest about eternal rest.

But if yet you cannot discern your neglects, look but to yourselves: within you, without you, to the work you have done. You can tell by his work whether your servant hath loitered, though you did not see him: so you may by yourselves. Is your love to Christ, your faith, your zeal, and other graces, strong or weak? What are your joys? What

is your assurance? Is all right, and strong, and in order within you? Are you ready to die, if this should be the day? Do the souls among whom you have conversed, bless you? Why, judge by this, and it will quickly appear whether you have been labourers or loiterers.

## CHAPTER VI.

### AN EXHORTATION TO SERIOUSNESS IN SEEKING REST.

I HOPE, reader, by this time thou art somewhat sensible what a desperate thing it is to trifle about eternal rest; and how deeply thou hast been guilty of this thyself. And I hope also, that thou darest not now suffer this conviction to die; but art resolved to be another man for the time to come. What sayest thou? Is this thy resolution? If thou wert sick of some desperate disease, and the physician should tell thee, If you will observe but one thing, I doubt not to cure you: wouldst thou not observe it? Why, if thou wilt observe but this one thing for thy soul, I make no doubt of thy salvation; if thou wilt now but shake off thy sloth, and put to all thy strength, and be a downright Christian, I know not what can hinder thy happiness. As far as thou art gone from God, if thou now return and seek him with thy whole heart, no doubt but thou shalt find him. As unkindly as thou hast dealt with Jesus Christ, if thou didst but feel thyself sick and dead, and seek him heartily, and apply thyself in good earnest to the obedience of his laws, thy salvation were as sure as if thou hadst it already; but as full as the satisfaction of Christ is, as free as the promise is, as large as the mercy of God is; yet if thou do but look on these, and talk of them, when thou shouldst greedily entertain them, thou wilt be never the better for them: and if thou shouldst loiter when thou shouldst labour, thou wilt lose the crown. O fall to work then speedily and seriously, and bless God that thou hast yet time to do it; and though that which is past cannot be recalled, yet redeem the time now by doubling thy diligence.

And because thou shalt see I urge thee not without cause, I will here adjoin a multitude of considerations to move thee: their intent and use is, to drive thee from delaying, and from loitering in seeking rest. Whoever thou art, therefore, I entreat thee to rouse up thy spirit, and give me awhile thy attention, and (as Moses said to the people) "set thy heart to all the words that I testify to thee this day; for it is not a vain thing, but it is for thy life." Weigh what I here write, with the judgment of a man; and the Lord open thy heart, and fasten his counsel effectually upon thee.

1. Consider our affections and actions should be answerable to the greatness of the ends to which they are intended. Now the ends of a Christian's desires and endeavours are so great, that no human understanding on earth can comprehend them; whether you respect their proper excellency, their exceeding importance, or their absolute necessity.

These ends are, the glorifying of God, the salvation of our own and other men's souls, in escaping the torments of hell, and possessing the glory of heaven. And can a man be too much affected with things of such moment? Can he desire them too earnestly, or love them too violently, or labour for them too diligently? When we know that if our prayers prevail not, and our labour succeeds not, we are undone for ever, I think it concerns us to seek and labour to the purpose. When it is put to the question, whether we shall live for ever in heaven or in hell; and the question must be resolved upon our obeying the gospel, or disobeying it, upon the painfulness or the slothfulness of our present endeavours; I think it is time for us to bestir ourselves, and to leave our trifling and complimenting with God.

2. Consider, our diligence should be answerable to the greatness of the work which we have to do, as well as to the ends of it.

Now, the works of a Christian here are very many, and very great: the soul must be renewed; many and great corruptions mortified; custom, temptations, and worldly interest must be conquered; flesh must be mastered; life, and friends, and credit, and all must be slighted; conscience must be upon good grounds quieted; assurance of pardon and salvation must be attained. And though it is God that must give us these, and that freely, without our own merits; yet will he not give them without our earnest seeking and labour.

Besides, there is a deal of knowledge to be got, for the guiding ourselves, for defending the truth, for the direction of others, and a deal of skill for the right managing of our parts: many ordinances are to be used, and duties to be performed, ordinary and extraordinary; every age, and year, and day, doth require fresh succession of duty; every place we come in, every person we have to deal with, every change of our condition, doth still require the renewing our labour, and bringeth duty along with it: wives, children, servants, neighbours, friends, enemies, all of them call for duty from us: and all this of great importance too; so that for the most, if we miscarry in it, it would prove our undoing.

Judge then yourselves, whether men that have so much business lying upon their hands should not bestir them? And whether it be their wisdom either to delay or to loiter!

3. Consider, our diligence should be quickened, because

of the shortness and uncertainty of the time allotted us for the performing of all this work, and the many and great impediments which we meet with. Yet a few days and we shall be here no more. Time passeth on: many diseases are ready to assault us; we that now are preaching, and hearing, and talking, and walking, must very shortly be carried, and laid in the dust, and there left to the worms in darkness and corruption; we are almost there already; it is but a few days, or months, or years, and what is that when once they are past? We know not whether we shall have another sermon, or sabbath, or hour. How then should those bestir them for their everlasting rest, who know they have so short a space for so great a work? Besides, every step in the way hath its difficulties: "the gate is strait, and the way narrow: the righteous themselves are scarcely saved." Scandals and discouragements will be still cast before us; and can all these be overcome by slothful endeavours?

4. Moreover, our diligence should be answerable to the diligence of our enemies in seeking our destruction. For if we sit still while they are plotting and labouring; or if we be lazy in our defence, while they are diligent in assaulting us, you may easily conceive how we are likely to speed. How diligent is Satan in all kinds of temptations! Therefore "be sober and vigilant, because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." How diligent are all the ministers of Satan! False teachers, scorers at godliness, malicious persecutors, all unwearied; and our inward corruption, the most busy and diligent of all: whatever we are about, it is still resisting us; depraving our duties, perverting our thoughts, dulling our affections to good, exciting them to evil: and will a feeble resistance serve our turn? Should we not be more active for our own preservation, than our enemies for our ruin?

5. Our affections and endeavours should bear some proportion with the talents we have received, and means we have enjoyed.

It may well be expected that a horseman should go faster than a footman: and he that hath a swift horse, faster than he that hath a slow one. More work will be expected from a sound man, than from the sick; and from a man at age, than from a child; and to whom men commit much, from them they will expect the more.

Now the talents which we have received are many and great: the means which we have enjoyed are very many, and very precious. What people breathing on earth, have had plainer instructions, or more forcible persuasions, or constant admonitions, in season and out of season? Sermons,

till we have been weary of them: and sabbaths till we profaned them! Excellent books in such plenty, that we knew not which to read! What people have had God so near them as we have had? Or have seen Christ, as it were, crucified before their eyes, as we have done? What people have had heaven and hell, as it were, opened unto them as we? Scarce a day wherein we have not had some spur to put us on. What speed then should such a people make for heaven? How should they fly that are thus winged? And how swiftly should they sail that have wind and tide to help them? Believe it, brethren, God looks for more from England, than from most nations in the world: and for more from you that enjoy these helps, than from the dark untaught congregations of the land. A small measure of grace besseems not such a people; nor will an ordinary diligence in the work of God excuse them!

6. The vigour of our affections and actions should be answerable to the great cost bestowed upon us, and to the deep engaging mercies which we have received from God. Surely we owe more service to our master from whom we have our maintenance, than we do to a stranger to whom we were never beholden.

O the cost that God hath been at for our sakes! The riches of sea and land, of heaven and earth, hath he poured out unto us. All our lives have been filled up with mercies: we cannot look back upon one hour of it, or passage in it, but we may behold mercy. We feed upon mercy, we wear mercy upon our backs, we tread upon mercy; mercy within us, mercy without us for this life, and for that to come. O the rare deliverances that we have partaken of, both national and personal! How oft, how seasonably, how fully have our prayers been heard, and our fears removed! What large catalogues of particular mercies can every Christian rehearse! To offer to number them would be as endless a task as to number the stars, or the sands of the shore.

If there be any difference betwixt hell (where we should have been) and earth, (where we now are,) yea, or heaven, (which is offered to us,) then certainly we have received mercy: yea, if the blood of the Son of God be mercy, then are we engaged to God by mercy; for so much did it cost him to recover us to himself. And should a people of such deep engagements be lazy in their returns? Shall God think nothing too much nor too good for us; and shall we think all too much that we do for him? Thou that art an observing sensible man, who knowest how much thou art beholden to God, I appeal to thee, Is not a loitering performance of a few heartless duties, an unworthy requital of such admirable kindness? For my own part, when I compare my slow and

unprofitable life, with the frequent and wonderful mercies received, it shames me, it silenceth me, and leaves me inexcusable.

7. Consider, all the relations which we stand in toward God, call upon us for our utmost diligence. Should not the pot be wholly at the service of the potter, and the creature at the service of his Creator? Are we his children, and do we not owe him our most tender affections, and dutiful obedience? Are we the spouse of Christ, and do we not owe him our observance, and our love? "If he be our father, where is his honour? and if he be our master, where is his fear? We call him Lord and Master, and we do well:" but if our industry be not answerable to our relations, we condemn ourselves in saying, we are his children, or his servants. How will the hard labour and daily toil that servants undergo to please their masters, judge and condemn those men who will not labour so hard for their great master? Surely there is none have a more honourable master than we, nor can expect such fruit of their labours.

8. How close should they ply their work, who have such attendants as we have! All the world are our servants, that we may be the servants of God. The sun, and moon, and stars, attend us with their light and influence: the earth, with all its furniture, is at our service: how many thousand plants, and flowers, and fruits, and birds, and beasts, do all attend us? The sea with its inhabitants, the air, the wind, the frost and snow, the heat and fire, the clouds and rain, all wait upon us while we do our work: yea, "the angels are ministering spirits for us." And is it not an intolerable crime for us to trifle, while all these are employed to assist us? Nay, more; the patience of God doth wait upon us: the Lord Jesus Christ waiteth in the offers of his blood; the Holy Spirit waiteth, in striving with our backward hearts: besides, all his servants, the ministers of his gospel, who study and wait, and preach and wait, and pray and wait upon careless sinners: and shall angels and men, yea the Lord himself, stand by and look on, while thou dost nothing?

O Christians, I beseech you, whenever you are on your knees in prayer, or reproving the transgressors, or exhorting the obstinate, or upon any duty, do but remember what attendants you have for this work: and then judge how it behoves you to perform it.

9. How forward and painful should we be in that work, where we are sure we can never do enough? If there were any danger in overdoing, then it might well cause men to moderate their endeavours: but we know "that if we could do all, we were but unprofitable servants:" much more when we fail in all.



It is true, a man may possibly preach too much, or hear too much, (though I have known few that did so,) but yet no man can obey or serve God too much. One duty may be said to be too long, when it shuts out another; and then it ceaseth indeed to be a duty. And all superstition, or worship of our own devising, may be called a righteousness over much; yet as long as you keep your service to the rule of the word, you never need to fear "being righteous over much:" for else we should reproach the Lord and Lawgiver of the church, as if he commanded us to do too much.

If the world were not mad with malice, they could never be so blind in this point as they are: to think that diligence for Christ, is folly and singularity: and that they who set themselves wholly to seek eternal life, are but precise puritans! The time is near, when they will easily confess, that God could not be loved or served too much, and that no man can be too busy to save his soul. For the world you may easily do too much, but herein (in God's way) you cannot.

10. Consider, they that trifle in the way to heaven, lose all their labour. If two be running in a race, he that runs slowest had as good never run at all: for he loseth the prize and his labour both. Many, who like Agrippa, are but "almost Christians," will find in the end they shall be but almost saved. God hath set the rate at which the pearl must be bought: if you bid a penny less, you had as good bid nothing. As a man that is lifting up some weighty thing, if he put to almost strength enough, it is as good he put to none at all, for he doth but lose all his labour.

O how many professors of Christianity will find this true to their sorrow, who have had a mind to the ways of God, and have kept up a dull task of duty, but never came to serious Christianity! How many a duty have they lost, for want of doing them thoroughly! "Many shall seek to enter in, and not be able;" who, if they had striven, might have been able. O therefore put to a little more diligence and strength, that all be not in vain that you have done already!

11. Furthermore, we have lost a great deal of time already, and therefore it is reason that we labour so much the harder. If a traveller sleep, or trifle out most of the day, he must travel so much the faster in the evening, or fall short of his journey's end. With some of us, our childhood and youth are gone; with some also their middle age; and the time before us is very uncertain. What a deal of time have we slept away, and talked away, and played away? What a deal have we spent in worldly thoughts and labours, or in mere idleness? Though in likelihood the most of our time

is spent, yet how little of our work is done? And is it not time to bestir ourselves in the evening of our days? The time which we have lost can never be recalled; should we not then redeem it by improving the little which remaineth? You may receive indeed an "equal recompense with those that have borne the burden and heat of the day, though you came not till the last hour;" but then you must be sure to labour diligently that hour. It is enough sure that we have lost so much of our lives. Let us not now be so foolish as to lose the rest.

12. Consider, the greater are your layings out the greater will be your comings in. Though you may seem to lose your labour at the present, yet the hour cometh when you shall find it with advantage. The seed which is buried and dead, will bring forth a plentiful increase at the harvest. Whatever you do, and whatever you suffer, everlasting rest will pay for all. There is no repenting of labours and sufferings in heaven: none says, "Would I had spared my pains and prayed less, or been less strict, and did as the rest of my neighbours did:" there is never such a thought in heaven as these. But on the contrary, it will be their joy to look back upon their labours, and consider how the mighty power of God did bring them through all. Whoever complained that he came to heaven at too dear a rate; or that his salvation cost him more labour than it was worth? We may say of all our labours, as Paul of his sufferings, "I reckon that the sufferings" (and labours) "of this present time, are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed." We labour but for a moment, but we shall rest for ever. Who would not put forth all his strength for one hour, when he may be a prince while he lives?

Oh, what is the duty and sufferings for a short life, in respect of endless joys with God? Will not "all our tears then be wiped away?" and all the sorrows of our duties forgotten? But yet the Lord will not forget them: "for he is not unjust, to forget our work and labour of love."

13. Consider, violence and laborious striving for salvation is the way that the wisdom of God hath directed us to, as best, and his sovereign authority appointed us as necessary. Who knows the way to heaven better than the God of heaven? When men tell us that we are too strict, whom do they accuse, God or us? If we do no more than what we are commanded, nor so much neither; they may as well say, God hath made laws which are too strict. Sure if it were a fault, it would lie in him that commands, and not in us who obey. And dare these men think that they are wiser than God? Do they know better than he, what men must do to be saved? These are the men that ask us,

Whether we are wiser than all the world besides? and yet they will pretend to be wiser than God. What do they less, when God bids us take the most diligent course, and they tell us, it is more ado than needs? Mark well the language of God, and see how you can reconcile it with the language of the world: "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many shall seek to enter in, and not be able. Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, or wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest. Work out your salvation with fear and trembling. Give diligence to make your calling and election sure. If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?"

This is the constant language of Christ: and which shall I follow, God or men; yea, and that the worst and most wicked men? Shall I think that every ignorant worldly sot, that can only call a man a puritan, knows more than Christ, or can tell God how to mend the Scriptures? Let them bring all the seeming reason they can against the holy, violent striving of the saints; and this sufficeth me to confute them all, that God is of another mind, and he hath commanded me to do much more than I do: and though I could see no reason for it, yet his will is reason enough to me: I am sure God is worthy to govern us, if we were better than we are. Who should make laws for us, but he that made us? And who should mark out the way to heaven, but he that must bring us thither? And who should determine on what conditions we shall be saved, but he that bestows the gift of salvation? So that let the world, or the flesh, or the devil, speak against a holy laborious course, this is my answer, God hath commanded it.

14. Moreover, it is a course that all men in the world either do, or will approve of. There is not a man that ever was, or is, or shall be, but shall one day justify the diligence of the saints. And who would not go that way, which every man shall applaud?

It is true, it is now *a way every where spoken against, and hated*; but let me tell you, 1. Most that speak against it, in their judgments approve of it; only because the practice of godliness is against the pleasures of the flesh, therefore do they, against their own judgments, resist it. They have not one word of reason against it, but reproaches and railing are their best arguments. 2. Those that are now against it, whether in judgment or passion, will shortly be of another mind. If they come to heaven, their mind must be changed before they come there. If they go to hell, their judgment will then be altered, whether they will or no.

If you could speak with every soul that suffereth those torments, and ask, Whether it be possible to be too diligent and serious in seeking salvation? you may easily conjecture what answer they would return. Take the most bitter derider or persecutor of godliness, even those that will venture their lives to overthrow it, if those men do not shortly wish a thousand times that they had been the most holy, diligent Christians on earth, then let me bear the shame of a false prophet for ever.

Remember this, you that will be of the opinion and way that most are of: why will you not be of the opinion then that all will be shortly of? Why will you be of a judgment which you are sure you shall all shortly change? O that you were but as wise in this, as those in hell.

15. Consider, they that have been the most serious, painful Christians, when they come to die, exceedingly lament their negligence. Those that have wholly addicted themselves to the work of God, and have made it the business of their lives, and have slighted the world, and mortified the flesh, and have been the wonders of the world for their heavenly conversations; yet when conscience is deeply awakened, how do their failings wound them? Even those that are hated and derided by the world for being so strict, and are thought to be almost beside themselves for their extraordinary diligence; yet commonly when they lie a dying, wish, O that they had been a thousand times more holy, more heavenly, more laborious for their souls! What a case then will the negligent world be in, when their consciences are awakened, when they lie dying, and look behind them upon a lazy, negligent life; and look before them upon a severe and terrible judgment? What an esteem will they have of a holy life? For my own part, I may say as Erasmus, "They accuse me for doing too much, but my own conscience accuseth me for doing too little, and being too slow; and it is far easier bearing the scorns of the world, than the scourges of conscience." The world speaks at a distance without me, so that though I hear their words, I can choose whether I will feel them; but my conscience speaks within, at the very heart, so that every check doth pierce me to the quick. Conscience, when it reprehends justly, is the messenger of God: ungodly revilers, are the voice of the devil. I had rather be reproached by the devil for seeking salvation, than reprov'd of God for neglecting it: I had rather the world should call me puritan in the devil's name, than conscience should call me a loiterer in God's name. As God and conscience are more useful friends than Satan and the world; so are they more dreadful, irresistible enemies.

And thus, reader, I have showed thee sufficient reason

against thy slothfulness and negligence, if thou be not a man resolved to shut thine eyes, and to destroy thyself. Yet, lest all this should not prevail, I will add somewhat more, to persuade thee to be serious in thy endeavours for heaven.

1. Consider, God is in good earnest with you; and why then should you not be so with him? In his commands, he means as he speaks, and will verily require your real obedience. In his threatenings he is serious, and will make them all good against the rebellious. In his promises he is serious, and will fulfil them to the obedient, even to the least tittle. In his judgments he is serious, as he will make his enemies know to their terror. Was not God in good earnest when he drowned the world, when he consumed Sodom and Gomorrah, when he scattered the Jews? And very shortly will lay hold on his enemies, particularly man by man, and make them know that he is in good earnest: especially when it comes to the great reckoning day. And is it time then for us to dally with God?

2. Jesus Christ was serious in purchasing our redemption. He was serious in teaching, "when he neglected his meat and drink," John iv, 32. He was serious in praying, "when he continued all night at it." He was serious in doing good, "when his kindred came and laid hands on him, thinking he had been beside himself." He was serious in suffering, "when he fasted forty days, was tempted, betrayed, spit on, buffeted, crowned with thorns, sweat blood, was crucified, pierced, died." There was no jesting in all this. And should we not be serious in seeking our own salvation?

3. The Holy Ghost is serious in soliciting us for our happiness. His motions are frequent, and pressing, and importunate: he striveth with our hearts. He is grieved when we resist him; and should not we then be serious in obeying his motions, and yielding to his suit?

4. How serious and diligent are all the creatures in their service to thee? What haste makes the sun to compass the world? And how truly doth it return at its appointed hour! So do the moon and other planets. The springs are always flowing for thy use; the rivers still running; the spring and harvest keep their times. How hard doth thy ox labour for thee from day to day? How painfully and speedily doth thy horse bear thee in travel? And shall all these be laborious, and thou only negligent? Shall they all be so serious in serving thee, and yet thou be so slight in thy service to God?

5. Consider, the servants of the world and the devil are serious and diligent: they ply their work continually, as if they could never do enough: they make haste, and march

furiously, as if they were afraid of coming to hell too late: they bear down ministers, and sermons, and counsel, and all, before them. And shall they do more for the devil, than thou wilt do for God? Or be more diligent for damnation, than thou wilt be for salvation? Hast not thou a better master; and sweeter employment; and sweeter encouragement; and a better reward?

6. There is no jesting in heaven nor in hell. The saints have a real happiness, and the damned a real misery; the saints are serious and high in their joy and praise, and the damned are serious and deep in their sorrow and complaints. There are no remiss or sleepy praises in heaven; nor any remiss or sleepy lamentations in hell: all men there are in good earnest. And should we not then be serious now? I dare promise thee, the thoughts of these things will shortly be serious thoughts with thyself. When thou comest to death or judgment, O what deep heart-piercing thoughts wilt thou have of eternity! Methinks I foresee thee already astonished, to think how thou couldst possibly make so light of these things! Methinks I even hear thee crying out of thy stupidity and madness!

And now having laid thee down these undeniable arguments, I do in the name of God demand thy resolution. What sayest thou? Wilt thou yield obedience or not? I am confident thy conscience is convinced of thy duty. Darest thou now go on in thy common careless course, against the plain evidence of reason and commands of God, and against the light of thy own conscience? Darest thou live as loosely, and sin as boldly, and pray as seldom, and as coldly, as before? Darest thou now as carnally spend the sabbath, and slumber over the service of God as slightly, and think of thine everlasting state as carelessly, as before? Or dost thou not rather resolve to gird up the loins of thy mind, and to set thyself wholly about the work of thy salvation; and to do it with all thy might; and to break over all the oppositions of the world, and to slight all their scorns and persecutions: "to cast off the weight that hangeth on thee; and the sin that doth so easily beset thee; and to run with patience and speed the race that is set before thee?" I hope these are thy full resolutions: if thou art well in thy wits, I am sure they are.

Yet, because I know the strange obstinacy of the heart of man, and because I would fain leave these persuasions fastened in thy heart, that so, if it be possible, thou mightest be awakened to thy duty, and thy soul might live, I shall proceed with thee yet a little further: and I once more entreat thee to stir up thy attention, and go along with me in the free and sober use of thy reason, while I propound

these following questions: and I command thee from God, that thou resist not conviction, but answer them faithfully, and obey accordingly.

*Question 1.* If you could grow rich by religion, or get lands and lordships thereby; or if you could get honour or preferment by it in the world; or could be recovered from sickness by it; or could live for ever in prosperity on earth; what kind of lives would you then lead, and what pains would you take in the service of God? And is not the rest of the saints a more excellent happiness than all this?

*Question 2.* If the law of the land did punish every breach of the sabbath, or every omission of family duties, or secret duties, or every cold and heartless prayer, with death: if it were felony or treason to be negligent in worship, and loose in your lives; what manner of persons would you then be, and what lives would you lead? And is not eternal death more terrible than temporal?

*Question 3.* If it were God's ordinary course to punish every sin with some present judgment, so that every time a man swears, or is drunk, or speaks a lie, or backbiteth his neighbour, he should be struck dead, or blind, or lame, in the place: if God did punish every cold prayer, or neglect of duty, with some remarkable plague; what manner of persons would you be? If you should suddenly fall down dead, like Ananias and Sapphira, with the sin in your hands; or the plague of God should seize upon you, as upon the Israelites, while their sweet morsels were yet in their mouths: if but a mark should be set in the forehead of every one that neglected a duty, or committed a sin; what kind of lives would you then lead? And is not eternal wrath more terrible than all this?

*Question 4.* If you had seen the general dissolution of the world, and all the pomp and glory of it consumed to ashes: if you saw all on fire about you, sumptuous buildings, cities, kingdoms, land, water, earth, heaven, all flaming about your ears: if you had seen all that men laboured for, and sold their souls for, gone; friends gone; the place of your former abode gone; the history ended, and all come down; what would such a sight as this persuade you to do? Why, such a sight thou shalt certainly see. I put my question to thee in the words of the apostle, 2 Peter iii, "Seeing all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for, and hasting unto, the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?" As if he should say, we cannot possibly conceive or express what manner of persons we should be in all holiness and godliness, when we do but

think of the sudden, and certain, and terrible dissolution of all things below.

*Question 5.* What if you had seen the process of the judgment of the great day? If you had seen the judgment set, and the books opened, and the most stand trembling on the left hand of the Judge, and Christ himself accusing them of their rebellions and neglects, and remembering them of all their former slightings of his grace, and at last condemning them to perpetual perdition? If you had seen the godly standing on the right hand, and Jesus Christ acknowledging their faithful obedience, and adjudging them to the possession of the joy of their Lord; what manner of persons would you have been after such a sight as this? Why, this sight thou shalt one day see, as sure as thou livest. And why then should not the foreknowledge of such a day awake thee to thy duty?

*Question 6.* What if you had once seen hell open, and all the damned there in their ceaseless torments, and had heard them crying out of their slothfulness in the day of their visitation, and wishing that they had but another life to live, and that God would but try them once again? One crying out of his neglect of duty, and another of his loitering and trifling, when he should have been labouring for his life; what manner of persons would you have been after such a sight as this? What if you had seen heaven opened, as Stephen did, and all the saints there triumphing in glory, and enjoying the end of their labours and sufferings; what a life would you lead after such a sight as this? Why, you will see this with your eyes, before it be long.

*Question 7.* What if you had lain in hell but one year, or one day, or hour, and there felt those torments that now you do but hear of; and God should turn you into the world again, and try you with another life time, and say, I will see whether thou wilt be yet any better; what manner of persons would you be? If you were to live a thousand years, would you not gladly live as strictly as the precisest saints, and spend all those years in prayer and duty, so you might but escape the torment which you suffered? how seriously then would you speak of hell! and pray against it! and hear, and read, and watch, and obey! How earnestly would you admonish the careless to take heed, and look about them to prevent their ruin! And will not you take God's word for the truth of this, except you feel it? Is it not your wisdom to do as much now to prevent it, as you would do to remove it when it is too late? Is it not more wisdom to spend this life in labouring for heaven, while ye have it, than to lie in torment, wishing for more time in vain?

And thus I have said enough, if not to stir up the lazy



sinner to a serious working out his salvation, yet at least to silence him, and leave him inexcusable at the judgment of God. If thou canst, after reading all this, go on in the same neglect of God, and thy soul, and draw out the rest of thy life in the same dull and careless course, as thou hast hitherto done; and if thou hast so far stupified thy conscience, that it will quietly suffer thee to forget all this, and to trifle out the rest of thy time in the business of the world, when in the mean while thy salvation is in danger, and the Judge is at the door; I have then no more to say to thee: it is as good to speak to a rock. Only as we do by our friends, when they are dead, and our words and actions can do them no good, yet to testify our affections, we weep and mourn for them; so will I also do for these souls. It makes my heart even tremble to think how they will stand trembling before the Lord! and how confounded and speechless they will be when Christ shall reason with them concerning their negligence and sloth! When he shall say, as the Lord doth in Jeremiah ii, 5, 9, 11, 13, "What iniquity have your fathers (or you) found in me, that ye are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity? Did I ever wrong you, or do you any harm, or ever discourage you from following my service? Was my way so bad that you could not endure it? or my service so base that you could not stoop to it? Did I stoop to the fulfilling of the law for you, and could not you stoop to fulfil the easy conditions of my gospel? Was the world, or Satan, a better friend to you than I? Or had they done for you more than I had done? Try now whether they will save you; or whether they will recompense you for the loss of heaven; or whether they will be as good to you as I would have been." O! what will the wretched sinner answer to any of this! But, though man will not hear, yet we may have hope in speaking to God: Lord, smite these rocks till they gush forth waters: though these ears are deaf, say to them, *Ephphatha*, be opened; though these sinners be dead, let that power speak which sometime said, "Lazarus, arise!" We know they will be awakened at the last resurrection: O, but then it will be only to their sorrow! O, thou that didst weep and groan over dead Lazarus, pity these sad and senseless souls, till they are able to weep and groan for, and pity themselves. As thou hast bid thy servants speak, so speak now thyself; they will hear thy voice speaking to their hearts, that will not hear mine speaking to their ears. Long hast thou knocked at these hearts in vain; now break the doors, and enter in.

Yet I will add a few more words to good men in particular, to show them why they above all men should be laborious for heaven; and that there is a great deal of reason, that

though all the world sit still, yet they should abhor that laziness and negligence, and lay out all their strength on the work of God. To this end, I desire them also to answer soberly to these few questions :

*Question 1.* What manner of persons should those be, who have felt the smart of their negligence in the new birth, in their several wounds and trouble of conscience, in their doubts and fears, in their various afflictions ; they that have groaned and cried out so oft, under the sense and effects of their negligence, and are like enough to feel it again, if they do not reform it? Sure one would think they should be slothful no more.

*Question 2.* What manner of persons should those be, who have bound themselves to God by so many covenants as we have done, and in special have covenanted so oft to be more painful and faithful in his service? At every sacrament ; on many days of humiliation and thanksgiving ; in most of our deep distresses and dangerous sicknesses ; we are still ready to bewail our neglects, and to engage ourselves, if God will but try us and trust us once again, how diligent and laborious we will be, and how we will improve our time, and reprove offenders, and watch over ourselves, and ply our work ; and do him more service in a day than we did in a month? The Lord pardon our perfidious covenant breaking ; and grant that our engagements may not condemn us.

*Question 3.* What manner of men should they be in duty, who have received so much encouragement as we have done? Who have tasted such sweetness in diligent obedience, as doth much more than countervail all the pains ; who have so oft had experience of the wide difference between lazy and laborious duty, by their different issues ; who have found all our lazy duties unfruitful ; and all our strivings and wrestlings with God successful, so that we were never importunate with God in vain? We who have had so many deliverances upon urgent seeking ; and have received almost all our solid comforts in a way of close and constant duty : how should we, above all men, ply our work?

*Question 4.* What manner of persons should they be in holiness, who have so much of the great work yet undone? So many sins in so great strength ; graces weak ; sanctification imperfect ; corruptions still working, and taking advantage of all our omission? When we are as a boatman on the water ; let him row never so hard, a month together, yet if he do but slack his hand, and think to ease himself, his boat goes faster down the stream than before it went up : so do our souls, when we think to ease ourselves by abating our pains in duty. Our time is short : our enemies

mighty: our hinderances many: God seems yet at a distance from many of us: our thoughts of him are dull and unbelieving: our acquaintance and communion with Christ is small, and our desires to be with him are as small; and should men in our case stand still?

*Question 5.* Lastly, what manner of persons should they be, on whom the glory of the great God doth so much depend? Men will judge of the father by the children, and of the master by the servants. We bear his image, and therefore men will measure him by his representation. He is no where in the world so lively represented as in his saints: and shall they set him forth as a pattern of idleness? All the world is not capable of honouring or dishonouring God so much as we: and the least of the honour is of more worth than all our lives. Seeing then that all these things are so, I charge thee, that art a Christian, in my Master's name, to consider and resolve the question, "What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" And let thy life answer the question as well as thy tongue.

I have been larger upon this use, partly because of the general neglect of heaven, that all sorts are guilty of; partly because men's salvation depends upon their present striving and seeking; partly because the doctrine of free grace misunderstood, is lately so abused, to the cherishing of sloth and security; partly because many eminent men of late do judge, that to work or labour for life and salvation is mercenary, legal, and dangerous; which doctrine, (as I have said before,) were it by the owners reduced into practice, would undoubtedly damn them; because they that seek not, shall not find; and they that strive not to enter, shall be shut out; and they that labour not, shall not be crowned; and, partly because it is grown the custom, instead of striving for the kingdom, and contending for the faith, to strive with each other about uncertain controversies, and to contend about the circumstantial of faith; wherein the kingdom of God doth no more consist than in meats, or drinks, or genealogies. Sirs, shall we who are brethren fall out by the way home, and spend so much of our time about the smaller matters, which thousands have been saved without, but never any one saved by them, while Christ and our eternal rest are almost forgotten? The Lord pardon and heal the folly of his people!

## CHAPTER VII.

THE THIRD USE.—PERSUADING ALL MEN TO TRY THEIR TITLE TO THIS REST ; AND DIRECTING THEM HOW TO TRY, THAT THEY MAY KNOW.

I NOW proceed to the third use ; and because it is of very great importance, I entreat thee to weigh it the more seriously.

Is there such a glorious rest so near at hand ? And shall none enjoy it but the people of God ? What mean the most of the world then, to live so contentedly without the assurance of their interest in this rest ? And to neglect the trying of their title to it, when the Lord hath so fully opened the blessedness of that kingdom, which none but obedient believers shall possess ; and so fully express those torments which all the rest of the world must eternally suffer ? A man would think now, that they who believe this should never be at any quiet till they were heirs of the kingdom. Most men say they believe this word of God to be true : how then can they sit still in such an utter uncertainty, whether ever they shall live in rest or not ? Lord, what a wonderful madness is this, that men who know they must presently enter upon unchangeable joy or pain, should yet live as uncertain what shall be their doom, as if they had never heard of any such state : yea, and live as quietly, and as merrily, in this uncertainty, as if nothing ailed them, and there were no danger !

Are these men alive or dead ? Are they waking or asleep ? What do they think on ? Where are their hearts ? If they have but a weighty suit at law, how careful are they to know whether it will go for them, or against them ? If they were to be tried for their lives, how careful would they be to know whether they should be saved or condemned, especially if their care might surely save them ? If they be dangerously sick, they will inquire of the physician, What think you, sir, shall I escape or no ? But for the business of their salvation, they are content to be uncertain. If you ask most men a reason of their hopes to be saved, they will say, It is because God is merciful, and Christ died for sinners, and the like general reasons ; which any man in the world may give as well as they ; but put them to prove their interest in Christ, and the saving mercy of God, and they can say nothing at all ; at least nothing out of their hearts and experience.

If God should ask them for their souls, as he did Cain for his brother Abel, they could return but such an answer as

he did. If God or man should say to them, What case is thy soul in, man? Is it regenerated and pardoned, or no? Is it in a state of life, or a state of death? He would be ready to say, I know not, am I my soul's keeper? I hope well; I trust God with my soul; I shall speed as well as other men do; I thank God I never made any doubt of my salvation. Thou hast the more cause to doubt a great deal, because thou never didst doubt; and yet more, because thou hast been so careless in thy confidence. What do these expressions discover, but a wilful neglect of thy own salvation? As a ship master that should let his vessel alone, and say, I will venture it among the rocks, and the waves, and winds; I will trust God with it; it will speed as well as other vessels do. Indeed as well as other men's that are as careless and idle, but not so well as other men's that are diligent and watchful. What horrible abuse of God is this, for men to pretend they trust God, to cloak their own wilful negligence! If thou didst truly trust God, thou wouldst also be ruled by him, and trust him in that way which he hath appointed thee. He requires thee to "give all diligence to make thy calling and election sure," and so to trust him, 2 Peter i, 10. He hath marked thee out a way by which thou mayest come to be sure; and charged thee to search and try thyself till thou certainly know. Were he not a foolish traveller that would go on when he doth not know whether it be right or wrong; and say, I hope I am right; I will go on and trust God? Art not thou guilty of this folly in thy travels to eternity? Not considering that a little serious inquiry, whether the way be right, might save thee a great deal of labour, which thou bestowest in vain, and must undo again, or else thou wilt miss of salvation, and undo thyself. Did I not know what a desperate, blind, carnal heart is, I should wonder how thou dost to keep off continual terrors from thy heart; and especially in these cases following:

1. I wonder how thou canst either think or speak of the dreadful God without exceeding terror and astonishment, as long as thou art uncertain whether he be thy father or thy enemy, and knowest not but all his attributes may be employed against thee. If his "saints must rejoice before him with trembling, and serve him with fear:" if they that are sure to receive the immovable kingdom, must yet serve God "with reverence and godly fear," because "he is a consuming fire:" how terrible should the remembrance of him be to them that know not but this fire may for ever consume them.

2. How dost thou think without trembling, upon Jesus Christ, when thou knowest not whether his blood hath

purged thy soul or not? And whether he will condemn thee or acquit thee in judgment: nor whether he be the corner stone and foundation of thy happiness, or a stone of stumbling to break thee, and grind thee to powder?

3. How canst thou open the Bible and read a chapter, or hear a chapter read, but it should terrify thee? Methinks every leaf should be to thee as Belshazzar's writing on the wall, except only that which draws thee to try and reform. If thou read the promises, thou knowest not whether ever they shall be fulfilled to thee, because thou art uncertain of thy performance of the condition. If thou read the threatenings, for any thing thou knowest, thou dost read thy own sentence. I do not wonder if thou art an enemy to plain preaching, and if thou say of it, and of the minister and Scripture itself, as Ahab of the prophet, "I hate him, for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil."

4. What comfort canst thou find in any thing which thou possessest? Methinks friends, and honours, and houses, and lands, should do thee little good, till thou know thou hast the love of God withal, and shalt have rest with him when thou leavest these. Offer to a prisoner, before he know his sentence, either music, or clothes, or lands, or preferment, and what cares he for any of these, till he know how he shall escape for his life? Then he will look after these comforts of life, and not before; for he knows if he must die the next day, it will be small comfort to die rich or honourable. Even when thou liest down to take thy rest, methinks the uncertainty of thy salvation should keep thee waking, or amaze thee in thy dreams, and trouble thy sleep; and thou shouldst say, as Job in a smaller distress than thine, Job vii, 13, 14, "When I say, my bed shall comfort me, my couch shall ease my complaint, then thou scarest me through dreams, and terrifiest me through visions."

5. What shift dost thou make to think of thy dying hour? Thou knowest it is hard by, and there is no avoiding it, nor any medicine found out that can prevent it: thou knowest it is the *king of terror*, and the inlet to thine unchangeable state. If thou shouldst die this day, (and "who knows what a day may bring forth?") thou dost not know whether thou shalt go straight to heaven or hell. And canst thou be merry till thou art got out of this dangerous state?

6. What shift dost thou make to preserve thy heart from horror, when thou rememberest the great judgment day, and the everlasting flames? Dost thou not tremble as Felix, when thou hearest of it? and as the elders of the town trembled when Samuel came to it, saying, Comest thou peaceably? So methinks thou shouldst do when the minister comes into the pulpit: and thy heart, whenever thou

meditate of that day, should meditate terror; and thou shouldst even be a terror to thyself and all thy friends. If the keepers trembled, and became as dead men, when they did but see the angels, Matt. xxviii, 3, 4, how canst thou think of living in hell with devils, till thou hast got some sound assurance that thou shalt escape it? Or if thou seldom think of these things, the wonder is as great, what shift thou makest to keep these thoughts from thy heart? Thy bed is very soft, or thy heart is very hard, if thou canst sleep soundly in this uncertain case.

I have showed thee the danger; let me next proceed to show thee the remedy.

If this general uncertainty of the world about their salvation were remediless, then must it be borne as other unavoidable miseries: but, alas, the common cause is wilfulness and negligence: men will not be persuaded to use the remedy, though it be at hand, prescribed to them by God himself, and all necessary helps thereunto provided for them. The great means to conquer this uncertainty, is self examination, or the serious and diligent trying of a man's heart and state by the rule of Scripture. But, alas, either men understand not the nature and use of this duty, or else they will not be at the pains to try. Go through a congregation of a thousand men, and how few of them will you meet with that ever bestowed one hour in all their lives in a close examination of their title to heaven? Ask thy own conscience, reader, when was the time, and where was the place, that ever thou solemnly tookedst thy heart to task, as in the sight of God, and examinedst it by Scripture, whether it be born again or not? Whether it be holy or not? Whether it be set most on God or on creatures, on heaven or earth? And didst follow on this examination till thou hadst discovered thy condition, and so passed sentence on thyself accordingly?

But because this is a work of so high concernment, and so commonly neglected, I will therefore,

1. Show you, that it is possible, by trying, to come to a certainty.
2. Show you the hinderances that keep men from trying, and from assurance.
3. I will lay down some motives to persuade you to it.
4. I will give you some directions how to perform it.
5. And, lastly, I will lay you down some marks out of Scripture, by which you may try, and come to an infallible certainty, whether you are the people of God or no.

And I, I shall show you that a certainty of salvation may be attained, and ought to be laboured for; which I maintain by these arguments.:

1. Scripture tells us we may know, and that the saints before us have known their justification and salvation, 2 Cor. v, 1; Romans viii, 36; John xxi, 15; 1 John v, 19, iv, 13, iii, 14, 24, ii, 3, 5; Rom. viii, 14, 19; Eph. iii, 12. I refer you to the places for brevity.

2. If we may be certain of the premises, then may we also be certain of the conclusion. But here we may be certain of both the premises. For, 1. "That whosoever believeth in Christ shall not perish, but have everlasting life," is the voice of the gospel; and, therefore, that we may be sure of. That we are such believers, may be known by conscience and internal sense.

3. The Scripture would never make such a wide difference between the children of God, and the children of the devil, and set forth the happiness of the one, and the misery of the other, and make this difference to run through all the veins of its doctrine, if a man cannot know which of these two states he is in.

4. Much less would the Holy Ghost bid us "give all diligence to make our calling and election sure," if it could not be done, 2 Peter i, 10.

5. And to what purpose should we be so earnestly urged to examine, and prove, and try ourselves, whether we be in the faith, and whether Christ be in us, or we be reprobates? 1 Cor. xi, 28, xiii, 5. Why should we search for that which cannot be found?

6. How can we obey those precepts which require us to rejoice always? 1 Thess. v, 16; to call God our father, Luke xi, 13; to live in his praises, Psa. xlix, 1-5; and to long for Christ's coming, Rev. xxii, 17, 20; 2 Thess. i, 10; and to comfort ourselves with the mention of it, 1 Thess. iv, 18; which are all the consequents of assurance? Who can do any of these heartily, that is not in some measure sure that he is a child of God?

The second thing I promised is, to show you what are the hinderances which keep men from examination and assurance. I shall, 1. Show what hinders them from trying; and 2. What hindereth them from knowing when they do try; that so when you see the impediments, you may avoid them.

And, 1. We cannot doubt but Satan will do his part to hinder us from such a necessary duty as this; if all the power he hath can do it, or all the means and instruments which he can raise up. He is loath the godly should have that assurance and advantage against corruption, which faithful self examination would procure them; and for the ungodly he knows, that if they should once fall close to this, they would find out his deceits, and their own danger.



If they did but faithfully perform this duty, he were likely to lose most of his subjects. If the snare be not hid, the bird will escape it: Satan knows how to angle for souls better than to show them the hook or line, and to fright them away with a noise, or with his own appearance.

Therefore he labours to keep them from a searching ministry: or to keep the minister from helping them to search: or to take off the edge of the word, that it may not pierce: or to turn away their thoughts, or possess them with prejudice. Satan is acquainted with all the preparations of the minister; he knows when he hath provided a searching sermon, fitted to the state and necessity of a hearer; and therefore he will keep him away that day, if it be possible, or else cast him asleep, or steal away the word by the cares and talk of the world, or some way prevent its operation.

This is the first hinderance.

2. Wicked men also are great impediments to poor sinners when they should examine and discover their estates.

1. Their examples hinder much. When an ignorant sinner seeth all his friends and neighbours do as he doth, yea, the rich and learned as well as others, this is an exceeding great temptation to proceed in his security.

2. The merry company and discourse of these men do take away the thoughts of his spiritual state, and make the understanding drunk: so that if the Spirit had before put into them any jealousy of themselves, or any purpose to try themselves, these do soon quench all.

3. Also their continual discourse of matters of the world, doth damp all these purposes.

4. Their railings also, and scorning at godly persons, is a very great impediment to multitudes of souls, and possesseth them with such a prejudice and dislike of the way to heaven, that they settle in the way they are in.

5. Their constant persuasions, allurements, and threats, hinder much. God doth scarce ever open the eyes of a poor sinner, to see that his way is wrong, but presently there is a multitude of Satan's apostles ready to flatter him, and daub, and deceive, and settle him again in the quiet possession of his former master. What, say they, do you make a doubt of your salvation, who have lived so well, and done nobody harm? God is merciful: and if such as you shall not be saved, God help a great many. What do you think is become of all your forefathers? And what will become of all your friends and neighbours that live as you do? Will they all be damned? Shall none be saved, think you, but a few strict ones? Come, come, if you hearken to these books or preachers, they will drive you to despair, or drive you out of your wits. Thus do they follow the soul that is escaping

from Satan, with restless cries, till they have brought him back. Oh, how many thousands have such charms kept asleep in security, till death and hell have awakened and better informed them! The Lord calls to the sinner, and tells him, "The gate is strait, the way is narrow, and few find it: try and examine whether thou be in the faith or no: give all diligence to make sure in time." And the world cries out clean the contrary, "Never doubt, never trouble yourselves with these thoughts." I entreat the sinner that is in this strait to consider, that it is Christ, and not their fathers, or mothers, or neighbours, or friends, that must judge them: and if Christ condemn them, these cannot save them: and therefore common reason may tell them, that it is not from the words of ignorant men, but from the word of God that they must fetch their hopes of salvation.

When Ahab would inquire among the multitudes of flattering prophets, it was his death. They can flatter men into the snare, but they cannot bring them out. Oh, take the counsel of the Holy Ghost, Ephesians v, 6, 7, "Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them:" but save yourselves from this untoward generation.

3. But the greatest hinderances are in men's own hearts.

1. Some are so ignorant that they know not what self examination is, nor what a minister means when he persuadeth them to try themselves; or they know not that there is any necessity of it; but think every man is bound to believe that God is his father, and that his sins are pardoned, whether it be true or false; and that it were a great fault to make any question of it: or they do not think that assurance can be attained: or that there is any such great difference betwixt one man and another: but that we are all Christians, and therefore need not trouble ourselves any further; or at least, they know not wherein the difference lies; or how to set upon this searching of their hearts. They have as gross conceits of that regeneration, which they must search for, as Nicodemus had; they are like those in Acts xix, 2, that "knew not whether there were a Holy Ghost to be received or no."

2. Some are so possessed with self love and pride, that they will not so much as suspect any danger to themselves. Like a proud tradesman who scorns the motion when his friends desire him to cast up his books, because they are afraid he will break. As some fond parents that have an overweening conceit of their own children, and therefore will not believe or hear any evil of them. Such a fond self love doth hinder men from suspecting and trying their states.

3. Some are so guilty that they dare not try : they are so fearful that they should find their estates unsound, that they dare not search into them. And yet they dare venture them to a more dreadful trial.

4. Some are so in love with their sin, and so in dislike with the way of God, that they dare not fall on the trial of their ways, lest they be forced from the course which they love.

5. Some are so resolved already never to change their present state, that they neglect examination as a useless thing. Before they will turn so precise, and seek a new way, when they have lived so long, and gone so far, they will put their eternal state to the venture, come of it what will. And when a man is fully resolved to hold to his way, and not to turn back, be it right or wrong, to what end should he inquire whether he be right or no?

6. Most men are so taken up with their worldly affairs, and are so busy in providing for the flesh, that they cannot set themselves to the trying of their title to heaven. They have another kind of happiness in their eye, which will not suffer them to make sure of heaven.

7. But the most common impediment is, that false faith and hope commonly called presumption ; which bears up the hearts of most of the world, and so keeps them from suspecting their danger.

Thus you see what abundance of difficulties must be overcome, before a man closely sets upon the examining of his heart.

And if a man break through all these impediments, and set upon the duty, yet, of those few who inquire after means of assurance, divers are deceived and miscarry, especially through these following causes :

1. There is such confusion and darkness in the soul of man, especially of an unregenerate man, that he can scarcely tell what he doth, or what is in him. As one can hardly find any thing in a house where nothing keeps its place, but all is cast on a heap together ; so it is in the heart where all things are in disorder, especially when darkness is added to this disorder : so that the heart is like an obscure dungeon, where there is but a little crevice of light, and a man must rather grope than see. No wonder if men mistake in searching such a heart, and so miscarry in judging their estates.

2. Besides, many are resolved what to judge before they try. They use the duty but to strengthen their present conceits of themselves, and not to find out the truth of their condition. Like a bribed judge, who examines each party as if he would judge uprightly, when he is resolved which way the cause shall go before hand. Just so do men examine their hearts.

3. Also men try themselves by false marks and rules ; not knowing wherein the truth of Christianity doth consist : some looking beyond, and some short of the Scripture standard.

Lastly, Men frequently miscarry in this work, by setting on it in their own strength. As some expect the Spirit should do it without them ; so others attempt it themselves, without seeking or expecting the help of the Spirit. Both these will certainly miscarry in their assurance.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### FURTHER CAUSES OF DOUBTING AMONG CHRISTIANS.

BECAUSE the comfort of a Christian's life doth so much consist in his assurance of God's special love, and because the right way of obtaining it is so much controverted, I will here proceed a little further in opening to you some other hinderances which keep us Christians from comfortable certainty.

1. One great cause of doubting and uncertainty is, the weakness of our grace. A little grace is next to none. Small things are hardly discerned. Most content themselves with a small measure of grace, and do not follow on to spiritual strength and manhood. They believe so weakly, and love God so little, that they can scarce find whether they believe and love at all. Like a man in a swoon, whose pulse and breathing is so weak, that they can hardly be perceived whether they move at all, and consequently whether the man be alive or dead.

The chief remedy for such would be, to follow on their duty till their graces be increased : ply your work : wait upon God in the use of his prescribed means, and he will undoubtedly bless you with increase. O that Christians would bestow most of that time in getting more grace, which they bestow in anxious doubtings, whether they have any or none ; and that they would lay out those serious affections in praying and seeking to Christ for more grace, which they bestow in fruitless complaints ! I beseech thee, take this advice as from God ! and then, when thou believest strongly, and lovest fervently, thou canst not doubt whether thou believe and love or not : no more than a man that is burning hot can doubt whether he be warm : or a man that is strong and lusty can doubt whether he be alive.

2. Many a soul lieth long under doubting, through the imperfection of their very reason, and exceeding weakness of their natural parts. Grace doth usually rather employ our faculties on better objects, than add to the degree of their

natural strength. Many honest hearts have such weak heads, that they know not how to perform the work of self trial: they are not able to argue the case; they will acknowledge the premises, and yet deny the apparent conclusion. Or if they be brought to acknowledge the conclusion, yet they do but stagger in their concession, and hold it so weakly, that every assault may take it from them. If God do not some other way supply to these men the defect of their reason, I see not how they should have clear and settled peace.

3. Another common cause of doubting and discomfort is, the secret maintaining some known sin.

When a man liveth in some unwarrantable practice, and God hath oft touched him for it, and yet he continueth it, it is no wonder if this person want both assurance and comfort. One would think that a soul that is so tender as to tremble, should be as tender of sinning: and yet sad experience telleth us that it is frequently otherwise. I have known too many such, that would complain and yet sin, and accuse themselves, and yet sin still, yea, and despair, and yet proceed in sinning: and all arguments and means could not keep them from the wilful committing of that sin again and again, which yet they themselves did think would prove their destruction. Yea, some will be carried away with those sins that seem most contrary to their dejected temper. I have known them that would fill men's ears with the constant lamentations of their miserable state, and accusations against themselves, as if they had been the most humble people in the world; and yet be as passionate in the maintaining their innocency when another accuseth them, and as intolerably peevish, and tender of their reputation in any thing they are blamed for, as if they were the proudest persons on earth.

This cherishing sin doth hinder assurance these four ways:

1. It doth abate the degree of our graces, and so makes them undiscernible.

2. It obscureth that which it destroyeth not; for it beareth such sway, that grace is not seen to stir, nor scarce heard speak, for the noise of this corruption.

3. It putteth out or darkeneth the eye of the soul, and it benumbeth and stupifieth it.

4. But especially it provoketh God to withdraw himself, his comforts, and the assistance of the Spirit, without which we may search long enough before we have assurance. God hath made a separation betwixt sin and peace. As long as thou dost cherish thy pride, thy love of the world, the desires of the flesh, or any unchristian practice, thou expectest assurance and comfort in vain. God will not encourage thee by his precious gifts in a course of sinning. This worm

will be gnawing upon thy conscience : it will be a devouring canker to thy consolations. Thou mayest steal a spark of false comfort from thy worldly prosperity or delight : or thou mayest have it from some false opinions, or from the delusions of Satan ; but from God thou wilt have no comfort. However an Antinomian may tell thee, that thy comforts have no dependence upon thy obedience, nor thy discomforts upon thy disobedience ; and therefore may speak peace to thee in the course of thy sinning ; yet thou shalt find by experience that God will not. If any man set up his idols in his heart, and put the stumbling block of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to a minister, or to God, to inquire for assurance and comfort, God will answer that man by himself, and instead of comforting him, he will set his face against him, “ he will answer him according to the multitude of his idols.”

5. Another common cause of want of assurance and comfort is, when men grow lazy in the spiritual part of duty. As Dr. Sibbs saith truly, “ It is the lazy Christian commonly that lacketh assurance.” The way of painful duty is the way of fullest comfort. Christ carrieth all our comforts in his hand : if we are out of that way where Christ is to be met, we are out of the way where comfort is to be had.

These two ways doth this laziness debar us of our comforts :—

1. By stopping the fountain, and causing Christ to withhold this blessing from us. Parents use not to smile upon children in their neglects and disobedience. So far as the Spirit is grieved, he will suspend his consolation. Assurance and peace are Christ's great encouragements to faithfulness and obedience ; and therefore (though our obedience do not merit them, yet) they usually rise and fall with our diligence in duty. They that have entertained the Antinomian dotage to cover their idleness and viciousness, may talk their nonsense against this at pleasure, but the laborious Christian knows it by experience. As prayer must have faith and fervency to procure its success, besides the bloodshed and intercession of Christ, so must all other parts of our obedience. He that will say to us in that triumphing day, “ Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord ;” will also comfort his servants in their most affectionate and spiritual duties, and say, “ Well done, good and faithful servant, take this foretaste of thy everlasting joy.” If thou grow seldom, and customary, and cold in duty, especially in thy secret prayers to God, and yet findest no abatement in thy joys, I cannot but fear that thy joys are either carnal or diabolical.

2 The action of the soul upon such excellent objects doth

naturally bring consolation with it. The very act of loving God in Christ, doth bring inexpressible sweetness into the soul. The soul that is best furnished with grace when it is not in action, is like a lute well stringed and tuned, which, while it lieth still, doth make no more music than a common piece of wood; but when it is taken up and handled by a skilful lutist, the melody is delightful. Some degree of comfort follows every good action, as heat accompanies fire, and as beams and influence issue from the sun: which is so true, that the very heathens upon the discharge of a good conscience, have found comfort and peace answerable. This is *præmium ante præmium*: a reward before the reward.

As a man therefore that is cold should not stand still and say, I am so cold that I have no mind to labour, but labour till his coldness be gone, and heat excited; so he that wants the comfort of assurance, must not stand still and say, I am so doubtful and uncomfortable, that I have no mind for duty; but ply his duty, and exercise his graces, till he finds his doubts and discomforts vanish.

And thus I have shown you the chief causes why so many Christians enjoy so little assurance and consolation.

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## CHAPTER IX.

CONTAINING DIRECTIONS FOR EXAMINATION, AND SOME MARKS OF TRIAL.

I WILL not stand here to lay down the directions necessary for preparation to this duty, because you may gather them from what is said concerning the hinderances: for the contraries of those hinderances will be the most necessary helps. Only before you set upon it, I advise you to the observation of these rules:—

1. Come not with too peremptory conclusions of yourselves beforehand. Do not judge too confidently before you try.

2. Be sure to be so well acquainted with the Scripture as to know what is the tenor of the covenant of grace, and what are the conditions of justification and glorification, and consequently what are sound marks to try thyself by.

3. Be a constant observer of the temper and motions of thy heart: most of the difficulty of the work doth lie in true and clear discerning of it. Be watchful in observing the actings both of grace and corruption, and the circumstances of their actings: as, how frequent? how violent? how strong or weak were the outward incitements? how great or small the impediments? what delight, or loathing, or fear, or reluctancy, did go with those acts?

1. Empty thy mind of all thy other cares and thoughts,

that they do not distract or divide thy mind. This work will be enough at once of itself, without joining others with it.

2. Then fall down before God, and in hearty prayer, desire the assistance of his Spirit, to discover to thee the plain truth of thy condition, and to enlighten thee in the whole progress of the work.

I will not digress to warn you here of the false rules and marks of trial of which you must beware. But I will briefly adjoin some marks to try your title to this rest.

1. Every soul that hath a title to this rest, doth place his happiness in it, and make it the ultimate end of his soul. This is the first mark; which is so plain a truth, that I need not stand to prove it. For this rest consisteth in the full and glorious enjoyment of God; and he that maketh not God his ultimate end, is in heart a pagan and vile idolater.

Let me ask thee then, Dost thou truly account it thy chief happiness to enjoy the Lord in glory, or dost thou not? Canst thou say with David, "The Lord is my portion? And whom have I in heaven but thee? And whom in earth that I desire in comparison of thee?" If thou be an heir of rest, it is thus with thee. Though the flesh will be pleading for its own delights, and the world will be creeping into thine affection, yet in thy ordinary, settled, prevailing judgment and affections, thou preferrest God before all things in the world.

1. Thou makest him the end of thy desires and endeavours: the very reason why thou hearest and prayest, why thou desirest to live and breathe on earth, is this, that thou mayest seek the Lord. Thou seekest first the kingdom of God and its righteousness: though thou dost not seek it so zealously as thou shouldst; yet hath it the chief of thy desires and endeavours: and nothing else is desired or preferred before it.

2. Thou wilt think no labour or suffering too great to obtain it. And though the flesh may sometimes shrink, yet art thou resolved and content to go through all.

3. If thou be an heir of rest, thy valuation of it will be so high, and thy affection to it so great, that thou wouldst not exchange thy title to it, and hopes of it, for any worldly good whatsoever. If God would set before thee an eternity of earthly pleasure on one hand, and the rest of the saints on the other, and bid thee take thy choice: thou wouldst refuse the world, and choose this rest.

But if thou be yet in the flesh, then it is clean contrary with thee. Then dost thou in thy heart prefer thy worldly happiness before God: and though thy tongue may say, that God is the chief good, yet thy heart doth not so esteem him. For,



1. The world is the chief end of thy desires and endeavours; thy very heart is set upon it; thy greatest care and labour is to maintain thy estate, or credit, or fleshly delights. But the life to come hath little of thy care or labour. Thou didst never perceive so much excellency in the unseen glory as to draw thy heart so after it; but that little pains which thou bestowest that way, it is but in the second place. God hath but the world's leavings, and that time and labour which thou canst spare from the world, or those few cold and careless thoughts which follow thy constant, earnest, and delightful thoughts of earthly things; neither wouldst thou do any thing at all for heaven, if thou knewest how to keep the world: but lest thou shouldst be turned into hell, when thou canst keep the world no longer, therefore thou wilt do something.

2. Therefore it is that thou thinkest the way of God too strict, and wilt not be persuaded to the constant labour of walking according to the gospel rule: and when it comes to trial, that thou must forsake Christ or thy worldly happiness, and the wind which was in thy back doth turn in thy face, then thou wilt venture heaven rather than earth, and (as desperate rebels use to say) thou wilt rather trust God's mercy for thy soul, than man's for thy body; and so deny thy obedience to God.

3. And certainly if God would but give thee leave to live in health and wealth for ever on earth, thou wouldst think it a better state than rest: let them seek for heaven that would, thou wouldst think this thy chiefest happiness. This is thy case if thou be yet an unregenerate person, and hast no title to the saints' rest.

The second mark which I shall give thee, to try whether thou be an heir of rest, is this:

As thou takest God for thy chief good, so thou dost heartily accept of Christ for thy only Saviour and Lord to bring thee to this rest. The former mark was the sum of the first and great command of the law of nature, ["Thou shalt love the Lord thy God."] This second mark is the sum of the command or condition of the gospel, ["Believe in the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved."] And the performance of these two is the whole sum or essence of godliness and Christianity. Observe therefore the parts of this mark, which is but a definition of faith.

1. Dost thou find that thou art naturally a lost condemned man, for thy breach of the first covenant? And believe that Jesus Christ is the mediator who hath made a sufficient satisfaction to the law? And hearing in the gospel that he is offered without exception unto all, dost thou heartily consent that he alone shall be thy Saviour? and no further

trust to thy duties and works, than as conditions required by him, and means appointed in subordination to him? Not looking at them as in the least measure able to satisfy the course of the law, or as a legal righteousness, nor any part of it? But art content to trust thy salvation on the redemption made by Christ?

2. Art thou also content to take him for thy only Lord and King, to govern and guide thee by his laws and Spirit? and to obey him even when he commandeth the hardest duties, and those which most cross the desires of the flesh? Is it thy sorrow when thou breakest thy resolution herein? And thy joy when thou keepest closest in obedience to him? Wouldst thou not change thy Lord and Master for all the world? Thus it is with every true Christian. But if thou be an unbeliever, it is far otherwise. Thou mayest call Christ thy Lord and thy Saviour: but thou never foundest thyself so lost without him, as to drive thee to trust him, and lay thy salvation on him alone: or at least thou didst never heartily consent that he should govern thee as thy Lord; nor resign up thy soul and life to be ruled by him; nor take his word for the law of thy thoughts and actions. It is like thou art content to be saved from hell by Christ when thou diest; but in the mean time he shall command thee no further than will stand with thy credit, or pleasure, or worldly estate and ends. And if he would give thee leave, thou hadst far rather live after the world and flesh, than after the word and Spirit. And though thou mayest now and then have a motion or purpose to the contrary; yet this that I have mentioned is the ordinary desire and choice of thine heart: and so thou art no true believer in Christ: for though thou confess him in words, yet in works thou dost deny him, "being disobedient, and to every good work a disapprover and a reprobate," Tit. i, 16. This is the case of those that shall be shut out of the saints' rest.

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## CHAPTER X.

### THE REASON OF THE SAINTS' AFFLICTIONS HERE.

A FURTHER use which we must make of the present doctrine is, to inform us why the people of God suffer so much in this life. What wonder? when you see their rest doth yet remain; they are not yet come to their resting place. We would all fain have continual prosperity, because it is pleasing to the flesh; but we consider not the unreasonableness of such desires. We are like children, who if they see any thing which their appetite desireth, cry for it; and if you tell them that it is unwholesome, or hurtful for them,

they are never the more quieted; or if you go about to heal any sore that they have, they will not endure you to hurt them, though you tell them that they cannot otherwise be healed; their sense is too strong for their reason, and therefore reason doth little persuade them. Even so it is with us when God is afflicting us: he giveth us reasons why we must bear it, so that our reason is oft convinced and satisfied, and yet we cry and complain still: it is not reason, but ease that we must have: spiritual remedies may cure the spirit's maladies; but that will not content the flesh.

But methinks Christians should have another palate than that of the flesh, to try and relish providences by: God hath given them the Spirit to subdue the flesh. And therefore I shall here give them some reasons of God's dealing in their present sufferings, whereby the equity and mercy therein may appear: and they shall be only such as are drawn from the reference that these afflictions have to our rest; which being a Christian's happiness and ultimate end, will direct him in judging of all estates and means.

1. Consider then, that labour and trouble are the common way to rest, both in the course of nature and of grace. Can there possibly be rest without motion and weariness? Do you not travel and toil first, and then rest afterwards? The day for labour goes first, and then the night for rest doth follow. Why should we desire the course of grace to be perverted, any more than we would do the course of nature? God did once dry up the sea to make a passage for his people; and once made the sun in the firmament to stand still; but must he do so always? or as oft as we would have him? It is his established decree, "That through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of heaven," Acts xiv, 22. "And that if we suffer with him, we shall also be glorified with him," 2 Tim. ii, 12. And what are we, that God's statutes should be reversed for our pleasure? As Bildad said to Job, chapter xviii, 4, "Shall the earth be forsaken for thee? or the rock be removed out of his place?" so must God pervert his established order for thee?

2. Consider also, that afflictions are exceeding useful to us, to keep us from mistaking our resting place, and so taking up short of it. A Christian's motion heaven ward, is voluntary, and not constrained. Those means therefore are most profitable to him, which help his understanding and will in this prosecution. The most dangerous mistake that our souls are capable of is, to take the creature for God, and earth for heaven. And yet, alas, how common is this! Though we are ashamed to speak so much with our tongues, yet how oft do our hearts say, "It is best being here!" And how contented are we with an earthly portion! So that I fear

God would displease most of us more to afflict us here, and promise us rest hereafter, than to give us our hearts' desire on earth, though he had never made us a promise of heaven. As if the creature without God were better than God without the creature. Alas, how apt are we, like foolish children, when we are busy at our sports and worldly employments, to forget both our Father and our home! Therefore it is a hard thing for a rich man to enter into heaven, because it is hard for him to value it more than earth, and not think he is well already. Come to a man that hath the world at will, and tell him, "This is not your happiness, you have higher things to look after;" and how little will he regard you? But when affliction comes, it speaks convincingly, and will be heard when preachers cannot.

Sometimes a sincere man begins to be lifted up with applause; and sometimes being in health and prosperity, he hath lost his relish of Christ, and the joys above; till God break in upon his riches, and scatter them abroad, or upon his children, or upon his conscience, or upon the health of his body, and break down his mount which he thought so strong: and then, when he lieth in Manasseh's fetters, or is fastened to his bed with pining sickness, O what an opportunity hath the Spirit to plead with his soul! When the world is worth nothing, then heaven is worth something.

How oft have I been ready to think myself at home, till sickness hath roundly told me, I was mistaken! And how apt yet to fall into the same disease, which prevaieth till it be removed by the same cure! If our dear Lord did not put these thorns into our bed, we should sleep out our lives, and lose our glory.

3. Consider, afflictions are God's most effectual means to keep us from straggling out of the way to our rest. If he had not set a hedge of thorns on the right hand and on the left, we should hardly keep the way to heaven. If there be but one gap open without these thorns, how ready are we to turn out at it! But when we cannot go astray but these thorns will prick us, perhaps we will be content to hold the way. When we grow wanton, or worldly, or proud, what a notable means is sickness, or other affliction, to reduce us! It is every Christian, as well as Luther, that may call affliction one of his best schoolmasters. Many a one, as well as David, may say by experience, "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept thy precepts." Many a thousand poor recovered sinners may cry, O healthful sickness! O comfortable sorrows! O gainful losses! O enriching poverty! O blessed day that ever I was afflicted! It is not only "the pleasant streams, and the green pastures, but his rod and staff also that are our comfort." Though I know

it is the word and Spirit that do the work ; yet certainly the time of suffering is so opportune a season, that the same word will take them then, which before was scarce observed : it doth so unbolt the door of the heart, that a minister or a friend may then be heard, and the word may have easier entrance to the affections.

4. Consider, afflictions are God's most effectual means to make us mend our pace in the way to our rest. They are his rod, and his spur : what sluggard will not awake and stir when he feeleth them ? It were well if mere love would prevail with us, and that we were rather drawn to heaven than driven : but seeing our hearts are so bad, that mercy will not do it, it is better we be put on with the sharpest scourge, than loiter out our time till the doors are shut.

O what a difference is there betwixt our prayers in health and in sickness ! betwixt our prosperity and adversity repentings ! He that before had not a tear to shed, or a groan to utter, now can sob, and sigh, and weep : he that was wont to lie like a block in prayer, and scarce minded what he said to God : now affliction presseth him down, how earnestly can he beg ! How doth he mingle his prayers and his tears ! and cry out, what a person he will be, if God will but hear him and deliver him ! Alas ! if we did not sometimes feel the spur, what a slow pace would most of us hold toward heaven !

Seeing then what our vile natures require, why should we be unwilling God should do us good by sharp means ? Sure that is the best dealing for us, which surest and soonest doth further us for heaven. I leave thee, Christian, to judge by thy own experience, whether thou dost not go more watchfully, and lively, and speedily in thy way to rest, in thy sufferings, than thou dost in thy more pleasing and prosperous state.

Lastly, Consider God doth seldom give his people so sweet a foretaste of their future rest, as in their deep afflictions. He keepeth his most precious cordials for the time of our greatest faintings and dangers. God is not so lavish of his choice favours as to bestow them unseasonably : he gives them at so fit a time, when he knoweth they are needful, and will be valued ; and when he is sure to be thanked for them, and his people rejoiced by them. Especially, when our sufferings are more directly for his cause, then doth he seldom fail of sweetening the bitter cup. Therefore have the martyrs been possessors of the highest joys, and therefore were they so ambitious of martyrdom. I do not think that Paul and Silas did ever sing more joyfully, than when they were sore with scourgings, and fast in the inner prison, with their feet in the stocks. When did Christ preach such

comforts to his disciples, and assure them of his providing them mansions with himself, but when he was ready to leave them, and their hearts were sorrowful because of his departure? When did he appear among them, and say, "Peace be unto you," but when they were shut up together for fear of the persecuting Jews? When did Stephen see heaven opened, but when he was giving up his life for the testimony of Jesus? And though we be never put to the suffering of martyrdom, yet God knoweth that in our natural sufferings we need support.

Seeing then that the time of affliction is the time of our most pure, spiritual, and heavenly joy, for the most part; why should a Christian think it so bad a time? Is not that our best estate, wherein we have most of God? Why else do we desire to come to heaven? If we look for a heaven of fleshly delights, we shall find ourselves mistaken. Conclude then, that affliction is not so bad a state in our way to rest as the flesh would make it. Are we wiser than God? Doth not he know what is good for us better than we? Or is he not as careful of our good, as we are of our own? Ah wo to us if he were not much more! and if he did not love us better than we love either him or ourselves!

But let us hear a little what it is that we can object.

1. Oh, saith one, I could bear any other affliction save this: if God had touched me in any thing else, I could have undergone it patiently; but it is my dearest friend, or child, or wife, or my health itself.

I answer, It seemeth God hath hit the right vein, where thy most inflamed, distempered blood did lie: it is his constant course to pull down men's idols, and take away that which is dearer to them than himself. There it is that his jealousy is kindled; and there it is that the soul is most endangered. If God should have taken from thee that which thou canst let go for him, and not that which thou canst not; or have afflicted thee where thou canst bear it, and not where thou canst not; thy idol would neither have been discovered nor removed; this would neither have been a sufficient trial to thee, nor a cure, but have confirmed thee in thy idolatry.

*Objection 2.* Oh, but saith another, if God would but deliver me out of it at last, I could be content to bear it: but I have an incurable sickness, or I am like to live and die in poverty, or disgrace, or distress.

I answer, 1. Is it nothing that he hath promised, "it shall work for thy good?" Romans viii, 28, and "that with the affliction he will make a way to escape?" that he will be with thee in it? and deliver thee in the fittest manner and season?

2. Is it not enough that thou art sure to be delivered at death, and that with so full a deliverance? Oh, what cursed unbelief doth this discover in our hearts! that we would be more thankful to be turned back again into the stormy sea of the world, than to be safely and speedily landed at our rest! And would be more glad of a few years inferior mercies at a distance, than to enter upon the eternal inheritance with Christ! Do we call God our chief good, and heaven our happiness? and yet is it no mercy or deliverance to be taken hence, and put into that possession?

*Objection 3.* Oh, but saith another, if my affliction did not disable me for duty, I could bear it; but it maketh me useless and utterly unprofitable.

*Answer 1.* For that duty which tendeth to thy own benefit, it doth not disable thee; but is the greatest help that thou canst expect. Thou usest to complain of coldness, and dulness, and worldliness, and security: if affliction will not help thee against all these, by warning, quickening, rousing thy spirit, I know not what will. Sure thou wilt repent thoroughly, and pray fervently, and mind God and heaven more seriously, either now or never.

2. As for duty to others, and service to the church, it is not thy duty when God doth disable thee. He may call thee out of the vineyard in this respect, even before he call thee by death. If he lay thee in the grave, and put others in thy place, is this any wrong to thee? So if he call thee out before thy death, and set others to do the work, should thou not be as well content? Must God do all the work by thee? Hath he not many others as dear to him, and as fit for the employment? But, alas, what deceitfulness lieth in these hearts! When we have time, and health, and opportunity to work, then we loiter, and do our Master but poor service: but when he layeth affliction upon us, then we complain that he disableth us for his work, and yet perhaps we are still negligent in that part of the work which we can do. So, when we are in health and prosperity, we forget the public, and are careless of other men's miseries and wants, and mind almost nothing but ourselves; but when God afflicteth us, though he excite us more to duty for ourselves, yet we complain that he disableth us for our duty to others: as if on a sudden we were grown so charitable, that we regard other men's souls more than our own! But is not the hand of flesh, in all this dissimulation, pleading its own cause? What pride of heart is this, to think that other men cannot do the work as well as we! Or that God cannot see to his church, and provide for his people, without us!

*Objection 4.* Oh, but saith another, it is my friends that are my afflictors: they disclaim me, and will scarce look at me:

they censure me, and backbite me, and slander me, and look upon me with a disdainful eye; if it were others, I could bear it, I look for no better from them: but when those that are my delight, and that I looked for comfort and refreshing from, when those are thorns in my sides, who can bear it?

*Answer 1.* Whoever is the instrument, the affliction is from God, and the provoking cause from thyself; and were it not fitter that thou look more to God and thyself?

2. Dost thou not know, that good men are still sinful in part? and that their hearts are naturally deceitful, and desperately wicked, as well as others? Learn therefore a better lesson from the prophet, Micah vii, 5, 6, 7, "Trust not (too much) in a friend, nor put confidence in a guide: keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom: but look rather for the Lord, and wait for the God of thy salvation."

3. It is likely thou hast given that love and trust to men, which was due only to God, or which thou hast denied him: and then no wonder if he chastise thee by them. If we would use our friends as friends, God would make them our helps and comforts: but when once we make them our gods, by excessive love and trust, then he suffers them to be our accusers and tormentors. It is more safe to me to have any creature a satan than a god; to be tormented by them than to idolize them. Till thou hast learned to suffer from the good, as well as the ungodly, never look to live a contented or comfortable life, nor ever think thou hast truly learned the art of suffering.

*Objection 5.* Oh, but if I had that consolation, which you say God reserveth for our suffering times, I should suffer more contentedly: but I do not perceive any such thing.

*Answer 1.* The more you suffer for righteousness' sake, the more of this blessing you may expect; and the more you suffer for your own evil doing, the longer you must look to stay till that sweetness come. When we have by our folly provoked God to chastise us, shall we presently look that he should fill us with comfort? "That were," as Mr. Paul Bayn saith, "to make affliction to be no affliction." What good would the bitterness do us, if it be presently drowned in that sweetness? It is well in such sufferings, if you have but supporting grace; and if your sufferings are sanctified to work out your sin.

2. Do you not neglect or resist the comforts which you desire? God hath filled precepts and promises, and other of his providences, with matter of comfort: if you overlook all these, and observe one cross more than a thousand mercies, who maketh you uncomfortable but yourselves? If you resolve you will not be comfortable as long as any



thing aileth your flesh, you may stay till death before you have comfort.

3. Have your afflictions wrought kindly with you, and fitted you for comfort? Have they humbled you, and brought you to a faithful confession and reformation of your beloved sin? and made you set close to your neglected duties? and weaned your hearts from their former idols? and brought them unfeignedly to take God for their portion and their rest? If this be not done, how can you expect comfort? Should God bind up the sore while it festereth at the bottom? It is not mere suffering that prepares you for comfort; but the success and fruit of suffering upon your hearts.

## CHAPTER XI.

AN EXHORTATION TO THOSE THAT HAVE GOT ASSURANCE OF THIS REST, THAT THEY WOULD DO ALL THEY POSSIBLY CAN TO HELP OTHERS TO IT.

HATH God set before us such a glorious prize as this everlasting rest, and made man capable of such an inconceivable happiness? Why then do not all the children of this kingdom bestir themselves more to help others to the enjoyment of it! Alas, how little are poor souls about us beholden to the most of us! We see the glory of the kingdom, and they do not: we see the misery and torment of those that miss of it, and they do not: we see them wandering quite out of the way, and know if they hold on they can never come there, and they discern not this themselves. And yet we will not set upon them seriously, and show them their danger and error, and help to bring them into the way, that they may live. Alas, how few Christians are there to be found, that live as men that are made to do good, and that set themselves with all their might to the saving of souls! No thanks to us if heaven be not empty, and if the souls of our brethren perish not for ever.

But because this is a duty which so many neglect, and so few are convinced that God doth expect it at their hands, and yet a duty of so high concernment to the glory of God, and the happiness of men, I will speak of it somewhat the more largely, and show you, 1. Wherein it doth consist. 2. What is the cause that it is so neglected. 3. Give some considerations to persuade you to the performance of it, and others to the bearing of it. 4. Apply this more particularly to some persons whom it doth nearly concern.

1. I would have you well understand what is this work which I am persuading you to. Know then on the negative,

1. It is no to invade the office of the ministry, and every man to turn a public preacher. I would not have you go beyond the bounds of your calling: we see by daily experience, what fruits those men's teaching doth bring forth, who run uncalled of God, and thrust themselves into the place of public teachers, thinking themselves the fittest for the work in the pride of their hearts, while they had need to be taught the very principles of religion. How little doth God bless the labours of these self-conceited intruders, even if they be ordained!

2. Neither do I persuade you to a zealous promoting of factions and parties, and venting of uncertain opinions, which men's salvation is little concerned in. Alas, what advantage hath the devil always got in the church by this imposture! The time that should be employed in drawing men's souls from sin to Christ, is employed in drawing them to opinions and parties: when men are fallen in love with their own conceits, and think themselves the wisest, how diligently do they labour to get them followers? as if to make a man a proselyte to their opinions, were as happy a work as to convert him to Christ! and when they fall among the lighter, ignorant sort of men, whose religion is all in the brain, and on their tongue, they seldom fail of success. These men shall shortly know, that to bring a man to the knowledge and love of Christ, is another kind of work than to bring him to be baptized again, or to be of such a church, or such a side. Unhappy are the souls that are taken in their snare; who, when they have spent their lives in contending for the circumstantialia of religion, which should have been spent in studying and loving the Lord Jesus, do in the end reap an empty harvest, suitable to their empty profession.

3. Nor do I persuade you to speak against men's faults behind their backs, and be silent before their faces, as the common custom of the world is. To tell other men of their faults, tendeth little to their reformation, if they hear it not themselves. To whisper men's faults to others, as it cometh not from love, or from an honest principle, so usually doth it produce no good effect; for if the party hear not of it, it cannot better him; if he do, he will take it but as the reproach of an enemy, and not as the faithful counsel of a friend, and as that which is spoken to make him odious, and not to make him virtuous; it tendeth not to provoke to godliness, but to raise contention; for "a whisperer separateth chief friends." And how few shall we find that make conscience of this horrible sin? or that will confess it, and bewail it, when they are reprehended for it? especially if men are speaking of their enemies, or those that have wronged them, or whom they suppose to have wronged them; or if it be of one that

eclipseth their glory, or that standeth in the way of their gain or esteem; or if it be one that differeth from them in judgment; or of one that is commonly spoke against by others; who is it that maketh any conscience of backbiting such as these? And you shall ever observe, that the forwarder they are to backbiting, the more backward always to faithful admonishing; and none speak less of a man's faults to his face, than those that speak most of them behind his back.

So far am I from persuading therefore to this preposterous course, that I would advise you to oppose it wherever you meet with it. See that you never hear a man speaking against his neighbour behind his back, (without some special cause or call,) but presently rebuke him: ask him, Whether he hath spoke those things in a way of love to his face? If he hath not, ask him, How he dare to pervert God's prescribed order, who commandeth to rebuke our neighbour plainly, and to tell him his fault first in private, and then before witness, till he see whether he will be won or not? And how he dare do as he would not be done by?

The duty therefore that I would press you to, is of another nature, and it consisteth in these things following:

1. That you get your hearts affected with the misery of your brethren's souls; be compassionate toward them; yearn after their salvation. If you did earnestly long after their conversion, and your hearts were fully set to do them good, it would set you on work, and God would usually bless it.

2. Take all opportunities that possibly you can, to instruct and help them to the attaining of salvation. And, lest you should not know how to manage this work, let me tell you more particularly what you are herein to do. 1. If it be an ignorant person you have to deal with, who is an utter stranger to the mysteries of religion, and to the work of regeneration, the first thing you have to do is, to acquaint him with these doctrines: labour to make him understand wherein man's chief happiness doth consist; and how far he was once possessed of it; and what law and covenant God then made with him; and how he broke it; and what penalty he incurred, and what misery he brought himself into thereby: teach him what need men had of a Redeemer; and how Christ in mercy did interpose, and bear the penalty; and what covenant now he hath made with man; and on what terms only salvation is now to be attained; and what course Christ taketh to draw men to himself; and what are the riches and privileges that believers have in him.

If, when he understands these things, he be not moved by them; or if you find that the stop lieth in his will and affections, and in the hardness of his heart, and in the interest

that the flesh and the world have got in him; then show him the excellency of the glory which he neglecteth, and the intolerableness of the loss of it, and the extremity and eternity of the torments of the damned, and how certainly they must endure them; and how just it is for their wilful refusals of grace; and how heinous a sin it is to reject such free and abundant mercy, and to tread under foot the blood of the covenant: show him the certainty, nearness, and terrors of death and judgment, and the vanity of all things below, which now he is taken up with; and how little they will bestead him in that time of his extremity: show him that by nature he himself is a child of wrath, an enemy to God; and by actual sin much more: show him the vile and heinous nature of sin; the absolute necessity he standeth in of a Saviour; the freeness of the promise; the fulness of Christ; the sufficiency of his satisfaction; his readiness to receive all that are willing to be his; and the authority and dominion which he hath purchased over us: show him also the absolute necessity of regeneration, faith, and holiness; how impossible it is to have salvation by Christ without these; and what they are, and the true nature of them.

If, when he understandeth all this, you find his soul enthralled in false hopes, persuading himself that he is a true believer, and pardoned, and reconciled, and shall be saved by Christ, and all this upon false grounds, (which is a common case,) then urge him hard to examine his state: show him the necessity of trying; the danger of being deceived; the commonness and easiness of mistaking through the deceitfulness of the heart; the extreme madness of putting it to a blind venture; or of resting in negligent or wilful uncertainty; help him in trying himself; produce some undeniable evidences from Scripture; ask him whether these be in him or not? Whether ever he found such workings or dispositions in his heart? Urge him to a rational answer: do not leave him till you have convinced him of his misery; and then seasonably and wisely show him the remedy.

If he produces some gifts, or duties, or works, know to what end he doth produce them: if to join with Christ in composing him a righteousness, show him how vain and destructive they are: if it be by way of evidence to prove his title to Christ, show him wherein the life of Christianity doth consist, and how far he must go further, if he will be Christ's disciple. In the mean time, that he be not discouraged with hearing of so high a measure, show him the way by which he must attain it; be sure to draw him to the use of all means; set him on hearing and reading the word, calling upon God, accompanying the godly; persuade him to leave his actual sin, and to get out of all ways of

temptation, especially to forsake ungodly company, and to wait patiently on God in the use of means; and show him the strong hopes that in so doing he may have a blessing; this being the way that God will be found in.

If you perceive him possessed with any prejudices against the way of holiness, show him their falsehood, and with wisdom and meekness answer his objections.

If he be addicted to delay duties he is convinced of, or laziness and stupidity endanger his soul, then lay it on more powerfully, and set home upon his heart the most piercing considerations, and labour to fasten them as thorns in his conscience, that he may find no ease or rest till he change his estate.

But because in all works the manner of doing them is of greatest moment, and the right performance doth much further the success, I will here adjoin a few directions, which you must be sure to observe in this work of exhortation; for it is not every advice that useth to succeed, nor any manner of doing it that will serve the turn. Observe therefore these rules:

1. Set upon the work sincerely, and with right intentions. Let thy end be the glory of God in the party's salvation. Do it not to get a name or esteem to thyself; or to bring men to depend upon thee; or to get thee many followers; do not as many parents and masters will do, viz. rebuke their children and servants for those sins that displease them, and are against their profit or their humours, as disobedience, unthriftiness, unmannerliness; but never seek in the right way that God hath appointed to save their souls. But be sure the main end be to recover them from misery, and bring them into the way of eternal rest.

2. Do it speedily: as you would not have them delay their return, so do not thou delay to seek their return. You are purposing long to speak to such an ignorant neighbour, and to deal with such a scandalous sinner, and yet you have never done it. Alas, he runs on the score all this while; he goes deeper in debt; wrath is heaping up; sin taketh rooting; custom doth more fasten him; engagements to sin grow stronger and more numerous; conscience grows seared; the heart grows hardened: while you delay, the devil rules and rejoiceth; Christ is shut out; the Spirit is repulsed; God is daily dishonoured; his law is violated; he is without a servant, and that service from him which he should have; time runs on; the day of visitation hasteth; death and judgment are at the door; and what if the man die and miss of heaven, while you are purposing to teach him and help him to it? If in case of his bodily distress, you must not bid him go, and come again to-morrow, when you have

it by you ; how much less may you delay the succour of his soul ? If once death snatch him away, he is then out of the reach of your charity. That physician is no better than a murderer, that negligently delayeth till his patient be dead, or past cure. Delay in duty is a great degree of disobedience, though you afterwards perform it. It shows an ill heart that is indisposed to the work. O how many a poor sinner perisheth, or grows rooted, and next to incurable in sin, while we are purposing to seek their recovery ! Opportunities last not always. When thou hearest that the sinner is dead, or removed, or grown obstinate, will not conscience say to thee, How knowest thou but thou mightest have prevented the damnation of a soul ? Lay by excuses then, and all lesser business, and obey God's command, "Exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day, lest any be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."

3. Let thy exhortation proceed from compassion and love, and let the manner of it clearly show the person thou dealest with that it does. It is not jeering, or scorning, or reproaching a man for his fault, that is a likely way to work his reformation ; nor is it the right way to convert him to God, to rail at him, and vilify him with words of disgrace. Men will take them for their enemies that thus deal with them ; and the words of an enemy are little persuading. Lay by your passion, therefore, and go to poor sinners with tears in your eyes, that they may see you indeed believe them to be miserable, and that you unfeignedly pity their case ; deal with them with earnest humble entreatings. Let them see that your very bowels yearn over them, and that it is the very desire of your hearts to do them good : let them perceive that you have no other end but the procuring their everlasting happiness ; and that it is your sense of their danger, and your love to their souls, that forces you to speak ; even because you know the terrors of the Lord, and for fear lest you should see them in eternal torments. Say to them, Why, friend, you know it is no advantage of my own that I seek. The way to please you, and to keep your friendship, were to soothe you in your own way, or to let you alone ; but love will not suffer me to see you perish, and be silent ; I seek nothing at your hands but that which is necessary to your own happiness. It is yourself that will have the gain and comfort, if you come in to Christ. If men would thus go to every ignorant wicked neighbour they have, and thus deal with them, O what blessed fruit should we quickly see !

I am ashamed to hear some lazy, hypocritical wretches revile their poor ignorant neighbours, and separate from their company, and judge them unfit for their society, before

ever they once tried them with this compassionate exhortation! O you little know what a prevailing course this were like to prove! And how few of the vilest drunkards or swearers would prove so obstinate, as wholly to reject or despise the exhortations of love! I know it must be God that must change men's hearts; but I know also that God worketh by means, and when he meaneth to prevail with men, he usually fitteth the means accordingly, and stirreth up men to plead with them in a prevailing way, and so setteth in with his grace, and maketh it successful. Certainly those that have tried can tell you by experience, that there is no way so prevailing with men, as the way of compassion and love. So much of these as they discern in your exhortation, usually so much doth it succeed with their hearts: and therefore I beseech those that are faithful to practise this course. Alas, we see most people among us, yea those that would seem godly, cannot bear a reproof that comes not in meekness and love! if there be the least passion, or relish of disgrace in it, they are ready to spit in your face. Yea, if you do not sweeten your reproof with fair words, they cannot digest it; but their heart will rise up against you, instead of a thankful submission and a reformation. O that it were not too evident that the Pharisee is yet alive in the breasts of many thousands that seem religious, even in this one point of bearing plain and sharp reproof! "They bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers," Matthew xxiii, 4. So far are they from doing, in this, as they would be done by.

4. Another direction I would give you, is this: do it with all possible plainness and faithfulness. Do not dally with men, and hide from them their misery or danger, or any part of it. Do not make their sins less than they are; nor speak of them in extenuating language. Do not encourage them in a false hope, no more than you would discourage the fond hopes of the righteous. If you see his case dangerous, tell him plainly of it: Neighbour, I am afraid God hath not yet renewed your soul; and that it is yet a stranger to the great work of regeneration and sanctification: I doubt you are not yet recovered from the power of Satan to God, nor brought out of the state of wrath which you were born in, and have lived in: I doubt you have not chosen Christ above all, nor set your heart upon him, nor unfeignedly taken him for your sovereign Lord. If you had, sure you durst not so easily disobey him: you could not so neglect him and his worship in your family and in public: you could not so eagerly follow the world, and talk of almost nothing but the things of this world, while Christ is seldom mentioned

by you. If you were in Christ, you would become a new creature: old things would be passed away, and all things would become new; you would have new thoughts, and new talk, and new company, and new endeavours, and a new conversation: certainly without these you can never be saved: you may think otherwise, and hope better as long as you will, but your hopes will deceive you, and perish with you. Alas! it is not as you will, nor as I will, who shall be saved, but it is as God will; and God hath told us, that "without holiness none shall see him:" and "except we be born again, we cannot enter into his kingdom:" and "that all that would not have Christ to reign over them, shall be brought forth and destroyed before him." O therefore look to your state in time.

Thus must you deal roundly and faithfully with men, if ever you intend to do them good. It is not hovering at a distance in a general discourse that will serve the turn: it is not in curing men's souls, as in curing their bodies, where they must not know their danger, lest it sadden them, and hinder the cure. They are here agents in their own cure, and if they know not their misery, they will never bewail it, nor know how much need they have of a Saviour: if they know not the worst, they will not labour to prevent it; but will sit still or loiter till they drop into perdition, and will trifle out their time till it be too late: and therefore speak to men as Christ to the Pharisees, till they knew that he meant them. Deal plainly, or you do but deceive and destroy them.

5. And as you must do it plainly, so also seriously, zealously, and effectually. The exceeding stupidity and deadness of men's hearts is such, that no other dealing will ordinarily work. You must call aloud to awake a man in a swoon or lethargy. If you speak to the common sort of men of the evil of their sin, of their need of Christ, of the danger of their souls, and of the necessity of regeneration, they will wearily and unwillingly give you the hearing, and put off all with a sigh, or a few good wishes, and say, *God forgive us, we are all sinners*, and there is an end. If ever you will do them good, therefore, you must sharpen your exhortation, and set it home, and follow it, till you have roused them up, and made them begin to look about them. Let them know that thou speakest not to them of indifferent things, nor about children's games, or matters of a few days or years continuance, nor yet about matters of uncertainty, which may never come to pass: but it is about the saving and damning of their souls and bodies; and whether they shall be blessed with Christ, or tormented with devils, and that for ever and ever: it is how to stand before God in



judgment, and what answer to give, and how they are like to speed; and this judgment and eternal state they shall very shortly see, they are almost at it; yet a few more nights and days, and they shall be at that last day; a few more breaths they have to breathe, and they shall breathe their last; and then as certainly shall they see that mighty change, as the heaven is over their heads, and the earth under their feet. O labour to make men know, that it is mad jesting about salvation or damnation: and that heaven and hell are not matters to be played with, or passed over with a few careless thoughts! It is most certain that one of these days thou shalt be either in everlasting, unchangeable joy or torment; and doth it not awake thee? Are there so few that find the way of death? Is it so hard to escape? so easy to miscarry? and that while we fear nothing, but think all is well? And yet you sit still and trifle! Why, what do you mean? What do you think on? The world is passing away; its pleasures are fading; its honours are leaving you; its profits will prove unprofitable to you; heaven or hell are a little before you; God is just and jealous; his threatenings are true; the great day of his judgment will be terrible; your time runs on; your lives are uncertain; you are far behind hand; you have loitered long; your case is dangerous; your souls are far gone in sin; you are strange to God; you are hardened in evil customs; you have no assurance of comfort to show; if you die to-morrow, how unready are you! And with what terror will your souls go out of your bodies! And do you yet loiter? Why, consider God standeth all this while waiting your leisure: his patience beareth; his justice forbearth; his mercy entreateth you: Christ standeth offering you his blood and merits; you may have him freely, and live with him: the Spirit is persuading: conscience is accusing and urging you: ministers are praying for you, and calling upon you: Satan stands waiting when justice will cut off your lives, that he may have you: this is your time; now or never. What! had you rather lose heaven, than your profits or pleasures? Had you rather burn in hell, than repent on earth? Had you rather howl and roar there, than pray day and night for mercy here? Or have devils your tormentors, than Christ your governor? Will you renounce your part in God and glory, rather than renounce your sins? Do you think a holy life too much for heaven; or too dear a course to prevent endless misery? Oh friends, what do you think of these things? God hath made you men, and endued you with reason: do you renounce your reason where you should chiefly use it? In this manner you must deal roundly and seriously with men. Alas! it is not a few dull words

between jest and earnest, between sleep and waking, as it were, that will waken an ignorant dead-hearted sinner. When a dull hearer and a dull speaker meet together, a dead heart and a dead exhortation, it is unlike to have a lively effect. If a man fall down in a swoon, you will not stand trifling with him, but lay hands on him presently, and snatch him up, and rub him, and call aloud to him: if a house be on fire, you will not in a cold strain go tell your neighbour of it, or make an oration of the nature and danger of fire; but you will run out and cry, Fire, fire: matters of moment must be seriously dealt with. To tell a man of his sins so softly as Eli did his sons, or reprove him so gently as Jehoshaphat did Ahab, "Let not the king say so," doth usually as much harm as good. I am persuaded the very manner of some men's reproof and exhortation hath hardened many a sinner in the way of destruction. To tell them of sin, or of heaven or hell, in a dull, easy, careless language, doth make men think you are not in good earnest; but scarce think yourselves such things are true. O sirs, deal with sin as sin, and speak of heaven and hell as they are, and not as if you were in jest. I confess I have failed much in this myself; the Lord lay it not to my charge! Loathness to displease men, makes us undo them.

6. Yet lest you run into extremes, I advise you to do it with discretion. Be as serious as you can; but yet with wisdom. And especially you must be wise in these things following:

1. In choosing the fittest season for your exhortation; not to deal with men when they are in a passion, or where they will take it for a disgrace. Men should observe, when sinners are fittest to hear instructions. Physic must not be given at all times, but in season. It is an excellent example that Paul giveth us, Galatians ii, 2. He communicated the gospel to them, yet privately to them of reputation, lest he should run in vain. Some men would take this to be a sinful complying with their corruption, to yield so far to their pride and bashfulness, as to teach them only in private, because they would be ashamed to own the truth in public: but Paul knew how great a hinderance men's reputation is to their entertaining of the truth, and that the remedy must not only be fitted to the disease, but also to the strength of the patient; and that in so doing, the physician is not guilty of favouring the disease, but is praiseworthy for taking the right way to cure. Means will work easily if you take the opportunity; when the earth is soft, the plough will enter. Take a man when he is under affliction, or in the house of mourning, or newly stirred by some moving sermon, and then set it home, and you may do him some good. Chris-

tian faithfulness doth require us, not only to do good when it falls in our way, but to watch for opportunities.

2. Be wise also in suiting your exhortation to the quality and temper of the person. All meats are not for all stomachs: one man will vomit that up which another will digest. 1. If it be a learned, or ingenious rational man, you must deal more by convincing arguments, and less by passionate persuasions. 2. If it be one that is both ignorant and stupid, there is need of both. 3. If one that is convinced, but not converted, you must use most those means that rouse the affections. 4. If they be obstinate and secure, you must reprove them sharply. 5. If they be of timorous, tender natures, they must be tenderly dealt with. All cannot bear that rough dealing that some can. Love and plainness, and seriousness take with all: but words of terror some can scare bear.

3. You must be wise also in using the aptest expressions. Many a minister doth deliver most excellent matter in such harsh and unseeming language, that it makes the hearers loath the food that they should live by, and laugh at a sermon that might make them quake; especially if they be men of curious ears, and carnal hearts, and have more wit and parts than the speaker. And so it is in private exhortation as well as public: if you clothe the most amiable truth in the sordid rags of unbecoming language, you will make men disdain it, though it be the offspring of God, and of the highest nature.

4. Let all your reproofs and exhortations be backed with the authority of God. Let the sinner be convinced that you speak not from yourselves, or of your own head. Show them the very words of Scripture for what you say: press them with the truth and authority of God: ask them, Whether they believe that this is his word, and that his word is true. So much of God as appeareth in our words, so much will they take. The voice of man is contemptible; but the voice of God is awful and terrible. Be sure therefore to make them know, that you speak nothing but what God hath spoken first.

5. You must also be frequent with men in this duty of exhortation; it is not once or twice that usually will prevail. If God himself must be constantly solicited, as if importunity could prevail with him when nothing else can; and therefore requires us "always to pray and not to faint," the same course, no doubt, will be most prevailing with men. Therefore we are commanded, "to exhort one another daily," and "with all long suffering: the fire is not always brought out of the flint at one stroke: nor men's affections kindled at the first exhortation." And if they were, yet if they be not

followed, they will soon grow cold again. Weary out sinners with your loving and earnest entreaties; follow them, and give them no rest in their sin. This is true charity, and this is the way to save men's souls; and a course that will afford you comfort upon a review.

6. Strive to bring all your exhortations to an issue; stick not in the work done, but look after the success. I have long observed it in ministers and private men, that if they speak never so convincing words, and yet all their care is over when they have done their speech, pretending that having done their duty, they leave the issue to God; these men seldom prosper in their labours: but those whose very heart is set upon the work, and that long to see it take for the hearers conversion, and use to inquire how it speeds, God usually blesseth their labours, though more weak. Labour therefore to drive all your speeches to the desired issue. If you are reproving sin, cease not till (if it may be) you have got the sinner to promise you to leave it, and to avoid the occasions of it: if you are exhorting to a duty, urge the party to promise you presently to set upon it: if you would draw them to Christ, leave not till you have made them confess that their present state is miserable, and not to be rested in; and till they have subscribed to the necessity of a change; and promised you to fall close to the use of means. O that all Christians would be persuaded to take this course with all their neighbours that are yet enslaved to sin, and strangers to Christ.

7. Lastly, Be sure your example exhort as well as your words. Let them see you constant in all the duties you persuade them to: let them see in your lives that excellency above the world, which you persuade them to in your speeches. Let them see, by your constant labours for heaven, that you indeed believe what you would have them believe.

And thus I have opened to you the first and great part of this duty, consisting in private exhortation, for the helping of poor souls to this rest that have yet no title to it; and I have showed you also the manner how to perform it. I will now speak a little of the next part.

1. Besides the duty of private admonition, you must do your utmost endeavours to help men to profit by the public ordinances. And to that end, first, do your endeavours for the procuring of faithful ministers where they are wanting. This is God's ordinary means of converting and saving. "How shall they hear without a preacher?" Not only for your own sakes, therefore, but for the poor miserable ones about you, do all you can to bring this to pass. Improve all your interest and diligence to this end. Ride, and go,

and seek, and make friends till you prevail. Who knoweth how many souls may bless you, who have been converted by the ministry which you have procured? It is a higher and nobler work of charity, than if you gave all that you have to relieve their bodies.

How small a matter were it (and yet how excellent a work) for every gentleman of means in England, to cull out some one or two, or more poor boys in the country schools, who are the choicest wits, and of the most pious dispositions, who are poor, and unable to proceed in learning; and to maintain them till they are fit for the ministry! It were but keeping a few superfluous attendants the less; if they had hearts to it, it were easily spared out of their rich apparel, or superfluous diet; I dare say they would not be sorry for it when they come to their reckoning: one sumptuous feast, or one costly suit of apparel, would maintain a poor boy a year or two at the university, who perhaps might come to have more true worth in him than many a glittering lord, and to do God more service in his church, than ever they did with all their estates and power.

2. And when you enjoy the blessing of the gospel, you must yet use your utmost diligence to help poor souls to receive the fruit of it. To which end you must draw them constantly to hear and attend it; mind them often of what they have heard; draw them, if it be possible, to repeat it in their families; if that cannot be, then draw them to come to others that do repeat it; that so it may not die in the hearing. The very drawing of men into the company and acquaintance of the good man, besides the benefit they have by their endeavours, is of singular use to the recovery of their souls. It is a means to take off prejudice, by confuting the world's slanders of the ways and people of God. Use therefore often to meet together, besides the more public meeting in the congregation; not to vent any unsound opinions, nor at the time of public worship, nor yet to separate from the church whereof you are members; but the work which I would have you meet about is this, to repeat together the word which you have heard in public; to pour out your joint prayers for the church and yourselves; to join in cheerful singing the praises of God; to open your scruples and doubts, and fears, and get resolution; to quicken each other in love and heavenliness, or holy walking: and all this not as a separated church, but as a part of the church more diligent than the rest in redeeming time, and helping the souls of each other heaven-ward.

3. One thing more I advise you; if you would have souls saved by the ordinances, labour still to keep the ordinances and ministry in esteem. No man will be much wrought on

by that which he despiseth. I shall confirm you herein, not in my own words, but in his that I know you dare not disregard, 1 Thess. v, 11-13, "Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as ye also do. And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake; and be at peace among yourselves." "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls, as those that must give an account, that they may do it with joy and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you," Heb. xiii, 17.

Thus you see part of your duty for the salvation of others.

But where shall we find the man that setteth himself to it with all his might, and that hath set his heart upon the souls of his brethren, that they may be saved?

Let us here a little inquire what may be the causes of the gross neglect of this duty, that the hinderances being discovered, may the more easily be overcome.

1. One hinderance is, men's own sinfulness and guiltiness. They have not been ravished themselves with the heavenly delights: how then should they draw others to seek them? They have not felt the wickedness of their own nature, nor their lost condition, nor their need of Christ, nor felt the renewing work of the Spirit: how then can they discover these to others? Ah that this were not the case of many a learned preacher in England! And the cause why they preach so frozenly! Men also are guilty themselves of the sins they should reprove; and this stops their mouths, and maketh them ashamed to reprove.

2. Another hinderance is, a secret infidelity prevailing in men's hearts. Alas, sirs, we do not sure believe men's misery; we do not believe sure the threatenings of God are true. Did we verily believe that all the unregenerate and unholy shall be eternally tormented, oh how could we hold our tongues when we are among the unregenerate: how could we choose but burst out into tears when we look them in the face, as the prophet did when he looked upon Hazeel? especially when they are our kindred or friends that are near and dear to us? Thus doth secret unbelief consume the vigour of each grace and duty. Oh Christians, if you did verily believe that your poor neighbour, or wife, or husband, or child, should certainly lie for ever in the flames of hell, except they be thoroughly changed before death doth snatch them hence, would not this make you cast off all discouragements, and lie at them day and night till they were persuaded? How could you hold your tongue, or let them alone another day, if this were soundly believed? If you

were sure that any of your dear friends that are dead, were now in hell, and persuading to repentance would get him out again, would not you persuade him day and night, if he were in hearing? And why should you not do as much then to prevent it, while he is in your hearing, but that you do not believe God's word that speaks the danger? Oh were it not for this cursed unbelief, our own souls and our neighbour's would gain more by us than they do.

3. This faithful dealing with men for their salvation, is much hindered also by our want of compassion to men's souls. We are hard hearted and cruel toward the miserable; and therefore (as the priest and the Levite did by the wounded man) we look on them, and pass by. O what tender hearts could endure to look upon a poor, blind, forlorn sinner, wounded by sin, and captivated by Satan, and never once open their mouths for his recovery! What though he be silent, and do not desire thy help! yet his misery cries aloud; misery is the most effectual suitor to one that is compassionate: if God had not heard the cry of our miseries before he heard the cry of our prayers, and been moved by his own pity before he was moved by our importunity, we might have long enough continued the slaves of Satan. Alas, what pitiful sights do we daily see! The ignorant, the profane, the neglecters of Christ and their souls: their sores are open and visible to all: and yet we do not pity them. You will pray to God for them, in customary duties, that God would open the eyes, and turn the hearts, of your friends and neighbours; and why do you not endeavour their conversion if you desire it? and if you do not desire it, why do you ask it? Doth not your negligence convince you of hypocrisy in your prayers, and of abusing the Most High God with your deceitful words? Your neighbours are near you, your friends are in the house with you, you eat, and drink, and work, and walk, and talk with them, and yet you say little or nothing to them. Why do you not pray them to consider and return, as well as pray to God to convert and turn them? Have you as oft begged of them to think on their ways, and to reform, as you have taken on you to beg of God that they may so do? What if you should see your neighbour fallen into a pit, and you should presently fall down on your knees, and pray God to help him out, but would neither put forth your hand to help him, nor once persuade or direct him to help himself, would not any man censure you to be cruel and hypocritical? What the Holy Ghost saith of men's bodily miseries, I may say much more of the misery of their souls: "If any man seeth his brother in need, and shutteth up his compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" Or what love hath he

to his brother's soul? The charity of our ignorant forefathers may rise up in judgment against us and condemn us: they would give all their estates almost, for so many masses, or pardons, to deliver the souls of their friends from a feigned purgatory; and we will not as much as admonish and entreat them, to save them from the certain flames of hell.

4. Another hinderance is, a base man-pleasing disposition that is in us. We are so loath to displease men, and so desirous to keep in credit and favour with them, that it makes us neglect our own duty. A foolish physician he is, and a most unfaithful friend, that will let a sick man die for fear of troubling him. And cruel wretches are we to our friends, that will rather suffer them to go quickly to hell, than we will anger them, or hazard our reputation with them. If they did but fall in a swoon, we would rub them, and pinch them, and never stick at hurting them. If they were distracted, we would bind them with chains, and we would please them in nothing that tended to their hurt. And yet when they are beside themselves in point of salvation, and in their madness posting on to damnation, we will not stop them, for fear of displeasing them. "How can those men be Christians that love the praise and favour of men, more than the favour of God?" John xii, 43. "For if they yet seek to please men, they are no longer the servants of Christ," Gal. i, 10. To win them indeed, they must become all things to all men; but to please them to their destruction, and let them perish, that we may keep our credit with them, is a course so base and barbarously cruel, that he that hath the face of a Christian should abhor it.

5. Another common hinderance is, a sinful bashfulness. When we should labour to make men ashamed of their sins, we are ourselves ashamed of our duties. May not these sinners condemn us, when they will not blush to swear or be drunk, and we blush to tell them of it, and persuade them from it? Sinners will boast of their sins, and show them in the open streets: and shall not we be as bold in drawing them from sin? Not that I would have inferiors forget their distance in admonishing their superiors; but do it with all humility, and submission, and respect. But yet I would much less have them forget their duty to God and their friends, be they never so much their superiors: it is a thing that must be done. Bashfulness is unseemly in cases of flat necessity. And indeed it is not a work to be ashamed of; to obey God in persuading men from their sins to Christ, and helping to save their souls, is not a business for a man to blush at. Yet, alas, what abundance of souls have been neglected through the prevailing of this sin! Even the most



of us are heinously guilty in this point. Reader, is not this thy own case? Hath not thy conscience told thee of thy duty many a time, and put thee on to speak to poor sinners, lest they perish? And yet thou hast been ashamed to open thy mouth to them, and so let them alone to sink or swim; believe me, thou wilt ere long be ashamed of this shame: O read those words of Christ, and tremble: "He that is ashamed of me, and my words, before this adulterous generation, of him will the Son of man be ashamed before his Father and the angels."

6. With many also pride is a great impediment. If it were to speak to a great man, they would do it, so it would not displease him. But to go among a company of ignorant beggars, or mean persons, and to sit with them in a smoky, nasty cottage, and there to exhort them from day to day; where is the person that will do it? Many will much rejoice if they have been instruments of converting a gentleman, (and they have good cause,) but for the common multitude, they look not after them: as if God were a respecter of the persons of the rich, or the souls of all were not alike to him. Alas, these men little consider how low Christ did stoop to us! When the God of glory comes down in flesh to worms, and goeth preaching up and down among them from city to city. Not the silliest women that he thought too low to confer with: few rich, and noble, and wise, are called. It is the poor that receive the glad tidings of the gospel.

*Objection.* O but, saith one, I am of so weak parts that I am unable to manage an exhortation; especially to men of strong parts and understanding.

I answer, 1. Set those upon the work who are more able. 2. Yet do not think that thou art *so* excused thyself, but use faithfully that ability which thou hast; not in teaching those of whom thou shouldst learn, but in instructing those that are more ignorant than thyself, and in exhorting those that are negligent in the things which they do know. If you cannot speak well yourself, yet you can tell them what God speaketh in his word. It is not the excellency of speech that winneth the souls; but the authority of God manifested by that speech, and the power of his word in the mouth of the instructor. A weak woman may tell what God saith in the plain passages of the word, as well as a learned man. If you cannot preach to them, yet you can say, Thus it is written. One of mean parts may remember the wisest of their duty when they forget it.

*Objection.* It is my superior; and is it fit for me to teach or reprove my betters? Must the wife teach the husband, of whom the Scripture biddeth them to learn? Or must the child teach the parents, whose duty it is to teach them?

I answer, 1. It is fit that husbands should be able to teach their wives, and parents to teach their children; and God expecteth they should be so, and therefore commandeth the inferiors to learn of them. But if they, through their negligence, disable themselves, or through their wickedness bring their souls into such misery, then it is themselves, and not you, that break God's order, by bringing themselves into disability and misery.

Matter of mere orders and manners must be dispensed with in cases of flat necessity. Though it were your minister, you must teach him in such a case. It is the part of parents to provide for their children, and not children for their parents; and yet if the parents fall into want, must not the children relieve them? It is the part of the husband to dispose of the affairs of the family and estate; and yet if he be sick, or beside himself, must not the wife do it? The rich should relieve the poor; but if the rich fall into beggary, they must be relieved themselves. It is the work of a physician to look to the health of others; and yet if he fall sick, somebody must help him. So must the meanest servant admonish his master, and the child his parent, and the wife her husband, and the people their ministers, in cases of necessity. Yet, secondly, let me give you these two cautions here:

1. That you do not pretend necessity when there is none, out of a mere desire of teaching. There is scarce a more certain discovery of a proud heart, than to be more desirous to teach than to learn; especially toward those that are fitter to teach us.

2. And when the necessity of your superiors doth call for your advice, yet do it with all possible humility, modesty, and meekness. Let them discern your reverence and submission in the humble manner of your addresses to them. Let them perceive that you do it not out of a mere teaching humour, or proud self conceitedness. If a wife should tell her husband of sin in a masterly railing manner; or if a servant reprove his master, or a child his father, in a saucy way, what good could be expected from such reproof? But if they should meekly and humbly open to him his sin and danger, and entreat him to bear with them in what God commandeth; and if they could by tears testify their sense of his case; what father, or master, or husband, could take this ill?

*Objection.* But, some may say, this will make all as preachers, and cause all to break over the bounds of their callings.

I answer, 1. This is not taking a pastoral charge of souls, nor making an office or calling of it, as preachers do.

2. And in the way of our callings, every good Christian is a teacher, and hath a charge of his neighbour's soul. Let it

be only the voice of a Cain to say, "Am I my brother's keeper?" I would one of these men, that are so loath that private men should teach them, to tell me, What if a man fall down in a swoon in the streets, though it be your father, or superior, would you not take him up presently, and use all means to recover him? Or would you let him lie and die, and say, It is the work of the physician, and not mine: I will not invade the physician's calling? In two cases every man is a physician; first, in case of necessity, and when a physician cannot be had; and secondly, in case the hurt be so small, that every man can do as well as the physician. And in the same two cases every man must be a teacher.

*Objection.* Some will further object to put off this duty, that the party is so ignorant, or stupid, or careless, or rooted in sin, and hath been so oft exhorted in vain, that there is no hope.

I answer, How know you when there is no hope? Cannot God yet cure him? And have not many as far gone been cured? Should not a merciful physician use means while there is life? And is it not inhuman cruelty in you to give up your friend to the devil as hopeless, upon mere backwardness to your duty, or upon groundless discouragements? What if you had been so given up yourself when you were ignorant?

*Objection.* But "we must not cast pearls before swine, nor give that which is holy to dogs."

I answer, That is but a favourable dispensation of Christ for your own safety. When you are in danger of being torn in pieces, Christ would have you forbear; but what is that to you, that are in no such danger? As long as they will hear, you have encouragement to speak, and may not cast them off as contemptuous swine.

*Objection.* O but it is a friend that I have all my dependence on; and by telling him of his sin and misery, I may lose his love, and so be undone.

I answer, Sure no man that hath the face of a Christian will for shame own such an objection as this. Yet, I doubt, it oft prevaieth in the heart. Is his love more to be valued than his safety? Or thy own benefit by him than the salvation of his soul? Or wilt thou connive at his damnation, because he is thy friend? Is that thy best requital of his friendship? Hadst thou rather he should burn for ever in hell, than thou shouldst lose his favour, or the maintenance thou hast from him?

To conclude this use, that I may prevail with every soul that feareth God, to use their utmost diligence to help all about them to this blessed rest, let me entreat you to consider these following motives:

1. Consider, Nature teacheth the communicating of good, and grace doth especially dispose the soul thereto; the neglect therefore of this work, is a sin both against nature and grace.

Would you not think that man or woman unnatural, that would let their children or neighbours famish in the streets, while they have provision at hand? And is not he more unnatural, that will let his children or neighbours perish eternally, and will not open his mouth to save them? Certainly this is most barbarous cruelty. We account an unmerciful, cruel man, a very monster, to be abhorred of all. Many vicious men are too much loved in the world, but a cruel man is abhorred of all. Now that it may appear to you what a cruel thing this neglect of souls is, do but consider these two things: First, how great a work it is. Secondly, how small a matter it is that thou refusest to do for the accomplishing so great a work. First, It is to save thy brother from eternal flames, that he may not there lie roaring in endless remediless torments. It is to bring him to the everlasting rest, where he may live in inconceivable happiness with God. Secondly, And what is it that you should do to help him herein? Why, it is to persuade him, and lay open to him his sin, and his duty, his misery, and the remedy, till you have made him willing to yield to the offers and commands of Christ. And is this so great a matter for to do, to the attaining such a blessed end? Is not the soul of a husband, or wife, or child, or neighbour, worth a few words? It is worth this, or it is worth nothing. If they lay dying in the streets, and a few words would save their lives, would not every man say, he was a cruel wretch that would let them perish rather than speak to them? Even the covetous hypocrite, that James reproveth, would give a few words to the poor, and say, "Go and be warmed, and be clothed." What a barbarous, unmerciful wretch then art thou, that wilt not vouchsafe a few words of serious, sober admonition, to save the soul of thy neighbour or friend! Cruelty and unmercifulness to men's bodies, is a most damnable sin; but to their souls much more, as the soul is of greater worth than the body, and as eternity is of greater moment than this short time.

Alas! you do not see or feel what case their souls are in when they are in hell, for want of your faithful admonition. Little know you what many a soul may now be feeling, who have been your neighbours and acquaintance, and died in their sins, on whom you never bestowed one hour's sober advice for preventing their unhappiness. If you knew their misery, you would now do more to bring them out of hell; but, alas! it is too late, you should have done it while they

were with you; it is now too late. As one said of physicians, "That they were the most happy men, because all their good deeds and cures were seen above ground to their praise, but all their mistakes and neglects were buried out of sight;" so I may say to you, Many a neglect of yours to the souls about you, may be now buried with those souls in hell, out of your sight, and therefore now it doth not much trouble you; but, alas! they feel it, though you feel it not. Jeremiah cried out, "My bowels, my bowels, I cannot hold my peace," because of a temporal destruction of his people: and do not our bowels yearn? And can we hold our peace at men's eternal destruction?

2. Consider, What a rate Christ did value souls at, and what he hath done toward the saving of them: he thought them worth his blood, and shall not we think them worth the breath of our mouths? Will you not do a little, where he hath done so much?

3. Consider, What a deal of guilt this neglect doth lay upon thy soul. First, thou art guilty of the murder and damnation of all those souls whom thou dost neglect. He that standeth by, and seeth a man in a pit, and will not pull him out if he can, doth drown him. And he that standeth by, while thieves rob him, or murderers kill him, and will not help him if he can, is accessory to the fact. And so he that will silently suffer men to damn their souls, or will let Satan and the world deceive them, and not offer to help them, will certainly be judged guilty of damning them. And is not this a most dreadful consideration? O sirs, how many souls then have every one of us been guilty of damning! what a number of our neighbours and acquaintance are dead, in whom we discerned no signs of sanctification, and we never once plainly told them of it, or how to be recovered! If you had been the cause but of burning a man's house through your negligence, or of undoing him, or destroying his body, how would it trouble you as long as you lived? If you had but killed a man unadvisedly, it would much disquiet you. We have known those that have been guilty of murder, that could never sleep quietly after, nor have one comfortable day, their own consciences did so vex and torment them. O what a heart must thou have, that hast been guilty of murdering such a multitude of precious souls! Remember this, when thou lookest thy friend or carnal neighbour in the face; and think with thyself, can I find in my heart, through my silence and negligence, to be guilty of his everlasting burning in hell? Methinks such a thought should even untie the tongue of the dumb.

Secondly. And as you are guilty of their perishing, so are you of every sin which in the mean time they commit. If

they were converted, they would break off their course of sinning: and if you did your duty, you know not but they might be converted. As he that is guilty of a man's drunkenness, is guilty of all the sins which that drunkenness doth cause him to commit: so he that is guilty of a man's continuing unregenerate, is also guilty of the sins of his unregeneracy. How many curses and oaths, and other sins of a most heinous nature are many of you guilty of, that little think of it? You that take much pains for your own souls, and seem fearful of sinning, would take it ill of one that should tell you, that you are guilty of weekly, or daily whoredoms, and drunkenness, and swearing, and lying. And yet it is too true, even beyond all denial, by your neglect of helping those who do commit them.

Thirdly. You are guilty also of all those judgments which those men's sins bring upon the town or country where they live. I know you are not such atheists, but you believe it is God that sendeth sickness, and famine, and war: and also that it is only sin that moveth him to this indignation. What doubt then is there, but you are the cause of judgments, who do not strive against those sins which cause them? God hath staid long in patience, to see if any would deal plainly with the sinners of the times, and so free their own souls from the guilt: but when he seeth that there is none, but all become guilty, no wonder then if he lay the judgment upon all. We have all seen the drunkards, and heard the swearers in our streets, and we would not speak to them: we have all lived in the midst of an ignorant, worldly, unholy people, and we have not spoke to them with earnestness, plainness, and love; no wonder then if God speak in his wrath, both to them and us. Eli did not commit the sin himself, and yet he speaketh so coldly against it, that he must bear the punishment. God locketh up the clouds, because we have shut up our mouths. The earth is grown as hard as iron to us, because we have hardened our hearts against our miserable neighbours. The cries of the poor for bread are loud, because our cries against sin have been so low. Sicknesses run apace from house to house, and sweep away the poor unprepared inhabitants, because we swept not out the sin that breedeth them. As Christ said in another case, Luke xix, 30, "If these should hold their peace, the stones would speak:" so, because we held our peace at the ignorance, ungodliness, and wickedness of our places, therefore do these plagues and judgments speak.

4. Consider, What a thing it will be, to look upon your poor friends in those flames, and to think that your neglect was a great cause of it! And that there was a time when you might have done much to prevent it. If you should

there perish with them, it would be no small aggravation of your torment! If you be in heaven, it would sure be a sad thought, were it possible that any sorrow could dwell there, to hear a multitude of poor souls, there to cry out for ever: O if you would but have told me plainly of my sin and danger, and dealt roundly with me, I might have escaped all this torment, and been now in rest! O what a sad voice will this be!

5. Consider, How diligent are the enemies of these poor souls to draw them to hell. And if nobody be diligent in helping them to heaven, what is like to become of them? The devil is tempting them day and night: their inward lusts are still working and withdrawing them: the flesh is still pleading for its delights and profits: their old companions are ready to entice them to sin, and to disgrace God's ways and people to them, and to contradict the doctrine of Christ that should save them, and to increase their dislike of holiness. Seducing teachers are exceeding diligent in sowing tares, and in drawing off the unstable from the way to life: and shall a seducer be so unwearied in proselyting poor unguarded souls to his fancies? And shall not a sound Christian be much more unwearied in labouring to win men to Christ and life?

6. Consider, The neglect of this doth very deeply wound when conscience is awakened. When a man comes to die, conscience will ask him, What good hast thou done in thy lifetime? The saving of souls is the greatest good; what hast thou done toward this? How many hast thou dealt faithfully with? I have oft observed, that the consciences of dying men very much wound them for this omission. For my own part, (to tell you my experience,) whenever I have been near death, my conscience hath accused me more for this than for any sin: it would bring every ignorant, profane neighbour to my remembrance, to whom I never made known their danger: it would tell me, thou shouldst have gone to them in private, and told them plainly of their desperate danger, without bashfulness, or daubing, though it had been when thou shouldst have eaten or slept, if thou hadst no other time: conscience would remember me, how at such a time, or such a time, I was in company with the ignorant, or was riding by the way with a wilful sinner, and had a fit opportunity to have dealt with him, but did not; or at least did it by halves, and to little purpose. The Lord grant I may better obey conscience hereafter while I live and have time, that it may have less to accuse me of at death!

7. Consider, lastly, The happy consequences of this work, where it is faithfully done. To name some:

1. You may be instrumental in that blessed work of saving souls, a work that Christ came down and died for, a work that the angels of God rejoice in: for, saith the Holy Ghost, "If any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him, let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins," James v, 19, 20. And how can God more highly honour you, than to make you instruments in so great a work?

2. Such souls will bless you here and hereafter. They may be angry with you at first; but if your words succeed, they will bless the day that ever they knew you, and bless God that sent you to speak to them.

3. It bringeth much advantage to yourselves: first, it will increase your graces both as it is a course that God will bless, and as it is an acting of them in this persuading of others: he that will not let you lose a cup of water which is given for him, will not let you lose these greater works of charity; besides, those that have practised this duty, must find, by experience, that they never go on more prosperously toward heaven, than when they do most to help others thither with them: it is not here as with worldly treasure, the more you give away, the less you have: but the more you give, the more you have: the setting forth Christ in his fulness to others, will warm your own hearts; the opening the evil and danger of sin to others, will increase your hatred of it. Secondly, it will increase your glory as well as your grace, both as a duty which God will reward, ("For they that convert many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever,") Dan. xii, 3, and also as we shall there behold them in heaven, and be their associates in blessedness, whom God made us here the instruments to convert. Thirdly, however, it will give as much peace of conscience, whether we succeed or not, to think that we were faithful, and did our best to save them, and that we are clear from the blood of all men. Fourthly, besides, that is a work, that if it succeed, doth exceedingly rejoice an honest heart: he that hath any sense of God's honour, or the least affection to the soul of his brother, must needs rejoice much at his conversion, whosoever be the instrument, but especially when God maketh ourselves the means of so blessed a work.

For my own part, it is an unspeakable comfort to me, that God hath made me an instrument for the recovering of so many from bodily diseases, and saving their natural lives: but all this is nothing to the comfort I have in the success of my labours, in the conversion and confirmation of souls; it is so great a joy to me, that it drowneth the



painfulness of my daily duties, and the trouble of my daily languishing and bodily griefs. And maketh all these, with all oppositions and difficulties in my work, to be easy: and of all the personal mercies that ever I received, next to his love in Christ to my soul, I most joyfully bless him for the plenteous success of my endeavours upon others: O what fruits then might I have seen, if I had been more faithful, and plied the work in private and public as I ought! I know we have need to be very jealous of our deceitful hearts in this point, lest our rejoicing should come from our pride. Naturally, we would every man be in the place of God, and have the praise of every good work ascribed to ourselves: but yet to imitate our Father in goodness, and to rejoice in that degree we attain to, is the part of every child of God. I tell you therefore, to persuade you from my own experience, that if you did but know what a joyful thing it is to be an instrument for the saving of souls, you would set upon it presently, and follow it night and day through the greatest discouragements and resistance.

And thus I have showed you what should persuade you to this duty. Let me now conclude with a word of entreaty; First, to all the godly in general. Secondly, to some above others in particular.

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## CHAPTER XII.

AN ADVICE TO SOME MORE PARTICULARLY, TO HELP OTHERS TO THIS REST.

UP then, every man that hath a tongue, and is a servant of Christ, and do something of this your Master's work. Why hath he given you a tongue, but to speak in his service? And how can you serve him more eminently, than in the saving of souls? He that will pronounce you blessed at the last day, and sentence you to the kingdom prepared for you, because you fed him, and clothed him, and visited him in his members, will surely pronounce you blessed for so great a work as the bringing over of souls to his kingdom. He that saith, "The poor you have always with you," hath left the ungodly always with you, that you might still have matter to exercise your charity upon. O if you have the hearts of Christians, or of men, in you, let them yearn toward your poor, ignorant, ungodly neighbours! Alas, there is but a step betwixt them and death and hell; many hundred diseases are waiting ready to seize them, and if they die unregenerate, they are lost for ever. Have you hearts of rock, that cannot pity men in such a case? If you

believe not the word of God, how are you Christians yourselves? If you do but believe it, why do you not bestir you to help others? Do you not care who is damned, so you be saved? If so, you have as much cause to pity your own-selves; for it is a frame of spirit inconsistent with grace: should you not rather say, as the lepers of Samaria, Is it not a day of glad tidings, and we sit still and hold our peace? Hath God had so much mercy on you, and will you have no mercy on your poor neighbours? You need not go far to find objects for your pity: look but into the streets, or into the next house to you, and you will probably find some. Have you not a neighbour that sets his heart below, and neglecteth eternity? What blessed place do you live in, where there is none such? If there be not some of them in thine own family, it is well; and yet art thou silent? Dost thou live close by them, or meet them in the streets, or labour with them, or travel with them, or sit still and talk with them, and say nothing to them of their souls, or the life to come? If their houses were on fire, thou wouldst run and help them: and wilt thou not help them when their souls are almost at the fire of hell? If thou knowest but a remedy for their diseases, thou wouldst tell it them, or else thou wouldst judge thyself guilty of their death. Cardan speaks of one that had a receipt that would dissolve the stone in the bladder, and he makes no doubt but that man is in hell, because he never revealed it to any before he died: what shall we say then of them that know the remedy for curing souls, and do not reveal it; nor persuade men to make use of it? Is it not hypocrisy to pray "that God's name may be hallowed," and never endeavour to bring men to hallow it? And can you pray, "Let thy kingdom come;" and yet never labour for the coming or increase of that kingdom? Is it not grief to your hearts to see the kingdom of Satan flourish, and to see him lead captive such a multitude of souls? You say you are soldiers of Christ: and will you do nothing against his prevailing enemies? You pray also daily, "that his will may be done;" and should you not daily then persuade men to do it? You pray, "that God would forgive them their sins, and that he would not lead them into temptation, but deliver them from evil;" and yet will you not help them against temptations, nor help to deliver them from the greatest evil? Nor help them to repent and believe, that they may be forgiven? Alas, that your prayers and your practice should so much disagree! Look about you therefore, Christians, with an eye of compassion on the sinners about you; be not like the priest or Levite that saw the man wounded, and passed by: God did not so pass by you,

when it was your own case. Are not the souls of your neighbours fallen into the hands of Satan? Doth not their misery cry out to you, Help, help! As you have any compassion toward men in the greatest misery, help! As you have the hearts of men, and not of tigers in you, help!

But as this duty lieth upon all in general, so upon some more especially, according as God hath called or qualified them thereto. To them, therefore, more particularly, I will address my exhortation: whether they be such as have more opportunity and advantages for this work, or such as have better abilities to perform it.

1. All you that God hath given more learning and knowledge to, or endued with better utterance than your neighbours, God expecteth this duty especially at your hand. The strong are made to help the weak, and those that see, must direct the blind. God looketh for this faithful improvement of your parts and gifts, which, if you neglect, it were better for you that you never had received them: for they will but further your condemnation, and be as useless to your own salvation as they are to others.

2. All those that have especially familiarity with some ungodly men, and that have interest in them, God looks for this duty at their hands. Christ himself did eat and drink with the publicans and sinners, but it was only to be their physician, and not their companion. God might give you interest in them to this end, that you might be a means of their recovery. They that will not regard the words of another, will regard a brother, or sister, or husband, or wife, or near friend: besides that, the bond of friendship doth engage you to more kindness and compassion.

3. Physicians that are much about dying men, should in a special manner make a conscience of this duty: they have a treble advantage. First, they are at hand. Secondly, they are with men in sickness and dangers, when the ear is more open, and the heart less stubborn than in time of health. He that made a scorn of godliness before, will hear counsel then, if ever he will hear it. Thirdly, besides, they look upon their physician as a man in whose hand is their life: or who at least may do much to save them, and therefore they will the more regard his advice. Therefore you that are of this honourable profession, do not think this a work beside your calling, as if it belonged to none but ministers: except you think it beside your calling to be compassionate, or to be Christians. Help to fit your patients for heaven, and whether you see they are for life or death, teach them both how to live and how to die, and give them some physic for their souls, as you do for their bodies. Blessed be God that very many of the chief physicians of this age have, by

their eminent piety, vindicated their profession from the common imputation of atheism and profaneness.

4. Another sort that have excellent advantage for this duty, are men that have wealth and authority, and are of great place or command in the world, especially that have many who live in dependence on them. O what a world of good might gentlemen and lords do, that have a great many tenants, and that are the leaders of the country, if they had but hearts to improve their interest and advantage! Little do you that are such, think of the duty that lies upon you in this. Have you not all honour and riches from God? Is it not evident then, that you must employ them for the advantage of his service? Do you not know who hath said, "That to whom men commit much, from them they will expect the more?"

You have the greatest opportunities to do good, of most men in the world. Your tenants dare not contradict you, lest you dispossess them or their children of their habitations: they fear you more than the threatenings of the Scriptures; they will sooner obey you than God. If you speak to them of God and their souls, you may be regarded, when even a minister shall be despised. O therefore as you value the honour of God, your own comfort, and the salvation of souls, improve your interest to the utmost for God. Go visit your tenants' and neighbours' houses, and see whether they worship God in their families, and take all opportunities to press them to their duties. Do not despise them, because they are poor or simple. Remember, God is no respecter of persons; your flesh is of no better metal than theirs; nor will the worms spare your faces or hearts any more than theirs; nor will your bones or dust bear the badge of your gentility: you must be all equals when you stand in judgment; and therefore help the soul of a poor man, as well as if he were a gentleman: and let men see that you excel others as much in piety, heavenliness, compassion, and diligence in God's work, as you do in riches and honour.

I confess you are like to be singular if you take this course; but then remember, you shall be singular in glory, for "few great, and mighty, and noble are called."

5. Another sort that have special opportunity to help others to heaven, are the ministers of the gospel: as they have, or should have, more ability than others, so it is the very work of their calling; and every one expecteth it at their hands, and will better submit to their teachers than to others. I intend not these instructions so much to teachers, as to others, and therefore I shall say but little to them; and if all, or most ministers among us were as faithful and

diligent as some, I would say nothing. But because it is otherwise, let me give these two or three words of advice to my brethren in this office.

1. Be sure that the recovering and saving souls, be the main end of your studies and preaching. O do not propound any low and base ends to yourselves. This is the end of your calling, let it be also the end of your endeavours. God forbid that you should spend a week's study to please the people, or to seek the advancing your own reputations. Dare you appear in the pulpit on such a business, and speak for yourselves, when you are sent and pretend to speak for Christ? Set out the work of God as skilfully as you can; but still let the winning of souls be your end, and always judge that the best means, that most conduceth to the end. Do not think that God is best served by a neat, starched oration: but that he is the able, skilful minister, that is best skilled in the art of instructing, convincing, persuading, and that is the best sermon that is best in these. Let the vigour also of your persuasions show that you are sensible on how weighty a business you are sent. Preach with that seriousness and fervour as men that believe their own doctrine, and know their hearers must either be prevailed with or be damned. What you would do to save them from everlasting burning, that do while you have the opportunity, and price in your hand, that people may discern you mean as you speak; and that you are not stage players, but preachers of the doctrine of salvation. Remember what Cicero saith, "That if the matter be never so combustible, yet if you put not fire to it, it will not burn." And what Erasmus saith, "That a hot iron will pierce, when a cold one will not." And if the wise men of the world account you mad, say as Paul, "If we are beside ourselves, it is to God:" and remember that Christ was so busy in doing of good, that his friends themselves began to lay hands on him, thinking he had been beside himself, Mark iii.

2. The second and chief word of advice that I would give you, is this: do not think that all your work is in studies, and in the pulpit. I confess that is great; but, alas! it is but a small part of your task. You are shepherds, and must know every sheep, and what is their disease, and mark their strayings, and help to cure them, and fetch them home.

O learn of Paul, Acts xx, 19, 20, 31, to preach publicly, and from house to house, night and day, with tears. Let there not be a soul in your charge that shall not be particularly instructed and watched over. Go from house to house daily, and inquire how they grow in knowledge and holiness, and on what grounds they build their hopes of salvation;

and whether they walk uprightly and perform the duties of their several relations, and use the means to increase their abilities. See whether they daily worship God in their families, and set them in a way, and teach them how to do it: confer with them about the doctrines and practice of religion, and how they receive and profit by public teaching, and answer all their carnal objections; keep in familiarity with them, that you may maintain your interest in them, and improve all your interest for God. See that no seducers creep in amongst them, or if they do, be diligent to counter-mine them, and preserve your people from the infection of heresies and schisms; or if they be infected, be diligent to procure their recovery; not with passion and lordliness, but with patience and condescension: as Masculus did by the Anabaptists, visiting them in prison, where the magistrate had cast them, and there instructing and relieving them; and though they reviled him when he came, and called him a false prophet, and antichristian seducer that thirsted for their blood, yet he would not so leave them, till at last by his meekness and love he had overcome them, and recovered many to the truth, and to unity with the church.

If any be "weak in the faith, receive him, but not to doubtful disputation." If any be too careless of their duties, and too little savour the things of the Spirit, let them be pitied, and not neglected: if any walk scandalously and disorderly, deal with them for their recovery, with all diligence and patience, and set before them the heinousness and danger of their sin: if they prove obstinate, after all, then avoid them, and cast them off: if they be ignorant, it may be your fault as well as theirs; but, however, they are fitter to be instructed than rejected, except they absolutely refuse to be taught. Christ will give you no thanks for keeping or putting out such from his school that are unlearned, when their desire or will is to be taught. I confess it is easier to shut out the ignorant, than to bestow our pains night and day in teaching them; but wo to such slothful, unfaithful servants. Who then is a faithful and a wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them their meat in due season, according to every one's age and capacity? "Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing." O be not asleep while the wolf is waking! Let your eye be quick in observing the dangers and strayings of your people. If jealousies, heart burnings, or contentions arise among them, quench them before they break out into raging, irresistible flames. As soon as you discern any to turn worldly, or proud, or factious, or self-conceited, or disobedient, or cold, and slothful in his duty, delay not, but presently make out

for his recovery : remember how many are losers in the loss of a soul.

3. Do not daub, or deal slightly with any. Some will not tell their people plainly of their sins, because they are great men ; as if none but the poor should be plainly dealt with : do not you so, but reprove them sharply, (though differently and with wisdom,) that they may be sound in faith. God doth sufficiently engage us to deal plainly ; he hath bid us speak and fear not : he hath promised to stand by us ; and he will be our security. I had rather hear from the mouth of Balak, " God hath kept thee from honour ;" or from Ahab, " Feed him with the bread and water of affliction ;" than to hear conscience say, *Thou hast betrayed souls to damnation by thy cowardice and silence* ; or to hear God say, " Their blood will I require at thy hands : " or to hear from Christ, the judge, " Cast the unprofitable servant into outer darkness, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth ; " yea, or to hear these sinners cry out against me in eternal fire, and with implacable rage to charge me with their undoing.

And as you must be plain and serious, so labour to be skilful and discreet, that the manner may somewhat answer the excellency of the matter. How oft have I heard a stammering tongue, with ridiculous expressions, vain repetitions, tedious circumlocutions, and unseemly pronunciation, spoil most precious doctrine, and make the hearers either loath it, or laugh at it ! How common are these extremes, while one spoils the food of life by affectation, and new-fashioned mincing, and pedantic toys, either setting forth a little and mean matter with a great deal of froth, and gaudy dressing ; or hiding excellent truths in a heap of vain rhetoric on the other side ! How many by their slovenly dressing make men loath the food of life, and cast up that which should nourish them ! Such novices are admitted into the sacred function, to the hardening of the wicked, and the disgrace of the work of the Lord ; and those that are not able to speak sense or reason, are made the ambassadors of the Most High God.

O, therefore, let me beseech you my brethren, in the name of the Lord, especially those that are more young and weak, that you tremble at the greatness of this holy employment, and run not up into a pulpit as boldly as into the market place : study and pray, pray and study, till you are become workmen that need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth, that your people may not be ashamed or weary to hear you : but that besides your clear unfolding the doctrine of the gospel, you may also be masters of your people's affections. It is a work that requireth your most

serious searching thoughts: running, hasty, easy studies, bring forth blind births. When you are the most renowned doctors in the church of God, alas, how little is it that you know, in comparison of all that which you are ignorant of!

4. Be sure that your conversation be teaching as well as your doctrine. Do not confute your doctrine by your practice. Be as forward in a holy and heavenly life, as you are in pressing it on others. Let your discourse be as edifying and spiritual, as you teach them theirs must be: for evil language give them good; and blessing for their cursing. Suffer any thing, rather than the gospel and men's souls should suffer: "Become all things [lawful] to all men, if by any means you may win some." Let men see that you use not the ministry only for a trade to live by; but that your hearts are set upon the welfare of their souls. Whatsoever meekness, humility, condescension, or self denial, you teach them from the gospel, O teach it them also by your undissembled example. This is to be guides, and pilots, and governors, of the church indeed.

What an odious sight is it, to see pride and ambition preach humility! and an earthly-minded man preach for a heavenly conversation!

Do I need to tell you that are teachers of others, that we have but a little while longer to preach? And but a few more breaths to breathe? And then we must come down, and be accountable for our work? Do I need to tell you, that we must die, and be judged as well as our people? Or that justice is most severe about the sanctuary? And "judgment beginneth at the house of God?"

5. The last whom I would persuade to this great work of helping others to the heavenly rest, is parents and masters of families. All you that God hath intrusted with children or servants, consider what duty lieth on you for furthering their salvation. That this exhortation may be the more effectual with you, I will lay down several considerations for you seriously to think on.

1. What plain and pressing commands of God are there, that require this great duty at your hand! Deut. vi, 6, 7, 8, "And these words which I command thee this day, shall be in thy heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." And how well is God pleased with this in Abraham, Gen. xviii, 17, 19, "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do? For I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him, that they shall keep the way of the Lord." Prov. xxii, 6, "Train up a child in the way he should go,



and when he is old, he will not depart from it." So that you see it is a work that the Lord of heaven and earth hath laid upon you; and how then dare you neglect it?

2. You will else be witnesses against your own souls: your great care and pains, and cost for their bodies, will condemn you for your neglect of their precious souls: you can spend yourselves in toiling and caring for their bodies, and even neglect your own souls, and venture them sometimes upon unwarrantable courses, and all to provide for your posterity: and have you not as much reason to provide for their souls? Do you not believe that your children must be everlastingly happy or miserable? And should not that be forethought, in the first place?

3. Consider, God hath made your children to be your charge; yea, and your servants too: every one will confess they are the minister's charge, and what a dreadful thing is it for them to neglect them, when God hath told them, That if they tell not the wicked of their sin and danger, their blood shall be required at that minister's hands! and is not your charge as great and as dreadful as theirs? Have not you a greater charge of your own families than any minister hath? Yea, doubtless, and your duty it is to teach, and admonish, and reprove them, and watch over them, at your hands else will God require the blood of their souls. The greatest charge it is that ever you were intrusted with, and wo to you if you prove unfaithful, and betray your trust, and suffer them to be ignorant for want of your teaching, or wicked for want of your admonition or correction.

4. Look into the dispositions and lives of your children, and see what a work there is for you to do. First, It is not one sin that you must help them against, but thousands; their name is legion, for they are many: it is not one weed that must be pulled up, but the field is overspread with them. Secondly, And how hard is it to prevail against any one of them! They are hereditary diseases, bred in their natures: they are as near them as the very heart; and how tenacious are all things of that which is natural! How hard to teach a hare not to be afraid, or a lion or tiger not to be fierce! Besides, the things you must teach them are quite above them; yea, and clean contrary to the interest and desires of their flesh: how hard is it to teach a man to be willing to be poor and despised for Christ; to deny themselves, and displease the flesh; to forgive an enemy; to love those that hate us; to watch against temptations; to avoid occasions and appearances of evil; to believe in a crucified Saviour; to rejoice in tribulation; to make God their delight and love; and to have their hearts in heaven, while they live on earth! I think none of this is easy; they that think

otherwise, let them try and judge; yet all this must be learned, or they are undone for ever. If you help them not to some trade, they cannot live in the world; but if they be destitute of these things, they shall not live in heaven. If the mariner be not skilful, he may be drowned; and if the soldier be not skilful, he may be slain: but they that cannot do the things above mentioned, will perish for ever; "For without holiness no man shall see God." O that the Lord would make all you that are parents sensible, what a work and charge doth lie upon you! You that neglect this important work, and talk to your families of nothing but the world, I tell you the blood of souls lies on you: make as light of it as you will, if you repent not and amend, the Lord will shortly call you to an account for the guilt of your children's everlasting undoing.

5. Think with yourselves, what a world of comfort you may have, if you be faithful in this duty: if you should not succeed, yet you have freed your own souls; and though it be sad, yet you may have peace in your own consciences: but if you do succeed, the comfort is inexpressible. For,

1. Good children will be truly loving to their parents; when a little matter will make ungodly children cast off their very natural affections.
2. Good children will be most obedient to you; they dare not disobey you, because of the command of God, except you should command them that which is unlawful, and then they must obey God rather than men.
3. And if you should fall into want, they would be most faithful in relieving you, as knowing they are tied by a double bond of nature and of grace.
4. And they will also be helpers of your souls; they will be delighting you with holy conference and actions; when wicked children will be grieving you with cursing, and swearing, or drunkenness, or disobedience.
5. But the greatest joy will be when you shall say, "Here am I, and the children thou hast given me." And are not all these comforts enough to persuade you to this duty?

6. Consider further, That the very welfare of church and state lieth mainly on this duty of well educating children; and without this, all other means are like to be far less successful. I seriously profess to you, that I verily think all the sins and miseries of the land may acknowledge this sin for their nurse. It is not good laws and orders that will reform us, if the men be not good, and reformation begin not at home; when children go wicked from the hands of their parents, in every profession they bring this fruit of their education with them. I tell you seriously, this is the cause of all our miseries in church and state, even the want of a holy education of children. Many lay the blame on

this neglect, and that; but there is none hath so great a hand in it as this.

7. I entreat you that are parents, to consider what excellent advantages you have above all others for the saving of your children.

1. They are under your hands while they are young, and tender, and flexible; but they come to ministers when they are grown older, and stiffer, and settled in their ways, and think themselves too good to be catechised. You have a twig to bend, and we an oak: you have the young plants of sin to pluck up, and we the deep-rooted vices. The consciences of children are not so seared with a custom of sinning, and long resisting grace, as others. You have the soft and tender earth to plough in, and we have the hard and stony ways, that have been trodden on by many-years practice of evil. We have a double task, first to unteach them, and then to teach them better; but you have but one. We must unteach them all that the world, and the flesh, and wicked company, and the devil, have been diligently teaching them in many years. You have them before they are possessed with prejudice against the truth: but we have them to teach, when they have many years lived among those that have taught them to think God's ways to be foolish. Doth not the experience of all the world show you the power of education? What else makes all the children of the Jews to be Jews? And all the children of the Turks to be Mohammedans? And of Christians to be in profession Christian? And of each sect or party in religion to follow their parents? Now what an advantage have you to use all this for the furtherance of their happiness!

2. Consider also, that you have the affections of your children more than any others: none in the world hath that interest in their hearts as you. You will receive that counsel from an undoubted friend, that you would not from an enemy, or a stranger. Now, your children know you are their friends, and advise them in love; and they cannot but love you again. Nature hath almost necessitated them to love you. O therefore, improve this your interest in them for their good!

3. You have also the greatest authority over them. You may command them, and they dare not disobey you, or else it is your own fault, for the most part; for you can make them obey you in your business; yea, you may correct them to enforce obedience. Your authority also is the most unquestionable authority in the world. The authority of kings and parliaments has been disputed, but yours is past dispute. And therefore if you use it not to bring them to God, you are without excuse.

4. Besides, their dependence is on you for their maintenance. They know you can either give them, or deny them what you have, and so punish and reward them at your pleasure. But on ministers or neighbours they have no such dependence.

5. Moreover, you that are parents know the temper and inclinations of your children, what vices they are most inclined to, and what instruction or reproof they most need: but ministers cannot so well know this.

6. Above all, you are ever with them, and so have opportunity, as you know their faults, so to apply the remedy. You may be still talking to them of the word of God, and minding them of their state and duty, and may follow and set home every word of advice, as they are in the house with you, or in the shop, or in the field. O what an excellent advantage is this, if you have hearts to use it! Especially you, mothers, remember this; you are more with your children, while they are little ones, than their fathers: be you therefore still teaching them as soon as ever they are capable of learning: you cannot do God such eminent service yourselves as men; but you may train up children that may do it, and then you will have part of the comfort and honour. What a deal of pains are you at with the bodies of your children more than the fathers? And what do you suffer to bring them into the world; and will not you be at as much pains for the saving of their souls? You are naturally of more tender affections than men; and will it not move you to think that your children should perish for ever? Therefore I beseech you, for the sake of the children of your bowels, teach them, admonish them, watch over them, and give them no rest till you have brought them to Christ.

And thus I have showed you reason enough to make you diligent in teaching your children.

Let us next hear what is usually objected against this by negligent men.

*Objection* 1. We do not see but those children prove as bad as others, that are taught the Scriptures, and brought up so holily; and those prove as honest men, that have none of this ado with them.

*Answer.* Who art thou, O man, that disputest against God? Hath God charged you "to teach your children diligently his word, speaking of it as you sit at home, and as you walk abroad, as you lie down, and as you rise up;" and dare you reply, that it is as good let it alone? Why, this is to set God at defiance; and as it were to spit in his face, and give him the lie. Will you take it well at your servants, if when you command them to do a thing, they should return you an answer, That they do not see but it

were as good let it alone? Wretched worm! darest thou thus lift up thy head against the Lord that made thee, and must judge thee? Is it not he that commandeth thee? If thou believe that this is the word of God, how darest thou say it is as good disobey it? This is devilish pride indeed, when such sottish, sinful dust, shall think themselves wiser than the living God.

2. But what if some prove bad that are well brought up? It is not the generality of them. Will you say that Noah's family was no better than the drowned world, because there was one Ham in it? Nor David's, because there was one Absalom? Nor Christ's, because there was one Judas?

3. But what if it were so? Have men need of the less teaching, or the more? You have more wit in the matters of this world. You will not say, I see many labour hard, and yet are poor, and therefore it is as good never to labour at all: you will not say, Many that go to school learn nothing, and therefore they may learn as much though they never go; or many that are great tradesmen break, and therefore it is as good never to trade at all; or many plough and sow and have nothing come up, and therefore it is as good never to plough more. What a fool were he that should reason thus! And is not he a thousand times worse, that shall reason thus for men's souls? Peter reasons the clean contrary way, "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?" 1 Peter iv, 18. And so doth Christ, Luke xiii, 24, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many shall seek to enter, and not be able." Other men's miscarriages should quicken our diligence, and not make us cast away ail. What should you think of that man that should look over into his neighbour's garden, and because he sees here and there a nettle or weed among much better stuff, should say, Why, you may see these men that bestow so much pains in digging and weeding, have weeds in their garden as well as I, that do nothing, and therefore who would be at so much pains? Just thus doth the mad world talk. You may see now that those that pray, and read, and follow sermons, have their faults as well as we, and have wicked persons among them as well as we: yea, but that is not the whole garden, as yours is; it is but here and there a weed, and as soon as they spy it, they pluck it up, and cast it away.

*Objection 2.* Some further object, It is the work of ministers to teach both us and our children, and therefore we may be excused.

*Answer 1.* It is first your duty, and then the minister's. It will be no excuse for you, because it is their work, except you could prove it were only theirs. Magistrates must

govern both you and your children: doth it therefore follow that you must not govern them? It belongs to the schoolmaster to correct them, and doth it not belong also to you? There must go many hands to this great work; as to the building of a house there must be many workmen, one to one part, and another to another, and one must not leave their part, and say it belongs to the other: so it is here in the instructing of your children: first, you must do your work, and then the minister must do his: you must be doing it privately, night and day; the minister must do it publicly and privately, as oft as he can.

2. But as the case now stands with ministers, they are disabled from doing that which belongs to their office, and therefore you cannot now cast your work on them. I will instance but in two things.

First, It belongs to their office to govern the church, and to teach with authority; and great and small are commanded to obey them, Heb. xiii, 7, 17. But this is unknown, and hearers look on themselves as free men, that may obey or not at their own pleasure. People think we have authority to speak to them when they please to hear, and no more. Nay, few of the godly themselves understand the authority that their teachers have over them from Christ: they know how to value a minister's gifts, but not how they are bound to obey him because of his office: not that they should obey him in evil, nor that he should be a final decider of all controversies, nor should exercise his authority in things of no moment; but as a schoolmaster may command his scholars when to come to school, and what book to read, and what form to be of; and as they ought to obey him, and learn of him, and not to set their wits against his, but to take his word, and believe him as their teacher, till they understand as well as he, and are ready to leave his school; just so are the people bound to obey and learn of their teachers. Now this ministerial authority is unknown, and so ministers are the less capable of doing their work, which comes to pass, 1. From the pride of man's nature, especially novices, which makes men impatient of the reins of guidance and command: 2. From the Popish error of implicit faith; to avoid which, we are driven as far into the contrary extreme: and 3. From the modesty of ministers, that are loath to show their commission, and make known their authority, lest they should be thought proud: as if a pilot should let the seamen run the ship whither they will, for fear of being thought proud in exercising his authority.

Secondly, A far greater clog than this doth lie upon ministers, which few take notice of; and that is, the fewness of ministers, and the greatness of congregations. In the

apostles' time every church had a multitude of ministers, and so it must be again, or we shall never come near that primitive pattern; and then they could preach publicly, and from house to house: but now, when there is but one or two ministers to many thousand souls, we cannot teach them one by one. So that you see, you have little reason to cast your work on the ministers, but should the more help them by your diligence in your several families, because they are already so over-burdened.

*Objection 3.* But some will say, We are poor men and must labour for our living, and so must our children; we cannot have time to teach them the Scriptures, we have somewhat else for them to do.

*Answer.* And are not poor men subject to God, as well as rich? And are they not Christians? And must they not give account of their ways? And have not your children souls to save or lose, as well as the rich? Cannot you find time to speak to them as they are at their work? Have you not time to instruct them on the Lord's day? You can find time to talk idly, as poor as you are; and can you find no time to talk of the way to life? You can find time on the Lord's day for your children to play, or walk, or talk in the streets, but no time to mind the life to come. Methinks you should rather say to your children, I have no lands to leave you: you have no hope of great matters here; be sure therefore to make the Lord your portion, that you may be happy hereafter; if you could get riches, they would shortly leave you, but the riches of grace and glory will be everlasting. Methinks you should say, as Peter, "Silver and gold I have none, but such as I have, I give you." The kingdoms of the world cannot be had by beggars, but the kingdom of heaven may.

O what a terrible reckoning will many poor men have, when Christ shall plead his cause and judge them! May not he say, I made the way to worldly honours inaccessible to you, that you might not look after it for yourselves or your children; but heaven I set open that you might have nothing to discourage you: I confined riches and honours to a few; but my blood and salvation I offered to all, that none might say, I was not invited: I tendered heaven to the poor as well as the rich: I made no exception against the meanest beggar; why then did you not come yourselves, and bring your children, and teach them the way to the eternal inheritance? Do you say you were poor? Why, I did not set heaven to sale for money; I called those that had nothing, to take it freely: only on condition they would take me for their Saviour and Lord, and give up themselves to me in obedience and love.

What can you answer Christ, when he shall thus convince you? Is it not enough that your children are poor and miserable here, but you would have them be worse for everlasting? If your children were beggars, yet if they were such beggars as Lazarus, they may be conveyed by angels into the presence of God. But believe it, as God will save no man because he is a gentleman, so will he save no man because he is a beggar. God hath so ordered it in his providence, that riches are common occasions of men's damnation, and will you think poverty a sufficient excuse? The hardest point in all our work is to be weaned from the world, and in love with heaven: and if you will not be weaned from it, that have nothing in it but labour and sorrow, you have no excuse. The poor cannot have time, and the rich will not have time, or they are ashamed to be so forward: the young think it too soon, and the old too late; and thus most men instead of being saved, have somewhat to say against their salvation; and when Christ sendeth to invite them, they say, "I pray thee have me excused." O unworthy guest of such a blessed feast, and worthy to be turned into everlasting burnings.

*Objection 4.* But some will object, We have been brought up in ignorance ourselves, and therefore we are unable to teach our children.

*Answer.* Indeed this is the very sore of the land; but is it not a pity that men should so receive their destruction by tradition? Would you have this course to go on thus still? Your parents did not teach you, and therefore you cannot teach your children, and therefore they cannot teach theirs: by this course the knowledge of God would be banished out of the world, and never be recovered. But if your parents did not teach you, why did not you learn when you came to age? The truth is, you had no hearts for it, for he that hath not knowledge, cannot value it, or love it. But yet though you have greatly sinned, it is not too late, if you will but follow my faithful advice in these four points:

1. Get your hearts deeply sensible of your own sin and misery, because of this long time which you have spent in ignorance and neglect. Bethink yourselves when you are alone; did not God make you, and sustain you for his service? Should not he have had the youth and strength of your spirits? Did you live all this time at the door of eternity? What if you had died in ignorance, where had you been? What a deal of time have you spent to little purpose? Your life is near done, and your work all undone. You are ready to die before you have learned to live. Should not God have had a better share of your lives, and your souls been more regarded and provided for? In the midst of these



thoughts, cast down yourselves in sorrow, as at the feet of Christ; bewail your folly, and beg pardon and recovering grace.

2. Then think as sadly how you have wronged your children. If an unthrift that hath sold all his lands, will lament it for his children's sake, as well as his own, much more should you.

3. Next set presently to work and learn yourselves. If you can read, do; if you cannot, get some that can; and be much amongst these that will instruct you; be not ashamed to be seen among learners, but be ashamed that you had not learned sooner. God forbid you should be so mad, as to say, I am now too old to learn; except you be too old to serve God, and be saved, how can you be too old to learn to be saved? Why not rather, I am too old to serve the devil and the world, I have tried them too long to trust them any more. What if your parents had not taught you any trade to live by? Would not you have set yourselves to learn, when you had come to age? Remember that you have souls to care for, as well as your children, and therefore first begin with yourselves.

4. While you are learning yourselves, teach your children what you do know; and what you cannot teach them yourselves, put them to learn of others that can; persuade them into the company of those who will be glad to instruct them. Have you no neighbours that will be helpful to you herein? O do not keep yourselves strange to them, but go among them, and desire their help, and be thankful to them, that they will entertain you in their company. God forbid that you should be like those that Christ speaks of, Luke xi, 52, "that would neither enter into the kingdom of God themselves, nor suffer those that would, to enter." God forbid you should be such barbarous wretches, as to hinder your children from being godly, and to teach them to be wicked! If any thing that walks in flesh may be called a devil, I think it is a parent that hindereth his children from salvation: nay, I will say more, I verily think that in this they are far worse than the devil. God is a righteous judge, and will not make the devil himself worse than he is: I pray you be patient while you consider it, and then judge yourselves. They are the parents of their children, and so is not the devil: do you think then that it is as great a fault in him to seek their destruction, as in them? Is it as great a fault for the wolf to kill the lambs, as for their own dams to do it? Is it so horrid a fault for an enemy in war to kill a child, or for a bear or mad dog to kill it, as for the mother to dash its brains against a wall? You know it is not: do you think then, that it is so hateful a thing in Satan to entice

your children to sin and hell, and to discourage and dissuade them from holiness, as it is in you? You are bound to love them by nature, more than Satan is. O then, what people are those that will teach their children, instead of holiness, to curse, and swear, and rail, and backbite, to be proud and revengeful, to break the Lord's day, and to despise his ways, to speak wantonly and filthily, to scorn at holiness, and glory in sin! O when God shall ask these children, Where learned you this language and practice? and they shall say, I learned it of my father or mother: I would not be in the case of those parents for all the world! Alas, is it a work that is worth the teaching, to undo themselves for ever? Or can they not without teaching learn it too easily of themselves? Do you need to teach a serpent to sting, or a lion to be fierce? Do you need to sow weeds in your garden? Will they not grow of themselves? To build a house requires skill and teaching, but a little may serve to set a town on fire: to heal the wounded or the sick, requireth skill; but to make a man sick, or to kill him, requireth but little. You may sooner teach your children to swear than to pray; and to mock at godliness, than to be truly godly. If these parents were sworn enemies to their children, and should study seven years, how to do them the greatest mischief, they could not possibly find out a surer way, than by drawing them to sin, and withdrawing them from God.

I shall therefore conclude with this earnest request to all Christian parents that read these lines, that they would have compassion on the souls of their poor children, and be faithful to the great trust God hath put on them. O sirs! if you cannot do what you would do for them, yet do what you can. Both church and state, city and country, groan under the neglect of this weighty duty: your children know not God, nor his laws; but take his name in vain, and slight his worship; and you do neither instruct them nor correct them, and therefore God doth correct both them and you. You are so tender of them, that God is the less tender both of them and you. Wonder not if God make you smart for your children's sins; for you are guilty of all they commit, by your neglect of doing your duty to reform them; even as he that maketh a man drunk, is guilty of all the sin that he committeth in his drunkenness. Will you resolve therefore to set upon this duty, and neglect it no longer? Remember Eli: your children are like Moses in the basket, in the water, ready to perish if they have not help. As ever you would not be charged before God for murderers of their souls; and as ever you would not have them cry out against you in everlasting fire, see that you teach them how to escape it, and bring them up in holiness, and the fear of God.

You have heard that the God of heaven doth flatly command it: I charge every man of you therefore, upon your allegiance to him, as you will very shortly answer the contrary at your peril, that you will neither refuse or neglect this most necessary work. If you are not willing to do it, now you know it to be so plain and so great a duty, you are flat rebels, and no true subjects of Christ. If you are willing to do it, but know not how, I will add a few words of direction to help you.

1. Teach them by your own example, as well as by your words. Be yourselves such as you would have them be: practice is the most effectual teaching of children, who are addicted to imitation, especially of their parents. Lead them the way to prayer, and reading, and other duties. Be not like base commanders, that will put on their soldiers, but not go on themselves. Can you expect your children should be wiser or better than you! Let them not hear those words out of your mouths, nor see those practices in your lives, which you reprove in them. Who should lead the way in holiness, but the father and master of the family? It is a sad time when a master or father will not hinder his family from serving God, but will give them leave to go to heaven without him.

I will but name the rest of your direct duty for your family. 1. You must help to inform their understandings. 2. To store their memories. 3. To rectify their wills. 4. To quicken their affections. 5. To keep tender their consciences. 6. To restrain their tongues, and help them to skill in gracious speech; and to reform and watch over their outward conversation.

To these ends, 1. Be sure to keep them, at least, so long at school, till they can read English. It is a thousand pities a reasonable creature should look upon a Bible, as upon a stone, or a piece of wood. 2. Get them Bibles and good books, and see that they read them. 3. Examine them often what they learn. 4. Especially spend the Lord's day in this work, and see that they spend it not in sports and idleness. 5. Show them the meaning of what they read and learn. 6. Acquaint them with, and keep them in company, where they may learn good, and keep them out of that company that would teach them evil. 7. Be sure to cause them to learn some catechism, containing the chief heads of divinity.

The heads of divinity which you must teach them first, are these:

1. That there is one only God, who is a Spirit, invisible, infinite, eternal, almighty, good, merciful, true, just, holy.
2. That this God is one in three, Father, Son, and Holy

Ghost. 3. That he is the Maker, Maintainer, and Lord of all. 4. That man's happiness consisteth in the enjoying of this God, and not in fleshly pleasure, profits, or honours. 5. That God made the first man upright and happy, and gave him a law to keep, with condition, that if he kept it perfectly, he should live happy for ever; but if he broke it, he should die. 6. That man broke this law, and so forfeited his welfare, and became guilty of death as to himself, and all his posterity. 7. That Christ the Son of God did here interpose, and prevent the full execution, undertaking to die instead of man, and so redeem him. 8. That Christ hereupon did make with man a better covenant, which proclaimed pardon of sin to all that did but repent, and believe, and obey sincerely. 9. That he revealed this covenant and mercy to the world by degrees: first, in darker promises, prophecies, and sacrifices; then in many ceremonious types; and then by more plain foretelling by the prophets. 10. That in the fulness of time Christ came and took our nature into union with his Godhead, being conceived by the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary. 11. That while he was on earth, he lived a life of sorrows, was crowned with thorns, and bore the pains that our sins deserved; at last being crucified to death, and buried, so satisfied the justice of God. 12. That he also preached to the Jews, and by constant miracles proved the truth of his doctrines before thousands of witnesses: that he revealed more fully his new covenant, That whosoever will believe in him, and accept him for their Saviour and Lord, shall be pardoned and saved, and have a far greater glory than they lost; and they that will not, shall lie under the curse and guilt, and be condemned to the everlasting fire of hell. 13. That he rose again from the dead, having conquered death, and took possession of his dominion over all, and so ascended up into heaven, and there reigneth in glory. 14. That before his ascension he gave charge to his apostles to preach the gospel to all nations and persons, and to offer Christ, and mercy, and life, to every one without exception, and to entreat and persuade them to receive him, and that he gave them authority to send forth others, on the same message, and to baptize, and to gather churches, and confirm and order them, and settle a course for the succession of ministers and ordinances to the end of the world. 15. That he also gave them power to work frequent and evident miracles for the confirmation of their doctrine; and to annex their writings to the rest of the Scriptures, and so to finish and seal them up, and deliver them to the world as his infallible word, which none must dare to alter, and which all must observe. 16. That for all his free grace is offered to the world, yet the heart is by nature so desperately wicked,

that no man will believe and entertain Christ sincerely, except by an almighty power he be changed and born again; and therefore doth Christ send forth his Spirit with his word, which worketh holiness in our hearts, drawing us to God and the Redeemer. 17. That the means by which Christ worketh and preserveth this grace, is the word read and preached, together with frequent, fervent prayer, meditation, sacraments, and gracious conferences; and it is much furthered also by special providences keeping us from temptation; fitting occurrences to our advantage, drawing us by mercies, and driving us by afflictions: and therefore it must be the great and daily care of every Christian to use faithfully all the ordinances, and improve all providences. 18. That though the new law or covenant be an easy yoke, and there is nothing grievous in Christ's commands, yet so bad are our hearts, and so strong our temptations, and so diligent our enemies, that whosoever will be saved, must strive, and watch, and bestow his utmost care and pains, and deny his flesh, and forsake all that would draw him from Christ, and herein continue to the end, and overcome: and because this cannot be done without continual supplies of grace, whereof Christ is the only fountain, therefore we must live in continual dependence on him by faith, and know "that our life is hid with God in him." 19. That Christ will thus by his word and Spirit gather him a church out of all the world, which is his body, and spouse, and be their head and husband, and will be tender of them as the apple of his eyes, and preserve them from danger, and continue among them his presence and ordinances; and that the members of this church must live together in entire love and peace, delighting themselves in God, and his worship, and the forethoughts of their everlasting happiness; forbearing and forgiving one another, and relieving each other in need; and all men ought to strive to be of this society: yet will the visible churches be still mixed of good and bad. 20. That when the full number of these are called home, Christ will come down from heaven again, and raise all the dead, and set them before him to be judged; and all that have loved God, and believed in Christ, and been willing that he should reign over them, and have improved their mercies in the day of grace, them he will justify, and sentence them to inherit everlasting glory: and those that were not such, he will condemn to everlasting fire: both which sentences shall be then executed accordingly.

This is the brief sum of the doctrine which you must teach your children. Though our ordinary creed, called the apostles' creed, contain all the absolute fundamentals;

yet in some it is so generally and darkly expressed, that an explication is necessary.

Then for matter of practice teach them the meaning of the commandments, especially of the great commands of the gospel; show them what is commanded and forbidden in the first table, and in the second, toward God and men, in regard of the inward and outward man. And here show them, 1. The authority commanding, that is, the Almighty God, by Christ the Redeemer. They are not now to look at the command as coming from God immediately, merely as God, or the Creator: but as coming from God, by Christ the Mediator, "who is now the Lord of all;" seeing "the Father now judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son." 2. Show them the terms on which duty is required, and the ends of it. 3. And the nature of duties, and the way to perform them aright. 4. And the right order, that they first love God, and then their neighbour; "first seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness." 5. Show them the excellencies and delights of God's service. 6. And the flat necessity of all this. 7. Especially labour to get all to their hearts, and teach them not only to speak the words, but to reduce them to practice.

And for sin, show them its evil and danger, and watch over them against it. Especially, 1. The sins that youth is commonly addicted to. 2. And which their nature and constitution most lead them to. 3. And which the time and place most strongly tempt to. 4. But especially be sure to kill their killing sins, those that all are prone to, and are of all most deadly; as pride, worldliness, ignorance, profaneness, and flesh pleasing.

And for the manner, you must do all this;—1. Betimes, before sin get rooting. 2. Frequently. 3. Seasonably. 4. Seriously and diligently. 5. Affectionately and tenderly. 6. And with authority: compelling, where commanding will not serve; and adding correction, where instruction is frustrated.

And thus I have done with the use of exhortation, to do our utmost for the salvation of others. The Lord give men compassionate hearts, that it may be practised, and then I doubt not but he will succeed it to the increase of his church.

THE  
SAINT'S EVERLASTING REST.

PART III.

CONTAINING A DIRECTORY FOR THE GETTING AND KEEPING THE  
HEART IN HEAVEN, BY THE DILIGENT PRACTICE OF THAT  
EXCELLENT DUTY OF MEDITATION.

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CHAPTER I.

REPROVING OUR EXPECTATIONS OF REST ON EARTH.

DOth this rest remain? How great then is our sin and folly to seek and expect it here! Where shall we find the Christian that deserves not this reproof? Surely we may all cry guilty to this. We know not how to enjoy convenient houses, goods, lands, and revenues, but we seek rest in these enjoyments. We seldom, I fear, have such sweet and contenting thoughts of God and glory, as we have of our earthly delights. How much rest do we seek in buildings, walks, apparel, ease, recreation, sleep, pleasing meats and drinks, company, health, and strength, and long life? Nay, we can scarce enjoy the necessary means that God hath appointed for our spiritual good, but we are seeking rest in them. Our books, our preachers, sermons, friends, abilities for duty, do not our hearts quiet themselves in them, even more than in God? Indeed, in words we disclaim, and God hath usually the pre-eminence in our tongues and professions: but do we not desire these more violently when we want them than we do the Lord himself? Do we not cry out more sensibly, O my friend, my goods, my health! than, O my God! Do we not miss ministry and means more passionately than we miss our God? Do we not bestir ourselves more to obtain and enjoy these, than we do to recover our communion with God? Do we not delight more in the possession of these, than we do in the fruition of God himself? Nay, are not those mercies and duties more pleasant to us, wherein we stand at the greatest distance from God? We can read, and study, and confer, preach and hear, day after day, without much weariness; because in these we have to do with instruments and creatures: but in secret prayer and conversing with God immediately, where no creature interposeth, how dull, how heartless, and weary are we! And if we lose creatures or means, doth it not trouble us more than our loss of God? If we lose but a friend, or health, all

the town will hear of it: but we can miss our God and scarce bemoan our misery. Thus it is apparent, we make the creature our rest. It is not enough, that they are refreshing helps in our way to heaven; but they must also be made our heaven itself. Reader, I would as willingly make thee sensible of this sin, as of any sin in the world; for the Lord's greatest quarrel with us is in this point. Therefore I most earnestly beseech thee to press upon thine own conscience these following considerations:

1. It is gross idolatry to make any creature or means our rest: to settle the soul upon it, and say, Now I am well, upon the bare enjoyment of the creature: what is this, but to make it our God? Certainly, to be the soul's rest is God's own prerogative. And as it is palpable idolatry to place our rest in riches and honours; so it is but a more refined idolatry to take up our rest in excellent means, in the church's prosperity, and in its reformation. When we would have all that out of God, which is to be had only in God; what is this but to run away from him to the creature, and in our hearts to deny him? When we fetch more of our comfort from the thoughts of prosperity, and those mercies which we have at a distance from God, than from the forethoughts of our everlasting blessedness in him. Are we Christians in judgment, and Pagans in affection? Do we give our senses leave to be the choosers of our happiness, while reason and faith stand by? O how ill must our dear Lord needs take it, when we give him cause to complain, as sometime he did of our fellow idolaters, Jer. i, 6, that we have been lost sheep, and have forgotten our resting place! When we give him cause to say, My people can find rest in any thing rather than in me! They can find delight in one another, but none in me; they can rejoice in my creatures and ordinances, but not in me; yea, in their very labours and duty they seek for rest, but not in me; they had rather be any where than be with me. Are these their gods? Have these delivered and redeemed them? Will these be better to them than I have been, or than I would be? If yourselves have but a wife, a husband, a son, that had rather be any where than in your company, and is never so merry as when furthest from you, would you not take it ill yourselves? Why so must our God needs do. For what do we but lay these things in one end of the balance, and God in the other, and foolishly prefer them before him? As Elkanah said to Hannah, "Am not I better to thee than ten sons?" So when we are longing after creatures, we may hear God say, Am not I better than all the creatures to thee?

2. Consider, How thou contradictest the end of God in giving these things. He gave them to help thee to him, and



dost thou take up with them in his stead? He gave them that they might be refreshments in thy journey; and wouldst thou now dwell in thy inn, and go no further? Thou dost not only contradict God herein, but lovest that benefit which thou mightest receive by them, yea, and makest them thy great hurt and hinderance. Surely, it may be said of all our comforts and all ordinances, and the blessedest enjoyments in the church on earth, as God said to the Israelites of his ark, Numbers x, 33, "The ark of the covenant went before them, to search out for them a resting place." So do all God's mercies here. They are not that rest, (as John professeth he was not the Christ,) but they are voices crying in this wilderness, to bid us prepare; for the kingdom of God, our true rest, is at hand. Therefore to rest here, were to turn all mercies clean contrary to their own ends, and our own advantages, and to destroy ourselves with that which should help us.

3. Consider, Whether it be not the most probable way to cause God either, first, to deny those mercies which we desire; or, secondly, to take from us these which we enjoy; or, thirdly, to imbitter them, or curse them to us? Certainly God is no where so jealous as here: if you had a servant whom your wife loved better than she did yourself, would you not take it ill of such a wife, and rid your house of such a servant? Why so, if the Lord see you begin to settle in the world, and say, Here I will rest, no wonder if he soon in his jealousy unsettle you. If he love you, no wonder if he take that from you wherewith he sees you about to destroy yourselves.

It hath been long my observation of many, that when they have attempted great works, and have just finished them; or have aimed at great things in the world, and have just obtained them; or have lived in much trouble, and just come to begin with some content to look upon their condition, and rest in it, they are near to death and ruin. When a man is once at this language, "Soul, take thy ease;" the next news usually is, "Thou fool, this night," or this month, or this year, "shall thy soul be required of thee, and then whose shall these things be?" O what house is there where this fool dwelleth not? Let you and I consider, whether this be not our own case. Have not I after such an unsettled life, and after so many longings and prayers for these days! Have not I thought of them with too much content, and been ready to say, "Soul, take thy rest?" Have not I comforted myself more in the forethoughts of enjoying these, than of coming to heaven and enjoying God? What wonder then if God cut me off, when I am just sitting down in this supposed rest? And hath not the like been your

condition? Many of you have been soldiers, driven from house and home, endured a life of trouble and blood, been deprived of ministry and means: did you not reckon up all the comforts you should have at your return; and glad your hearts with such thoughts, more than with the thoughts of your coming to heaven? Why, what wonder if God now cross you, and turn some of your joy into sadness? Many a servant of God hath been destroyed from the earth, by being over valued and over loved. I pray God you may take warning for the time to come, that you rob not yourselves of all your mercies. I am persuaded our discontents and murmurings are not so provoking to God, nor so destructive to the sinner, as our too sweet enjoying, and rest of spirit, in a pleasing state. If God hath crossed any of you in wife, children, goods, friends, either by taking them from you, or the comfort of them, try whether this be not the cause; for wheresoever your desires stop, and you say, Now I am well; that condition you make your god, and engage the jealousy of God against it. Whether you be friends to God or enemies, you can never expect that God should suffer you quietly to enjoy your idols.

4. Consider, If God should suffer thee thus to take up thy rest here, it were one of the greatest curses that could befall thee: it were better for thee if thou never hadst a day of ease in the world: for then weariness might make thee seek after true rest. But if he should suffer thee to sit down and rest here, where were thy rest when this deceives thee? A restless wretch thou wouldst be through all eternity. To have their good things on the earth, is the lot of the most miserable perishing sinners. Doth it become Christians then to expect so much here? Our rest is our heaven: and where we take our rest, there we make our heaven: and wouldst thou have but such a heaven as this? It will be but as a handful of waters to a man that is drowning, which will help to destroy, but not to save him.

5. Consider, Thou seekest rest where it is not to be found, and so wilt lose all thy labour. I think I shall easily evince this by these clear demonstrations following:

First, Our rest is only in the full obtaining our ultimate end; but that is not to be expected in this life. Is God to be enjoyed in the best reformed church here, as he is in heaven? You confess he is not; how little of God, not only the multitude of the blind world, but sometimes the saints themselves, enjoy! And how poor comforters are the best ordinances and enjoyments without God! Should a traveller take up his rest in the way? No, because his home is his journey's end. When you have all that creatures and means can afford, have you that you sought for? Have

you that you believe, pray, suffer for? I think you dare not say so. Why then do we once dream of resting here? We are like little children strayed from home; and God is now fetching us home; and we are ready to turn into any house, stay and play with every thing in our way, and sit down on every green bank, and much ado there is to get us home.

Secondly, As we have not yet obtained our end, so are we in the midst of labours and dangers: and is there any resting here? What painful work doth lie upon our hands! Look to our brethren, to our souls, to God; and what a deal of work in respect of each of these, doth lie before us! And can we rest in our labours? Indeed we may ease ourselves sometimes in our troubles; but that is not the rest we are now speaking of; we may rest on earth, as the ark is said to rest in the midst of Jordan, Josh. iii, 13; or as the angels of heaven are desired to turn in, and rest them on earth, Gen. xviii, 4. They would have been loath to have taken up their dwelling there. Should Israel have settled his rest in the wilderness, among serpents, and enemies, and weariness, and famine? Should Noah have made the ark his home, and been loath to come forth when the waters were fallen? Should the mariner choose his dwelling on the sea, and settle his rest in the midst of rocks, and sands, and tempests? Though he may adventure through all these, for a commodity of worth; yet I think he takes it not for his rest. Should a soldier rest in the midst of fight, when he is in the very thickest of his enemies? And are not Christians such travellers, such mariners, such soldiers? Have you not fears within, and troubles without? Are we not in the thickest of continual dangers? We cannot eat, drink, sleep, labour, pray, hear or confer, but in the midst of snares; and shall we sit down and rest here? O Christian, follow thy work, look to thy danger, hold on to the end; win the field and come off the ground, before you think of settling to rest. I read that Christ, when he was on the cross, comforted the converted thief with this, "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise:" but if he had only comforted him with telling him, that he should rest there on the cross, would he not have taken it for a derision? Methinks it should be ill resting in the midst of sicknesses and pains, persecution and distresses; one would think it should be no contented dwelling for lambs among wolves. I say therefore to every one that thinketh of rest on earth, "Arise ye, depart, this is not your rest."

6. Consult with experience, both other men's and your own; many thousands have made trial, but did ever one of these find a sufficient rest for his soul on earth? Delights I

deny not but they have found; but rest and satisfaction they never found: and shall we think to find that which never man could find before us? Ahab's kingdom is nothing to him, except he had also Naboth's vineyard, and did that satisfy him when he had obtained it? If we had conquered the whole world, we should perhaps do as Alexander, sit down and weep because there was never another world to conquer. Go ask honour, Is there rest here? Why you may as well rest on the top of the tempestuous mountains, or in Etna's flames. Ask riches, Is there rest here? Even such as is in a bed of thorns. Inquire of worldly pleasure and ease, can they give you any tidings of true rest? Even such as the fish in swallowing the bait; when the pleasure is sweetest, death is the nearest. Such is the rest that all worldly pleasures afford. Go to learning, to the purest, plentifullest, powerfullest ordinances, or compass sea and land to find out the most perfect church, and inquire whether there your soul may rest? You might haply receive from these an olive branch of hope, as they are means to your rest, and have relation to eternity; but in regard of any satisfaction in themselves, you would remain as restless as ever. O how well might all these answer us, as Jacob did Rachel, "Am I instead of God?" So may the highest perfections on earth say, Are we instead of God? Go, take a view of all estates of men in the world, and see whether any of them have found this rest. Go to the husbandman, behold his endless labours, his continual care, and toil, and weariness, and you will easily see, that there is no rest: go to the tradesman, and you shall find the like: if I should send you lower, you would judge your labour lost: go to the painful minister, and there you will yet more easily be satisfied; for though his spending, endless labours are exceeding sweet, yet it is not because they are his rest, but in reference to his people's, and his own eternal rest: if you would ascend to magistracy, and inquire at the throne, you would find there is no condition so restless. Doubtless neither court, nor country, towns or cities, shops or fields, treasuries, libraries, solitariness, society, studies, or pulpits, can afford any such thing as this rest. If you could inquire of the dead of all generations, or if you could ask the living through all dominions, they would all tell you, Here is no rest; and all mankind may say, "All our days are sorrow, and our labour is grief, and our hearts take no rest," Eccles. ii, 23.

If other men's experience move you not, do but take a view of your own: can you remember the estate that did fully satisfy you? Or if you could, will it prove a lasting state? For my own part, I have run through several states

of life, and though I never had the necessities which might occasion discontent, yet did I never find a settlement for my soul; and I believe we may all say of our rest, 'as Paul of our hopes, "If it were in this life only, we were of all men most miserable." If then either Scripture, or reason, or the experience of ourselves, and all the world, will satisfy us, we may see there is no resting here. And yet how guilty are the generality of us of this sin! How many halts and stops do we make, before we will make the Lord our rest! How must God even drive us, and fire us out of every condition, lest we should sit down and rest there! If he give us prosperity, riches, or honour, we do in our hearts dance before them, as the Israelites before their calf, and say, *These are thy gods*, and conclude it is good being here. If he imbitter all these to us by crosses, how do we strive to have the cross removed, and are restless till our condition be sweetened to us, that we may sit down again and rest where we were? If the Lord, seeing our perverseness, shall now proceed in the cure, and take the creature quite away, then how do we labour, and care, and cry, and pray, that God would restore it, that we may make it our rest again! And while we are deprived of its enjoyment, and have not our former idol, yet rather than come to God, we delight ourselves in our hopes of recovering our former state; and as long as there is the least likelihood of obtaining it, we make those very hopes our rest: if the poor by labouring all their days, have but hopes of a fuller estate when they are old, (though a hundred to one they die before they have obtained it,) yet do they rest themselves on those expectations. Or if God doth take away both present enjoyments, and all hopes of recovering them, how do we search about from creature to creature, to find out something to supply the room, and to settle upon instead thereof! Yea, if we can find no supply, but are sure we shall live in poverty, in sickness, in disgrace, while we are on earth, yet will we rather settle in this misery, and make a rest of a wretched being, than we will leave all and come to God.

A man would think, that a multitude of poor people, who beg their bread, or can scarce with their hardest labour have sustenance for their lives, should easily be driven from resting here, and willingly look to heaven for rest; and the sick, who have not a day of ease, or any hope of recovery left them. But O the cursed averseness of our souls from God! We will rather account our misery our happiness, yea, that which we daily groan under as intolerable, than we will take up our happiness in God. If any place in hell were tolerable, the soul would rather take up its rest there, than come to God. Yea, when he is bringing us over to him,

and hath convinced us of the worth of his ways and service, the last deceit of all is here, we will rather settle upon those ways that lead to him, and those ordinances that speak of him, and those gifts which flow from him, than we will come clean over to himself.

Marvel not that I speak so much of resting in these; beware lest it prove thy own case: I suppose thou art so convinced of the vanity of riches, and honour, and pleasure, that thou canst more easily disclaim these: but for thy spiritual helps, thou lookest on these with less suspicion, and thinkest thou canst not delight in them too much, especially seeing most of the world despise them, or delight in them too little. But doth not the increase of those helps dull thy longings after heaven? I know the means of grace must be loved and valued; and he that delighteth in any worldly thing more than in them, is not a Christian: but when we are content with duty instead of God, and had rather be at a sermon than in heaven; and a member of a church here, than of that perfect church; and rejoice in ordinances but as they are part of our earthly prosperity; this is a sad mistake.

So far rejoice in the creature as it comes from God, or leads to him, or brings thee some report of his love: so far let thy soul take comfort in ordinances as God doth accompany them, or gives himself unto thy soul by them: still remembering, when thou hast even what thou dost most desire, yet this is not heaven; yet these are but the first fruits. It is not enough that God alloweth us all the comfort of travellers, and accordingly to rejoice in all his mercies, but we must set up our staff as if we were at home. While we are present in the body, we are absent from the Lord; and while we are absent from him, we are absent from our rest. If God were as willing to be absent from us, as we from him, and if he were as loath to be our rest, as we are loath to rest in him, we should be left to an eternal restless separation. In a word, as you are sensible of the sinfulness of your earthly discontents, so be you also of your irregular contents, and pray God to pardon them much more. And above all the plagues and judgments of God on this side hell, see that you watch and pray against this, [of settling any where short of heaven, or reposing your souls on any thing below God.] Or else, when the bough which you tread on, breaks, and the things which you rest upon, deceive you, you will perceive your labour all lost, and your highest hopes will make you ashamed. Try if you can persuade Satan to leave tempting, and the world to cease troubling and seducing; if you can bring the glory of God from above, or remove the court from heaven to earth, and

secure the continuance of this through eternity, then settle yourselves below, and say, Soul, take thy rest here ; but till then, admit not such a thought.

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## CHAPTER II.

### MOTIVES TO HEAVENLY MINDEDNESS.

WE have now, by the guidance of the word of the Lord, and by the assistance of his Spirit, showed you the nature of the rest of the saints ; and acquainted you with some duties in relation thereto : we come now to the close of all, to press you to the great duty which I chiefly intended when I begun this subject.

Is there a rest, and such a rest remaining for us? Why then are our thoughts no more upon it? Why are not our hearts continually there? Why dwell we not there in constant contemplation? Ask your hearts in good earnest, What is the cause of this neglect? Hath the eternal God provided us such a glory, and promised to take us up to dwell with himself? And is not this worth the thinking on? Should not the strongest desires of our hearts be after it, and the daily delights of our souls be there? Can we forget and neglect it? What is the matter? Will not God give us leave to approach this light? Or will he not suffer our souls to taste and see it? Then what mean all his earnest invitations? Why doth he so condemn our earthly mindedness, and command us to set our affections above? If the forethoughts of glory were forbidden fruits, perhaps we should be sooner drawn unto them. Sure I am, where God hath forbidden us to place our thoughts and our delights, thither it is easy enough to draw them. If he say, Love not the world, nor the things of the world, we doat upon it nevertheless. How unweariedly can we think of vanity, and day after day employ our minds about it! And have we no thoughts of this our rest? How freely and how frequently can we think of our pleasures, our friends, our labours, our flesh, our studies, our news; yea, our very miseries, our wrongs, our sufferings, and our fears! But where is the Christian whose heart is on this rest? What is the matter? Why are we not taken up with the views of glory, and our souls more accustomed to these delightful meditations? Are we so full of joy that we need no more; or is there no matter in heaven for our joyous thoughts; or rather, are not our hearts carnal and blockish? Earth will tend to earth. Had we more spirit, it would be otherwise with us. As St. Augustin cast by Cicero's writings, because they contained not the name of Jesus; so let us

humble and cast down these sensual hearts, that have in them no more of Christ and glory. As we should not own our duties any further than somewhat of Christ is in them, so should we no further own our hearts: and as we should delight in the creatures, no longer than they have reference to Christ and eternity, so no further should we approve of our own hearts. Why did Christ pronounce his disciples' eyes and ears blessed, but as they were the doors to let in Christ by his works and words into their heart? Blessed are the eyes that so see, and the ears that so hear, that the heart is thereby raised to this heavenly frame. Sirs, so much of your hearts as is empty of Christ and heaven, let it be filled with shame and sorrow, and not with ease.

But let me turn my reprehension to exhortation, that you would turn this conviction into reformation. And I have the more hope, because I here address myself to men of conscience, that dare not wilfully disobey God; yea, because to men whose portion is there, whose hopes are there, and who have forsaken all that they may enjoy this glory; and shall I be discouraged from persuading such to be heavenly minded? If you will not hear and obey, who will? Whoever thou art therefore that readest these lines, I require thee, as thou tenderest thine allegiance to the God of heaven, as ever thou hopest for a part in this glory, that thou presently take thy heart to task; chide it for its wilful strangeness to God; turn thy thought from the pursuit of vanity, bend thy soul to study eternity; habituate thyself to such contemplations, and let not those thoughts be seldom and cursory, but settle upon them; dwell here, bathe thy soul in heaven's delights; drench thine affections in these rivers of pleasure; and if thy backward soul begin to flag, and thy thoughts to fly abroad, call them back, hold them to their work, put them on, bear not with their laziness; and when thou hast once tried this work, and followed on till thou hast got acquainted with it, and kept a close guard upon thy thoughts till they are accustomed to obey, thou wilt then find thyself in the suburbs of heaven, and as it were in a new world; thou wilt then find that there is sweetness in the work and way of God, and that the life of Christianity is a life of joy: thou wilt meet with those abundant consolations which thou hast prayed, and panted, and groaned after, and which so few Christians obtain, because they know not the way to them, or else make not conscience of walking in it.

You see the work now before you; this, this is that I would fain persuade you to practise: let me bespeak your consciences in the name of Christ, and command you by the authority I have received from Christ, that you faith-



fully set upon this duty, and fix your eye more steadfastly on your rest. Do not wonder that I persuade you so earnestly: though indeed if we were truly reasonable men, it would be a wonder that men should need so much persuasion to so sweet and plain a duty: but I know the employment is high, the heart is earthly, and will still draw back; the temptations and hinderances will be many and great, and therefore I fear all these persuasions are little enough: say not, We are unable to set our own hearts on heaven, this must be the work of God: therefore all your exhortation is in vain. I tell you, though God be the chief disposer of your hearts, yet next under him you have the greatest command of them yourselves, and a great power in the ordering of your own thoughts, and determining your own wills: though without Christ you can do nothing, yet under him you may do much, and must do much, or else you will be undone through your neglect: do your own parts, and you have no cause to distrust whether Christ will do his.

I will here lay down some considerations, which, if you will but deliberately weigh with an impartial judgment, I doubt not will prove effectual with your hearts, and make you resolve upon this excellent duty.

1. Consider, A heart set upon heaven, will be one of the most unquestionable evidences of a true work of saving grace upon thy soul. Would you have a sign infallible, not from me, or from the mouth of any man, but from the mouth of Jesus Christ himself, which all the enemies of the use of marks can lay no exceptions against? Why here is such a one, Matthew vi, 21, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Know once assuredly where your heart is, and you may easily know that your treasure is there. God is the saints' treasure and happiness: heaven is the place where they fully enjoy him: a heart therefore set upon heaven, is no more but a heart set upon God, desiring this full enjoyment: and surely a heart set upon God through Christ, is the truest evidence of saving grace. External actions are the easiest discovered; but those of the heart are the surest evidences. When thy learning will be no good proof of thy grace; when thy knowledge, thy duties, and thy gifts, will fail thee; when arguments from thy tongue and thy hand may be confuted; then will this argument from the bent of thy heart prove thee sincere. Take a poor Christian that can scarce speak English about religion, that hath a weak understanding, a failing memory, a stammering tongue, yet his heart is set on God, he hath chosen him for his portion, his thoughts are on eternity, his desires there, his dwelling there; he cries out, O that I were there! he takes that day for a time of imprisonment, wherein

he hath not taken one refreshing view of eternity. I had rather die in this man's condition, than in the case of him that hath the most eminent gifts, and is most admired for parts and duty, whose heart is not taken up with God. The man that Christ will find out at the last day, and condemn for want of a wedding garment, will be he that wants this frame of heart. The question will not then be, How much you have known or talked? but, How much have you loved, and where was your heart? Why then, as you would have a sure testimony of the love of God, and a sure proof of your title to glory, labour to get your hearts above. God will acknowledge you love him, when he sees your hearts are set upon him. Get but your hearts once truly in heaven, and without all question, yourselves will follow. If sin and Satan keep not thence your affections, they will never be able to keep away your persons.

2. Consider, A heavenly mind is a joyful mind: this is the nearest and the truest way to comfort: and without this you must needs be uncomfortable. Can a man be at the fire, and not be warm? Or in the sunshine, and not have light? Can your heart be in heaven, and not have comfort? What could make such frozen uncomfortable Christians, but living so far as they do from heaven? And what makes others so warm in comforts, but their frequent access so near to God! When the sun in the spring draws near our part of the earth, how do all things congratulate its approach! The earth looks green, and casteth off her mourning habit; the trees shoot forth; the plants revive; the birds sing; the face of all things smiles upon us, and all the creatures below rejoice. If we would but keep these hearts above, what a spring would be within us; and all our graces be fresh and green! How would the face of our souls be changed, and all that is within us rejoice! How should we forget our winter sorrows, and withdraw our souls from our sad retirements! How early should we rise (as those birds in the spring) to sing the praise of our great Creator! O Christians! get above; believe it, that region is warmer than this below. Those that have been there have found it so, and those that have come thence have told us so; and I doubt not but thou hast sometimes tried it thyself. I dare appeal to thy own experience: When is it that you have largest comforts? Is it not after such an exercise as this, when thou hast got up thy heart, and conversed with God, and talked with the inhabitants of the higher world, and viewed the mansions of the saints and angels, and filled thy soul with the forethoughts of glory? If thou knowest by experience what this practice is, I dare say thou knowest what spiritual joy is. If it be the countenance of God that fills us with joy,

then they that most behold it, must be fullest of these joys. If you never tried this, nor lived this life of heavenly contemplation, I never wonder that you walk uncomfortably, and know not what the joy of the saints means: can you have comforts from God, and never think of him? Can heaven rejoice you when you do not remember it? Doth any thing in the world glad you, when you think not on it? Whom should we blame then, that we are so void of consolation, but our own negligent unskilful hearts? God hath provided us a crown of glory, and promised to set it shortly on our heads, and we will not so much as think of it: he holdeth it out to us, and biddeth us behold and rejoice, and we will not so much as look at it. What a perverse course is this, both against God and our own joys!

I confess, though in fleshly things the presenting a comforting object is sufficient to produce an answerable delight, yet in spirituals we are more disabled: God must give the joy itself, as well as afford us matter for joy: but yet withal, it must be remembered, that God doth work upon us as men, and in a rational way doth raise our comforts: he enableth and exciteth us to mind these delightful objects, and from thence to gather our own comforts; therefore he that is most skilful and painful in this gathering art, is usually the fullest of the spiritual sweetness. It is by believing that we are filled with joy and peace; and no longer than we continue our believing. It is in hope that the saints rejoice, yea, in this hope of the glory of God; and no longer than they continue hoping. And here let me warn you of a dangerous snare, an opinion which will rob you of all your comfort: some think, if they should thus fetch in their own by believing and hoping, and work it out of Scripture promises by their own thinking and studying, then it would be a comfort only of their own hammering out, (as they say,) and not the genuine joy of the Holy Ghost. A desperate mistake, raised upon a ground that would overthrow almost all duty, as well as this; which is their setting the workings of God's Spirit and their own spirits in opposition, when their spirits must stand in subordination to God's: they are conjunct causes, co-operating to the producing of one and the same effect. God's Spirit worketh our comforts by setting our own spirits at work upon the promises, and raising our thoughts to the place of our comforts. As you would delight a covetous man by showing him money, or a voluptuous man with fleshly delights; so God useth to delight his people by taking them as it were by the hand, and leading them into heaven, and showing them himself, and their rest with him. God useth not to cast in our joys while we are idle, or taken up with other things. It is true,

he sometimes doth it suddenly, but usually in the aforesaid order: and his sometimes sudden, extraordinary casting of comforting thoughts in our hearts, should be so far from hindering endeavours in a meditating way, that it should be a singular motive to quicken us to it; even as a taste given us of some cordial, will make us desire and seek the rest. God feedeth not saints as birds do their young, bringing it to them, and putting it in their mouth, while they lie still in the nest, and only gape to receive it: but as he giveth to man the fruits of the earth, the increase of our land in corn and wine, while we plough, and sow, and weed, and water, and dung, and dress, and then with patience expect his blessing; so doth he give the joys of the soul. Yet I deny not, that if any should think so to work out his own comforts by meditation, as to attempt the work in his own strength, the work would prove to be like the workman, and the comfort he would gather would be like both; even mere vanity; even as the husbandman's labour without the sun, and rain, and blessing of God.

So then you may easily see, that close meditation on the matter and cause of your joy, is God's way to procure solid joy. For my part, if I should find my joy of another kind, I should be very prone to doubt of its sincerity. If I find a great deal of comfort, and know not how it came, nor upon what rational ground it was raised, nor what considerations feed and continue it, I should be ready to question whether this be from God. Our love to God should not be like that of fond lovers, who love violently, but they know not why. I think a Christian's joy should be rational joy, and not to rejoice, and know not why. In some extraordinary case, God may cast in such an extraordinary kind of joy: yet it is not his usual way. And if you observe the spirit of most uncomfortable Christians, you will find the reason to be their expectation of such kind of joys: and accordingly are their spirits variously tossed, and inconstantly tempered: when they meet with such joys, then they are cheerful and lifted up; but because these are usually short-lived, therefore they are straight as low as hell. And thus they are tossed as a vessel at sea, up and down, but still in extremes; whereas, alas, God is most constant, Christ the same, heaven the same, and the promise the same; and if we took the right course for fetching in our comfort from these, sure our comforts would be more settled and constant, though not always the same. Whoever thou art therefore that readest these lines, I entreat thee, in the name of the Lord, and as thou valuest the life of constant joy, and that good conscience which is a continual feast, that thou wouldst seriously set upon this work, and learn the art of heavenly mindedness,

and thou shalt find the increase a hundred fold, and the benefit abundantly exceed thy labour.

3. Consider, A heart in heaven will be a most excellent preservative against temptations, and a powerful means to save the conscience from the wounds of sin: God can prevent our sinning, though we be careless, and sometimes doth; but this is not his usual course; nor is this our safest way to escape. When the mind is either idle, or ill employed, the devil needs not a greater advantage: if he find but the mind empty, there is room for any thing that he will bring in; but when he finds the heart in heaven, what hope that his motions should take? Let him entice to any forbidden course, the soul will return Nehemiah's answer, "I am doing a great work, and cannot come," Neh. vi, 3. Several ways will this preserve us against temptation. First, By keeping the heart employed. Secondly, By clearing the understanding, and confirming the will. Thirdly, By prepossessing the affections. Fourthly, By keeping us in the way of God's blessing.

First, By keeping the heart employed. When we are idle, we tempt the devil to tempt us; as it is an encouragement to a thief, to see your doors open and nobody within; and as we used to say, "Careless persons make thieves;" so it will encourage Satan to find your hearts idle: but when the heart is taken up with God, it cannot have time to hearken to temptations; it cannot have time to be lustful and wanton, ambitious or worldly.

If you were but busied in your lawful callings, you would not be so ready to hearken to temptations: much less if you were busied above with God. Will you leave your plough and harvest in the field? Or leave the quenching of a fire in your houses, to run hunting of butterflies? Would a judge rise, when he is sitting upon life and death, to go and play among the boys in the streets? No more will a Christian, when he is busy with God, give ear to the alluring charms of Satan. The love of God is never idle; it worketh great things where it truly is; and when it will not work, it is not love. Therefore being still thus working, it is still preserving.

Secondly, A heavenly mind is freest from sin, because it is of clearest understanding in spiritual matters. A man that is much in conversing above, hath truer and livelier apprehensions of things concerning God and his soul, than any reading or learning can beget: though perhaps he may be ignorant in divers controversies, and matters that less concern salvation, yet those truths which must establish his soul, and preserve him from temptation, he knows far better than the greatest scholars; he hath so deep an insight into

the evil of sin, the vanity of the creature, the brutishness of sensual delights, that temptations have little power on him; for these earthly vanities are Satan's baits, which with the clear-sighted, have lost their force. "In vain," saith Solomon, "the net is spread in the sight of any bird." And in vain doth Satan lay his snares to entrap the soul that plainly sees them. When the heavenly mind is above with God, he may from thence discern every danger that lies below: nay, if he did not discover the snare, yet were he likelier far to escape it than any others. A net or bait that is laid on the ground, is unlikely to catch the bird that flies in the air; while she keeps above, she is out of the danger, and the higher, the safer; so it is with us. Satan's temptations are laid on the earth; earth is the place, and earth is the ordinary bait: how shall these ensnare the Christian, who hath left the earth and walks with God?

Do you not sensibly perceive, that when your hearts are seriously fixed on heaven, you become wiser than before? Are not your understandings more solid; and your thoughts more sober? Have you not truer apprehensions of things than you had? For my own part, if ever I be wise, it is when I have been much above, and seriously studied the life to come: methinks I find my understanding, after such contemplations, as much to differ from what it was before, as I before differed from a fool or an idiot: when my understanding is weakened and befooled with common employment, and with conversing long with the vanities below, methinks a few sober thoughts of my Father's house, and the blessed provision of his family in heaven, doth make me (with the prodigal) to come to myself again. Surely, when a Christian withdraws himself from his earthly thoughts, and begins to converse with God in heaven, he is a Nebuchadnezzar, taken from the beasts of the field to the throne, and his understanding returneth to him again. O when a Christian hath had but a glimpse of eternity, and then looks down on the world again, how doth he say to his laughter, *Thou art mad!* and to his vain mirth, *What dost thou?* How could he even tear his flesh, and take revenge on himself for his folly! How verily doth he think that there is no man in Bedlam so mad, as wilful sinners, and lazy betrayers of their own souls, and unworthy slights of Christ and glory!

Do you not think (except men are stark devils) that it would be a harder matter to entice a man to sin, when he lies a dying, than it was before? If the devil, or his instruments, should then tell him of a cup of sack, of merry company, or of a stage play, do you think he would then be so taken with the motion? If he should then tell him of riches, or

honours, or show him cards, or dice, or a whore, would the temptation (think you) be as strong as before? Would he not answer, Alas! what is all this to me, who must presently appear before God, and give account of all my life, and straightways be in another world? Why, if the apprehension of the nearness of eternity will work such strange effects upon the ungodly, and make them wiser than to be deceived so easily as they were wont to be in time of health; what effects would it work in thee, if thou couldst always dwell in the views of God, and in lively thoughts of thine everlasting state? Surely a believer, if he improve his faith, may have truer apprehensions of the life to come, in the time of his health, than an unbeliever hath at the hour of his death.

Thirdly, A heavenly mind is fortified against temptations, because the affections are prepossessed with the delights of another world. When the soul is not affected with good, though the understanding never so clearly apprehend the truth, it is easy for Satan to entice that soul. Mere speculations (be they never so true) which sink not into the affections, are poor preservatives against temptations. He that loves most, and not he that knows most, will easiest resist the motions of sin. There is in a Christian a kind of spiritual taste, whereby he knows these things, besides his mere reasoning power: the will doth as sweetly relish goodness, as the understanding doth truth; and here lies much of a Christian's strength. If you should dispute with a simple man, and labour to persuade him that sugar is not sweet, or that wormwood is not bitter, perhaps you might with sophistry over argue his mere reason, but yet you could not persuade him against his sense; whereas a man that hath lost his taste, is easier deceived for all his reason. So it is here. When thou hast had a fresh delightful taste of heaven, thou wilt not be so easily persuaded from it; you cannot persuade a very child to part with his apple, while the taste of its sweetness is yet in its mouth.

O that you would be persuaded to be much in feeding on the hidden manna, and to be frequently tasting the delights of heaven! It is true, it is a great way off from our sense, but faith can reach as far as that. How would this raise thy resolutions, and make thee laugh at the fooleries of the world, and scorn to be cheated with such childish toys! What if the devil had set upon Paul when he was in the third heaven? Could he then have persuaded his heart to the pleasures, or profits, or honours, of the world? Though the Israelites below may be enticed to idolatry, and from eating and drinking to rise up to play; yet Moses in the mount with God will not do so: and if they had been where

he was, and had but seen what he there saw, perhaps they would not so easily have sinned. O if we could keep our souls continually delighted with the sweetness above, with what disdain should we spit out the baits of sin!

Fourthly, Whilst the heart is set on heaven, a man is under God's protection: and therefore if Satan then assault him, God is more engaged for his defence.

Let me entreat thee then, if thou be a man that is haunted with temptation, (as doubtless thou art, if thou be a man,) if thou perceive thy danger, and wouldst fain escape it; use much this powerful remedy, keep close with God by a heavenly mind; and when the temptation comes, go straight to heaven, and turn thy thoughts to higher things; thou shalt find this a surer help than any other. Follow your business above with Christ, and keep your thoughts to their heavenly employment, and you sooner will this way vanquish the temptation, than if you argued or talked it out with the tempter.

4. Consider, The diligent keeping of your hearts on heaven, will preserve the vigour of all your graces, and put life into your duties. It is the heavenly Christian that is the lively Christian: it is our strangeness to heaven that makes us so dull: it is the end that quickens all the means; and the more frequently and clearly this end is beheld, the more vigorous will all our motions be. How doth it make men unweariedly labour, and fearlessly venture, when they do but think of the gainful prize! How will the soldier hazard his life, and the mariner pass through storms and waves! How cheerfully do they compass sea and land, when they think of an uncertain perishing treasure! O what life then would it put into a Christian's endeavours, if he would frequently think of his everlasting treasure! We run so slowly, and strive so lazily, because we so little mind the prize. When a Christian hath been tasting the hidden manna, and drinking of the streams of the paradise of God, what life doth this put into him! How fervent will his spirit be in prayer, when he considers that he prays for no less than heaven!

Observe but the man who is much in heaven, and you shall see he is not like others; there is somewhat of that which he hath seen above, appeareth in all his duty and conversation: nay, take but the same man immediately when he is returned from these views of bliss, and you may easily perceive he excels himself. If he be a preacher, how heavenly are his sermons! What clear descriptions, what high expressions hath he of that rest! If he be a private Christian, what heavenly conference, what heavenly prayers, what a heavenly carriage, hath he! May you not



even hear in a preacher's sermons, or in the private duties of another, when they have been most above? When Moses had been with God in the mount, it made his face shine, that the people could not behold him. If you would but set upon this employment, even so it would be with you: men would see the face of your conversation shine, and say, "Surely he hath been with God!"

It is true, a heavenly nature goes before this heavenly employment; but yet the work will make it more heavenly: there must be life, before we can feel: but our life is continued and increased by feeding. Therefore, let me inform thee, if thou lie complaining of deadness and dulness, that thou canst not love Christ, nor rejoice in his love; that thou hast no life in prayer, nor any other duty, and yet never triedst this quickening course, or at least art careless and inconstant in it; thou art the cause of thy own complaints; thou dullest thine own heart; thou deniest thyself that life which thou talkest of. Is not "thy life hid with Christ in God?" Whither must thou go but to Christ for it? And whither is that, but to heaven, where he is? "Thou wilt not come to Christ that thou mayest have life." If thou wouldst have light and heat, why art thou then no more in the sunshine? If thou wouldst have more of that grace which flows from Christ, why art thou no more with Christ for it? Thy strength is in heaven, and thy life in heaven, and there thou must daily fetch it, if thou wilt have it. For want of this recourse to heaven, thy soul is as a candle that is not lighted, and thy duties as a sacrifice which hath no fire. Fetch one coal daily from this altar, and see if thy offering will not burn. Light thy candle at this flame, and feed it daily with oil from hence, and see if it will not gloriously shine: keep close to this reviving fire, and see if thy affections will not be warm. Thou bewailest thy want of love to God; (and well thou mayest, for it is a heinous crime, a killing sin;) why, lift up thy eye of faith to heaven, behold his beauty, contemplate his excellencies, and see whether his amiableness will not fire thy affections, and his goodness ravish thy heart. As the eye doth incense the sensual affections, by gazing on alluring objects; so doth the eye of faith in meditation inflame our affections toward our Lord, by gazing on that highest beauty. Whoever thou art, that art a stranger to this employment, be thy parts and profession ever so great, let me tell thee, thou spendest thy life but in trifling or idleness; thou seemest to live, but thou art dead: I may say of thee, as Seneca of idle Vacia, "Sci, latere, vivere, nestis;" thou knowest how to lurk in idleness, but how to live thou knowest not. And as the same Seneca would say, when he passed by that sluggard's dwelling, "Ibi situs est Vacia;"

so it may be said of thee, There lies such a one, but not, There lives such a one, for thou spendest thy days liker to the dead than the living. One of Draco's laws to the Athenians was, That he who was convicted of idleness, should be put to death; thou dost execute this on thy own soul, whilst by thy idleness thou destroyest its life.

Thou mayest many other ways exercise thy parts, but this is the way to exercise thy graces: they all come from God as their fountain, and lead to God as their end, and are exercised on God as their chief object: so that God is their all in all. From heaven they come, and to heaven they will direct and move thee. And as exercise maintaineth appetite, strength, and liveliness to the body; so doth it also to the soul. *Use limbs, and have limbs*, is the known proverb; and use grace and spiritual life in these heavenly exercises, and you shall find it quickly cause their increase. The exercise of your mere abilities of speech will not much advantage your graces; but the exercise of these heavenly gifts will inconceivably help the growth of both: for as the moon is then most full and glorious, when it doth most directly face the sun; so will your souls be both in gifts and graces, when you most nearly view the face of God. This will feed your tongue with matter, and make you abound and overflow, both in preaching, praying, and conferring. Besides, the fire which you fetch from heaven for your sacrifices, is no false or strange fire. As your liveliness will be much more, so will it be also more sincere.

The zeal which is kindled by your meditations on heaven, is most like to prove a heavenly zeal; and the liveliness of the spirit which you fetch from the face of God, must needs be the divinest life. Some men's fervency is drawn only from their books, and some from stinging affliction, and some from the mouth of a moving minister, and some from the encouragement of an attentive auditory: but he that knows this way to heaven, and derives it daily from the pure fountain, shall have his soul revived with the water of life, and enjoy that quickening which is the saint's peculiar: by this faith thou mayest offer Abel's sacrifice, more excellent than that of common men, and by it obtain witness that thou art righteous, God testifying of thy gifts, Heb. xi, 4. When others are ready, as Baal's priests, to beat themselves, and cut their flesh, because their sacrifices will not burn; then if thou canst get but the spirit of Elias, and in the chariot of contemplation soar aloft, till thou approachest near to the quickening spirit, thy soul and sacrifice will gloriously flame, though the flesh and the world should cast upon them the water of all their enmity. Say not now, How shall we get so high? Or how can mortals ascend to

heaven? For faith hath wings, and meditation is its chariot; its office is to make absent things as present. Do you not see how a little piece of glass, if it do but rightly face the sun, will so contract its beams and heat, as to set on fire that which is behind it, which without it would have received but little warmth? Why thy faith is as the burning-glass to thy sacrifice, and meditation sets it to face the sun; only take it not away too soon, but hold it there awhile, and thy soul will feel the happy effect.

If we could get into the holy of holies, and bring thence the name and image of God, and get it closed up in our hearts, this would enable us to work wonders; every duty we performed would be a wonder; and they that heard would be ready to say, Never man spake as this man speaketh. The Spirit would possess us, as those flaming tongues, and make us every one speak (not in the variety of the confounded languages, but) in the primitive pure language of Canaan, the wonderful works of God. We should then be in every duty, whether prayer, exhortation, or brotherly reproof, as Paul was at Athens; his spirit was stirred within him: and should be ready to say, as Jeremiah did, Jer. xx, 9, "His word was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones; and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay."

Christian reader, art thou not thinking when thou seest a lively believer, and hearest his melting prayers, and ravishing discourse, O how happy a man is this! O that my soul were in his state! Why, I here direct and advise thee from God. Try this course, and set thy soul to this work, and thou shalt be in as good a case. Wash thee frequently in this Jordan, and thy dead soul shall revive, and thou shalt know there is a God in Israel; and that thou mayest live a vigorous and joyous life, if thou neglect not thine own mercies. If thou truly value this strong and active frame of spirit, show it by thy present attempting this heavenly exercise. Thou hast heard the way to obtain this life in thy soul, and in thy duties; if thou wilt yet neglect it, blame thyself.

But alas, the multitude of professors come to a minister just as Naaman came to Elias; they ask us, How shall I overcome a hard heart, and get the strength and life of grace? But they expect that some easy means should do it; and think we should cure them with the very answer to their question, and teach them a way to be quickly well: but when they hear of a daily trading in heaven, and constant meditation on the joys above, this is a greater task than they expected; and they turn their backs as Naaman to Elias, or the young man on Christ. Will not preaching,

and praying, and conference, serve, (say they,) without this dwelling still in heaven? I entreat thee, reader, beware of this folly; fall to the work: the comfort of spiritual health will countervail all the trouble. It is but the flesh that repines, which thou knowest was never a friend to thy soul. If God had not set thee on some grievous work, shouldst thou not have done it for the life of thy soul? How much more when he doth but invite thee to himself?

5. Consider, The frequent believing views of glory are the most precious cordial in all afflictions: 1. To sustain our spirits, and make our sufferings far more easy. 2. To stay us from repining. And 3. To strengthen our resolutions, that we forsake not Christ for fear of trouble. A man will more quietly endure the lancing of his sores, when he thinks on the ease that will follow. What then will not a believer endure, when he thinks of the rest to which it tendeth? What if the way be never so rough, can it be tedious if it lead to heaven? O sweet sickness, sweet reproaches, imprisonments, or death, which is accompanied with these tastes of our future rest! Believe it, thou wilt suffer heavily, thou wilt die most sadly, if thou hast not at hand the foretastes of this rest. Therefore as thou wilt then be ready with David to pray, "Be not far from me, for trouble is near:" so let it be thy chief care not to be far from God and heaven, when trouble is near, and "thou wilt find him a very present help in trouble."

\* All sufferings are nothing to us, so far as we have the foresight of this salvation. No bolts, nor bars, nor distance of place, can shut out these supporting joys, because they cannot confine our faith and thoughts, although they may confine our flesh. Christ and faith are spiritual, and therefore prisons and banishments cannot hinder their intercourse. Even when persecution and fear hath shut the door, Christ can come in, and stand in the midst, and say, "Peace be unto you." It is not the place that gives the rest, but the presence and beholding of Christ in it. If the Son of God will walk with us in it, we may walk safely in the midst of those flames, which shall devour those that cast us in: why then, keep thy soul above with Christ; be as little as may be out of his company, and then all conditions will be alike to thee. What made "Moses choose affliction with the people of God, rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season? He had respect to the recompense of reward." Yea, our Lord himself did fetch his encouragements to sufferings from the foresight of his glory: "For to this end he both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living," Rom. xiv, 9. "Even Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, for the joy that was set

before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

6. Consider, It is he that hath his conversation in heaven, who is the profitable Christian to all about him: with him you may take sweet counsel, and go up to the celestial house of God. When a man is in a strange country, far from home, how glad is he of the company of one of his own nation! How delightful is it to them to talk of their country, of their acquaintance, and the affairs of their home! Why, with a heavenly Christian thou mayest have such discourse; for he hath been there in the spirit, and can tell thee of the glory and rest above. To discourse with able men, of clear understandings, about the difficulties of religion, yea, about languages and sciences, is both pleasant and profitable; but nothing to this heavenly discourse of a believer. O how refreshing are his expressions! How his words pierce the heart! How they transform the hearers! "How doth his doctrine drop as the rain, and his speech distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass; while his tongue is expressing the name of the Lord, and ascribing greatness to his God!" This is the man who is as Job, "when the candle of God did shine upon his head, and when by his light he walked through darkness: when the secret of God was upon his tabernacle, and when the Almighty was yet with him: then the ear that heard him, did bless him; and the eye that saw him, gave witness to him," Job xxix, 3, 4, 5, 11. Happy the people that have a heavenly minister; happy the children and servants that have a heavenly father or master; happy the man that hath heavenly associates; if they have but hearts to know their happiness. This is the companion, who will watch over thy ways, who will strengthen thee when thou art weak, who will cheer thee when thou art drooping, and comfort thee with the same comforts wherewith he hath been so often comforted himself. This is he that will be blowing the spark of thy spiritual life, and always drawing thy soul to God, and will be saying to thee, as the Samaritan woman, "Come and see one that hath told me all that ever I did," one that hath ravished my heart with his beauty, one that hath loved our souls to the death: is not this the Christ? Is not the knowledge of God and him eternal life? Is it not the glory of the saints to see his glory? If thou travel with this man on the way, he will be directing and quickening thee in thy journey to heaven: if thou be buying, or selling, or trading with him in the world, he will be counselling thee to lay out for the inestimable treasure: if thou wrong him, he can pardon thee, remembering that Christ hath not only pardoned great offences to him, but

will also give him this invaluable portion. This is the Christian of the right stamp; this is the servant that is like his Lord; these be the innocent that save the island, and all about them are the better where they dwell. I fear the men I have described are very rare, but were it not for our shameful negligence, such men might we all be!

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### CHAPTER III.

CONTAINING SOME HINDERANCES OF HEAVENLY MINDEDNESS.

As thou valuest the comforts of a heavenly conversation, I here charge thee from God, to beware most carefully of these impediments:

1. The first is, a living in a known sin. Observe this:—What havoc will this make in thy soul! O the joys that this hath destroyed! The blessed communion with God that this hath interrupted! The ruins it hath made amongst men's graces! The duties that it hath hindered! And above all others, it is an enemy to this great duty.

I desire thee, in the fear of God, stay here a little, and search thy heart. Art thou one that hath used violence with thy conscience? Art thou a wilful neglecter of known duties, either public or private? Art thou a slave to thine appetite, in eating or drinking, or to any other commanding sense? Art thou a seeker of thine own esteem, and a man that must needs have men's good opinion? Art thou a peevish or a passionate person, ready to take fire at every word, or every supposed slight? Art thou a deceiver of others in thy dealing: or one that hath set thyself to rise in the world? Not to speak of greater sins, which all take notice of. If this be thy case, I dare say, heaven and thy soul are very great strangers; I dare say thou art seldom with God, and there is little hope it should be better as long as thou continuest in these transgressions: these beams in thine eye will not suffer thee to look to heaven; these will be a cloud between thee and God. How shouldst thou take comfort from heaven, who taketh so much pleasure in the lusts of the flesh? Every wilful sin will be to thy comforts as water to fire; when thou thinkest to quicken them, this will quench them; when thy heart begins to draw near to God, this will presently fill thee with doubting. Besides, it doth utterly indispose thee, and disable thee to this work; when thou shouldst wind up thy heart to heaven, it is biased another way: it is entangled, and can no more ascend in divine meditation, than the bird can fly whose wings are clipt, or that is taken in the snare. Sin doth cut the very sinews of the soul; therefore I say of this heavenly life as

Mr. Bolton saith of prayer, "Either it will make thee leave sinning, or sin will make thee leave it," and that quickly too: for these cannot continue together. If heaven and hell can meet together, then mayest thou live in thy sin, and in the tastes of glory. If therefore thou find thyself guilty, never doubt but this is the cause that estrangeth thee from heaven; and take heed lest it keep out thee, as it keeps out thy heart. Yea, if thou be a man that hitherto hast escaped, and knowest no reigning sin in thy soul, yet let this warning move thee to prevention, and stir up a dread of this danger in thy spirit; especially resolve to keep from the occasions of sin, and, as much as possible, out of the way of temptations.

2. A second hinderance carefully to be avoided, is an earthly mind; for you may easily conceive, that this cannot stand with a heavenly mind. God and mammon, earth and heaven, cannot both have the delight of thy heart. This makes thee like Anselm's bird, with a stone tied to the foot, which as oft as she took flight, did pluck her to the earth again. If thou be a man that hast fancied to thyself, some happiness to be found on earth, and beginnest to taste a sweetness in gain, and to aspire after a higher estate, and art driving on thy design; believe it, thou art marching with thy back upon Christ, and art posting apace from this heavenly life. Hath not the world that from thee, which God hath from the believer? When he is blessing himself in God, and rejoicing in hope of the glory to come; then thou art blessing thyself in thy prosperity.

It may be thou holdest on thy course of duty, and prayest as oft as thou didst before; it may be thou keepest in with good ministers, and with good men, and seemest as forward in religion as ever: but what is all this to the purpose? Mock not thy soul, man; for God will not be mocked. Thine earthly mind may consist with thy common duties; but it cannot consist with this heavenly duty. I need not tell thee this, if thou wouldst not be a traitor to thy own soul: thou knowest thyself how seldom and cold, how cursory and strange, thy thoughts have been of the joys hereafter, ever since thou didst trade so eagerly for the world.

Methinks I even perceive thy conscience stir now, and tell thee plainly, that this is thy case. Hear it, man! O hear it now; lest thou hear it in another manner when thou wouldst be full loath. O the cursed madness of many that seem to be religious! who thrust themselves into the multitude of employments, and think they can never have business enough, till they are so loaded with labours, and clogged with cares, that their souls are as unfit to converse with God, as a man to walk with a mountain on his back. And

when all is done, and they have lost that heaven they might have had upon earth, they take up a few rotten arguments to prove it lawful, and then they think that they have salved all. They miss not the pleasures of this heavenly life, if they can but quiet their consciences, while they fasten upon lower and baser pleasures.

For thee, O Christian! who hast tasted of these pleasures, I advise thee, as thou valuest their enjoyment, as ever thou would taste of them any more, take heed of this gulf of an earthly mind: for if once thou comest to this, "that thou wilt be rich, thou fallest into temptation, and a snare, and into divers foolish and hurtful lusts." Keep these things as thy upper garments still loose about thee, that thou mayest lay them by whenever there is cause; but let God and glory be next thy heart, yea, as the very blood and spirit by which thou livest: still remember that of the Spirit, "The friendship of the world is enmity with God; whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God." And "love not the world, nor the things in the world: if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." This is plain dealing; and happy he that faithfully receives it.

3. A third hinderance of which I must advise thee to beware is, the company of ungodly and sensual men. Not that I would dissuade thee from necessary converse, or from doing them any office of love: nor would I have thee conclude them to be dogs and swine, that so thou mayest evade the duty of reproof; nor yet to judge them such at all, before thou art certain they are such indeed.

But it is the unnecessary society of ungodly men, and familiarity with unprofitable companions, though they be not so apparently ungodly, that I dissuade you from. It is not only the open profane, the swearer, the drunkard, that will prove hurtful to us; but dead-hearted formalists, or persons merely civil, and moral, or whose conference is empty, unsavoury, and barren, may much divert our thoughts from heaven. As mere idleness, and forgetting God, will keep a soul as certainly from heaven, as a profane, licentious, fleshly life: so also will useless company as surely keep our hearts from heaven, as the company of men more dissolute and profane. Alas! our dulness and backwardness is such, that we have need of the most constant and powerful helps: a clod, or a stone, that lies on the earth is as prone to arise and fly in the air, as our hearts are to move toward heaven. You need not hold them from flying up to the skies; it is sufficient that you do not help them. If our spirits have not great assistance, they may easily be kept from flying aloft, though they never should meet with the least impedi-



ment. O think of this in the choice of your company: when your spirits need no help to lift them up, but as the flames you are always mounting upward, and carrying with you all that is in your way, then you may indeed be less careful of your company; but till then be careful therein. As it is reported of a lord that was near his death, and the doctor that prayed with him read over the litany, "For all women labouring with child, for all sick persons, and young children," &c.—"From lightning and tempest; from plague, pestilence, and famine; from battle and murder, and from sudden death." "Alas!" saith he, "what is this to me, who must presently die?" So mayest thou say of such men's conference, Alas! what is this to me, who must shortly be in rest? What will it advantage thee to a life with God, to hear where the fair is such a day, or how the market goes, or what weather it is, or is like to be, or when the moon changed, or what news is stirring? What will it conduce to the raising thy heart God-ward, to hear that this is an able minister, or that an able Christian, or that this was an excellent sermon, or that is an excellent book; to hear a discourse of baptisms, ceremonies, the order of God's decrees, or other such controversies of great difficulty, and less importance? Yet this, for the most part, is the sweetest discourse that you are likely to have of a formal dead-hearted professor. If thou hadst newly been warming thy heart with the joys above, would not this discourse quickly freeze it again? I appeal to the judgment of any man that hath tried it, and maketh observations on the frame of his spirit.

4. A fourth hinderance to heavenly conversation is, disputes about lesser truths, and especially when a man's religion lies only in his opinions; a sure sign of an unsanctified soul. If sad examples be regarded, I need say the less upon this. It is legibly written in the faces of thousands; it is visible in the complexion of our deceased nation. They are men least acquainted with a heavenly life, who are the violent disputers about the circumstantials of religion: he whose religion is all in his opinions, will be most frequently and zealously speaking his opinions; and he whose religion lies in the knowledge and love of God in Christ, of that time when he shall enjoy God and Christ. As the body doth languish in consuming fevers, when the native heat abates within, and an unnatural heat inflaming the external parts succeeds; so when the zeal of a Christian doth leave the internals of religion, and fly to externals, or inferior things, the soul must needs consume and languish. Yea, though you were sure your opinions were true, yet when the chief of your zeal is turned thither, and the chief of your conference there laid out, the life of grace decays within.

Therefore let me advise you that aspire after this joyous life, spend not your thoughts, your time, your zeal, or your speeches, upon quarrels that less concern your souls: but when others are feeding on husks or shells, or on this heated food which will burn their lips far sooner than warm and strengthen their hearts; then do you feed on the joys above. I could wish you were all understanding men, able to defend every truth of God; but still I would have the chief to be chiefly studied, and none to shoulder out your thoughts of eternity: the least controverted points are usually most weighty, and of most necessary use to our souls.

5. As you value the comforts of a heavenly life, take heed of a proud and lofty spirit. There is such an antipathy between this sin and God, that thou wilt never get thy heart near him, as long as this prevaileth in it. If it cast the angels from heaven that were in it, it must needs keep thy heart estranged from it. If it cast our first parents out of paradise, and separated between the Lord and us, it must needs keep our hearts from paradise, and increase the cursed separation from our God. The delight of God is an humble soul, even him that is contrite, and trembleth at his word: and the delight of an humble soul is in God: and sure where there is mutual delight, there will be freest admittance, and heartiest welcome, and most frequent converse. Well then, art thou a man of worth in thine own eyes? And very tender of thine esteem with others? Art thou one that much valuest applause, and feelest delight when thou hearest of thy great esteem with men; and art dejected when thou hearest that men slight thee? Dost thou love those most who best honour thee; and doth thy heart bear a grudge at those that thou thinkest undervalue thee? Wilt thou not be brought to shame thyself, by humble confession, when thou hast sinned against God, or injured thy brother? Art thou one that honourest the rich? And thinkest thyself somebody if they value and own thee? But lookest strangely at the poor, and art almost ashamed to be their companion? Art thou unacquainted with the deceitfulness and wickedness of thy heart? Or knowest thyself to be vile only by reading, not by feeling thy vileness? Art thou readier to defend thyself, and maintain thine innocency, than to accuse thyself, or confess thy fault? Canst thou hardly hear a close reproof, or plain dealing, without difficulty and distaste? Art thou readier in thy discourse to teach than to learn: and to dictate to others, than to hearken to their instructions? Art thou bold and confident of thy own opinions, and little suspicious of the weakness of thy understanding? but a slighter of the judgment of all that are against thee? Is thy spirit more disposed to command than to obey? Art thou

ready to censure the doctrine of thy teachers, the actions of thy rulers, and the persons of thy brethren? and to think, if thou wert a judge, thou wouldst be more just; or if thou wert a minister, thou wouldst be more fruitful and more faithful? If these symptoms be in thy heart, beyond doubt thou art a proud person. Thou art abominably proud; there is too much of hell abiding in thee, for thee to have any acquaintance at heaven: thy soul is too like the devil, to have any familiarity with God.

I entreat you be very jealous of your souls in this point: there is nothing will more estrange you from God: I speak the more of it, because it is the most common and dangerous sin, and most promoting the great sin of infidelity: you would little think what humble carriage, what exclaiming against pride, what self accusing, may stand with this devilish sin of pride. O Christian, if thou wouldst live continually in the presence of thy Lord, and lie in the dust, he would thence take thee up; descend first with him into the grave, and thence thou mayest ascend with him to glory. Learn of him to be meek and lowly, and then thou mayest taste of this rest to thy soul. Thy soul else will be "as the troubled sea, which cannot rest;" and instead of these sweet delights in God, thy pride will fill thee with perpetual disquietude.

6. Another impediment to this heavenly life is, laziness, and slothfulness of spirit: and I verily think for knowing men, there is nothing hinders more than this. If it were only the exercise of the body, the moving of the lips, the bending of the knee, then men would as commonly step to heaven, as they go a few miles to visit a friend: yea, if it were to spend our days in numbering beads, and repeating certain words and prayers, or in the outward parts of duties commanded by God, yet it were comparatively easy: further, if it were only in the exercise of parts and gifts, it were easier to be heavenly minded. But it is a work more difficult than all this: to separate our thoughts and affections from the world; to draw forth all our graces in their order, and exercise each on its proper object; to hold them to this, till the work doth thrive and prosper in their hands; this is the difficult task. Heaven is above thee, the way is upwards; dost thou think, who art a feeble sinner, to travel daily this steep ascent without a great deal of labour and resolution? Canst thou get that earthly heart to heaven, and bring that backward mind to God, while thou liest still, and takest thine ease? If lying down at the foot of the hill, and looking toward the top, and wishing we were there, would serve the turn, then we should have daily travellers for heaven. But "the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." There must be violence used to

get the first fruits, as well as to get the full possession. Dost thou not feel it so, though I should not tell thee? Will thy heart get upwards except thou drive it? Dost thou find it easy to dwell in the delights above? It is true the work is sweet, and no condition on earth so desirable; but therefore it is that our hearts are so backward; especially in the beginning, till we are acquainted with it. O how many who can easily bring their hearts to ordinary duties, as reading, hearing, praying, conferring, could never yet in all their lives, bring them, and keep them, to a heavenly contemplation one half hour together! Consider here, reader, as before the Lord, whether this be not thine own case. Thou hast known that heaven is all thy hopes; thou knowest thou must shortly be turned hence, and that nothing below can yield thee rest; thou knowest also that a strange heart, a seldom and careless thinking of heaven, can fetch but little comfort thence: and dost thou yet, for all this, let slip thy opportunities, when thou shouldst walk above, and live with God? Dost thou commend the sweetness of a heavenly life, and yet didst never once try it thyself? But as the sluggard that stretched himself on his bed, and cried, O that this were working! so dost thou live at thy ease, and say, O that I could get my heart to heaven! How many read books and hear sermons, in expectation to hear of some easy course, or to meet with a shorter cut to comforts, than ever they are like to find? And if they can hear of none from the preachers of truth, they will snatch it with rejoicing from the teachers of falsehood: and presently applaud the excellency of the doctrine, because it hath fitted their lazy temper; and think there is no other doctrine will comfort the soul, because it will not comfort it with hearing and looking on. And while they pretend enmity only to the law, they oppose the easier conditions of the gospel, and cast off the burden which all must bear that find rest to their souls: the Lord of light, and Spirit of comfort, show these men in time, a surer way for lasting comfort. It was an established law among the Argi, that if a man were perceived to be idle and lazy, he must give an account before the magistrate, how he came by his victuals and maintenance: and sure when I see these men lazy in the use of God's appointed means for comfort, I cannot but question how they came by their comforts. I would they would examine it thoroughly themselves; for God will require an account of it from them. Idleness, and not improving the truth in painful duty, is the common cause of men's seeking comfort from error; even as the people of Israel, when they had no comfortable answer from God, because of their own sin and neglect, would run to seek it from the idols of the

Heathens: so when men are false hearted, and the Spirit of truth denies them comfort, because they deny him obedience, they will seek it from a lying spirit.

My advice to such a lazy sinner, is this: as thou art convicted that this work is necessary to thy comfort, so resolvedly set upon it: if thy heart draw back, and be undisposed, force it on with the command of reason; and if thy reason begin to dispute the work, force it with producing the command of God: and quicken it with the consideration of thy necessity, and the other motives before propounded: and let the enforcements that brought thee to the work, be still in thy mind to quicken thee in it. Do not let such an incomparable treasure lie before thee, while thou liest still with thy hand in thy bosom: let not thy life be a continual vexation, which might be a continual feast, and all because thou wilt not be at the pains. When thou hast once tasted the sweetness of it, and a little used thy heart to the work, thou wilt find the pains thou takest abundantly recompensed. Only sit not still with a disconsolate spirit, while comforts grow before thine eyes. Neither is it a few formal, lazy, running thoughts, that will fetch thee this consolation from above; no more than a few lazy, formal words will prevail with God instead of fervent prayer. I know Christ is the fountain, and I know this, as every other gift, is of God: but yet if thou ask my advice, how to obtain these waters of consolation, I must tell thee, there is something also for thee to do: the gospel hath its conditions and works, though not such impossible ones, as the law; Christ hath his yoke and his burden, though easy, and thou must take it up, or thou wilt never find rest to thy soul. I know so far as you are spiritual, you need not all this striving and violence, but that is but in part, and in part you are carnal; and as long as it is so, there is no talk of ease. It was the Parthians' custom, that none must give their children any meat in the morning, before they saw the sweat on their faces: and you shall find this to be God's most usual course, not to give his children the taste of his delights, till they begin to sweat in seeking after them. Therefore lay them both together, and judge whether a heavenly life, or thy ease, be better; and make the choice accordingly. Yet this let me say, thou needest not expend thy thoughts more than now thou dost; it is but only to employ them better: I press thee not to busy thy mind much more than thou dost; but to busy it upon better and more pleasant objects. Employ but so many serious thoughts every day, upon the excellent glory of the life to come, as thou now employest on the affairs in the world; nay, as thou daily locest on vanities, and thy heart will be at heaven in a short space.

7. It is also a dangerous hinderance, to content ourselves with the mere preparatives to this heavenly life, while we are strangers to the life itself: when we take up with the mere studies of heavenly things, and the notions and thoughts of them in our brain, or the talking of them with one another, as if this were all that makes us heavenly people. There is none in more danger of this snare, than those that are much in public duty, especially preachers of the gospel. O how easily may they be deceived here, while they do nothing more than read of heaven, and study of heaven, and preach of heaven, and pray, and talk of heaven! What, is not this the heavenly life? O that God would reveal to our hearts the danger of this snare! Alas, all this is but mere preparation: this is not the life we speak of, though it is a help thereto. I entreat every one of my brethren in the ministry, that they search and watch against this temptation: this is but gathering the materials, and not the erecting the building: this is but gathering manna for others, not eating and digesting it ourselves: as he that sits at home may study geography, and draw most exact descriptions of countries, and yet never see them, nor travel toward them; so may you describe to others the joys of heaven, and yet never come near it in your own hearts: if you should study of nothing but heaven while you lived, and preach of nothing but heaven to your people, yet might your own hearts be strangers to it: we are under a more subtle temptation than other men to draw us from this heavenly life: if our employments lay at a greater distance from heaven, we should not be so apt to be thus deluded: but when we find ourselves employed upon nothing else, we are easier drawn to take up here. Studying and preaching of heaven is more like to a heavenly life, than thinking and talking of the world is, and the likeness it is that may deceive us: this is to die the most miserable death, even to famish ourselves, because we have bread on our tables, and to die for thirst while we draw water for others: thinking it enough that we have daily to do with it, though we never drink it.

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## CHAPTER IV.

### SOME GENERAL HELPS TO HEAVENLY MINDEDNESS.

HAVING thus showed thee what hinderances will resist thee in the work, I shall now lay down some positive helps. But first, I expect that thou resolve against the forementioned impediments, that thou read them seriously, and avoid them faithfully, or else thy labour will be all in vain; thou dost but go about to reconcile light and darkness,

Christ and Belial, heaven and hell, in thy spirit. I must tell thee also, that I expect thy promise, faithfully to set upon the helps which I prescribe thee; and that the reading of them will not bring heaven into thy heart, but in their constant practice the Spirit will do it.

As thou valuest then these foretastes of heaven, make conscience of performing these following duties:

1. Know heaven to be the only treasure, and labour to know what a treasure it is: be convinced that thou hast no other happiness, and be convinced what happiness is there: if thou dost not soundly believe it to be the chief good, thou wilt never set thy heart upon it; and this conviction must sink into thy affections: for if it be only a notion, it will have little operation.

2. Labour as to know heaven to be the only happiness, so also to be thy happiness. Though the knowledge of excellency and suitableness may stir up that love which worketh by desire, yet there must be the knowledge of our interest or propriety to the setting at work our love of complacency. We may confess heaven to be the best condition, though we despair of enjoying it; and we may desire and seek it, if we see the obtainment to be but probable; but we can never delightfully rejoice in it, till we are persuaded of our title to it. What comfort is it to a man that is naked, to see the rich attire of others? Or, to a man that hath not a bit to put in his mouth, to see a feast which he must not taste of? What delight hath a man that hath not a house to put his head in, to see the sumptuous buildings of others? Would not all this rather increase his anguish, and make him more sensible of his misery? So, for a man to know the excellencies of heaven, and not to know whether he shall ever enjoy them, may well raise desire to seek it, but it will raise but little joy and content.

3. Another help to the foretaste of rest is this: labour to apprehend how near it is: think seriously of its speedy approach. That which we think is near at hand, we are more sensible of than that which we behold at a distance. When we hear of war or famine in another country, it troubleth us not so much; or if we hear it prophesied of a long time hence: so if we hear of plenty a great way off, or of a golden age that shall fall out, who knows when, this never rejoiceth us. But if judgments or mercies draw near, then they affect us. This makes men think on heaven so insensibly, because they conceit it at a great distance: they look on it as twenty, or thirty, or forty years off; and this it is that dulls their sense. As wicked men are fearless and senseless of judgment, because the sentence is not speedily executed; so are the good deceived of their comforts, by

supposing them further off than they are. How much better were it to receive the sentence of death in ourselves, and to look on eternity as near at hand? Surely, reader, thou standest at the door, and hundreds of diseases are ready waiting to open the door and let thee in. Are not the thirty or forty years of thy life that are past, quickly gone? Are they not a very little time when thou lookest back on them? And will not all the rest be shortly so too? Do not days and nights come very thick? Dost thou not feel that building of flesh to shake, and perceive thy house of clay to totter? Look on thy glass, see how it runs: look on thy watch, how fast it goeth; what a short moment is between us and our rest; what a step is it from hence to everlastingness! While I am thinking and writing of it, it hasteth near, and I am even entering into it before I am aware. While thou art reading this, it posteth on, and thy life will be gone as a tale that is told. Mayest thou not easily foresee thy dying time, and look upon thyself as ready to depart? It is but a few days till thy friends shall lay thee in the grave, and others do the like for them. If you verily believed you should die to-morrow, how seriously would you think of heaven to-night! The true apprehensions of the nearness of eternity, doth make men's thoughts of it quick and piercing; put life into their fears and sorrows, if they be unfit; and into their desires and joys, if they have assurance of its glory.

4. Another help to this is, to be much in serious discoursing of it, especially with those that can speak from their hearts. It is pity (saith Mr. Bolton) that Christians should ever meet together, without some talk of their meeting in heaven: it is pity so much precious time is spent in vain discourses, and useless disputes, and not a sober word of heaven. Methinks we should meet together on purpose to warm our spirits with discoursing of our rest. To hear a minister or private Christian set forth that glorious state, with power and life from the promises of the gospel, methinks should make us say, as the two disciples, "Did not our hearts burn within us, while he was opening to us the Scripture?" While he was opening to us the windows of heaven? Get then together, fellow Christians, and talk of the affairs of your country and kingdom, and comfort one another with such words. This may make our hearts revive within us, as it did Jacob's to hear the message that called him to Goshen, and to see the chariots that should bring him to Joseph. O that we were furnished with skill and resolution to turn the stream of men's common discourse to these more sublime and precious things! And when men begin to talk of things unprofitable, that we could tell how to put in a word for heaven.



5. Another help is this; make it thy business in every duty, to wind up thy affections nearer heaven. A man's attainments from God are answerable to his own desires and ends; that which he sincerely seeks he finds: God's end in the institution of his ordinances was, that they be as so many stepping stones to our rest, and as the stairs by which (in subordination to Christ) we may daily ascend unto it in our affections: let this be thy end in using them, as it was God's end in ordaining them; and doubtless they will not be unsuccessful. Men that are separated by sea and land, can yet, by letters, carry on great trades, even to the value of their whole estate: and may not a Christian in the wise improvement of duties, drive on this happy trade for rest? Come not therefore with any lower ends to duties; renounce familiarity, customariness, and applause. When thou kneelest down in secret or public prayer, let it be in hope to get thy heart nearer God before thou risest off thy knees: when thou openest thy Bible or other books, let it be with this hope, to meet with some passage of Divine truth, and some such blessings of the Spirit with it, as may raise thine affections nearer heaven: when thou art setting thy foot out of thy door to go to the public worship, say, I hope to meet with somewhat from God that may raise my affections before I return; I hope the Spirit will give me the meeting, and sweeten my heart with those celestial delights; I hope that Christ will appear to me in the way, and shine about me with light from heaven, and let me hear his instructing and reviving voice, and cause the scales to fall from mine eyes, that I may see more of that glory than I ever yet saw; I hope before I return to my house, my Lord will take my heart in hand, and bring it within the view of rest, and set it before his Father's presence, that I may return as the shepherds from the heavenly vision, glorifying and praising God. Remember also to pray for thy teacher, that God would put some divine message into his mouth, which may leave a heavenly relish on thy spirit.

If these were our ends, and this our course, when we set to duty, we should not be so strange as we are to heaven.

6. Another help is this; make an advantage of every object thou seest, and of every passage of Divine Providence, and of every thing that befalls thee in thy labour and calling, to mind thy soul of its approaching rest. As all providences and creatures are means to our rest, so do they point us to that as their end. Every creature hath the name of God and of our final rest written upon it, which a considerate believer may as truly discern, as he can read upon a hand in a cross-way the name of the town or city it points to. This spiritual use of creatures and providences is God's

great end in bestowing them on man; and he that overlooks this end, must needs rob God of his chief praise, and deny him the greatest part of his thanks. This relation that our present mercies have to our great eternal mercies, is the very quintessence and spirit of all these mercies; therefore do they lose the very spirit of all their mercies, and take nothing but the husks, who overlook this relation, and draw not forth the sweetness of it in their contemplations. God's sweetest dealings with us would not be half so sweet as they are, if they did not intimate some further sweetness. As ourselves have a fleshly and spiritual substance, so have our mercies a fleshly and spiritual use, and are fitted to the nourishing of both our parts. He that receives the carnal part, and no more, may have his body comforted by them, but not his soul. O, therefore, that Christians were skilled in this art! You can open your Bibles, and read there of God and of glory: O learn to open the creatures, and the several passages of Providence, to read of God and glory there. Certainly, by such a skilful improvement, we might have a fuller taste of Christ and heaven, in every bit we eat, and in every draught we drink, than most men have in the use of the sacrament.

If thou prosper in the world, let it make thee more sensible of thy perpetual prosperity: if thou be weary of thy labours, let it make thy thoughts of rest more sweet: if things go cross with thee, let it make thee more earnestly desire that day, when all thy sufferings and sorrow shall cease. Is thy body refreshed with food or sleep? remember the inconceivable refreshings with Christ. Dost thou hear any news that makes thee glad? remember what glad tidings it will be to hear the sound of the trump of God, and the absolving sentence of Christ our judge. Art thou delighting thyself in the society of the saints? remember the everlasting amiable society thou shalt have with perfected saints in rest. Is God communicating himself to thy spirit? remember that time when thy joy shall be full. Dost thou hear or feel the tempest of wars, or see any cloud of blood arising? remember the day that thou shalt be housed with Christ, where there is nothing but calmness and amiable union, and where we shall solace ourselves in perfect peace, under the wings of the Prince of Peace. Thus you may see what advantages to a heavenly life every condition and creature doth afford us, if we have but hearts to apprehend and improve them.

7. Another singular help is this: be much in that angelical work of praise. As the most heavenly spirits will have the most heavenly employment, so the more heavenly the employment, the more will it make the spirit heavenly: though the heart be the fountain of all our actions, yet do those

actions, by a kind of reflection, work much on the heart from whence they spring; the like also may be said of our speeches. So that the work of praising God, being the most heavenly work, is likely to raise us to the most heavenly temper. This is the work of those saints and angels, and this will be our own everlasting work: if we were more taken up in this employment now, we should be liker to what we shall be then. When Aristotle was asked what he thought of music, he answers, "Jovem neque canere neque citharam pulsare;" that Jupiter did neither sing nor play on the harp; thinking it an unprofitable art to men, which was no more delightful to God. But Christians may better argue from the like ground, that singing of praise is a most profitable duty, because it is as it were so delightful to God himself, that he hath made it his people's eternal work; for "they shall sing the song of Moses, and the song of the Lamb." As desire, and faith, and hope, are of shorter continuance than love and joy; so also preaching, and prayer, and sacraments, and all means for confirmation, and expression of faith and hope shall cease, when our thanks, and praise, and triumphant expressions of love and joy, shall abide for ever. The liveliest emblem of heaven that I know upon earth is, when the people of God, in the deep sense of his excellency and bounty, from hearts abounding with love and joy, join together both in heart and voice, in the cheerful and melodious singing of his praise. Those that deny the use of singing, disclose their unheavenly unexperienced hearts, as well as their ignorant understandings. Had they felt the heavenly delights that many of their brethren in such duties have felt, they would have been of another mind! And whereas they are wont to question, whether such delights be genuine, or any better than carnal or delusive; surely the very relish of God and heaven that is in them, the example of the saints, in Scripture, whose spirits have been raised by the same duty and the command of Scripture for the use of this means, one would think should quickly destroy the controversy. And a man may as truly say of these delights, as of the testimony of the Spirit, that they witness themselves to be of God.

Little do we know how we wrong ourselves, by shutting out of our prayers the praises of God, or allowing them so narrow a room as we usually do. Reader, I entreat thee, remember this: let praises have a larger room in thy duties; keep ready at hand matter to feed thy praise, as well as matter for confession and petition. To this end study the excellencies and goodness of the Lord, as frequently as thy own necessities and vileness; study the mercies which thou hast received, and which are promised; both their own

worth and their aggravating circumstances, as often as thou studiest the sins thou hast committed. O let God's praise be much in your mouths. Seven times a day did David praise him: yea, his praise was continually of him. As he that offereth praise glorifieth God, so doth he most rejoice and glad his own soul. "Offer therefore the sacrifice of praise continually: in the midst of the church let us sing his praise."

I confess, to a man of a languishing body, where the heart faints, and the spirits are feeble, the cheerful praising of God is more difficult; because the body is the soul's instrument, and when it lies unstrung, or untuned, the music is likely to be accordingly. Yet a spiritual cheerfulness there may be within, and the heart may praise, if not the voice. But where the body is strong, the spirits lively, and the heart cheerful, and the voice at command, what advantage have such for this heavenly work? With what alacrity may they sing forth praises? O the madness of healthful youth, that lay out this vigour of body and mind upon vain delights, which is so fit for the noblest work of men! And O the sinful folly of many who drench their spirits in continual sadness, and waste their days in complaints and groans, and so make themselves unfit for this sweet and heavenly work! that when they should join with the people of God in his praise, and delight their souls in singing to his name, they are studying their miseries, and so rob God of his praise, and themselves of their solace. But the greatest destroyer of our comfort in this duty is our sticking in the tune and melody, and suffering the heart to be all the while idle, which should perform the chief part of the work.

8. Another thing I will advise you to is this: be a careful observer of the drawings of the Spirit, and fearful of quenching its motions, of resisting its workings: if ever thy soul get above this earth, and get acquainted with this living in heaven, the Spirit of God must be to thee as the chariot to Elijah; yea, the very living principle by which thou must move and ascend to heaven. O then grieve not thy guide, quench not thy life: if thou dost, no wonder if thy soul be at a loss: you little think how much the life of all your graces depends upon your ready and cordial obedience to the Spirit: when the Spirit urgeth thee to secret prayer, and thou refuseth obedience; when he forbids thee a known transgression, and yet thou wilt go on; when he telleth thee which is the way, and which not, and thou wilt not regard, no wonder if heaven and thy soul be strange: if thou wilt not follow the Spirit, while it would draw thee to Christ, and to duty; how should it lead thee to heaven, and bring thy heart into the presence of God? O what bold access

shall that soul find in its approaches to the Almighty, that is accustomed to a constant obeying of the Spirit. And how backward, how dull, and strange, and ashamed, will he be to these addresses, who hath long used to break away from the Spirit that would have guided him! I beseech thee learn well this lesson, and try this course: let not the motions of thy body only, but the thoughts of thy heart, be at the Spirit's beck. Dost thou not feel sometimes a strong impulsion to retire from the world, and draw near to God? O do not thou disobey, but take the offer, and hoist up sail while thou mayest have this blessed gale. When this wind blows strongest, thou goest fastest, either backward or forward. The more of this Spirit we resist, the deeper will it wound, and the more we obey, the speedier is our pace; as he goes heaviest that hath the wind in his face, and he easiest that hath it in his back.

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## CHAPTER V.

### A DESCRIPTION OF HEAVENLY CONTEMPLATION.

THE main thing intended is yet behind, and that which I aimed at when I set upon this work. All that I have said is but the preparation to this. I once more entreat thee, therefore, as thou art a man that makest conscience of a revealed duty, and that darest not wilfully resist the Spirit; as thou valuest the high delights of a saint, and as thou art faithful to the peace and prosperity of thine own soul; that thou diligently study the directions following, and that thou speedily and faithfully put them in practice: I pray thee, therefore, resolve before thou readest any further, and promise here, as before the Lord, that if the following advice be wholesome to thy soul, thou wilt seriously set thyself to the work, and that no laziness of spirit shall take thee off, nor lesser business interrupt thy course, but that thou wilt approve thyself a doer of this word, and not an idle hearer only. Is this thy promise, and wilt thou stand to it? Resolve, man, and then I shall be encouraged to give thee my advice; only try it thoroughly, and then judge: if in the faithful following of this course thou dost not find an increase of all thy graces, and art not made more serviceable in thy place; if thy soul enjoy not more fellowship with God, and thy life be not fuller of pleasure, and thou have not comfort readier by thee at a dying hour, and when thou hast greatest need; then throw these directions back in my face, and exclaim against me as a deceiver for ever: except God should leave thee uncomfortable for a little season, for the more glorious manifestation of his attributes, and thy integrity; and single

thee out as he did Job, for an example of constancy and patience, which would be but a preparative for thy fullest comfort. Certainly God will not forsake this his own ordinance, but will be found of those that thus diligently seek him. God hath, as it were, appointed to meet thee in this way: do not thou fail to give him the meeting, and thou shalt find by experience that he will not fail.

The duty which I press upon thee so earnestly, I shall now describe: it is the set and solemn acting of all the powers of the soul upon this most perfect object [rest] by meditation.

I will a little more fully explain the meaning of this description, that so the duty may lie plain before thee. 1. The general title that I give this duty is, *meditation*: not as it is precisely distinguished from cogitation, consideration, and contemplation; but as it is taken in the larger and usual sense for cogitation on things spiritual, and so comprehending consideration and contemplation.

That meditation is a duty of God's ordaining, not only in his written law, but also in nature itself, I never met with the man that would deny: but that it is a duty constantly practised, I must, with sorrow, deny: it is in word confessed to be a duty by all, but by the constant neglect denied by most: and (I know not by what fatal security it comes to pass, that) men that are very tender conscienced toward most other duties, yet as easily overslip this, as if they knew it not to be a duty at all; they that are presently troubled if they omit a sermon, a fast, a prayer in public or private, yet were never troubled that they have omitted meditation, perhaps, all their lifetime to this very day: though it be that duty by which all other duties are improved, and by which the soul digesteth truths, and draweth forth their strength for its nourishment. Certainly, I think, that as a man is but half an hour taking into his stomach that meat which he must have seven or eight hours to digest; so a man may take into his understanding and memory more truth in one hour, than he is able well to digest in many. Therefore God commanded Joshua, "That the book of the law should not depart out of his mouth, but that he should meditate therein day and night: that he might observe to do according to that which is written therein." As digestion is the turning the food into chyle and blood, and spirits and flesh; so meditation, rightly managed, turneth the truths received and remembered into warm affection, raised resolution, and holy conversation. Therefore what good those men are likely to get by sermons or providences, who are unaccustomed to meditation, you may easily judge. And why so much preaching is lost

among us, and men can run from sermon to sermon, and yet have such languishing starved souls, I know no truer cause than their neglect of meditation. If men heard one hour and meditated seven; if they did as constantly digest their sermons as they hear them, they would find another kind of benefit by sermons, than the ordinary sort of Christians do.

But because meditation is a general word, and it is not all meditation that I here intend, I shall therefore lay down the difference whereby this I am urging is discerned from all other sorts of meditation. And the difference is taken from the act, and from the object of it.

From the act, which I call the set and solemn acting of all the powers of the soul.

1. I call it the acting of them, for it is action that we are directing you in now, and not dispositions; yet these also are necessarily presupposed: it must be a soul that is qualified for the work, by the supernatural grace of the Spirit, which must be able to perform this heavenly exercise. It is a work of the living, and not of the dead: it is a work of all other the most spiritual, and therefore not to be well performed by a heart that is merely carnal.

2. I call this meditation the acting of the powers of the soul, meaning the soul as rational. It is the work of the soul; for bodily exercise doth here profit but little. The soul hath its labour and its ease, its business and its idleness, as well as the body; and diligent students are usually as sensible of the labour and weariness of their spirits, as they are of that of the members of the body. This action of the soul is it I persuade thee to.

3. I call it the acting of ALL the powers of the soul, to difference it from the common meditation of students, which is usually the mere employment of the brain. It is not a bare thinking that I mean, nor the mere use of invention or memory, but a business of a higher and more excellent nature.

The understanding is not the whole soul, and therefore cannot do the whole work: as God hath made several parts in man, to perform their several offices for his nourishment and life; so hath he ordained the faculties of the soul to perform their several offices for his spiritual life; so the understanding must take in truths, and prepare them for the will, and it must receive them, and commend them to the affections: the best digestion is in the bottom of the stomach; the affections are as it were the bottom of the soul, and therefore the best digestion is there; while truth is but a speculation swimming in the brain, the soul hath not taken fast hold of it: Christ and heaven have various

excellencies, and therefore God hath formed the soul with a power of divers ways of apprehending, that so we might be capable of enjoying those excellencies.

What good could all the glory of heaven have done us? or what pleasure should we have had in the goodness of God himself, if we had been without the affections of love and joy, whereby we are capable of being delighted in that goodness? So also, what strength or sweetness canst thou receive by thy meditations on eternity, while thou dost not exercise those affections which are the senses of the soul, by which it must receive this strength and sweetness!

This is it that hath deceived Christians in this business: they have thought meditation is nothing but the bare thinking on truths, and the rolling of them in the understanding and memory, when every school boy can do this.

Therefore this is the great task in hand, and this is the work that I would set thee on; to get these truths from thy head to thy heart; that all the sermons which thou hast heard of heaven, and all the notions thou hast conceived of this rest, may be turned into the blood and spirit of affection, and thou mayest feel them revive thee, and warm thee at the heart, and mayest so think of heaven, as heaven should be thought on.

If thou shouldst study nothing but heaven while thou livest, and shouldst have thy thoughts at command, to turn them thither on every occasion, and yet shouldst proceed no further than this, this were not the meditation that I intended: as it is thy whole soul that must possess God hereafter, so must the whole in a lower manner possess him here. I have shown you, in the beginning of this treatise, how the soul must enjoy the Lord in glory, to wit, by knowing, by loving, by joying in him: why, the very same way must thou begin thy enjoyment here.

So much as thy understanding and affections are sincerely acted upon God, so much dost thou enjoy him: and this is the happy work of this meditation. So that you see here is somewhat more to be done, than barely to remember and think of heaven: as running, and such like labours, do not only stir a hand or foot, but strain and exercise the whole body; so doth meditation the whole soul.

As the whole was filled with sin before, so the whole must be filled with God now; as St. Paul saith of knowledge, and gifts, and faith, to remove mountains, that if thou hast all these without love, thou art but "as a sounding brass, or as a tinkling cymbal," so I may say of the exercise of these, if in this work of meditation, thou exercise knowledge, and gifts, and faith of miracles, and not love and joy, thou dost nothing; if thy meditation tends to fill thy note book with



notions and good sayings concerning God, and not thy heart with longings after him, and delight in him, for aught I know thy book is as much a Christian as thou.

I call this meditation set and solemn, to difference it from that which is occasional. As there is prayer which is solemn, when we set ourselves wholly to the duty; and prayer which is sudden and short, commonly called ejaculations, when a man in the midst of other business doth send up some brief request to God: so also there is meditation solemn, when we apply ourselves only to that work; and there is meditation which is short and cursory, when in the midst of our business we have some good thoughts of God in our minds. And as solemn prayer is either first set, when a Christian observing it as a standing duty, doth resolutely practise it in a constant course; or secondly, occasional, when some unusual occasion doth put us upon it at a season extraordinary: so also meditation.

Now, though I would persuade you to that meditation which is mixed with your common labours, and to that which special occasions direct you to; yet these are not the main things which I here intend: but that you would make it a constant standing duty, as you do hearing, and praying, and reading the Scripture, and that you would solemnly set yourselves about it, and make it for that time your whole work, and intermix other matters no more with it, than you would do with praying, or other duties. Thus you see what kind of meditation it is that we speak of, viz. the set and solemn acting of all the powers of the soul.

The second part of the difference is drawn from its object, which is rest, or the most blessed estate of man in his everlasting enjoyment of God in heaven. Meditation hath a large field to walk in, and hath as many objects to work upon, as there are matters, and lines, and words in the Scriptures, as there are known creatures in the whole creation, and as there are particular discernible passages of Providence in the government of persons and actions through the world: but the meditation that I now direct you in, is only of the end of all these, and of these as they refer to that end: it is not a walk from mountains to valleys, from sea to land, from kingdom to kingdom, from planet to planet; but it is a walk from mountains and valleys to the holy mount Sion; from sea and land to the land of the living; from the kingdoms of this world to the kingdom of saints; from earth to heaven; from time to eternity. It is a walking upon the sun, and moon, and stars; it is a walk in the garden and paradise of God. It may seem far off; but spirits are quick; whether in the body, or out of the body, their motion is swift: they are not so heavy or dull as these earthly lumps,

nor so slow of motion as these clods of flesh. I would not have you cast off your other meditations; but surely as heaven hath the pre-eminence in perfection, so should it have the pre-eminence also in our meditation: that which will make us most happy when we possess it, will make us most joyful when we meditate upon it; especially when that meditation is a degree of possession, if it be such affecting meditation as I here describe.

You need not here be troubled with fear, lest studying so much on these high matters should make you mad. If I set you to meditate as much on sin and wrath, and to study nothing but judgment and damnation, then you might fear such an issue: but it is heaven, and not hell, that I would persuade you to walk in; it is joy, and not sorrow, that I persuade you to exercise. I would urge you to look on no deformed object, but only upon the ravishing glory of saints, and the unspeakable excellencies of the God of glory, and the beams that stream from the face of his Son. Are these sad thoughts? Will it distract a man to think of his happiness? Will it distract the miserable to think of mercy? Or the captive, or prisoner, to foresee deliverance? Neither do I persuade your thoughts to matters of great difficulty, or to study knotted controversies of heaven, or to search out things beyond your reach. If you should thus set your wit upon the tenters, you might quickly be distracted indeed; but it is your affections more than your inventions that must be used in this heavenly employment we speak of. They are truths which are commonly known, which your souls must draw forth and feed upon. The resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting, are articles of your creed, and not nicer controversies. Methinks it should be liker to make a man mad, to think of living in a world of wo, to think of abiding among the rage of wicked men, than to think of living with Christ in bliss; methinks, if we be not mad already, it should sooner distract us, to hear the tempests and roaring waves, to see the billows, and rocks, and sands, and gulfs, than to think of arriving safe at rest. "But wisdom is justified of all her children." Knowledge hath no enemy but the ignorant. This heavenly course was never spoken against by any, but those that never either knew it, or used it. I more fear the neglect of men that do approve it. Truth loseth much more by loose friends, than by the sharpest enemies.

## CHAPTER VI.

THE FITTEST TIME AND PLACE FOR THIS CONTEMPLATION, AND  
THE PREPARATION OF THE HEART UNTO IT.

THUS I have opened to you the nature of this duty ; I proceed to direct you in the work ; where I shall, First, Show you how you must set upon it ; Secondly, How you must behave in it ; and Thirdly, How you shall shut it up. I advise thee, 1. Somewhat concerning the time. 2. Somewhat concerning the place. And 3. Somewhat concerning the frame of thy spirit.

And 1. For the time, I advise thee that as much as may be, it be set and constant. Proportion out such a part of thy time to the work.

Stick not at their scruple, who question the stating of times as superstitious ; if thou suit out thy time to the advantage of the work, and place no religion in the time itself ; thou needest not to fear lest this be superstition. As a workman in his shop will have a set place for every one of his tools, or else when he should use it, it may be to seek ; so a Christian should have a set time for every ordinary duty, or else when he should practise it, it is ten to one but he will be put by it. Stated time is a hedge to duty, and defends it against many temptations to omission. God hath stated none but the Lord's day himself : but he hath left it to be stated by ourselves, according to every man's condition and occasions, lest otherwise his law should have been a burden or a snare. Yet hath he left us general rules, which by the use of reason, and Christian prudence, may help us to determine the fittest times.

It is as ridiculous a question of them that ask us, Where Scripture commands to pray so oft, or at such hours ? as if they asked, Where the Scripture commands that the church stand in such a place ? or the pulpit in such a place ? or my seat in such a place ? or where it commands a man to read the Scriptures with a pair of spectacles ?

Most that I have known to argue against a stated time, have at last grown careless of the duty itself, and showed more dislike against the work than the time. If God gave me so much money or wealth, and tell me not in Scripture how much such a poor man must have, nor how much my family, nor how much in clothes, and how much in expenses, is it not lawful, yea, and necessary, that I make the division myself, and allow to each the due portion ? So if God doth bestow on me a day or week of time, and give me such and such work to do in this time, and tell me not how much I

shall allot to each work; certainly I must make the division myself, and proportion it wisely and carefully too. Though God hath not told you at what hour you shall rise in the morning, or at what hours you shall eat and drink; yet your own reason and experience will tell you, that ordinarily you should observe a stated time. Neither let the fear of customariness and formality deter you from this. This argument hath brought the Lord's Supper from once a week to once a quarter, or once a year; and it hath brought family duties, with too many of late, from twice a day to once a week, or once a month.

I advise thee, therefore, if well thou mayest, to allow this duty a stated time, and be as constant in it, as in hearing and praying: yet be cautious in understanding this. I know this will not prove every man's duty: some have not themselves and their time at command, and therefore cannot set their hours; such are most servants, and many children of poor parents; and many are so poor, that the necessity of their families will deny them this freedom. I do not think it the duty of such to leave their labours for this work just at certain set times, no nor for prayer. Of two duties we must choose the greater, though of two sins we must choose neither. I think such persons were best to be watchful, to redeem time as much as they can, and take their vacant opportunities as they fall, and especially to join meditation and prayer, as much as they can, with the labours of their callings. There is no such enmity between labouring, and meditating or praying in the Spirit, but that both may be done together; yet I say, as Paul in another case, "If thou canst be free, use it rather." Those that have more spare time, I still advise, that they keep this duty to a stated time. And indeed it were no ill husbandry, nor point of folly, if we did so by all other duties; if we considered the ordinary works of the day, and suited out a fit season and proportion of time to every work, and fixed this in our memory and resolution, or wrote it in a table, and kept it in our closets, and never broke it but upon unexpected and extraordinary causes: if every work of the day had thus its appointed time, we should be better skilled, both in redeeming time, and performing duty.

2. I advise thee also concerning thy time for this duty, that as it be stated, so it be frequent: just how oft it should be, I cannot determine, because men's conditions may vary it; but in general, that it be frequent, the Scripture requireth, when it mentioneth meditating continually, and day and night. Circumstances of our condition may much vary the circumstance of our duties. It may be one man's duty to hear or pray oftener than another, and so it may be in this

of meditation: but for those that can conveniently omit other business, I advise, that it be once a day at least. Though Scripture tells us not how oft in a day we should eat or drink, yet prudence and experience will direct us twice or thrice a day.

Those that think they should not tie themselves to order and number of duties, but should then only meditate, or pray, when they find the Spirit provoking them to it, go upon uncertain and unchristian grounds. I am sure the Scripture provokes us to frequency, and our necessity secondeth the voice of Scripture; and if through my own neglect, or resisting the Spirit, I do not find it so excite me, I dare not therefore disobey the Scripture, nor neglect the necessities of my own soul. I should suspect that spirit which would turn my soul from constancy in duty: if the Spirit in Scripture bid me meditate or pray, I dare not forbear it, because I find not the Spirit within me to second the command: if I find not incitation to duty before, yet I may find assistance while I wait in performance. I am afraid of laying my corruptions upon the Spirit, or blaming the want of the Spirit's assistance, when I should blame the backwardness of my own heart; nor dare I make one corruption a plea for another; nor urge the inward rebellion of my nature, as a reason for the outward disobedience of my life; and for the healing of my nature's backwardness, I more expect that the Spirit of Christ should do it in a way of duty, than in a way of disobedience and neglect of duty. Men that fall on duty according to the frame of their spirit only, are like our ignorant vulgar, who think their appetite should be the only rule of their eating; when a wise man judgeth by reason and experience, lest when his appetite is depraved, he should either surfeit or famish. Our appetite is no sure rule for our times of duty; but the word of God in general, and our spiritual reason, experience, necessity, and convenience, in particular, may truly direct us.

Three reasons especially should persuade thee to frequency in this meditation on heaven.

1. Because seldom conversing with him will breed a strangeness betwixt thy soul and God: frequent society breeds familiarity, and familiarity increaseth love and delight, and maketh us bold and confident in our addresses. This is the main end of this duty, that thou mayest have acquaintance and fellowship with God therein; therefore if thou come but seldom to it, thou wilt keep thyself a stranger still, and so miss of the end of the work.

2. Seldomness will make thee unskilful in the work, and strange to the duty, as well as to God. How clumsily do men set their hands to a work they are seldom employed

in! whereas, frequency will habituate thy heart to the work, and thou wilt better know the way in which thou daily walkest, yea, and it will be more easy and delightful also: the hill which made thee pant and blow at the first going up, thou mayest run up easily when thou art once accustomed to it.

3. And lastly, Thou wilt lose that heat and life by long intermissions, which with much ado thou didst obtain in duty. If thou eat but a meal in two or three days, thou wilt lose thy strength as fast as thou gettest it: if in holy meditation thou get near to Christ, and warm thy heart with the fire of love, if thou then turn away, and come but seldom, thou wilt soon return to thy former coldness.

It is true, the intermixed use of other duties may do much to the keeping thy heart above, especially secret prayer: but meditation is the life of most other duties; and the view of heaven is the life of meditation.

3. Concerning the time of this duty, I advise thee, that thou choose the most seasonable time. All things are beautiful in their season. Unseasonableness may lose thee the fruit of thy labour; it may raise disturbances and difficulties in the work; yea, it may turn a duty to sin; when the seasonableness of a duty doth make it easy, doth remove impediments, doth embolden us to the undertaking, and ripen its fruit.

The seasons of this duty are either, first, ordinary; or secondly, extraordinary.

First, The ordinary season of your daily performance cannot be particularly determined, otherwise God would have determined it in his word. Men's conditions of employment, and freedom, and bodily temper, are so various, that the same may be a seasonable hour to one, which may be unseasonable to another. If thou be a servant, or a hard labourer, that thou hast not thy time at command, thou must take that season which thy business will best afford: either as thou sittest in the shop at thy work, or as thou travellest on the way, or as thou liest waking in the night. Every man best knows his own time, even when he hath the least to hinder him in the world: but for those whose necessities tie them not so close, but that they may choose what time of the day they will, my advice to such is, that they carefully observe the temper of their body and mind, and mark when they find their spirits most active and fit for contemplation, and pitch upon that as the stated time. Some men are freest for duties when they are fasting, and some are then unfittest of all. Every man is the meetest judge for himself. The time I have always found fittest for myself, is the evening, from sun setting to the

twilight; and some time in the night when it is warm and clear.

The Lord's day is a time exceeding seasonable for this exercise. When should we more seasonably contemplate on rest, than on that day which doth typify it to us? Neither do I think that typifying use is ceased, because the antitype is not fully come. However, it being a day appropriated to worship and spiritual duties, we should never exclude this duty, which is so eminently spiritual. I think verily this is the chief work of a Christian sabbath, and most agreeable to the intent of its positive institution. What fitter time to converse with our Lord, than on that day which he hath appropriated to such employment, and therefore called it the Lord's day? What fitter day to ascend to heaven than that on which our Lord did arise from earth, and fully triumph over death and hell, and take possession of heaven before us?

Two sorts of Christians I would entreat to take notice of this especially.

1. Those that spend the Lord's day only in public worship; either through the neglect of meditation, or else by their overmuch exercise of the public, allowing no time to private duty: though there be few that offend in this kind; yet some there are, and a hurtful mistake to the soul it is. They will grow but in gifts, if they exercise but their gifts in outward performances.

2. Those that have time on the Lord's day for idleness and vain discourse, and find the day longer than they know how well to spend: were these but acquainted with this duty of contemplation, they would need no other recreation; they would think the longest day short enough, and be sorry that the night had shortened their pleasure.

Secondly, For the extraordinary performance, these following are seasonable times:

1. When God doth extraordinarily revive thy spirit. When God hath enkindled thy spirit with fire from above, it is that it may mount aloft more freely. It is a choice part of a Christian's skill, to observe the temper of his own spirit, and to observe the gales of grace, and how the Spirit of Christ doth move upon his. "Without Christ we can do nothing:" therefore let us be doing when he is doing; and be sure not to be out of the way, nor asleep, when he comes. A little labour will set thy heart a going at such a time, when another time thou mayest take pains to little purpose.

2. When thou art cast into troubles of mind through sufferings, or fear, or care, or temptations, then it is seasonable to address thyself to this duty. When should we take our cordials, but in our times of fainting? When is it more

seasonable to walk to heaven, than when we know not in what corner on earth to live with comfort? Or when should our thoughts converse above, but when they have nothing but grief to converse with below?

Another fit season for this heavenly duty is, when the messengers of God summon us to die: when either our gray hairs, or our languishing bodies, or some such forerunners of death, tell us that our change cannot be far off; when should we more frequently sweeten our souls with the believing thoughts of another life, than when we find that this is almost ended, and when flesh is raising fears and terrors? Surely no men have greater need of supporting joys than dying men; and those joys must be fetched from our eternal joy.

It now follows that I speak a word of the fittest place. Though God is every where to be found, yet some places are more convenient than others.

1. As this is a private and spiritual duty, so it is most convenient that thou retire to some private place: our spirits have need of every help, and to be freed from every hinderance in the work. For occasional meditation I give thee not this advice; but for set and solemn duty, I advise, that thou withdraw thyself from all society, that thou mayest awhile enjoy the society of Christ.

And as I advise thee to a place of retiredness; so also that thou observe more particularly, what place or posture best agreeth with thy spirit; whether within door, or without; whether sitting still, or walking. I believe Isaac's example in this also, will direct us to the place and posture which will best suit with most, as it doth with me, viz. "His walking forth to meditate in the fields at the even tide." And Christ's own example gives us the like direction. Christ was used to a solitary garden; and though he took his disciples thither with him, yet did he separate himself from them for more secret devotions.

I am next to advise thee somewhat concerning the preparations of thy heart. The success of the work doth much depend on the frame of thy heart. When man's heart hath nothing in it that might grieve the Spirit, then was it the delightful habitation of his Maker. God did not quit his residence there, till man did repel him by unworthy provocations. There grew no strangeness till the heart grew sinful, and too loathsome a dungeon for God to delight in. And were this soul restored to its former innocency, God would quickly return to his former habitation; yea, so far as it is renewed and repaired by the Spirit, the Lord will yet acknowledge it his own, and Christ will manifest himself unto it, and the Spirit will take it for its temple and residence.



So far as the soul is qualified for conversing with God, so far it doth actually enjoy him. Therefore "keep thy heart with all diligence, for from thence are the issues of life."

More particularly, when thou settest on this duty, 1. Get thy heart as clear from the world as thou canst; wholly lay by the thoughts of thy business, of thy troubles, of thy enjoyments, and of every thing that may take up any room in thy soul. Get thy soul as empty as possibly thou canst, that so it may be the more capable of being filled with God. It is a work that will require all the powers of thy soul, if they were a thousand times more capacious and active than they are, and therefore you have need to lay by all other thoughts and affections while you are busied here.

2. Be sure thou set upon this work with the greatest seriousness that possibly thou canst. Customariness here is a killing sin. There is no trifling in holy things; God will be sanctified of all that draw near him. These spiritual duties are the most dangerous, if we miscarry in them, of all. The more they advance the soul, being well used, the more they destroy it, being used unfaithfully; as the best meats corrupted are the worst.

To help thee therefore to be serious when thou settest on this work, first, Labour to have the deepest apprehensions of the presence of God, and of the incomprehensible greatness of the majesty which thou approachest. Think with what reverence thou shouldst approach thy Maker: think thou art addressing thyself to him "that made the worlds with the word of his mouth; that upholds the earth as in the palm of his hand; that keeps the sun, and moon, and heaven, in their courses; that bounds the raging sea with the sands, and saith, Hitherto go, and no further." Thou art going to converse with him, before whom the earth will quake, and devils tremble; before whose bar thou must shortly stand, and all the world with thee, to receive their doom. O think, I shall then have lively apprehensions of his majesty; my drowsy spirits will then be wakened: why should I not now be roused with the sense of his greatness, and the dread of his name possess my soul?

Secondly, Labour to apprehend the greatness of the work which thou attemptest, and to be deeply sensible both of its weight and height. If thou wert pleading for thy life at the bar of a judge, thou wouldst be serious; and yet that were but a trifle to this. If thou were engaged in such a work as David was against Goliath, whereon the kingdom's deliverance depended, in itself considered, it were nothing to this. Suppose thou wert going to such a wrestling as Jacob's; suppose thou wert going to see the sight which the three disciples saw in the mount; how seriously, how reverently

wouldst thou both approach and behold! If some angel from heaven should but appoint to meet thee, at the time and place of thy contemplation, how apprehensively wouldst thou go to meet him! Why, consider then with what a spirit thou shouldst meet the Lord, and with what seriousness and dread thou shouldst daily converse with him.

Consider also the blessed issue of the work. If it succeed, it will be an admission of thee into the presence of God, a beginning of thy eternal glory on earth; a means to make thee live above the rate of other men, and admit thee into the next room to the angels themselves; a means to make thee live and die both joyfully and blessedly: so that the prize being so great, thy preparation should be answerable.

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## CHAPTER VII.

WHAT AFFECTIONS MUST BE ACTED, AND BY WHAT CONSIDERATIONS AND OBJECTS, AND IN WHAT ORDER.

To draw the heart nearer the work; the next thing to be discovered is, What powers of the soul must here be acted, what affections excited, what considerations are necessary thereto, and in what order we must proceed.

1. You must go to the memory, which is the magazine or treasury of the understanding, thence you must take forth those heavenly doctrines which you intend to make the subject of your meditation. For the present purpose, you may look over any promise of eternal life in the gospel; any description of the glory of the saints, of the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting; some one sentence concerning those eternal joys, may afford you matter for many years meditation; yet it will be a point of wisdom here, to have always a stock of matter in our memory, that so when we should use it, we may bring forth out of our treasury things new and old. If we took things in order, and observed some method in respect of the matter, and did meditate first on one truth concerning eternity, and then another, it would not be amiss. And if any should be barren of matter through weakness of memory, they may have notes or books of this subject for their furtherance.

2. When you have fetched from your memory the matter of your meditation, your next work is to present it to your judgment; open there the case as fully as thou canst, set forth the several ornaments of the crown, the several dignities belonging to the kingdom, as they are partly laid open in the beginning of this book; let judgment deliberately view them over, and take as exact a survey as it can; then put the question, and require a determination. Is there

happiness in all this, or not? Is not here enough to make me blessed? Can he want any thing, who fully possesseth God? Is there any thing higher for a creature to attain? Thus urge thy judgment to pass an upright sentence, and compel it to subscribe to the perfection of thy celestial happiness, and to leave this sentence as under its hand upon record.

Thus exercise thy judgment in the contemplation of thy rest; thus magnify and advance the Lord in thy heart, till a holy admiration hath possessed thy soul.

3. But the great work, which you may either premise, or subjoin to this as you please, is, to exercise thy belief of the truth of thy rest; and that both in respect of the truth of the promise, and also the truth of thy own interest and title. As unbelief doth cause the languishing of all our graces; so faith would do much to revive and actuate them, if it were but revived and actuated itself.

If we did soundly believe that there is such a glory, that within a few days our eyes shall behold it, O what passions would it raise within us! Were we thoroughly persuaded, that every word in the Scripture concerning the inconceivable joys of the kingdom, and the inexpressible blessedness of the life to come, were the very word of the living God, and should certainly be performed to the smallest tittle, O what astonishing apprehensions of that life would it breed! How would it actuate every affection! How would it transport us with joy, upon the least assurance of our title! If I were as verily persuaded, that I shall shortly see those great things of eternity, promised in the word, as I am that this is a chair that I sit in, or that this is paper that I write on, would it not put another spirit within me? Would it not make me forget and despise the world? and even forget to sleep, or to eat? and say, as Christ, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of?" O sirs, you little know what a thorough belief would work.

Therefore let this be a chief part of thy business in meditation. Read over the promises; study all confirming providences; call forth thine own experiences; remember the Scriptures already fulfilled both to the church and saints in the former ages, and eminently to both in this present age, and those that have been fulfilled particularly to thee.

Set before your faith, the freeness and the universality of the promise: consider God's offer, and urge it upon all, that he hath excepted from the conditional covenant no man in the world, nor will exclude any from heaven, who will accept of his offer. Study also the gracious disposition of Christ, and his readiness to welcome all that will come: study all the evidences of his love, which appeared in his sufferings,

in his preaching the gospel, in his condescension to sinners, in his easy conditions, in his exceeding patience, and in his urgent invitations. Do not all these discover his readiness to save? Did he ever manifest himself unwilling? Remember also his faithfulness to perform his engagements. Study also the evidences of his love in thyself. Look over the works of his grace in thy soul: if thou dost not find the degree which thou desirest, yet deny not that degree which thou findest. Remember what discoveries of thy state thou hast made formerly in the work of self examination. Remember all the former testimonies of the Spirit; and all the sweet feelings of the favour of God; and all the prayers that he hath heard and granted; and all the preservations and deliverances; and all the progress of his Spirit, in his workings on thy soul, and the disposals of Providence, concurring to thy good; and vouchsafing of means, the directing of thee to them, the directing of ministers to meet with thy state, the restraint of those sins that thy nature was most prone to. Lay these all together, and then think with thyself, Whether all these do not testify the good will of the Lord concerning thy salvation? And whether thou mayest not conclude with Samson's mother, when her husband thought they should surely die, "If the Lord were pleased to kill us, he would not have received an offering at our hands, neither would he have showed us all these things; nor would, as at this time, have told us such things as these," Judges xiii, 22, 23

2. When the meditation hath thus proceeded about the truth of thy happiness, the next part of the work is to meditate of its goodness; that when the judgment hath determined, and faith hath apprehended, it may then pass on to raise the affections.

1. The first affection to be acted is love; the object of it is goodness: here then is the reviving part of thy work: go to thy memory, thy judgment, and thy faith, and from them produce the excellencies of thy rest; take out a copy of the record of the Spirit in Scripture, and another of the sentence registered in thy spirit, whereby the transcendent glory of the saints is declared; present these to thy affection of love; open to it the cabinet that contains the pearl; show it the promise, and that which it assureth; thou needest not look on heaven through a multiplying glass; open but one case-ment, that love may look in; give it but a glimpse of the back parts of God, and thou wilt find thyself presently in another world: do but speak out, and love can hear; do but reveal these things, and love can see; it is the brutish love of the world that is blind; Divine love is exceeding quick sighted. Let thy faith, as it were, take thy heart by

the hand, and show it the sumptuous buildings of thy eternal habitation, and the glorious ornaments of thy Father's house; show it those mansions which Christ is preparing, and display before it the honours of the kingdom; let faith lead thy heart into the presence of God, and draw as near as possibly thou canst, and say to it, "Behold, the Ancient of Days, the Lord Jehovah, whose name is I AM;" this is he who made the worlds with his word; this is the cause of all causes, the spring of action, the fountain of life, the first principle of the creatures' motions; who upholds the earth, who ruleth the nations, who disposeth of events, and subdueth his foes; who governeth the depths of the great waters, and boundeth the rage of her swelling waves; who ruleth the winds, and moveth the orbs, and causeth the sun to run its race, and the several planets to know their courses; this is he that loved thee from everlasting, that formed thee in the womb, and gave thee this soul; who brought thee forth, and showed thee the light, and ranked thee with the chief of his earthly creatures; who endued thee with thy understanding, and beautified thee with his gifts; who maintaineth thee with life, and health, and comforts; who gave thee thy preferments, and dignified thee with thy honours, and differenced thee from the most miserable and vilest of men. Here, O here is an object worthy thy love; here thou mayest be sure thou canst not love too much; this is the Lord that hath blessed thee with his benefits, that hath spread thy table in the sight of thine enemies, and caused thy cup to overflow; this is he that angels and saints praise, and the host of heaven must magnify for ever.

Thus do thou expatiate in the praises of God, and open his excellencies to thine own heart, till thou feel the life begin to stir, and the fire in thy breast begin to kindle: as gazing upon the dusty beauty of flesh doth kindle the fire of carnal love; so this gazing on the glory and goodness of the Lord will kindle spiritual love. What though thy heart be rock and flint, this often striking may bring forth the fire; but if yet thou feelest not thy love to work, lead thy heart further, and show it yet more; show it the Son of the living God, whose name is "Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace;" show it the King of saints on the throne of his glory, "who is, and was, and is to come; who liveth and was dead, and behold, he lives for evermore; who hath made thy peace by the blood of his cross, and hath prepared thee, with himself, a habitation of peace;" his office is to be the *great peace maker*; his kingdom is a kingdom of peace; his gospel is the tidings of peace; his voice to thee now is the voice of peace; draw near and behold him; dost thou not hear his voice? He

that called Thomas to come near and to see the print of the nails, and to put his finger into his wounds, he it is that calls to thee, Come near and view the Lord thy Saviour, and be not faithless, but believing; "Peace be unto thee, fear not, it is I;" he that calleth, Behold me, behold me, to a rebellious people that called not on his name, doth call out to thee, a believer, to behold him; he that calls to them who pass by, to behold his sorrow in the day of his humiliation, doth call now to thee, to behold his glory in the day of his exaltation. Look well upon him: dost thou not know him? Why, it is he that brought thee up from the pit of hell; it is he that reversed the sentence of thy damnation; that bore the curse which thou shouldst have borne, and restored to thee the blessing that thou hadst forfeited, and purchased the advancement which thou must inherit for ever; and yet dost thou not know him? Why, his hands were pierced, his head was pierced, his sides were pierced, his heart was pierced, with the sting of thy sins, that by these marks thou mayest always know him. Dost thou not remember when he found thee lying in thy blood, and took pity on thee, and dressed thy wounds, and brought thee home, and said unto thee, *Live?* Hast thou forgotten since he wounded himself to cure thy wounds, and let out his own blood to stop thy bleeding? Is not the passage to his heart yet standing open? If thou know him not by the face, the voice, the hands; if thou know him not by the tears and bloody sweat, yet look nearer, thou mayest know him by the heart; that broken-healed heart is his, that dead-revived heart is his, that pitying, melting heart is his; doubtless it can be none but his. Love and compassion are its certain signatures; this is he, even this is he, who would rather die than thou shouldst die; who chose thy life before his own; who pleads his blood before his Father, and makes continual intercession for thee. If he had not suffered, O! what hadst thou suffered? What hadst thou been, if he had not redeemed thee? Whither hadst thou gone, if he had not recalled thee? There was but one step between thee and hell, when he stept in and bore the stroke; he slew the bear, and rescued the prey; he delivered thy soul from the roaring lion; and is not here fuel enough for love to feed on? Doth not this loadstone snatch thy heart, and almost draw it forth from thy breast? Canst thou read the history of love any further at once? Doth not thy throbbing heart here stop to ease itself; and dost thou not, as Joseph, seek for a place to weep in? Or do not the tears of thy love bedew these lines? Go then, for the field of love is large, it will yield thee fresh contents for ever, and be thine eternal work to behold and love; thou needest not then want work for thy present meditation.

Hast thou forgotten the time when thou wast weeping, and he wiped the tears from thine eyes? when thou wast bleeding, and he wiped the blood from thy soul? when pricking cares and fears did grieve thee, and he did refresh thee, and draw out the thorns? Hast thou forgotten when thy folly wounded thy soul, and the venomous guilt seized upon thy heart? when he sucked forth the mortal poison from thy soul, though therewith he drew it into his own.

I remember it is written of good Melancthon, that when his child was removed from him, it pierced his heart to remember how he once sat weeping, with the infant on his knee, and how lovingly it wiped the tears from the father's eyes: how then should it pierce thy heart to think how lovingly Christ hath wiped away thine! O how oft hath he found thee sitting weeping, like Hagar, while thou gavest up thy state, thy friends, thy life, yea, thy soul, for lost; and he opened to thee a well of consolation, and opened thine eyes also that thou mayest see it? How oft hath he found thee in the posture of Elias, sitting under the tree forlorn and solitary, and desiring rather to die than to live; and he hath spread thee a table from heaven, and sent thee away refreshed and encouraged? How oft hath he found thee, as the servant of Elias, crying out, "Alas! what shall we do, a host doth compass the city?" and he hath opened thine eyes to see more for thee than against thee, both in regard of the enemies of thy soul and thy body? How oft hath he found thee in such a passion, as Jonas, in thy peevish frenzy, weary of thy life; and he hath not answered passion with passion, though he might have done well to be angry, but hath mildly reasoned thee out of thy madness, and said, "Dost thou well to be angry," or to repine against me? How oft hath he set thee on watching and praying, or repenting and believing, and when he hath returned, hath found thee fast asleep? and yet he hath not taken thee at the worst, but instead of an angry aggravation of thy fault, he hath covered it over with the mantle of love, and prevented thy over-much sorrow with a gentle excuse, "the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." He might have done by thee, as Epaminondas by his soldier, who, finding him asleep upon the watch, run him through with his sword, and said, "Dead I found thee, and dead I leave thee:" but he rather chose to awake thee more gently, that his tenderness might admonish thee, and keep thee watching. How oft hath he been traduced in his cause, or name, and thou hast, like Peter, denied him (at least by thy silence) whilst he hath stood in sight? Yet all the revenge he hath taken, hath been a heart-melting look, and a silent remembering thee of thy fault by his countenance. How oft hath con-

science haled thee before him, as the Pharisees did the adulterous woman; and laid most heinous crimes to thy charge? And when thou hast expected to hear the sentence of death, he hath shamed away the accusers, and put them to silence, and said to thee, "Neither do I condemn thee; go thy way, and sin no more."

And art thou not yet transported with love? Can thy heart be cold, when thou thinkest of this, or can it hold when thou rememberest those boundless compassions? Rememberest thou not the time when he met thee in thy duties; when he smiled upon thee, and spake comfortably to thee? when thou didst "sit under his shadow with great delight, and when his fruit was sweet to thy taste?" when "he brought thee to his banqueting house, and his banner over thee was love?" when "his left hand was under thy head, and with his right hand he did embrace thee?" And dost thou not yet cry out, "Stay me, comfort me, for I am sick of love?" Thus I would have thee deal with thy heart; thus hold forth the goodness of Christ to thy affections; plead thus the case with thy frozen soul, till thou say as David in another case, "My heart was hot within me."

If these arguments will not rouse up thy love, thou hast more of this nature at hand: thou hast all Christ's personal excellencies to study; thou hast all his particular mercies to thyself; thou hast all his sweet and near relations to thee; and thou hast the happiness of thy perpetual abode with him hereafter. All these offer themselves to thy meditation, with all their several branches. Only follow them close to thy heart, ply the work, and let it not cool: deal with thy heart, as Christ did with Peter when he asked thrice over, "Lovest thou me?" till he was grieved, and answered, "Lord, thou knowest that I love thee." So say to thy heart, Lovest thou the Lord? and ask it the second time, and urge it the third time, Lovest thou the Lord? till thou grieve it, and shame it out of its stupidity, and it can truly say, Thou knowest that I love him.

2. The next affection to be excited is desire. The object of it is goodness not yet attained. This being so necessary an attendant of love, and being excited much by the same considerations, I suppose you need the less direction, and therefore I shall touch but briefly on this; if love be hot, desire will not be cold.

When thou hast thus viewed the goodness of the Lord, and considered the pleasures that are at his right hand, then proceed on thy meditation thus: think with thyself, Where have I been? what have I seen? O the incomprehensible, astonishing glory! O the rare transcendent beauty! O blessed souls that now enjoy it! that see a thousand times



more clearly what I have seen but darkly at this distance, and scarce discern through the interposing clouds! What a difference is there betwixt my state and theirs! I am sighing, and they are singing: I am sinning, and they are pleasing God: I have an ulcerated soul, like the loathsome bodies of Job and Lazarus, but they are perfect, and without blemish: I am here entangled in the love of the world, when they are taken up with the love of God: I live indeed amongst the means of grace, and I possess the fellowship of my fellow believers; but I have none of their immediate views of God, none of that fellowship that they possess: they have none of my cares and fears; they weep not in secret; they languish not in sorrows; all tears are wiped away from their eyes. O what a feast hath my faith beheld, and what a famine is yet in my spirit! I have seen a glimpse of the court of God; but, alas, I stand but as a beggar at the doors, when the souls of my companions are admitted in. O blessed souls! I may not, I dare not, envy your happiness; I rather rejoice in my brethren's prosperity, and am glad to think of the day when I shall be admitted into your fellowship. But O that I were so happy as to be in your place; not to displace you, but to rest there with you. Why must I stay and groan, and weep, and wait? My Lord is gone, he hath left this earth, and is entered into his glory: my brethren are gone, my friends are there, my house, my hope, my all, is there: and must I stay behind to sojourn here? What precious saints have left this earth! If the saints were all here, if Christ were here, then it were no grief for me to stay; but when my soul is so far distant from my God, wonder not if I now complain; an ignorant Micah will do so for his idol, and shall not my soul do so for God? And yet if I had no hope of enjoying, I would go and hide myself in the deserts, and spend my days in fruitless wishes; but seeing it is the promised land, the state I must be advanced to myself, and my soul draws near, and is almost at it, I will live and long; I will look and desire; I will breathe out, How long, Lord, how long! How long, Lord, holy and true, wilt thou suffer this soul to pant and groan! and wilt not open and let him in, who waits and longs to be with thee!

Thus, reader, let thy thoughts aspire: thus whet the desires of thy soul by meditation; till thy soul long (as David's for the waters of Bethlehem) and say, "O that one would give me to drink of the wells of salvation!" and till thou canst say as he, "I have longed for thy salvation, O Lord!"

3. The next affection to be acted, is hope. This is of singular use to the soul. It helpeth exceedingly to support it in sufferings; it encourageth it to adventure upon the

greatest difficulties ; it firmly establisheth it in the most shaking trials ; and it mightily enlivens the soul in duties.

Let faith then show thee the truth of the promise, and judgment the goodness of the thing promised ; and what then is wanting for the raising thy hope ? Show thy soul from the word, and from the mercies, and from the nature of God, what possibility, yea, what probability, yea, what certainty, thou hast of possessing the crown. Think thus, and reason thus with thy own heart : why should I not confidently and comfortably hope, when my soul is in the hands of so compassionate a Saviour, and when the kingdom is at the disposal of so bounteous a God ? Did he ever manifest any backwardness to my good, or discover the least inclination to my ruin ? Hath he not sworn to the contrary to me in his word, that he delights not in the death of him that dieth, but rather that he should repent and live ? Have not all his dealings with me witnessed the same ? Did he not mind me of my danger, when I never feared it ? And why was this, if he would not have me to escape it ? Did he not mind me of my happiness, when I had no thoughts of it ? And why was this, but that he would have me to enjoy it ? I have been ashamed of my hope in the arm of flesh, but hope in the promise of God maketh not ashamed : I will say therefore in my greatest sufferings, " The Lord is my portion, therefore will I hope in him. ' The Lord is good to them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him ; it is good that I both hope, and quietly wait, for the salvation of the Lord. The Lord will not cast off for ever ; but though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion, according to the multitude of his mercies. " Though I languish and die, yet will I hope ; for he hath said, " The righteous hath hope in his death. " Though I must lie down in dust and darkness, yet there " my flesh shall rest in hope. " And when my flesh hath nothing in which it may rejoice, yet will I keep " the rejoicing of hope firm to the end. "

4. The last affection to be acted, is joy. This is the end of all the rest ; love, desire, hope, tend to the raising of our joy. And is it nothing to have a deed of gift from God ? Are his infallible promises no ground of joy ? Is it nothing to live in daily expectation of entering into the kingdom ? Is not my assurance of being glorified one day, a sufficient ground for inexpressible joy ? Is it no delight to the heir of a kingdom, to think of what he must hereafter possess, though at present he little differ from a servant ? Am I not commanded " to rejoice in hope of the glory of God ? "

Here take thy heart once again, as it were, by the hand, bring it to the top of the highest mount ; show it the " kingdom of Christ, and the glory of it ; " say to it, " All this will

thy Lord bestow upon thee, who hast believed in him, and been a worshipper of him. It is the Father's good pleasure to give thee this kingdom." Seest thou this astonishing glory above thee? Why all this is thy own inheritance. This crown is thine, these pleasures are thine, because thou art Christ's, and Christ is thine; when thou wert married to him, thou hadst all this with him.

Thus take thy heart into the land of promise; show it the pleasant hills and fruitful valleys; show it the clusters of grapes which thou hast gathered, and by those convince it that it is a blessed land, flowing with better than milk and honey: enter the gates of the holy city, walk through the streets of the New Jerusalem, walk about Sion, go round about her, tell the towers thereof, mark well her bulwarks, consider her palaces, that thou mayest tell it to thy soul: "The foundation is garnished with precious stones; the twelve gates are twelve pearls; the street of the city is pure gold, as it were transparent glass; there is no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. It hath no need of sun or moon to shine in it, for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof, and the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it." This is thy rest, O my soul, and this must be the place of thy everlasting habitation: "Let all the sons of Sion then rejoice, and the daughters of Jerusalem be glad: for great is the Lord, and greatly is he praised in the city of our God: beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth is mount Sion; God is known in her palaces for a refuge."

Yet proceed: "The soul," saith Austin, "that loves, ascends frequently, and runs familiarly through the streets of the heavenly Jerusalem, visiting the patriarchs and prophets, saluting the apostles, and admiring the armies of martyrs and confessors." So do thou lead on thy heart as from street to street, bringing it into the palace of the great King; lead it, as it were, from chamber to chamber; say to it, Here must I lodge, here must I live, here must I love, and be loved. I must shortly be one of this heavenly choir, I shall then be better skilled in the music; among this blessed company must I take my place; my tears will then be wiped away; there it is that trouble and lamentation cease, and the voice of sorrow is not heard. O when I look upon this glorious place, what a dungeon methinks is earth! O what a difference betwixt a man feeble, pained, groaning, dying, rotting in the grave, and one of these triumphant, blessed, shining saints! Here "shall I drink then of the river of pleasure, the streams whereof make glad the city of God. For the Lord will create a new earth, and the former shall not be remembered; we shall be glad and rejoice for ever

in that which he creates; for he will create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy; and he will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in his people, and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying; there shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man, that hath not filled his days."

Why do I not then arise from the dust, and lay aside my sad complaints, and cease my mourning? Why do I not trample down vain delights, and feed upon the foreseen delights of glory? Why is not my life a continual joy; and the favour of heaven perpetually upon my spirit?

I do not place any flat necessity in thy acting all the fore-mentioned affections in this order at one time, or in one duty: perhaps thou mayest sometime feel some one of thy affectionous more flat than the rest, and so to have more need of exciting; or thou mayest find one stirring more than the rest, and so think it more seasonable to help it forward; or if thy time be short, thou mayest work upon one affection one day, and upon another the next, as thou findest cause; all this I leave to thy own prudence.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### SOME ADVANTAGES AND HELPS FOR RAISING THE SOUL BY MEDITATION.

THE next part of this directory, is to show you what advantages you should take, and what helps you should use, to make your meditations of heaven more quickening, and to make you taste the sweetness that is therein. For this is the main work, that you may not stick in a bare thinking, but may have the lively sense of all upon your hearts: and this you will find to be the most difficult part of the work. It is easier to think of heaven a whole day, than to be lively and affectionate in those thoughts one quarter of an hour. Therefore let us yet a little further consider what may be done, to make your thoughts of heaven piercing, affecting thoughts.

It will be a point of spiritual prudence, and a singular help to the furthering of faith, to call in our senses to its assistance: if we can make us friends of those usual enemies, and make them instruments of raising us to God, which are the usual means of drawing us from God, we shall perform a very excellent work. Sure it is both possible and lawful to do something in this kind; for God would not have given us either senses themselves, or their usual objects, if they might not have been serviceable to his own praise, and helps to raise us to the apprehension of higher things: and it is

very considerable, how the Holy Ghost doth condescend, in the phrase of Scripture, in bringing things down to the reach of sense; how he sets forth the excellencies of spiritual things in words that are borrowed from the objects of sense. Doubtless, if such expressions had not been best, and to us necessary, the Holy Ghost would not have so frequently used them: he that will speak to man's understanding, must speak in man's language, and speak that which he is capable to conceive.

1. Go to then; when thou settest thyself to meditate on the joys above, think on them boldly as Scripture hath expressed them; bring down thy conceivings to the reach of sense. Excellency, without familiarity, doth more amaze than delight us; but love and joy are promoted by familiar acquaintance: when we go about to think of God and glory without these spectacles, we are lost, and have nothing to fix our thoughts upon; we set God and heaven so far from us, that our thoughts are strange, and we look at them as things beyond our reach, and are ready to say, that which is above is nothing to us: to conceive no more of God and glory, but that we cannot conceive them; and to apprehend no more, but that they are past apprehension, will produce no more love but this, to acknowledge that they are so far above us that we cannot love them; and no more joy but this, that they are above our rejoicing. And therefore put Christ no further from you, than he hath put himself, lest the Divine nature be again inaccessible. Think of Christ as in our own nature glorified; think of our fellow saints as men there perfected; think of the city and state as the Spirit hath expressed it, only with caution. Suppose thou wert now beholding this city of God, and that thou hadst been a companion with John in his survey of its glory, and hadst seen the thrones, the majesty, the heavenly hosts, the shining splendour, which he saw: draw as strong suppositions as may be from thy sense for the helping of thy affections: it is lawful to suppose we did see for the present, that which God hath in propheties revealed, and which we must really see in more unspeakable brightness before long. Suppose therefore with thyself thou hadst been that apostle's fellow traveller into the celestial kingdom, and that thou hadst seen all the saints in their white robes, with palms in their hands: suppose thou hadst heard those songs of Moses, and of the Lamb; or didst even now hear them praising and glorifying the living God: if thou hadst seen these things indeed, in what a rapture wouldst thou have been! And the more seriously thou puttest this supposition to thyself, the more will the meditation elevate thy heart.

I would not have thee, as the Papists, draw them in pic-

tures, nor use such ways to represent them. This, as it is a course forbidden by God, so it would but seduce and draw down thy heart: but get the liveliest picture of them in thy mind that possibly thou canst; meditate on them, as if thou wert all the while beholding them, and as if thou wert even hearing the hallelujahs; till thou canst say, Methinks I see a glimpse of the glory! Methinks I hear the shouts of joy and praise! Methinks I even stand by Abraham and David, Peter and Paul, and more of these triumphing souls! Methinks I see the Son of God appearing in the clouds, and the world standing at his bar to receive their doom! Methinks I hear him say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father;" and see "them go rejoicing into the joy of their Lord!" My very dreams of these things have deeply affected me; and should not these just suppositions affect me much more? What if I had seen with Paul those unutterable things; should I not have been exalted (and that perhaps above measure) as well as he? What if I had stood in the room of Stephen, and seen heaven opened, and Christ sitting at the right hand of God? Surely that one sight was worth the suffering his storm of stones. O that I might but see what he did see, though I also suffered what he did suffer! What if I had seen such a sight as Micaiah saw? "The Lord sitting upon his throne, and all the hosts of heaven standing on his right hand and on his left." Why these men of God did see such things; and I shall shortly see far more than ever they saw, till they were loosed from the flesh, as I must be. And thus you see how the familiar conceiving of the state of blessedness, as the Spirit hath in a condescending language expressed it, and our strong suppositions raised from our bodily senses, will further our affections in this heavenly work.

2. There is yet another way by which we may make our senses serviceable to us, and that is, by comparing the objects of sense with the objects of faith; and so forcing sense to afford us that medium, from whence we may conclude the transcendent worth of glory, by arguing from sensitive delights as from the less to the greater. And here, for your further assistance, I shall furnish you with some of these comparative arguments.

And 1. You must strongly argue with your hearts, from the corrupt delights of sensual men. Think then with yourselves, when you would be sensible of the joys above: is it such a delight to a sinner to do wickedly? And will it not be delightful indeed to live with God? Hath a drunkard such delight in his cups and companions, that the very fears of damnation will not make him forsake them? Sure then there are high delights with God! If the way to hell

can afford such pleasure, what are the pleasures of the saints in heaven?

2. Compare also the delights above, with the lawful delights of sense. Think with thyself, How sweet is food to my taste when I am hungry! Especially, as Isaac said, "that which my soul loveth." What delight hath the taste in some pleasant fruits, in some well relished meats! O what delight then must my soul have in feeding upon Christ the living bread! and in eating with him at his table in his kingdom! How pleasant is drink in the extremity of thirst! Then how delightful will it be to my soul "to drink of that fountain of living water, which whoso drinks shall thirst no more!"

3. Compare also the delights above with the delights that are found in natural knowledge. This is far beyond the delights of sense, and the delights of heaven are further beyond it. Think then, can an Archimedes be so taken up with his mathematical invention, that the threats of death cannot take him off? Should I not much more be taken up with the delights of glory, and die with these contemplations fresh upon my soul; especially when my death will perfect my delights? But those of Archimedes die with him. What a pleasure is it to dive into the secrets of nature! to find out the mysteries of arts and sciences! If we make but any new discovery in one of these, what singular pleasure do we find therein! Think then what high delights there are in the knowledge of God and Christ! If the face of human learning be so beautiful, that sensual pleasures are to it but base and brutish; how beautiful then is the face of God! When we light on some choice and learned book, how are we taken with it! we could read and study it day and night; we can leave meat, and drink, and sleep, to read it; what delights then are there at God's right hand, where we shall know in a moment more than any mortal can know!

4. Compare also the delights above, with the delights of morality, and of the natural affections. What delight had many sober Heathens in the practice of moral duties; so that they took him only for an honest man who did well through the love of virtue, and not only for fear of punishment: yea, so highly did they value virtue, that they thought the chief happiness of man consisted in it. Think then what excellency there will be in that rare perfection which we shall be raised to in heaven; and in that uncreated perfection of God which we shall behold! What sweetness is there in the exercise of natural love: whether to children, to parents, to yoke fellows, or to friends! The delight which special, faithful friends find in loving and enjoying one another, is a most pleasing, sweet delight: even Christ himself, as it

seemeth, had some of this kind of love, for he had one disciple whom he especially loved. Think then, if the delights of cordial friendship be so great, what delights shall we have in the friendship of the Most High? and in our mutual amity with Jesus Christ? and in the dearest love and comfort with the saints? Surely this will be a closer and stricter friendship than ever was betwixt any friends on earth; and these will be more lovely and desirable friends than any that ever the sun beheld: and both our affections to our Father, and our Saviour, but especially his affection to us, will be such as here we never knew; as spirits are so far more powerful than flesh, that one angel can destroy a host, so also are their affections more strong and powerful: we shall then love a thousand times more strongly and sweetly than now we can; and as all the attributes and works of God are incomprehensible, so are the attributes and work of love: he will love us many thousand times more than we, even at the perfectest, are able to love him: what joy then will there be in this mutual love?

5. Compare also the excellencies of heaven with those glorious works of the creation which our eyes now behold. What a deal of wisdom, and power, and goodness, appeareth in and through them to a wise observer! What a deal of the majesty of the great Creator doth shine in the face of this fabric of the world! Surely his works are great and admirable, sought out of them that have pleasure therein. This makes the study of natural philosophy so pleasant, because the works of God are so excellent: what rare workmanship is in the body of a man! yea, in the body of every beast! which makes the anatomical studies so delightful. What excellency in every plant we see! in the beauty of flowers! in the nature, diversity, and use of herbs! in fruits, in roots, in minerals, and what not! but especially, if we look to the greater work: if we consider the whole body of this earth, and its creatures, and inhabitants; the ocean of waters, with its motions and dimensions, the variation of the seasons, and of the face of the earth; the intercourse of spring and fall, of summer and winter: what wonderful excellency do these contain! Why, then think if these things, which are but servants to sinful men, are yet so full of mysterious worth; what is that place where God himself doth dwell, prepared for the just who are perfected with Christ!

When thou walkest forth in the evening, look upon the stars, in what number they bespangle the firmament; if in the day time, look up to the glorious sun; view the wide expanded heavens, and say to thyself, What glory is in the least of yonder stars! What a vast, what a resplendent



body hath yonder moon, and every planet! What an inconceivable glory hath the sun! Why, all this is nothing to the glory of heaven. Yonder sun must there be laid aside as useless; for it would not be seen for the brightness of God. I shall live above all yonder glory; yonder sun is but darkness to the lustre of my Father's house; I shall be as glorious as that sun myself.

So think of the rest of the creatures. This whole earth is but my Father's footstool; this thunder is nothing to his dreadful voice; these winds are nothing to the breath of his mouth; so much wisdom and power as appear in these; so much and far more greatness, and goodness, and delight, shall I enjoy in the actual fruition of God. Surely, if the rain which rains, and the sun which shines, on the just and unjust, be so wonderful; the sun then which must shine on none but saints and angels, must needs be wonderful and ravishing in glory.

6. Compare the things which thou shalt enjoy above, with the excellency of those admirable works of Providence, which God doth exercise in the church and in the world. What glorious things hath the Lord wrought! And yet we shall see more glorious than these. Would it not be an astonishing sight, to see the sea stand as a wall on the right hand and on the left, and the people of Israel pass safely through, and Pharaoh and his people swallowed up? If we had seen the rock to gush forth streams, or manna or quails rained down from heaven, or the earth open and swallow up the wicked; would not all these have been wonderful, glorious sights? But we shall see far greater things than these. And as our sights shall be more wonderful, so also they shall be more sweet; there shall be no blood or wrath intermingled; we shall not then cry out as David, "Who shall stand before this holy Lord God?" Would it not have been an astonishing sight to have seen the sun stand still in the firmament? Why, we shall see when there shall be no sun to shine at all; we shall behold for ever a sun of more incomparable brightness. Were it not a brave life, if we might still live among wonders and miracles; and all for us, and not against us? If we could have drought or rain at our prayers, as Elias; or if we could call down fire from heaven, to destroy our enemies; or raise the dead to life, as Elisha; or cure the diseased, and speak strange languages, as the apostles; alas, these are nothing to the wonders which we shall see and possess with God, and all those wonders of goodness and love! We shall possess that pearl and power itself, through whose virtue all these works were done; we shall ourselves be the subjects of more wonderful mercies than any of these. Jonas

was raised but from a three day's burial, from the belly of the whale in the deep ocean; but we shall be raised from many years' rottenness and dust, and that dust exalted to a sunlike glory, and that glory perpetuated to all eternity. What sayest thou? Is not this the greatest of miracles or wonders? Surely, if we observe but common providences, the motions of the sun, the tides of the sea, the standing of the earth, the warming it, the watering it with rain as a garden, the keeping in order a wicked confused world, with multitudes of the like, they are all very admirable; but then to think of the Sion of God, of the vision of the Divine Majesty, of the comely order of the heavenly host, what an admirable sight must that needs be! O what rare and mighty works have we seen! what clear discoveries of an Almighty arm! what magnifying of weakness! what casting down of strength! what wonders wrought by most improbable means! what turning of tears and fears into safety and joy! such hearing of earnest prayers, as if God could have denied us nothing! All these are wonderful works: but what are these to our full deliverance! to our final conquest! to our eternal triumph! and to that great day of great things!

7. Compare also the mercies which thou shalt have above, with those particular providences which thou hast enjoyed thyself. If thou be a Christian indeed, thou hast, if not in thy book, yet certainly in thy heart, many favours upon record; the very remembrance and rehearsal of them is sweet; how much more sweet was the actual enjoyment! But all these are nothing to the mercies which are above. Look over the excellent mercies of thy youth, the mercies of thy riper years, the mercies of thy prosperity and of thy adversity, the mercies of thy several places and relations: are they not excellent and innumerable? Canst not thou think on the several places thou hast lived in, and remember that they have each had their several mercies? The mercies of such a place and such a place, and all of them very rich and engaging mercies? O how sweet was it to thee, when God resolved thy last doubts! when he overcame and silenced thy fears and unbelief! when he prevented the inconveniences of thy life, which thy own counsel would have cast thee into! when he eased thy pains, when he healed thy sickness, and raised thee up as from the very grave! Were not all these precious mercies? Alas, these are but small things for thee in the eyes of God; he intendeth thee far greater things than these, even such as these are scarce a taste of. It was a choice mercy that God hath so notably answered thy prayers, and that thou hast been so oft and evidently a prevailer with him: but O think, are all these so sweet and precious, that my life would have been a perpetual misery

without them! Hath his providence lifted me so high on earth, and his merciful kindness made me great? How sweet then will the glory of his presence be! And how high will his eternal love exalt me! And how great shall I be made in communion with his greatness! If my pilgrimage and warfare have such mercies, what shall I find in my home, and in my triumph? If I have had so much in this strange country, at such a distance from him; what shall I have in heaven in his immediate presence?

8. Compare the joy which thou shalt have in heaven, with that which the saints of God have found in the way to it, and in the foretastes of it: when thou seest a heavenly man rejoice, think what it is that so affects him. It is the property of fools to rejoice in toys; but the people of God are wiser, they know what it is that makes them glad. When did God reveal himself to any of his saints, but the joy of their hearts was answerable to the revelation? When Moses had been talking with God in the mount, it made his visage so shining and glorious, that the people could not endure to behold it; but he was fain to put a veil upon it: no wonder then if the face of God must be veiled, till we come to that state where we shall be capable of beholding him, when "the veil shall be taken away, and we all beholding him with open face, shall be changed into the same image from glory to glory." Alas, what are the back parts which Moses saw from the clefts of the rock, to that open face which we shall behold hereafter! What is that revelation to John in Patmos, to this revelation which we shall have in heaven! How short doth Paul's vision come of the saints' vision above with God! How small a part of the glory which we must see, was that which so transported Peter in the mount! I confess these were all extraordinary foretastes; but little to the full, beatifical vision. When David foresaw the resurrection of Christ and of himself, how did it make him break forth and say, "Therefore my heart was glad, and my glory rejoiceth, my flesh also shall rest in hope." Think then, if the foresight can raise such ravishing joy, what will the actual possession do? How oft have we read and heard of the dying saints, who, when they had scarce strength and life to express them, have been as full of joy as their hearts could hold? And when their bodies have been under the extremities of their sickness, yea, ready to feel the pangs of death, have yet had so much of heaven in their spirits, that their joy hath far surpassed their sorrows? And if a spark of this fire be so glorious, and that in the midst of the sea of adversity, what then is that sun of glory itself?

9. Compare also the glory of the heavenly kingdom with the glory of the church on earth, and of Christ in his state

of humiliation; and you may easily conclude, if Christ, standing in the room of sinners, was so wonderful in excellencies, what is Christ at the Father's right hand? And if the church, under her sins and enemies, hath so much beauty, she will have much more at the marriage of the Lamb. How wonderful was the Son of God in the form of a servant! When he is born, the heavens must proclaim him by miracles; a new star must appear in the firmament, and fetch men from remote parts of the world to worship him in a manger; the angels and heavenly host must declare his nativity, and solemnize it with praising and glorifying God; when he sets upon his office, his whole life is a wonder; water turned into wine, thousands fed with five loaves and two fishes, the lepers cleansed, the sick healed, the lame restored, the blind receive their sight, the dead raised: if we had seen all this, should we not have thought it wonderful? The most desperate diseases cured with a touch, with a word; the blind eyes with a little clay and spittle; the devils departing by legions at command; the winds and the sea obeying his word: are not all these wonderful? Think then, how wonderful is his celestial glory! If there be such cutting down of boughs, and spreading of garments, and crying, Hosannah, to one that comes into Jerusalem riding on an ass; what will there be when he comes with his angels in his glory? If they that hear him preach the gospel of the kingdom, have their hearts turned within them, that they turn and say, "Never man spake like this man:" then sure they that behold his majesty in his kingdom, will say, "There was never glory like this glory." If when his enemies come to apprehend him, the word of his mouth doth cast them all to the ground; if when he is dying, the earth must tremble, the veil of the temple rend, the sun in the firmament hide its face, and the dead bodies of the saints arise: O what a day will it be when he will once more shake, not the earth only, but the heavens also, and remove the things that are shaken! when this sun shall be taken out of the firmament, and be everlastingly darkened with the brightness of his glory! when the dead must all rise and stand before him; and "all shall acknowledge him to be the Son of God, and every tongue confess him to be Lord and King!" If when he riseth again, the grave and death have lost their power, and the angels of heaven must roll away the stone, and astonish the watchmen till they are as dead men, and send the tidings to his dejected disciples; if the bolted doors cannot keep him out; if the sea be as firm ground for him to walk on; if he can ascend to heaven in the sight of his disciples, and send the angels to forbid them gazing after him: O what power,

and dominion, and glory, then is he now possessed of! and must we ever possess with him!

Yet think further, are his very servants enabled to do such miracles when he is gone from them? Can a few poor fishermen and tent makers, cure the lame, and blind, and sick? open prisons, destroy the disobedient, and raise the dead? O then what a world will that be, where every one can do greater works than these! It were much to have the devils subject to us; but more to have our names written in the book of life. If the very preaching of the gospel be accompanied with such power, that it will pierce the heart, and discover its secrets, bring down the proud, and make the stony sinner tremble; if it can make men burn their books, sell their lands, bring in the price, and lay it down at the preacher's feet; if it can make the spirit of princes stoop, and the kings of the earth resign their crowns, and do their homage to Jesus Christ; if it can subdue kingdoms, and convert thousands, and turn the world thus upside down; if the very mention of the judgment and life to come, can make the judge on the bench to tremble; what then is the glory of the kingdom itself? What an absolute dominion have Christ and his saints! And if they have this power and honour in the day of their abasement, what will they have in their full advancement?

10. Compare the mercies thou shalt have above, with the mercies which Christ hath here bestowed on thy soul; and the glorious change which thou shalt have at last, with the gracious change which the Spirit has wrought on thy heart. Compare the comforts of thy glorification, with the comforts of thy sanctification. There is not the smallest grace in thee which is genuine, but is of greater worth than the riches of the Indies; nor a hearty desire and groan after Christ, but is more to be valued than the kingdoms of the world; a renewed nature is the very image of God: Scripture calleth it, "Christ dwelling in us," and "the Spirit of God dwelling in us:" it is a beam from the face of God himself; it is the seed of God remaining in us; it is the only inherent beauty of the rational soul; it ennobleth man above all nobility; it fitteth him to understand his Maker's pleasure, to do his will, and to receive his glory: think then with thyself, if "this grain of mustard seed" be so precious, what is "the tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God?" If a spark of life be so much, how glorious then is the fountain and end of this life! If we are even now said "to be like God, and to bear his image, and to be holy as he is holy;" sure we shall then be much liker God, when we are perfectly holy, and without blemish. Is the desire of heaven so precious a thing! what then is the thing itself? Is love so

excellent! what then is the beloved? Is our joy in foreseeing and believing so sweet! what will be the joy in the full possession? O the delight that a Christian hath in the lively exercise of some of these affections! What good doth it to his very heart, when he can feelingly say, He loves his Lord! Yea, even those troubling passions of sorrow and fear, are yet delightful, when they are rightly exercised: how glad is a poor Christian when he feeleth his heart melt, and when the thoughts of sinful unkindness will dissolve it! Even this sorrow doth yield him matter of joy: O what will it then be, when we shall do nothing but know God, and love, and rejoice, and praise, and all this in the highest perfection! What a comfort is it to my doubting soul, when I have a little assurance of the sincerity of my graces! How much more will it comfort me, to find that the Spirit hath safely conducted me, and left me in the arms of Jesus! What a change was it that the Spirit made upon my soul, when he first "turned me from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God!" To be taken from that horrid state of nature, wherein myself and my actions were loathsome to God, and the sentence of death was passed upon me, and the Almighty took me for his utter enemy; and to be presently numbered among his saints, and called his friend, his servant, his son, and the sentence revoked which was gone forth; O what a change was this! To be taken from that state wherein I was born, and had lived so many years, and if I had so died, I had been damned for ever; and to be justified from all these crimes, and freed from all these plagues, and put into the title of an heir of heaven; O what an astonishing change was this! How much greater will that glorious change then be! beyond expressing! beyond conceiving! How oft, when I have thought of this change in my regeneration, have I cried out, O blessed day! and blessed be the Lord that I ever saw it! How then shall I cry out in heaven, O blessed eternity! and blessed be the Lord that brought me to it! Was the mercy of my conversion so exceeding great, that the angels of God did rejoice to see it? Sure then the mercy of my salvation will be so great, that the same angels will congratulate my felicity. This grace is but a spark that is raked up in the ashes; it is covered with flesh from the sight of the world; but my everlasting glory will not "be under a bushel, but upon a hill, even upon Sion, the mount of God."

## CHAPTER IX.

## HOW TO MANAGE AND WATCH OVER THE HEART THROUGH THE WHOLE WORK.

THE last part of this directory is, to guide you in managing your hearts through this work, and to show you wherein you had need to be exceeding watchful. I have showed you before, what must be done with your hearts in your preparations to the work, and in your setting upon it: I shall now show it you, in respect of the time of the performance. Our chief work will here be, to discover to you the danger, and that will direct you to the remedy. Let me therefore acquaint you beforehand, that whenever you set upon this heavenly employment, you shall find your own hearts your greatest hinderers, and they will prove false to you in one or all of these four degrees: First, they will hold off, that you will hardly get them to the work; or else they will betray you by their idleness in the work, pretending to do it, when they do it not; or they will interrupt the work, by their frequent excursions, and turning aside to every object; or they will spoil the work by cutting it short, and be gone before you have done any good at it. Therefore I forewarn you, as you value the invaluable comfort of this work, faithfully resist these four dangerous evils.

1. Thou shalt find thy heart as backward to this, as to any work in the world. O what excuses it will make! what evasions it will find out! and what delays, when it is never so much convinced! Either it will question, whether it be a duty or not! or, if it be so to others, yet whether it be so to thee? It will take up any thing like reason to plead against it; or, if thy heart have nothing against the work, then it will trifle away the time in delays, and promise this day and the next, but still keep off; or lastly, if thou wilt not be so baffled with excuses or delays, thy heart will give thee a flat denial, and oppose its own unwillingness to thy reason; thou shalt find it draw back with all the strength it hath. I speak all this of the heart so far as it is carnal; for so far as it is spiritual, it will judge this work the sweetest in the world.

But take up the authority which God hath given thee, command thy heart; if it rebel, use violence with it; if thou be too weak, call in the Spirit of Christ to thine assistance; he is never backward to so good a work, nor will deny his help in so just a cause: God will be ready to help thee, if thou be not unwilling to help thyself. Say unto him, "Lord, thou gavest my reason the command of my thoughts and

affections : the authority I have received over them, is from thee, and now, behold they refuse to obey thine authority : thou commandest me to set them to the work of heavenly meditation, but they rebel, and stubbornly refuse the duty ; wilt thou not assist me to execute that authority which thou hast given me ? O send down thy Spirit and power that I may enforce thy commands, and effectually compel them to obey thy will."

And thus doing, thou shalt see thy heart will submit : its resistance will be brought under ; and its backwardness will be turned to compliance.

2. When thou hast got thy heart to the work, beware lest it delude thee by a loitering formality ; lest it say, I go, and go not ; lest it trifle out the time, while it should be effectually meditating. When thou hast perhaps but an hour's time for meditation, the time will be spent before thy heart will be serious. This doing of duty, as if we did it not, doth undo as many as the flat omission of it. To rub out the hour in a bare lazy thinking of heaven, is but to lose that hour, and delude thyself. What is to be done in this case ? Why, do here also as you do by a loitering servant ; keep thine eye always upon thy heart ; look not so much to the time it spendeth in the duty, as to the work that is done : you can tell by his work, whether your servant hath been painful : ask, what affections have yet been acted ? How much am I yet got nearer heaven ? Verily many a man's heart must be followed as close in this duty of meditation, as an ox at the plough, that will go no longer than you are calling or scourging ; if you cease driving but a moment, the heart will stand still.

I would not have thee of the judgment of those who think that while they are so backward, it is better let it alone ; and that if mere love will not bring them to the duty, the service is worse than the omission : these men understand not, First, that this argument would certainly cashier all spiritual obedience ; nor do they understand well the corruptness of their own natures ; nor that their sinful undisposedness will not suspend the commands of God ; nor one sin excuse another ; especially they little know the way of God to excite their affections ; and that the love which should compel them, must itself be first compelled, in the same sense as it is said to compel : love I know is a most precious grace, and should have the chief interest in all our duties ; but there are means appointed by God to procure this love ; and shall I not use those means, till I can use them from love ? that were to neglect the means till I have the end. Must I not seek to procure love, till I have it already ? There are means also for the increasing of love where it is



begun, and means for exciting it where it lieth dull : and must I not use these means till it is increased and excited ? Fall upon the work till thou art constrained to love ; and then love will constrain thee to further duty.

3. As thy heart will be loitering, so will it be diverting. It will be turning aside, like a careless servant, to talk with every one that passeth by : when there should be nothing in thy mind but the work in hand, it will be thinking of thy calling, or of thy afflictions, or of every bird, or tree, or place, thou seest, or of any impertinency, rather than of heaven. The cure here is the same with that before ; to use watchfulness and violence with your own imaginations, and as soon as they step out, to chide them in. Drive away these birds of prey from thy sacrifice, and strictly keep thy heart to the work thou art upon.

4. Lastly, Be sure also to look to thy heart in this, that it cut not off the work before the time, and run not away through weariness, before it have leave. Thou shalt find it exceeding prone to this. Thou mayest easily perceive it in other duties : if in secret thou set thyself to pray, is not thy heart urging thee still to cut it short ? Dost thou not frequently find a motion to have done ? Art thou not ready to be up, as soon almost as thou art down on thy knees ? So it will be also in thy contemplations of heaven ; as fast as thou gettest up thy heart, it will be down again ; it will be weary of the work ; it will be minding thee of other business to be done, and stop thy heavenly walk, before thou art well warm. What is to be done in this case also ? Why the same authority and resolution which brought it to the work, and observed it in the work, must hold it to it, till the work be done. Stick to the work till thy graces be acted, thy affections raised, and thy soul refreshed with the delights above ; or if thou canst not obtain these ends at once, ply it the closèr the next time, and let it not go till thou feel the blessing. "Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, when he comes, shall find so doing."

Thus I have directed you in this work of heavenly contemplation, and led you into the path where you may walk with God. But because I would bring it down to the capacity of the meanest, and help their memories who are apt to let slip the former particulars, I shall here contract the whole, and lay it before you in a narrower compass. But still I wish thee to remember, it is the practice of a duty that I am directing thee in, and therefore if thou wilt not practise it, do not read it.

The sum is this, as thou makest conscience of praying daily, so do thou of meditation ; and more especially on the joys of heaven. To this end, set apart one hour, or half

hour, every day, wherein thou mayest lay aside all worldly thoughts, and with all possible seriousness and reverence, as if thou wert to speak with God himself, or to have a sight of Christ, or of that blessed place: so withdraw thyself into some secret place, and set thyself wholly to the following work: if thou canst, take Isaac's time and place, who "went forth into the field in the evening to meditate:" but if thou be a servant, or poor man, that cannot have that leisure, take the fittest time and place that thou canst, though it be when thou art private about thy labours.

When thou settest to the work, look up toward heaven, let thine eye lead thee as near as it can; remember that there is thine everlasting rest; study its excellency, study its reality, till thy unbelief be silenced, and thy faith prevail: if thy judgment be not yet drawn to admiration, use those sensible helps and advantages which were even now laid down. Compare thy heavenly joys with the choicest on earth, and so rise up from sense to faith; if this mere consideration prevail not, then plead the case with thy heart: preach upon this text of heaven to thyself; convince, inform, confute, instruct, reprove, examine, admonish, encourage and comfort, thy own soul from this celestial doctrine; draw forth those several considerations of thy rest, on which thy several affections may work, especially that affection or grace which thou intendest to act. If it be love which thou wouldst act, show it the loveliness of heaven, and how suitable it is to thy condition; if it be desire, consider thy absence from this lovely object; if it be hope, consider the possibility and probability of obtaining it; if it be courage, consider the singular assistance and encouragements which thou mayest receive from God, the weakness of the enemy, and the necessity of prevailing; if it be joy, consider its excellent, ravishing glory, thy interest in it, and its certainty, and the nearness of the time when thou mayest possess it. Urge these considerations home to thy heart; whet them with all possible seriousness upon each affection: if thy heart draw back, force it to the work; if it loiter, spur it on; if it step aside, command it in again; if it should slip away, and leave the work, use thine authority: keep it close to the business, till thou hast obtained thine end; stir not away, if it may be, till thy love flame, till thy joy be raised, or till thy desire or other graces be lively. Call in assistance also from God, mix ejaculations with thy soliloquies; till having seriously pleaded the case with thy heart, and recently pleaded the case with God, thou hast pleaded thyself from a clod to a flame, from a forgetful sinner to a mindful lover: from a lover of the world, to a thirster after God: from a fearful coward, to a resolved Christian. In a word,

what will not be done one day, do it the next, till thou hast pleaded thy heart from earth to heaven: from conversing below, to a walking with God; and till thou canst lay thy heart to rest, as in the bosom of Christ; in this meditation of thy full and everlasting rest.

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## CHAPTER X.

### AN EXAMPLE OF THIS HEAVENLY CONTEMPLATION, FOR THE HELP OF THE UNSKILFUL.

**REST!** How sweet a word is this to mine ears! Methinks the sound doth turn to substance, and having entered at the ear, descended down to my very heart; methinks I feel it stir and work, and that through all my parts and powers, but with a various work upon my various parts. To my wearied senses and languid spirits, it seems a quieting, powerful opiate; to my dulled powers, it is spirit and life; to my dark eyes, it is both eye salve and a prospective; to my taste, it is sweetness; to mine ears, it is melody; to my hands and feet, it is strength and nimbleness: methinks I feel it digest as it proceeds, and increase my native heat and moisture, and lying as a reviving cordial at my heart, from thence doth send forth lively spirits, which beat through all the pulses of my soul. Rest! not as the stone that rests on the earth, nor as these clods of flesh shall rest in the grave; so our beasts must rest as well as we; nor is it the satisfying of our fleshly lusts, nor such a rest as the carnal world desireth: no, no; we have another kind of rest than these: rest we shall from our labours, which were but the way and means to rest: but yet that is the smallest part: O blessed rest, where we shall never rest day nor night, crying, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabbaoth!" where we shall rest from sin, but not from worship! from suffering and sorrow, but not from solace! O blessed day, when I shall rest with God! when I shall rest in the arms and bosom of my Lord! when I shall rest in knowing, loving, rejoicing, and praising! when my perfect soul and body together, shall in these perfect actings, perfectly enjoy the most perfect God! when God also, who is love itself, shall perfectly love me! and rejoice over me with joy and singing, as I shall rejoice in him! How near is that most blessed joyful day! it comes apace; even "he that comes will come, and will not tarry:" though my Lord seem to delay his coming, yet a little while and he will be here: what are a few hundred years when they are over? How surely will his sign appear! and how suddenly will he seize upon the careless world! Even as the lightning that shines from east to west in a moment.

He who is gone hence, will even so return. Methinks I hear the voice of his foregoers! Methinks I see him in the clouds, with the attendance of his angels in majesty and glory! O poor secure sinners, what will you now do? where will you hide yourselves, or what shall cover you? Mountains are gone, the earth and heavens that were, are passed away; the devouring fire hath consumed all except yourselves, who must be the fuel for ever: O that you could consume as soon as the earth, and melt away as did the heavens! Ah, these wishes are now but vain; the Lamb himself would have been your friend, he would have loved you, and ruled you, and now have saved you: but you would not then, and now it is too late: never cry, Lord, Lord: too late, too late, man. Why dost thou look about? can any save thee? Whither dost thou run? can any hide thee? O wretch, that hast brought thyself to this! Now blessed are ye that have believed and obeyed; this is the end of your faith and patience; this is that for which ye prayed and waited; do you now repent your sufferings and sorrows? your self denying and holy walking? are your tears of repentance now bitter or sweet? O see how the Judge doth smile upon you! there is love in his looks; the titles of Redeemer, Husband, Head, are written in his amiable face. Hark! doth he not call you? he bids you stand here on his right hand: fear not, for there he sets his sheep: O joyful sentence pronounced by his mouth! "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundations of the world!" See how your Saviour takes you by the hand: the door is open: the kingdom is his, and therefore yours: there is your place before his throne: the Father receiveth you as the spouse of his Son, he bids you welcome to the crown of glory: never so unworthy, crowned you must be: this was the project of free redeeming grace, the purpose of eternal love. O blessed grace! O blessed love! O the frame that my soul shall then be in! But I cannot express it, I cannot conceive it!

This is that joy which was procured by sorrow; this is that crown which was procured by the cross; my Lord did weep, that now my tears might be wiped away; he did bleed, that I might now rejoice; he was forsaken, that I might not now be forsaken; he did then die, that I might now live. This weeping, wounded Lord, shall I behold; this bleeding Saviour shall I see, and live in him that died for me. O free mercy that can exalt so vile a wretch! free to me, though dear to Christ! here must I live with all these saints! O comfortable meeting of my old acquaintance, with whom I prayed, and wept, and suffered; with whom I spake of this day and place! I see the grave could

not contain you, the sea and earth must give up their dead; the same love hath redeemed and saved you also: this is not like our cottages of clay, our prisons, our earthly dwellings: this voice of joy is not like our old complainings, our groans, our sighs, our impatient moans; nor this melodious praise like our scorns and revilings, nor like the oaths and curses which we heard on earth: this body is not like the body we had, nor this soul like the soul we had, nor this life like the life that then we lived; we have changed our place, we have changed our state, our clothes, our thoughts, our looks, our language; we have changed our company for the greater part, and the rest of our company is changed itself; before, we were weak and despised, but now how glorious! Where are now our different judgments, our divided spirits? Now we are all of one judgment, of one name, of one heart, of one house, and of one glory. O sweet reconciliation! O happy union! which makes us first to be one with Christ, and then one with ourselves! Now our differences shall be dashed in our teeth no more, nor the gospel reproached through our folly. O my soul, thou shalt no more lament the sufferings of the saints; never more condole the church's ruins; never bewail thy suffering friends, nor lie wailing over their death beds, or their graves: thou shalt never suffer thy old temptations from Satan, the world, or thy own flesh; thy body will no more be such a burden to thee; thy pains and sicknesses are all now cured; thou shalt be troubled with weakness and weariness no more; thy head is not now an aching head, nor thy heart now an aching heart; thy hunger and thirst, and cold and sleep, thy labour and study are all gone. O what a mighty change is this: from the dunghill to the throne; from a body as vile as the carrion in the ditch, to a body as bright as the sun in the firmament! from all my doubts and fears, to this possession which hath put me out of doubt! from all my fearful thought of death, to this most blessed joyful life! O what a change is this! farewell sin and suffering for ever; now welcome most holy, heavenly nature; which as it must be employed in beholding the face of God, so is it full of God alone; delighted in nothing but him. O who can question the love which he doth so sweetly taste? or doubt of that which with such joy he feeleth? Farewell repentance, confession, and supplication; farewell hope and faith; and welcome love, and joy, and praise. I shall now have my harvest without ploughing or sowing; my wine without the labour of the vintage; my joy without a preacher or a promise; even all from the face of God himself. Whatever mixture is in the streams, there is nothing but pure joy in the fountain. Here shall I be encircled with eternity, and come forth no

more : here shall I live, and ever live, and praise my Lord, and ever, ever praise him. My face will not wrinkle, nor my hair be gray ; but “ this mortal hath put on immortality, and this corruptible incorruption, and death is swallowed up in victory : O death ! where is thy sting ? O grave ! where is thy victory ? ” The date of my lease will no more expire, nor shall I lose my joys through fear of losing them. When millions of ages are past, my glory is but beginning ; and when millions more are past, it is no nearer ending. Every day is all noontide, and every month is May or harvest, and every year is there a jubilee, and every age is full manhood : and all this but one eternity. O blessed eternity ! the glory of my glory ! the perfection of my perfection !

Ah drowsy, earthly, blockish heart, how coolly dost thou think of this reviving day ! Dost thou sleep when thou thinkest of eternal rest ? art thou hanging earthward, when heaven is before thee ? Hadst thou rather sit thee down in dung, than walk in the court of the presence of God ? Dost thou now remember thy worldly business ? Art thou thinking of thy delights ? Wretched heart ! is it better to be here, than above with God ? is the company better ? are the pleasures greater ? come away, make no excuse, make no delay ; God commands, and I command thee, come away ; gird up thy loins ; ascend the mount, and look about thee with seriousness and with faith. Look thou not back upon the way of the wilderness, except it be when thine eyes are dazzled with the glory, or when thou wouldst compare the kingdom with that howling desert, that thou mayest more sensibly perceive the mighty difference. Fix thine eye upon the sun itself, and look not down to earth as long as thou art able to behold it ; except it be to discern more easily the brightness of the one by the darkness of the other. Yonder is thy Father’s glory : yonder must thou dwell when thou leavest this earth : yonder must thou remove, O my soul, when thou departest from this body : and when the power of thy Lord hath raised it again, and joined thee to it, yonder must thou live with God for ever. There is the glorious “ New Jerusalem, the gates of pearl, the foundations of pearl, the streets and pavements of transparent gold.” Seest thou that sun which lighteth all the world ? Why, it must be taken down as useless there, or the glory of heaven will darken it, and put it out ; even thyself shall be as bright as yonder shining sun ; “ God will be the sun, and Christ the light, and in his light shalt thou have light.”

O wretched heart ! hath God made thee a promise of rest, and wilt thou come short of it, and shut out thyself through unbelief ? Thine eyes may fail thee, thy ears deceive thee, and all thy senses prove delusions, sooner than a promise of

God can delude thee. Thou mayest be surer of that which is written in the word, than if thou see it with thy eyes, or feel it with thy hands. Art thou sure thou livest? or sure that this is the earth which thou standest on? Art thou sure thine eyes see the sun? As sure is all this glory to the saints; as sure shall I be higher than yonder stars, and live for ever in the holy city, and joyfully sound forth the praise of my Redeemer, if I be not shut out by the "evil heart of unbelief, causing me to depart from the living God."

And is this rest so sweet, and so sure? O then, what means the careless world! Do they know what it is they so neglect? Did they ever hear of it? or are they yet asleep? Do they know for certain that the crown is before them, while they thus sit still, or follow trifles, when they are hasting so fast to another world, and their eternal happiness lies at stake? Were there left one spark of reason, they would never sell their rest for toil, their glory for worldly vanities. Ah, poor men! that you would once consider what you hazard, and then you would scorn these tempting baits. O blessed for ever be that love, that hath rescued me from this mad bewitching darkness!

Draw nearer yet, O my soul; bring forth thy strongest love; here is matter for it to work upon: O see what beauty presents itself! Is it not exceeding lovely? Is not all the beauty in the world contracted here? Is not all other beauty deformity to it? Dost thou need to be persuaded now to love? Here is a feast for thine eyes: a feast for all the powers of thy soul. Dost thou need to be entreated to feed upon it? Canst thou love a little shining earth? Canst thou love a walking piece of clay? And canst thou not love that God, that Christ, that glory, which is so truly and unmeasurably lovely? Thou canst love thy friend because he loves thee: and is the love of friends like the love of Christ? Their weeping or bleeding for thee doth not ease thee, nor stay the course of thy tears or blood: but the tears and blood that fell from thy Lord, have all a sovereign, healing virtue, and are waters of life, and balsam to thy fainting sores. O my soul! if love deserve, and should procure love, what incomprehensible love is here before thee! Pour out all the store of thy affections here: and all is too little. O that it were more! Let him be first served, that served thee first: let him have the strength of thy love, who parted with strength and life in love to thee: if thou hast any to spare when he hath his part, let it be imparted then to standers by. See what a sea of love is here before thee: cast thyself into this ocean of his love: fear not, though it seems a furnace of fire, and the hottest that was ever kindled upon earth, yet it is the fire of love and not of

wrath ; a fire most effectual to extinguish fire ; never intended to consume, but to glorify thee : venture into it then in thy believing meditations, and walk in these flames with the Son of God : when thou art once in, thou wilt be sorry to come forth again. O my soul ! what wantest thou here to provoke thy love ? Dost thou love for excellency ? Why thou seest nothing below but baseness, except as they relate to thy enjoyments above. Yonder is the Goshen, the region of light : this is a land of palpable darkness. Yonder stars, that shining moon, the radiant sun, are all but as the lanterns hanged out at thy Father's house, to light thee while thou walkest in the dark streets of the earth : but little dost thou know the glory that is within ! Dost thou love for suitableness ? Why what person more suitable than Christ ? his godhead, his manhood, his fulness, his freeness, his willingness, his constancy, do all proclaim him thy most suitable friend. What state more suitable to thy misery than that of mercy ? Or to thy sinfulness and baseness, than that of honour and perfection ? What place more suitable to thee than heaven ? Thou hast had a sufficient trial of this world : dost thou find it agree with thy nature or desires ? Are these common abominations, these heavy sufferings, these unsatisfying vanities, suitable to thee ? Or dost thou love for interest and near relation ? Where hast thou better interest than in heaven ? or where hast thou nearer relation than there ? Dost thou love for acquaintance and familiarity ? Why though thine eyes have never seen the Lord, yet he is never the further from thee. If thy son were blind, yet he would love thee his father, though he never saw thee. Thou hast heard the voice of Christ to thy very heart ; thou hast received his benefits ; thou hast lived in his bosom ; and art thou not yet acquainted with him ? It is he that brought thee seasonably and safely into the world ; it is he that nursed thee in thy tender infancy, and helped thee when thou couldst not help thyself ; he taught thee to go, to speak, to read, to understand ; he taught thee to know thyself and him ; he opened thee that first window whereby thou sawest into heaven ; hast thou forgotten since thy heart was careless, and he did quicken it, and make it yield ? When it was at peace, and he did trouble it ? And broken, till he did heal it again ? Hast thou forgotten the time, nay, the many times, when he found thee in secret, all in tears ; when he heard thy sighs and groans, and left all to come and comfort thee ? When he came in upon thee, and took thee up, as it were, in his arms, and asked thee, Poor soul, what aileth thee ? Dost thou weep when I have wept so much ? Be of good cheer, thy wounds are saving and not deadly. It is I that have made them, who mean



thee no hurt ; though I let out thy blood, I will not let out thy life.

Methinks I remember yet his voice, and feel those arms that took me up. How gently did he handle me ! How carefully did he dress my wounds, and bind them up ! Methinks I hear him still saying, Though thou hast dealt unkindly with me, yet will not I do so by thee ; though thou hast set light by me, and all my mercies, yet both I and all are thine. What wouldst thou have that I cannot give thee ? and what dost thou want that I cannot give thee ? If any thing in heaven and earth will make thee happy, it is all thine own. Wouldst thou have pardon ? thou shalt have it. I freely forgive thee all the debt. Wouldst thou have grace and peace ? thou shalt have them both. Wouldst thou have myself ? behold I am thine, thy friend, thy Lord, thy husband, and thy head. Wouldst thou have the Father ? I will bring thee to him ; and thou shalt have him in and by me. These were my Lord's reviving words ; these were the melting, healing, quickening passages of love. After all this, when I was doubtful of his love, methinks I yet remember his convincing arguments : Have I done so much to testify my love, and yet dost thou doubt ? Have I made thy believing it the condition of enjoying it, and yet dost thou doubt ? Have I offered thee myself so long, and yet dost thou question my willingness to be thine ? *What could I have done more than I have done ?* At what dearer rate should I tell thee that I love thee ? Read the story of my bitter passion ; wilt thou not believe that it proceeded from love ? Did I ever give thee cause to be so jealous of me ? or to think so hardly of me as thou dost ? Have I made myself in the gospel a lion to thine enemies, and a lamb to thee ; and dost thou so overlook my lamb-like nature ? Have I set mine arms and heart there open to thee, and wilt thou not believe but they are shut ? If I had been willing to let thee perish, I could have done it at a cheaper rate : what need I follow thee with so long patience and entreating ? What, dost thou tell me of thy wants ; have I not enough for me and thee ? and why dost thou tell me of thy unworthiness, and thy sin ? I had not died if man had not sinned : if thou wert not a sinner, thou wert not for me ; if thou wert worthy thyself, what shouldst thou do with my worthiness ? Did I ever invite the worthy and righteous ? or did I ever save or justify such ? or is there any such on earth ? Hast thou nothing ? art thou lost and miserable ? art thou helpless and forlorn ? dost thou believe that I am a sufficient Saviour ? and wouldst thou have me ? why then take me. Lo, I am thine ; if thou be willing, I am willing, and neither sin nor devils shall break the match.

These, O these were the blessed words which his Spirit from his gospel spoke unto me, till he made me cast myself at his feet, yea, into his arms, and cry out, "My Saviour and my Lord, thou hast broke my heart, thou hast revived my heart, thou hast overcome, thou hast won my heart; take it, it is thine! if such a heart can please thee, take it: if it cannot, make it as thou wouldst have it."

Thus, O my soul, mayest thou remember the sweet familiarity thou hast had with Christ; therefore if acquaintance will cause affection, O then knit thy heart unto him; it is he that hath stood by thy bed of sickness, that hath cooled thy heats, and eased thy pains, and refreshed thy weariness, and removed thy fears; he hath been always ready, when thou hast earnestly sought him; he hath given thee the meeting in public and in private; he hath been found of thee in the congregation, in thy house, in thy chamber, in the field, in the way as thou wast walking, in thy waking nights, in thy deepest dangers. If bounty and compassion be an attractive of love, how unmeasurably then am I bound to love him! All the mercies that have filled up my life tell me this! all the places that ever I did abide in, every condition of life that I have passed through, all my employments, and all my relations, every change that hath befallen me, all tell me, that the fountain is overflowing goodness.

Lord, what a sum of love am I indebted to thee, and how doth my debt continually increase! How should I love again for so much love! But what! shall I dare to think of making thee requital, or of recompensing all thy love with mine? Will my mite requite thee for thy golden mines? or mine, which is nothing, or not mine, for thine, which is infinite and thine own? Shall I dare to contend in love with thee? or set my borrowed spark against the sun of love? Can I love as high, as deep, as broad, as long, as love itself; as much as he that made me, and that made me live, that gave me all that little which I have? Both the heart, the fire, the fuel, and all, were his: as I cannot match thee in the works of thy power, nor make, nor preserve, nor guide, the world; so why should I think any more of matching thee in love? No, Lord, I yield, I am overcome; O blessed conquest! go on victoriously, and still prevail, and triumph in thy love; the captive of love shall proclaim thy victory, when thou leadest me in triumph from earth to heaven, from death to life, from the tribunal to the throne; myself, and all that see it, shall acknowledge that thou hast prevailed, and all shall say, "Behold how he loved him!" Yet let me love thee, in subjection to thy love as thy redeemed captive, though I cannot reach thy measure.

O my soul, begin it here ; be sick of love now, that thou mayest be well with love there : "Keep thyself now in the love of God," and let neither life, nor death, nor any thing, separate thee from it, and thou shalt be kept in the fulness of love for ever ; for the Lord hath prepared a city of love, a place for the communicating of love to his chosen, and those that love his name shall dwell there.

Away then, O my drowsy soul, from this world's uncomfortable darkness ! The night of thy ignorance and misery is past, the day of glorious light is at hand ; this is the day-break betwixt them both : though thou see not yet the sun itself appear, methinks the twilight of promise should revive thee ! Come forth then, and leave these earthly cells, and hear thy Lord that bids thee rejoice, and again rejoice ! Thou hast lain here long enough in thy prison of flesh, where Satan hath been thy jailer ; where cares have been thy irons, and fears thy scourge, and the bread and water of affliction thy food ; where sorrows have been thy lodging, and a carnal, hard, unbelieving heart, the iron gates and bars that have kept thee in, that thou couldst scarce have leave to look through the lattices, and see one glimpse of the immortal light : the angel of the covenant now calls thee, and strikes thee, and bids thee arise and follow him : up, O my soul, and cheerfully obey, and thy bolts and bars shall all fly open ; do thou obey, and all will obey ; follow the Lamb which way soever he leads thee : art thou afraid, because thou knowest not whither ? Can the place be worse than where thou art ? Shouldst thou fear to follow such a guide ? Can the sun lead thee to a state of darkness ? Or can he mislead thee that "is the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world ?" Will he lead thee to death, who died to save thee from it ? Or can he do thee any hurt, who for thy sake did suffer so much ? Follow him, and he will show thee the paradise of God, he will give thee a sight of the New Jerusalem, he will give thee a taste of the tree of life : thy winter is past, and wilt thou house thyself still in earthly thoughts ; and confine thyself to drooping and dulness ?

Come forth, O my drooping soul, and lay aside thy winter, mourning robes ; let it be seen in thy believing joys and praise, that the day is appearing, and the spring is come ; and as now thou seest thy comforts green, thou shalt shortly see them white and ripe for harvest ; and then thou, who art now called forth to see and taste, shalt be called forth to reap, and gather, and take possession. Shall I suspend and delay my joys till then ? Should not the joys of the spring go before the joys of harvest ? Is the heir in no better a state than the slave ? My Lord hath taught me to rejoice in

the hope of his glory, and to see it through the bars of a prison; and even when I am "persecuted for righteousness' sake," when I am "reviled, and all manner of evil said against me for his sake," then he hath commanded me "to rejoice and be exceeding glad, because of this my great reward in heaven." How justly is an unbelieving heart possessed by sorrow, and made a prey to cares and fears, when itself doth create them, and thrust away its offered peace and joy! I know it is the pleasure of my bounteous Lord, that none of his family should want comfort, nor live such a poor and miserable life, nor look with such a famished dejected face. I know he would have my joys exceed my sorrows; and as much as he delights in the humble and contrite, yet doth he more delight in the soul as it delighteth in him. Hath my Lord spread me a table in this wilderness, and furnished it with promises of everlasting glory, and set before me angels' food, and broached for me the side of his beloved Son, that I might have a better wine than the blood of the grape? Doth he so importunately invite me to sit down, and draw forth my faith, and feed, and spare not? Nay, hath he furnished me to that end with reason, and faith, and a rejoicing disposition? And yet is it possible that he should be unwilling I should rejoice? Never think it, O my unbelieving soul: nor dare charge him with thy uncomfortable heaviness, who offereth thee the foretastes of the highest delight that heaven can afford, and God can bestow. Doth he not bid thee "delight thyself in the Lord?" and promise to give thee "the desires of thy heart?" Hath he not charged thee "to rejoice evermore?" Yea, "to sing aloud, and shout for joy?"

Away, you cares and fears! away, you importunate sorrows! stay here below, whilst I go up and see my rest. The way is strange to me, but not to Christ. There was the eternal dwelling of his glorious Deity; and thither hath he also brought his glorified flesh. It was his work to purchase it; it is his work to prepare it, and to prepare me for it, and to bring me to it. The eternal God of truth hath given me his promise, his seal, and his oath, to assure me, that "believing in Christ I shall not perish, but have everlasting life:" thither shall my soul be speedily removed, and my body shortly follow. And can my tongue say, that I shall shortly and surely live with God, and yet my heart not leap within me? Can I say it believingly, and not rejoicingly? Ah faith! how do I perceive thy weakness? ah unbelief! if I had never known it before, how sensibly do I now perceive thy malicious tyranny? But were it not for thee, what abundance might I have? The light of heaven would shine into my heart, and I might be as familiar there as I am on earth.

Come away, my soul, then; stand not looking on that grave, nor turning those bones, nor reading thy lesson in the dust: those lines will soon be wiped out: but lift up thy head and look to heaven, and read thy instructions in those fixed stars: or yet look higher than those eyes can see, into that foundation which standeth sure, and see thy name written in the book of life. What if an angel should come from heaven and tell thee, That there is a mansion prepared for thee; that it shall certainly be thine own, and thou shalt possess it for ever; would not such a message make thee glad? And dost thou make light of the infallible word of promises which were delivered by the Spirit, and by the Lord himself?

What delight have I found in my private studies, especially when they have prospered to the increase of knowledge! Methinks I could bid the world farewell, and immure myself among my books, and look forth no more, (were it a lawful course,) but shut the door upon me, and among those divine souls employ myself in sweet content, and pity the rich and great ones that know not happiness. Sure then it is a high delight indeed, which in the lap of eternity is enjoyed!

If the queen of Sheba came from Ethiopia to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and see his glory; O how gladly should I pass from earth to heaven, to see the glory of that eternal majesty; and to attain myself that height of wisdom, in comparison of which, the most learned on earth are but fools and idiots! If the heaven of glass which the Persian emperor framed, were so glorious a piece, and the heaven of silver which the emperor Ferdinand sent to the great Turk, because of their rare artificial representations and motions, what will the heaven of heavens be, which is not formed by the art of man, or beautified like these childish toys, but it is the matchless palace of the great King, built by himself for the residence of his glory, and the perpetual entertainment of his beloved saints!

I cannot here enjoy my parents, or my beloved friends, without some delight; what will it then be to live in the perpetual love of God! For brethren here to live together in unity, how good and pleasant a thing is it! To see a family live in love: husbands, wives, parents, children, servants, doing all in love to one another! O then, what a blessed society will be the family of heaven, and those peaceable inhabitants of the New Jerusalem! Where is no division, nor disaffection, nor strangeness, nor deceitful friendship; never an angry thought or look; never an unkind expression; but all one in Christ, who is one with the Father, and live in the love of Love himself.

Awake then, O my drowsy soul, and look above this

world of sorrow! Hast thou borne the yoke of afflictions from thy youth, and so long felt the smarting rod, and yet canst no better understand its meaning? Is not every stroke to drive thee hence? and is not the voice like that to Elijah, "What dost thou here? up, and away." Dost thou forget that sure prediction of the Lord, "In the world ye shall have trouble, but in me ye shall have peace." The first thou hast found true by long experience; and of the latter thou hast had a small foretaste; but the perfect peace is yet before, which, till it be enjoyed, cannot be clearly understood.

Ah, my Lord, I feel thy meaning; it is written in my flesh; it is engraven in my bones: my heart thou aimest at: thy rod doth drive, thy silken cord of love doth draw; and all to bring it to thyself: can such a heart be worth thy having? Make it so, Lord, and then it is thine: take it to thyself, and then take me. I can but reach it toward thee, and not unto thee: I am too low, and it is too dull: this clod hath life to stir, but not to rise: as the feeble child to the tender mother, it looketh up to thee, and stretcheth out the hands, and fain would have thee take it up. Indeed, Lord, my soul is in a strait, and what to choose I know not, but thou knowest what to give; to depart and be with thee, is best; but yet to be in the flesh seems needful. Thou knowest I am not weary of thy work; I am willing to stay while thou wilt here employ me, and to despatch the work which thou hast put in my hands; but I beseech thee stay no longer when this is done; and while I must be here, let me be still amending and ascending; make me still better, and take me at the best. I dare not be so impatient of living, as to importune thee to cut off my time, and urge thee to snatch me hence: nor yet would I stay when my work is done; and remain under thy feet, while they are in thy bosom: I am thy child as well as they; Christ is my head as well as theirs: why is there then so great a distance? I acknowledge the equity of thy ways: though we are all children, yet I am the prodigal, and therefore meeter in this remote country to feed on husks, while they are always with thee, and possess thy glory: but they were once in my condition, and I shall shortly be in theirs: they were of the lowest form before they came to the highest; they suffered before they reigned; they came out of great tribulation, who now are standing before thy throne; and shall not I be content to come to the crown as they did? and to drink of their cup before I sit with them in the kingdom? I am contented, O my Lord, to stay thy time, and go thy way, so thou wilt exalt me also in thy season, and take me into thy barn when thou seest me ripe. In the meantime I may desire, though I am not to repine; I may believe and wish,

though not make sinful haste; I am content to wait, but not to lose thee: and when thou seest me too contented with thine absence, quicken then my dull desires, and blow up the dying spark of love: and leave me not till I am able unfeignedly to cry out, "As the hart panteth after the brooks, and the dry land thirsteth for water streams, so thirsteth my soul after thee, O God: when shall I come and appear before the living God?" What interest hath this empty world in me! and what is there in it that may seem so lovely, as to entice my desires and delight from thee, or to make me loath to come away? Draw forth my soul to thyself by the secret power of thy love, as the sunshine in the spring draws forth the creatures from their winter cells; meet it half way, and entice it to thee, as the loadstone doth the iron: dispel the clouds that hide from me thy love, or remove the scales that hinder mine eyes from beholding thee: for only the beams that stream from thy face, and the taste of thy salvation, can make a soul unfeignedly say, "Lord, now let thy servant depart in peace."

Send forth thy convoy of angels for my departing soul, and let them bring it among the perfect spirits of the just, and let me follow my dear friends that have died in Christ before; and when my friends are crying over my grave, let my spirit be reposed with thee in rest; and when my corpse shall lie there rotting in the dark, let my soul be in the inheritance of the saints in light. And O thou that numberest the hairs of my head, number all the days that my body lies in the dust; thou that writest all my members in thy book, keep an account of all my scattered bones; and hasten, O my Saviour, the time of my return; send forth thine angels, and let that dreadful, joyful trumpet sound; delay not, lest the living give up their hopes; delay not, lest earth should grow like hell, and lest thy church, by divisions, be crumbled to dust; delay not, lest thine enemies get advantage of thy flock, and lest pride, and hypocrisy, and sensuality, and unbelief, should prevail against thy little remnant, and share among them thy whole inheritance, and when thou comest thou find not faith on the earth; delay not, lest the grave should boast of victory, and refuse to deliver up thy due. O hasten that great resurrection day! when thy command shall go forth, and none shall disobey; when the sea and earth shall yield up their hostages, and all that sleep in the grave shall awake, and the dead in Christ shall first arise; when the seed that thou sowedst corruptible, shall come forth incorruptible; and graves that received but rottenness, and retained but dust, shall return thee glorious stars and suns: therefore dare I lay down my carcass in the dust, entrusting it not to a grave, but to thee; and therefore

my flesh shall rest in hope, till thou raise it to the everlasting rest. Return, O Lord, how long! O let thy kingdom come! thy desolate bride saith, *Come*; for thy Spirit within her saith, *Come*, who teacheth her thus to pray, with groanings which cannot be expressed: the whole creation saith, *Come*, waiting to be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God: thyself hath said, "Surely I come: Amen; even so, come, Lord Jesus."

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#### THE CONCLUSION.

THUS, reader, I have given thee my best advice for the attaining and maintaining a heavenly conversation. The manner is imperfect, and too much my own: but for the main matter, I received it from God. From him I deliver it thee, and his charge I lay upon thee, that thou entertain and practise it. If thou canst not do it fully, do it as thou canst; only be sure thou do it seriously and frequently. If thou wilt believe a man that hath made some small trial of it, thou shalt find it will make thee another man, and elevate thy soul, and clear thy understanding, and leave a pleasant savour upon thy heart; so that thy own experience will make thee confess, that one hour thus spent will more effectually revive thee, than many in bare external duties; and a day in these contemplations will afford thee truer content, than all the glory and riches of the earth. Be acquainted with this work, and thou wilt be acquainted with God; thy joys will be spiritual and lasting; thou wilt have comfort in life, and comfort in death; when thou hast neither wealth, nor health, nor the pleasures of this world, yet wilt thou have comfort; comfort without the presence or help of any friend, without a minister, without a book; when all means are denied thee, or taken from thee, yet mayest thou have vigorous, real comfort. Thy graces will be active and victorious; and the daily joy which is thus fetched from heaven, will be thy strength: thou wilt be as one that standeth on the top of an exceeding high mountain; he looks down on the world as if it were quite below him; how small do the fields, and woods, and countries, seem to him? cities and towns seem but little spots. Thus despicably wilt thou look on all things here below: the greatest princes will seem but as grasshoppers, and the busy, contentious, covetous world, but as heaps of ants. Men's threatenings will be no terror to thee; nor the honours of this world any strong enticement; temptations will be harmless, as having lost their strength; and afflictions less grievous, as having lost their sting; and every mercy will be better known and relished.



Reader, it is (under God) in thy own choice now, whether thou wilt live this blessed life or not; and whether all these pains which I have taken for thee, shall prosper or be lost. If it be lost through thy laziness (which God forbid) thou wilt prove the greater loser thyself.

O man, what hast thou to mind, but God and heaven? art thou not almost out of this world already? dost thou not look every day, when one disease or other will let out thy soul? doth not the bier stand ready to carry thee to the grave? and the worms wait to feed upon thy face and heart? what if thy pulse must beat a few strokes more? and what if thou hast a few more breaths to fetch, before thou breathe thy last? and what if thou hast a few more nights to sleep, before thou sleep in the dust? Alas, what will this be, when it is gone? and is it not almost gone already? Shortly thou wilt see thy glass run out, and say thyself, My life is done! my time is gone! there is nothing now but heaven or hell: where then should thy heart be now, but in heaven? Didst thou but know what a dreadful thing it is to have a doubt of heaven, when a man lies dying, it would rouse thee up.

O what a life might men live, if they were but willing and diligent! God would have our joys to be far more than our sorrows; yea, he would have us to have no sorrow but what tendeth to joy; and no more than our sins have made necessary for our good. How much do those Christians wrong God and themselves, that either make their thoughts of God the inlet of their sorrows, or let these offered joys lie by, as neglected or forgotten! Some there be that say, It is not worth so much time and trouble, to think of the greatness of the joys above. But as these men obey not the command of God, which requireth them to have their affections on things above; so do they wilfully make their own lives miserable, by refusing the delights that God hath set before them. And yet if this were all, it were a smaller matter; if it were but loss of their comforts, I would not say much; but see what abundance of other mischiefs follow the absence of these heavenly delights.

First, It will damp, if not destroy, our very love to God; so deeply as we apprehend his exceeding love to us, and his purpose to make us eternally happy, so much will it raise our love: love to God, and delight in him, are still conjunct. They that conceive of God as one that desireth their blood and damnation, cannot heartily love him.

Secondly, It will make us have rare and displeasing thoughts of God; for our thoughts will follow our love and delight. Did we more delight in God than in any thing below our thoughts would as freely run after him, as they now run from him.

Thirdly, And it will make men have as rare and displeasing speech of God; for who will care for talking of that which he hath no delight in? What makes men still talking of worldliness, or wickedness, but that these are more pleasant to them than God?

Fourthly, Men will have no delight in the service of God, when they have no delight in God, nor any sweet thoughts of heaven, which is the end of their services. No wonder if such Christians complain, that they are still backward to duty; that they have no delight in prayer, in sacraments, or in Scripture itself: if thou couldst once delight in God, thou wouldst easily delight in duty; especially that which bringeth thee into the nearest converse with him; but till then, no wonder if thou be weary of all.

Fifthly, This want of heavenly delight will leave men under the power of every affliction; they will have nothing to comfort them and ease them in their sufferings, but the empty, ineffectual pleasures of the flesh; and when that is gone, where then is their delight?

Sixthly, It will make them fearful and unwilling to die: for who would go to a God, or a place, that he hath no delight in? Or who would leave his pleasure here, except it were to go to better? But if men take delight in God whilst they live, they will not tremble at the tidings of death.

If God would persuade you now to make conscience of this duty, and help you in it by the blessed influence of his Spirit, you would not change your lives with the greatest prince on earth. But I am afraid, if I may judge of your hearts by the backwardness of my own, that it will prove a hard thing to persuade you to the work. Pardon my jealousy; it is raised upon too many and sad experiments. What say you? Do you resolve on this heavenly course or no? Will you let go all your sinful pleasures, and daily seek these higher delights? I pray thee, reader, consider of it, and resolve on the work before thou goest further. Let thy family perceive, let thy neighbours perceive, let thy conscience perceive, yea, let God perceive it, that thou art a man that hast thy conversation in heaven. God hath now offered to be thy daily delight; thy neglect is thy refusal. Take heed what thou dost: refuse this, and refuse all: thou must have heavenly delights, or none that are lasting. God is willing thou shouldst daily walk with him, and fetch in consolation from the everlasting fountain: if thou be unwilling, bear the loss; and when thou liest dying, then seek for comfort where thou canst. O how is the unseen God neglected, and the unseen glory forgotten! and all for want of that "faith which is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things that are not seen."

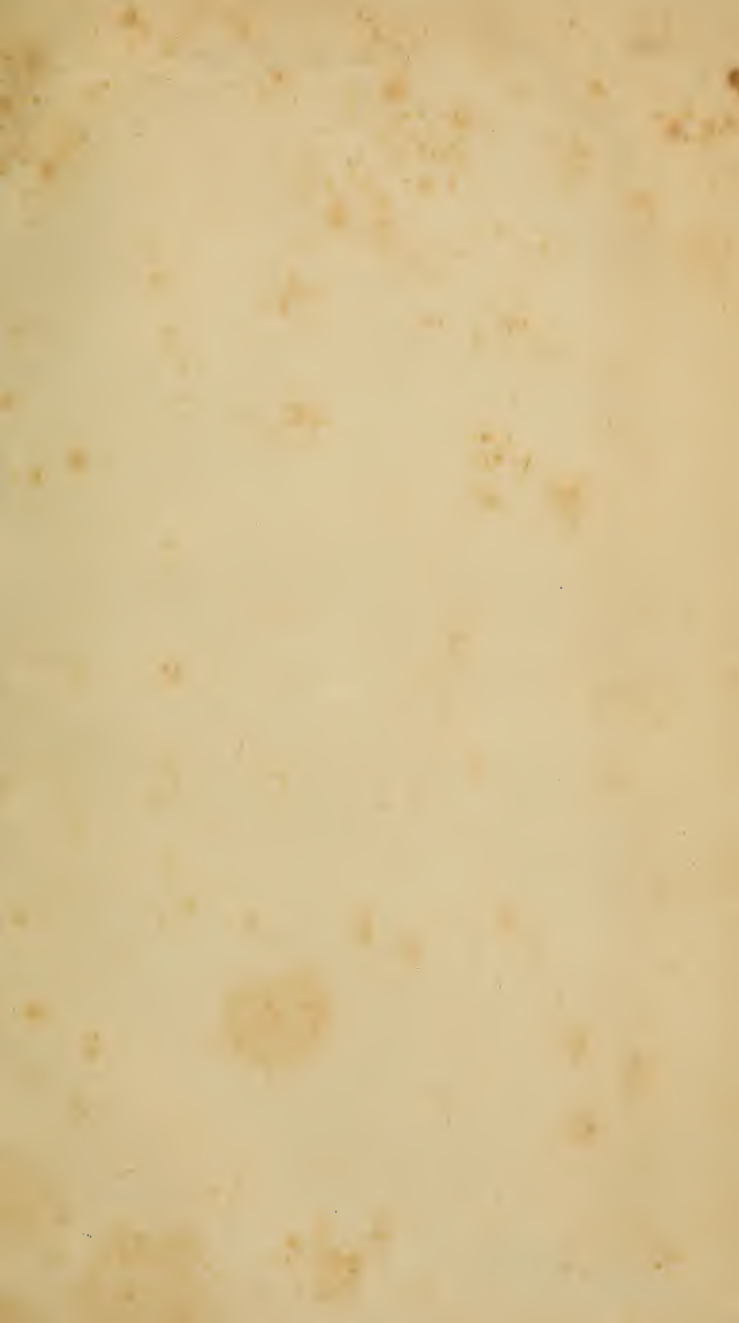
But for you whose hearts God hath weaned from all things here below, I hope you will fetch one walk daily in the New Jerusalem! God is your love, and your desire; and I know you would fain be more acquainted with your Saviour, and I know it is your grief that your hearts are not more near him; and that they do not more passionately love and delight in him. As ever you would enjoy your desires, try this life of meditation on your everlasting rest.

O thou, the merciful Father of spirits, the attractive of love, and ocean of delights, draw up these drossy hearts unto thyself, and keep them there till they are spiritualized and refined, and second these thy servant's weak endeavours, and persuade those that read these lines, to the practice of this delightful, heavenly work. O suffer not the soul of thy most unworthy servant to be a stranger to those joys which he unfoldeth to thy people, or to be seldom in that way which he hath marked out to others; but O keep me, while I tarry on this earth, in daily, serious breathings after thee, and in a believing, affectionate walking with thee; and when thou comest, O let me be found so doing, not hiding my talent, nor serving my flesh, nor yet asleep, with my lamp unfurnished, but waiting and longing for my Lord's return; that those who shall read these directions, may not reap only the fruit of my studies, but the breathings of my active hope and love; that if my heart were open to their view, they might there read the same most deeply engraven with a beam from the face of the Son of God; and not find vanity, or lust, or pride, within, where the words of life appear without; that so these lines may not witness against me: but proceeding from the heart of the writer, may be effectual, through thy grace, upon the heart of the reader, and so be the savour of life to both.

Glory be to God in the highest : on earth peace : good will toward men.

THE END.





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