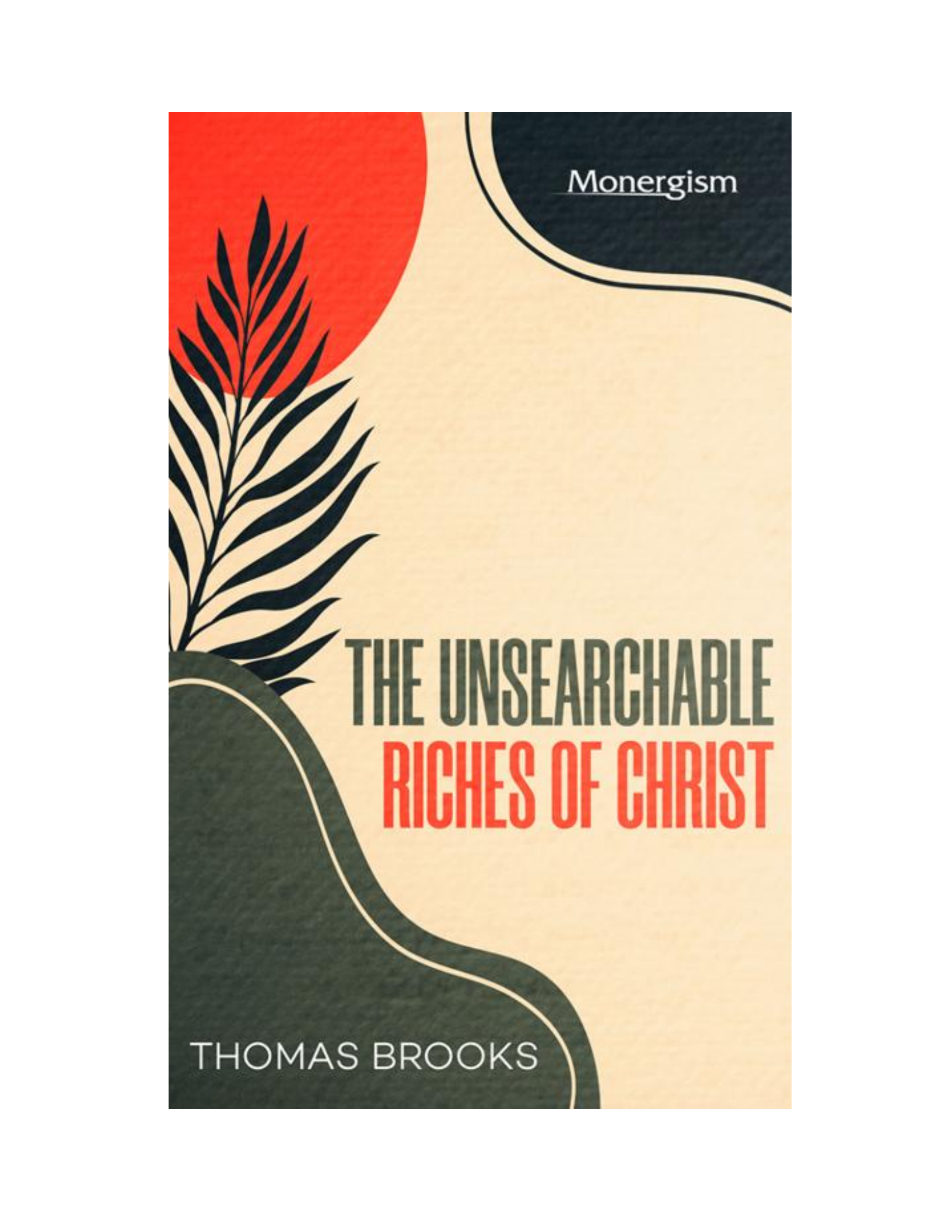


Monergism

A stylized black palm branch with long, pointed leaves extends from the left side of the cover. In the upper left corner, a large, solid red circle is partially visible. The background is a light beige color with dark green and black abstract shapes in the corners.

**THE UNSEARCHABLE
RICHES OF CHRIST**

THOMAS BROOKS

The book cover features a light beige background. In the top left, there is a large red circle partially obscured by a dark blue, stylized palm frond that extends downwards. In the top right, a dark blue curved shape contains the word 'Monergism' in white. In the bottom left, a dark blue curved shape contains the author's name 'THOMAS BROOKS' in white. The title 'THE UNSEARCHABLE RICHES OF CHRIST' is centered in the middle-right area, with 'THE UNSEARCHABLE' in dark blue and 'RICHES OF CHRIST' in red.

Monergism

**THE UNSEARCHABLE
RICHES OF CHRIST**

THOMAS BROOKS

Copyright ©Monergism Books

The Unsearchable Riches of Christ

by Thomas Brooks (1608 - 1680)

The 'Unsearchable Riches of Christ' was originally published in 1655. A second edition followed in 1657; a third, 'corrected and amended,' in 1661; and a fourth in 1671—all 4to. Our text is the third edition, and its title-page is given below.*—G.

Ἀνεξιχνίαστοι πλοῦτοι τοῦ χριστοῦ

THE

Unsearchable Riches

OF

CHRIST

OR,

MEAT for STRONG MEN,

And

MILKE for BABES

Held forth in Twenty-two

SERMONS

FROM

Ephesians III. VIII.

By THOMAS BROOKS, Preacher of the word in London

The Third Edition Corrected and Amended

Ipse unus erit tibi omnia, quia in ipso uno bono, bona sunt omnia,
Aug
It pleased the father, that in him should all fullness dwell. Col. 1:19
In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Chap.
2:3.

LONDON: Printed by M.S. for John Hancock at the first Shop in
Popes head-Alley, next to Cornhill.
1661.

Table of Contents

EPISTLE DEDICATORY

The words opened

THE FIRST DOCTRINE — Those that are lowest in their own esteem
are highest in God's esteem, proved

-- Eighteen properties of an humble soul

-- Five reasons of the point

-- Uses of it

-- Eight motives to provoke persons to be humble

-- Nine directions and helps to keep us humble and low in our own
eyes

-- The dangerous nature of pride held forth in nine propositions: also, six ways wherein pride shews itself

THE SECOND DOCTRINE —All saints are not of an equal size and growth in grace and holiness

-- Twelve things by which souls weak in grace are discovered and deciphered

-- Twelve supports and comforts to uphold weak Christians. Wherein also you may see how Christ and they are sharers

-- Six duties that lie upon weak saints. And in the opening of them, several weighty questions are propounded and answered

-- The duties of strong saints to the weak shewed in eleven particulars

THE THIRD DOCTRINE —That the Lord gives the best gifts to his best beloved ones

-- What those best gifts are that Christ bestows upon his dearest ones, shewed in ten particulars

-- The difference between Christ's giving and the world's giving, shewed in six things

-- The excellency of those gifts that Christ gives above all other gifts that the world gives, shewed in five things

-- Six reasons why God gives the best gifts to his dearest ones

-- Eight inferences or uses made of this point

THE FOURTH DOCTRINE —That the gifts and graces that God bestows upon his people should be improved, employed, and exercised by his people

-- Twelve reasons why gracious souls should exercise and improve their gifts and graces; in the handling and opening of which reasons several other considerable things fall in

-- Three special ends that the gifts and graces that God has bestowed upon believers should be exercised and improved to

-- The main use is, To stir up all Christians to make a blessed improvement of their gifts and graces

-- Seven considerations or motives to stir saints up to improve their talents

-- Question: When may a soul be said to be excellent in grace, or to have highly improved grace?

-- This question receives ten answers

THE FIFTH DOCTRINE —That the Lord Jesus Christ is very rich

-- This point is opened and proved by eight arguments

-- Four grounds and reasons why the Lord Jesus Christ is held forth in the word to be so very rich

-- The excellency of the riches of Christ above all other riches in the world, held forth in seven particulars

-- Nine directions to poor souls that would fain get an interest in Christ

THE SIXTH DOCTRINE —That it is the great duty of preachers or ministers to preach Jesus Christ to the people, proved

-- Five reasons why ministers must preach Christ to the people

-- How Christ is to be preached, shewed in eleven things

-- Three rules or directions, that such are to observe, as would preach Christ aright to the people

THE LAST DOCTRINE —That the office of a faithful minister is an honourable office

-- I. Seven things speak them out to be honourable

-- II. What honour that is that is due to faithful ministers, shewed in three things

-- Quest. How must Christians honour their faithful ministers shewed in five things

EPISTLE DEDICATORY

To all true Israelites, in whom there is no guile, Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, through our Lord Jesus Christ, be multiplied.

DEAR HEARTS, my design in appearing once more in print is not to please the captious critic, or the sullen cynic, but to heighten your 'fellowship with the Father and the Son,' 1 John 1:3, 4, and to further you in a closer walking with God, and to ripen you more and more for reigning with God when you shall be here no more.

'Beloved in our Lord,' there are two sad and great evils—oh that there were no more!—among the saints this day. The strong are very apt, yea, they make little of offending the weak; and the weak are as apt, and make as little of judging and condemning the strong, Rom. 14:1–10. The serious and conscientious perusal of this treatise may, by the blessing of the Lord, contribute much to the preventing of those sad evils. You that are weak may, in this treatise, as in a glass, see your weakness, your mercies, your graces, your duties, your privileges, and your comforts. You that are weak in grace, may here find many questions answered and doubts resolved, that tend to the satisfying,

quieting, settling, and establishing of your precious souls in peace, joy, and assurance. You that are weak in grace, may here find a staff to support you, a light to direct you, a sword to defend you, and a cordial to strengthen you, &c. And you that are strong in grace, may here see what is your way, what is your work, and what at last shall be your reward. Here you will find that which tends to the discovery of spirits, the sweetening of spirits, the uniting of spirits, the healing of spirits, and the making up of breaches, &c.

Here you will find 'meat for strong men,' and 'milk for babes.' Here you will find who is more motion than notion; more heart than head; more spirit than flesh; more inside than outside, &c.

Here you will find 'the unsearchable riches of Christ,'—which of all boxes of precious ointment is the most precious—opened; and oh how sweet must he be, that is the sweetest of sweets! In Christ are riches of justification; in Christ are riches of sanctification, riches of consolation, and riches of glorification. And this following treatise may serve as a key, I say not as a golden one, to open the door, that you may come where these treasures lie. Christ's riches are like the eternal springs of the earth, that cannot dry up, but are and shall be diffused by his Spirit and gospel, until his whole house be filled with them.

The excellency and usefulness of the riches of Christ, and answers to many weighty queries about his unsearchable riches, is more than hinted at in this tract. In this tract much is spoken concerning the nature, properties, and excellencies of humility, which is both the beautifier and preserver of all other graces.

Here you may see that those that are lowest in their own esteem, are highest in God's esteem. Here you may see that humble souls are not so low and contemptible in the eyes of the world, as they are honourable in the eyes of God.

And if ever there were an age since Christ was on earth, wherein it was needful to preach, press, and print this great doctrine of humility, of self, of soul abasement, this is the age wherein we live. Oh the pride, the stateliness of the professors of this age! But because this point is largely spoken to in this tract, I shall satisfy myself with this touch.

There are many other weighty things treated on, which for brevity's sake I shall omit, only give me leave to acquaint you with a few things about this ensuing tract, and then I shall draw to a close.

First, That it is the substance of twenty-two sermons, preached by me about three years ago, on the lecture nights at this place where now I preach.

Secondly, That there are in it several other things of no small concernment to your souls, that I did not then deliver, but have been given in since, from that fountain that fills all in all.

Thirdly, That though I have been much pressed to print these sermons, yet I should never have yielded, had I not been thoroughly convinced and persuaded in my judgment and conscience, that they may, by the blessing of the Lord upon them, prove many ways useful and serviceable to all those honest Nathanaels into whose hands they may fall, else they had been buried in the dark, and never come to public light.

I have only a few requests to make to you, and then I shall take my leave of you.

And my first request is this, that you would meditate and dwell upon what you read; otherwise your pains (I say not your souls) and mine will be lost.

It is a law among the Parsees in India, to use premeditation in what they are to do, that if it be bad, to reject it; if good, to act it. The application is easy. The more any man is in the contemplation of

truth, the more fairer and firmer impression is made upon his heart by truth. Christians must be like the clean beasts, that parted the hoof and chewed the cud; they must by heavenly meditation chew truths and concoct truths, or else they will never taste the sweetness that is in divine truths.

Mary 'pondered the sayings of the shepherds in her heart,' Luke 2:19. Not they that eat most, but they that digest most, are the most healthful. Not they that get most, but they that keep most, are richest. So not they that hear most, or read most, but they that meditate most, are most edified and enriched.

My second request to you is this, that you will make conscience of living out those truths you read.

To read much and practise nothing, is to hunt much and catch nothing.

Suetonius reports of Julius Cæsar, 'That seeing Alexander's statue, he fetched a deep sigh, because he at that age had done so little.

Ah! what cause have most to sigh, that they have heard so much, and read so much, and yet done so little! Surely it is more honourable to do great things, than to speak or read great things! It is the doer that will be most happy at last, John 13:17. *In vitæ libro scribuntur qui quod possunt faciunt, etsi quod debent, non possunt*, they are written in the book of life, that do what good they can, though they cannot do as they would [Bernard.]

I have read of a good man coming from a public lecture, and being asked by one whether the sermon was done, answered, with a sad sigh, 'Ah! it is said, but not done.'

My third request is this, that you will pray over what you read.

Many read much, and pray little, and therefore get little by all they read.

Galen writes of a fish called Uranoscopos, that hath but one eye, and yet looks continually up to heaven. When a Christian has one eye upon his book, the other should be looking up to heaven for a blessing upon what he reads.

When one heard what admirable victories Scanderbeg's sword had wrought, he would needs see it; and when he saw it, says he, This is but an ordinary sword; alas! what can this do? Scanderbeg sent him word, I have sent thee my sword, but I have the arm that did all by it.

Alas! what can Christ's sword, Christ's word, do without his arm? Therefore look up to Christ's arm in prayer, that so his sword, his word, may do great things in your souls.

Luther professeth 'that he profited more by prayer in a short space than by study in a longer;' as John, by weeping, got the sealed book open.

My fourth request to you is this, That if, by the blessing of the Lord upon my weak endeavours, any leaf or line should drop myrrh or mercy, marrow or fatness, upon your spirits, that you will give all the glory to the God of heaven, for to him alone it does belong.

Through grace I know I am a poor worm; I am nothing, I have nothing but what I have received. The crown becomes no head but Christ's. Let him who is our all in all have the honour and the glory of all, and I have my end.

Pliny tells of some in the remote parts of India that have no mouths, and yet live on the smell of herbs and sweet flowers; but I hope better things of you, even such as accompany salvation.

My fifth request to you is this, That you would let me lie near your hearts, when you are in the mount especially.

Oh pray, pray hard for me, that the Spirit of the Lord may be redoubled upon me; that his word may prosper in my mouth; that it

may 'run, and be glorified;' and that I may be high in my communion with God, and holy and unblameable in my walkings with God; and that it may be still day with my soul; that I may live and die in the joys and comforts of the Holy Ghost; and that when my sun is set, my glass out, my work done, my race run, I may rest in the everlasting arms of divine love, &c.

My last and least request to you is this, That you will please to cast a mantle of love over the mistakes of the press, and do me that right, and yourselves the courtesy, as, before you read, to correct any material faults that you shall find pointed at in the errata.

God's easy passing over the many and daily erratas of your lives, cannot but make you so ingenuous as readily to pass over the erratas in this book.

You are choice jewels in my eye; you lie near unto my heart; I am willing to spend and be spent for your sakes. My earnest and humble desire is, that my service and labour of love may be accepted by you, Rom. 15:31, and that it may work much for your internal and eternal welfare; and that 'an abundant entrance may be administered to you into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,' 2 Pet. 1:11, and 1:8; and that you may be filled 'with joy unspeakable and full of glory,' and with that 'peace that passes understanding.' This is, and by grace shall be, the prayer of him who desires to approve himself faithful to Christ, his truths, his interests, and his people, and who is your souls' servant in all gospel engagements.

THOMAS BROOKS.

THE UNSEARCHABLE RICHES OF CHRIST

Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable

riches of Christ.—EPH. 3:8.

'UNTO me, who am less than the least of all saints.'

The Greek is a comparative made of a superlative. 'Less than the least of all saints,' is a double diminutive, and signifies lesser than the least, if lesser might be. Here you have the greatest apostle descending down to the lowest step of humility. Great Paul is least of saints, last of the apostles, and greatest of sinners.² The choicest buildings have the lowest foundations, the best balsam sinks to the bottom; those ears of corn and boughs of trees that are most filled and best laden, bow lowest. So do those souls that are most laden with the fruits of paradise. 'Unto me who am less than the least of all saints.'

'Is this grace given.'

In the Greek, or 'was this grace given.' The word that is here rendered grace, is taken in Scripture not only for the favour of God, but also for his gracious gifts; and so you are to understand it in this place. Grace is taken for the gifts of grace; and they are twofold, common or special. Some are common to believers and hypocrites, as knowledge, tongues, a gift of prayer, &c.; some are special and peculiar to the saints, as fear, love, faith, &c. Now Paul had all these, the better to fit him for that high and noble service to which he was called.

'That I should preach.'

That is, declare good news or glad tidings. The Greek word answers to the Hebrew word, which signifies good news, glad tidings, and a joyful message.

'That I should preach among the Gentiles.'

Sometimes this Greek word is generally used for all men, or for all nations. Sometimes the word is used more especially for the people

of the Jews. Sometimes it is used for the Gentiles distinguished from the Jews. So it is used Mat. 6:32, 'For after all these things do the Gentiles seek.' And so it is used here. Those that are 'without God in the world,' that stand in arms against God, that are ignorant of those riches of grace that are in Christ; this grace is given to me, that I should preach among the poor heathens, 'the unsearchable riches of Christ.'

'That I might preach among the Gentiles.' What, myself? No, but 'the unsearchable riches of Christ.'

The Greek word signifies, not to be traced out. Here is rhetoric indeed! Here is riches, unsearchable riches, unsearchable riches of Christ. Riches always imply two things: 1, abundance; 2, abundance of such things as be of worth. Now in the Lord Jesus Christ is the greatest riches, the best riches, the choicest riches; in Christ are riches of justification, Titus 2:14; in Christ are riches of sanctification, Philip. 4:12, 13; in Christ are riches of consolation, 2 Cor. 12:9; and in Christ are riches of glorification, 1 Pet. 1:2, 3. But of these glorious unsearchable riches of Christ, we shall speak hereafter.

I shall begin at this time with the first words, 'Unto me who am less than the least of all saints.' There are these two observations that naturally flow from these words.

Obs. 1. That the most holy men are always the most humble men.

None so humble on earth, as those that live highest in heaven.

Or if you will, take the observation thus:

That those that are the most highly valued and esteemed of by God, are lowest and least in their own esteem.

'Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints,' &c.

Obs. 2. The second observation is,

That there are weak saints as well as strong; little saints as well as great.

Or thus,

All saints are not of an equal growth or stature.

I. I shall begin with the first observation, That the most holy men are always the most humble men. Souls that are the most highly esteemed and valued by God, do set the least and lowest esteem upon themselves. 'Unto me who am less than the least of all saints,' &c.

In the handling of this point, I shall do these three things:

I. I shall prove that the most holy souls are always the most humble souls.

II. I shall shew you the properties of souls truly humble.

III. I shall shew you the reasons why those that are the most highly prized and esteemed of God, do set so low a price upon themselves.

IV. And then the use.

THE FIRST DOCTRINE

Those that are lowest in their own esteem are highest in God's esteem, proved

I. For the first, That this is so, I shall give you most clear proofs, and open them to you.

See it in Job. No man ever received a fairer or a more valuable certificate under the hand of God, or the broad seal of heaven, for his being a soul famous in grace and holiness, than Job, as you may see,

Job 1:8, 'And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil?' And yet no man could speak more undervaluingly of himself than Job did. Job 42:5, 6, 'I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee, I abhor myself in dust and ashes.' This expression is the deepest act of abhorrency. Abhorrency strictly taken, is hatred wound up to the height. 'I abhor myself.' The word that is rendered abhor signifies to reject, to disdain, to contemn, and to cast off. Ah! says Job, I abhor myself, I reject myself, I disdain myself, I cast off myself, I have a vile esteem of myself.⁴ So our blessed apostle, who had been 'caught up into the third heavens, and had such glorious revelations as could not be uttered,' yet he accounted himself less than the least of all saints. Not that anything can be less than the least; the apostle's holy rhetoric doth not cross Aristotle's philosophy; but the original word being a double diminutive, his meaning is that he was as little as could be; therefore he put himself down so little as could not be, less than the least.

Another proof you have, Isa. 6:1, 5, 6. As Paul among the apostles was the greatest, so Isaiah among the prophets was the clearest and choicest gospel preacher, and holds out more of Christ and of his kingdom and glory, than all the other prophets do. Isa. 6:1, He sees the glory of the Lord in a vision, and this makes him cry out, verse 5, 'Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts; I am undone.' The Hebrew is, 'I am cut off,' I am a forlorn man! Why? 'For I have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.' Here you have the highest and choicest among the prophets, as you had Paul before among the apostles, abasing and laying low himself.

So Peter. Luke 5:8, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.' When he saw that glorious miracle wrought by the Lord Jesus, he cries out as one very sensible of his own weakness and sinfulness. 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man.' Ah! I am not worthy to be

near such majesty and glory, who am a mere bundle of vice and vanity, of folly and iniquity.

Take another clear instance: Gen. 18:27, 'And Abraham answered and said, Behold, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, who am but dust and ashes.' Here you have the father of the faithful, the greatest believer in the world, accounting himself dust and ashes. Dust notes the baseness of his original, and ashes notes his deserving to be burnt to ashes, if God should deal with him in justice rather than in mercy. The nearer any soul draws to God, the more humble will that soul lie before God. None so near God as the angels, nor none so humble before God as the angels.

So Jacob, Gen. 32:10, 'I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and all the truth which thou hast shewed unto thy servant,' &c. Jacob, a man eminent in his prevailing with God, a prince that had the honour and the happiness to overcome the God of mercy, yet judges himself unworthy of the least mercy. Ah! how low is that soul in his own eyes, that is most honourable in God's eyes!

David, you know, was a man after God's own heart, 1 Kings 15:5; a man highly honoured, much beloved, and dearly prized by the Lord; yet 1 Sam. 26:20, he counts himself a flea; and what is more contemptible than a flea? In Ps. 22:6, 'I am a worm,' saith he, 'and no man.' The word that is there rendered worm, is a word that signifies a very little worm which breedeth in scarlet, a worm that is so little that a man can hardly see or perceive it. A worm is the most despicable creature in the world, trampled under foot by every one. Says he, I am a despicable worm in my own eyes, and in my enemies' eyes.

And thus you see the point proved, that the most holy men have been always the most humble men.

Eighteen Properties of an Humble Soul

II. The second thing that I am to do is, to shew you the properties of humble souls. I confess, when I look abroad in the world, and observe the carriage of all sorts of men, my heart is stirred to speak as fully and as home to this point as Christ shall help me. It is very very sad to consider, how few humble souls there be in these days. Ah! the damnable pride that reigns and rules in the hearts and lives of most men. I think it is far greater than hath been known in the generations before us. Ah, England! England! what folly, what damnable wickedness is this, that thou shouldst be a-lifting thyself up in pride, when God is a-staining the pride of all glory, and bringing into contempt the honourable of the earth, and a-setting his feet upon the neck of pride.

[1.] Now the first property that I shall lay down of an humble soul is this:

An humble soul under the highest spiritual discoveries, and under the greatest outward mercies, forgets not his former sinfulness and his former outward meanness. Paul had been taken up into the third heavens, and had glorious revelations and manifestations of God, 2 Cor. 12:1–4; he cries out, 'I was a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious,' 1 Tim. 1:13. Under the choicest discoveries, he remembers his former blasphemies. So Rom. 7:23, 'I see a law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members.' He had been at this time about fourteen years converted, as some judge. He was a man that lived at as high a rate in God, as any we read of; a man that was filled with glorious discoveries and revelations, and yet under all discoveries and revelations, he remembers that body of sin and death that made him cry out, 'O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me?, Who shall ease me of my burden, who shall knock off these chains that make my life a hell? I will by a few instances prove the other branch: Gen. 32:10, 'I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies,' says Jacob, 'for with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands.' I remember, saith he, when I went over Jordan, I was as a footman that carried all his wealth with him.

Under his outward greatness he forgets not his former meanness. An humble soul is good at looking back upon his former low estate, upon his threadbare coat that was his best and only robe.

So David, 1 Chron. 17:16, 17, 'And David the king came and sat before the Lord, and said, What am I, O Lord God, and what is mine house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? And yet this was a small thing in thine eyes, O God; for thou hast also spoken of thy servant's house for a great while to come, and hast regarded me according to the state of a man of high degree. Who am I, O Lord God, and what is mine house?' David remembered the meanness of his birth; he remembered his shepherd's crook, as Jacob did his travelling staff. Mercies make an humble soul glad, but not proud. An humble soul is lowest when his mercies are highest; he is least when he is greatest; he is lowest when he is highest; he is most poor when he is most rich. Nothing melts like mercy, nothing draws like mercy, nothing humbles like mercy. Mercy gives the humble soul such excellent counsel, as Placilla the empress gave her husband Theodosius, 'Remember, O husband,' saith she, 'what lately you were, and what now you are; so shall you govern well the empire, and give God his due praise for so great an advancement.' The voice of mercy is, Remember what lately thou wert, and what now thou art, and be humble. Now proud men that are lifted up from the dunghill, that abound in worldly wealth, ah! how does their blood rise with their outward good! The more mercies they have, the more proud they are; mercies do but puff and swell such souls. In a crowd of mercies, they cry out in the pride of their hearts: 'Depart from us, O God, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty that we should serve him? and what profit shall we have, if we pray unto him?' Ps. 73:3–13; Job 21:7–16, 14:15.

[2.] A second property of an humble soul is this, He overlooks his own righteousness, and lives upon the righteousness of another, to wit, the Lord Jesus. So the apostle, Philip. 3:8–10, overlooks his own righteousness, and lives wholly upon the righteousness of Christ: 'I desire to be found in him,' saith he, 'not having mine own

righteousness.' Away with it, it is dross, it is dung, it is dog's meat! It is a rotten righteousness, an imperfect righteousness, a weak righteousness, 'which is of the law; but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith,' that is a spotless righteousness, a pure righteousness, a complete righteousness, an incomparable righteousness; and, therefore, an humble soul overlooks his own righteousness, and lives upon Christ's righteousness. Remember this, all the sighing, mourning, sobbing, and complaining in the world, doth not so undeniably evidence a man to be humble, as his overlooking his own righteousness, and living really and purely upon the righteousness of Christ. This is the greatest demonstration of humility that can be shewn by man, Mat. 6:8. Men may do much, hear much, pray much, fast much, and give much, &c., and yet be as proud as Lucifer, as you may see in the Scribes, Pharisees, Mat. 23, and those in Isa, 58:3, who in the pride of their hearts made an idol of their own righteousness: 'Wherefore have we fasted,' say they, 'and thou seest it not? wherefore have we afflicted our souls, and thou takest no knowledge?' Oh! but for a man now to trample upon his own righteousness, and to live wholly upon the righteousness of another, this speaks out a man to be humble indeed. There is nothing that the heart of man stands more averse to than this, of coming off from his own righteousness. Man is a creature apt to warm himself with the sparks of his own fire, though he doth lie down for it in eternal sorrow, Isa. 50:11. Man is naturally prone to go about to establish his own righteousness, that he might not subject to the righteousness of Christ; he will labour as for life, to lift up his own righteousness, and to make a saviour of it, Rom. 10:4. Ay, but an humble soul disclaims his own righteousness: 'All our righteousness is as filthy rags.' 'Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified,' Ps. 143:2. So Job, 'Though I were righteous, yet I would not answer, but I would make supplication to my judge,' Job 9:15. Proud Pharisees bless themselves in their own righteousness: 'I thank God I am not as this publican; I fast twice in the week,' &c., Luke 18:11, 12. Ay, but now a soul truly humbled blushes to see his own righteousness, and glories in this, that he has the righteousness of Christ to live upon. Rev. 4:10,

11, the twenty-four elders throw down their crowns at the feet of Christ. By their crowns you may understand their gifts, their excellencies, their righteousness; they throw down these before Christ's throne, to note to us, that they did not put confidence in them, and that Christ was the crown of crowns and the top of all their royalty and glory. An humble soul looks upon Christ's righteousness as his only crown.

[3.] Thirdly, The lowest and the meanest good work is not below an humble soul. An humble David will dance before the ark: he enjoyed so much of God in it, that it caused him to leap and dance before it; but Michal his wife despised him for a fool, and counted him as a simple vain fellow, looking upon his carriage as vain and light, and not becoming the might, majesty, and glory of so glorious a prince. Well! says this humble soul, if this be to be vile, I will be more vile.

Great Paul, yet being humble and low in his own eyes, he can stoop to do service to the least and meanest saint. 1 Cor. 9:19–21, 'For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews. To them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law. To them that are without law, as without law, being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ, that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak, became I as weak, that I might gain the weak. I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means gain some.' Here you have an humble soul bowing and stooping to the meanest saint, and the lowest services, that he might win souls. So the Lord Jesus himself was famous in this, John 13:4. Though he was the Lord of glory, and one that thought it no robbery to be equal with God, one that had all perfection and fulness in himself, yet the lowest work is not below this King of kings. Witness his washing his disciples' feet and wiping them with a towel, 1 Cor. 2:8; Philip. 2:6; Col. 1:19.

Bonaventure, though he was born of great parentage, and a great scholar, yet to keep his mind from swelling, he would often sweep

rooms, wash vessels, and make beds.

So that famous Italian marquess, when God was pleased by the ministry of his word to convert him, the lowest work was not below him. Though he might have lived like a king in his own country, yet having tasted of that life and sweet that was in Jesus, he was so humble that he would go to market, and carry home the meanest and the poorest things the market yielded. There was nothing below him, when God had changed him, and humbled him.³

It was recorded to the glory of some ancient generals, that they were able to call every common soldier by his own name, and were careful to provide money, not only for their captains and soldiers, but litter also for the meanest beast. There is not the lowest good that is below the humble soul. If the work be good, though never so low, humility will put a hand to it; so will not pride.

[4.] A fourth property of an humble heart is this, An humble heart will submit to every truth of God, that is made known to it; even to those divine truths that are most cross to flesh and blood. 1 Sam. 3:17, Eli would fain know what God had discovered to Samuel concerning him; Samuel tells him that he must break his neck, that the priesthood must be taken away from him, and his sons must be slain in the war; why 'it is the Lord,' saith he, 'let him do what seemeth him good.' So in Lev. 10:3, the Lord by fire from heaven destroys Aaron's two sons. 'Then Moses said unto Aaron, This is that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified; and Aaron held his peace.' If God miss of his honour one way, he will rain hell out of heaven, but he will have it another way. This Aaron knew, and therefore he held his peace, when God shewed himself to be 'a consuming fire.' The Hebrew word that is here rendered peace, signifies the quietness and silence of his mind. He did not hold his tongue only, for many a man may hold his tongue, and yet his mind and heart may kick and swell against God, but his very mind was quiet and still; there was a heavenly calm in his spirit; he was dumb

and silent, because the Lord had done it. So in Acts 10:33, 'We are all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.' We are not here to hear what may tickle our ears, or please our fancies, or satisfy our lusts. No; but we are here to hear what God will say. Our hearts stand ready pressed to subject themselves to whatever God shall declare to be his will. We are willing to hear what we may do, that we may obey sincerely and universally the good pleasure of our God, knowing that it is as well our dignity as our duty so to do.

There are three things in an humble soul that do strongly incline it to duty.

The first is divine love.

The second is divine presence.

The third is divine glory.

The dove made use of her wings to fly to the ark; so doth an humble soul of his duties to fly to Christ. Though the dove did use her wings, yet she did not trust in her wings, but in the ark. So though an humble soul does use duties, yet he does not trust in his duties, but in his Jesus. But now proud hearts they hate the truth, they cry out, 'Who is the Lord, that we should obey him?' And what are his commandments, that we should submit to them? Ay, but an humble soul falls under the power of truth, and counts it his greatest glory to be obedient to all truth.

[5.] A fifth property of an humble soul is this: An humble soul lives not upon himself, nor upon his own actings, but upon the Lord Jesus, and his actings. Poor men, you know, they do not live upon themselves, they live upon others; they live upon the care of others, the love of others, the provision of others. Why! thus an humble soul lives upon the care of Christ, the love of Christ, the promise of Christ, the faithfulness of Christ, the discoveries of Christ. He lives upon Christ for his justification, Philip. 3:7–10; he lives upon Christ for his

sanctification. Cant. 4:16, 'Awake, O north wind, and come thou south, blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out;' and he lives upon Christ for his consolation: Cant. 2:3, 'As the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste;' and he lives upon Christ for the performance of all holy actions: Philip. 4:13, 'I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me;' Gal. 2:20, 'I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.' An humble soul sees in Christ a fulness of abundance, and a fulness of redundancy, and here his soul lives and feeds. An humble soul sees that all his stock is in the hands of Christ. His stock of graces, his stock of comforts, his stock of experiences are in the hands of Jesus Christ, who is the great Lord keeper of all a believer's graces, and of all his comforts; and therefore, as children live upon them in whose hand their stock is, be it a brother or a friend, why, so an humble soul sees its stock is in the hand of the Lord Jesus, and therefore he lives upon Christ, upon his love, and his provision, and his undertakings, &c. But now proud hearts live not upon the Lord Jesus Christ; they live upon themselves, and upon their own duties, their own righteousness, their own actings, as the Scripture evidences. Christ dwells in that heart most eminently that hath emptied itself of itself. Christ is the humble man's manna, upon which he lives, and by which he thrives, Isa. 58:2, 7; Luke 7:47.

[6.] A sixth property of an humble soul is this, He judges himself to be below the wrath and judgments of God. An humble soul looks upon himself as one not worthy that God should spend a rod upon him, in order to his reformation, edification, or salvation. As I am unworthy, saith an humble soul, that God should smile upon me, so I am unworthy that he should spend a frown upon me. Job 13:25, 'Wilt thou break a leaf driven to and fro? And wilt thou pursue the dry stubble?' Why, I am but a leaf, I am but a little dry stubble, I am below thy wrath; I am so very, very bad, that I wonder that thou shouldst so much as spend a rod upon me. What more weak,

worthless, slight, and contemptible than a leaf, than dry stubble? Why, Lord, says Job, I am a poor, weak, and worthless creature, I wonder that thou shouldst take any pains to do me good, I can't but count and call everything a mercy that is less than hell.

So David, in 1 Sam. 24:14, 'After whom is the King of Israel come out? After whom dost thou pursue? After a dead dog, after a flea.' The language of an humble soul, when God begins to be angry, is this: Lord, I can bless thee that thou wilt take any pains with me; but I humbly acknowledge that I am below the least rod, I am not worthy that thou shouldst frown upon me, threaten me, strike me, or whip me, for my internal and eternal good. But proud hearts think themselves wronged when they are afflicted, they cry out with Cain, 'Our punishment is greater than we can bear,' Gen. 4:13.

[7.] A seventh property of an humble soul is this, An humble soul doth highly prize the least of Christ. The least smile, the least good word, the least good look, the least truth, the least mercy, is highly valued by an humble soul.

The Canaanitish woman in the fifteenth of Matthew sets a high price upon a crumb of mercy. Ah, Lord, says the humble soul, if I may not have a loaf of mercy, give me a piece of mercy; if not a piece of mercy, give me a crumb of mercy. If I may not have sun-light, let me have moon-light; if not moon-light, let me have star-light; if not star-light, let me have candle-light; and for that I will bless thee.

In the time of the law, the meanest things that were consecrated were very highly prized, as leather or wood, that was in the tabernacle. An humble soul looks upon all the things of God as consecrated things. Every truth of God is a consecrated truth; it is consecrated to holy use, and this causes the soul highly to prize it; and so every smile of God, and every discovery of God, and every drop of mercy from God, is very highly prized by a soul that walks humbly with God. The name of Christ, the voice of Christ, the footsteps of Christ, the least touch of the garment of Christ, the least-regarded truth of Christ, the

meanest and least-regarded among the flock of Christ, is highly prized by humble souls that are interested in Christ, Song 1:3; John 10:4, 5; Ps. 27:4; Mat. 9:20, 21; Acts 24:14; 1 Cor. 9:22. An humble soul cannot, an humble soul dares not, call anything little that has Christ in it; neither can an humble soul call or count anything great wherein he sees not Christ, wherein he enjoys not Christ. An humble soul highly prizes the least nod, the least love-token, the least courtesy from Christ; but proud hearts count great mercies small mercies, and small mercies no mercies; yea, pride does so unman them, that they often call mercy misery, &c.

[8.] The eighth property of an humble soul is this, It can never be good enough, it can never pray enough, nor hear enough, nor mourn enough, nor believe enough, nor love enough, nor fear enough, nor joy enough, nor repent enough, nor loathe sin enough, nor be humble enough, &c.

Humble Paul looks upon his great all as nothing at all; he forgets those things that are behind, and reaches forth to those things which are before, 'that if by any means he might attain unto the resurrection of the dead,' Philip. 3:11–14; that is, that perfection of holiness which the dead shall attain unto in the morning of the resurrection, by a metonymy of the subject for the adjunct.

No holiness below that matchless, peerless, spotless, perfect holiness that saints shall have in the glorious day of Christ's appearing, will satisfy the humble soul. An humble heart is an aspiring heart; he cannot be contented to get up some rounds in Jacob's ladder, but he must get to the very top of the ladder, to the very top of holiness. An humble heart cannot be satisfied with so much grace as will bring him to glory, with so much of heaven as will keep him from dropping into hell; he is still crying out, Give, Lord, give; give me more of thyself, more of thy Son, more of thy Spirit; give me more light, more life, more love, &c. Cæsar in warlike matters minded more what was to conquer than what was conquered; what was to gain than what was gained. So does an humble soul mind more what he should be

than what he is, what is to be done than what is done. Verily heaven is for that man, and that man is for heaven, that sets up for his mark the perfection of holiness. Poor men are full of desires; they are often a-sighing it out, Oh that we had bread to strengthen us, drink to refresh us, clothes to cover us, friends to visit us, and houses to shelter us, &c.; so souls that are spiritually poor they are often a-sighing it out, Oh that we had more of Christ to strengthen us, more of Christ to refresh us, more of Christ to be a covering and shelter to us, &c. I had rather, says the humble soul, be a poor man and a rich Christian, than a rich man and a poor Christian. Lord, says the humble soul, I had rather do anything, I had rather bear anything, I had rather be anything, than to be a dwarf in grace, Rev. 3:17, Isa. 65:5, Luke 18:11, 12. The light and glory of humble Christians rises by degrees: Cant. 6:1, (1.) Looking forth as the morning, with a little light; (2.) Fair as the moon, more light; (3.) Clear as the sun, i.e. come up to a higher degree of spiritual light, life, and glory. Lord, says the humble soul, give me much grace, and then a little gold will serve my turn; give me much of heaven, and little of earth will content me; give me much of the springs above, and a little of the springs below will satisfy me, &c.

[9.] The ninth property of an humble soul is this, It will smite and strike for small sins as well as for great, for those the world count no sin, as well as for those that they count gross sins.

When David had but cut off the lap of Saul's garment, his heart smote him as if he had cut off his head. The Hebrew word signifies to smite, wound, or chastise. Ah! his heart struck him, his heart chastised him, his heart wounded him for cutting off Saul's skirt, though he did it upon noble grounds, viz., to convince Saul of his false jealousies, and to evidence his own innocency and integrity: and so, at another time, his heart smote him for numbering the people, as if he had murdered the people: 2 Sam. 24:10, 'And David's heart smote him, after that he had numbered the people; and David said unto the Lord, I have sinned greatly in that I have done: and now I beseech thee, O Lord, take away the iniquity of thy servant, for I have

done very foolishly.' An humble soul knows that little sins, if I may so call any, cost Christ his blood, and that they make way for greater; and that little sins multiplied become great, as a little sum multiplied is great; that they cloud the face of God, wound conscience, grieve the Spirit, rejoice Satan, and make work for repentance, &c. An humble soul knows that little sins, suppose them so, are very dangerous; a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump; a little staff may kill one; a little poison may poison one; a little leak in a ship sinks it; a little fly in the box of ointment spoils it; a little flaw in a good cause mars it; so a little sin may at once bar the door of heaven and open the gates of hell; and therefore an humble soul smites and strikes itself for the least as well as the greatest. Though a head of garlic be little, yet it will poison the leopard, though he be great. Though a mouse is but little, yet it will kill an elephant, if he gets up into his trunk. Though the scorpion be little, yet it will sting a lion to death; and so will the least sin, if not pardoned by the death of Christ.

A proud heart counts great sins small, and small sins no sins, and so disarms conscience for a time of its whipping and wounding power; but at death, or in hell, conscience will take up an iron rod, with which it will lash the sinner for ever; and then, though too late, the sinner shall acknowledge his little sins to be very great, and his great sins to be exceeding grievous and odious, &c.

[10.] The tenth property of an humble soul is this, It will quietly bear burdens, and patiently take blows and knocks, and make no noise. An humble soul sees God through man; he sees God through all the actions and carriages of men: 'I was dumb,' saith the prophet, 'I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it.' An humble soul looks through secondary causes, and sees the hand of God, and then lays his own hand upon his mouth. An humble soul is a mute soul, a tongue-tied soul, when he looks through secondary causes to the supreme cause. So Aaron, when he saw his sons suddenly surprised by a dreadful and doleful death, he held his peace, he bridled his passions; he sits silent under a terrible stroke of divine justice, because the fire that devoured them went out from the Lord. So

when Samuel had told Eli that God would judge his house for ever, and that he had sworn that the iniquity of his house should not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever, &c., 'It is the Lord,' says Eli, 'let him do what seemeth him good.' Eli humbly and patiently lays his neck upon the block; it is the Lord; let him strike, let him kill, &c., says Eli, 1 Sam. 3:11, 13.

So David, when Shimei manifested his desperate fury and folly, malice and madness, in raving and raging at him, in cursing and reproaching of him, says he, 'Let him alone, and let him curse, for the Lord hath bidden him,' 2 Sam. 16:5, 14. God, says he, will, by his wise providence, turn his cursing into blessing. I see the justice of God in his cursing, therefore let him alone, let him curse, says David.

Cassianus reports, that when a certain Christian was held captive by the infidels, and tormented by divers pains and ignominious taunts, being demanded, by way of scorn and reproach, Tell us what Christ has done for you, answered, He hath done what you see, that I am not moved at all the cruelties and contumelies you cast upon me.

So that blessed martyr, Gyles of Brussels, when the friars, sent to reduce him, did at any time miscall him, he ever held his peace, insomuch that those wretches would say abroad that he had a dumb devil in him. Full vessels will bear many a knock, many a stroke, and yet make no noise. So Christians that are full of Christ, that are full of the Spirit, will bear many a knock, many a stroke, and yet make no noise.

An humble soul may groan under afflictions, but he will not grumble in calms. Proud hearts discourse of patience, but in storms humble hearts exercise patience. Philosophers have much commended it, but in the hour of darkness it is the humble soul that acts it. I am afflicted, says the humble soul, but it is mercy I am not destroyed. I am fallen into the pit; it is free grace I am not fallen into hell. God is too just to wrong me, and too gracious to harm me; and therefore I will be still and quiet, let him do what he will with me, says the

humble soul. But proud souls resist when they are resisted, they strike when they are stricken, Isa 58:1–3: 'Who is the Lord,' says lofty Pharaoh, 'that I should obey him?' and Cain cries out, 'My punishment is greater than I am able to bear.' Well! remember this: though it be not easy in afflictions and tribulations to hold our peace, yet it is very advantageous; which the heathens seemed to imitate in placing the image of Angerona [goddess of silence], with the mouth bound upon the altar of Volupia [of pleasure], to shew that those that do prudently and humbly conceal their sorrows and anxieties by patience, shall attain comfort and refreshment.

[11.] The eleventh property of an humble soul is this: in all religious duties and services, he trades with God upon the credit of Christ. Lord, says the humble soul, I need power against such and such sins: give it me upon the credit of Christ's blood. I need strength to such and such services: give it me upon the credit of Christ's word. I need such and such mercies for the cheering, refreshing, quickening, and strengthening of me: give them into my bosom upon the credit of Christ's intercession. As a poor man lives and deals upon the credits of others, so does an humble soul live and deal with God for the strengthening of every grace, and for the supply of every mercy, upon the credit of the Lord Jesus. An humble soul knows that since he broke with God in innocency, God will trust him no more, he will take his word no more; and therefore when he goes to God for mercy, he brings his Benjamin, his Jesus, in his arms, and pleads for mercy upon the account of Jesus.

Plutarch reports that it was wont to be the way of the Molossians, when they would seek the favour of their prince, they took up the king's son in their arms, and so went and kneeled before the king, and by this means overcame him. So do humble souls make a conquest upon God with Christ in their arms. The Father will not give that soul the repulse that brings Christ in his arms.² The humble soul knows that God out of Christ is incommunicable, that God out of Christ is incomprehensible, that God out of Christ is very terrible, and that God out of Christ is inaccessible; and therefore he still

brings Christ with him, and presents all his requests in his name, and so prevails, &c. Oh! but proud souls deal with God upon the credit of their own worthiness, righteousness, services, prayers, tears, fastings, &c., as the proud Pharisees and those wrangling hypocrites in Isa. 58:1–3.

It was a very proud saying of one, *Cœlum gratis non accipiam*, I will not have heaven but at a rate; and therefore well did the father call vain-glory a pleasant thief, and the sweet spoiler of spiritual excellencies.

[12.] The twelfth property of an humble soul is this: it endeavours more how to honour and glorify God in afflictions, than how to get out of afflictions. So Daniel, the three children, the apostles, and those worthies of whom this world was not worthy. They were not curious about getting out of affliction, but studious how to glorify God in their afflictions. They were willing to be anything, and to bear anything, that in everything God might be glorified. They made it their business to glorify God in the fire, in the prison, in the den, on the rack, and under the sword, &c. Lord, says the humble soul, do but keep down my sins, and keep up my heart in a way of honouring of thee under all my troubles, and then my troubles will be no troubles, my afflictions will be no afflictions. Though my burdens be doubled, and my troubles be multiplied, yet do but help me to honour thee by believing in thee, by waiting on thee, and by submitting to thee, and I shall sing care away, and shall say, It is enough.⁴

When Valens the emperor sent messengers to win Eusebius to heresy by fair words and large promises, he answered, Alas, sir! these speeches are fit to catch little children that look after such things, but we that are taught and nourished by the holy Scriptures are readier to suffer a thousand deaths than to suffer one syllable or tittle of the Scripture to be altered. And when the emperor threatened to confiscate his goods, to torment him, to banish him, or to kill him, he answered, He need not fear confiscation that hath nothing to lose;

nor banishment, to whom heaven only is a country; nor torments, when his body will be dashed with one blow; nor death, which is the only way to set him at liberty from sin and sorrow. Oh! but when a proud man is under troubles and afflictions, his head and heart are full of plots and projects how to get off his chains, and to get out of the furnace, &c. A proud heart will say anything, and do anything, and be anything, to free himself from the burdens that press him, as you see in Pharaoh, &c.; but an humble soul is willing to bear the cross as long as he can get strength from heaven to kiss the cross, to bless God for the cross, and to glorify God under the cross, &c., John 1:20, 21.

[13.] The thirteenth property of an humble soul is this: it seeks not, it looks not, after great things. A little will satisfy nature, less will satisfy grace; but nothing will satisfy a proud man's lusts. Lord, says the humble soul, if thou wilt but give me bread to eat and raiment to put on, thou shalt be my God, Gen. 28:20–22. Let the men of the world, says the humble soul, take the world in all its greatness and glory, and divide it among themselves. Let me have much of Christ and heaven in my heart, and food convenient to support my natural life, and it shall be enough: Job 22:29, 'When men are cast down, then thou shalt say, There is lifting up; and he shall save the humble person;' or as the Hebrew hath it, *ne shahh gneaim*, him that hath low eyes, noting to us that an humble soul looks not after high things. So in Ps. 131:1, 2, 'Lord, my heart is not haughty nor mine eyes lofty.' But how do you know that, David? Why, says he, 'I do not exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high, or too wonderful for me. Heb. *ובופלאות ממני* Surely I behaved and quieted myself.' 'My soul is as a child that is weaned of his mother. My soul is even as a weaned child.' As a great shoe fits not a little foot, nor a great sail a little ship, nor a great ring a little finger, so a great estate fits not a humble soul.

It was a prudent speech of that Indian king Taxiles to the invading Alexander: What should we need, said he, to fight and make war one with another, if thou comest not to take away our water and our

necessaries by which we must live? As for other goods, if I be richer than thou, I am ready to give thee of mine; and if I have less, I will not think scorn to thank thee if thou wilt give me some of thine. Oh! but proud Absalom can't be content to be the king's son, unless he may have the crown presently from his father's head. Cæsar can abide no superior, nor Pompey an equal. A proud soul is content with nothing.

A crown could not content Ahab, but he must have Naboth's vineyard, though he swim to it in blood. Diogenes had more content with his tub to shelter him from the injuries of the weather, and with his wooden dish to eat and drink in, than Alexander had with the conquest of half the world, and the fruition of all the treasures, pleasures, and glories of Asia. So an humble soul is more contented and satisfied with Daniel's pulse and John's coat than proud princes are with their glistening crowns and golden sceptres.

[14.] The fourteenth property of an humble soul is this: it can rejoice in the graces and gracious actings of others, as well as in its own. An humble Moses could say when Eldad and Medad prophesied in the camp, 'Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them,' Num. 11:26–30. So humble Paul in Acts 26:29, 'And Paul said, I would to God that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, except those bonds.' I heartily wish and pray for thine own sake that not only in a low but in an eminent, degree, both thou and all that are here present, were as far Christians as I am; only I would not wish them imprisoned as I am. An humble soul is no churl. There is no envy in spiritual things; one may have as much of spirituals as another, and all alike. So in 1 Thes. 1:2, 3, 'We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father.' So in the 2 Epistle 1:2–4, 'Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because

that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all towards each other aboundeth: so that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God, for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure.' Ezekiel can commend Daniel, his contemporary, matching him with Noah and Job, for his power in prayer; and Peter highly praises Paul's epistles, though he had been sharply reproved in one of them, Ezek. 14:14, 2 Peter 3, &c. Oh! but proud souls will be still a-casting disgrace and contempt upon those excellencies in others that they want in themselves.

A proud cardinal, in Luther's time, said, Indeed, a reformation is needful, and to be desired, but that Luther, a rascally friar, should be the man should do it, is intolerable. Pride is like certain flies, called cantharides, who light especially upon the fairest wheat and the most blown roses.

Though Licinius, who was joined with Galerius in the empire, was so ignorant that he could not write his own name, yet as Eusebius reports, he called the liberal arts a public poison.

This age is full of such monsters that envy every light that outshines their own, and that throw dirt upon the graces and excellencies of others, that themselves may only shine. Pride is notable both at subtraction and at multiplication. A proud heart always prizes himself above the market; he reckons his own pence for pounds, and others' pounds for pence; he looks upon his own counters as gold, and upon others' gold as counters. All pearls are counterfeit but what he wears.

[15.] The fifteenth property of an humble soul is, he will rather bear wrongs than revenge wrongs offered. The humble soul knows that vengeance is the Lord's, and that he will repay, &c., Ps. 94:1. The humble soul loves not to take the sword in his own hand, Rom. 12:19; he knows the day is a-coming, wherein the Lord will give his enemies two blows for one, and here he rests. An humble soul, when wrongs are offered, is like a man with a sword in one hand and a salve in the

other; could wound but will heal: Ps. 35:11–16, 'False witnesses did rise up: they laid to my charge things that I knew not. They rewarded me evil for good, to the spoiling of my soul. But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth: I humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into my own bosom. I behaved myself as though he had been my friend or brother: I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth for his mother,' &c. The Scripture abounds in instances of this nature.

Dionysius having not very well used Plato at the court, when he was gone, fearing lest he should write against him, he sent after him to bid him not to write against him. Says he, 'Tell Dionysius that I have not so much leisure as to think of him.' So humble wronged souls are not at leisure to think of the wrongs and injuries that others do them.

Mr Foxe, that wrote the Book of Martyrs, would be sure to do him a kindness that had done him an injury: so that it used to be a proverb, 'If a man would have Mr Foxe do him a kindness, let him do him an injury.' An humble soul is often in looking over the wrongs and injuries that he has done to God, and the sweet and tender carriage of God towards him notwithstanding those wrongs and injuries; and this wins him, and works him to be more willing and ready to bear wrongs, and forgive wrongs, than to revenge any offered wrongs.

[16.] The sixteenth property of an humble soul is this, An humble soul, though he be of never so rare abilities, yet he will not disdain to be taught what he knows not, by the meanest persons, Isa. 11:6. A child shall lead the humble soul in the way that is good; he cares not how mean and contemptible the person is, if a guide or an instructor to him.

Apollos, 'an eloquent man, and mighty in the Scripture,' a master in Israel, and yet sits by an Aquila, a tent-maker, and Priscilla his wife, to be instructed by them, Acts 18:24–26. Sometimes the poorest and the meanest Christian may, for counsel and comfort, be a god to another, as Moses was to Aaron. As an humble soul knows that the

stars have their situation in heaven, though sometimes he sees them by their reflection in a puddle, in the bottom of a well, or in a stinking ditch; so he knows that godly souls, though never so poor, low, and contemptible, as to the things of this world, are fixed in heaven, in the region above; and therefore their poverty and meanness is no bar to hinder him from learning of them, Eph. 2:6.

Though John was poor in the world, yet many humble souls did not disdain, but rejoice in his ministry. Christ lived poor and died poor, Mat. 8:20. As he was born in another man's house, so he was buried in another man's tomb. Austin observes, when Christ died he made no will; he had no crown-lands, only his coat was left, and that the soldiers parted among them; and yet those that were meek and lowly in heart counted it their heaven, their happiness, to be taught and instructed by him.

[17.] The seventeenth property of an humble soul is this: an humble soul will bless God, and be thankful to God, as well under misery as under mercy; as well when God frowns as when he smiles; as well when God takes as when he gives; as well under crosses and losses, as under blessings and mercies: Job 1:21, 'The Lord gives and the Lord takes, blessed be the name of the Lord.' He doth not cry out upon the Sabeans and the Chaldeans, but he looks through all secondary causes, and sees the hand of God; and then he lays his hand upon his own heart, and sweetly sings it out, 'The Lord gives, and the Lord takes, blessed be the name of the Lord.' An humble soul, in every condition, blesses God, as the apostle commands, in the 1 Thes. 5:18, 'In every thing give thanks to God.' So 1 Cor. 4:12, 'Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer.' The language of an humble soul is, If it be thy will, saith an humble soul, I should be in darkness, I will bless thee; and if it be thy will I should be again in light, I will bless thee; if thou wilt comfort me, I will bless thee; and if thou wilt afflict me, I will bless thee; if thou wilt make me poor, I will bless thee; if thou wilt make me rich, I will bless thee; if thou wilt give me the least mercy, I will bless thee; if thou wilt give me no mercy, I will bless thee. An humble soul is quick-sighted; he sees the

rod in a Father's hand; he sees honey upon the top of every twig, and so can bless God; he sees sugar at the bottom of the bitterest cup that God doth put into his hand; he knows that God's house of correction is a school of instruction; and so he can sit down and bless when the rod is upon his back. An humble soul knows that the design of God in all is his instruction, his reformation, and his salvation.

It was a sweet saying of holy Bradford, If the queen will give me my life, I will thank her; if she will banish me, I will thank her; if she will burn me, I will thank her; if she will condemn me to perpetual imprisonment, I will thank her. Ay, this is the temper of an humble heart. An humble soul knows, that to bless God in prosperity is the way to increase it; and to bless God in adversity is the way to remove it. An humble soul knows, that if he blesses God under mercies, he hath paid his debt; but if he blesses God under crosses, he hath made God a debtor. But oh the pride of men's hearts, when the rod is upon their backs! You have many professors that are seemingly humble, while the sun shines, while God gives, and smiles, and strokes; but when his smiles are turned into frowns, when he strikes and lays on, oh the murmurings! the disputings! the frettings! and wranglings of proud souls! they always kick when God strikes.

[18.] The last property of an humble soul is this: an humble soul will wisely and patiently bear reproof: Prov. 25:12, 'As an ear ring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wise reprover upon an obedient ear.' A seasonable reproof falling upon an humble soul hath a redoubled grace with it. It is an earring of gold, and as an ornament of fine gold, or as a diamond in a diadem.

An humble David can say, 'Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness, and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head,' Ps. 141:5. David compares the faithful reproof of the righteous, to the excellent oil that they used about their heads. Some translate it, 'Let it never cease from my head.' That is, let me never want it, and so the original will bear too, I would never want reproofs, whatsoever I want: 'But yet my prayer shall be

in their calamities.' I will requite their reproofs with my best prayers in the day of their calamity, saith David. Whereas a proud heart will neither pray for such nor with such as reprove them, but in their calamities will most insult over them.

Some translate it more emphatically: 'The more they do, the more I shall think myself bound unto them.' And this was Gerson's disposition, of whom it is recorded, that he rejoiced in nothing more than if he were freely and friendly reprov'd by any: Prov. 9:8, 9, 'Rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee; give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser.' Prov. 19:25, 'Reprove one that hath understanding, and he will understand knowledge.' You know how sweetly David carries it towards Abigail, 1 Sam. 25:32, 33; she wisely meets him, and puts him in mind of what he was going about, and he falls a-blessing of her presently: 'Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me, and blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou which hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood.' I was resolved in my passion, and in the heat of my spirit, that I would not leave a man alive, but blessed be God, and blessed be thy counsel! An humble soul can sit down and bless God under reproofs. An humble soul is like the Scythian king, that went naked in the snow, and when Alexander wondered how he could endure it, he answered, 'I am not ashamed, for I am all forehead.' An humble soul is all forehead, able to bear reproofs with much wisdom and patience. Oh! but a proud heart cannot bear reproofs, he scorns the reprover and his reproofs too.

Prov. 15:12, 'A scorner loveth not one that reproveth him, neither will he go unto the wise.' Amos 5:10, 'They hate him that reproveth in the gate;' as Ahab did good Micaiah, and John Baptist did Herod, and our Saviour the Pharisees, Luke 16:13. Christ being to deal with the covetous Scribes and Pharisees, he lays the law home, and tells them plainly that they could not serve God and mammon. Here Christ strikes at their right eye; but how do they hear this? Mark in the 14th verse, 'The Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things, and they derided him.' The Pharisees did not simply laugh at Christ,

but gave also external signs of scorn in their countenance and gestures. They blew their nose at him, for that is the meaning of the original word. By their gestures they demonstrated their horrid deriding of him; they fleared and jeered, when they should have feared and trembled at the wrath to come: Isa. 28:10, 'For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little.' One observes, that that was a scoff put upon the prophet, and is as if they should say, Here is nothing but precept upon precept, line upon line. And, indeed, the very sound of the words in the original carries a taunt, zau le zau, kau lakau, as scornful people, by the tone of their voice and rhyming words, scorn at such as they despise. Pride and passion, and other vices, in these days go armed; touch them never so gently, yet, like the nettle, they will sting you; and if you deal with them roundly, roughly, cuttingly, as the apostle speaks, they will swagger with you, as the Hebrew did with Moses: 'Who made thee a judge over us?' Exod. 2:13, 14. And thus much for the properties of an humble soul.

Five Reasons of the Point

III. I come now to the next thing, and that is, to shew you the reasons why the best men are the most humble men.

[1.] First, Because they see themselves the greatest debtors to God for what they do enjoy.

There is no man on earth that sees himself such a debtor to God as the humble man. Every smile makes him a debtor to God, and every good word from heaven makes him a debtor to God. He looks upon all his temporals, as health, wealth, wife, child, friend, &c., and sees himself deeply indebted for all. He looks upon his spiritual mercies, and sees himself a great debtor to God for them; he looks upon his graces, and sees himself a debtor for them; he looks upon his experiences, and sees himself a debtor for them; he looks upon all his privileges, and sees himself a debtor for them; he looks upon his in-

comes, and sees himself a debtor for them. The more mercy he hath received, the more he looks upon himself indebted and obliged to pay duty and tribute to God; as you may see in Ps. 116:6, 7, 8, 12, 13, 14 verses compared. In the 6th, 7th, 8th verses, he tells you of the mercies he had received from God, and in the 12th and 13th verses, says he, 'What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits towards me?' I see myself, saith he, wonderfully indebted; well, what then? why, 'I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord, in the presence of all his people.' The same you have in the 16th, 17th, and 18th verses of the same psalm.

So David, Ps. 103:1–4, casts his eyes upon his temporal and his spiritual mercies, and then calls upon his soul: 'O my soul, bless the Lord; and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases,' &c. An humble soul knows, that it is a strange folly to be proud of being more in debt than another. It is true, saith he, I have this and that mercy in possession, and such and such mercies in reversion; but by all, I am the more a debtor to God.

Cæsar admired at that mad soldier, who was very much in debt and yet slept so quietly. So does an humble soul wonder and admire, to see men that are so much indebted to God for mercies, as many are, and yet sleep so quietly, and be so mindless and careless in blessing and praising of God. There is nothing, saith one, that endures so small a time, as the memory of mercies received; and the more great they are, the more commonly they are recompensed with ingratitude.

[2.] Secondly, It is because in this life they have but a taste of God.

In the 1 Pet. 2:2, 3, 'As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby; if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.' The best men on this side heaven have but a taste; he is but in a tasting, desiring, hungering, thirsting, and growing

condition: Job 26:14, 'These are part of his ways, but how little a portion is heard of him!' So in 1 Cor. 13:9, 10, 12, 'We know but in part, and we prophesy but in part; now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face.' The Lord gives out but little of himself here, we have but a taste of divine sweetness here, we see but the back-parts of God, the day is not far off when we shall see his face. The best of Christ is behind, as the sweetest honey lies in the bottom. Our greatest knowledge here is to know that we know nothing.

The Rabbins in their comments upon Scripture, when they meet with hard knots that they cannot explicate, they salve all with this, *Elias cum venerit solvet omnia*, 'When Elias comes, he will resolve all things.' The best men are in the dark, and will be in the dark, till the Lord comes to shine forth upon them in more grace and glory. The best men on this side heaven are narrow vessels: they are able to receive and take in but little of God. The best men are so full of the world, and the vanities thereof, that they are able to take in but little of God. Here God gives his people some tastes, that they may not faint; and he gives them but a taste, that they may long to be at home, that they may keep humble, that they may sit loose from things below, that they may not break and despise bruised reeds, and that heaven may be the more sweet to them at last, &c.

[3.] A third reason why the best men are the most humble, and that is, because the best men dwell more upon their worser part, their ignoble part, than they do upon their noble part, their better part.

In Isa. 6:5, 'I am a man of unclean lips,' saith that humble soul. So humble Job cries out of the iniquity of his youth; and says he, 'Once have I spoken foolishly, yea, twice, but I will do so no more,' Job 13:26, 40:15. Humble David, Ps. 51:3, sighs it out, 'My sin is ever before me.' So humble Paul, Rom. 7:22, 23, complains, that he 'hath a law in his members warring against the law of his mind, and leading him captive to the law of sin;' and that, 'when he would do good, evil was present with him.' An humble soul sees that he can stay no more from sin than the heart can from panting, and the pulse

from beating; he sees his heart and life to be fuller of sin, than the firmament is of stars; and this keeps him low. He sees that sin is so bred in the bone, that till his bones, as Joseph's, be carried out of the Egypt of this world, it will not out. He every day finds that these Jebusites and Canaanites be as thorns in his eyes, and as goads in his sides. He finds sin an ill inmate, that will not out, till the house fall on the head of it; as the fretting leprosy, in the walls of the house, would not out till the house itself was demolished.² Though sin and grace were never born together, and though they shall not die together; yet while the believer lives, these two must live together; and this keeps them humble.

As the peacock, looking upon his black feet, lets fall his plumes, so the poor soul, when he looks upon his black feet, the vanity of his mind, the body of sin that is in him, his proud spirit falls low.

Epaminondas, an Athenian captain, being asked why he was so sad the day after a great victory, answered, 'Yesterday I was tickled with much vain-glory, therefore I correct myself for it to-day.' That is the temper of an humble soul. It is very observable, that the saints are pressed to take notice of their better part: Cant. 1:15, 'Behold thou art fair my love, behold thou art fair.' And so, chap. 4:1, 'Behold thou art fair, behold thou art fair.' God hath much ado to get a gracious heart to mind his spiritual beauty; to take notice of the inward excellency that he hath wrought in it. Though 'the king's daughter be all glorious within,' yet God hath much ado to bring her to see and take notice of her inward beauty and glory. The humble soul is more set to eye and dwell upon its deformity, than it is upon that beauty and glory that God hath stamped upon it. And this makes the man little and low in his own eyes.

[4.] Fourthly, Because they have the clearest sight and vision of God, and have the nearest and highest communion with God. None on earth are so near to God, and so high in their communion with God, as humble souls. And as they have the clearest visions of God, so those actions of God give them the fullest sight and knowledge of

their own sinfulness and nothingness. So in Job 42:5, 6, 'I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye hath seen thee, I abhor myself in dust and ashes.' Isa. 6:1, 5, In a vision the Lord discovers his glory to the prophet, then verse 5, 'Woe is me!' saith he, 'for I am undone;' or 'I am cut off,' why? Because 'I am a man of unclean lips; and have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.' Oh, the vision that I have had of the glory of God hath given me such a clear and full sight of my own vileness and baseness, that I cannot but loathe and abhor myself. When Abraham draws near to God, then he accounts himself but dust and ashes, Gen. 18:26, 27. The angels that are near God, that stand before him, they cover their faces with two wings, as with a double scarf, in the 6th of Isaiah ver. 2.

[5.] The fifth and last reason why those are most humble that are most holy is, because they maintain in themselves a holy fear of sinning.

And the more this holy fear of falling is maintained, the more the soul is humbled. Prov. 14:16, 'A wise man feareth, and departeth from evil;' and chap. 28:14, 'Happy is the man that feareth always: but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief.' And this keeps the holy soul humble.

I have known a good old man, saith Bernard, who when he had heard of any that had committed some notorious offence, was wont to say with himself, Ille hodie, et ego cras, he fell to-day, so may I to-morrow. Now, the reason why humble souls do keep up in themselves a holy fear of falling, is because this is the best to keep them from falling. Job fears and conquers on the dunghill; Adam presumes, and falls in paradise; Nehemiah fears, and stands, Neh. 5:15; Peter presumes, and falls, Mat. 26:69, seq.; Mr Sanders the martyr, in Queen Mary's days, fears and stands; Dr Pendleton presumes, and falls from a professor to be a papist.

When Agamemnon said, What should the conqueror fear? Casander presently answered, Quod nihil timet, He should fear this most of all, that he fears not at all.

And so I have done with the reasons of the point. I shall now come to

The Uses of It

IV. The uses of it: and the first is this.

[1.] Is it so, that the most holy souls are the most humble souls? Then this shews you, that the number of holy souls is very few. Oh, how few be there that are low in their own eyes! The number of souls that are high in the esteem of God, and low in their own esteem, are very few. Oh, the pride of England! Oh, the pride of London! Pride in these days has got a whore's forehead; yet pride cannot climb so high but justice will sit above her.

Bernard saith, that pride is the rich man's cousin. I may add, and the poor man's cousin, and the profane man's cousin, and the civil man's cousin, and the formal man's cousin, and the hypocrite's cousin; yea, all men's cousin; and it will first or last cast down and cast out all the Lucifers and Adams in the world.

[2.] Secondly, As you would approve yourselves to be high in the account of God, as you would approve yourselves to be not only good, but eminently good, keep humble. Since England was England, since the gospel shined amongst us, there was never such reason to press this duty of humility, as in these days of pride wherein we live; and therefore I shall endeavour these two things:

First, To lay down some motives that may work you to be humble.

Secondly, To propound some directions that may further you in this work.

First, For the motives, Consider,

Eight Motives to Provoke Persons to be Humble

(1.) First, How God singles out humble souls from all others, to pour out most of the oil of grace into their hearts.

No vessels that God delights to fill, like broken vessels, like contrite spirits: James 4:6, 'He resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble.' The Greek word signifies, to set himself in battle array. God takes the wind and hill of a proud soul, but he gives grace to the humble. The silver dews flow down from the mountains to the lowest valleys. Abraham was but dust and ashes in his own eyes; ay, but saith God, 'Shall I hide from Abraham the thing that I will do?' Gen. 18:17. No; I will not. An humble soul shall be both of God's court and his counsel too. Humble Jacob, that was in his own eyes less than the least of all mercies, Gen. 32:10, what a glorious vision had he of God, when the ground was his bed, and the stone his pillow, and the hedges his curtains, and the heavens his canopy; then he saw angels ascend and descend, Gen. 28. An humble soul that lies low, oh what sights of God hath he! What glory doth he behold, when the proud soul sees nothing! God pours in grace to the humble, as men pour in liquor into an empty vessel. He does not drop in grace into an humble heart, but he pours it in.

The altar under the law was hollow, to receive the fire, the wood, and the sacrifice; so the hearts of men, under the gospel, must be humble, empty of all spiritual pride and self-conceitedness, that so they may receive the fire of the Spirit, and Jesus Christ, who offered himself for a sacrifice for our sins.

Humility is both a grace, and a vessel to receive grace. There is none that sees so much need of grace as humble souls. There is none prizes grace like humble souls. There is none improves grace like humble souls. Therefore God singles out the humble soul to fill him to the brim with grace, when the proud is sent empty away.

(2.) A second motive is, of all garments humility doth best become Christians, and most adorn their profession.

Faith is the champion of grace, and love the nurse, but humility the beauty of grace: 1 Peter 5:5, 'Be clothed with humility.' The Greek word *εγκομζωσασθε* imports, that humility is the ribbon or string that ties together all those precious pearls, the rest of the graces. If this string break, they are all scattered.

The Greek word that is rendered clothed, comes of another Greek word *κόμζος*, that signifies to knit, and tie knots, as delicate and curious women used to do, of ribbons, to adorn their heads and bodies, as if humility were the knot of every virtue, the grace of every grace. Chrysostom calls humility the root, mother, nurse, foundation, and band of all virtue.' Basil calls it 'the storehouse and treasury of all good.' For what is the scandal and reproach of religion at this day? Nothing more than the pride of professors. Is not this the language of most? They are great professors, Oh but very proud! They are great hearers, they will run from sermon to sermon, and cry up this man, and cry up that man, Oh but proud! They are great talkers, Oh but as proud as the devil! &c. Oh that you would take the counsel of the apostle, 'Be clothed with humility'; and that Col. 3:12, 'Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering.' No robes to these.

(3.) The third motive is this, humility is a loadstone that draws both the heart of God and man to it.

In Isa. 57:15, 'Thus saith the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit.' The Lord singles out the humble soul of all others, to make him an habitation for himself. Here is a wonder! God is on high; and yet the higher a man lifts up himself, the farther he is from God; and the lower a man humbles himself, the nearer he is to God. Of all souls, God delights most to dwell with the humble, for they do most prize and best improve his precious presence.

In Prov. 29:23, 'A man's pride shall bring him low, but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit. Prov. 22:4, 'By humility and the fear of the Lord are riches and honour,' &c. The Hebrew is, 'The heel of humility.' Riches and honour follow humility at the very heels. One of the ancients used to say that humility is the first, second, and third grace of a Christian. Humility is a very drawing grace; it draws men to think well and speak well of Christ, the gospel, and the people of God; it makes the very world to say, Ay, these are Christians indeed; they are full of light, and yet full of lowliness; they are high in worth, and yet humble in heart. Oh, these are the crown and the glory of religion.³

An humble soul is like the violet, that by its fragrant smell draws the eye and the hearts of others to him. Mat. 18:4, 'They are the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.' He that is least in his own account is always greatest in God's, and in good men's account.

(4.) The fourth motive is this, consider all the world cannot keep him up, that doth not keep down his own spirit.

One asked a philosopher, what God was a-doing? He answered, 'That his whole work was to lift up the humble, and to cast down the proud.' That man cannot possibly be kept up, whose spirit is not kept down, as you may clearly see in Pharaoh, Haman, Herod, and Nebuchadnezzar; all the world could not keep them up, because their spirit was not kept down.

Prov. 29:27, 'A man's pride shall bring him low;' for it sets God against him, and angels against him, and men against him; yea, even those that are as proud as himself. It is very observable, that whereas one drunkard loves another, one swearer loves another, and one thief loves another, and one unclean person loves another, &c., yet one proud person cannot endure another, but seeks to undermine him, that he alone may bear the bell, and carry the commendations, the praise, the promotion. It is storied of the Romans, that were the proudest people on the earth, that they reckoned it as a parcel of their praise, that they brought down the proud. All the world, sirs, will not keep up those persons that do not keep down their spirits.

Proud Valerian, the Roman emperor, fell from being an emperor to be a footstool to Sapor, king of Persia, as oft as he took horse.

Henry the Fourth, emperor, in sixty-two battles, had generally the better, and yet was deposed, and driven to that misery, that he desired only a clerkship in a house at Spira, that himself had built. And oh! that professors would think of this in these days in which we live. All the world shall not keep up those which do not keep down their own spirits. The very design of God is to stain the pride of all glory, and to bring into contempt the honourable of the earth. Therefore now if men in our days shall grow proud and high, under mercies and divine appearances, justice will be above them, and turn their glory into shame, and lay their honour in the dust. If your blood rises with your outward good, you will certainly fall, and great will be your fall.

(5.) The fifth consideration to provoke us to be humble is this: let us have always our eye fixed upon the example of Jesus Christ, and his humble and lowly carriage.

Christ by his example labours to provoke his disciples to keep humble, and to walk lowly: in John 13:4, 5, 12, 13, 14, 15 verses compared. He rises and washes his disciples' feet, &c., and mark what he aims at in that carriage of his, verse 12–14: 'Know ye what I

have done unto you,' saith he; 'Ye call me Master and Lord, and ye say well, for so I am; if I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet; for I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.' I have given you an example, saith Christ, and I would have you to imitate my example. Example is the most powerful rhetoric; the highest and noblest example should be very quickening and provoking. Oh! here you have the greatest, the noblest example of humility, that was ever read or heard of. Upon consideration of this great and eminent example of Christ's humility, Guericus, a good man, cried out, Thou hast overcome me, O Lord! thou hast overcome my pride. This example of thine hath mastered me. Oh that we could say with this good man, Thou hast overcome, O Lord! thou hast overcome our proud hearts, by this example thou hast overmastered our lofty spirits.

This example of Christ's humility you have further set forth, Philip. 2:6–8, 'Who being in the form of God,' that is, in the nature and essence of God, being very God, clothed with divine glory and majesty as God, 'thought it no robbery,' it being his right by nature, 'to be equal with God.' The Greek words that are rendered, 'he thought it no robbery,' do import, he made it not a matter of triumph or ostentation to be equal with God, it being his right by nature, and therefore the challenging of it could be no usurpation of another's right, of taking to himself that which was not his own. 'He thought it no robbery to be equal with God.' The Greek is equals, that is, every way, equal, not a secondary and inferior God, as the Arians would have him. 'But made himself of no reputation,' verse 7. The Greek is 'emptied himself,' that is, he suspended and laid aside his glory and majesty, or dis-robbed himself of his glory and dignity, and became a sinner, both by imputation and by reputation, for our sakes.

And verse 8, 'he humbled himself.' This Sun of righteousness went ten degrees back in the dial of his Father, that he might come to us with healing under his wings. 'And became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.' In these words there is a kind of

gradation; for it is more to become obedient than to humble himself; and more to yield unto death than to become obedient; and yet more to be crucified than simply to die; for it was to submit himself to a most painful, ignominious, and cursed death. 'He became obedient.' That is, saith Beza, 'to his dying day,' his whole life being nothing but a continual death.

I have read of an earl called Eleazarus, that being given to immoderate anger, was cured of that disordered affection by studying of Christ and his patience; he still dwelt upon the meditation of Christ and his patience, till he found his heart transformed into the similitude of Jesus Christ. And oh! that you would never leave pondering upon that glorious example of Christ's humility, till your hearts be made humble, like the heart of Christ. Oh! that that sweet word of Christ, Mat. 11:29, might stick upon all your hearts, 'Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly, and you shall find rest to your souls.'

Bonaventure engraved this sweet saying of our Lord, 'Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart,' in his study; and oh that this saying was engraven upon all your foreheads, upon all your hearts! Oh that it was engraven upon the dishes you eat in, the cups you drink in, the seats you sit on, the beds you lie on, &c.

Jerome having read the religious life and death of Hilarion, folding up the book, said, Well! Hilarion shall be the champion whom I will imitate. Oh! when you look upon this glorious example of Christ, say, The Lord Jesus his example shall be that that my soul shall imitate.

(6.) Sixthly, consider Humility will free a man from perturbations and distempers.

When there are never such great storms without, humility will cause a calm within. There are a great many storms abroad, and there is nothing will put the soul into a quiet condition but humility. An humble soul saith, Who am I, that I may not be despised? Who am I,

that I may not be reproached, abused, slighted, neglected? That which will break a proud man's heart, will not so much as break an humble man's sleep. In the midst of a storm, an humble soul is still in a calm. When proud hearts are at their wit's ends, stamping, swearing, and swaggering at God, and man, and providence, an humble soul is quiet and still, like a ship in a harbour. Shimei, 2 Sam. 16:6, 13, comes railing and cursing of David, and calls him a bloody man, and a man of Belial, that is, a runnagado, one who being desperately wicked had shaken off the yoke of government, and would be under no law. So the Hebrew word Jagnat, signifies men without yoke, or lawless. Therefore the Septuagint commonly translate it παράνομος, altogether irregular. It signifies most flagitious men, and notorious and desperately wicked, stigmatized villains, even incarnate devils; and yet David holds his peace, though provoked by his mighty men to revenge himself. Oh! how would this cursing and railing have maddened and broken many a proud man's heart; and yet it stirs not David.

Fulgentius, after he was extremely persecuted, he had an advantage to seek revenge, but he would not; for, saith he, *plura pro Christo toleranda*, we must suffer more for Christ than so. What though I am thus and thus wronged? What though I have an opportunity for revenge? yet I must suffer more than so for Christ, says the humble soul. An humble soul, when wrongs are offered him, is like a man with a sword in one hand and salve in another; he could kill but will cure.

One wondering at the patience and humble carriage of Socrates, towards one that reviled him, Socrates said, If we should meet one whose body were more unsound than ours, should we be angry with him, and not rather pity him? Why then should we not do the like to him whose soul is more diseased than ours? An humble soul, when he meets with this and that wrong from men, he knows that their souls are diseased, and that rather moves him to pity than to revenge wrongs offered. A proud heart swells and grows big, when in the least wronged, and is ready to call for fire from heaven, and to take any

opportunity for revenge of wrongs offered. No man so abused as I, no man thus styled as I, says the proud soul. Oh, but an humble soul in patience possesses himself in all trials and storms.

Galladius observes upon Exod. 22:28, the patience and humble carriage of those three emperors, Theodosius, Honorius, and Arcadius, towards those that spake evil of them; they would have them subject to no punishment; for they said, If it come from lightness of spirit, it is to be contemned; if from madness, it is worthy of pity; if from injury, it is to be forgiven; for injuries and wrongs are to be pardoned. And this is the true temper of an humble soul, and by this he enjoys peace and quiet in the midst of all earthquakes and heartquakes.

(7.) The seventh consideration is this, consider humility exalteth.

He that is most humble, is and shall be most exalted and most honoured. No way to be high, like this of being low. Moses was the meekest man on earth, and God made him the honourablest, calling of him up unto himself into the mount, making known his glory to him, and making of him the leader of his people Israel. Gideon was very little in his own eyes; he was the least of his father's house in his own apprehension, and God exalts him, making him the deliverer of his Israel.

It was a good saying of one, Wilt thou be great? begin from below. As the roots of the tree descend, so the branches ascend. The lower any man is in this sense, the higher shall that man be raised. Mat. 23:12, 'And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.' God, that is wisdom itself, hath said it, and he will make it good, though thou seest no ways how it should be made good. The lowest valleys have the blessing of fruitfulness, while the high mountains are barren; Prov. 18:12, 'Before destruction, the heart of man is lofty, and before honour is humility.'

David came not to the kingdom till he could truly say, 'Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lifted up,' Ps. 131:1, 2. Abigail was not made David's wife till she thought it honour enough to wash the feet of the meanest of David's servants, 1 Sam. 25. Moses must be forty years a stranger in Midian, before he became king in Jeshurun; he must be struck sick to death in the inn, before he goes to Pharaoh on that noble embassy.

It was a sweet observation of Luther, 'That for the most part when God set him upon any special service for the good of the church, he was brought low by some fit of sickness or other.' Surely, as the lower the ebb, the higher the tide; so the lower any descend in humility, the higher they shall ascend in honour and glory. The lower this foundation of humility is laid, the higher shall the roof of honour be overlaid. If you would turn spiritual purchasers of honour, or of whatsoever else is good, no way like this of humility. We live in times wherein men labour to purchase honour; some by their money, others by their friends; others by making themselves slaves to the lusts of men; others by being prodigal of their blood, and many by giving themselves up to all manner of baseness and wickedness, whereby their carnal ends may be attained, and themselves exalted; but these men and their honour will quickly be laid in the dust. Oh! but the readiest, the surest, the safest, the sweetest way to attain to true honour, is to be humble, to lie low. Humility makes a man precious in the eye of God. He that is little in his own account, is great in God's esteem.²

(8.) The eighth and last consideration that I shall propound is this, consider humility keeps the soul free from many darts of Satan's casting, and snares of his spreading.

As you may see in the three children in Daniel, and in those worthies in the 11th of the Hebrews, 'of whom this world was not worthy.' As the lowest shrubs are freed from many violent gusts and blasts of wind, which shake and rend the tallest cedars; so the humble soul is free from a world of temptations, that proud and lofty souls are

shaken and torn in pieces with. The devil hath least power to fasten a temptation upon an humble soul. He that hath a gracious measure of humility, is neither affected with Satan's proffers, nor terrified with Satan's threatenings. The golden chain does not allure him, nor the iron chain does not daunt him.

I have read of one who, seeing in a vision many snares of Satan spread upon the earth, he sat down and mourned, and said with himself, 'Who shall pass through these?' whereunto he heard a voice answering, 'Humility shall pass through them.' A proud heart is as easily conquered as tempted, vanquished as assaulted. But the humble soul, when tempted, says with that worthy convert, 'I am not the man that I was.' There was a time when my heart was proud and lifted up, and then thou couldst no sooner knock but I opened; no sooner call but I answered; no sooner tempt but I did assent. Oh! but now the Lord taught me to be humble; I can resist, though I cannot dispute; I can fight, but not yield.

Mistress Katherine Bretterge, an humble precious soul, being once in a great conflict with Satan, said thus to him, 'Satan, reason not with me, I am but a weak woman; if thou hast anything to say, say it to my Christ; he is my advocate, my strength, and my redeemer, and he shall plead for me. An humble soul is good at turning Satan over to the Lord Jesus, and this increases Satan's hell. It is reported of Satan, that he should say thus of a learned man, Tu me semper vincis, thou dost always overcome me; when I would throw thee down, thou liftest up thyself in assurance of faith; and when I would exalt and promote thee, thou keepest thyself in humility; and so thou art too hard for me. The only way to avoid cannon-shot, as they say, is to fall down flat; no such way to be freed from temptations as to keep low.

And so I have done with the first head; namely, the motives that should move and provoke us to keep humble, to be base, to be nothing in our own eyes.

Nine Directions and Helps to Keep us Humble and Low in Our Own Eyes

I shall now come to some helps and directions that may be useful to keep us humble and low in our own eyes. And the first is this:

[1.] Dwell much upon the greatness of God's mercy and goodness to you.

Nothing humbles and breaks the heart of a sinner like mercy and love. Souls that converse much with sin and wrath may be much terrified; but souls that converse much with grace and mercy will be much humbled. Luke 7, the Lord Jesus shews mercy to that notorious sinner, and then she falls down at his feet, and loves much and weeps much, &c. In the 1 Chron. 17, it was in the heart of David to build God a house. God would not have him to do it, yet the messenger must tell David that God would build him a house, and establish his Son upon the throne for ever. Look into the 15th, 16th, and 17th verses, and there you shall find that David lets fall such an humble speech, which he never did before that God had sent him that message of advancement. 'And David the king came, and sat before the Lord, and said, Who am I, O Lord God? and what is mine house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? And yet this was a small thing in thine eyes, O God; for thou hast also spoken of thy servant's house for a great while to come,' &c., 2 Sam. 7:18, 19. And this sweetly and kindly melts him, and humbles him, before the Lord. Oh, if ever you would have your souls kept low, dwell upon the free grace and love of God to you in Christ. Dwell upon the firstness of his love, dwell upon the freeness of his love, the greatness of his love, the fulness of his love, the unchangeableness of his love, the everlastingness of his love, and the activity of his love. If this do not humble thee, there is nothing on earth will do it. Dwell upon what God hath undertaken for you. Dwell upon the choice and worthy gifts that he has bestowed on you; and dwell upon that glory and

happiness that he has prepared for you, and then be proud if you can.

[2.] Secondly, Keep faith in continual exercise, upon Christ as crucified, and upon Christ as glorified.

There are two special sights of Christ, that tend much to humble and abase a soul.

The one is a sight of Christ in his misery, in the 12th of Zech. ver. 10.

And the other is a sight of Christ in his glory (Rev. 1:7, Isa. 6:1, 3, 5, compared). It is dangerous to be more notion than motion; to have faith in the head and none in the heart; to have an idle and not an active faith. It is not enough for you to have faith, but you must look to the acting of your faith, upon Christ as crucified, and upon Christ as glorified. Souls much in this will be very little and low in their own eyes. The great reason why the soul is no more humble is because faith is no more active.

[3.] Thirdly, Study your own natures more, and whatever evil you behold in other men's practices, labour to see the same in your own nature.

There is the seed of all sins, of the vilest and worst of sins, in the best of men. When thou seest another drunk, thou mayest see the seed of that sin in thy own nature. When thou seest another unclean, the seeds of uncleanness thou mayest see in thy own nature. And in that thou dost not act uncleanness as others, it arises not from the goodness of thy nature, but from the riches of God's grace. Remember this, there is not a worse nature in hell than that that is in thee, and it would discover itself accordingly; if the Lord did not restrain it, it would carry thee to those horrid acts that are against the very light of nature.⁴

There was one that was a long time tempted to three horrid sins: to be drunk, to lie with his mother, and to murder his father. Being a

long time followed with these horrid temptations, at last he thought to get rid of them, by yielding to that he judged the least, and that was to be drunk; but when he was drunk, he did both lie with his mother and murder his father. Why, such a hellish nature is in every soul that breathes! and did God leave men to act according to their natures, men would be all incarnate devils, and this world a perfect hell. Such is the corruption of our nature, that propound any divine good to it, it is entertained as fire by water; but propound any evil, and it is like fire to straw. It is like the foolish satyr that made haste to kiss the fire; it is like that unctuous matter, which the naturalists say that it sucks and snatches the fire to it with which it is consumed. There was a holy man that rarely heard of other men's crimson sins, but he usually bedewed the place with his tears, considering that the seeds of those very sins was in his own nature. In thy nature thou hast that that would lead thee with the pharisees to oppose Christ; and with Judas, to betray Christ; and with Pilate, to condemn Christ; and with the soldiers, to crucify Christ, &c. Oh, what a monster, what a devil wouldst thou prove, should God but leave thee to act suitable to that sinful and woful nature of thine!

[4.] Fourthly, Dwell much upon the imperfection that follows and cleaves to thy best actions.

Oh the wanderings! Oh the deadness, the dulness, the fruitlessness of thy spirit in religious duties! Man is a creature apt to hug himself in religious services, and to pride himself in holy duties; and to stroke himself after duties, and to warm himself by the sparks of his own fire, his own performances, though he does lie down in sorrow for it, Isa. 50:11. Whenever thou comest off from holy services, sit down, and look over the spots, blots, and blemishes that cleave to your choicest services. The fairest day has its clouds, the richest jewels their flaws, the finest faces their spots, the fairest copies their blots, and so have our finest and fairest duties.

Plutarch tells of a private soldier of Julius Cæsar's, who fought so valiantly in Britain, that by his means he saved the captains, which

otherwise were in great danger to be cast away, being driven into a bog, then marching with great pain through the mire and dirt: in the end he got to the other side, but left his shield behind him. Cæsar, wondering at his noble courage, ran to him with joy to embrace him; but the poor soldier, hanging down his head, the water standing in his eyes, fell down at Cæsar's feet, and besought him to pardon him, for that he had left his shield behind him. You know how to apply it. He had done gallantly, yet he falls down at Cæsar's feet, after his brave service, with tears in his eyes, upon the sense of his leaving his shield behind him. When we have done our best, we have cause to fall down at Jesus's feet, and with tears in our eyes sue out our pardon.

[5.] Fifthly, In the day of thy prosperity, forget not thy former poverty.

In the day of thy present greatness, forget not thy former meanness. Humble Jacob, in the day of his prosperity, remembers his former poverty: 'With my staff I passed over Jordan, and now I am become two bands,' Gen. 32:10. And so David, in his prosperity, remembered that his sheep-hook was changed into a sceptre, and his seat of turf into a royal throne, Ps. 78:71, 1 Chron. 17. And when Joseph was a royal favourite, he remembered that he had been an imprisoned slave. And when Gideon was raised to be a saviour to Israel, he remembered how God took him from the threshing-floor, Judges 6:11, and how God changed his threshing instrument of wood into one of iron, to thresh the mountains, as God himself phraseth it, Isa. 41:15.

Primislaus, the first king of Bohemia, kept his country shoes always by him, to remember from whence he was raised.

Agathocles, by the furniture of his table, confessed that from a potter he was raised to be a king of Sicily.

We live in times wherein many a man hath been raised from the dunghill to sit with princes; and oh that such were wise to remember their former low and contemptible beings, and to walk humbly before the Lord! otherwise who can tell but that greater contempt shall be poured forth upon them, than that which they have poured upon princes.

[6.] Sixthly, Look upon all that you have received, and all that you shall hereafter receive, as the fruit of free grace.

Look upon thy adoption, and write this motto, This is the fruit of free grace. Look upon thy justification, and write this motto, This is the fruit of free grace. Look upon all thy graces, and write, These are the fruits of free grace. Look upon thy experiences, and write, These are the fruits of free grace. Look upon thy strength to withstand temptations, and write, This is the fruit of free grace. Look upon divine power to conquer corruptions, and write, This is the fruit of free grace. Look upon the bread thou eatest, the beer thou drinkest, the clothes thou wearest, &c., and write, These are the fruits of free grace. 1 Cor. 4:7, 'Who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou hast not received? and if thou hast received it, why dost thou glory as though thou hadst not received it? Who maketh thee to differ? Episcopius, a great insolent Arminian, answered, Ego me ipsum discerno, I make myself to differ, to wit, by the improvement of nature.

This age is full of such proud monsters; but an humble soul sees free grace to be the spring and fountain of all his mercies and comforts; he writes free grace upon all his temporals, and upon all his spirituals, &c.

[7.] The seventh direction is, Meditate much upon these two things:

First, The great mischief that sin hath done in the world.

It cast angels out of heaven, and Adam out of paradise. It hath lain the first corner-stone in hell, and ushered in all the evils and miseries

that be in the world. It hath threw down Abraham, the best believer in the world; and Noah, the most righteous man in the world; and Job, the uprightest man in the world; and Moses, the meekest man in the world; and Paul, the greatest apostle in the world. Oh, the diseases, the crosses, the losses, the miseries, the deaths, the hells, that sin hath brought upon the world!

Basil wept when he saw the rose, because it brought to his mind the first sin, from whence it had the prickles, which it had not while man continued in innocency, as he thought! Oh, when he saw the prickles his soul wept; so when we see, hear, or read of the blood, misery, wars, and ruins that sin has brought upon us, let us weep and lie humble before the Lord.

Secondly, Meditate much on this, that many wicked men take more pains to damn their souls and go to hell, than thou dost to save thy soul and to get to heaven, Mat. 22:15.

Oh, what pains do wicked men take to damn their souls and go to hell! Lactantius saith of Lucian, that he spared neither God nor man. He took pains to make himself twice told a child of wrath.

It is said of Marcellus, the Roman general, that he could not be quiet, nec victor, nec victus, neither conquered nor conqueror. Such restless wretches are wicked men. The drunkard rises up in the morning, and continues till midnight, till wine inflame him, Isa. 5:11. The unclean person wastes his time, and strength, and estate, and all to ruin his own soul.

Theotimus, being told by his physician, that if he did not leave his lewd courses, he would lose his sight, answered, Vale lumen amicum, then farewell, sweet light. What a deal of pains does the worldling take! He rises up early, and goes to bed late, and leaves no stone unturned, and all to make himself but the more miserable in the close.

Pambus, in the Ecclesiastical History, wept when he saw a harlot dressed with much care and cost, partly to see one take so much pains to go to hell, and partly because he had not been so careful to please God as she had been to please a wanton lover. Oh, sirs! what reason have you to spend your days in weeping? When you look abroad, see what pains most men take to damn their souls and go to hell, and then consider what little pains you take to escape hell, to save your souls, and go to heaven.

[8.] Eighthly, Get more internal and experimental knowledge and acquaintance with God.

If ever you would keep humble, no knowledges humbles and abases like that which is inward and experimental. We live in days wherein there is abundance of notional light. Many professors know much of God notionally, but know nothing of God experimentally; they know God in the history, but know nothing of God in the mystery. They know much of God in the letter, but little or nothing of God in the Spirit; and therefore it is that they are so proud and high in their own conceits, when as he that experimentally knows the Lord is a worm and no man in his own eyes. As the sun is necessary to the world, the eye to the body, the pilot to the ship, the general to the army, so is experimental knowledge to the humbling of a soul. Who more experimental in their knowledge than David, Job, Isaiah, and Paul? And who are more humble than these worthies?

Seneca observed of the philosophers, that when they grew more learned, they were less moral, so a growth in notions will bring a great decay in humility and zeal, as it is too evident in these days. Well, remember this, a drop of experimental knowledge will more humble a man than a sea of notional knowledge.

[9.] Ninthly, Look up to a crucified Christ for special power and strength against the pride of your hearts. It is sad in these knowing times to think how few there are that know the right way of bringing under the power of any sin. Most men scarce look so high as a

crucified Christ for power against their powerful sins. One soul sits down and complains, Such a lust haunts me, I will pray it down; another saith, Such a sin follows me, and I will hear it down, or watch it down, or resolve it down: and so a crucified Christ is not in all their thoughts. Not but that you are to hear, pray, watch, and resolve against your sins; but above all, you should look to the acting of faith upon a crucified Christ. As he said of the sword of Goliath, 'None like to that,' so I say, None like to this for the bringing under the pride of men's hearts. The weaker the house of Saul grew, the stronger the house of David grew. The weakening of your pride will be the increase and strengthening of your humility, and therefore what the king of Syria said unto his fifty captains, 'Fight neither with small nor great, but with the king of Israel,' so say I, If you would keep humble, if you will lie low, draw forth your artillery, place your greatest strength against the pride of your souls. The death of pride will be the resurrection of humility. And that this may stick upon you, I shall lay down several propositions concerning pride; and I am so much the more willing to fall upon this work, and to make it the subject of our discourse at this time, because this horrid sin doth appear so boldly and impudently, and that not only among profane persons, but professors also. There are ten propositions that I shall lay down concerning pride.

The Dangerous Nature of Pride

held forth in nine propositions: also, six ways wherein pride shews
itself

[1.] And the first is this, Of all sins pride is most dangerous to the souls of men.

Pride is a sin that will put the soul upon the worst of sins. Pride is a gilded misery, a secret poison, a hidden plague. It is the engineer of deceit, the mother of hypocrisy, the parent of envy, the moth of holiness, the blinder of hearts, the turner of medicines into maladies, and remedies into diseases. It is the original and root of most of those notorious vices that be to be found among the children of men. It was pride that put Herod upon seeking the blood of Christ. It was pride that put the Pharisees upon the persecuting of Christ. It was pride that made Athaliah destroy all the seed-royal of the house of Judah, that he might reign, 2 Chron. 21:10. It was pride that put Joab upon murdering perfidiously, under colour of friendship, Abner, 2 Sam. 3:27, and Amasa, 2 Sam. 20:9, 10. Zimri, out of ambition to reign, murdered Elah his lord, 1 Kings 16:8–10. Omri, out of pride and ambition to reign, rose up against Zimri, and enforced him to burn himself in the king's palace, 1 Kings 16:18. It is pride that hath ushered in all the contentions that be in towns, cities, countries, families, and pulpits throughout the world. It was pride and ambition to reign that put Absalom upon pursuing his father's life, from whom he had received life.

It is very remarkable, that the pride and ambition of Nebuchadnezzar did usher in the destruction of the Assyrian monarchy; and the ambition and pride of Cyrus that did usher in the overthrow of the Babylonian monarchy; and the ambition and pride of Alexander was the cause of the annihilation of the Persian monarchy; and it was the pride and ambition of the Roman commanders that was the cause of

the utter subversion of the Grecian monarchy. There is no tongue that can express, nor heart that can conceive, the horrid sins and miseries that pride hath ushered in among the children of men. All sin will down with a proud heart that is resolved to rise. Great sins are no sins with such a soul; he makes nothing of those very sins that would make the very heathen to blush.

[2.] The second proposition that I shall lay down concerning pride is this,

Where pride hath possessed itself thoroughly of the soul, it turns the heart into steel, yea, into a rock.

As you may see in Pharaoh. Pride turned his heart into steel, yea, into a very rock. God strikes again and again; he sends plague upon plague; and yet the more he is plagued, the more he is hardened. His pride turned his soul into a rock: he is no more sensible of the frowns of God, the threatenings of God, the plagues, the strokes of God, than a rock. Pride had hardened his heart; he stirs not, he yields not.

It was the pride of Saul that turned his heart into steel: 'I have sinned,' saith he, 'yet honour me before the people,' 1 Sam. 15:30. God gave him many a blow, many a knock, and many a check, and yet, after all, 'Honour me before the people.' Oh how desperately was his heart hardened in pride! In Dan. 5:18, Nebuchadnezzar's mind, saith the text, 'was hardened in pride.' He saw the vengeance of the Almighty upon his predecessors, and God took him up, and lashed him till the blood came, and yet he made nothing of it, because his heart was hardened in pride. Pride sets a man in opposition against God. Other sins are aversions from God, but this sin is a coming against God. In other sins a man flies from God, but in this sin a man flies upon God: James 4:6, 'God resisteth the proud.' A man doth not resist another till he is set upon; the traveller doth not resist until such time as the thief sets upon him. Saith the text, 'God resisteth the proud.' It intimates thus much to us, that the proud heart sets upon God himself, and therefore God resists him. The Greek word is

ἀντιτάσσεται; he places himself in battle array against the proud. God brings forth his battalia against the proud, and they bring forth their battalia against God. A proud heart resists, and is resisted; this is duro durum, flint to flint, fire to fire; yet in the day of God's wrath the proud shall be burnt up as stubble, both branch and root, Mal. 4:1.

[3.] The third proposition concerning pride is this,

Pride is a sin that shales forth and shews itself not one way, but many ways.

For instance,

First, Sometimes it shews itself in the looks, Prov. 6:17: he tells you of seven things that the Lord hates, and one is a proud look. The Hebrew word there is, 'The haughty eye.' The haughty eye God hates. Men's hearts usually shew themselves in their eyes: Ps. 131:1, 'Mine heart is not haughty, nor mine eye lofty.' There be such who shew pride in their very looks, but the Lord looks aloof at them, Ps. 138:6.

Secondly, Sometimes pride shews itself in words: Dan. 4:30, 'Is not this great Babylon that I have built, for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?' and in chap. 3:15, 'Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?' It was a very proud saying of one, *Cœlum gratis non accipiam*, I will not have heaven but at a rate; and of another, 'We have not so lived and deserved of God that the enemy should vanquish us.' These were the proud ones, that spake loftily, and that set their mouths against the heavens, as the psalmist speaks, Ps. 73:6, 8, 9, compared. And such a one was Henry the Second. Hearing that his city Mentz was taken, he used this proud blasphemous speech, 'I shall never love God any more, that suffered a city so dear to me to be taken away from me.' Such a proud wretch, both in words and actions, was Sennacherib, as you may see in Isa. 37, from ver. 8 to 18.

Thirdly, Sometimes pride shews itself in the habit of the body; so Herod's pride appeared: Acts 12:21, Herod was 'arrayed in royal apparel.' In cloth of silver, saith Josephus, which, being beaten upon by the sunbeams, dazzled the people's eyes, and drew from them that blasphemous acclamation, 'It is the voice of God, and not of man.' The people being most commonly like the Bohemian curs, that used to fawn upon a good suit; so the rich man, Luke 16:19, was clothed in purple, καὶ βύσσον, and in silk. He was commonly so clothed; it was his everyday's wear, as the Greek word ἐνεδιδύσκετο implieth.

Quest. But here a question may be asked, May not persons habit themselves according to their dignities, ranks, and places that God hath put them in in the world?

Ans. I answer, They may, and ought so to do. If God hath lifted them up in the world above others, they may wear better apparel than others, Gen. 41:42, Esther 6:8, Ps. 45:13, 14, 2 Sam. 13:18, Lam. 4:5, Mat. 11:8, Gen. 27:15, Isa. 52:1, Hosea 2:13, Exod. 28:40. I cite these scriptures so much the rather, because some, through weakness and peevishness, stumble and are not satisfied herein. There is nothing in the law of God or nature against it.

Quest. But you may say, May not persons sin in their apparel?

Ans. I answer, Yes, and that in four cases.

[1.] When it is not modest, but carries with it provocation to lust and wantonness: Prov. 7:10, 'There met the young man a woman in the attire of an harlot.' The Hebrew word signifies a habit or ornament finely set and fitted to the body; and saith the text, 'She was subtle of heart,' or trussed up about the breasts, with her upper parts naked; so Levi-Ben-Gersom reads the words, 'She met him with her naked breasts,' at this day too commonly used by such as would not be held harlots. Oh what a horrid shame and reproach is it to religion, the ways of God, and the people of God, that professors should go so! One saith 'that superfluous apparel is worse than whoredom, because

whoredom only corrupts chastity, but this corrupts nature.' Another saith, 'If women adorn themselves so as to provoke men to lust after them, though no ill follow upon it, yet those women shall suffer eternal damnation, because they offered poison to others, though none should drink of it.'

[2.] Persons sin in their apparel when as they exceed their degree and rank in costly apparel, which is that which is condemned by the apostle, 1 Tim. 2:9, 1 Pet, 3:3. The apostle doth not simply condemn the wearing of gold, but he condemns it in those that go above their degree and rank. The words are rather an admonition than a prohibition.

[3.] It is sinful when it is so expensive as that it hinders works of mercy and charity. Oh how many proud souls be there in these days that lay so much upon their backs, that they can spare nothing to fill the poor's bellies. 'Silk doth quench the fire of the kitchen,' saith the French proverb. The meaning is, that it doth hinder works of charity and mercy. Surely those that put on such costly ornaments upon their backs as close up the hand of charity, will at last share with Dives in his misery.

[4.] When persons habit themselves in strange and foreign fashions, which is the sin, shame, and reproach of many among us in these days. Now that is strange apparel which is not peculiar to the nations where men live. The Lord threatens to punish such, Zeph. 1:8, that are clothed with strange apparel. There are too many women and men in our days that are like the Egyptian temples, very gypsies, painted without and spotted within; varnish without and vermin within.

Mercury being to make a garment for the moon, as one saith, could never fit her, but either the garment would be too big or too little, by reason she was always increasing or decreasing. May not this be applied to the vain curiosity of too too many professors in these days, whose curiosity about their clothes can never be satisfied?

I shall conclude this head with this counsel: Clothe yourselves with the silk of piety, with the satin of sanctity, and with the purple of modesty, and God himself will be a suitor to you. Let not the ornaments upon your backs speak out the vanity of your hearts.

Fourthly, Sometimes pride shews itself by the gesture and carriage of the body. Isa. 3:16, The daughters of Sion 'were haughty, and walked with stretched out necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, making a tinkling with their feet.' Oh earth! earth! dost thou not groan to bear such monsters as these?

Fifthly, And sometimes pride shews itself in contemptuous challenges of God; as Pharoah, 'Who is the God of the Hebrews, that I should obey him?'

Sixthly, Sometimes pride shews itself by bragging promises, 'I will arise, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil, and my lusts shall be satisfied,' Exod. 15:9.

[4.] The fourth proposition that I shall lay down is this:

Pride is a sin that of all sins makes a man or woman most like to Satan.

Pride is morbus Satanicus, Satan's disease. Pride is so base a disease, that God had rather see his dearest children to be buffeted by Satan, than that in pride they should be like to Satan. When Paul, 2 Cor. 12:7, under the abundance of revelations, was in danger of being puffed up, the Lord, rather than he would have him proud like to Satan, suffers him to be buffeted by Satan. Humility makes a man like to angels, and pride makes an angel a devil. Pride is worse than the devil, for the devil cannot hurt thee till pride hath possessed thee. If thou would see the devil limned to the life, look upon a proud soul; for as face answers to face, so doth a proud soul answer to Satan. Proud souls are Satan's apes, and none imitate him to the life like these. And oh that they were sensible of it, before it be too late, before the door of darkness be shut upon them!

[5.] A fifth proposition is this:

Pride cannot climb so high, but justice will sit above her.

One asked a philosopher what God was a-doing? He answered, That his whole work was to exalt the humble and pull down the proud. It was pride that turned angels into devils; they would be above others in heaven, and therefore God cast them down to hell. Pride, saith Hugo, was born in heaven, but forgetting by what way she fell from thence, she could never find the way thither again. The first man would know as God, and the Babel-builders would dwell as God, but justice set above them all. This truth you see verified in the justice of God upon Pharaoh, Haman, Herod, Belshazzar, and Nebuchadnezzar; all these would be very high, but justice takes the right hand of them all, and brings them down to the dust. Yea, pride cannot climb so high in the hearts of saints, but divine justice will be above it. Uzziah his heart was lifted up, 2 Chron. 26:16, but justice smites him with a leprosy, and so he died, out of grief and sorrow, saith Josephus. David glories in his own greatness, 2 Sam. 24:1, seq., and for this seventy thousand fall by the hand of justice. Hezekiah's heart was lifted up, but wrath was upon him, and upon all Judah and Jerusalem for it, 2 Chron. 32:25, seq. Pride sets itself against the honour, being, and sovereignty of God, and therefore justice will in spite of all sit above her. Other sins strike at the word of God, the people of God, and the creatures of God, but pride strikes directly at the very being of God, and therefore justice will be above her.

Nebuchadnezzar was proud, and God smites his reason, and turns him into a beast. Oh! how many young professors are there in our days, who have been proud of their notions, and proud of their parts and gifts, and justice hath so smitten them, that they have lost that life, that sweetness, that spiritualness, that quickness that once they had, and are dried and shrivelled up by a hand of justice. They are like the apples of Sodom, glorious without, but rotten and worthless within. Some there are that have been very shining, yet by reason of pride have fallen from a seeming excellency to be naught, and from

naught to be very naught, and from very naught to be stark naught. Isa. 23:9, 'The Lord of hosts hath purposed it, to stain the pride of all glory, and to bring into contempt' (or to make light) 'all the honourable of the earth.' The Hebrew word that is here rendered purposed, signifies to consult, or take counsel. It is consulted and agreed upon in counsel, that he will stain the pride of all glory, and bring into contempt the honourable of the earth; and the counsel of the Lord shall stand, Ps. 33:11; Isa. 2:11, 12, 'The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of man shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. For the day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up, and he shall be brought low.'

Divine justice will take the right hand of all proud ones on the earth. God bears, as I may say, a special spleen against pride. His heart hates it, Prov. 6:16, 17; his mouth curses it, Ps. 119:21; and his hand plagueth it, as you have seen in the former instances, and as you may see further in these following instances:

The king of Egypt, that Jeremiah prophesied against, in his forty-fourth chapter, was so puffed up with pride, that he boasted his kingdom was so surely settled, that it could not be taken from him either by God or man; not long after he was taken in battle by Amasis, one of his own subjects, and hanged up.

Dionysius the tyrant said in the pride of his heart, that his kingdom was bound to him with chains of adamant; but time soon confuted him, for he was driven out, and forced to teach a school at Corinth for a poor living.

Cares, a soldier, being proud of his valour, because he had given Cyrus a great wound, shortly after he ran mad. In all ages there are notable instances to prove that pride has not got so high, but justice has set above her.

[6.] The sixth proposition is this,

Of all sins spiritual pride is most dangerous, and must be most resisted.

Spiritual pride is the lifting up of the mind against God; it is a tumor and swelling in the mind, and lies in contemning and slighting of God, his word, promises, and ordinances, and in the lifting up of a man's self, by reason of birth, breeding, wealth, honour, place, relation, gifts or graces, and in despising of others. Of this spiritual pride Habakkuk speaks, chap. 2:4, 'His heart that is lifted up in him, is not upright.' Prov. 16:5, 'Every one that is proud in heart, is an abomination to the Lord;' or, that 'lifts up his heart against God,' or his decrees; as Lewis the Eleventh did, in that proud speech of his, *Si salvabor, salvabor; si vero damnabor, damnabor*. 'If I shall be saved, I shall be saved; and if I shall be damned, I shall be damned; and there is all the care that I shall take.' Like to this, was that proud and wretched speech of one Rufus, who painted God on the one side of his shield, and the devil on the other, with this mad motto: 'If thou wilt not have me, here is one will.' Spiritual pride is a white devil, as one calls it, a gilded poison, by which God is robbed of his honour, a man's own soul of his comfort and peace, and others of that benefit and fruit which otherwise they might receive from us. Satan is subtle; he will make a man proud of his very graces; he will make him proud that he is not proud. Pride grows with the decrease of other sins, and thrives by their decay. Other sins are nourished by poisonous roots, as adultery is nourished by idleness, and gluttony and murder by malice and envy; but this white devil, spiritual pride, springs from good duties and good actions towards God and man. Spiritual pride is a very great enemy to the good and salvation of man. Pride is like a very great swelling, which unfits men for any service.

Again, spiritual pride is a very great enemy to the good and salvation of men. The Greek word signifies swelleth, for pride is like a great swelling in the body, which unfits it for any good service. John 5:40, 'You will not come to me, that you may have life;' and ver. 44, 'How can ye believe in me, which seek honour one of another?' Christ blesses his Father, Mat. 11:25, that he had 'hid those things from the

wise and prudent, and had revealed them unto babes and sucklings.' It is the pride of men's hearts that makes them throw off ordinances, as poor and low things, when, alas! in their practices they live below the power, beauty, glory, and holiness of the least and lowest ordinance. There's more holiness, purity, and glory manifested in the lowest administrations of Christ, than is held forth by them, in their highest practices.

[7.] The seventh proposition is this,

Pride un-mans a man; it makes him do acts that are below a man.

As you may see in Pharaoh, Haman, Herod, Nebuchadnezzar, &c. It makes men bedlams, to say they know not what, and to do they care not what. It was pride that made Hildebrand to cause Henry the Fourth to stand three days at his gate, with his wife and his child, barefooted. It was pride that made Adonibezek cause three-score and ten kings, with their thumbs and great toes cut off, Judges 1:5–7, to gather their meat under his table. Oh! what wretched unmanly acts hath the pride of many persons put them upon.

[8.] The eighth proposition is this,

The poorest are oftentimes the proudest.

Pretty is the parable of Jotham: the best trees refused to be king, but the bramble affected it; and did sperare et aspirare, hope and aspire it, Judges 9:15. So in 2 Kings 14:9, 'The thistle that was in Lebanon sent to the cedar that was in Lebanon, saying, Give thy daughter to my son to wife.' Hagar the kitchen-maid will be proud, and insult over her mistress Sarah, Gen. 21. The poor sons of Zebedee would sit at Christ's right hand and left, Mat, 20:20, 21. And those that Job disdains to set with the dogs of his flock, yet contemn him in the day of his sorrow, Job 30:1. The foot strives to be equal with the head, the servant as the master, the cobbler as the councillor, and the peasant as the prince, &c.

[9.] The ninth proposition is this,

Pride is a sure fore-runner of a fall.

'Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty mind before a fall,' Prov. 16:18, 18:12. Herod fell from a throne of gold to a bed of dust. Nebuchadnezzar fell from the state of a mighty king, to be a beast. Adam fell from innocency to mortality. The angels fell from heaven to hell, from felicity to misery.

[10.] The tenth and last proposition is this:

God will by an invincible power carry the day against proud souls.

You that it escape, and ruffle it out, and carry it with a high hand, remember this, God will by an invisible power carry the day against you; when you think not of it, he will eat you like a moth. Isa. 47:10, 11, 'For thou hast trusted in thy wickedness, thou hast said, None seeth me. Thy wisdom and thy knowledge hath perverted thee. And thou hast said in thine heart, I am, and none else besides me. Therefore shall evil come upon thee, thou shalt know not from whence it riseth; and mischief shall fall upon thee, and thou shalt not be able to put it off. And desolation shall come upon thee suddenly, which thou shalt not know.' Impunity oftentimes causeth impudency, but quod differtur non aufertur, forbearance is no acquittance. The longer the hand is lifted up, the heavier will be the blow at last. Of all metals, lead is the coldest, but being melted, it becomes the hottest. Humble souls know how to apply this, and proud souls shall sooner or later experience this.

THE SECOND DOCTRINE

All saints are not of an equal size and growth in grace and holiness

II. I shall now proceed to a second observation,

Namely,

That all saints are not of an equal size and growth in grace and holiness.

Some are higher, and some are lower; some are stronger and some are weaker, in spiritual graces and heavenly excellencies. 'Unto me who am less than the least,' &c.

Among true believers, some may be found to be but weak believers. This point flows as natural from the words as the stream does from the fountain, and no point more clear in all the Scripture than this.

In Rom. 14:1, you read of some that are weak in the faith; 'Them that are weak in the faith receive,' saith the apostle. None are to be rejected in whom aliquid Christi, anything of Christ, is to be found. And so Mat. 14:31, there is mention made of 'little faith.' 1 Cor. 9:22, 'To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak.' You read of babes in grace: 1 Pet. 2:2, 3, 'As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if so be that ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.' 1 John 2:12–14, there is mention made of 'little children, of young men, and of fathers.' All are not fathers in grace, nor all are not young men in grace; there are some children in grace. A Christian in this life hath his degrees of growth; he is first a child in grace, and then a young man in grace, and then a father in grace.

For the further opening of this point, I shall endeavour these four things.

I. I shall endeavour to decipher to you souls weak in grace.

II. I shall endeavour to lay down those things that may encourage, support, and comfort souls that are weak in grace.

III. I shall speak to the duties that lie upon those that are weak in grace.

IV. The duties that lie upon those that are strong in grace, towards those that are weak in grace.

Of these four we shall speak, as the Lord shall assist.

Twelve Things by Which Souls Weak in Grace are Discovered and Deciphered

I. I shall begin with the first, To decipher souls weak in grace.

The first thing by which I shall decipher souls weak in grace is this:

[1.] Weak Christians are usually carried much out after the poor low things of this world.

They are much in carking and caring for them, and in pursuing and hunting greedily after them. That is a clear text for this: Mat. 6:24, to the end. Christ labours by several weighty arguments to fence and fortify his disciples against those diffident, doubtful, carking cares, that divide, distract, distemper, torture, and tear the heart in a thousand pieces. And yet neither these arguments, nor yet the presence of him who was the great landlord of heaven and earth, and whose love and bowels were still yearning towards them, and whose special eye of providence was still over them, could, rid their heads and hearts of these worldly cares that do but vex and perplex the souls of men. And it is very observable, that after this smart lecture that Christ had read them, they did strive three several times who should be greatest and highest in worldly enjoyments. Their hearts

should have been only in heaven, and yet they strive for earth, as if there were no heaven, or as if earth were better than heaven. All which does clearly evidence, that their graces were very weak, and their corruptions very strong. Men that have little of the upper springs within, are carried out much after the springs below. Baruch was good, but weak in grace; he had but some sips and tastes of the glory of that other world, and that made him, when God was a-pulling down all worldly glory, to seek for earth as if there were no heaven, Jer. 45:1–5. Certainly there is but little of Christ and grace within, where the heart is so strongly carried out after these things without. Where there is such strong love and workings of heart after these poor things, it speaks our soul's enjoyment of God to be but poor and low.

In the Old Testament, the Jews, being babes and infants in grace and holiness, had a world of temporal promises, and very few spiritual promises. But now in the days of the gospel, the Lord is pleased to double and treble his Spirit upon his people, and now you meet with very few temporal promises in the gospel, but the gospel is filled with spiritual promises. The gospel drops nothing but marrow and fatness, love and sweetness; and therefore God looks in these days that men should grow up to a greater height of holiness, heavenliness, and spiritualness, than what they attained to in those dark days, wherein the sun shined but dimly. Men rich and strong in grace look upon the world with a holy scorn and disdain, as Themistocles, when he saw in the dark a thing like a pearl, he scorned to stoop for it himself, saying to another, 'Stoop thee, for thou art not Themistocles.' Abraham, a man strong in grace, looked with a holy scorn and with an eye of disdain upon these poor things. When Melchisedec from God had made him heir of all things, he refused the riches that the king of Sodom offered him, because God was his shield and his exceeding great reward, Gen. 14:21, 15:1. The greatest bargain that a soul rich in grace will make with God for himself is this, 'Give me but bread to eat and clothes to wear, and thou shalt be my God.' So it was with that brave soul, Gen. 28:21, he desires but food and raiment. Mark, he asks food, not junkets;

raiment, not ornaments. A little will serve a man that is strong in grace, much will not serve a man that is weak in grace, nothing will serve a man that is void of grace. Souls weak in grace, have their hearts much working after these poor low things; as you may see, Mat. 18:1, 'Who shall be greatest in the kingdom of heaven?' The question is stated by the disciples, that one would have thought should have had their hearts and thoughts in heaven; but they dreamed of an earthly kingdom, where honours and offices should be distributed, as in the days of David and Solomon. And it is observable in Mark 9:33, 34, they are at it again: 'And he came to Capernaum; and being in the house, he asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way? But they held their peace' (they were ashamed to tell him); 'for by the way they had disputed among them selves who should be greatest. 'Saith one, I'll have this, and saith another, I'll have that, &c.; or as it is in the Greek, 'they disputed who was greatest;' so in Luke 9:46. Says one, I am greater than thou; No, says another, I am greatest: τίς μείζων who was greatest. It is an argument of a childish disposition to be taken more with rattles and baubles than with jewels and pearls. That Christian hath little of the power of grace within him, whose heart is so strongly carried out to these vanities below. Men that are grown up to years of understanding prefer one piece of gold above a thousand new counters. A soul that is strong in grace, that is high in its spiritual enjoyments, prefers one good word from God, one good look from Christ, above all the glory of this world. 'Lord,' saith he, 'lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me.' Warm my heart with the beams of thy love, and then a little of these things will suffice. You see Moses and all those worthies in the 11th of the Hebrews, who were men strong in grace, how bravely they trample upon all things below God. They left their families and their countries, where they lived like princes, to wander in a wilderness, upon the bare command of God. So Luther, a man strong in grace, when he had a gown and money given him by the elector, he turned himself about, and said, 'I protest God shall not put me off with these poor low things.' Souls that know by experience what the bosom of Christ is, what spiritual communion is, what the glory of heaven is,

will not be put off by God nor man with things that are mixed, mutable, and momentary. And to shame many professors in these days, I might bring in a cloud of witnesses; even from among the very heathen, who never heard of a crucified Christ, and yet were more crucified to things below Christ than many of them that pretend much to Christ. But I shall forbear, only desiring that those that think and speak so scornfully and contemptuously of heathens may not at last be found worse than heathens; yea, be judged and condemned by heathens in the great and terrible day of the Lord.

Secondly, In order to a further deciphering of weak Christians, I shall lay down this:

[2.] That weak saints do usually overfear troubles before they come; yea, those future evils that, forty to one, may never fall out.

The very empty thoughts and conceit of trouble is very terrible and perplexing to a weak saint. When it was told the house of David, saying, 'Syria is confederate with Ephraim,' his heart was moved, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind, Isa. 7:2. Their heart quaked and quivered, as we say, like an aspen leaf. It is an elegant expression, shewing, in their extremity, the baseness of their fears, arguing no courage or spirit at all in them. The very news and conceit of trouble or calamities, oh how doth it perplex, and vex, and grieve, and overwhelm weak Christians! The very hearing of trouble at a distance makes them to stagger and reel, and ready to say, 'Will God now save? Will he now deliver?' It puts them into those shaking fits, that they know not what to do with themselves, nor how to perform the service they owe to God or man. Now tell me, can you call that a stout spirit, a strong spirit, that is daunted with the very report and thoughts of calamity? Or that does torment men with immoderate fear of a thousand things that happily shall never fall out; as fears of foreign invasions, or fears of home-bred confusions, fears of change of religion, or being surprised with such or such diseases, or being ruined in their outward estate by such and such devices or disadvantages, or by falling under the frowns of

such a great man, or under the anger and revenge of such and such a man, and a thousand such like things. Now, this speaks out much weakness in grace. Souls strong in grace are carried above these fears; yea, with the leviathan in Job, they can laugh at the shaking of a spear, chap. 41:29. They can say with David, 'Though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, we will fear no evil; for thou art with us, thy rod and thy staff do comfort us,' Ps. 23:4. But weak souls are afraid of their own shadow. The very shadow of trouble will exceedingly trouble such souls, and oftentimes make their lives a very hell.

[3.] Thirdly, Fainting in the day of adversity speaks of a soul to be but weak in grace.

Weak Christians are overcome with little crosses. The least cross doth not only startle them, but it sinks them, and makes them ready to sit down and to cry out with the church, 'Behold you that pass by, see whether there be any sorrow like my sorrow,' Lam. 1:12. Before trouble comes, weak Christians are apt to think that they can bear much and endure much; but, alas! when the day of trial comes upon them, when they are put to it, they prove but men of poor and impotent spirits, and then they roar, and complain, and lie down in the dust, suffering crosses and losses to bind them hand and foot, and to spoil them of all their comforts. And now though they have many comforts for one cross, yet one cross doth so damp and daunt their hearts, that joy and comfort flies away from them, and they sit down overwhelmed. Certainly this speaks out little of Christ within. All Rachel's comforts were no comforts, because her children were not. This speaks out much weakness within.

Prov. 24:10, 'If thou faintest in the day of adversity, thy strength is small;' if thou shrinkest, if thou abatest and slackest, in the day of adversity, thy strength is small. Man hath no trial of his strength till he be in trouble; faintness then discovers weakness. Afflictions try what sap we have, as hard weather tries what health we have. A weak Christian sinks under a little burden; every frown, every sour word,

every puff of wind blows him down, and makes him sink under his burden. But now a soul strong in grace bears up bravely against all winds and weather. That is a brave text, and worthy to be written in letters of gold, that you have in Gen. 49:23, 24, 'Joseph's bow abode in strength, though the archers sorely grieved him, shot at him, and hated him. And the arms of his hands were made strong, by the mighty God of Jacob.' The archers that sorely grieved him were his barbarous brethren that sold him; his adulterous mistress that, harlot-like, hunted for his precious life; his injurious master, that without any desert of his, imprisoned him; the tumultuating Egyptians, that were pined with hunger, perhaps spake of stoning him; and the envious courtiers and enchanters spake evilly of him before Pharaoh, to bring him out of favour. All these shot sorely at him. The word that is rendered archers in the Hebrew, *בעלי*, is arrow-masters, which term implieth cunning and skilfulness in shooting. They were cunning and skilful to hit the mark, and they shot at him, as at a mark; but yet 'his bow abode in strength.' When God in the midst of weakness makes a soul strong, that soul will not only face enemies and difficulties, but triumph over them. Those that are strong in grace seldom want courage or counsel when they are at the worst. They always find their hope to be an anchor at sea, and their faith a shield upon land; and therefore they triumph in all storms and dangers. They stand firm when they are under the greatest pressures: 2 Cor. 11:23, 'In labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths often,' &c. And yet he triumphs in 2 Cor. 1:12, 'Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in singleness and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-wards.' Strong Paul rejoiced in his sufferings for Christ, and therefore often sings it out: 'I, Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ;' not 'I Paul, rapt up in the third heaven.' He preferred his crown of thorns before a crown of gold, his prison rags above all royal robes.

[4.] Fourthly, A weak Christian thinks that little to be much that he suffers for Christ.

In Mat. 19:27, then 'answered Peter, and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have? 'Their worldly case in following Christ, was little worse than when they only traded in fishing; and yet, 'we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have?' This their all was not worth a speaking of, and yet, for this they look for some great worldly reward and recompence. 'We have forsaken all.' A great all sure! a few broken boats, and a few tattered and torn nets, and a little old household stuff, and Christ maintained them too, upon his own cost and charge; and yet say they, 'We have forsaken all, and followed thee.' Neither is it without an emphasis, that they begin with a Behold; 'Behold we have forsaken all,' as if Christ were greatly beholding to them. Let their wills be but crossed a little, by servants, children, friends, &c, or let them but suffer a little in their names or estates, &c., and presently you shall have them a-sighing it out,' No sorrow like our sorrow,' no loss to our loss, no cross to our cross, &c. Whereas souis strong in grace suffer much, and yet count that much but little. A soul strong in grace can suffer much, and yet make nothing of it. I am heartily angry, saith Luther, who suffered very much, with those that speak of my sufferings, which if compared with that which Christ suffered for me, are not once to be mentioned in the same day, &c.3

[5.] Fifthly, Those that are weak in grace dwell more upon what may discourage them in the ways of grace and holiness, than they do upon what may encourage them.

They dwell more upon their sins than upon a Saviour; more upon their misery, than upon free grace and mercy; more upon that which may feed their fears, than upon that that may strengthen their faith; more upon the cross, than upon the crown; more upon those that are against them, than those that are for them: Isa. 51:12, 13, 'I, even I, am he that comforteth you: who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass; and forgettest the Lord thy maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and hast feared continually every day, because of the fury of the oppressor, as

if he were ready to destroy? and where is the fury of the oppressor?' The same is intimated Rom. 4:19, 20, 'Abraham, being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body being dead, nor yet the deadness of Sarah's womb.' Mark, 'being not weak in faith.' Souls weak in faith are very apt to dwell upon discouragements, but strong Christians look above all discouragements.

'He considered not.' The Greek is οὐ κατενόησε he cared not for his own body, he did not mind that; but in the 20th verse, 'he considered him that had promised.' Souls strong in grace dwell more upon their encouragements to holiness and believing, than upon their discouragements. 'He considered him that had promised.' He had an eye fixed upon the faithfulness of God, and the sufficiency and almightiness of God, and this bore up his heart above all discouragements. So in 2 Cor. 4:16–18, 'Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding, and eternal weight of glory; while we look not (mark, they are not doating upon their discouragements) upon things that are seen, but upon things that are not seen: the things which are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen are eternal.' An eye fixed upon encouragements makes heavy afflictions light, long afflictions short, and bitter afflictions sweet. Those blessed martyrs found it so, that were cast out all night, in a cold frosty night, naked, and were to be burnt the next day, who thus comforted themselves, The winter is sharp, but paradise is sweet; here we shiver for cold, but the bosom of Abraham will make amends for all. Weak Christians have eyes to behold their discouragements, but none to see their encouragements; they look more upon their corruption than upon their sanctification; upon their disobedience than their obedience; upon their distrust than upon their faith; upon the old man than upon the new; and this keeps them low and weak in spirituals, it causes a leanness in their souls.

[6.] Sixthly, The zeal of weak Christians usually outstrips their wisdom and knowledge.

Weak Christians are very zealous, but not according to knowledge: Rom. 10:2, 'For I bear them record, that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.' They were very zealous, but not true zealots, they are very peevish and pettish and censorious; but they want wisdom and knowledge to manage their zeal, to God's glory and their brethren's good. Such zeal had those two rabbins that set upon Charles the Fifth, to persuade him to turn Jew, as judging their religion to be the only religion in the world, and for which they were put to a cruel death, in the year 1530. A great zeal they had to the winning over of him to Judaism, but this zeal was their ruin. Zeal without knowledge is as wild-fire in a fool's hand; it is like the devil in the demoniac, that sometimes cast him into the fire, and sometimes into the water. So the disciples of Christ were weak in their light, and furious in their zeal: Luke 9:54, 'Let fire come down from heaven, and consume them,' say they. But mark what Christ saith, ver. 55: 'Ye know not what manner of spirits ye are of;' that is, ye know not what spirit acts you. You think that you are acted by such a spirit as Elijah of old was acted by, but you err, saith Christ; 'you have a zeal, but not according to knowledge,' therefore it is a human affection and not a divine motion. Zeal is like fire: in the chimney it is one of the best servants, but out of the chimney it is one of the worst masters. Zeal kept by knowledge and wisdom, in its proper place, is a choice servant to Christ and saints; but zeal not bounded by wisdom and knowledge, is the high way to undo all, and to make a hell for many at once.

Weak Christians are usually most zealous about circumstances and things that have least of God and Christ and the power of holiness in them; and most cold about substances, as woful experience doth evidence in these days. Zeal ordered by wisdom, feeds upon the faults of offenders, not on their persons. It spends itself and its greatest heat principally upon those things that concern a man's self. It is most exercised about substantials: Tit. 2:14, but that which is rash, is most exercised about circumstantials; Gal. 1:14, Paul was, in the days of his ignorance, very zealous for the traditions of his fathers, &c.

[7.] Seventhly, Among all saints, the weakest saints act most like carnal sinners.

No saint so like a sinner as a weak saint: 1 Cor. 3:1–5, 'And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For are ye not yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul, and another I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?' They were advanced but very little above the imperfections and passions and sins of mere men, of such which had nothing of the Spirit in them, &c. Do wicked men quarrel with their teachers, as shallow trivial teachers, when themselves are in fault, as being not capable of more mysterious matter? So did these babes here. Do wicked men impute their not profiting to the minister, as he that, having a thorn in his foot, complains of the roughness of the way as the cause of his limping, when as it was the thorn and not the roughness of the way that hurt him. Or as she, that, being struck with a sudden blindness, bid open the window, when as it was not the want of light, but want of sight, that troubled her. So did these babes in the text lay the fault of their non-proficiency upon their teachers, when the fault was wholly in themselves.

Now he calls them carnal, partly because the flesh was strong in them, and partly because they followed and relished the things of the flesh, and partly because they did in their actions resemble carnal men. Do carnal and wicked men cry up one good man, and cry down another? Do they lift up one, and abase another? So did they. Are wicked men full of envy, strife, and divisions? So were they. And these over-flowings of the gall and spleen, come from a fulness of bad humours, from that abundance of carnality that was in them. But now souls strong in grace are higher than carnal men, as Saul was higher than the people by head and shoulders. Souls strong in grace have their feet where carnal men's heads are: Prov. 15:24, 'The way of life is above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath.' Souls

that are strong in grace, do act rather like angels than like carnal men; they do as much resemble the Father of spirits, as carnal men do the Father of lies.

[8.] Eighthly, Souls weak in grace are easily drawn aside out of the ways of holiness.

You know a man that hath but a little bodily strength, is easily thrust out of the way; so it is with souls weak in grace: 1 John 3:7, 'Little children, let no man deceive you; he that doth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.' Saith the apostle, 'Little children, let no man deceive you.' Many in these days, under pretences of high and glorious enjoyments of God, neglect and despise righteousness and holiness, crying up visions and manifestations, when their visions are only the visions of their own hearts and their manifestations are plain delusions. Ah! but says the apostle, 'Little children, let none of these deceive you.' I tell you he, and only he, that doth righteousness, is righteous, as God is righteous. Children, you know, may be easily cozened, and made to take counters for gold, because they are broader and brighter. Children in grace are soon deceived, hence is it that they are so cozened. 'Little children, keep yourselves from idols,' 1 John 5:21. So in Heb. 12:12, 13, 'Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees.' Some think that the apostle alludes to those combats of the heathens, wherein it was a token of yielding, when a man hung down his hands. You are weak, saith the apostle, and by reason of trials you are apt to hang down your hands, and to give up all as lost; therefore, says he, lift up your hands to fight, and your feet to run, take heart and courage, faint not, give not over, turn not aside because of the sharpness of afflictions. But souls strong in grace will hold on in the ways of grace and holiness, in the face of all dangers and deaths, Ps. 44.

[9.] Ninthly, Weak Christians are apt to make sense and feeling the judge of their spiritual estates and conditions.

And, therefore, upon every turn they are apt to judge themselves miserable, and to conclude that they have no grace, because they cannot feel it, nor discern it, nor believe it; and so making sense, feeling, and reason, the judge of their estates, they wrong, and perplex, and vex their precious souls, and make their lives a very hell: as if it were not one thing to be the Lord's, and another thing for a man to know that he is the Lord's; as if it were not one thing for a man to have grace, and another thing to know that he hath grace.

The Canaanite woman had strong faith, but no assurance that we read of, Mat. 15:22, seq. Gal. 4:6, 'And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.' Mark, they are first the sons of God, and then the Spirit cries, Abba, Father. 1 John 5:13, 'These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life.' Mark, they did believe, and they had eternal life, in respect of Christ their head, who, as a public person, was gone to heaven, to represent all his saints. And they had eternal life in respect of the promises, and they had eternal life in respect of the beginnings of it; and yet they did not know it, they did not believe it. Therefore 'these things write I unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God,' saith he, 'that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that this life is in his Son.' Ponder on Micah 7:7–9. Much of this you may read in my treatise called Heaven on Earth, or a well-grounded Assurance of Men's everlasting Happiness and Blessedness in this World, and to that I refer you.

The word shall judge us at last, John 12:48; and therefore strong saints make only the word of God the judge of their spiritual condition now, as Constantine made it the judge and decider of all opinions.

[10.] Tenthly, Their thoughts and hearts are more taken with the love-tokens, and the good things they have by Christ, than with the person of Christ.

Oh their graces, their comforts, their enlargements, their meltings, and their warmings, &c., are the things that most take them. Their thoughts and hearts are so exercised and carried out about these, that the person of Christ is much neglected by them. The child is so taken with babies and rattles, &c., that the mother is not minded. And such is the carriage of weak Christians towards Christ. But now souls strong in grace are more taken with the person of Christ than they are with the love-tokens of Christ. They bless Christ indeed for every dram of grace, and for every good word from heaven, and for every good look from heaven; ay, but yet the person of Christ, that is more to them than all these.³ This is remarkable in the church, Cant. 5:9, 10, 'What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women? &c. My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand,' &c. She doth not say, My beloved is one that I have got so many thousands by, and heaven by, and pardon of sin by, and peace of conscience by. Oh no! but he is white and ruddy. Her soul was taken most with the person of Christ. Not but that every one is to mind the graces of Christ, and to be thankful for them; ay, but it is an argument of weakness of grace, when the heart is more exercised about the bracelets, and the kisses, and the love-tokens of Christ, than it is about the person of Christ. But now saith one strong in grace, My bracelets are precious, but Christ is more precious; the streams of grace are sweet, but the fountain of grace is most sweet; the beams of the sun are glorious, but the sun itself is most glorious. A naked Christ, a despised Christ, a persecuted Christ, is more valued by a strong Christian, than heaven and earth is by a weak Christian.⁵

[11.] Eleventhly, Souls weak in grace are easily stopped and taken off from acting graciously and holily, when discouragements face them.

This you may see in that remarkable instance concerning Peter, in that 26th of Matthew, from the 69th to the end. A silly wench outfaces him; she daunts and dis-spirits this self-confident champion; she easily stops and turns him by saying, 'Thou wast with Jesus of Galilee,' v. 70. 'But he denied it before them all, saying, I

know not what thou sayest.' He makes as if he did neither understand her words or her meaning; and this false dissembling was a true denying of Christ. Now Mark saith, chap. 14:68, that upon the very first denial of Christ, the cock crew, and yet this fair warning could not secure him, but when another maid saw him, and said, 'This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth,' ver. 72, he denied it with an oath, saying, 'I do not know the man.' This was fearful and dreadful, and the worse because his Master, whom he forswore, was now upon his trial, and might say with wounded Cæsar, καὶ σὺ τεχνον What! and thou my son Brutus!' Is this thy kindness to thy friend, to him that has loved thee, and saved thee, and owned thee? &c. Then ver. 73, 'Surely thou art one of them, for thy speech betrayeth thee.' And ver. 74. 'He began to curse and to swear, I know not the man.

The Greek word that is rendered curse, imports a cursing and a damning of himself, an imprecation of God's wrath, and a separation from the presence and glory of God, if he knew the man. Some writers say, that he cursed Christ. 'I know not the man,' saith he. Though it were ten thousand times better to bear than to swear, and to die than to lie, yet when discouragement faces him, he is so amazed and daunted, that he tells the most incredible lie that almost could be uttered by the mouth of man. For there was scarce any Jew, saith Grotius, that knew not Christ by sight, being famous for those abundance of miracles that he wrought before their eyes. Neither could Peter allege any cause why he came thither, if he had not known Christ. But, ver. 75, 'He went out, and wept bitterly.' One sweet look of love breaks his heart in pieces, he melts under the beamings forth of divine favour upon him: Once he leapt into a sea of waters to come to Christ, and now he leaps into a sea of tears for that he had so shamefully denied Christ. Clement notes, that Peter so repented, that all his life-time after, every night when he heard the cock crow, he would fall upon his knees and weep bitterly, begging pardon for this dreadful sin.

Others say, that after his lying, cursing, and denying of Christ, he was ever and anon weeping, and that his face was furrowed with

continual tears. He had no sooner taken in poison, but he vomits it up again, before it got to the vitals. He had no sooner handled a serpent, but he turns it into a rod to scourge his soul with remorse. This truth is further confirmed by the speech and carriage of the disciples: Luke 24:21, seq., 'We trusted,' say they, 'that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel, but now we cannot tell what to say to it.' Here their hope hangs the wing extremely. Weak souls find it as hard to wait for God, as it is to bear evil. This weakness Christ checks, ver. 25, 'O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken,' &c. And John 16:5, the first news Christ tells them, is of their sufferings and of his leaving of them; and upon the thoughts hereof their hearts were so filled with sorrow, that they could not so much as say, 'Master, whither goest thou?' ver. 6. But now, souls strong in grace will hold on in holy and gracious actings in the very face of the greatest discouragements, as those in Ps. 44:19, 'Though thou hast sore broken us in the place of dragons, and covered us with the shadow of death, yet our heart is not turned back, neither have our steps declined from thy ways.' And so the three children, they hold up in the face of all discouragements. And so those brave worthies, of whom this world was not worthy, Heb. 11, their hearts were carried out exceedingly, notwithstanding all discouragements, to hold on in ways of holiness, and in their actings of faith upon God, in the face of all dangers and deaths that did attend them.

When Henry the Eighth had spoken and written bitterly against Luther, saith Luther, Tell the Henries, the bishops, the Turks, and the devil himself, do what they can, we are children of the kingdom, worshipping of the true God, whom they, and such as they, spit upon and crucified. And of the same spirit and metal were many martyrs. Basil affirms of the primitive saints, that they had so much courage and confidence in their sufferings, that many of the heathens, seeing their heroic zeal and constancy, turned Christians.

[12.] Twelfthly, Weak saints mind their wages and veils more than their work.

Their wages, their veils, is joy, peace, comfort, and assurance, &c.; and their work is waiting on God, believing in God, walking with God, acting for God, &c. Now, weak saints' minds are more carried out, and taken up about their wages, about their veils, than they are about their work, as experience doth abundantly evidence.⁴ Ah! Christians, if you don't mind your wages more than your work, what means the bleating of the sheep, and the lowing of the oxen? 1 Sam. 15:14. What means those earnest and vehement cryings out and wrestlings for joy, peace, comfort, and assurance, when the great work of believing, of waiting, and of walking with God, is so much neglected and disregarded? But now strong saints are more mindful of their work than they are of their wages. Lord! saith a strong saint, do but uphold me in a way of believing, in a way of working, in a way of holy walking, &c., and it shall be enough, though I should never have assurance, comfort, peace, or joy, till my dying day. If thou wilt carry me forth so as thou mayest have honour, though I have no comfort; so thou mayest have glory, though I have no peace, I will bless thee, Rom. 4:18–20. I know, says such a soul, though a life of comfort be most pleasing to me, yet a life of believing, abstracted from comfort, is most honourable to thee, and therefore I will be silent before thee. Lord! do but help me in my work, and take thine own time to give me my wages, to give me comfort, joy, peace, assurance. They are none of the best servants that mind their wages more than their work, nor they are none of the best Christians that mind their comforts and their in-comes more than that homage and duty that they owe to God.

Before I come to the second thing premised, give me leave to give you this hint; viz., that there is no such way to joy, peace, and assurance, as this, to mind your work more than your wages. Ah I had many mourning, complaining Christians done thus, their mourning before this had been turned into rejoicing, and their complaining into singings. Christians, the high way to comfort is to mind comfort less, and duty more; it is to mind more what thou shouldst do, than what thou wouldst have, as you may see in Eph. 1:13, 'In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of faith,

the gospel of your salvation: in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise.'

The original runs thus ἐν ᾧ καὶ πιστεύσαντες, in whom believing, ye were sealed. While faith is busied and exercised about Christ, and those varieties of glories and excellencies that are in him, the Lord comes, and by his Spirit seals up the life, and love, and glory of them.

Thus by divine assistance I have despatched the first thing, viz., the deciphering of weak Christians.

II. The second thing that I propounded for the further opening and clearing of this point was, to hold forth to you those things that tend to support, comfort, and uphold weak Christians. And truly I must needs say, that if ever there were a time wherein weak Christians had need of support, I verily believe this is the time wherein we live, for by the horrid profaneness of men on the one hand, and the abominable, loose, and rotten principles of others on the other hand, the hearts of many weak Christians especially are sadded, that God would not have sadded, and their spirits wounded and grieved, that God would have comforted and healed; and therefore I shall dwell the longer upon this second thing,

And the first thing that I shall lay down by way of support is this.

Twelve Supports and Comforts to Uphold Weak Christians.

Support 1. That the weakest Christians have as much interest and propriety in Christ, and all the fundamental good that comes by Christ, as the strongest saints in the world have.

Weak saints are as much united to Christ, as much justified by Christ, as much reconciled by Christ, and as much pardoned by Christ, as the strongest saints. It is true, weak Christians cannot

make so much improvement and advantage of their interest in Christ, as strong saints can; they have not that power, that wisdom, that spiritual skill to make that advantage of their interest and propriety in Christ as strong saints have; yet have they as much interest and propriety in the Lord Jesus, and all the fundamental good that comes by him, as the strongest saint that breathes. The sucking child hath as much interest and propriety in the father, and in what is the father, as the child that is grown up to age, though the young child has not that skill, nor that power, nor wisdom to improve that interest to his advantage, as he that is grown up in years hath. It is just so here; a soul weak in grace hath as much interest in the Lord as the strongest saint hath, though he hath not that skill to improve that interest. And is not this a singular comfort and support? Verily, were there no more to bear up a poor weak saint from fainting under all their sins, and sorrows, and sufferings, yet this alone might do it, &c.

The second support and comfort to weak saints is this:

Support 2. That God doth with an eye of love reflect upon the least good that is in them, or done by them.

And is not this a glorious comfort and support, that the Lord looks with an eye of love upon the least good that is in you, or done by you? You cannot have a good thought, but God looks upon that thought with an eye of love: Ps. 32:5, 'I said I would confess my sin, and thou forgavest mine iniquity.' I said it in my thoughts, that I would confess my sin, and thou presently meeting me with pardoning mercy, forgavest mine iniquity. So in Mal. 3:16, 'And there was a book of remembrance written for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name.' They had but some thoughts of God, and God reflects upon those thoughts with an eye of love: Isa. 38:5, 'I have heard thy prayers, I have seen thy tears.' Tears we look upon but as poor things, and yet God looks upon them as pearls, and therefore he puts them into his bottle, as the psalmist speaks. There

is not a bit of bread, not a drop of drink thou givest, but God casts an eye of love upon it, Mat. 25:35, 36.

There is not a desire that arises in thy soul, but the Lord takes notice of it: Prov. 10:17, 'Thou hast heard the desire of the humble.' Weak saints are full of desires, their whole life is a life of desires, they are still a-breathing out holy desires: Lord, pardon such a sin, and give me power against such a sin, and strength, Lord, to withstand such a temptation, and grace, Lord, to uphold me under such an affliction, &c.; and the Lord hears and answers such gracious breathings and longings.

It was holy Jewel's desire, that he might die preaching; and God looked with an eye of love upon his desire, and he had it.

It was Latimer's desire, that he might shed his heart's blood for Christ; and God looked with an eye of love upon the breathings of his heart, and he had it.

The Israelites did but groan, and God looked upon their groans with an eye of love; he comes down, he makes his arm bare, he tramples upon their proud enemies, and by miracles he saved them. O weak Christian! is not this a singular comfort, that the Lord reflects with an eye of love upon your thoughts, upon your desires, upon your tears, and upon your groanings, &c. What though others slight you! what though others take no notice of you! yet the Lord casts an eye of love upon you.

Some think it very strange that God should set down in Scripture the story of Jacob, a poor countryman, Gen. 31, that he had a few ewes and lambs, streaked and spotted, and yet take no notice of the great emperors and kings of the earth, nor of their great actions and warlike designs in the world. But this is to shew that tender love and respect that God bears to his children, above what he does to the great ones of this world. God is more taken with Lazarus's patched coat than with Dives's silken robe, &c.

A third thing that I shall propound for the support and comfort of weak saints is this:

Support 3. Consider, the Lord looks more upon your graces than he doth upon your weaknesses.

Or thus,

The Lord will not cast away weak saints, by reason of the weaknesses that cleaves to their persons or services.

In 2 Chron. 30:18–20, there came a multitude of people to eat the passover, but they were not prepared according to the preparation of the sanctuary; therefore Hezekiah puts up a prayer for them, and the text saith, that the 'Lord hearkened to Hezekiah, and healed the people.' The Lord looked upon their uprightness, and so passed over all their other weaknesses. He did not cast off Peter for his horrid sins, but rather looks upon him with an eye of love and pity: Mark 16:7, 'But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter, that he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him, as he said unto you.' O admirable love! O matchless mercy! where sin abounds, grace does superabound. This is the glory of Christ, that he carries it sweetly towards his people, when they carry themselves unworthily towards him. Christ looks more upon Peter's sorrow than upon his sin, upon his tears than upon his oaths, &c. The Lord will not cast away weak saints for their great unbelief, because there is a little faith in them. He will not throw them away for that hypocrisy that is in them, because of that little sincerity that is in them. He will not cast away weak saints for that pride that is in them, because of those rays of humility that shine in them. He will not despise his people for their passions, because of those grains of meekness that are in them. We will not throw away a little gold because of a great deal of dross that cleaves to it, nor a little wheat because mixed with much chaff, and will God? will God?

We will not cast away our garments because of some spots, nor our books because of some blots, nor our jewels because of some flaws, and do we think that the Lord will cast away his dearest ones, because of their spots, and blots, and flaws? Surely no. God looks more upon the bright side of the cloud than the dark: James 5:11, 'Remember the patience of Job.' It is not, remember the murmuring of Job, the cursing of Job, the complainings of Job, the impatience of Job; but, 'Remember the patience of Job.' God looks upon the pearl, and not upon the spot that is in it. So in Heb. 11:30, 31, there is mention made of Rahab's faith, love, and peaceable behaviour towards the spies, but no mention made of her lie. The Lord overlooks her weakness, and keeps his eye upon her virtues. Where God sees but a little grace, he doth as it were hide his eyes from those circumstances that might seem to deface the glory of it. So in 1 Pet. 3:6, 'Even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord.' Mark there was but one good word in Sarah's speech to Abraham, she called her husband lord; the speech otherwise was a speech of unbelief, yet the Holy Ghost speaking of her in reference to that speech, conceals all the evil in it, and mentions only the reverent title she gave to her husband, commending her for it.

He that drew Alexander, whilst he had a scar upon his face, drew him with his finger upon the scar. So when the Lord comes to look upon a poor soul, he lays his finger upon the scar, upon the infirmity, that he may see nothing but grace, which is the beauty and the glory of the soul. Ah! but weak Christians are more apt to look upon their infirmities than on their graces, and because their little gold is mixed with a great deal of dross, they are ready to throw away all as dross. Well, remember this, the Lord Jesus hath as great and as large an interest in the weakest saints, as he hath in the strongest. He hath the interest of a friend, and the interest of a father, and the interest of a head, and the interest of a husband; and, therefore, though saints be weak, yea, though they be very weak, yet having as great and as large an interest in them as in the strongest saints, he cannot but overlook their weakness, and keep a fixed eye upon their graces.

A fourth support is this:

Support 4. That the Lord will graciously preserve and strengthen those weak graces that are in you.

Though your graces be as a spark of fire in the midst of an ocean of corruption, yet the Lord will preserve and blow up that spark of fire into a flame. It was the priest's office in the time of the law, to keep the fire in the sanctuary from going out; and it is the office of our Lord Jesus, as he is our high priest, our head, our husband, our mediator, for to blow up that heavenly fire that he hath kindled in any of our souls. His honour, his faithfulness, and his goodness is engaged in it, and therefore he cannot but do it, else he would lose much love and many prayers and praises, did he not cherish, preserve, and strengthen his own work in his own people. The faith of the disciples was generally weak, as I have formerly shewed you, and yet how sweetly doth the Lord Jesus carry it towards them! John 16, Acts 2. He was still a-breathing out light, life, and love upon them; he was still a-turning their water into wine, their bitter into sweet, and their discouragements into encouragements, and all to raise and keep up their spirits. His heart was much in this thing, therefore says he, 'It is necessary that I leave you, that I may send the Comforter to be a comfort and guide unto you.' I will pour out my Spirit upon you, that a little one may become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation, and that the feeble may be as David, and the house of David as God, as the angel of the Lord, Zech. 12:8. That is a sweet text, Isa. 65:8, 'Thus saith the Lord, As the new wine is found in the clusters, and one saith, Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it, so will I do for my servants' sake,' &c. Oh, saith Christ to the Father, here are a company of weak saints that have some buddings of grace, oh do not destroy it, Father! there is a blessing in it, though it be but weak. The genuine sense of the similitude, I think, is this: when a vine being blasted or otherwise decayed is grown so bad and so barren, that scarce any good clusters of grapes can be discerned on it, whereby it may be deemed to have any life, or of ever becoming fruitful again, and the husbandman is about to grub it up or cut it

down to the ground, one standing by sees here a cluster, and there a little cluster, and cries out, Oh do not grub up the vine, do not cut down the vine, it hath a little life, and by good husbandry it may be made fruitful. We may look upon the Lord Jesus as thus pleading with his Father's justice: Father, I know thou seest that these souls are dry and barren, and that there is little or no good in them, and therefore thou mightest justly cut them down. But, O my Father! I see here a bunch and there a bunch, here a little grace and there a little grace, surely there is a blessing in it. Oh spare it, let it not be stubbed up, let it not be destroyed.

Mat. 12:27, 'A bruised reed shall he not break, nor smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory.'

'A bruised reed shall he not break.' The Jewish commentators carry it thus: he shall not tyrannise over, but nourish and cherish the poor, weak, feeble ones, that are wont to be oppressed by great ones. But men more spiritual carry it thus: Christ will not carry it roughly and rigorously towards poor weak tender souls, whose graces are as a bruised reed and as smoking flax. A reed is a contemptible thing, a tender thing, it will break sometimes before a man is aware; a bruised reed is more tender, it will be broken with a touch, yet Christ will not break such a bruised reed, i.e. a soul weak in grace.

'Nor quench the smoking flax.' The wick of a candle is little worth, and yet less when it smokes, as yielding neither light nor heat, but rather smokes, and offends with an ill smell, which men cannot bear, but will tread it out. But the Lord Jesus Christ will not do so. Souls whose knowledge, love, faith, and zeal do as but smoke out, the Lord Jesus will not trample under foot; nay, he will cherish, nourish, and strengthen such to life eternal. Look, what tallow is to the wick, or oil is to the lamp, that will the Lord Jesus be to the graces of weak Christians.

'Till he shall bring forth judgment unto victory.' That is, until the sanctified frame of grace begun in their hearts be brought to that

perfection that it prevaieth over all opposite corruption.

Thus you see how sweetly the Lord Jesus carries it to souls weak in grace; therefore let not those that bring forth a hundredfold despise those that bring forth but thirty, nor those that have five talents despise those that have but two.

The fifth support is this:

Support 5. That weak saints may be very useful to the strong, and sometimes may do more than strong saints can.

As you may see in 1 Cor. 12:14 to 28. The apostle in this Scripture discovers the singular use of the weakest saint in the body of Christ by the usefulness of the weakest and meanest member in the natural body to the strongest: ver. 21, 'The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again the head to the foot, I have no need of thee.' By the head and by the eye he means such saints as were eminent in gifts and graces, that were adorned more richly and that shined more gloriously in grace and gracious abilities than others. Oh these should not despise those that were not so eminent and excellent as themselves; for God hath so tempered the inequality of the members in the natural body, that the more excellent and beautiful members can in no wise lack the more abject and weak members; therefore slight not the weakest saints, for certainly, at first or last, the weakest will be serviceable to the strongest. A dwarf may be useful to a giant, a child to a man; sometimes a little finger shall do that that a limb in the body cannot do; it is so often in Christ's spiritual body. I will give you a very famous instance for this.

At the council of Nice there was 318 bishops, and by the subtlety of a philosopher disputing against the marriage of ministers, they generally voted against it, that those that were single should not marry. At length up starts Paphnutius, a plain Christian, and in the name of Christ, with the naked word of God, he pleaded against them all in that case; and God so wrought by his arguments, that he

convinced the 318 bishops, and carried the cause against them; yea, and so convinced the philosopher of his error, that before all he freely confessed it: 'As long,' saith he, 'as men's words were only pressed, I could repel words with words; but what is weak man to withstand the word of God? I yield; I am conquered.'

Weak Christians may be of singular use to the strongest; those that know most may learn more even from the weakest saints.

Junius was converted by discoursing with a ploughman; and, Acts 18:24 to 27, Apollos, though he was an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures as the text speaks, yet was he furthered and bettered in the knowledge of Christ's kingdom by Aquila and Priscilla. A poor tent-maker and his wife were instrumental to acquaint him with those things that he knew but weakly. He had not ascended above John's baptism, but they had, and so communicated their light and knowledge to him.

The sixth support is this:

Support 6. Where there is but a little grace, there God expects less, and will accept of less, though it be accompanied with many failings.

Thou sayest, Oh! I have but a little grace, a little faith, a little love, a little zeal. Oh know, where there is but a little grace, there God expects less obedience, and will accept of less service: 2 Cor. 8:12, 'For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that which a man hath, and not according to that which he hath not.' The two mites cast into the treasury, Luke 21:3, by the poor widow, her heart being in the action, were more acceptable than two talents cast in by others. Noah's sacrifice could not be great, and yet it was greatly accepted by God. In the time of the law, God accepted a handful of meal for a sacrifice, and a gripe of goat's hair for an oblation; and certainly God hath lost none of his affections to poor souls in the time of the gospel: Cant. 2:14, 'Let me hear thy voice, for thy voice is sweet, and thy countenance is lovely.' The Hebrew word

ethkolech signifies any sound such as birds or brutes make. Their chattering is like lovely songs in the ear of God, their mite is a sweet oblation. Parents, that have but some drops of that love and tender affection that is in God to his people, yet accept of a very little service from their weak children; and will not God? In time of strength God looks for much, but in the time of weakness God will bear much, and overlook much, and accept of a little, yea, of a very little.

One, writing of the tree of knowledge, saith that 'it bears many leaves, but little fruit.' Though weak saints have a great many leaves, and but little fruit, little grace, yet that little the Lord will kindly accept of.

Artaxerxes, the Persian monarch, was famous for accepting of a little water from the hand of a loving subject; God makes himself famous, and his grace glorious, by his kind acceptation of the weakest endeavours of his people, &c.

The seventh support is this:

Support 7. The least measure of grace is as true an earnest, and as good and sure a pledge of greater measures of grace that the soul shall have here, and of glory that the soul shall have hereafter, as the greatest measure of grace is.

'He that hath begun a good work, he will perfect it to the day of Christ,' Philip. 1:6. Christ is called not only the author, but also the finisher of our faith, Heb. 12:2. In Mal. 4:2, 3, 'Unto you that fear my name, shall the Sun of righteousness arise, with healing in his wings, and he shall go forth and grow up as calves of the stall.' And so in Job 17:9, 'The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.' Zech. 12:8, 'In that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David, and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the Lord before them.' So in Hosea 14:5-7, I will be as the dew to Israel, he shall grow as the lily, and

cast forth his fruits as Lebanon: his branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon. They that dwell under his shadow shall return, they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon.'

The tree in Alcinous's garden had always blossoms, buds, and ripe fruits, one under another. Such a tree will God make every Christian to be. 'The righteous,' though never so weak, 'shall flourish like the palm tree,' Ps. 92:12–14. Now the palm tree never loseth his leaf or fruit, saith Pliny.

An old man being asked if he grew in goodness, answered, Yea, doubtless I believe I do, because the Lord hath said, 'They shall still bring forth fruit in old age, they shall be fat, and flourishing;' or green, as the Hebrew hath it.

In the island of St Thomas, on the back side of Africa, in the midst of it is a hill, and over that a continual cloud, wherewith the whole island is watered. Such a cloud is Christ to weak saints. Though our hearts naturally are like the isle of Patmos, which is so barren of any good as that nothing will grow but on earth that is brought from other places, yet Christ will make them like 'a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not,' Isa. 58:11.

The eighth support is this:

Support 8. That the least good that is done by the weakest saint shall not be despised by Christ, but highly esteemed and rewarded.

As you may see in Mat. 19:27, 'Behold we have forsaken all, and followed thee, and what shall we have?' A great all! a great catch indeed, as I have formerly shewed you; they left a few old boats and torn nets and poor household stuff, yet Christ carries it very sweetly and lovingly to them, and tells them in verse 28, that they should 'sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.' Christ tells them they shall sit as ambassadors or chief councillors and

presidents, which have the chief seats in the kingly assembly, yea, they shall sit as kings. They are here but obscure kings, but kings elected; but in that day they shall be kings crowned, kings glorified, kings acknowledged. Then they shall as far outshine the glory of the sun, as the sun now outshines a twinkling star. In that day they shall be 'higher than the kings of the earth,' Ps. 89:27. So in Mat. 10:42, 'And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones, a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward, for a cup of cold water.' Water, the common element, and cold water, which cost them not so much as fire to warm it; for that, there is a torrent and a very sea of all pleasures provided for thee to all eternity. God esteems men's deeds by their minds, and not their minds by their deeds. The least and cheapest courtesy that can be shewed shall be rewarded. There is an emphasis in that deep asseveration, 'Verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.' Mercy is as sure a grain as vanity. God is not like to break, neither will he forget the least good done by the least saint. The butler may forget Joseph, and Joseph may forget his father's house, but the Lord will not forget the least good done by the weakest saint.⁴

The Duke of Burgundy, being a wise and loving man, did bountifully reward a poor gardener, for offering of him a rape-root, being the best present the poor man had; and will not our God, whose very nature is goodness, kindness, and sweetness, &c., do much more? Surely he will reward the least good done by the weakest saint. Therefore be not discouraged, weak Christians, though you should meet with hard measure from the world, though they should reward your weak services with reproaches, &c., for the Lord will reward you; he 'will not despise the day of small things,' Heb. 6:10. What though, O precious soul, thy language be clipped and broken? what though thou canst but chatter like a crane? what though thou canst not talk so fluently and eloquently for Christ as others? what though thy hand be weak, that thou canst not do so much for Christ as others? nor do so well for Christ as others? yet the Lord, seeing thy

heart sincere, will reward thee. Thou shalt have an everlasting rest for a little labour, and a great reward for a little work.

The ninth support is this:

Support 9. That as your graces are weaker than others, so your temptations shall be fewer, and your afflictions lighter than others.

God in much wisdom and love will suit your burdens to your backs, he will suit all your temptations and afflictions to your strength. Your burdens shall not be great, if your strength be but little, as you may see, 1 Cor. 10:13, 'There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.' The Lord, O weak Christian! will suit thy burden to thy back, and his strokes to thy strength. This is most evident in Scripture, that the strongest in grace have always been most tempted, afflicted, and distressed.

If Abraham excel others in faith, God will try the strength of Abraham's faith to the uttermost, and put him to that that he never put man to before, Gen. 20. If Moses excel all others in meekness, the Lord will try the strength of that grace, and Moses shall have to do with as proud and as murmuring a generation, as ever man had to do with. If Job carry the day from all others, in point of patience, he shall be exercised with such strange and unheard of afflictions, as shall try not only the truth, but also the strength of his patience to the uttermost. If Paul have more glorious revelations than the rest of the apostles, Paul shall be more buffeted and exercised with temptations, than the rest of the apostles.

And thus you see it clear by all these instances, that the best and choicest saints have always met with the worst and greatest temptations and afflictions. So when the disciples were in the lowest form, when they were weak in grace, the Lord Jesus exercises them but with light afflictions; but when they had a greater measure of the

Spirit poured upon them, then their troubles were increased and multiplied, and their former troubles, in comparison of the latter, were but as scratches of pins to stabs at the heart, Acts 2:1 to 21. When the Spirit of the Lord was poured out upon them, then they were afflicted, opposed, and persecuted with a witness; when they had a greater measure of the Spirit, to enable them to bear the hatred, frowns, strokes, and blows of the enraged world, then all of them had the honour to suffer a violent death for Christ, as histories do evidence.

That is a very remarkable scripture, Luke 24:49, 'And behold I send the promise of my Father upon you; but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.' The Lord Jesus would not have them go from Jerusalem, till they were endued with power from on high. By 'the promise of the Father,' is meant the gifts and graces of the Spirit that is promised in Isa. 44:3; Joel 2:28; John 14:16, and 15:26. 'Tarry ye here,' says Christ, 'at Jerusalem, till ye be completely armed and fitted for all encounters, till ye be endued with power;' or, as the Greek carries it, 'till ye be clothed,' ἐνδύσησθε. They were as naked persons; they had but a little of the Spirit, so that they were not complete; they were not clothed with the Spirit, till after the ascension of Christ. Now saith Christ, 'Tarry until such time as ye are clothed with the Spirit.' The Lord Jesus knew well enough that they should meet with bitter opposition, terrible afflictions, and dreadful persecution for his and the gospel's sake; therefore 'Tarry,' said he, 'until ye be clothed with the Holy Ghost,' that so nothing may daunt ye, nor sink ye.

The tenth support is this:

Support 10. That your persons stand not before God in your own righteousness, but in the perfect, spotless, and matchless righteousness of the Lord Jesus.

Weak hearts are apt to sit down troubled and discouraged, when they look upon that body of sin that is in them, and those imperfections

that attend their chiefest services; they are ready to say, We shall one day perish by the strength of our lusts, or by the defects of our services. Oh but weak souls should remember this, to strengthen them against all discouragements, that their persons stand before God, clothed with the righteousness of their Saviour, and so God owns them and looks upon them as persons wrapped up in his royal robe. Hence it is that he is called, Jer. 23:6, 'JEHOVAH TSIDKENU, the Lord our righteousness.' And so in 1 Cor. 1:30, 'He is of God made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.'

Though weak saints have nothing of their own, yet in Christ they have all, for in him is all fulness, Col. 1:19, both repletive and diffusive; both of abundance and of redundance; both of plenty and of bounty. He is made to weak saints wisdom, by his prophetic office; and he is made to weak saints righteousness and sanctification, by his priestly office; and he is made to weak saints redemption, by his kingly office. So in Col. 2:10, 'And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power.'

Varro reports of two hundred and eighty-eight several opinions that were among the philosophers, about the complete happiness of man; but they were out in them all, one judging his happiness lay in this and another in that. They caught at the shadow of happiness, but could not come at the tree of life, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is weak saints' complete happiness. Rev. 14:5, 'And in their mouths was found no guile, for they were without fault before the throne of God.' Though men may accuse you, judge and condemn you, yet know for your support, that you are acquitted before the throne of God. However you may stand in the eyes of men, as full of nothing but faults, persons made up of nothing but sin, yet are you clear in the eyes of God. So in Cant. 4:7, 'Thou art all fair, my love, and there is no spot in thee.' There is none, such as are the spots of wicked men, nor no spot in mine account. God looks upon weak saints in the Son of his love, and sees them all lovely; they are as the tree of Paradise, Gen. 3:6, 'fair to his eye, and pleasant to his taste.' Or as Absalom, in

whom there was no blemish from head to foot. Ah, poor souls! you are apt to look upon your spots and blots, and to cry out with the leper not only 'Unclean, unclean!' but 'Undone, undone!' Well, for ever remember this, that your persons stand before God in the righteousness of Christ; upon which account you always appear, before the throne of God, without fault; you are all fair, and there is no spot in you.

The eleventh support is this:

Support 11. Your sins shall never provoke Christ, nor prevail with Christ so far, as to give you a bill of divorce.

Oh there is much in it, if the Lord would set it home upon your hearts. Your sins shall never prevail so far with Christ, nor never so far provoke him, as to work him to give you a bill of divorce. Your sins may provoke Christ to frown upon you, they may provoke Christ to chide with you, they may provoke him greatly to correct you, but they shall never provoke Christ to give you a bill of divorce: Ps. 89:30–34, 'If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail.' That is a great support to a weak saint, that his sin shall never separate him from God nor Christ. Thou art many times afraid that this deadness, this dulness, this earthliness, and these wandering thoughts, &c., that do attend thee, will provoke the Lord Jesus to sue a bill of divorce against thee. But remember this, thy sins shall never so far prevail with Christ, as to work him to give thee a bill of divorce. Mark,

There is nothing can provoke Christ to give thee a bill of divorce but sin:

Now sin is slain; ergo,

I shall open this to you in three things:

[1.] First, Sin is slain judicially; for it is condemned both by Christ and his people, and so it is dead according to law; which is and may be a singular comfort and support to weak saints, that their greatest and worst enemy, sin, is condemned to die, and shall not for ever vex and torment their precious souls. It is dead judicially, it is under the sentence of condemnation: 1 Cor. 15:55, 56, 'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin,' &c. The apostle here triumphs over it as a thief condemned to death. Sin is sentenced now; though not fully put to death, it is dead judicially. As when the sentence of death is passed upon a malefactor, you say he is a dead man; why? he is judicially dead; so is sin, sin is judicially dead. When a man that hath robbed and wounded another is taken, and sentenced judicially, we say he is a dead man; and it is often a great refreshing and satisfaction to a man that he is so. Sin, O weak soul! is sentenced and judicially slain; and therefore that can never work the Lord Jesus to give thee a bill of divorce. The thoughts of which should much refresh thee and support thee.

[2.] Secondly, Sin is dead or slain civilly, as well as judicially. It is civilly dead, because the power of it is much abated, and its dominion and tyranny overpowered. As when a king or tyrant is whipped and stripped of all power to domineer, reign, and play the tyrant, he is civilly dead, even while he lives; so is sin in this sense dead even while it lives, Rom. 6:14. That text is suitable to our purpose: Hosea 13:1, 'When Ephraim spake trembling, he exalted himself in Israel; but when he offended in Baal, he died.'

What is the meaning of these words? The meaning is this: When the king of Ephraim spake, the people even trembled at his voice, such power once he had; but when he offended in Baal, by serving Baal, by giving himself up to idolatry, he died in respect of obedience not yielded to him as formerly. Time was that he was terrible, but when he fell to idolatry, his strength and glory came down, so that now he became even like a dead carcase.

Adam died civilly the same day that he sinned. The creatures that before lovingly obeyed him, as soon as he renounced obedience to his God, they renounced all obedience to him or his sovereignty, so that he civilly died the very same day that he sinned.

That is a sweet word that you have, Rom. 6:11, 'Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin.' Therefore Christ will never divorce you for sin. Oh what a support may this be to a weak saint, that sin, that he fears above all other things in the world, is slain judicially and civilly. The Lord hath whipped and stripped it of all its ruling, reigning, domineering, tyrannizing power. Oh, therefore, Christians, look upon sin as dead, that is, as not to be obeyed, as not to be acknowledged, no more than a tyrant that is stripped of all his tyrannizing power. People that are wise, and understand their liberty, look not upon such a one as fit to be obeyed and served, but as one fit to be renounced and destroyed. Do you so look upon your sins, and deal accordingly with them.

[3.] Thirdly, Sin is slain naturally, as well as civilly. Christ hath given it its death's wound by his death and resurrection. He hath given sin such a wound, that it cannot be long-lived, though it may linger awhile in a saint. As a tree that is cut at the root with a sore gash or two, must die within a year, perhaps a month, nay, it may be within a week; though for a time it may flourish, it may have leaves and fruit, yet it secretly dies, and will very shortly wither and perish. The Lord Jesus hath given sin such a mortal wound, by his death and Spirit, and by the communication of his favour and grace to the soul, that sin shall never recover its strength more, but die a lingering death in the souls of the saints. Christ did not die all at once upon the cross, but by little and little; to shew us, that his death should extend to the slaying of sin gradually in the souls of the saints. When our enemy hath a mortal wound, we say he is a dead man, his wound is mortal; so when Jesus Christ hath given sin such a deadly wound, such a mortal blow, that it shall never recover its strength and power more, we may truly say, it is dead, it is slain. Therefore cheer up, O weak souls, for certainly sin that is thus slain can never provoke Jesus

Christ to give you a bill of divorce. Ah! that all weak Christians would, like the bee, abide upon these sweet flowers, and gather honey out of them, &c.

To proceed.

The twelfth support is this:

Support 12. Christ and you are sharers.

Know this, weak saints, for your support and comfort,

1. That Christ shares with you, and you share with Christ.

I shall open this sweet truth to you a little.

[1.] Christ shares with you in your natures.

In Heb. 2:16, 'For verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham. And by this he hath advanced fallen man above the very angels. This is the great mystery spoken of, 1 Tim. 3:16, 'And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh,' &c.

[2.] The Lord Jesus shares with you in your afflictions.

In Isa. 63:9, 'In all their afflictions he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old.' It is between Christ and his church as between two lute strings, no sooner one is struck but the other trembles.

[3.] He shares with you in all sufferings and persecutions, as well as in all your afflictions.

Acts 9:4, 5, 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?' There is such a near union between the Lord Jesus Christ and the weakest saints, that a man cannot strike a saint but he must strike through the very

heart of Christ. Their sufferings are held his, Col. 1:24; and their afflictions are his afflictions, and their reproaches are his reproaches, Heb. 13:13; and their provocations are his provocations, Neh. 4:4, 5; God is provoked more than Nehemiah. So Isa. 8:18, compared with Heb. 2:13. 'Behold I, and the children whom the Lord hath given me, are for signs and wonders in Israel.' This the apostle applies to Christ, Heb. 2:13.

[4.] The Lord Jesus Christ shares with you in all your temptations, Heb. 2:17, 18, and 4:15, 16.

Christ was tempted, and he was afflicted as well as you, that he might be able so succour you that are tempted. As a poor man that hath been troubled with pain and grief, he will share with others that are troubled with pain or grief. Ah, friends! the Lord Jesus Christ hath lost none of his affections by going to heaven; he is still full of compassion, though free from personal passion. When he was on earth, oh! how did he sympathize with his poor servants in all their temptations. 'Satan,' says Christ to Peter, 'hath desired to winnow thee, but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not,' Luke 22:32. Luther, in his preaching, met with every man's temptation, and being once asked how he could do so? answered, Mine own manifold temptations and experiences are the cause thereof. Oh! the manifold temptations that the Lord Jesus hath undergone, makes him sensible, as I may say, and willing to share with us in our temptations.

Secondly, As Christ shares with weak saints, so weak saints share with Christ. And this I shall shew you briefly in a few particulars.

[1.] Weak saints share with Christ in his divine nature. 2 Peter 1:4, 'Whereby are given to us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these we might be partakers of the divine nature.' Not of the substance of the Godhead, as the Familists say, for that is incommunicable; but by the divine nature we are to understand those divine qualities, called elsewhere, 'the image of God,' 'the life of

God,' that whereby we are made like to God in wisdom and holiness, wherein the image of God, after which man was at first created, consists, Eph. 4:24, Col. 3:10. Saints that do partake of this divine nature, that is, of those divine qualities before spoken of, they resemble God, not only as a picture doth a man, in outward lineaments, but as a child doth his father, in countenance and condition. And well may grace be called 'the divine nature,' for as God bringeth light out of darkness, comfort out of sorrow, riches out of poverty, and glory out of shame, so does grace bring day out of night, and sweet out of bitter, and plenty out of poverty, and glory out of shame. It turns counters into gold, pebbles into pearls, sickness into health, weakness into strength, and wants into abundance. 'Enjoying nothing, and yet possessing all things,' 2 Cor. 6:10, &c.

[2.] Weak saints share with Christ in his Spirit and grace.

In Ps. 45:7, Christ is 'anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows.' They have the anointings of the Spirit, as well as he, though not so richly as he. They have their measure, though not that measure and proportion of the Spirit as the Lord Jesus hath. So in John 1:16, 'Of his fulness have all we received, grace for grace.' There is in Christ not only a fulness of abundance, but also a fulness of redundancy. There is an overflowing fulness in Christ, as a fountain overflows, and yet still remains full. 'Grace for grace,' or, 'grace upon grace.' Abundance of grace, and the increases of graces, one by another.

'Grace for grace,' that is, as a child in generation receives member for member; or as the paper from the press receives letter for letter; or as the wax from the seal receives print for print; or as the glass from the image receives face for face, so does the weakest saint receive from Jesus Christ.

'Grace for grace,' that is, for every grace that is in Christ, there is the same grace in us, in some measure. There is not the weakest saint

that breathes, but has in him some wisdom that answers to the wisdom of Christ, and some love that answers to the love of Christ, and some humility, meekness, and faith, that answers to the humility, meekness, and faith of the Lord Jesus, in truth and reality, though not in degree or quantity, &c.

[3.] Weak saints share with Christ, in the manifestations and discoveries of his Father.

The Lord Jesus, that lies in the bosom of the Father, hath the clearest and the fullest manifestations of the Father that can be, and he comes and opens the love and heart of the Father, he unbosoms and unbowels God to the weakest saints, as in John 15:15, 'Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.' So in John 17:6–8.

[4.] Weak saints share with Christ in his honourable titles.

In the title of sons, 1 John 3:1, 'Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!' And in that of heirs, Rom. 8:17. Yea, they are priests, and prophets, and kings, as well as he, as you may see by comparing Rev. 1:5, 6, with 1 Peter 2:9, &c.

[5.] Weak saints share with Christ in his conquests.

In 1 Cor. 15:55–57, Rom. 8:37, Christ hath triumphed over sword, famine, death, and devils, &c., and so have they through him also. Over all these we are more than conquerors, we are over and above conquerors. Oh what a blessed thing is this! that weak saints should share with Christ in his conquests. The poor weak soldier shares with his general in all his noble and honourable conquests; so does a poor weak Christian share with his Christ in all his noble and honourable conquests.

[6.] Lastly, They share with Christ in his honour and glory.

And what would they have more? John 12:26, 'If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.' 1 Peter 5:1, Eph. 2:6, 'And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.' Believers are already risen in Christ their head, and they do at this instant sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Christ, as a public person, doth represent all believing souls, and they are set down in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. In Rom. 8:17, 'If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him.' And in John 14:2, 3, 'I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.' So in Rev. 3:21, 'To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.' Now, what would you have more, weak souls? Christ shares with you, and you share with Christ. You are apt to be discouraged because you do not share with Christ in such measures of grace, comfort, and holiness, as such and such strong saints do. Oh! but remember in how many weighty things Christ and you are sharers; and be dejected if you can! Ah, Christians! what though you do not share in the honours, profits, pleasures, and advantages of the world; yet this should be your joy and crown, that Christ and your souls are sharers in those things that are most eminent and excellent, most precious and glorious; and the serious remembrance hereof should bear up your heads, hopes, and hearts, above all the troubles, temptations, and afflictions that come upon you in this world, &c.

III. The third thing propounded, was to shew you the duty of weak saints. Who these weak saints are, you have heard; and what their supports and comforts are, you have heard; and now I shall shew you their duty in the following particulars.

And the first duty that I shall press upon weak saints is this:

Six Duties that Lie Upon Weak Saints

1. To be thankful for that little grace they have.

Wilt thou be thankful, O Christian, for the least courtesy shewed thee by men? And wilt thou not be thankful for that little measure of grace that is bestowed upon thee by God? Dost thou remember, O weak Christian! that the least measure of grace is more worth than a thousand worlds? that it is more worth than heaven itself? Dost thou remember, O weak Christian! that the greatest number of men have not the least measure or dram of saving grace? Doth free grace knock at thy door, when it passes by the doors of thousands? And doth it cast a pearl of price into thy bosom, when others are left to wallow in their blood for ever? And wilt thou not be thankful? Oh do but consider, weak souls, how notoriously wicked you would have been if the Lord had not bestowed a little grace upon you! Thou lookest, O soul, one way, and there thou hearest some a-cursing, banning, and a-blaspheming God to his very face. Had not the Lord given thee a little grace, ten thousand to one but thou hadst been one in wickedness among these monsters of mankind. And thou lookest another way, and there thou seest persons dicing, carding, drabbing, and drunkenning, &c.; why, had not the Lord vouchsafed to thee some tastes and sips of grace, thou mightst have been as vile as the vilest among them. Ah, weak saints! you do not think what an awakened conscience would give for a little of that little grace that the Lord has given you. Were all the world a lump of gold, and in their hand to give, they would give it for the least spark of grace, for the least drop of mercy.

I have read of a man who, being in a burning fever, professed that if he had all the world at his dispose, he would give it all for one draught of beer. So would an awakened conscience for one dram of grace. Oh! saith such a soul, when I look up and see God frowning, when I look inward and feel conscience gnawing and accusing, when I look downward and see hell open to receive me, and when I look on my right and left hand, and see devils standing ready to accuse me, oh! had I a thousand worlds I would give them all for a little drop of that grace that such and such souls have, whom I have formerly

slighted and despised. Oh! what would not a damned soul, that hath been but an hour in hell, give for a drop of that grace that thou hast in thy heart! Think seriously of this and be thankful.

Well! remember one thing more, and that is this, viz., that there is no such way to get much grace, as to be thankful for a little grace. He who opens his mouth wide in praises, shall have his heart filled with graces. Ingratitude stops the ear of God, and shuts the hand of God, and turns away the heart of the God of grace, and therefore you had need be thankful for a little grace. Unthankfulness is the greatest injustice that may be; it is a withholding from the great landlord of heaven and earth his due, his debt.

Philip branded his soldier that begged the land of one that had relieved him, and kindly entertained him, with ingratus hospes, the ungrateful guest. O weak saints! give not God an occasion by your ingratitude to brand you, and to write upon your foreheads, ungrateful children. Had it not been for unthankfulness, Adam had been in paradise, the lapsed angels in heaven, and the Jews in their own land of promise. The Jews have a saying, that the world stands upon three things, the law, holy worship, and retribution, and if these things fall the world will fall. You know how to apply it, Isa. 1:3, 4.

But [that] I may in good earnest stir up your souls to thankfulness, will you take home with you these things, that haply have never or seldom been thought of by you?

[1.] First, Consider, that there is more need of praises than there is of prayers.

Two things do with open mouth proclaim this truth.

And the first is this, our mercies do out-weigh our wants. This is true in temporals, but infinitely more in spirituals and eternal. Thou wantest this and that outward mercy, and what is thy want, O soul! of this and that single mercy, to the multitudes of mercies that thou

dost enjoy? And as for spirituals, there is nothing more clear than this, that thy spiritual mercies do infinitely out-weigh thy spiritual wants. Thou wantest this and that spiritual mercy, but what are those wants to that God, that Christ, and all those spiritual blessings in heavenly places, with which thou art blest in Christ Jesus, Eph. 1:4.

Secondly, Consider this, That all your wants and miseries are deserved and procured by your sins. Jer. 4:18, 'Thy way and thy doings have procured these things unto thee: this is thy wickedness, because it is bitter, because it reacheth unto thy heart.' And chap. 5:25, 'Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withholden good things from you.' But now all your mercies are un-merited and undeserved; they all flow in upon you from the free love and favour of God; and therefore there is more need of praises than of prayers. And oh! that the high praises of God were more in your mouths, upon this very account! And oh that, with David, you would summon all the faculties of your souls to praise the Lord, who hath filled you, and followed you with the riches of mercy all your days, Ps. 149:2, and 103:1–5. But,

[2.] Secondly, Consider this, Thankfulness is a surer and a better evidence of our sincerity, and spiritual ingenuity, than praying or hearing, or such like services, are.

Thanksgiving is a self-denying grace; it is an uncrowning ourselves and the creatures, to set the crown upon the head of our Creator; it is the making ourselves a footstool, that God may be lifted up upon his throne, and ride in a holy triumph over all; it is a grace that gives God the supremacy in all our hearts, thoughts, desires, words, and works. Self-love, flesh and blood, and many low and carnal considerations, may carry men to pray, and hear, and talk, &c. The whip may work a shame to beg, but thankfulness is the free-will offering of a child. There is nothing that so clearly and so fully speaks out your sincerity and spiritual ingenuity, as thankfulness doth. Therefore, weak saints, if you would have a substantial evidence of your sincerity and spiritual ingenuity, be thankful for a little grace.

The little birds do not sip one drop of water, but they look up, as if they meant to give thanks, to shew us what we should do for every drop of grace, &c.⁴

The third and last consideration to set this home is this:

[3.] A thankful soul holds consort with the music of heaven.

By thankfulness thou holdest a correspondency with the angels, who are still a-singing hallelujahs to him that sits upon the throne, and is blessed for ever, Rev. 4:6–9, and 5:12–14. In heaven there is no prayers, but all praises. I am apt to think, that there cannot be a clearer nor a greater argument of a man's right to heaven, and ripeness for heaven, than this, being much in the work of heaven here on earth. There is no grace but love, nor no duty but thankfulness, that goes with us to heaven.

Ay, but weak saints may say, Sir! we judge that there is weight in what you say, to provoke us to thankfulness; but did we know that we had true grace, though it were never so little, though it were but as the grain of mustard seed, we would be thankful. But this is our condition, we live between fears and hopes; one day hoping we shall to heaven, and be happy for ever, another day we are fearing that we shall to hell, and miscarry for ever; and thus we are up and down, backward and forward. Sometimes we believe we have grace, and at other times we doubt we have none; sometimes we have a little light, and suddenly our sun is clouded; one day we are ready to say with David, 'The Lord is our portion,' and the next day we are ready to complain with Jonah, that we are 'cast out' from the presence of the Lord.

Methinks I hear a weak saint saying thus to me, Sir, I would fain have an end put to this controversy that hath been so long in my soul, viz., whether I have grace or no, and if you please, I will tell you what I find, and so humbly desire your judgment and opinion upon the whole.

Well, speak on, poor soul, and let me hear what thou hast found in thine own soul.

Why, sir, then thus:

[1.] I find, first, a holy restlessness in my soul, till with old Simeon I have gotten Christ in my arms, yea, till I have gotten Christ in my heart, Luke 2:25–33. I go from duty to duty, and from ordinance to ordinance, and yet I cannot rest, because 'I cannot find him whom my soul loves,' Cant. 5:10. I am like Noah's dove, that could not rest until he had gotten into the ark. Oh I cannot be quiet till I know that I am housed in Christ. My soul is like a ship in a storm, that is tossed hither and thither, oh! where shall I find him? Oh! how shall I obtain him who is the chiefest of ten thousand? What Absalom said in another case, I can say in this, saith the poor soul; in his banishment he could say, 'What is all this to me, so long as I cannot see the king's face?' And truly the language of my soul is this, What is honour to me? and riches to me? and the favour of creatures to me? so long as I go mourning without my Christ, so long as I see not my interest in my Christ.

Well, have you anything else to say, O weak Christian?

Yes sir, I have one thing more to say.

What is that?

Why, it is this.

[2.] I can truly say, that the poorest, the most distressed and afflicted man in the world, is not fuller of desires, nor stronger in his desires than I am. The poor man desires bread to feed him, and the wounded man desires a plaster to heal him, and the sick man desires cordials to strengthen him, &c. But these are not fuller of desires after those things that are suitable to them, than I am of holy and heavenly desires. Oh that I had more of God! oh that I were filled with Christ! oh that I had his righteousness to cover me, his grace to pardon me,

his power to support me, his wisdom to counsel me, his loving-kindness to refresh me, and his happiness to crown me, &c.

Well, is this all, O weak saint?

No, sir, I have one thing more to tell you.

What is that?

Why, that is this:

[3.] Though I dare not say that Christ is mine, yet I can truly say, that Christ, his love, his works, his grace, his word, are the main objects of my contemplation and meditation. Oh I am always best, when I am most a-meditating and contemplating Christ, his love, his grace, &c. Ps. 139:17, 'How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God; how great is the sum of them!'

Well, is this all, O weak saint?

No, sir, I have one thing more to say.

What is that?

Why, it is this:

[4.] I can truly say, That the want of Christ's love is a greater grief and burden to my soul, than the want of any outward thing in this world. I am in a wanting condition, as to temporals; I want health, and strength, and trading, friends, and money, 'that answereth all things,' as Solomon speaks, Eccles. 10:19. And yet all these wants do not so grieve me, and so afflict and trouble me, as the want of Christ, as the want of grace, as the want of the discoveries of that favour that is better than life, Ps. 63:3, 4.

Well, is this all, O weak saint?

No, sir, there is one thing more.

What is that?

Why, that is this:

[5.] That I would not willingly nor resolvedly sin against Christ, for a world. It is true, I dare not say I have an interest in Christ, yet I dare say that I would not willingly and resolvedly sin against Christ for a world. I can say, through grace, were I this moment to die, that my greatest fear is of sinning against Christ, and my greatest care is of pleasing Christ. I know there was a time, when my greatest care was to please myself and the creature, and my greatest fear was to please myself and the creature. I can remember with sorrow and sadness of heart, how often I have displeased Christ to please myself, and displeased Christ to please the creature; but now it is quite otherwise with me, my greatest care is to please Christ, and my greatest fear is of offending Christ.

Well, is this all, O weak saint?

No, sir, I have one thing more.

What is that?

Why, that is this:

[6.] Though I dare not say that Christ is mine, and that I have an interest in him, yet I can truly say, I dearly love the people of Christ, for the image of Christ that I see stamped upon them. It is true, I dare not say Christ is mine, and heaven is mine; I cannot say with such and such, 'The Lord is my portion;' yet I can say that I dearly love those that have the Lord for their portion. I can truly say, that the poorest and the most neglected, and the most despised saint in the world, is more precious in my eye, and more dear to my soul, than the greatest and the richest sinner in the world, Ps. 16:3.

Well, is this all, O weak saint, that thou hast to say?

No, sir, I have one thing more.

What is that?

Why, that is this:

[7.] Though I dare not say that I have any interest in Christ, or that I love Christ, yet I dare say, that my soul weeps and mourns in secret for the dishonour that is done to Christ, both by myself and by others also. I can look the Lord in the face, were I now to die, and say, Lord! thou that knowest all thoughts and hearts, thou dost know, that 'mine eyes run down with rivers of tears, because men keep not thy law,' Jer. 9:1-3; Ps. 119:136.

Well, is this all?

No, sir, I crave your patience to hear me in one thing more.

What is that, O weak Christian?

Why, that is this:

[8.] That I prize persons and things according to the spiritualness and holiness that is in them; and the more spiritual and holy any man or thing is, the more is that man and thing prized by my soul. I have often thought of that sweet word, Ps. 119:104, 'Thy word is very pure, therefore doth thy servant love it.' Other men love it because of the profit they get by it, or because of a name, or this, or that; but I love it for the purity, for the holiness, and the cleanness of it. No preaching, saith the weak saint, nor no praying, nor no talking, nor no society that likes me and is sweet to me, but that that is most spiritual, most holy. It is not an exercise tricked and trimmed up with wit, learning, and eloquence; it is not the hanging of truth's ears with counterfeit pearls, that takes me; but the more plainness, spiritualness, and holiness, I see in an exercise, the more is my heart raised to prize it and love it. And therefore, saith the weak saint, because Christ is perfectly and infinitely holy above all other, I prize

Christ above all. Ordinances are sweet, but Christ is more sweet to my soul. Saints are precious, but Christ is far more precious. Heaven is glorious, but Christ is infinitely more glorious. The first thing that I would ask, if I might have it, saith the weak saint, is Christ. And the next thing that I would ask, if I might have it, is more of Christ. And the last thing that I would ask, if I might have it, is that I might be satiated and filled with the fulness of Christ. Let the ambitious man take the honours of the world, so I may but have Christ. Let the voluptuous man swim in all the pleasures of the world, so I may have Christ. And let the covetous man tumble up and down in all the gold and silver of the world, so I may have Christ, and it shall be enough to my soul.³

Well, is this all, O weak saint?

No, sir; I have one thing more to say,

What is that?

Why, it is this:

[9.] I find the same conflict in my soul that Paul found in his soul, after he was converted near upon fourteen years, after he was taken up into as clear and choice enjoyments of God, as any soul that ever I read of. The conflict that is mentioned, Rom. 7:6, I find in my soul. The whole frame of my soul, understanding, will, and affections, are set against sin. I find that 'I hate the evil that I do, and I find that the good that I would do, I do not, and the evil that I would not do, that do I. I find a law in my members, rebelling against the law of my mind, and leading of me captive into the law of sin,' and this makes me often to cry out with Paul, 'O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death? Therefore I sometime hope, that those sins that are now my burden, shall never hereafter be my bane.

Well, and is this all, O weak saint?

No, sir; I have one thing more to say.

What is that?

Why that is this:

[10.] I can truly say, when the Lord gives me any strength against sin, and any power to serve him, and walk close with him in his ways, it is a greater joy and comfort to my soul, than all the blessings of this life. Though I have not yet seen, he hath 'set me as a seal upon his heart, as a seal upon his arm;' though I have not yet the clear assurance of his love; though his spirit hath not yet set up such a light in my soul, whereby I might run and read my right and title to himself and heaven; yet when he doth give me but a little light through a crevice, when he does but begin to cause his love to dawn upon me, when he gives me but a little strength against sin, and a little power to walk close with himself, &c.; oh, this doth administer more abiding joy, and more sweet peace, and more solid comfort to my soul, than all the riches, honours, friends, and favours of this world.

Well, is this all, O weak saint?

No, sir; I have one thing more to say.

What is that?

Why, that is this:

[11.] Though my interest in Christ be not clear to me, yet I can truly say I would not change my condition with the men of this world, for a thousand worlds, Ps. 101:3; 139:21, 22; 120:6. It is true, I cannot say that I have 'the seal and witness of the Spirit,' that many talk and boast of, though I fear but a few enjoy; yet I can truly say, that I would not change my estate with men merely civil, nor with the profane men of this world, for ten thousand worlds, &c.

Well, is this all, O soul!

No, sir; I have but one thing more, and then I have done.

Well, what is that?

Why, that is this.

[12.] I find my soul carried forth to a secret resting, relying, leaning, staying, and hanging upon Christ for life and happiness. Though I know not how it shall go with me, yet I have thrown myself into his arms; I lean upon him; there I will hang, and there I will rest and stay: 'if I must perish, I will perish there,' Job 13:15; 2 Kings 7:3–5; Esther 4:16.

And thus, sir, I have opened my state and condition to you; and now I do earnestly desire your judgment upon the whole.

Well, then, this I shall say, as 'I must answer it in the day of my appearing before God,' that had I as many souls as I have hairs on my head, or as there be stars in heaven, I could freely adventure the loss of them all, if these things do not undeniably speak out, not only the truth, but also the strength of grace, &c. Nay, let me tell you, that he that finds but any of these things really in his soul, though the Lord hath not given him a clear and full manifestation of his love and favour, &c., yet, while breath is in his body, he hath eminent cause to bless God, and to walk thankfully and humbly before him.

The second duty is this,

2. Live up to that little grace you have.

Thou sayest, O weak Christian, thou hast but a little light, a little love, a little zeal, a little faith, &c. Well, grant it, but know that it is thy duty to live up to those measures of grace thou hast. And this is the second head that I shall press upon you, live up and live out that grace you have. And if ever there were a season to press this point home upon souls, this is the season in which we live. And considering that it is not a flood of words, but weight of argument,

that carries it with ingenuous spirits, I shall therefore propound these following things to their serious consideration.

[1.] First, Consider this, living up to your graces carries with it the greatest evidence of the truth of grace.

That man that lives not up to his grace, let him be strong or weak, wants one of the best and strongest demonstrations that can be to evidence the truth of his grace. If you would have a clear evidence that that little love, that little faith, that little zeal you have is true, then live up to that love, live up to that faith, live up to that zeal that you have, and this will evidence it beyond all contradiction, &c.

[2.] Secondly, Consider this, God and your own souls will be very great losers, if you live not up to those measures of grace you have.

God will lose many prayers and many praises; he will lose much honour, and glory, and service, which otherwise he might have; and you will lose much peace, much comfort, much rest, quietness, and content that otherwise your souls might enjoy, &c.

[3.] Thirdly, Consider this, your not living up to that little light and grace you have, will open the mouths of graceless souls against your gracious God, and against his gracious ones, and against his gracious ways.

You think, because of the weakness of your grace, you must be borne with in this, and that, and what not. But remember, it is your duty to live up to the light and grace you have; and nothing below this will effectually stop the mouths of graceless wretches from barking against the ways of God, the truths of God, and the people of God. Vain men will be often a-reasoning thus: though such and such men and women have not such great knowledge, such clear light, such strong love, and such burning zeal as David, Paul, and other worthies, yet they have so much light and knowledge as tells them that they should not carry themselves thus and thus as they do. Their light and knowledge tells them that they should be just and righteous

in their dealings, and in all their ways and designs, &c. Though they have not such great measures of spiritual enjoyments as such and such, yet that little grace they have should lead them by the hand to do things worthy of that Christ and the gospel they profess, &c.

Let me a little expostulate the point with you, weak saints; you know that you should not be stirred and heated by every straw that is in your way. Why do not you in this, then, live up to your light? You know that you should not 'be overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good,' Rom. 12:21. And why do not you in this live up to your light? You know that you should 'do good to those that do hurt to you,' Mat. 5:44–48. Why do not you in this live up to your light? You know that you should do your duties to others, though they neglect their duties to you. It is not the neglect of a husband's duty that frees the wife from the discharge of hers, nor the neglect of a wife's duty that frees the husband from the discharge of his. You know this, don't you? Yes. Why don't you then live up to your light? Why do you by your contrary actings open the mouths of others against God and his ways? You know that you should be exemplary in your relations, in your generations, and in your conversations; you know that you should be examples of holiness, meekness, sweetness, patience, and contentedness, and why then don't you live up to your knowledge in these things? You know that you should do to others as you would have others to do to you; and why in this don't you live up to your knowledge? Ah! that you that are weak did not cause the mouths of wicked men to be opened against God, his truths and ways, by your living below that light and knowledge that God hath given you! I beseech you, as you tender the honour of God, and as you would stop the mouths of vain men, live up to those measures of grace that the Lord hath given you. No way to comfort like this, no way to the crown like this. He will not be long a babe in grace, who lives out that little grace he hath.

[4.] Fourthly, Living up to your light is the readiest and the only way to fetch up and to recover all that hath been lost by your living below your light.

By your living below your light, God, your own souls, and the gospel have lost much, yea, and others also have lost much light, comfort, strength, and quickness, &c., that they might have had, had you but lived up to that little grace you had. Now, there is no way on earth to recover and to fetch up these losses, but by living up to that grace you have. Ah, Christians! it is not your running from sermon to sermon,—not that I speak against frequent hearing of the word,—nor your crying up this man and that man, or this notion and that, or this way or that, that will recover and fetch up the honour that God hath lost by your living below your graces. It is only your living up to your graces that will make up all the breaches that have been made upon his honour and the gospel, and upon the comfort and peace of your own souls and others'. Well, remember this, all the honour that God hath from you in this life, is from your living up to that light, knowledge, love, fear, and faith that he hath given you. There is nothing that will make up all losses but this; therefore I beg of you, upon the knees of my soul, that you would take this one thing home with you, and go into your closets, and lay your hands upon your hearts, and say, Well, the Lord hath lost much, and my own soul hath lost much, and others have lost much, by my living below that little grace I have; and therefore I will now make it my business, by assisting grace, to live up to those measures of grace that I have received, more than yet I have done all my days. I will, by the strength of Christ, make it more my duty and my work to live out what God hath given in than ever yet I have done, that so the Lord and the gospel may be no further losers but gainers by me.

[5.] The fifth and last motive is this, the readiest and the surest way to get more grace, is to live up to that little grace you have.

He that lives up to a little light shall have more light; he that lives up to a little knowledge shall have more knowledge; he that lives up to a little faith shall have more faith; and he that lives up to a little love shall have more love, &c. There is no such way to attain to greater measures of grace as for a man to live up to that little grace he hath. Verily, the main reason why many are such babes and shrubs in

grace, is because they do not live up to their attainments. He that wont improve two talents, shall never have the honour to be trusted with five; but he that improves a little, shall be trusted with much: 'The diligent hand maketh rich,' Prov. 10:4. He that is active and agile, that works as well as wishes, that adds endeavours to his desires, will quickly be a cedar in grace. Ah, Christians! you have a God that is great, a God that is good, a God that is gracious, and a God that is rich, that loves not to see his children to be always weaklings and striplings in grace. The very babe, by drawing the breasts, gets strength and nourishment. Oh you babes in grace, put out that little strength you have, be you still a-drawing at the breasts of Christ, at the breasts of the promises, and strength will come, nourishment will follow, &c.

The third duty that I would press upon weak saints is this:

3. Be sure that you always reflect upon your graces, and whatsoever good is in you, with cautions.

This is a weighty point, and doth bespeak your most serious attention.

There are six rules or cautions that weak saints should always observe in their looking upon their graces.

And the first is this:

[1.] Look upon all your graces as gifts of grace, as favours given you from above, as gifts dropped out of heaven into your hearts, as flowers that are given you out of the garden of paradise.

A man should never look upon his grace, but he should look upon it as a flower of paradise, as a gift that God hath cast into his bosom from heaven. 1 Cor. 4:7, 'Who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou that thou hast not received?' &c. 'Of thine own,' saith David, 'have we given thee,' 1 Chron. 29:14. Thou talkest of light, of love, of fear, of faith, &c., but what are all these but pearls of

glory that are freely given thee by the hand of grace? 'Every good and perfect gift comes down from above.' As all light flows from the sun, and all water from the sea, so all good flows from heaven. The greatest excellencies in us do as much depend upon God, as the light doth upon the sun. When thou lookest upon thy wisdom, thou must say, Here is wisdom, ay, but it is from above; here is some weak love working towards Christ, but it is from above; here is joy, and comfort, and peace, but these are all the flowers of paradise; they never grew in nature's garden. When a soul looks thus upon all those costly diamonds with which his heart is decked, he keeps low, though his graces are high. Where this rule is neglected, the soul will be endangered of being swelled and puffed.

Mr Foxe was used to say, that 'as he got much good by his sins, so he got much hurt by his graces.' When you look upon the stream, remember the fountain; when you look upon the flower, remember the root; when you look upon the stars, remember the sun; and when you look upon your graces, remember the fountain of grace, else Satan will be too hard for you. Satan is so artificial, so subtle and critical, that he can make your very graces to serve him against your graces; conquering joy by joy, sorrow by sorrow, humility by humility, fear by fear, and love by love, if you do not look upon all your graces as streams flowing from the fountain above, and as fruits growing upon the tree of life that is in the midst of the paradise of God. Therefore, when one eye is fixed upon your graces, let the other be always fixed upon the God of grace.

[2.] Secondly, At that time when your eye is upon inherent grace and righteousness, let your heart be fixed upon Christ, and his imputed righteousness.

Paul's eye was upon his grace: Rom. 7:22, 25, 'I delight in the law of God, after the inward man. And with my mind I serve the law of God.' And yet at that very same time, his heart was set upon Christ, and taken up with Christ; ver. 25, 'I thank God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.' So in Col. 2:2, 3, you have one eye fixed upon grace,

and at the same time the heart fixed upon Christ. 'That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.' His eye is upon grace, his heart is upon Christ. So in Philip. 3:8, the apostle hath his eye upon the excellent knowledge of Christ, but ver. 9, his heart is set upon the righteousness of Christ. 'That I might be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.' Here you have his eye upon grace, and his heart upon Christ, in the very presence of his grace. This is your glory, Christians, in the presence and sight of all your graces, to see the free grace of Christ, and his infinite, spotless, matchless, and glorious righteousness, to be your surest, sweetest, highest, and choicest comfort and refuge.

Peter was not well skilled in this lesson, and that was the very reason that he fell foulest, when his confidence was highest. Grace is a ring of gold, and Christ is the pearl in that ring; and he that looks more upon the ring than the pearl that is in it, in the hour of temptation will certainly fall. When the wife's eye is upon her rings or jewels, then her heart must be set upon her husband. When grace is in my eye, Christ must at that time be in my arms, yea, he must lie between my breasts: Cant. 1:13, 'My beloved is as a bundle of myrrh, he shall lie all night between my breasts.' Christ, and not grace, must lie nearest to a Christian's heart.

[3.] A third thing is this, When you look upon your grace, you must look upon it as a beautiful creature, that is begotten in the soul by Christ, and that is strengthened, maintained, cherished, and upheld in your souls by nothing below the spiritual, internal, and glorious operations of Christ.

Though grace be a beautiful creature, yet grace is but a creature, and so your souls must look upon it. Grace is a heavenly offspring, it is the first-born of God, as I may say, and does most represent him to

the life. Grace is a bud of glory; it is of the blood royal; it is nobly descended, James 1:17. So in Heb. 12:2, 'Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.' Christ is the Alpha and Omega, the beginner and ender. In all other things and arts, the same man cannot begin and finish, but Christ doth both. Philip. 1:5, Our graces thrive and are upheld in life and power, in beauty and glory, by the internal operation of Christ in our souls. So in Col. 1:27, 'Christ in you the hope of glory,' So ver. 29, 'Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working which worketh in me mightily.' So Philip. 4:13, 'I can do all things, through Christ that strengtheneth me; I can be high and low, poor and rich, honourable and base, something or nothing, &c., through Christ that strengthens me.' So in Cant. 4:16, 'Blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may send forth a fragrant smell.' We may puff and blow our hearts out, and yet no savoury smell will flow forth, if Christ does not blow. So in Ps. 138:3, 'In the day when I cried, thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul.' Your graces, Christians, are heavenly plants of God's own setting and watering; and certainly the heavenly husbandman will never suffer such plants of renown to wither, for want of heavenly sap; he will look to the strengthening, supporting, and nourishing the work of his own hand. He will cause the desires of his people to bud, and their graces to blossom, and their souls to be like a watered garden, green and flourishing: Isa. 58:11, compared with Isa. 35:6, 7.

[4.] Fourthly, When you look upon your graces, you must look upon them as an earnest of more glorious and unspeakable measures of grace and glory, that your souls shall be filled with at last.

In Eph. 1:13, 14, 'After that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.' That little light and knowledge thou hast, is an earnest to thy soul, that thou shalt at last know, even as thou art known. 1 Cor. 13:12, 'For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then shall I know, even as I am known.' Christians

know but little of that they should know, they know but little of that they might know, they know but little of that others know, they know but little of that they desire to know, they know but little of that they shall know, when they shall come to know 'even as they are known.' And yet these weak and imperfect glimpses that they have of God and heaven here, are infallible pledges of that perfect knowledge and full prospect that they shall have of God and heaven hereafter. So that that little spark of joy thou hast, is an earnest of those everlasting joys that shall rest upon thy head, when all sorrow and mourning shall fly away, Isa. 35:10, &c. And those sips of comfort thou hast now, are an earnest of thy swimming in those everlasting pleasures that be 'at God's right hand,' Ps. 16:11. The least measures of grace are an earnest of greater measures. God will not lose his earnest, though men often lose theirs. God will not despise 'the day of small things;' he will make those that bring forth but thirty fold, to bring forth sixty fold; and those that bring forth sixty fold, to bring forth a hundred fold, &c. He, his Son and Spirit, are all eminently and fully engaged to carry on the work of grace in his children's souls. Therefore do not sit down and say, My light is but dim, and my love but weak, and my joy but a spark that will quickly go out, &c. But always remember, that those weak measures of grace thou hast, are a sure evidence of greater measures that God will confer upon thee in his own time and in his own ways, Isa. 64:4, 5.

[5.] Fifthly, When you look upon your graces, be sure that you look more at the truth of your graces, than at the measure of your graces.

You must rather bring your graces to the touchstone, to try their truth, than to the balance, to weigh their measures. Many weak Christians are weighing their graces, when they should be a-trying the truth of their graces, as if the quantity and measure of grace were more considerable than the essence and nature of grace. And this is that that keeps many weak saints in a dark, doubting, questioning, and despairing condition; yea, this makes their lives a very hell. Weak saints, if you will not observe this rule, this caution, when you look upon your graces, you will go sighing and mourning to your

graves. Ah! poor hearts, you should not be more cruel to your own souls than God is. When God comes to a judgment of your spiritual estates, he doth not bring a pair of scales to weigh your graces, but a touchstone to try the truth of your graces; and so should you deal by your own souls. If you deal otherwise, you are more cruel to your souls than God would have you. And if you are resolved that in this you will not imitate the Lord, then I dare prophesy that joy and peace shall be none of your guests, and he that should comfort you will 'stand afar off,' Lam. 1:16. It is good to own and acknowledge a little grace, though it be mingled with very much corruptions; as that poor soul did, Mark 9:24, 'And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.' He had but a little little faith, and this was mixed with abundance of unbelief, and yet notwithstanding he acknowledges that little faith he had, 'Lord, I believe, help my unbelief.' His faith was so weak, that he accounts it little better than unbelief; yet, says he, 'Lord, I believe, help my unbelief.' The least measure of faith will make thee blessed here and happy hereafter.

A doctor cried out upon his dying-bed, *Credo languida fide, sed tamen fidei*; much faith will yield unto us here our heaven, and any faith, if true, will yield us heaven hereafter. So the church in Cant. 1:5, 'I am black, but comely.' She had nothing to say for her beautifulness, yet she acknowledgeth her comeliness. 'I am black, but comely.' Though she could not say she was clear, yet she could say she was comely. As she was free to confess her blackness, so she was ingenuous to acknowledge her comeliness. 'I am black, but comely.' Ah, Christians! will you deal worse with your own souls, than you deal with your children? When you go to make a judgment of your child's affections, you look more to the truth of their affections, than you do to the strength of their affections; and will you be less ingenuous and favourable to your poor souls? If he deserves to be branded, that feasts his child and starves his wife, what do you deserve, that can acknowledge the least natural good that is in a child, and yet will acknowledge none of that spiritual and heavenly good that is in your souls?

[6.] Sixthly, and lastly, When you look upon your graces, look that you do not renounce and reject your graces, seen in the light of the Spirit, as a weak and worthless evidence of your interest in Christ, and that happiness that comes by Christ.

I know in these days many cry up revelations and visions, yea, the visions of their own hearts, and make slight of the graces of Christ in the hearts of his people; yea, they look upon grace as a poor weak thing. Ah, Christians! take heed of this, else you will render null, in a very great measure, many precious scriptures,—especially the Epistles of John,—which were penned for the comfort and support of weak saints.

But that this may stick and work, be pleased to carry home with you these three things.

(1.) First, Other precious saints that are now triumphing in heaven, have pleaded their interest in God's love, and hopes of a better life, from graces inherent.

I will only point at those scriptures that speak out this truth: 1 John 3:14, 2:3, 4; Job 23:10–12; and the whole 31st chapter of Job; Ps. 119:6; Isa. 38:2, 3; 2 Cor. 1:12. All these scriptures, with many others that might be produced, do with open mouth proclaim this truth. And surely to deny the fruit growing upon the tree to be an evidence that the tree is alive, is to me as unreasonable as it is absurd. Certainly, it is one thing to judge by our graces, and another thing to trust in our graces, to make a saviour of our graces. There is a great deal of difference betwixt declaring and deserving; and if this be not granted, it will follow, that the apostle hath sent us aside to a covenant of works, when he exhorts us to 'use all diligence to make our calling and election sure,' 2 Peter 1:5–10.

(2.) Secondly, Carry home this with you, If justification and sanctification be both of them benefits of the covenant of grace, then

to evidence the one by the other, is no ways unlawful, nor no turning aside to a covenant of works:

But our justification and sanctification are both of them benefits and blessings of the covenant of grace. Ergo....

In Jer. 33:8, 'I will pardon all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me,' there is your justification; 'and I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me, there is your sanctification. And therefore to evidence the one by the other can be no ways unlawful, nor no turning aside to a covenant of works.

(3.) Thirdly, Carry home this with you, Whatever gift of God in man brings him within the compass of God's promise of eternal mercy, that gift must be an infallible evidence of salvation and happiness.

But such are those gifts mentioned in those scriptures that prove the first head.

Therefore they are infallible evidences of our salvation and eternal happiness.

I confess a man may have many great gifts, and yet none of them bring him within the compass of God's promise of eternal mercy. But I say, whatever gift of God in man brings him within the compass of God's promise of eternal mercy, that gift must be an infallible evidence of his happiness and blessedness.

For the further clearing of this, I will instance in a gift of waiting. Where this gift is, it brings a man within the compass of God's promise of eternal mercy. And had a man, as in a deserted state it often falls out, nothing under heaven to shew for his happiness, but only a waiting frame, this ought to bear him up from fainting and sinking. When the soul saith, My sun is set, my day is turned into night, my light into darkness, and my rejoicing into mourning, &c., oh, I have lost the comforting presence of God! I have lost the

quicken presence of God! I have lost the supporting presence of God! I have lost the encouraging presence of God! &c., and when I shall recover these sad losses, I know not. All that I can say is this, that God keeps me in a waiting frame, weeping and knocking at the door of mercy. Now, I say, this waiting temper brings the soul within the compass of the promise of eternal mercy. And certainly such a soul shall not miscarry. Take three promises for this.

In Isa. 40:31, 'They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.' The mercy is the waiting man's, but the waiting man must give God leave to time his mercy for him. So in Isa. 30:18, 'And therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you; and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the Lord is a God of judgment; blessed are all they that wait for him.' So in Isa. 64:4, 'For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, besides thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him.' So in Isa. 49:23, 'They shall not be ashamed that wait for me.' Men are often ashamed, that wait upon the mountains and hills. Men high and great often frustrate the expectation of waiting souls, and then they blush, and are ashamed and confounded that they have waited, and been deceived; but 'they shall not be ashamed that wait for me,' says God; I will not deceive their expectation, and after all their waiting turn them off, and say, I have no mercy for you.³ Now, I say, where this waiting temper is, which is all that many a poor soul hath to shew for everlasting happiness and blessedness, that soul shall never miscarry. That God that doth maintain and uphold the soul in this heavenly waiting frame, in the appointed season will speak life and love, mercy and glory, to the waiting soul.

And so I have done with the third use, which was to stir you up to look upon your graces with cautions.

The fourth duty is:

4. To persuade weak saints not to turn aside from the ways of God, nor from the service of God, because of any hardships or difficulties that they meet with in his ways or service.

There is a very great aptness in weak saints to take offence almost at everything, and to be discouraged by the least opposition, affliction, and temptation, and so to turn aside from the good old way. Now that no difficulties nor hardships may turn you out of the way that is called holy, consider seriously of these few things.

[1.] First, Consider this, the Lord will sweeten more and more his services to you.

He will make his work to be more and more easy to your souls; he will suit thy burden to thy back, and thy work to thy hand. O weak soul! thou shalt find that his grace will be sufficient to hold thee up and carry thee on, notwithstanding any difficulties or discouragements that be in the way. He will shed abroad that love that shall constrain thy soul, both to keep close to his service, and to delight in his service, 2 Cor. 12:9; 5:14. He will make all his services to be easy to thee; he will vouchsafe to thee that assisting grace that shall keep up thy head and heart from fainting and sinking under discouragements, as you may see in Ezek. 36:25–28, 'And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.' So in Ps. 63:8, 'My soul followeth hard after thee,' (ay, but how comes this to pass?): 'Thy right hand upholds me.' I feel thy hand under me, drawing of my soul off after thee. Oh! were not thy gracious hand under me, I should never follow hard after thee. The Lord will put under his everlasting arms, O weak Christian! and therefore though thy feet be apt to slide, yet his everlasting arms shall bear thee up. Therefore be not discouraged, do not turn aside from those paths that drop marrow and fatness, though there be a lion in the way.

[2.] Secondly, Consider this, O weak saint! that there is less danger and hardship in the ways of Christ, than there is in the ways of sin,

Satan, or the world.

That soul doth but leap out of the frying-pan into the fire, that thinks to mend himself by turning out of the way that is called holy. Oh! the horrid drudgery that is in the ways of sin, Satan, or the world. Thy worst day in Christ's service is better than thy best days, if I may so speak, in sin or Satan's service, Prov. 11:18, 19, and 21:21. Satan will pay the sinner home at last with the loss of God, Christ, heaven, and his soul for ever. 'But in the way of righteousness is life, joy, peace, honour, and in the pathway thereof there is no death,' Prov. 12:28. 'His ways are ways of pleasantness, and all his paths are peace,' Prov. 3:17.

[3.] Thirdly, Remember, O weak saint! that all those hardships that thou meetest with, do only reach the outward man.

They only reach the ignoble, the baser part of man; they meddle not, they touch not, the noble part.' With my mind I serve the law of God, though with my flesh the law of sin,' Rom. 7:22. And verse 25, 'I delight in the law of God, after the inward man.' And indeed many of the heathen have encouraged themselves in this very consideration, against the troubles and dangers of this life. All the arrows that are shot at a Christian stick in his buckler, they never reach his conscience, his soul. The raging waves beat sorely against Noah's ark, but they touched not him. The soul is of too noble a nature to be touched by troubles. Jacob's hard service under Laban, and his being nipped by the frost in winter, and scorched by the sun in summer, did only reach his outward man; his soul had high communion, and sweet fellowship with God, under all his hardships, Gen. 31:40. Ah, Christian! bear up bravely, for whatever hardships thou meetest with in the ways of God, shall only reach thy outward man; and under all these hardships thou mayest have as high and sweet communion with God, as if thou hadst never known what hardships meant, Hosea 2:14.

[4.] Fourthly, Tell me, O weak saints! have not you formerly enjoyed such sweet refreshings while you have been in the very service of God, as hath out-weighed all the troubles and hardships that your souls have met with? I know you have and you know that you have often found that scripture made good upon your hearts, Ps. 19:11, 'Moreover, by them is thy servant warned, and in keeping of them there is great reward.' Mark, he doth not say, 'for keeping of them there is great reward,' though that is a truth; but, 'in keeping of them there is great reward. While the soul is at work, God throws in the reward. Do not you remember, O weak Christians! when you have been in the service and way of God, how he hath cast in joy at one time and peace at another &c. Oh! the smiles, the kisses, the sweet discoveries that your souls have met with, whilst you have been in his ways. Ah, poor souls! do not you know that one hour's being in the bosom of Christ will make you forget all your hardships? Heaven at last will make amends for all; and the more hardships you find in the ways of God, the more sweet will heaven be to you when you come there. Oh, how sweet is a harbour after a long storm, and a sunshine day after a dark and tempestuous night, and a warm spring after a sharp winter! The miseries and difficulties that a man meets with in this world, will exceedingly sweeten the glory of that other world.

[5.] Lastly, consider, What hardships and difficulties the men of this world run through, to get the world, and undo their own souls.

They rise early, go to bed late; they go from one end of the world to another, and venture through all manner of dangers, deaths, and miseries, to gain those things that are vain, uncertain, vexing, and dangerous to their souls, Ps. 127:2, Mat. 16:16. And wilt not thou, as 'a good soldier of Christ,' 2 Tim. 2:3, 4, endure a little hardship for the honour of thy Captain, and thine own internal and eternal good? Thou art listed under Christ's colours, and therefore thou must arm thyself against all difficulties and discouragements. The number of difficulties makes the Christian's conquest the more illustrious. A gracious man should be made up all of fire, overcoming and consuming all oppositions, as fire does the stubble. All difficulties

should be but whetstones to his fortitude, as Chrysostom said of Peter.

The fifth duty is this:

5. You that are weak saints should observe how Christ keeps your wills and affections.

That man is kept indeed, whose will and affection is kept close to Christ; and that man is lost with a witness, whose will and affections are won from Christ. Weak saints are more apt to observe their own actions than their wills and affections, and this proves a snare unto them; therefore observe your affections, how they are kept; for if they are kept close to Christ, if they are kept faithful to Christ, though thy foot may slide from Christ, all is well. The apostle, Rom. 7:17, seq., observed, that his will and affections were kept close to Christ even then, when he was tyrannically captivated and carried by the prevalency of sin from Christ: 'With my mind I serve the law of God,' says he, 'and what I do I allow not; therefore it is no more I that doth it, but sin that dwelleth in me.' My will stands close to Christ, and my affections are faithful to Christ, though by the prevalency of corruption I am now and then carried captive from Christ. It is one thing to be taken up by an enemy, and another thing for a man to lay down his weapons at his enemy's feet. I am, saith the apostle, a forced man, 'I do what I hate;' I do what I never intended. The heart may be sound, when more external and inferior parts are not. The heart of a man may be sound God-ward and Christ-ward and holiness-ward, when yet there may be many defects and weaknesses in his conversation. Now, a weak Christian should be very studious to observe how his heart stands God-wards; for the man is as his heart is; if that be right with Christ, then all is well; therefore, says Solomon, Prov. 4:23, 'Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.' The Hebrew runs more fully thus: 'Before all,' or, 'Above all keepings, keep thy heart;' for out of it is the goings forth of lives.' The heart is the spring and fountain of all natural and spiritual actions, it is the *primum mobile*, the great wheel that sets all

other wheels agoing; it is the great monarch in the isle of man; therefore keep it with all custody and caution, or else bid farewell to all true joy, peace, and comfort. When the heart stands right towards Christ, Christ will pardon much, and pass by much.

If the ravished virgin in the time of the law cried out, she was guiltless; so when a poor soul, ravished by the power of corruption, and strength of Satan's temptations, cries out, 'Lord, I would not, for all the world, sin against thee, I would not distrust thee, I would not be impatient under thy afflicting hand, I would not be proud under thy merciful hand; but, Lord, these sons of Zeruiah, 2 Sam. 3:39, these corruptions, are too hard for me; they commit a rape upon me; they ravish me of my Jesus, and of my joy, and of my peace; Lord, help me, Lord deliver me!' now these weaknesses shall not be charged upon the soul. The ravished virgin under the law, if she cried out, was guiltless; and certainly God is not, nor will not be, less merciful and gracious to his people under the gospel, who are still a-crying out against their sins and Satan's assaults. Surely those sins shall never be a Christian's bane, that are now his greatest burden. It is not falling into the water, but lying in the water, that drowns. It is not falling into sin, but lying in sin, that damns. If sin and thy heart be two, Christ and thy heart are one. If thy heart be Christward, thou art so happy that nothing can make thee miserable.

6. Sixthly, Take heed of making sense and feeling a judge of your condition. Though there is nothing more dangerous, yet there is nothing more ordinary, than for weak saints to make their sense and feeling the judge of their condition. Ah, poor souls! this is dishonourable to God, and very disadvantageous to yourselves. Sense is sometimes opposite to reason, but always to faith; therefore do as those worthies did, 2 Cor. 5:8, 9, 'We walk by faith, and not by sight.' For a man to argue thus: Surely God is not my God, for I am not enlightened, I am not quickened, I am not melted, I am not raised, I am not enlarged as formerly. Oh! I have not those sweet answers and returns of prayer that once I had! Oh! I cannot find the Lord's quickening presence, nor his enlivening presence, nor his humbling

presence, nor his encouraging presence, as once I have; therefore surely my condition is not good. Oh! I am more backward to good than formerly, and more prone to evil than formerly, therefore I am afraid that God is not my God, and that the work of grace is not thorough upon me. Oh! God does not look upon me as in the days of old, nor speak to me as in the days of old, nor carry it towards me as in the days of old, and therefore I am afraid that all is naught.

Verily, if you will make sense and feeling the judge of your estate and condition, you will never have peace nor comfort all your days. Thy estate, O Christian, may be very good, when sense and feeling says it is very bad. That child cannot but be perplexed that thinks his father doth not love him, because he does not always feel him smoothing and stroking of him. Christians, you must remember that it is one thing for God to love you, and another thing for God to tell you that he loves you. Your happiness lies in the first, your comfort in the second. God hath stopped his ear against the prayers of many a precious soul whom he hath dearly loved. The best of men have at times lost that quickening, ravishing, and comforting presence of God that once they have enjoyed. And verily, he that makes sense and carnal reason a judge of his condition, shall be happy and miserable, blessed and cursed, saved and lost, many times in a day, yea, in an hour. The counsel that I would give to such a soul that is apt to set up reason in the room of faith is this, Whatsoever thy estate and condition be, never make sense and feeling the judge of it, but only the word of God. Did ever God appoint carnal reason, sense, and feeling, to be a judge of thy spiritual estate? Surely no. And why, then, wilt thou subject thy soul to their judgments? God will judge thee at last by his word: John 12:48, 'The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge you in the last day.' Carnal reason is an enemy to faith; it is still a-crossing and contradicting of faith; it fills the mind full of cavils and prejudices, full of pleas and arguments, to keep Christ and the soul asunder, and the soul and the promises asunder, and the soul and peace and comfort asunder. It will never be well with thee so long as thou art swayed by carnal reason, and reliest more upon thy five senses than the four evangelists.

Remember Job was as famous for his confidence as for his patience: 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him,' Job 13:15. As the body lives by breathing, so the soul lives by believing, &c.

The Duties of Strong Saints to the Weak Shewed in Eleven Particulars

IV. The duties of strong saints to the weak.

We come now to the last thing propounded, and that is, the duties of strong saints to those that are weak. I intend at this time to finish this point, and therefore shall not speak everything that might be spoken, being not of their minds that think a man never speaks enough that speaks not all that may be spoken to an argument. I shall, as near as I can, instance in those duties that are most weighty and worthy. And surely those souls that are serious and conscientious in the discharge of these, cannot, nor will not, be negligent in the discharge of the rest. Now; there are eleven duties that strong saints are to perform to those that are weak.

And the first is this.

[1.] Those that are strong ought to bear with the infirmities of the weak.

Rom. 15:1, 'We then that are strong,' saith the apostle, 'ought to bear with the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.' The word that is rendered to bear signifies to bear as pillars do bear the weight and burden of the house; to bear as porters do bear their burdens, or as the bones do bear the flesh, or rather as parents bear their babes in their arms.

'Bear the infirmities.' Mark, he doth not say the enormities, but the infirmities; he doth not say the wickedness, but the weakness. The strong ought to bear with the infirmities of the weak. The Lord bears with the weakness of his children. Peter is weak, and sinful through weakness; he will not let the Lord Jesus wash his feet, John 13; but the Lord Jesus knowing that this was from weakness, and not from wickedness, he passes it over, and notwithstanding his unkind refusal, he washes his feet. Thomas is very weak: 'I will not believe,' says he, 'except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side,' John 20:25. Now this Christ bears with much tenderness and sweetness, as you may see in ver. 27, 'Then said he to Thomas, Reach hither thy fingers, and behold my hands, and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless, but believing.' The Lord Jesus doth, as it were, open his wounds afresh; he overlooks his weakness. Well, saith he, seeing it is so that thou wilt not believe, I will rather bleed afresh than thou shalt die in thy unbelief. So the three disciples that Christ had singled out to watch with him one hour, Mat. 26, they shewed a great deal of weakness to be sleeping when their Lord was a-sorrowing, to be snorting when their Saviour was sighing, &c. Yet Christ bears this, and carries it sweetly towards them, and excuses their weakness: ver. 41, 'The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.' Oh how sweetly doth the Lord carry it! Every new man is two men; he hath a contrary principle in him, the flesh and the spirit. The spirit, the noble part, is willing, but the flesh, the ignoble part, is weak and wayward.

Now shall the Lord thus bear with his weak ones, and shall not strong saints bear also? Remember, strong Christians, there was a day when you were as weak as others, as apt to fall as others, as easily conquered as others; and if then the Lord carried it sweetly towards you, let the same spirit be in you towards those that are weak. It will be no grief of heart to you, if in this you act like your Lord and Saviour.

If you do not bear with the infirmities of the weak, who shall? who will? This wicked world cannot, nor will not. The world will make

them transgressors for a word, and watch for their halting; and therefore you had need to bear with them so much the more, Isa. 29:21, Jer. 20:10. The world's cruelty should stir up your compassions.

[2.] Secondly, As it is your duty to bear with them, so it is your duty to receive them into communion with you.

Rom. 14:1, 'Him that is weak in the faith receive you, but not to doubtful disputations.'

'Him that is weak in the faith receive,' that is, him that is not thoroughly persuaded of all things pertaining to Christian liberty, about things indifferent. 'Them that are weak in the faith receive;' he doth not say, 'Them that have no faith receive.' For there is no rule for the saints or churches to receive them into communion that have no faith, that have no fellowship with the Father and the Son. But 'him that is weak in the faith,' saith he, 'receive.'

The word that is here rendered receive, signifies to receive into our bosom with charitable affection. The Greek word signifies three things.

(1.) It signifies to receive weak saints as our own bowels; to receive them with the greatest tenderness, affection, pity, and compassion that possibly can be. So the same Greek word is used in the Epistle of Philemon, ver. 12, where Paul entreats Philemon 'to receive Onesimus as his own bowels.' The word there is the same word with this in the text. So must the strong receive the weak, even as their own bowels; receive them with the greatest affection, with the greatest compassion that possibly can be.

(2.) The word signifies patiently to bear with the weak when they are received; and not to take them into your bosom, into your communion one day and cast them out the next, but patiently to bear with them, as well as affectionately to receive them.

It was a heathen prince [Xerxes] that crowned his steersman in the morning, and beheaded him in the evening of the same day, &c.

(3.) The word signifies by fatherly instruction to seek to restore him. It is not the will of Christ that weak saints should be rejected, or that the door of entrance should be shut against them, till they are stronger, or till they have attained to such heights and such perfections of grace and divine enjoyments of God as others have attained. Remember this, as the weakest faith, if true, gives the soul a right to all that that internal and eternal worth that is in Christ: so the weakest faith, if true, gives a man a real right unto all the external privileges and favours that come by Christ. In Rom. 15:7, 'Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God.' This is the standing rule for all the saints and churches in the world to go by. It is not their wills, but these two scriptures last cited, that are the standing rules by which all the churches on earth are to go by, in the admission of members.

'Them that are weak in the faith' are to be received by you, because the Lord Jesus hath received them. Christ does not receive the strong to the glory of God, and cast off the weak. No; the Lord Jesus gathers the weak into his bosom, and tenderly dandles them upon his knee. He receives the weak to glory, as well as the strong; therefore saith the apostle, 'As the Lord hath received them, so do you.'

Bucer rejected none in whom he saw aliquid Christi, anything of Christ, but gave them the right hand of fellowship. Such persons and churches can never answer it to Christ, that keep the door of admission shut against souls truly gracious, though they are but weak in grace, though they have [not] attained to such a measure of light, or degrees of love, or to such perfections in holiness, as such and such have done. No; the standing rule is, 'Him whom the Lord hath received, receive.'

If weak saints shall desire communion, and be willing to walk in the ways that Jesus Christ hath appointed his saints to walk in, the

churches ought to give them the right hand of fellowship. And that is the second duty that lies upon the strong, viz., that they are to receive the weak into communion and fellowship with them, and that with the greatest affection, love, and compassion, that possibly can be.

A third duty that lies upon strong saints to the weak is this:

[3.] They must look more upon their graces than upon their weaknesses.

It is a sad thing when they shall borrow spectacles to behold their weak brethren's weaknesses, and refuse looking-glasses wherein they may see their weak brethren's graces. Saints that are strong ought to look more upon the virtues of weak saints than upon their miscarriages. When Christ saw but a little moral good in the young man, the text saith that 'He looked upon him, and loved him,' Mark 10:12. And shall not we look upon a weak saint and love him, when we see the love of God and the image of God upon him. Shall moral virtue take the eye, and draw the love of Christ? And shall not supernatural grace in a weak Christian take our eyes and draw our hearts? Shall we eye a little gold in much earth? And shall we not eye a little grace where there is much corruption?

It is an unsufferable weakness, I had almost said, for persons to suffer their affections to run out only to such that are of their judgments, and to love, prize, and value persons according as they suit their opinions, and not according to what of the image of God shines in them. But if this be not far from a gospel spirit, and from that God-like spirit that should be in saints, I know nothing. It speaks out much of Christ within, to own where Christ owns, and love where Christ loves, and embrace where Christ embraces, and to be one with every one that is practically one with the Lord Jesus. Christ cannot but take it very unkindly at our hands, if we should disown any upon whom he hath set his royal stamp. And I bless his grace that hath drawn out my desires and endeavours to love, own, and honour the people of Christ, according to what of the

appearances of Christ I see in them. And, if I am not much mistaken, this is the highway to that joy, peace, and comfort, the want of which makes a man's life a hell. God looks more on the bright side of the cloud, than he doth on the dark, and so should we.

It was the honour of Vespasian that 'he was more ready to conceal the vices of his friends, than their virtues.' Surely there is much of God in that soul, that is upon a gospel account more careful and skilful to conceal the vices of weak saints, than their virtues. Many in these days do justly incur the censure which that sour philosopher passed upon grammarians, that 'they were better acquainted with the evil of Ulysses, than with their own.'

[4.] Fourthly, It is the duty of strong saints, in things indifferent to deny themselves, to please the weak.

1 Cor. 8:13, 'Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.' Strong saints must stand unchangeably resolved neither to give offence carelessly, nor to take offence causelessly. Says the apostle, I will not stand to dispute my Christian liberty, but will rather lay it down at my weak brother's feet, than I will by the use of it offend one for whom Christ hath died. 1 Cor. 9:22, 'To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak. I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.' That is, I condescended and went to the uttermost that possibly I could, without sin, to win and gain upon the weak; I displeased myself in things that were of an indifferent nature, to please them. Thou oughtest not, O strong Christian, by the use of thy Christian liberty, to put a stumbling-block before thy weak brother. Rom. 15:2, 'We then that are strong, ought to bear with the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification.' He doth not say, Let every one of us please the lust of his neighbour, but let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification. Let us in things of an indifferent nature so yield as to please our neighbour. There were some thought that they might

observe days; others thought they might not. Some thought they might eat meat; others thought they might only eat herbs. Why, saith the apostle, in these things that are of an indifferent nature, I will rather displease and deny myself, to profit my neighbour, than I will, by the use of my liberty, occasion my neighbour to offend. Ay, this is true Christian love indeed, for a man to cross himself to please his neighbour, so it may be for his soul's edification. But this heavenly love is driven almost out of the world, which causeth men to dislike those things in others which they flatter in themselves.

A fifth duty incumbent upon strong saints is,

[5.] To support the weak.

1 Thes. 5:14, 'Support the weak, be patient towards all men.' Look, what the crutch is to the lame, and the beam of the house is to the ruined house, that ought strong saints to be to the weak. Strong saints are to be crutches to the weak, they are to be, as it were, beams to bear up the weak. Strong saints are to set to their shoulder, to shore up the weak by their counsels, prayers, tears, and examples. Strong saints must not deal by the weak, as the herd of deer do by the wounded deer; they forsake it and push it away. Oh no! When a poor weak saint is wounded by a temptation, or by the power of some corruption, then they that are strong ought to succour and support such an one, lest he be swallowed up of sorrow. When you that are strong see a weak saint staggering and reeling under a temptation or affliction, Oh, know it is then your duty to put both your hands underneath, to support him that he faint not, that he miscarries not in such an hour. Isa. 35:3, 'Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees.'

'Strengthen the weak hands,' that is, hands that hang down; 'and confirm the feeble knees,' that is, such knees that by reason of feebleness are ready to fall. Strengthen such, that is, encourage them, by casting in a promise, by casting in thy experiences, or by casting in the experiences of other saints, that so they may be supported. It

may be his case was once thine: if so, then tell him what promises did support thee, what discoveries of God did uphold thee; tell him what tastes, what sights, and what in-comes thou hadst, and how bravely thou didst bear up, by the strength of his everlasting arms that were under thee, &c.

A sixth duty that is incumbent upon strong saints is,

[6.] To take heed of making weak saints halt and go lame in a way of holiness, or of keeping them off from the ways of God, or of turning them out of the ways of God.

That is the meaning of that scripture, as I conceive, Luke 17:2. And of that, Mat. 18:10, 'Take heed that ye offend not one of these little ones, for their angels do always behold the face of my Father.' You are apt to slight them because they are weak in grace and holiness, and so you are apt to cause them to halt; but take heed of this, they have glistering courtiers that do attend them; therefore take heed that you do not offend them, for their angels, as so many champions, stand ready to right them and fight for them. A man were better offend and anger all the devils in hell, and all the witches in the world, than to anger and offend the least of Christ's little ones. If Cain do but lower upon Abel, God will arraign him for it: 'Why is thy countenance cast down?' Gen. 4:6. If Miriam do but mutter against Moses, God will spit in her face for it, Num. 12:14. That is a very dreadful word, Mat. 18:6, 'Take heed how ye offend one of these little ones;' you make nothing of it, but saith Christ, take heed, 'for it were better that a millstone,' a huge millstone, as the Greek word signifies, such a one as an ass can but turn about; (this kind of punishment the greatest malefactors among the Jews were put to in those days, saith Jerome), 'and cast into the middle of the sea;' so it is word for word in the Greek, the middle being deepest and furthest off from the shore, rendering his estate most miserable and irrecoverable.

[7.] Seventhly, It is the duty of strong saints to suit all things to the capacity of the weak.

To suit all their prayers and all their discourses to the capacity of the weak. Paul was good at this: 'To the weak became I as weak.' Paul was a man as strong in natural and acquired parts as any living, and he knew how to word it, and to carry it in as lofty strains, as any that breathed, yet who more plain in his preaching than Paul? It hath many a time made my heart sad, to think how those men will answer it in the day of Christ, that affect lofty strains, high notions, and cloudy expressions, that make the plain things of the gospel dark and obscure.

Many preachers in our days are like Heraclitus, who was called 'the dark doctor;' they affect sublime notions, obscure expressions, uncouth phrases, making plain truths difficult, and easy truths hard. 'They darken counsel with words without knowledge,' Job 38:2. Studied expressions and high notions in a sermon, are like Asahel's carcase in the way, that did only stop men and make them gaze, but did no ways profit them or better them. It is better to present truth in her native plainness, than to hang her ears with counterfeit pearls.

That is a remarkable scripture, 1 Cor. 3:1, 2, 'And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat; for hitherto ye were not able to bear it; neither yet now are ye able.' The apostle did not soar aloft in the clouds, and express the mysteries of the gospel in such a dark obscure way as that poor creatures could not be able to pick out the mind of God in it. No; but he suited all his discourses to their capacities; and so must you.

[8.] Eighthly, It is your duty to labour to strengthen weak saints against sin, and to draw them to holiness argumentatively.

When a strong saint comes to deal with one that is weak, and would strengthen him against sin, he must do it argumentatively; and when he would draw to holiness, he must do it argumentatively. 1 John 2:1, 2, compared with chap. 1:7, 9, 'My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not.' What things were those he wrote? Mark,

chap. 1:7, 'If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth from all sins.' Here he fenceth them against sin, by one of the strongest and choicest arguments that the whole book of God affords, by an argument that is drawn from the soul's communion with God. And then in verse 9, 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father.' Here the apostle labours to strengthen weak saints argumentatively, even by the strongest arguments that the whole book of God affords. So verses 12, 13, 'I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you, for his name's sake,' &c. So in verse 18, 'Little children, it is the last times, and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists, whereby we know that it is the last time.' So verse 28, 'And now, little children, abide in him, that when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming. If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doth righteousness is born of him.' You see in all these scriptures how the apostle labours to strengthen weak saints in a way of holiness, and to fence them against ways of wickedness argumentatively, and so must you; this being the ready way to convince them, and to make a conquest upon them, &c.

The ninth duty that lies upon strong saints is,

[9.] To cast a mantle over the infirmities of the weak.

Now there is a three-fold mantle that should be cast over the infirmities of the weak. There is a mantle of wisdom, a mantle of faithfulness, and a mantle of compassion, which is to be cast over all the infirmities of weak saints.

First, Strong saints are to cast a mantle of wisdom over the infirmities of weak saints. They are not to present their sins in that ugliness, and with such aggravations, as may terrify, as may sink, as

may make a weak saint to despair, or may drive him from the mercy-seat, or as may keep him and Christ asunder, or as may unfit him for the discharge of religious duties. It is more a weakness than a virtue in strong Christians, when a weak saint is fallen, to aggravate his fall to the uttermost, and to present his sins in such a dreadful dress, as shall amaze him, &c. It often proves very prejudicial and dangerous to weak saints, when their infirmities are aggravated beyond Scripture grounds, and beyond what they are able to bear. He that shall lay the same strength to the rubbing of an earthen dish, as he does to the rubbing of a pewter platter, instead of clearing it, shall surely break it all to pieces. The application is easy, &c.

Secondly, There is a mantle of faithfulness that is to be cast over the infirmities of weak saints. A man should never discover the infirmities of a weak saint, especially to such that have neither skill nor will to heal and bury them. The world will but blaspheme and blaze them abroad, to the dishonour of God, to the reproach of religion, and to the grief and scandal of the weak, &c. They will with Ham rather call upon others to scoff at them, than bring a mantle to cover them, &c. Ham was cursed for that he did discover his father's nakedness to his brethren, when it was in his power to have covered it. He saw it, and might have drawn a curtain over it, but would not; and for this, by a spirit of prophecy, he was cursed by his father, Gen. 9:22. This age is full of such monsters, that rejoice to blaze abroad the infirmities of the saints, and these certainly justice hath or will curse.

Thirdly, There is a mantle of compassion that must be cast over the weaknesses and infirmities of weak saints. When a weak man comes to see his sin, and the Lord gives him to lie down in the dust, and to take shame and confusion to himself, that he hath dishonoured God, and caused Christ to bleed afresh, and grieved the Spirit, &c.; oh now thou must draw a covering, and cast a mantle of love and compassion over his soul, that he may not be swallowed up with sorrow. Now thou must confirm thy love to him, and carry it with as great tenderness and sweetness after his fall, as if he had never fallen. This

the apostle presses, 2 Cor. 2:7, 'Love,' says the wise man, 'covereth all sin.' Love's mantle is very large. Love claps a plaster upon every sore; love hath two hands, and makes use of both, to hide the scars of weak saints. Christ, O strong saints, casts the mantle of his righteousness over your weaknesses, and will not you cast the mantle of love over your brother's infirmities?

[10.] Tenthly, It is the duty of strong saints to sympathize with the weak; to rejoice with them when they rejoice, and to mourn with them when they mourn.

2 Cor. 11:29, 'Who is weak, and I am weak? who is σκανδαλίζεται, scandalized, offended, and I πυροῦμαι, am not on fire, burn not?

Thuanus reports of Lodovicus Marsacus, a knight of France, when he was led with other martyrs that were bound with cords, going to execution, and he for his dignity was not bound, he cried, Give me my chains too, let me be a knight of the same order.

It should be between a strong saint and a weak, as it is between two lute-strings, that are tuned one to another; no sooner one is struck, but the other trembles; no sooner should a weak saint be struck, but the strong should tremble. 'Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them,' Heb. 13:3.

The Romans punished one that was seen looking out at his window with a crown of roses on his head, in a time of public calamity; and will not God punish those that do not sympathize with Joseph in his afflictions? Surely he will. Amos 6:1–14.

[11.] Lastly, It is the duty of the strong to give to the weak the honour that is due unto them.

1 Peter 3:7: They have the same name, the same baptism, the same profession, the same faith, the same hope, the same Christ, the same promises, the same dignity, and the same glory with you; therefore speak honourably of them, and carry it honourably towards them.

Let not them be under your feet, that Christ has laid near his heart, &c. And so much for this second doctrine.

We come now to the next words.

Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, &c.—Eph. 3:8.

We shall speak now to the word grace. The Greek word χάρις, that is here rendered grace, hath a twofold signification.

First, Sometimes it is taken for the gracious favour and good-will of God, whereby he is pleased of his own free love to accept and own poor sinners in the Son of his love, for his own. This is called the first grace, because it is the fountain of all other graces, and the spring from whence they flow. And it is therefore called grace, because it makes a man gracious with God.

Secondly, This word χάρις, that is here rendered grace, is taken for the gifts of grace, and they are of two sorts, special or common. Common grace is that which hypocrites may have, and in which they may excel and go beyond the choicest saints, as in a gift of knowledge, a gift of utterance, a gift of prayer, a gift of tongues, &c. A man may have these, and many other excellent gifts, and yet miscarry, yea, fall as low as hell; witness Judas, Demas, the scribes and pharisees, &c., Mat. 7:21–25. Secondly, There is special grace, as faith, love, humility, meekness, which the apostle reckons up, Gal. 5:22, 23. Now here by grace you may either understand the gracious favour of God, 'Unto me who am less than the least of all saints is this choice favour given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,' or else you may take it for the gifts of grace, both saving and common, which the apostle had given him, in order to the discharge of his ministerial office, which, by the special favour of God, he was advanced to.

The word grace being thus opened, we may from thence observe, first,

THE THIRD DOCTRINE

That the Lord gives the best gifts to his best beloved ones

I. That the Lord gives his best gifts to his best beloved ones.

'Unto me,' saith the apostle, 'who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given.'

For the opening and clearing of this point, I shall premise these four things.

I. To shew you what those best gifts are that God bestows upon his best beloved ones.

II. I shall shew you the manner of his giving the best gifts to his beloved ones, or the difference there is between Christ's giving and the world's giving.

III. And then the excellency of those gifts that Christ gives, above all other gifts that the world gives.

IV. And lastly, The reason why Christ gives his best gifts to his best beloved ones.

For the first, What are those best gifts that Christ bestows upon his best beloved ones?

I shall not instance in those common gifts that they have in common with others, but rather shew unto you those special gifts that he bestows upon them; and of those I shall single out them that are most choice, and that carry most in them of the glory, favour, and 'good will of him that dwelt in the bush.'

And the first is this:

What Those Best Gifts are that Christ Bestows Upon His Dearest Ones

Shewed in Ten Particulars

[1.] He gives light to his beloved ones; and 'light is a pleasant thing to behold,' as the wise man speaks, Eccles. 11:7. He gives spiritual light, which is a mercy of mercies. Eph. 5:14, 'Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.' So John 1:7–9, 'He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, that lighteneth every man that cometh into the world.' He gives that light whereby his people are enabled to see sin to be the greatest evil, and himself to be the chiefest good. He gives that light that melts the soul, that humbles the soul, that warms the soul, that quickens the soul, that quiets the soul, and that glads the soul. Man is not born with heavenly light in his heart, as he is born with a tongue in his mouth. Till Christ comes and sets up a light in the soul, the soul lives in darkness, and lies in darkness, yea, is darkness in the very abstract: Eph. 5:8, 'Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord.' Saints are always in the sunshine, therefore they should be like a crystal glass, with a light in the midst, which appeareth in every part.

A Christian should be like the lamp in the story, that never went out. Were it not for the sun, it would be perpetual night in the world, notwithstanding all starlight, and torchlight, and moonlight. It is not the torchlight of natural parts and creature-comforts, nor the starlight of civil honesty and common gifts, nor yet the moonlight of temporary faith and formal profession, that can make day in the soul, till the Sun of righteousness rise and shine upon it. And that is the first thing he gives, light.

Now, the second thing he gives is,

[2.] Repentance. Repentance is not a flower that grows in nature's garden. Acts 5:31, 'Him hath God the Father exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.' So in 2 Tim. 2:25, 'The servant of the Lord must in meekness instruct those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.' By these scriptures, it is clear that repentance is no flower that grows in nature's garden, though Arminians teach and print, that if men will put out their power and their strength they may repent, &c. But several that have been of this opinion, have experienced the falseness of it when it hath been too late: 'The Ethiopian cannot change his skin, nor the leopard his spots,' Jer. 13:23. And certainly, if there were such a power in man to repent, as some would make the world believe, man would never miscarry everlastingly for his not repenting. Oh, is it good dwelling with everlasting burnings, with a burning fire? Is it good being for ever shut out from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power? Certainly, if there were such a power in vain man to repent, no man would go to hell for not repenting; and many that have boasted much of their abilities to repent, when they have been upon a dying bed, would have given a thousand worlds, were there so many in their power, that they could but repent.

Luther confesses, that before his conversion, he met not with a more displeasing word in all the study of divinity than this word repent; but after the Lord had converted him, and manifested himself to him, he delighted in this work; then he could sorrow for his sins, and rejoice in his sorrow.

Repentance strips the soul stark naked of all the garments of the old Adam, and leaves not so much as the shirt behind. In this rotten building there is not one stone left upon another. As the flood drowned Noah's own friends and servants, as well as strangers, so true repentance drowns all darling lusts. True repentance is the cutting off the right hand, and the pulling out of the right eye; and is this such an easy thing? Surely no. True repentance is a gift that is from above, and if the Lord doth not give it, man will eternally perish

for the want of it. You may read much more of this in my treatise called Heaven on Earth.

[3.] Thirdly, Christ gives his Spirit. Rom. 5:5, 'The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us.' So in 1 John 3:24, 'And hereby we know that he abideth in us.' How? 'By the Spirit which he hath given us.' So in chap. 4:13. The Spirit that the Lord Christ gives is an enlightening Spirit, it is the candle of the Lord set up in the hearts of the saints, to guide them in the way everlasting. It is a sanctifying Spirit, a Spirit of burning, Isa. 4:4. He is a fire to enlighten the soul, and a fire to enliven the soul, and a fire to warm the soul, &c. Whatsoever is of the Spirit is spirit. It is nimble, and lively, and active, and full of life and motion, as the Spirit is. A man without the Spirit of the Lord is a dull, dromish⁴ creature. As the Latins call a dull, dromish man, a fireless man, so we may call a man that hath not the Spirit, a spiritless man. The Spirit that Christ gives is a sealing Spirit, Eph. 1:13; and a leading Spirit, Rom. 8. He leads from sin, he leads from wrath, he leads from the curse; he leads to God, he leads to Christ, he leads to the promises, he leads to glory, &c.

Again, this Spirit is a comforting Spirit, John 4:16; and a pleading Spirit, Rom. 8:26. Every Christian has three advocates pleading for him: the first is, that divine love that is in the bosom of the Father; the second is, the Lord Jesus that is at the right hand of the Father; and the third is, the Holy Spirit that is one with the Father.

[4.] Fourthly, He gives his blood. The blood of Christ is a gift of Christ to his beloved ones. Mat 20:28, 'The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.' So in John 10:11, 'I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep.' His blood was the purest blood, his human nature being most pure. His blood was the noblest blood, and therefore called in Scripture, 'the blood of God,' Rom. 3:25 and Acts 20:28, by reason of the conjunction of the divine nature with the human. It was his life-blood, his heart-blood that he gave. It was not

the blood of his finger, but the blood of his heart; it was precious blood.

Three things are called precious in the Scripture.

(1.) Faith is called precious faith, 2 Peter 1:1.

(2.) The promises are called precious promises, ver. 4.

(3.) The blood of Christ is called precious blood, 1 Peter 1:19.

All your precious mercies swim to you in precious blood, as you may see by comparing the scriptures in the margin together.

It was an excellent saying of Luther, speaking of this blood of Christ, *Una guttula plus valet quam cœlum et terra*, one little drop of this blood, saith he, is more worth than heaven and earth. Your pardon swims to you in blood; your peace swims to you in blood; your reconciliation is made by blood; your acceptation is wrought by blood, &c. *Sanguis Christi clavis cœli*, Christ's blood is heaven's key; Christ's blood is a preservative against the greatest evils; Christ's blood, as Pliny saith of polium, is a preservative against serpents, &c.

[5.] Fifthly, Christ gives pardon of sin. And do you know what a mercy that is? Ask the troubled soul, ask the soul that knows what it is to lie under the wrath of the Almighty, and he will tell you that pardon of sin is a gift more worth than a thousand worlds. Now that pardon of sin is a gift of God, you may see in Acts 5:31, 'Him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.' So in Acts 26:18. Ah, souls! of all mercies pardoning mercy is the most necessary mercy. I may go to heaven without honours, and without riches, and without the smiles of creatures; but I cannot go to heaven without pardoning mercy. A man may be great and graceless, he may be rich and miserable, he may be honourable and damnable, &c., but he cannot be a pardoned soul, but he must be a very blessed soul, Ps. 32:1, 2. It entitles souls to all blessedness, it puts the royal crown upon their

heads. Of all mercies pardoning mercy is the most sweetening mercy; it is a choice jewel, and swims to the soul in blood, Heb. 9:22. It is a mercy that makes all other mercies to look like mercies, and taste like mercies, and work like mercies; and the want of it takes off the glory and beauty of all a man's mercies, and makes his life a very hell. Pardon of sin is a voluminous mercy, a mercy that has many, many precious mercies in the womb of it. You may well call it Gad, Gen. 30:11, for it ushers in troops of mercy. When you can number the sands of the sea, and tell the stars of heaven, then, and not till then, shall you be able to recount the mercies that attend pardoning mercy. He that has this mercy cannot be miserable, and he that wants it cannot be happy: get this and get all, miss this and miss all. This is a gift conferred only upon Christ's favourites: 'Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee,' Mat. 9:2. No mercy will make a man everlastingly merry below pardoning mercy. He hath no reason to be sad that hath his pardon in his bosom, nor he hath no reason to be glad, who is upon the last step of the ladder, ready to be turned off without his pardon. And this is the fifth gift that Christ gives to his, viz. pardon of sin.

[6.] Sixthly, Christ gives precious promises: 2 Peter 1:4, 'Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises,' &c. The promises are a precious book; every leaf drops myrrh and mercy. The promises are golden vessels, that are laden with the choicest jewels that heaven can afford or the soul desire. All our spiritual, temporal, and eternal good is to be found in the belly of the promises. Promises are big-bellied mercies. There is nothing you can truly call a mercy but you will find it in the belly of a promise. Under all changes they are the comfort, support, and relief of the soul: Ps. 119:49, 50, 'Remember thy word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope. This is my comfort in my affliction, for thy word hath quickened me.' If the soul groan under the power of sin, then that promise relieves it: Rom. 6:14, 'For sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace.' If the soul groan under the guilt of sin, then that promise relieves it: Jer. 33:8, 'I will pardon all their iniquities whereby they have sinned against me,' &c.

And that promise, Isa. 43:25, 'I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for my own sake, and will not remember thy sins. I, even I, am he, blotting out thy transgression;' 'I, even I,' whom thou hast offended; 'I, even I,' whom thou hast provoked; 'I, even I,' whose glorious name thou hast profaned; 'I, even I,' whose righteous law thou hast violated; 'I, even I,' whose holy covenant thou hast transgressed; 'I, even I,' whose mercies thou hast despised; 'I, even I, whose chastisements thou hast slighted,' will blot out thy transgressions for my own sake.'

'I, even I,' is a passionate and emphatical expression. God's goodness runs over to sinful creatures; and 'where sin abounds, there grace doth superabound.'

If the creditor himself blot out the debt, and cross the book, surely it shall never be remembered more. Our sins are debts, which God, who hath the power of life and death, of heaven and hell, of condemning and absolving, hath engaged himself to blot out as a thick cloud: Isa. 44:22, 'I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins.' An under-officer may blot out an indictment, and yet the offender may be never the better for it; but if the king, who is the supreme judge, shall blot it out, then the offender is safe. The application is easy. If the soul be deserted, then that promise relieves it: Micah 7:18, 19, 'He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us,' &c. If the soul be sliding and ready to fall, then that promise supports and upholds it: Ps. 37:24, 'Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand;' or, as the Hebrew hath it, 'the Lord upholding him with his hand;' Deut. 33:26, 27. The Hebrew participle $\gamma\mu\sigma$ notes a continued act of God. God hath still his everlasting arms under his people, so that they shall never totally nor finally fall. And the root samach, from whence this word is derived, signifies to sustain or uphold, as the tender mother doth the little babe. The safety and security of the child lies not so much in the child's hanging about the mother's neck, as in the mother's holding it fast in her arms. So our safety and security lies not so much in our weak holding upon Christ, but in

Christ's holding of us fast in his everlasting arms. This is our glory and our safety, that Christ's 'left hand is always under us, and his right hand does always embrace us,' Cant. 2:6. If the soul be forsaken by friends, then that promise relieves it, Heb. 13:5, 6, 'I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.'

There are five negatives in the Greek to assure God's people that he will never forsake them. Five times this precious promise is renewed in the Scripture, that we might have the stronger consolation, and that we may press and oppress it till we have gotten all the sweetness out of it. And verily many precious souls have sucked much sweetness out of the breasts of this promise, when their nearest relations and their dearest friends have forsaken them and forgotten them. God loves that his people should put his bonds, his promises in suit; and he that doth shall find God near him, though friends should leave him, and the world be in arms against him, &c. If the soul be tempted, then that word of promise relieves it, 1 Cor. 10:13, 'But God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able,' &c. The promises are a Christian's magna charta; they are his chief evidences for heaven. Men highly prize their charters and privileges, and carefully keep the conveyances and assurances of their lands. Oh! how should saints then treasure up and keep these precious promises which the Lord hath given them, and which are to them, instead of all assurances, for their protection, maintenance, deliverance, comfort, and everlasting happiness! And thus much for the sixth gift the Lord gives, viz. the promises.

[7.] Seventhly, The Lord gives grace: 'Of his fulness we all have received grace for grace,' John 1:16. The Lord gives that grace, the least dram of which is more worth than heaven and earth.

It was an excellent saying of one of the ancients [Jerome], 'I had rather have St Paul's coat with his heavenly graces, than the purple robes of kings with their kingdoms.' Grace is that which truly ennobles the soul; it raises the soul up to converse with the highest and with the noblest objects, and every man is as the objects are with

which he converses. If the objects are noble, the man is so; if the objects are base with which a man converses, the man is base. A man may better know what he is by eyeing the objects with which his soul does mostly converse, than by observing his most glorious and pompous services: 'The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour,' Prov. 12:26. Abraham was a prince of God among the Hittites, Gen. 23:6. The Jews say that those seventy persons that went down with Jacob into Egypt were more worth than the seventy nations of the world. Indeed, it is only grace that makes a man truly noble.

When one heard the king of Persia styled 'the Great King,' saith he, I acknowledge none more excellent than myself, unless more righteous; nor none greater, unless better. Grace, as it is bred by the noblest means, so it is preserved and maintained in the soul by the choicest means, viz. union and communion with God, &c.; grace is glory in the bud, and glory is grace at the full; grace makes a man all glorious within and without; grace is a ring of gold, and Christ is the sparkling diamond in that ring.

[8.] Eighthly, He gives peace: John 14:27, 'My peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you.' Christ gives peace with God, and peace with conscience, and peace with the creatures. Dulce nomen pacis, the very name of peace is sweet, Rom. 5:1, Hosea 2:21–23, Job 5:19–25.

The Hebrews, when they wished all happiness to any, used but this one word, 'Peace be with you;' and the ancients were wont to paint peace in the form of a woman, with a horn of plenty in her hand, all blessings. Ask a soul that hath been under terrors of conscience, and he will tell you, that of all gifts, inward peace is the most princely gift, &c.

[9.] Ninthly, He gives glory: John 10:28, 'My sheep hear my voice, and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life.' Rom. 6:23, 'The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life.'

Now the glory that Christ gives is real glory: 2 Tim. 4:7, 8, 'Henceforth is laid up for me a crown of glory.' The Greek word ἀποκείται signifies two things: 1, a designation of a crown; 2, a reservation and safe keeping of it for him until the coronation day.

Again, the glory he gives the soul is soul-filling glory; glory that fills the understanding with the clearest and the brightest light; glory that fills the will with the greatest freedom; glory that fills the affections with the choicest joy and delight, Ps. 16:11, and 17:15, 2 Cor. 12:1–6.

Again, the glory he gives is incomparable glory: Rom. 8:18, 'I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us.' The Greek word λογίζομαι, that is here rendered I reckon, is not a word of doubting, but a word of concluding. I conclude by arguments, that our present sufferings are not worthy to be compared to that illustrious and glorious glory 'that is ready to be revealed on us,' as it is in the Greek. I have cast up the account, saith the apostle, as wise merchants use to cast up theirs, and I find in the balancing of the account, that there is nothing to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed.

Again, the glory he gives is unmoveable glory. All worldly glory is tottering and shaking. Princes' crowns hang now but upon one side of their heads. 'The Lord of hosts hath purposed it to stain' (or pollute) 'the pride of all glory, and to bring into contempt all the honourable of the earth,' Isa. 23:9. 'The Lord hath purposed it,' or as it is in the Hebrew [יעצה], 'The Lord hath consulted it; and the counsel of the Lord shall stand.' It is agreed upon in heaven, that the pride of all glory shall be stained and polluted, or thrown down, as some polluted filthy thing that is trampled under foot. Oh! but this glory that Christ gives is unmoveable glory, it is permanent glory; it is glory that cannot be changed, stained, or polluted, Heb. 12:28.

Again, the glory he gives is suited glory. It is glory that is suited to the backs, hearts, hopes, desires, and capacities of his servants, John 14:1–3.

Again, the glory he gives is never-fading glory; it is glory that fadeth not away. When a man hath been in heaven as many millions of years as there be stars in heaven, his glory shall be as fresh and as green as it was at his first entrance into heaven. All worldly glory is like the flowers of the field; but the glory that Christ gives is lasting and durable like himself, &c.

[10.] Tenthly, and lastly, He gives himself, and verily this is a gift of gifts indeed, John 6:51, 63; so in Eph. 5:20. A saint may say, Methinks I hear Christ saying to me as Æschines said to Socrates, 'Others,' said he, 'give thee silver and gold, and precious jewels, but I give thee myself.' So the soul may say, One friend gives me bread, and another gives me clothes, and another gives me house-room, &c. Oh! but thou givest me thyself. Christ put into the balance will outweigh all other gifts that he bestows upon the sons of men. Christ is the richest gift. Oh! there are unsearchable riches in Christ, as hereafter I shall shew you. He is the choicest and the rarest gift; he is a gift given but to a few. Rich and rare jewels are not commonly, but more rarely given; so is Christ. Though Israel be 'as the sand of the sea, yet a remnant only shall be saved,' Rom. 9:17. 'A garden enclosed, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed, is my well-beloved,' Cant. 4:12. 'Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's pleasure to give you a kingdom,' Luke 12:32. Christ is a drawing gift, a gift that draws all other gifts along with him. 'If he have given us his Son, how shall he not with him freely give us all things?' Rom. 8:32. Christ is a drawing gift. When God the Father hath cast this incomparable jewel into a man's bosom, he cannot deny him anything. Such a soul may well say, Hath he given me a Christ? and will he not give me a crumb? Hath he given me his Son, which is the greatest mercy? and will he stand with me for lesser mercies? Surely no. In a word, Christ is of all gifts the sweetest gift. As the tree, Exod. 15:25, sweetened the bitter waters, so this gift, the Lord Jesus, of whom that tree was a type, sweetens all other gifts that are bestowed upon the sons of men. He turns every bitter into sweet, and makes every sweet more sweet.

And so I come to the second thing propounded, and that was,

The Difference Between Christ's Giving and the World's Giving

shewed in six things

II. The difference between Christ's giving and the world's giving.

And this I shall shew you in the following particulars:

[1.] First, The world gives, but they give grudgingly; but when Christ gives, he gives freely: Isa. 55:1, 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, let him come, and buy wine and milk without money, and without price.' So in Rev. 21:6, 'I will give to every one that is athirst of the water of life freely.' To do good, and not to do it freely, handsomely, is nothing. A benefit given with grudging is a stony loaf, only taken for necessity.

[2.] Secondly, The world they give, but they give poorly, niggardly, but Christ gives plenteously, richly: 1 Tim. 6:17, 'Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.'

When Cæsar gave one a great reward, 'This,' saith he, 'is too great a gift for me to receive;' 'But,' says Cæsar, 'it is not too great a gift for me to give.' So, though the least gift that Christ gives, in some sense, is too much for us to receive, yet the greatest gifts are not too great for Christ to give.

It is said of Araunah, that noble Jebusite, renowned for his bounty, that 'he had but a subject's purse, but a king's heart.' But the Lord Jesus hath not only a king's heart, but he hath also a king's purse, and gives accordingly.

[3.] Thirdly, The world give, but they give tauntingly, they give upbraidingly; they hit men in the teeth with the gifts they give. Ay, but the Lord Jesus Christ gives, and he gives willingly, he upbraids none with the gifts he gives: James 1:5, 'If any man lack wisdom, let him ask it of God, that gives liberally, and upbraideth no man.' Where Christ gives, there he won't upbraid, neither with present failings nor former infirmities. Christ is not wont to reproach those to whom he gives the best gifts; he will not cast it in their dish, that he hath been thus and thus kind to them, but will always 'rejoice over them to do them good.' But the world gives, and then reproaches the receiver for receiving, and this turns all into gall and wormwood, &c.

[4.] Fourthly, The world gives, but they give more rarely, but Christ gives, and he gives frequently. He is every day, every hour, yea, every moment, a-giving of royal favours to his people. Here is peace for you that are in trouble, says Christ; and here is pardon for you that groan under guilt, says Christ; and here is comfort for you that are mourners in Zion, says Christ, &c. His hand is ever in his purse, he is still a-scattering pearls of glory, ay, the very jewels of his crown, among the beloved of his soul.

[5.] Fifthly, The world gives, but they give the worst, and keep the best; ay, but Christ gives the best, he gives the best of the best. He gives the best joy; the best comfort, the best peace, the best love, the best assistance, &c., he gives adoption, remission, justification, sanctification, acceptation, reconciliation, and glorification, &c. He gives the best; as that king in Plutarch said of a groat, 'it is no kingly gift;' and of a talent, 'it is no base bribe.' The world gives groats, ay, but Christ gives talents, 2 Cor. 9:15, 1 Peter 1:8, Philip. 4:7, Ps. 88:10, 11.

[6.] Sixthly, The world gives a little, that they may give no more; ay, but Christ gives that he may give. He gives a little grace that he may give grace upon grace. He gives a little comfort that he may give fulness of comfort, John 1:16. He gives some sips that he may give

full draughts, he gives pence that he may give pounds, and he gives pounds that he may give hundreds.

The third particular that I am to shew you is,

The Excellency of those Gifts that Christ Gives

above all other gifts that the world gives, shewed in five things

III. The excellency of those gifts that Christ gives, above all other gifts that the world gives.

In this I shall mind brevity, and,

[1.] First, The gifts that Christ gives to his are spiritual and heavenly gifts, as is most clear by what hath been already said, and the spirituality of them doth demonstrate the excellency of them. And doubtless the more spiritual any gift, any promise, any truth, any prayer, or any service is, the more excellent is that gift, &c. All Christ's gifts are like himself, spiritual and heavenly.

[2.] Secondly, They are pure gifts. Christ gives wine without water, light without darkness, gold without dross, and sweet without bitter, Rev. 22:1, James 3:17. There is much dross and poison in the gifts that the world gives, but there is none in the gifts that Christ gives. The streams are as the fountain is; the fountain is pure, and so are the streams. The branches are as the root is; the root is pure, and so are the branches.

[3.] Thirdly, The gifts that Christ gives are soul-satisfying gifts. They are such as are suitable to the soul, and therefore they satisfy the

soul. Things satisfy as they suit. There is a good, and there is a suitable good. Now, it is only the suitable good that satisfies the soul of man. A pardon is most suitable to a condemned man, and therefore it best satisfies him. Health is most suitable to the sick, and therefore it satisfies when it is attained, &c. As bread satisfies the hungry soul, and drink the thirsty soul, and clothing the naked soul, so do the precious gifts that Christ bestows upon the soul satisfy the soul. The light, the love, the joy, the peace, the fellowship, &c., that Christ gives, doth abundantly satisfy the soul, Jer. 31:15, 16; Ps. 90:14, 36:8, 63:5, 65:4. Oh, but the gifts that this world gives can never satisfy the soul: Eccles. 5:10, 'He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase.' A man may as soon fill a chest with grace, or a quart-pot with virtue, as a heart with wealth. If Alexander conquer one world, he will wish for another to conquer.

[4.] Fourthly, The gifts that Christ gives are most permanent and lasting gifts. The grace he gives is called 'an immortal seed,' 1 John 3:9; and the glory he gives is called 'everlasting glory,' Rom. 2:7. The gifts of the world are fading, 2 Peter 1:11. A false oath, a spark of fire, a storm at sea, a treacherous friend, brings all to nothing in a moment. Sad experience doth every day confirm this.

[5.] Fifthly, and lastly, The gifts that Christ gives are the most useful gifts. They are useful to the strengthening of the soul against temptations, and to the supporting of the soul under afflictions, and to the sweetening of all changes; health and sickness, strength and weakness, plenty and poverty, honour or disgrace, life or death. Oh, but worldly gifts cannot bear up the spirits of men from fainting and sinking when trials come, when troubles come.

Our modern stories relate of Queen Mary, that she should say, 'If they did open her when she was dead, they should find Calais lying at her heart;' the loss of which, it seems, hastened her end.

The prior in Melancthon rolled his hands up and down in a basin full of angels, thinking to have charmed his gout, but it would not do. The precious gifts that Christ gives his, will bear up their heads above all waters, &c. Of all gifts, they are the most useful for the producing of the most noble effects. There are no gifts produce such effects as the precious gifts that Christ gives. They raise men up to much life and activity; they make souls strong to do for God, to bear for God, to suffer for God; to be anything, to be nothing, that God may be 'all in all.' They raise the strongest joy, the most lasting comfort, and the purest peace. There is no gifts draw out that thankfulness, and raise up to that fruitfulness, as the gifts that Jesus Christ gives. And so much for that third head, viz., the excellency of those gifts that Christ gives above all other gifts whatsoever.

I come now to the fourth head, and that is,

Six Reasons Why God Gives the Best Gifts to His Dearest Ones.

IV. The reasons why God gives his best gifts to his dearest ones.

I shall only give you these six:

[1.] First, Because he loves them with the dearest, with the choicest, and with the strongest love; therefore he gives them the best gifts.

Christ doth not love believers with a low, flat, dull, common love, with such a love as most men love one another with, but with a love that is like himself. Now, men will give as they love: 1 Sam. 1:4, 5, 'And Elkanah gave to Peninnah his wife, and to all his sons and daughters, portions, but unto Hannah he gave a worthy portion, for he loved her.' In the Hebrew it is, 'he gave her a gift of the face;' that is, a great, an honourable gift. Men look upon great and honourable

gifts with a sweet and cheerful countenance; so the gifts that Jesus Christ gives to believers are the gifts of the face, that is, they are the greatest gifts, the honourablest gifts, the choicest gifts, gifts fit for none but a king to give.

Augustus, in his solemn feasts, gave trifles to some, but gold to others. The Lord Jesus scatters the trifles of this world up and down; as Luther well speaks, 'The whole Turkish empire is but a crust that God throws to a dog.' God scatters giftless gifts, viz., the honours, riches, and favours of this world, up and down among the worst of men; but as for his gold—his Spirit, his grace, his Son, his favour—these are jewels that he only casts into the bosom of saints, and that because he dearly loves them.

[2.] Secondly, Christ gives the best gifts to his people, because they are best principled and fitted to make a divine improvement of them.

There is no men on earth that are principled and fitted for the improvement of the special gifts that Christ gives but his own people. None have such principles of wisdom, love, holiness, and faithfulness to make an improvement of the joy, the peace, the comfort, that the Lord gives as his people; ergo.... Abraham gave unto 'the sons of the concubines gifts, and sent them away; but unto Isaac he gave all that he had,' Gen. 25:5. As Isaac was better beloved than the concubines' sons, so Isaac was better principled to improve love than they were. The application is easy.

[3.] Thirdly, He doth it upon this account, that he may the more endear the hearts of his people to him.

The greatest design of Christ in this world is mightily to endear the hearts of his people; and indeed it was that which was in his eye and upon his heart from all eternity. It was this design that caused him to lay down his crown and to take up our cross, to put off his robes and to put on our rags, to be condemned that we might be justified, to undergo the wrath of the Almighty that we might for ever be in the

arms of his mercy. He gives his Spirit, his grace, yea, and his very self, and all to endear the hearts of his people to himself. When Isaac would endear the heart of Rebekah, then the bracelets, the jewels, and the earrings are cast into her bosom, Gen. 24:53. So the Lord Jesus casts his heavenly bracelets, jewels, and earrings into the bosoms, into the laps, of his people, out of a design to endear himself unto them: Prov. 17:8, 'A gift is a precious stone in the eyes of him that hath it; whithersoever it turneth, it prospereth.' In the Hebrew it is thus, 'a gift is as a stone of grace,' אבן־חן, that is, it makes a man very acceptable and gracious in the eyes of others. A gift is like that precious stone pantarbe, that hath a marvellous conciliating property in it; or like the wonder-working loadstone, that, as some writers observe, hath among other properties this, that it makes those that have it well-spoken men and well accepted of princes. Certainly the gifts that Jesus Christ gives to his do render him very acceptable and precious in their eyes. Christ to them is the crown of crowns, the heaven of heavens, the glory of glories; he is the most sparkling diamond in the ring of glory: Prov. 18:16, 'A man's gift maketh room for him, and bringeth him before great men.' The gifts that Jesus Christ gives widen the heart and enlarge the soul of a believer to take in more of himself. Naturally we are narrow-mouthed heavenward and wide-mouthed earthward; but the Lord Jesus, by casting in his jewels, his pearls, his precious gifts, into the soul, doth widen the soul, and enlarge the soul, and make it more capacious to entertain himself. Christ by his gifts causes all doors to stand open, that 'the King of glory may enter in,' Ps. 24:7–10.

4. Now the fourth reason of the point is, because Christ expects more from his people, than he doth from all the world besides, therefore he gives them the best gifts.

Where the Lord expects and looks for most, there he gives most. Though believers are but 'a little flock,' though they are but 'a remnant,' though they are but 'a fountain sealed, a spring shut up, a garden enclosed,' yet Christ looks for more from them, than from all the world besides. He looks for more love from them, than from all

the world besides; and he expects more service from them, than from all the world besides; and he looks for more honour from them than from all the world besides: Mal. 1:6, 'A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: If I am your father, where is my honour? and if I am your master, where is my fear?' He looks for more fear from them than from all the world besides, and for more honour from them than from all the world besides, and for more prayers and praises from them than from all the world besides.

[5.] Fifthly, The Lord Jesus gives the best gifts to his own, people, that he may fence and strengthen them against the worst temptations.

There are no men on earth that lie open to temptations, as saints. The best men have been always the most tempted. The more excellent any man is in grace and holiness, the more shall that man be followed with temptations, as you may see in David, who was tempted by Satan to number the people; and Job, to curse God and die; and Peter, to deny Christ; and so Paul was buffeted, yea, and Christ himself most grievously assaulted. The Lord knows well enough that Satan hath a cruel eye, an envious eye, a malicious eye upon his beloved ones, and therefore he is pleased, by his precious gifts, to strengthen them against his assaults. What Paul once said concerning bonds and afflictions, that they attended him 'in every place,' that may believers say concerning temptations, that they attend them in 'every place,' in every calling, in every condition, in every company, in every service, &c. As now, that the hearts of his people and temptations may not meet, the Lord is pleased to give them the best and choicest gifts.

Austin thanked God for this, that his heart and the temptations did not meet. The Lord hath on purpose given these glorious gifts into the hearts of his saints, that their souls and temptations may be kept asunder; that though they be tempted, yet they may not be conquered; though they be assaulted, yet they may not be vanquished. Basil, Luther, Vincentius, and that famous marquis

Galeacius [Carraciolus], &c., met with very strange and strong temptations, but the precious gifts that the Lord had cast into their bosoms made them triumph over all.³ Oh that grace, that peace, that life, that love, that communion with which the Lord had crowned them, made them too great, too noble, and too glorious to yield to any temptations with which they were beset. It was their pleasure to overcome offered pleasure, their honour to overcome offered honour, their greatness to overcome offered greatness. When one of them was tempted with money and preferment, he scorned the offers, saying, Give me money that may last for ever, and glory that may eternally flourish.

Jerome tells a story of a Christian soldier, whom when the prætor could not by any torments remove from Christianity, he commanded to be laid on a bed in a pleasant garden, among the flourishing and fragrant flowers; which done, all others withdrawing, a most beautiful harlot came to him, and used all art to destroy his soul; but the Christian soldier being filled with the royal gifts of the Spirit, bit off his tongue with his teeth, and spat it in her face as she was tempting him, and so got victory over all her temptations.

The precious favours God confers upon his, make them temptation-proof; they make believers trample upon the most amiable baits. 'How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God,' says Joseph. Joseph's sense of Potiphar's favours heaped upon him, strengthened him against the impudent solicitations of his wanton mistress, Gen. 39. And shall not the singular favours that God confers upon his dearest ones strengthen them against Satan's assaults? Surely gracious hearts are wrought more upon, and bettered and strengthened more by spirituals than by temporals; by eternal than by external; and if Satan do not find it so, I am much mistaken.

Well, remember this, Satan's overcoming the saints gives him the greatest advantage to boast and triumph over Christ.

Ambrose brings in the devil boasting against Christ, and challenging Judas as his own; He is not thine, Lord Jesus, saith he, he is mine; his thoughts beat for me; he eats with thee, but he is fed by me; he takes bread from thee, but money from me; he drinks with thee, but sells thy blood to me. So when Satan prevails over the saints, look, O Christ, says he, are these the price of thy blood? are these the objects of thy love? are these the delight of thy soul? what, are these thy jewels? are these the apple of thy eye? are these thy pleasant portion? Why, lo how I lead them! lo how I triumph over them! they seem rather to be mine than thine. Ah, Christians! resist as for life, that Satan may never have occasion thus to insult and triumph over Christ, &c.

[6.] Sixthly and lastly, Christ gives the best gifts to his dearest ones, that they may be an honour and a praise unto him in the glorious day of his owning of them, and marriage to them before all the world.

Believers in this life are but betrothed to Christ: 'I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness,' Hosea 2:19, 20. Their marriage-day is put off till the glorious day of Christ's appearing; the great day of his glory will be the day of solemnity; Rev. 21:2, 9, 10, compared. It would not be for the honour and glory of Christ, that his spouse in that day should be clothed with rags; therefore he hath given them the bracelets, the ear-rings, and the jewels before-hand, that they may be a praise and an honour to him in the marriage day. Oh! when the saints shall appear with all those glorious jewels about them, that Christ hath bequeathed to them, how will their splendid glory darken all other glory, and make the very sun to hide its face. This is our betrothing day, that will be our marriage day.

Bishop Ridley, the night before he suffered, invited his hostess and the rest at table to his marriage, 'for,' said he, 'to-morrow I must be married.' so several other martyrs went as merrily to die, as to dine; knowing that their dying day did but make way for their marriage day. The Lord doth by his rich and royal favours trick and trim up his

bride beforehand, that she may be an honour and a praise to him in the day of coronation, in the day of marriage, in the day of solemnity, when he will own her before devils, angels, and all reprobates; when he will say, 'Lo, here am I, and the bride, O Father! that thou hast given me.'

And thus you have a brief account of the reasons of the point, why the Lord gives the best gifts to his own people.

We shall make some short but sweet uses of this point.

Eight Inferences or Uses Made of this Point

And, first,

[1.] Doth the Lord give the best and greatest gifts to his people? Then you that are his people, sit down and wonder at this condescending love of God.

Oh! what is in thy soul or in my soul, that should cause the Lord to give such gifts to us as he hath given? We were all equal in sin and misery; nay, doubtless, we have actually outsinned thousands, to whom these precious gifts are denied. Let us therefore sit down and wonder at this condescending love of God. Oh! we were once poor wretches sitting upon the dunghill, yea, wallowing in our blood, and yet behold the King of kings, the Lord of lords, hath so far condescended in his love, as to bestow himself, his Spirit, his grace, and all the jewels of his royal crown upon us. Oh! what heart can conceive, what tongue can express, this matchless love! I will be thine for ever, says Christ, and my Spirit shall be thine for ever, and my grace thine for ever, and my glory thine for ever, and my righteousness thine for ever; all I am and all I have, shall be thine for ever. O sirs! what condescending love is this. Oh! what a Christ is this.

[2.] But then, secondly, Be greatly thankful, oh be greatly thankful for the great gift that Christ hath bestowed upon you.

It is not a little thankfulness that will answer and suit to the great gifts that the Lord Jesus hath bestowed upon you. Oh say with the psalmist, 'What shall I render to the Lord for all his favours, and great benefits. I will take the cup of salvation, and will call upon the name of the Lord,' Ps. 116:13, 14. Yea, say again with the psalmist, 'I will praise thee more and more.' Or as it is in the Hebrew, 'I will add to thy praise,' Ps. 71:14. Oh when thou lookest upon the jewels, the pearls that Christ hath given thee, say, Lord, I will praise thee more and more, I will rise higher and higher in thy praises, I will be still adding to thy praise. The very law of nature bespeaks great thankfulness, where great favours are given; and the law of custom bespeaks it, and doth not the law of grace bespeak it much more?

When Tamerlane had taken Bajazet, among other questions he asked him 'if ever he had given God thanks for making him so great an emperor?' He confessed immediately, that 'he never thought of that;' to whom Tamerlane replied, 'It is no wonder so ungrateful a man should be made a spectacle of misery. Oh! what do they then deserve that are unthankful for spiritual favours. Tell me, O Christians, are not the gifts that Christ hath conferred upon you, peculiar gifts? And will you not be thankful for them? Were they but common gifts, you ought to be thankful for them; how much more then for peculiar gifts, for right-handed favours? Tell me, are not the gifts that Christ hath given thee rare gifts? What hadst thou been if Christ had not made a difference between thee and others, by those glorious gifts that he hath conferred upon thee? Thou lookest upon some, and seest they are very ignorant. Oh! what hadst thou been if God had not bestowed that grace of knowledge upon thee? Thou lookest upon other persons that are unclean, profane, and filthy. Why! such a wretch wouldst thou have been, if the Lord had not made a difference between thee and them, by bestowing himself, his grace, and Spirit upon thee.

It was long since determined in the schools, that 'penitents had more reason to be thankful than innocent; sin giving an advantage to mercy to be doubly free in giving and in pardoning;' and so the greater obligation is left upon us to thankfulness.

Luther hath a very famous story, in his writing upon the fourth commandment, in the time of the council of Constance. He tells you of two cardinals, that as they were riding to the council, they saw a shepherd in the field weeping. One of them being affected with his weeping, rode to him to comfort him; and coming near to him he desired to know the reason of his weeping. The shepherd was unwilling to tell him at first, but at last he told him, saying, 'I looking upon this toad considered that I never praised God as I ought, for making me such an excellent creature as a man, comely and reasonable. I have not blessed him that he made me not such a deformed toad as this.' The cardinal hearing this, and considering that God had done far greater things for him than for this poor shepherd, he fell down dead from his mule; his servants lifting him up, and bringing him to the city, he came to life again, and then cried out, 'O St Austin! how truly didst thou say, the unlearned rise and take heaven by force, and we with all our learning wallow in flesh and blood.' The application is easy.

Thirdly, The next use is,

[3.] If the Lord hath given the best gifts to his people, then oh that his people would not give God the worst, but the best of everything.

Oh! give the Lord the best of your strength, the best of your time, the best of your mercies, and the best of your services, who hath given to your souls the best of gifts: Num. 18:29, 'Out of all your gifts ye shall offer every heave-offering of the Lord, of all the best thereof, even the hallowed part thereof, out of it.' So I say, of all thy offerings offer God the best, who hath given to thee the best and greatest gifts. So in Exod. 35:22, 'For the service of the tabernacle they brought bracelets, and ear-rings, and tables, all jewels of gold: and every man that

offered, offered an offering of gold unto the Lord.' They gave the best of the best, and so must we. Oh do not offer to God the worst of your time, the worst of your strength, the worst of your mercies, the worst of your services. That same is a very dreadful text: Mal. 1:8, 13, 14, compared, 'And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with it, and accept thy person? saith the Lord of hosts.' Saith God, Will men be put off thus? No, I know they won't; and why then should you deal worse with me than with men? Thy governors will have the best, ay, the best of the best; and will you deal worse with me, saith God, than with your governors? Will you thus requite me for all my favours, O foolish people and unwise? is this your kindness to your friend? Ver. 13, 14, 'Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness is it! and ye have snuffed at it, saith the Lord of hosts: and ye have brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering: should I accept this of your hands? saith the Lord.' Oh! that God had not cause to complain thus of many of your souls, to whom he hath shewn much love. But mark what follows: ver. 14, 'But cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth, and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing: for I am a great King, saith the Lord of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen.' If you have better in your hands, and yet shall go to put off God with the worst, the curse will follow. Think of it and tremble, all you that deal fraudulently and false-heartedly with God. Ah, Christians! you must say, World, stand behind; sin and Satan, get you behind us, for the best gifts, the choicest favours that ever were given, we have received from the Father of lights; and therefore by his gifts he hath obliged our souls to give him the best of our time, strength, and services; and therefore we will not be at your call or beck any longer. Oh, say, the Lord hath given us the best gifts, and 'Cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth, and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing.'

[4.] Fourthly, This should bespeak the people of God to trust and lean upon God for lesser gifts.

Hath God given thee a crown, and wilt thou not trust him for a crumb? 2 Tim. 4:8. Hath he given thee a house that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God? Heb. 11:15. Hath he given thee 'a kingdom that shakes not'? Heb. 12:28. And wilt thou not trust him for a cottage, for a little house-room in this world? Hath he given thee himself, his Son, his Spirit, his grace; and wilt thou not trust him to give thee bread, and friends, and clothes, and other necessary mercies that he knows thou needest? Rom. 8:32, Mat. 6:32. Hath he given thee the greater, and will he stand with thee for the lesser? Surely no. Wilt thou trust that man for much, that hath given thee but a little? And wilt thou not trust that God for a little, that hath given thee much? Wilt thou not trust him for pence, that hath given thee pounds? O sirs! hath the Lord given you himself, the best of favours; and will not you trust him for the least favours? Hath he given you pearls, and will not you trust him for pins? &c. Doth not the apostle argue sweetly? Rom. 8:32, 'He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? What! says the apostle, hath he given us his Son, his only Son, his bosom Son, his beloved Son, the Son of his joy, the Son of his delights? Oh how can he then but cast in all other things, as paper and pack-thread, into the bargain? Oh! that Christians would learn to reason themselves out of their fears, and out of their distrusts, as the apostle doth. Oh! that Christians would no longer rend and rack their precious souls with fears and cares, but rest satisfied in this, that he that hath been so kind to them in spirituals, will not be wanting to them in temporals, Prov. 8:23–32.

[5.] Fifthly, If the Lord hath given the best gifts to his people, this should then bespeak his people, not to envy the men of the world for those lesser favours that God hath conferred upon them.

It was horrid wickedness in Ahab to envy poor Naboth, because of his vineyard; and is it a virtue in you that are Christians to envy others, because their outward mercies are greater or sweeter than yours? Should the prince upon whose head the royal crown is set, and about whose neck the golden chain is put, envy those whose

hands are full of sugar-plums, and whose laps are full of rosemary, &c. Hath not God, O Christians! put a royal crown of glory upon your heads, and a golden chain of grace about your necks, and his Son's glorious robe upon your backs? and why then should your hearts rise against others' mercies? O! reason yourselves out of this sinful temper.

I would have every Christian thus to argue: Hath not the Lord given me himself? Is not one dram of that grace that God hath given me, more worth than ten thousand worlds? and why then should I envy at others' mercies?

There was a soldier which, for breaking his rank in reaching after a bunch of grapes, was condemned to die by martial law, and as he went to execution, he went eating of his grapes; upon which, some of his fellow-soldiers were somewhat troubled, saying, 'He ought then to mind somewhat else;' to whom he said, 'I beseech you, sirs, do not envy me my grapes, they will cost me dear; you would be loath to have them at the rate that I must pay for them.' So say I, O saints! do not envy the men of this world because of their honours, riches, &c., for you would be loath to have them at that rate that they must pay for them. Oh! there is a day of reckoning a-coming, a day wherein all the nobles and brave gallants in the world must be brought to the bar, and give an account how they have improved and employed all the favours that God hath conferred upon them; therefore envy them not. Is it madness and folly in a great favourite at court, to envy those that feast themselves with the scraps that come from the prince's table? Oh! then, what madness and folly is it that the favourites of heaven should envy the men of the world, who at best do but feed upon the scraps that come from God's table! Spirituals are the choice meat, temporals are but the scraps. Temporals are the bones, spirituals are the marrow.

Is it below a man to envy the dogs because of the bones? And is it not much more below a Christian to envy others for temporals, when himself enjoys spirituals?

[6.] Sixthly, Be not troubled for the want of lesser gifts.

It is to me a sad thing to see gracious souls, that have some comfortable satisfaction in their own hearts that the Lord hath given Christ and grace to them, John 14:1–3, &c., go up and down whining and weeping because they have not health, or wealth, or child, or trade, &c., when the Lord hath bestowed upon them such choice, spiritual blessings, the least of which will out-weigh all temporal blessings. Well, Christians, remember this, you act below your spiritual birth, your holy calling, when you suffer your hearts to be troubled and perplexed for the want of temporal things. Can you read special love in these? Doth your happiness lie in the enjoyment of them? Are not the angels happy without them? Was not Lazarus more happy than Dives? Yes. Oh! then, let not the want of those things trouble thee, the enjoyment of which can never make thee happy. Should the child be troubled for want of a rattle or a baby, that is proclaimed heir of a crown? And why then should a Christian, that is heir-apparent to a heavenly crown, be troubled upon the want of worldly toys? &c.

Jerome tells us of one Didymus, a godly preacher, who was blind; Alexander, a godly man, coming to him, asked him whether he was not sore troubled and afflicted for want of his sight? 'Oh yes,' said Didymus, 'it is a great affliction and trouble to me.' Then Alexander chid him, saying, Hath God given you the excellency of an angel, of an apostle, and are you troubled for that which rats and mice and brute beasts have.

It is great folly, it is double iniquity for a Christian to be troubled for the want of those things that God ordinarily bestows upon the worst of men. Oh the mercies that a Christian hath in hand, oh the mercies that a Christian hath in the promises, oh the mercies that a Christian hath in hope, are so many, so precious, and so glorious, that they should bear up his head and heart from fainting and sinking under all outward wants.

There goes a story among scholars of Æsop's deceiving Mercury, he having promised him one part of his nuts, keeps all the meat to himself, and gives the other the shells. Ah, Christians! God hath given you the meat, but the world the shells; why then should you be troubled for want of the shells, when God hath given you the kernel? &c.

[7.] Seventhly, If the Lord hath given his people the best gifts, oh then, let not them leave off that God that hath bestowed such choice and noble favours on them.

Jer. 2:11–13, 'Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? but my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit: Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the Lord.' Why? 'For my people have committed two evils, they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters,' &c. This was that aggravated the Israelites' sin, Ps. 105 and 106, that they forsook that God that had conferred upon them many rich and royal favours. But oh! then, what madness and folly is it in you, that you should forsake that God that hath done such mighty things for your souls? I may say, to keep you close to God, as Saul said to his servants, to keep them close to him, 1 Sam. 22:7, 'Then Saul said unto his servants that stood about him, Hear now, ye Benjamites, will the son of Jesse give every one of you fields and vineyards, and make you all captains of thousands, and captains of hundreds?' Ah, Christians! can the world give you spiritual life? Can the world give you peace of conscience, pardon of sin, the favour of God, the hopes of glory? No. Oh then! never leave nor forsake that God that hath given you all these royal favours, which none can give nor take, but himself. He that forsakes God forsakes his own mercies; he forsakes his life, his joy, his crown, his all in all.

No evil to this, of forsaking the greatest good. It makes a man's life a very hell. 'Such shall be written in the dust,' Jer. 17:13.

[8.] Eighthly and lastly, Be not impatient nor froward, when God shall take away some lesser mercies from you.

Hath God given you the best and the greatest gifts that your souls can beg or himself can give? And will you be froward or impatient when he shall come to take away lesser mercies? What? wilt thou be an impatient soul, when God comes and writes death upon such a near mercy, and passes the sentence of death upon such and such desirable mercies? Verily this is the way to provoke God to strip thee naked of thy choicest ornaments, and to put thee in chains, or else to turn thee a-grazing among the beasts of the field, as he did Nebuchadnezzar. God gives the best, and takes away the worst; he gives the greatest, and takes away the least; the sense of which made Job bless God when stripped of all. If a man should give you a pearl and take away a pin; if he should give you a bag of gold and take away a bag of counters, would it not be a madness in you to be impatient, and froward? Doth God take away a pin, and hath he not given you a pearl for it? He hath given thee a pound, O Christian! for every penny that he hath taken from thee; therefore be not froward nor impatient. Remember, Christians, how many in the world there be that sit sighing and mourning under the want of those very favours that you do enjoy. 'Why does the living man complain?' What! out of the grave, and complain! What! out of hell, and complain! This is man's sin, and God's wonder.

A Word to Sinners

But now some poor sinners may say, Here is good news for saints, but what is all this to us all this while?

Why, I will tell you; I have something to say for the comfort and encouragement of poor sinners. Ah, sinners! Christ is willing to bestow the best gifts upon the worst sinners. Take one text for all; it is a sweet one, and full to the point in hand: Ps. 68:18, 'Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive, thou hast received gifts for men, yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.'

Christ hath received gifts, as a steward, from the hand of the Father, to dispense them among men, yea, among the rebellious, the worst of men. If there be here at this time any rebellious sinner, or rebellious Sabbath-breaker, or rebellious drunkard, or rebellious curser, &c., let such rebellious sinners know that Christ hath received gifts 'even for the rebellious.'

'That the Lord God might dwell amongst them.' That is, that the Lord God might have sweet fellowship and communion with them: 'Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.'

'Behold I stand at the door and knock.' I, that have heaven to give, and peace to give, and pardon to give, and grace to give, and myself to give; I, that have tried gold to enrich you, and white raiment to clothe you, and eye-salve to anoint you, 'I stand at the door and knock; if any man will open the door,' let him be never so guilty, never so filthy, never so unworthy, &c., 'I will come in and sup with him, and he with me.'

Lord, at whose door dost thou stand knocking? Is it at the rich man's door, or at the righteous man's door, or at the humbled man's door, or at the weary and heavy-laden man's door, or at the mourner's door, or at the qualified or prepared man's door? No, says Christ, it is at none of these doors. At whose then, O blessed Lord? At the lukewarm Laodicean's door; at their door that are neither hot nor cold, that are 'wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.' These, says Christ, are the worst of the worst; and yet if any of these wretches, these monsters of mankind, will open the door, 'I will come in, and will sup with them, and they with me.'

I have read a remarkable story of a great rebel that had raised a mighty party against a Roman emperor. The emperor upon this being much provoked and stirred in spirit, made a proclamation, that whosoever brought in the rebel, dead or alive, should have a great sum of money. The rebel, hearing of this, comes and presents himself unto the emperor, and demanded of him the sum of money; whereupon the emperor reasons thus, 'If I should now cut him off, the world would say I did it to save my money;' and so he pardoned him, and gave him the great sum of money, notwithstanding all his former rebellion.

Oh! shall a heathen emperor do thus to a rebel that was in arms against him, and will not God do as much for poor rebellious sinners? Surely he will. What though thou hast been in arms against God, and mustered up all the strength and force thou couldst, even all the members of thy body, and faculties of thy soul, against God, and Christ, and holiness, yet know that the King of Israel is a merciful king; he is a God of pardons; he delights to make his grace glorious, and therefore is very willing to shew mercy to the greatest rebels, to the worst of sinners. Witness Manasseh, Mary Magdalene, the thief, Paul, and others. The greatness of man's sins do but set off the riches of free grace. Sins are debts, and God can as easily blot out a debt of many thousands as he can a lesser debt; therefore let not the greatest rebel despair but believe, and he shall find that 'where sin hath abounded, there grace shall superabound,' &c.

And thus much for this observation. We shall now proceed to the next words, viz.,

'That I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.'—Eph. 3:8.

A little to open the words.

'That I should preach.'

That is, declare good news, or the glad tidings of salvation that is brought by Jesus Christ to sinners. The Greek word Ευαγγέλιον, in the New Testament, answers to the Hebrew word Bessorah in the Old Testament, both signifying good news, glad tidings, or a joyful message.

'That I should preach among the Gentiles'

The word ἔθνεσιν, that is here rendered Gentiles, is sometimes used generally for all men, or all nations. So it is used in Mat. 25:32, and 28:19. Sometimes this Greek word is used more especially for the people of the Jews; so in John 11:48, 50–52, and Acts 10:22; and sometimes it is used for the Gentiles, distinguished from the Jews; so in Mat. 6:32.

By the Gentiles here you are to understand those poor heathens that were without God in the world, that never had heard of Christ, nor those unsearchable riches that be in him; as you may clearly see by comparing this text with that, Gal. 1:15, 16, 'But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach among the heathen,' saith he, 'immediately I consulted not with flesh and blood.'

1. The first observation that I shall speak to, from these words thus opened, is this:

THE FOURTH DOCTRINE

That the gifts and graces that God bestows upon his people should be improved, employed, and exercised by his people.

The Greek word χάρις, that is here rendered grace, we shewed you, hath a three-fold signification in the Scripture. Sometimes it denotes the favour of God, sometimes the common gifts of the Spirit, and sometimes the saving graces of the Spirit. Now, says Paul, that singular favour that God hath conferred upon me, and all those common gifts and special graces with which he has enriched me, they are all to be employed and exercised. 'Unto me is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.

So that there is nothing more clear than this, viz.: That the gifts and graces that God bestows upon his people, should be employed, improved, and exercised by his people.

'To me is this grace given.' Not that I should be idle, but active; not that I should be negligent, but diligent; not that I should hide my talents, but improve them.

I shall touch upon a few scriptures that speak out this truth, and then open it to you. 2 Tim. 1:6, 'Wherefore I put thee in remembrance, that thou stir up the gift of God that is in thee.' As the fire is increased and preserved by blowing, so are our graces. Some think that it is a metaphor taken from a spark kept in ashes, which, by gentle blowing, is stirred up, till it take a flame. Others say, it is an allusion to the fire in the temple, which was always to be kept burning. We get nothing by dead and useless habits. Talents hid in a napkin gather rust. The noblest faculties are imbedded, when not improved, when not exercised. Philip. 2:12, 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.' The Greek is, κατεργάζεσθε, 'Work till you get the work through.' The reason why many men's hearts tremble, and are so full of fears and doubts, is because their

salvation is not wrought out; they do not make thorough work in their souls, they put not that question home, Whether they have grace or no? an interest in Christ or no? They do not rise with all their strength against sin, nor with all their power to serve the Lord; and therefore fears and doubts do compass them round about. So in 1 Cor. 15:58, 'Be stedfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.'

'Be stedfast.' It is a metaphor taken from a foundation, on which a thing stands firmly; or a seat or chair, wherein one sits fast.

'Unmoveable' signifies one that will not easily move his place or opinion.

'Abounding,' or excelling 'in the work of the Lord.'

'Knowing that your labour is not in vain.' The Greek is 'labours unto weariness.' The apostle would have them labour unto weariness; 'For,' saith he, 'it is not in vain.' It will turn to a good account; it will yield you much of heaven here, and make you high in heaven hereafter.

There are only two things that I shall endeavour to do, for the opening of the point.

I. To shew you why persons must improve, employ, and exercise the graces and gifts that God hath bestowed upon them. And then,

II. The end to which they are to exercise those graces and gifts.

Twelve Reasons Why Gracious Souls Should Exercise and Improve their Gifts and Graces

I. For the first, There are these twelve reasons why gracious souls should exercise and improve their gifts and graces. Friends, this point is a point of as singular use and of as great concernment to you, as any that I know the Scripture speaks of, and therefore I desire you to lend your most serious and solemn attentions.

[1.] First, They must exercise and improve their graces,

Because the exercise and improvement of their graces is the ready way to be rich in grace.

As sin is increased in the soul by the frequent actings of it, so grace is nourished and strengthened in the soul by its frequent actings. The exercise of grace is always attended with the increase of grace. Prov. 10:4, 'The diligent hand maketh rich;' or, the nimble hand; the hand that is active and agile, that will see nothing lost for looking after, that hand maketh rich. Ruth 2, how did Boaz follow the business himself! his eyes were in every corner, on the servants and on the reapers, yea, on the gleaners too.

It is recorded of Severus, that his care was not to look what men said of him, or how they censured him, but to look what was to be done by him. He will rise in judgment against those professors that look more what this man and the other man saith of them, than what is to be done by them. The heart of a Christian is to be taken up with what is to be done by him, and not with what this man thinks, or the other judges of him.

Pacunius hath an elegant saying; 'I hate,' saith he, 'the men that are idle in deed, and philosophical in word.' God loves, saith Luther, curristas, not quæristas, the runner, not the questioner. Grace grows by exercise and decays by disuse. Though both arms grow, yet that which a man most useth is the stronger and the bigger; so it is both in gifts and graces. In birds, their wings which have been used most are sweetest; the application is easy. Such men as are contented with so much grace as will bring them to glory, with so much grace as will

keep hell and their souls asunder, will never be rich in grace, nor high in comfort or assurance. Such souls usually go to heaven in a storm. Oh how weather-beaten are they before they can reach the heavenly harbour!

[3.] Secondly, They must exercise their gifts and graces, because it is the main end of God's giving gifts and graces to them.

Grace is given to trade with; it is given to lay out, not to lay up. Grace is a candle that must not be put under a bushel, but set upon a candlestick. Grace is a golden treasure that must be improved, not hoarded up, as men do their gold. Grace is a talent, and it is given for this very end, that it should be employed and improved for the honour and advantage of him that gave it. The slothful servant, in God's account, is an evil servant, and accordingly God has denoted him, and doomed him for his ill husbandry, to destruction, Mat. 25:24–31.

'What a shame is it,' saith one [Jerome], 'that faith should not be able to do that which infidelity hath done! What! not better fruit in the vineyard, in the garden of God, than in the wilderness? What! not better fruit grow upon the tree of life, than upon the root of nature? &c.

[3.] And then thirdly, Because grace, exercised and improved, will do that for us that all the means in the world can never do for us.

I shall evidence this truth in some remarkable instances.

Suppose the guilt of sin to be upon a man's soul, even as a heavy mountain, there is nothing but the exercise of grace now that can remove this guilt. The man prays, and yet guilt sticks upon him; he hears, and yet guilt as a mountain lies heavy upon him; he mourns, he sighs, he groans, and yet guilt sticks upon him; he runs from ordinance to ordinance, and from ordinary service to extraordinary, and yet guilt follows him; he runs from man to man, Sir, was ever any man's case like mine? I have prayed thus long, I have heard thus

long, I have mourned thus long, &c., and yet guilt lies as a mountain upon my soul! There is nothing now below the exercise of grace that will remove this. It is only faith in the promises of remission that will remove the guilt of sin that lies so heavy upon the soul. It is only faith's application of the righteousness of Christ that can take off this burden that sinks the soul, even as low as hell. Faith must make a plaster of the blood of Christ, and apply it to the soul, or the soul will die under its guilt. There is nothing below this can do it. Faith's application of the blood of Christ takes off the guilt, and turns the storm to a calm: Rom. 5:1, 'Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.'

Again, suppose that the power and prevalency of sin hinders the soul's sweet communion with God, so that the soul cannot sport itself, and joy and delight itself in God, as in the days of old; it cannot see God smiling, stroking, and speaking kindly, as in former days. Now, there is nothing in all the world that can ease the soul of this burden of sin below the exercise of grace. Oh, saith such a poor soul, I pray, sir, and yet I sin; I resolve against sin, and yet I sin; I combat against sin, and yet I am carried captive by sin; I have left no outward means unattempted, and yet after all, my sins are too hard for me; after all my sweating, striving, and weeping, I am carried down the stream. There is nothing now but the actings of faith upon a crucified Christ that will take off this burden from the soul of man. Now, you must make use of your graces to draw virtue from Christ; now faith must touch the hem of Christ's garment, or thou wilt never be healed. It is just with a soul in this case as it was with the poor widow, Luke 8:43–49, that had the bloody issue; she leaves no means unattempted whereby she might be cured; she runs from one physician to another, till she had spent all she was worth, till she had brought a noble to ninepence, and now says she, 'If I could but touch the hem of his garment, I should be whole.' Hereupon she crowds through the crowd to come to Christ, and being got behind him, she touches the hem of his garment, 'and immediately she was made whole.' The cure being thus wrought, Christ uncrowns himself to crown her faith: 'And he said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort,

thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace.' He doth not say, Woman, thy trembling hath made thee whole; or, Woman, thy sweating and struggling in a crowd to come to me, hath made thee whole; or, Woman, thy falling down and abasing thyself, though she did all this; but, 'Woman, thy faith hath made thee whole.' Ah, Christians! it is not your trembling, or your falling down, or your sweating in this and that service, that will stop the bloody issue of your sins, but believing in Christ. It is sad to consider how few professors in these days have attained the right way of mortifying of sin. They usually go out against their sins in the strength of their own purposes, prayers, and resolutions, &c., and scarce look so high as a crucified Christ; they mind not the exercise of their faith upon Christ; and therefore it is a righteous thing with Christ that after all they should be carried captive by their sins. Nothing eats out sin like the actings of grace; nothing weakens and wastes the strength of sin like the exercise of grace. Oh! did men believe more in Christ, sin would die more; did they believe the threatenings more, sin would die more; did they believe the promises more, sin would die more; did they believe reigning with Christ more, sin would die more: 'He that hath this hope purifies himself, even as Christ is pure,' 1 John 3:3.

Again, Suppose that the soul be followed with black, dismal, fiery temptations, there is nothing now in all the world that can divinely strengthen and fence the soul against these temptations but the exercise of grace, the improvement of grace. It is true you are to hear, read, pray, meditate, &c.; but all these without the exercise of grace in them, will never make you victorious over Satan's temptations. Nothing puts Satan to it like the exercise of grace.

It is said of Satan, that he should say to a holy man who was much in the exercise of grace, Tu me semper vincis, thou dost always overcome me: Eph. 6:16. 'Above all, take the shield of faith, whereby ye may be able to quench the fiery darts of the devil.' Whatsoever piece of armour you neglect, be sure that you neglect not the shield of faith. The Greek word that is here rendered a shield, *Θυρεός α Θυρα*, comes from another word that signifies a door or a gate, to note that

as a door or a gate doth secure our bodies, so will the shield of faith secure our souls against the fiery darts of the devil: 'Above all, take the shield of faith, whereby ye may be able to quench all the fiery darts of the devil.' The apostle alludes to the custom of the Scythians, who used to dip the heads of their arrows or darts in the gall of asps and vipers, the venomous heat of which, like a fire in their flesh, killed the wounded with torments, the likest hell of any other. But the soldiers then had generally shields of raw neats' leather, as several writers testify, and when the fiery darts lighted upon them, they were presently quenched. So these fiery darts of Satan, when they light upon the shield of faith, they are presently quenched; and there is no other way to do it. Till the Lord draw out a man's faith to act upon the promises and upon Christ, these fiery darts will not be quenched.

Again, Suppose that the world, the smiling world or the frowning world, the tempting world or the persecuting world, should lie as a heavy stone or burden upon your hearts, as it doth upon the hearts of thousands in these days—witness their attempting anything to get the favours, honours and riches of this world! Ah! how many have turned their backs upon God, and Christ, and truth, &c., to gain the world! How will you get off this burden? No way in the world like to the exercise and actings of grace. Many men hear much, and yet remain worldly; and pray like angels, and yet live as if there were no heaven nor hell. They will talk much of heaven, and yet those that are spiritual and wise do smell their breath to stink strong of earth; and all the arts, and parts, and gifts in the world can never cure them of this soul-killing disease; but the exercise of grace, till faith break forth in its glorious actings. A man may hear and pray many years, and yet be as carnal, base, and worldly as ever. There is no way under heaven to remove this stone, this burden, but the exercise of faith and love, &c.: Cant. 8:6, 7; 1 John 4:5, 'For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?'

Not that the habit of faith overcometh the world, but faith in the exercise of it conquers the world, and that it does these three ways.

(1.) First, Faith in the exercise of it presents the world to the soul under all those notions that the Scripture holds forth the world unto us by.

The Scripture holds forth the world as an impotent thing, as a mixed thing, as a mutable thing, as a momentary thing. Now faith comes and sets this home with power upon the soul, and this takes the soul off from the world.

(2.) Secondly, Faith doth it by causing the soul to converse with more glorious, soul-satisfying, soul-delighting, and soul-contenting objects.

2 Cor. 4:16–18, 'Though our outward man perish, yet our inward man is renewed day by day.' How comes this to pass? 'While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things that are not seen; for the things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen are eternal.' Now when faith is busied and exercised about soul-ennobling, soul-greatening, soul-raising, and soul-cheering objects, a Christian tramples the world under his feet; and now heavy afflictions are light, and long afflictions short, and bitter afflictions sweet, unto him, &c. Now, stand by world! welcome Christ! &c.

So in Heb. 11. It was the exercise of faith and hope upon noble and glorious objects that carried them above the world, above the smiling world, and above the frowning world, above the tempting world, and above the persecuting world, as you may see by comparing several verses of that chapter together: ver. 9, 10, 'By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.' Ver. 24–26, 'And by faith, Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to

suffer afflictions with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season: esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, for he had respect to the recompence of reward.' Ver. 27, 'By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.' And in ver. 35, 'They refused deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection.'

So in Heb. 10:34, 'They took joyfully the spoiling of their goods,' (upon what account?) 'knowing in themselves, that they had in heaven a better and more enduring substance.'

(3.) Thirdly and lastly, Faith doth it by assuring the soul of enjoying of better things. For my part I must confess, so far as I understand anything of the things of God, I cannot see how a soul under the power of a well-grounded assurance can be a servant to his slave, I mean the world. I confess men may talk much of heaven, and of Christ, and religion, &c.; but give me a man that doth really and clearly live under the power of divine assurance, and I cannot see how such a one can be carried out in an inordinate love to these poor transitory things. I know not one instance in all the Scripture that can be produced to prove that ever any precious saint that hath lived in the assurance of divine love, and that hath walked up and down this world with his pardon in his bosom, have ever been charged with an inordinate love of the world. That is a sad word, 1 John 2:15.

[4.] Now a fourth reason of this point, why persons are to exercise their graces, is, because it is the best way to preserve their souls from apostasy and backsliding from God. 2 Pet. 1:5 to 11, 'Add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, &c.; for if ye do these things ye shall never fall.' 'Add to your faith virtue.' The Greek word επιχορηγήσατε, that is here rendered add, hath a great emphasis in it. It is taken from dancing round. Link them, saith the apostle, hand in hand, as in dancing, virgins take hands; so we must join hand to hand in these measures of graces, lead up the dance of

graces, as in the galliard every one takes his turn. So in chap. 3:17, 18, 'Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things, beware lest ye also, being led aside with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness.' There are many turn aside, and shake hands with God, and Christ, and truth, and the words of righteousness; and therefore you had need to take heed that you fall not as others have fallen before you.

But how shall we be kept from apostatising? Why, 'grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.' It is a growth in grace, it is the exercise of grace, that will make a man stand when others fall, yea, when cedars fall, &c.

[5.] Fifthly, All other exercises without the exercise of grace will profit nothing.

Or if you will, take it thus:

All other exercises will be loss to us, without the exercise of grace; therefore we had need to improve our graces. When the house is on fire, if a man should only pray, and cry, &c., he may be burnt for all that; therefore he must be active and stirring; he must run from place to place, and call out for help, and must work even in the fire, and bestir himself as for life, in the use of all means, whereby the fire may be quenched. So if grace be not acted, it is not all a man's praying and crying, &c., that will profit him or better him. Grace must be exercised or all will be lost; prayers lost, tears lost, time lost, strength lost, soul lost, &c. 1 Tim. 4:7, 8, 'But refuse profane and old wives' fables.' Shift them off, as the word is, set them by, say thou art not at leisure to attend them, make a fair excuse, as the word notes, tell them thou hast business of an eternal concernment to look after, and 'exercise thyself rather unto godliness;' or lay aside thy upper garments, as runners and wrestlers do, to which the apostle alludes, and bestir thyself lustily; for says he, verse 8, 'Bodily exercise profits little, but godliness is profitable unto all things, and hath the promise of this life, and of that which is to come.' The Babylonians are said to

make three hundred and sixty several commodities of the palm tree; but what are those hundred commodities to those thousands that attend holiness, that attend the exercise of grace? Nothing makes a man rich in spirituals, like the frequent and constant actings of grace. In Heb. 4:2, 'The word did not profit them that heard it, because it was not mixed with faith.' He doth not speak there of unbelievers, but of those that had grace in the habit, but not in the exercise; and therefore the word did not turn to their accounts; they heard, and were never the better. And what was the ground of it? Why, it was because they did not exercise faith upon the word. The words that fell from the preacher's lips into their ears were a sweet potion, but they did not work kindly, because there wanted the ingredients of faith. Faith is one of those glorious ingredients, that must make every sermon, every truth, work for their souls' advantage. Nothing will work for a believer's good, for his gain, if his graces be asleep.

[6.] Sixthly, Because it is the end of all the dignity and glory that God hath conferred upon his people; therefore they must exercise and improve their grace. In 1 Pet. 2:9, 'But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye may shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.'

'Ye are a chosen generation.' That is, a picked people; the dearly beloved of his soul; such as he first chose for his love, and then loves for his choice.

'A royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people.' The Greek is, 'a people of purchase,' such as comprehendeth, as it were, all God's gettings, his whole stock, that he makes any reckoning of, λαὸν εἰς περιποίησιν.

'That ye may shew forth,' or, as it is in the Greek, 'that ye may preach forth,' that ye may publicly declare the virtues of him that hath 'called you out of darkness into his marvellous light;' that ye may so

hold forth the virtues of him that hath conferred all this dignity and glory upon you, as to excite others, to 'glorify your Father which is in heaven.' You know the picture of a dear friend is not to be thrust in a corner, but in some conspicuous place of the house. Why, our graces are the very image of Christ, they are his picture; and therefore to be held forth to open view. These candles must not be put under a bushel, but set up in a candlestick. Jewels are to wear, not to hide; so are our graces.

It was a capital crime in Tiberius's days, to carry the image of Augustus upon a ring or coin, into any sordid place; and shall not Christians be more mindful and careful, that their graces, which are Christ's image, be no ways obscured, but that they be kept always sparkling and shining? Christ's glory and thy comfort, O Christian! lies much in the sparkling of thy graces. Pearls are not to be thrust in mud walls, or hung in swines' snouts, but to be hung on the breasts.

[7.] Seventhly, Gracious souls must exercise their grace, because the more grace is exercised and improved, with the more ease and delight will all religious services be performed, Ps. 40:7, 8; 119:97–112. When grace is improved and exercised, gracious services are easily performed. As the more natural strength is exercised and improved, with the more ease and pleasure are all bodily services performed; so the more grace is acted and improved, with the more ease and delight all Christian services are performed. Such souls find wages in their very work, they find not only for keeping, but also 'in keeping of his commands there is great reward.' 'All the ways of the Lord are ways of pleasantness to them,' and they find 'that all his paths drop marrow and fatness,' Rom. 6:22; Ps. 19:11; Prov. 3:17; Ps. 65:11. Ah, Christians! as ever you would have the services of God to be easy and delightful to your souls, look to the exercise and improvement of your graces, and then your work will be a joy.

[8.] Eighthly, You must exercise and improve your gifts and graces, because the more grace is improved, the more God will be honoured. Rom. 4:19–21, 'And being not weak in faith, he considered not his

own body, now dead, when he was about an hundred years old; neither the deadness of Sarah's womb: he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded, that what he had promised, he was able to perform.'

'He gave glory to God.' But how did he give glory to God? Was it a dead habit of faith that set the crown of honour upon the head of God? No! It was the lively actings of his faith upon the promise and the promiser, that gave glory to God. All the honour and glory that God hath from believers in this life, is from the actings of their grace. It was Abraham's acting of faith that was his high honouring of God. Christians! I would entreat this favour of you, that you would be often in the meditation of this truth, viz.: That all the honour that God hath from believers in this life, is from the actings and exercise of their graces. When thou goest to prayer, then think thus with thyself: Is it so, that all the honour that God shall have from my soul in prayer, will be from the actings of grace in prayer? Oh then, what cause have I to stir up myself to lay hold on God, and to blow up all those sparks of grace that be in me! As a body without a soul, much wood without fire, a bullet in a gun without powder, so are words in prayer without the Spirit, without the exercise of the graces of the Spirit. Jonah acted his faith when he was in the belly of hell; and Daniel acted faith when he was in the lions' den; and the thief acted faith when he was on the cross; and Jeremiah acted faith when he was in the dungeon; and Job acted faith when he was on the dunghill; and David acted faith when he was in his greatest distress; and so did Moses in Exod. 14. And you know the issue of all was, much glory to God, and much good to them. His heart will never be long a stranger to joy and peace, who is much in the exercise and actings of grace.

[9.] Ninthly, Because the more grace is improved, the more afflictions and tribulations will be lessened and sweetened to us: 2 Cor. 4:16, 17, 'Though our outward man decreases, yet our inward man is renewed day by day,' or day and day. [ἡμέρα καὶ ἡμέρα.]

When Peter Martyr was dying, he said, 'My body is weak, but my mind is well, well for the present, and will be better for ever hereafter.' This is the godly man's motto, 'For afflictions there is glory, for light afflictions a weight of glory, for momentary afflictions eternal glory.' So in Heb. 10 and 11. O friends! if your graces were more exercised and improved, afflictions would be more sweet. This would turn the cross into a crown; this would turn bitter into sweet, and long winter nights into summer days. It would make every condition to be a paradise to you, &c.

[10.] Tenthly, If grace be not exercised and improved, the soul may be easily surprised, conquered, and vanquished by a tempting devil and an enticing world. When the sword is in the scabbard, the traveller is easily surprised, and when the guard is asleep, the city is quickly conquered. The strongest creature, the lion, and the wisest creature, the serpent, if they be dormant, are as easily surprised as the weakest worms. So the strongest and wisest saints, if their graces be asleep, if they be only in the habit, and not in the exercise, they may be as easily surprised and vanquished as the weakest Christians in all the world, as you may see in David, Solomon, Samson, Peter. Every enemy insults over him that hath lost the use of his weapons, &c.

[11.] Eleventhly, We must improve our graces, because decays in grace are very great losses to us. By decaying in grace, we come to lose our strength, our best strength, our spiritual strength; our strength to do for God; our strength to wait on God, and walk with God; our strength to bear for God; our strength to suffer for God. By decaying in grace, we come to lose that 'joy that is unspeakable and full of glory,' and that comfort and 'peace that passes understanding,' and to lose the sense of that 'favour that is better than life.' Now our faith will be turned into fear, our dancing into mourning, our rejoicing into sighing; and when, O Christian! thou beginnest to fall, and to decay, who knows how far thou mayest fall, how much thy graces may be impaired, and how long it may be before thy sun rise

when once it is set; therefore you had need to exercise and improve your graces.

[12.] Twelfthly, and lastly, You are to improve your graces, because souls truly gracious have a power to do good. I do not say that a man in his natural estate—though Arminians do—hath power in himself to do supernatural acts, as to believe in God, to love God, and the like, &c., for I think a toad may as well spit cordials as a natural man do supernatural actions, 1 Cor. 2:14; Jer. 13:23; James 1:17; Eph. 2:1–3. No; I do not say that all the grace we have is not from God, nor that man in his natural estate is not dead God-ward, and Christ-ward, and holiness-ward, and heaven-ward. But this I say, that souls truly gracious have a power to do good. It is sad to think how many professors do excuse their negligence by pretending an inability to do good, or by sitting down discouraged, as having in their hands no power at all. What can we do, say they, if the Lord do not breathe upon us, as at first conversion? We can do nothing. I think in my very conscience, that this is one reason of much of that slightness, neglect, and omission of duties, that is among professors in these days, so that God may complain, as he doth, Isa. 64:7, 'There is no man that stirreth up himself to take hold of me, they are as men asleep,' that sit still and do nothing. But certainly they that are truly united to Christ, are not acted as dead stocks, as if every time and moment of their acting God-wards and holiness-ward they received new life from the Spirit of Christ, as at first conversion they did. And I am confident, for want of the knowledge and due consideration of this truth, many professors take such liberty to themselves, as to live in the neglect of many precious duties of godliness, for which, first or last, they will pay dear. But remembering that it is not a flood of words, but weighty arguments, that convince and persuade the souls and consciences of men, I shall give you four reasons to demonstrate, that believers have a power to do good; and the first is this.

First, because they have life; and all life is a power to act by. Natural life is a power to act by; spiritual life is a power to act by; eternal life is a power to act by. The philosopher saith, 'That a fly is more

excellent than the heavens, because the fly hath life, which the heavens have not,' &c.

Secondly, Else there is no just ground for Christ to charge the guilt of sins upon them; as neglect of prayer, repentance, mortification; nor the guilt of carelessness and slothfulness, &c., which he doth. If they can act no further, nor no longer than the Holy Ghost acts them, as at their first conversion, notwithstanding their union with Christ, and that spiritual principle of life that at first they received from Christ, certainly if it be so, it will not stand with the unspotted justice of God to charge the guilt of sins of omission upon believing souls, if they have no power to act, but are as stocks and stones, &c., as some dream.

A third ground is this: if there be not some power in believers to do good, then we should not have as much benefit by the second Adam as we had by the first. The first Adam, if he had stood, would have communicated a power to all his sons and daughters to have done good, as being corrupted he doth communicate power to sin, as all his children find by sad and woful experience; and shall not Christ much more communicate a power to us to do good in our measure? Surely he doth, though few mind it, and fewer improve it as they should. If there be not such a power in believers, how have they gained more by the second Adam than they lost by the first? and wherein lies the excellency of the second above the first?

Fourthly and lastly, All those exhortations are void, and of none effect, if there be not some power in souls truly gracious to do good; as all those exhortations to watchfulness, to stir up 'the grace of God that is in us,' and to 'work out our own salvation with fear and trembling,' and that also, 'give all dilligence to make your calling and election sure.' To what purpose are all these precious exhortations, if the regenerate man have no power at all to act anything that is good? Nay, then, believers under the covenant of grace should be in no better a condition than unregenerate men that are under a covenant of works, who see their duties discovered, but have no power to

perform; which is contrary, as to other scriptures, so to that Ps. 40:7–9, 'Then said I, Lo I come: in the volume of thy book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart,' or, 'thy law is in the midst of my bowels,' as the Hebrew reads it; and to that of Ezek. 36:25–27, &c. A soul truly gracious can sincerely say, 'Thy law, O Lord, is in the midst of my bowels, and I delight to do thy will, O Lord.' I confess I cannot do as I should, nor I shall never do it as I would, till I come to heaven; but this I can say in much uprightness, that 'Thy law is in my heart, and I delight to do thy will, O Father.' And so Paul, 'With my mind I serve the law of God, though with my flesh the law of sin,' Rom. 7:25.

And we have many promises concerning divine assistance, and if we did but stir up the grace of God that is in us, we should find the assistance of God, and the glorious breakings forth of his power and love, according to his promise, and the work that he requires of us, Isa. 26:12; 64:5, &c. Though no believer doth what he should do, yet doubtless every believer might do more than he doth do, in order to God's glory, and his own and others' internal and eternal good, Isa. 41:10; Heb. 13:5, 6, &c. Affection without endeavour is like Rachel, beautiful but barren. They are blessed that do what they can, though they cannot but underdo.

When Demosthenes was asked what was the first part of an orator, what the second, what the third, he answered, Action; the same may I say, if any should ask me what is the first, the second, the third part of a Christian, I must answer, Action. Luther saith, 'He had rather obey than work miracles.' 'Obedience is better than sacrifice.'

But, sir, you will say, what is the meaning of that text, that is so often in the mouths of professors, 'Without me you can do nothing'? John 15:5.

I answer, All that that text holds forth is this, that if a man hath not union with Christ, if he be not implanted into Christ, he can do nothing. 'Without me,' that is, separate from me, or apart from me,

as the words may be read, 'you can do nothing.' If you are not implanted into me, if by the Spirit and faith you are not united unto me, you can do nothing. The arm may do much; it may offend an enemy, and it may defend a man's life, by virtue of its union with the head; but if you separate the arm from the head, from the body, what can it do? Certainly the soul, by virtue of its union with Christ, may do much, though such as are separated from Christ can do nothing, at least as they should. Ah, Christians! if you would but put out yourselves to the utmost, you would find the Lord both ready and willing to assist you, to meet with you, and to do for you above what you are able to ask or think.³

Cæsar, by continual employment, overcame two constant diseases, the headache and the falling sickness. Oh the spiritual diseases that the active Christian overcomes! Among the Egyptians, idleness was a capital crime. Among the Lucani, he that lent money to an idle person was to lose it. Among the Corinthians, the slothful were delivered to the carnifex, saith Diphilus. Oh! the deadly sins, the deadly temptations, the deadly judgments, that idle and slothful Christians are given up to. Therefore be active, be diligent, be abundant in the work of the Lord. Idleness is the very source of sin. Standing pools gather mud, and nourish and breed venomous creatures; and so do the hearts of idle and slothful Christians, &c.

2. Now the second thing that we are to do for the further opening of this point is, to shew you

The special ends that the gifts and graces that God hath bestowed upon believers should be exercised and improved to.

And they are these that follow:

Three Special Ends that the Gifts and Graces that God has Bestowed Upon

Believers Should be Exercised and Improved to

[1.] First, They are to be improved and exercised to the honour of God, to the lifting up of God, and to the keeping up of his name and glory in the world, 1 Cor. 10:31.

He that improves not his gifts and graces to this end, crosses the grand end of God's bestowing such royal favours on him. Graces and gifts are talents that God hath given you to trade with, and not to hide in a napkin, Mat. 25. The idle servant, in Christ's account, was an evil servant. The idle soul, in Christ's account, is an evil soul, and accordingly Christ will deal with him.

Seneca calls sloth 'the nurse of beggary, the mother of misery;' and slothful Christians find it so. Christians, God hath given you grace, that you should give him glory. His honour should be dearer to you than your jewels, than your crowns, than your lives, ay, than your very souls. Thou livest no longer than thou livest to his praise.

It is recorded of Epaminondas, the commander-in-chief of the Thebans, that he did not glory in anything but this, 'That his father, whom he dearly loved and honoured, was living when he won three famous battles against the Lacedæmonians,' that were then held for their valour to be invincible; regarding more the honour and content his father should receive of it, than his own. Shall a heathen thus strive to honour his earthly father? And shall not Christians strive more to honour their heavenly Father with all the gifts and graces that he hath conferred upon them.

But you will say, How should we honour the Lord?

I answer,

(1.) By a free and frequent acknowledgment that all your graces flow from the Lord Jesus, the fountain of grace: John 1:16, 'Of his fulness

we all receive grace for grace.' James 1:17, 'Every good and perfect gift comes down from above,' &c. Thou must say, O Christian, I have nothing but what I have received; I have no light, no life, no love, no joy, no peace, but from above, 1 Cor. 4:7. The jewels that hang in my breasts, and the chains of pearl that be about my neck, and the golden crown that is upon my head, and all the sparkling diamonds in that crown, are all from above, Ezek. 16:11–15, Ps. 45:8, seq. All those princely ornaments by which I am made more beautiful and lovely than others, and all those beds of spices and sweet flowers, by which I am made more desirable and delectable, is from above. Say, I am nothing. I have nothing of my own; all I am, and all I have, is from on high. 'We have given thee of thine own,' says David, 1 Chron. 29:14. So do thou say, Lord, the love with which I love thee, is thine own; and the faith by which I hang upon thee, is thine own; and the fear by which I fear before thee, is thine own; and the joy which I rejoice before thee with, is thine own; and the patience with which I wait upon thee, is thine own. And therefore say, as David did, upon the receipt of mercy, 'Blessed be thou, Lord God of Israel our Father, for ever and ever. Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine: thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all. Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name.'

(2.) You must honour him, by acknowledging the dependency of your graces upon the fountain of grace. And that your strength to stand lies not so much in your graces, as in their dependency upon the fountain of grace, as in their conjunction with the God of grace. A man by his arm may do much, but it is mainly by reason of its union and conjunction with the head. It is so between a Christian's graces and Christ. The stream doth not more depend upon the fountain, nor the branch upon the root, nor the moon upon the sun, nor the child

upon the mother, nor the effect upon the cause, than our graces do depend upon the fountain of grace, Ps. 138:3, Philip. 4:12, 13.

Now that our very graces do thus depend upon the fountain of grace, and that our strength to stand lies not so much in our graces as in Christ, is clear by this, that the graces of the saints may and do most fail them when they have most need of them: Mark 4:40, 'And he said, Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?' When the wind was high, their faith was low; when the storm was great, their faith was little; so Luke 8:25, 'And he said unto them, Where is your faith?' Are you now to seek it, when you should use it? Peter denied Christ, when he had need by faith to have confessed Christ. Moses's faith failed him, when it should have been most serviceable to him, Num. 20:12. And David's courage failed him, when it should have been a buckler to him, 1 Sam. 21:13, 14. And the disciples' love failed them, when it should have been most useful to them, John 14:28. And Job's wisdom and patience failed him, when they should have been greatest supporters to him. By all which it is most clear, that not only ourselves, but also our very graces, must be supported by the God of grace, the fountain of grace, or else they will be to seek when we most need them. Though grace is a glorious creature, it is but a creature, and therefore must be upheld by its Creator. Though grace be a beautiful child, yet it is but a child, that must be upheld by the Father's arms. This, Christians, you must remember, and give glory to God.

(3.) You must honour him by uncrowning your graces, to crown the God of your graces. By taking the crown off from your own heads, and putting it upon his, or by laying it down at his feet, as they did theirs, in Rev. 4:10, Acts 3:11, 12, 16, and 4:7–10. These scriptures are wells of living waters; they are bee-hives of living honey; see and taste. The Lord hath often uncrowned himself, to crown his people's graces, as you may see in these following scriptures, Mat. 9:22, and 15:28, Mark 10:52, Luke 7:50. And why, then, should not his people uncrown their graces to crown him? Cant. 5:10, seq. That which others attribute to your graces, do you attribute to the God of grace.

You must say, Though our graces are precious, yet Christ is more precious; though they are sweet, yet Christ is most sweet; though they are lovely, yet Christ is altogether lovely. Your graces are but Christ's picture, Christ's image; and therefore do not you worship his image, and in the mean while neglect his person. Make much of his picture, but make more of himself. Let his picture have your eye, but let himself have your heart, John 1:39, seq. Your graces are but Christ's hands, by which he works; be you therefore careful that you do not more mind the workman's hands than the workman himself. Your graces are but Christ's servants, therefore do not smile upon the servant, and look asquint upon the Master. Your graces are but Christ's favourites; therefore do not so stare upon them, and be taken with them, as to forget the Prince on whom they wait, &c. All I drive at is this, that not your graces but Christ, may be all in all unto you, &c.

[2.] The second end to which you must improve your gifts and graces, is to the good of others: Ps. 66:16, 'Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul;' Ps. 34:8, 'Oh taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him;' Isa. 2:3; Acts 5:26–29. Bonum est communicativum. God hath given you gifts and grace, to that very end, that you should improve them for others' good. It is the very nature of grace to be diffusive and communicative. Grace cannot be long concealed. The better anything is, the more communicative it will be. Grace is as fire in the bones, as new wine in the bottles; you cannot hide it, you must give vent to it: Acts 4:28, 'We cannot but speak the things that we have heard and seen;' as Cræsus his dumb son did for his father. Can the fire cease to turn all combustible matter into fire? can the candle, once thoroughly lighted, cease to spend itself for the enlightening of others? Then may the precious sons of Zion cease to give light to others, by their examples, counsels, and communicating their experiences. No way to honour God, no way to win souls, nor no way to increase your own gifts and graces, than to exercise them for the good of others. Grace is not like to worldly vanities, that diminish by distribution; nor like candles

which keep the same light, though a thousand are lighted by them. Grace is like the widow's oil, which multiplied by pouring out, 2 Kings 4; and like those talents which doubled by employment, Mat. 25.

It was a good saying of one, 'For insensible riches those who pay their money do diminish their substance, and they who receive are made richer, but these not so, but both he who numbereth doth much increase his substance, and doth add much to the riches of the receiver.

Again, by how much more we pour out of these flowing spiritual things, by so much those spreading in abundance are greater to us; for in this case it doth not happen as in money, for there they who tell out to their neighbour diminish their own substance, and by how much the more he spendeth, by so much the less money he possesseth; but in spirituals it is quite otherwise.

The Main Use is, To Stir up All Christians to Make a Blessed Improvement of their Gifts and Graces

No way to advance the kingdom of Christ in the world like this, of improving your gifts and graces to the advantage and profit of others; no love nor pity to the precious souls of men like this; no way to abound in grace, to be rich in grace like this; nor no way to be high in heaven like this. Art thou, O Christian, bound to do good to others, by communicating earthly things? And art thou not much more bound to do them good by communicating of spiritual things? Surely thou art. Why are Christians so often in Scripture compared to trees, but because of their fruitfulness and usefulness to others? And why are they called 'stewards of the manifold gifts of God,' but to note to us, that their gifts are not to be enclosed, but employed for the good of others? And why hath Christ put a box of precious ointment into

every Christian's hand, but that it should be opened for the benefit of others? Certainly, he that is good is bound to do good; for gifts and graces are given, not only to make us good, and keep us good, but also to make us, yea, to provoke us to do good. Lilmod lelammed, 'We therefore learn that we may teach,' is a proverb among the rabbins. 'And I do therefore lay in, and lay up,' saith the heathen, 'that I may draw forth again, and lay out for the good of many.' I think they are no good Christians that shall scorn to learn this good lesson, though of a heathen. And oh that all that write themselves Christians, were so good as to imitate the good that shined in many heathens! To me it is very sad, that Christians that live and act below the very heathens, should be offended to hear now and then of those excellencies that sparkled in the very heathens. I think that is a very evil spirit, that cannot endure to hear of those excellencies in others that he wants himself. Certainly he is a brave Christian, and hath much of Christ within, that accounts nothing his own that he doth not communicate to others. The bee doth store her hive out of all sorts of flowers for the common benefit, and why then in this should not every Christian be like a bee?

Synesius speaks of some, who having a treasure of rare abilities in them, would as soon part with their hearts as their corruptions. I think they are rather monsters than real Christians, that are of such a spirit.

[3.] The third and last thing to which you are to improve your gifts and graces is, to the benefit and profit of your own souls. Not to improve them to your own internal and eternal good, is with a high hand to cross the main end of God's conferring them upon you. Ah, Christians! you must improve them to the strengthening of you against temptations, to the supporting of you under afflictions, to the keeping under of strong corruptions, to the sweetening of all mutations, and to the preparing and fitting of you for the days of your dissolution.

I shall content myself with giving you this hint, because I have before spoken more fully to this head.

And thus we have done with the doctrinal part.

We shall come now to make some use and application of this point to ourselves.

If this be so, that it is the duty of Christians to improve and exercise the gifts and graces that the Lord hath given them,

Then, in the first place, this looks very sourly and wishly upon all lazy, idle, negligent Christians, that do not stir up themselves to lay hold on God, that do not stir up the grace of the Lord in them. It is sad to consider how many Christians can stir up themselves to lay hold on all opportunities to make themselves great and rich in the world, and yet suffer their golden gifts and graces even to grow rusty for want of exercise. It is sad to see how busy many men are to exercise and improve a talent of riches, who yet bind up their talents of gifts and grace in a napkin. By these God loses much honour and praise, and themselves lose much comfort and content, and others lose much profit and benefit, and the gospel loses much credit and glory.

But the main use that I shall make of this point, shall be to exhort and stir you all up, to make a blessed improvement of your graces.

And indeed it is a point of most singular use to us all our days, a truth that is every day of very great concernment to our souls.

Now there are seven considerations that I shall propound by way of motive, to stir up your souls to make a blessed improvement of the grace and gifts you have received.

Seven Considerations or Motives

to Stir Saints Up to Improve their Talents

[1.] And the first is this: seriously consider, that the exercise and, improvement of grace in your souls, will be more and more the death and ruin of sin in your souls.

Take it from experience; there is not a choicer way than this for a man to bring under the power of his sin, than to keep up the exercise of his grace. Sin and grace are like two buckets at a well, when one is up the other is down; they are like the two laurels at Rome, when one flourishes the other withers. Certainly, the readiest and the surest way to bring under the power of sin, is to be much in the exercise of grace: Rom. 8:10, 'And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin: but the spirit is life because of righteousness.' The life and activity of Christ and grace in the soul, is the death and destruction of sin in the soul. The more grace acts in the soul, the more sin withers and dies in the soul. The stronger the house of David grew, 2 Sam. 3, the weaker the house of Saul grew. As the house of David grew every day stronger and stronger, so the house of Saul every day grew weaker and weaker. So the activity of the new man is the death of the old man. When Christ began to bestir himself in the temple, the money-changers quickly fled out, Mat. 21:12–14. So when grace is active and stirring in the soul, corruption quickly flies. A man may find out many ways to hide his sin, but he will never find out any way to subdue his sin, but by the exercise of grace. Of all Christians, none so mortified as those in whom grace is most exercised. Sin is a viper that must be killed, or it will kill you for ever; and there is no way to kill it but by the exercise of grace.

[2.] Secondly, Consider this by way of motive to provoke you to exercise and improve your graces. The exercise and improvement of your graces will provoke others to bless and admire the God of grace. 'Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven,' Mat. 5:16,—the light of your conversation, and the light of your graces. Oh how many

thousand souls be there now triumphing in heaven, whose gifts and graces shined gloriously when they were on earth. And ah! how many thousands are there now on earth, that bless and admire the Lord for the shine of their graces who are now in heaven; that bless the Lord for the faith of Abraham, and the zeal of David, and the meekness of Moses, and the patience of Job, and the courage of Joshua, &c. Ah, Christians! as you would stir up others to exalt the God of grace, look to the exercise and improvement of your graces. When poor servants shall live in a family, and see the faith of a master, and the love of a master, and the wisdom of a master, and the patience of a master, and the humility of a master, &c., shining like so many stars of heaven, oh how doth it draw forth their hearts to bless the Lord, that ever they came into such a family! It is not a profession of religion, but the exercise and improvement of grace, that contributes so much to the lifting up the glory of the Lord, and to the greatening of his praise in the world. Many saints have had their hearts warmed and heated by sitting by other saints' fires, by eyeing and dwelling upon other saints graces. Ah! when men's graces shine as Moses his face did, when their lives, as one speaketh of Joseph's life, is a very heaven, sparkling with variety of virtues, as with so many bright stars; ah! how are others stirred up to glorify God, and to cry out, These are Christians indeed! These are an honour to their God, a crown to their Christ, and a credit to their gospel. Oh! if they were all such, we would be Christians too. It is a very great stumbling-block to many poor sinners, to see men that make a very great and large profession of Christ, never to exercise and shew forth the virtues of Christ. They profess they know him, and yet by the non-exercise of his virtues they deny him.

It was one of Machiavel's principles, that the appearance of virtue was only to be sought, because the use of it, saith he, is a trouble, but the credit of it a help. I am afraid that this cursed soul-damning principle is the best flower that grows in many men's gardens in these days. Though there is no virtue but is as a bright stone in a dark night, it shines and shews its clearness and beauty; it is as pure gold, the brighter for passing through the fire; yet how do most covet

rather the name of virtue, than to be really virtuous! Such, I believe, shall have the hottest and the lowest place in hell. Well, Christians, remember this, it is not a show of grace, but the exercise of grace, that will provoke others to glorify the fountain of grace. That is a very remarkable scripture, 1 Thes. 1:2, 3, 8, compared, 'We give thanks to God always for you, making mention of you in our prayers; remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God, and our Father. For from you sounded out the word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad.' In this eighth verse you have an elegant metaphor, which signifies, that their faith was so lively, that with its sound, as it were, it stirred up other nations. The Greek word is to sound as with the sound of a trumpet, to make to sound afar off. Says the apostle, your graces made a noise like a trumpet; they stirred up others to be gracious and active, as the trumpet stirs up men to war. So in 2 Peter 1:3, 4, 'We are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all towards each other aboundeth. So that we ourselves glory in you the churches of God, for your patience and faith, in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure.' Hoc enim angelicum, this is the character of the angelical nature, to rejoice in the graces and gracious actings of others. He that acts otherwise holds forth the image of the devil, and declares himself a native of hell.

[3.] Thirdly, Consider that the exercise and improvement of grace, may be a special means to stir up the exercise of grace in others.

Your improvement of grace may be a special means to stir up others to improve their graces also. 1 Thes. 1:7, 'So that we were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.' Or as the Greek is, 'you were types, moulds,' τύπους, patterns of piety to them that were in Christ long before you. So in 2 Cor. 9:2, 'For I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago, and your zeal hath provoked very

many.' I knew you were forward, and this I boasted of; I made it my glory to tell how grace shined in your souls. 'And,' saith he, 'your zeal hath provoked many.' When they saw how warm and lively, and active, how open-handed and open-hearted you were to the poor saints, their hearts were stirred up to acts of charity also. Stories speak of some that could not sleep when they thought of the trophies of other worthies that went before them. The highest examples are very quickening and provoking.

That this may stick upon your souls, I beseech you bed and board, rise and walk with this one consideration, viz., that all the good you provoke others to by counsel or example, shall be put down to your account. It shall certainly turn to your internal and eternal advantage. In the great day, Christ will make honourable mention of all the good that thou hast stirred and provoked others to, and will reward thee for it before angels and men. The faith, the love, the hope, the charity, the patience, &c., that thou hast provoked others to, shall be put down to thy account, as if thou hadst been the only actor of them, &c. As all the sins that men provoke or stir up others to by their counsel or example, shall be put down to their accounts, as you may see in David. David did but send a letter concerning the death of Uriah, and yet the charge cometh, 'Thou hast slain Uriah with the sword,' 2 Sam. 12:9. As whatsoever is done by letter, counsel, or example, to provoke others to sin, shall certainly be charged upon men's accounts at last, so whatsoever good thou dost stir up others to, that shall be set upon thy score, and shall turn to thy eternal account in the day of Christ. Oh! who would not then labour with all their might, even day and night, to stir up the grace of the Lord in themselves and others, seeing it shall turn to such a glorious account in that day wherein Christ shall say to his Father, 'Lo, here am I, and the children that thou hast given me,' &c.

[4.] Fourthly, consider this, the exercise and improvement of grace, contributes very much both to the stopping the mouths of your enemies, and to the rendering of you lovely in the very eyes of your enemies. Oh! there is nothing in all the world that contributes so

much to the stopping of the mouths of your enemies, and to the rendering of your souls lovely in the eyes of your enemies, as the exercise and improvement of your graces. As you may see in David, David improved his grace to a glorious height, and says Saul, 'Thou art more righteous than I,' 1 Sam. 24:17. John improved his grace to a glorious height, and was much in the exercise of it, and what follows? why, 'Herod feared and revered him, knowing that he was a just and a holy man,' Mark 6:20. Oh! how did the wisdom, faith, and holiness of Joseph, Daniel, and the three children silence their most enraged adversaries! yea, what a deal of honour did the exercise of their graces cause those heathen princes to put upon them? 1 Peter 2:15, 'For so is the will of God, that by well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.' It is not all the talking and profession in the world that can stop the mouths of foolish men; it must be well-doings, grace improved, grace exercised and manifested in ways of holiness, that must work so great a wonder as to stop the mouths of wicked men.

The Greek word that is here translated well-doing, ἀγαθοποιῶντας is a participle of the present tense, and notes the continual custom of well-doing. And indeed, nothing but a continual course of well-doing will be able to stop the mouths of wicked persons. It is not a fit of holiness, but a course, that can produce so great a miracle as to stop the mouths of wicked men: 'That ye might stop the mouths of ungodly men.'

The Greek is, 'that ye may muzzle,' or, 'halter up,' φιμῶν, from φιμῶ. There is no way in the world to button, muzzle, or halter up the mouths of wicked men, but by the exercise of your graces in ways of well-doing. Oh! this will cause you to be well thought of, and well spoken of; this is that that will make even wicked men to say, These are Christians indeed! these are they that have not only a name to live, but are alive; that have not only a form of godliness, but the power. A Christian's exercise of faith in times of wants, and of patience in times of affliction, and of courage in times of temptation,

and of contentation in times of opposition, &c., doth mightily silence and stop the mouths of the worst of men.

Henry the Second of France, being present at the martyrdom of a certain tailor burnt by him for religion, was so terrified by beholding the wisdom, courage, faith, and constancy of the said martyr, that he swore at his going away, 'that he would never be any more present at such a sight.'

[5.] Fifthly, Dwell much upon the sweet nature of grace, if you would have your souls carried out to the exercise and improvement of grace.

The name of grace and the nature of grace is very sweet. The Hebrew word that is rendered grace signifies favour and mercy; and it answers to the Greek word χάρις, that signifies favour and mercy; and some derive the Greek word from a word that signifies joy, because grace begets the greatest joy and sweetness in the spirits of men that possibly can be.³

Grace is compared to the sweetest things; to sweet spices, to wine and milk. Grace is a beam of the Sun of righteousness, the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace is a sweet flower of paradise, a spark of glory, &c. It is cherished and maintained by that sweet word, that is sweeter than the honey or the honey-comb, and by sweet union and communion with the Father and the Son. It is exercised about the sweetest objects, viz., God, Christ, promises, and future glory. It sweetens all your services and duties. Your best performances are but stinking sacrifices, if they are not attended with the exercise of grace. Grace is that heavenly salt that makes all our services savoury and sweet in the nostrils of God. Grace is of the greatest and sweetest use to the soul; it is an anchor at sea, and a shield at land; it is a staff to uphold the soul, and a sword to defend the soul; it is bread to strengthen the soul, and wine to cheer the soul; it is physic to cure all diseases, and a plaster to heal all wounds, and a cordial to strengthen the soul under all faintings, &c. Grace is thy eye to see for Christ, thy ear to hear for

Christ, thy head to contrive for Christ, thy tongue to speak for Christ, thy hand to do for Christ, and thy feet to walk with Christ. Grace makes men of the frowardest, sourest, crabbedest natures, to be of a sweet, lovely, amiable, pleasing temper, Isa. 11:7–9. It turns lions into lambs, wolves into sheep, monsters into men, and men into angels, as you may see in Manasseh, Paul, Mary Magdalene, Zaccheus, and others. Yet sometimes grace, in a rugged unhewn nature, is like a gold ring on a leprous hand, or a diamond set in iron, or a jewel in a swine's snout, &c.

[6.] Sixthly, By way of motive, consider this, that wicked men do exercise and improve to the uttermost, all those principles of wickedness that be in them, against the ways of God, the honour of God, and the comforts of the saints.

Now shall wicked men improve all their principles to the uttermost against God, his truth, and saints, &c.; and shall not saints improve their graces to the honour of God, the advancement of truth, and the joy and benefit one of another? You may see the activity of wicked men's spirits in Prov. 4:16, 'They sleep not unless they have done mischief, and their sleep is taken away, unless they cause some to fall.' Oh, they cannot rest! 'The wicked are like the troubled sea,' as Isaiah speaks, 'when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt,' Isa. 57:20, 21. So in 2 Pet. 2:14, 'Having eyes full of adultery, that cannot cease from sin, beguiling unstable souls.' An heart they have, exercised with covetous practices; cursed children,' they break all promises and covenants with God and man, as Samson did the new ropes. So in Prov. 19:19, 'A man of great wrath shall suffer punishment, for if thou deliver him, yet thou must do it again.' The Hebrew word *tosiph* signifies to add. Saith he, Thou must add deliverance to deliverance, for he will still be a-adding sin to sin. So the *Radix*, *jasaph*, is used, Deut. 29:19, and in several other scriptures. Such sinners make God a god of clouts, one that will not do as he saith. Ahab, after he was threatened with utter rooting out, begat fifty sons, as it were to cross God, and to try it out with him. Let God thunder in his judgments, yet he will add sin to sin, he will

proceed from evil to evil, till he comes to the very top of evil, viz., to be hardened in sin, and to scoff at holiness, &c., Jer. 9:3.

The old Italians were wont, in time of thunder, to shoot off their greatest ordnance, and to ring their greatest bells, to drown the noise of the heavens. So let God thunder from heaven, yet wicked men will so improve their wicked principles, that their consciences may not hear the noise of the thunder-claps of divine displeasure. The covetous man will improve his earthly principles, and the ambitious man his ambitious principles, and the voluptuous man his voluptuous principles, and the unchaste man his unclean principles, and the erroneous man his erroneous principles, and the blasphemous man his blasphemous principles, &c. Ah sirs! shall wicked men thus improve their wicked principles to the uttermost against God, Christ, and religion, and against the prosperity, peace, joy, and happiness of the saints? And shall not saints improve their graces to the uttermost for the honour of the Lord, the advancement of religion, and the mutual profit and benefit of each other?

[7.] Seventhly, The more high and excellent any man is in grace, the more highly he shall be exalted in glory.

Oh! therefore, exercise your grace, improve your grace. As you would be high in heaven, labour to improve your graces much while you are here on earth; for glory will be given out at last according to the exercise and improvement of your grace.

The more high and improved a man's graces be, the more that man will do for God; and the more any man doth for God, the more at last shall he receive from God: 1 Cor. 15:58, 'Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.' So Gal. 6:7, seq., 'He that sows sparingly shall reap sparingly; but he that sows liberally shall reap liberally.' The more any man hath improved his grace, the more that man will be able to bear and suffer for God; and the more any man bears and suffers for

God, the more glory shall that man have at last from God: Mat. 5:11, 12, 'Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake; rejoice and be exceeding glad,' or 'leap and dance for joy, leap and skip for joy,' &c. Why so? 'For great is your reward in heaven.' God is a liberal paymaster, and no small things can fall from so great and so gracious a hand as his. The more excellent any man is in grace, the more he is the delight of God. Ps. 16:3, 4, 'My goodness extendeth not to thee, but to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight.' Now this is spoken in the person of Christ, for the apostle applies these words to Christ, Acts 2:25. Now saith Christ, 'My goodness reaches not to thee,' O Father! 'but to the saints, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight.' And doubtless, they that are his greatest delight on earth, shall be possessed of the greatest glory in heaven. If fathers give the greatest portions to those children in whom they delight, why should not Christ? Is it equity in the one, and iniquity in the other? Surely no. Christ may do with his own as he pleases.

Again, the more any man improves his grace, the clearer, sweeter, fuller, and richer is his enjoyments of God here. There is no man in all the world that hath such enjoyments of God, as that man hath that most improves his graces. It is not he that knows most, nor him that hears most, nor yet he that talks most, but he that exercises grace most, that hath most communion with God, that hath the clearest visions of God, that hath the sweetest discoveries and manifestations of God. Now certainly if they that improve their graces most, have most of God here, then without controversy, they shall have most of God hereafter. Doubtless a man may as well plead for equal degrees of grace in this world, as for equal degrees of glory in the other world.

Again, if those who are most graceless and wicked shall be most tormented, then certainly they that are most gracious shall be most exalted in the day of Christ. But the more wicked any man is, the more shall he be tormented in the day of vengeance: 'Woe to you,

Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye shall receive the greater damnation,' Mat. 23:14, Luke 12:47, 48. The darkest, the lowest, the hottest place in hell is provided for you; therefore it roundly follows, that those that are most gracious shall at last be most glorious.

And thus much for the motives that tend to provoke all the precious sons of Zion, to make a thorough improvement of the gifts and graces that the Lord hath bestowed upon them.

I shall now come to the resolution of a weighty question, and so conclude this point, which I have been the longer upon, by reason of its very great usefulness in these days, wherein men strive to exercise anything, yea, everything, but grace and holiness, &c.

Now this question is this,

Quest. When May a Soul be Said to be Excellent in Grace

Quest. When may a soul be said to be excellent in grace, or to have highly improved grace?

Now to this question I shall give these following answers:

[1.] First, A soul that is high and excellent in grace, that hath improved his graces to a considerable height, will keep humble and unspotted under great outward enjoyments. It is said of Daniel, that he had 'an excellent spirit;' and herein did his excellent spirit appear, in that he was holy and humble in heart, though high in place and worth, &c., Dan. 6:3–7. Daniel keeps humble and holy when he is lifted high, yea, made the second man in the kingdom. Malice itself could not find anything against him, but 'in the matter of his God.' It is much to be very gracious when a man is very great, and to be high in holiness when advanced to high places. Usually men's blood rises with their outward good. Certainly, they are worthy ones, and shall

walk with Christ in white, whose garments are not defiled with greatness or riches, &c., Rev. 3:4.

[2.] Secondly, They that have highly improved their graces, will comply with those commands of God that cross nature, that are contrary to nature. And doubtless that man hath improved his graces to a very high rate, whose heart complies with those commands of God that are cross and contrary to nature; as for a man to love them that loathe him, to bless them that curse him, to pray for them that persecute him, &c., Mat. 5:44. It is nothing to love them that love us, and to speak well of them that speak well of us; and to do well, and carry it well towards them, that carry it well towards us. Oh, but for a man to love those that hate him, to be courteous to them that are currish to him, to be sweet to them that are bitter to him, &c., this strongly demonstrates a high improvement of grace. Certainly that man is very, very good, who hath learned that holy lesson of 'overcoming evil with good,' Rom. 12:21. Such a one was Stephen, Acts 7:55, 20:9. He was a man full of the Holy Ghost, that is, of the gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost; he was much in the exercise of grace, he can pray and sigh for them, yea, even weep tears of blood for them, who rejoiced to shed his blood. So did Christ weep over Jerusalem, so did Titus, so did Marcellus over Syracuse, so did Scipio over Carthage; but they shed tears for them, whose blood they were to shed, but Christ shed tears for them who were to shed his blood. So Abraham 'being strong in faith gave glory to God,' Rom. 4:20. How? Why, by complying with those commands of God that were contrary to flesh and blood, as the offering up of his son, his only son, his beloved son, his son of the promise, and by leaving his own country, and his near and dear relations, upon a word of command. The commands of God so change the whole man and make him new, that you can hardly know him to be the same one, saith one. Well, sirs, remember this, it is a dangerous thing to neglect one of his commands, though it be never so cross to flesh and blood, who by another is able to command you into nothing or into hell. 'Let Luther hate me, and in his wrath call me a thousand times devil, yet I will

love him, and acknowledge him to be a most precious servant of God,' saith Calvin.⁴

[3.] Thirdly, Consider this, such souls will follow the Lord fully, that have made an improvement of their graces. Oh, this was the glorious commendations of Caleb and Joshua in Numb. 14:24, that 'they followed the Lord fully,' in the face of all difficulties and discouragements. 'They had another spirit in them,' says the text, they would go up and possess the land; though the walls were as high as heaven, and the sons of Anak were there, they made no more of it than to go, see, and conquer.

'They followed the Lord fully.' In the Hebrew it is, 'They fulfilled after me.' The Hebrew word is a metaphor taken from a ship under sail, that is carried with a strong wind, as fearing neither sands, nor rocks, nor shelves, &c. Such have little if anything of Christ within, who follow him by halves or haltingly.

I remember Cyprian brings in the devil triumphing over Christ thus: 'As for my followers, I never died for them as Christ did for his; I never promised them so great reward as Christ hath done to his, and yet I have more followers than he, and they do more for me than his do for him.' Oh, where is that spirit in these days that was upon those worthies? Ps. 44:7, 'All this is come upon us, yet have we not forgotten thee, neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant; our heart is not turned back, neither have our steps declined from thy way, though thou hast sore broken us in the place of dragons, and covered us with the shadow of death.'

[4.] Fourthly, Such souls that have improved their graces to a considerable height, will bless God as well when he frowns as when he smiles.

As well when he takes as when he gives, when he strikes as when he strokes, as you may see by comparing the scriptures in the margin together. When the Lord had stripped Job of all, and had set him

naked upon the dunghill, why then says Job, 'The Lord gives, and the Lord taketh away, and blessed be the name of the Lord.' Where grace is improved to a considerable height, it will work a soul to sit down satisfied with the naked enjoyment of God, without other things: John 14:8, 'Shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us.' The sight of the Father, without honours, the sight of the Father, without riches, the sight of the Father, without men's favour, will suffice the soul. As Jacob said, 'It is enough that Joseph is alive;' so says the soul that is high in grace, It is enough that Jesus is alive, &c.

[5.] Fifthly, Souls that have improved their graces to a considerable height, will be good in bad times and in bad places.

Such souls will bear up against the stream of evil examples, in the worst of times and in the worst of places. Abraham was righteous in Chaldea; Lot was just in Sodom; Daniel holy in Babylon; Job upright and fearing God in the land of Uz, which was a profane and most abominable superstitious place; Nehemiah zealous in Damascus. Oh, take me a man that hath improved his grace, and the worser the times are the better that man will be; he will bear up bravely against the stream of evil examples, he will be very good when times and all round about him are very bad.

Some say that roses grow the sweeter when they are planted by garlic. Verily, Christians that have gloriously improved their graces are like those roses, they grow sweeter and sweeter, holier and holier, by wicked men. The best diamonds shine most in the dark, and so do the best Christians shine most in the worst times.

[6.] Sixthly, Such turn their principles into practice. They turn their speculations into power, their notions into spirit, their glorious inside into a golden outside, Ps. 45:13.

[7.] Seventhly, Such as have made a considerable improvement of their gifts and graces, have hearts as large as their heads; whereas most men's heads have outgrown their hearts, &c.

[8.] Eighthly, Such are always most busied about the highest things, viz., God, Christ, heaven, &c., Philip. 3; 2 Tim. 4:8; 2 Cor. 4:18; Rom. 8:18.

[9.] Ninthly, Such are always a-doing or receiving good. As Christ went up and down doing good, Mat. 4:23; chap. 9:35; Mark 6:6.

[10.] Tenthly and lastly, Such will mourn for wicked men's sins as well as their own. Oh the tears, the sighs, the groans, that others' sins fetch from these men's hearts! Pambus, in the ecclesiastical history, wept when he saw a harlot dressed with much care and cost, partly to see one take so much pains to go to hell, and partly because he had not been so careful to please God, as she had been to please a wanton lover, Jer. 9:1, 2; 2 Pet. 2:7–9.

I have at this time only given you some short hints, whereby you may know whether you have made any considerable improvement of that grace the Lord hath given you. I do intend, by divine permission, in a convenient time to declare much more of this to the world, I shall follow all what hath been said with my prayers, that it may help on your internal and eternal welfare.

The Fifth Doctrine.

That the Lord Jesus Christ is very rich

'The unsearchable riches of Christ.'—Eph. 3:8.

Now, the next observation that we shall begin with is this:

That the Lord Jesus Christ is very rich.

And the second will be this:

That the great business and work of the ministry is to hold forth to the people the riches of Christ.

We shall begin with the first point at this time, namely, that the Lord Jesus Christ is very rich.

For the opening of this point, we shall attempt these three things:

I. To demonstrate this to be a truth, that the Lord Jesus is very rich.

II. The grounds why he is thus held forth in the word, to be one full of unsearchable riches.

III. To shew you the excellency of the riches of Christ, above all other riches in the world.

IV. And then the use of the point.

I. For the first, that the Lord Jesus Christ is very rich.

[1.] First, Express scripture speaks out this truth. He is rich in goodness: Rom. 2:4, 'Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness,' his 'native goodness,' &c., that is ready to be employed for thy internal and eternal good, &c.

Again, He is rich in wisdom and knowledge: Col. 2:3, 'In whom,' speaking of Christ, 'are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.' Christ was content that his riches should be hid from the world; therefore do not thou be angry that thine is no more known to the world. What is thy one mite to Christ's many millions? &c.

Again, He is rich in grace: Eph. 1:7, 'By whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.'

Again, He is rich in glory: Eph. 1:18, 'That ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what is the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.' So in chap. 3:16, 'That he would grant unto you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.' So in Philip. 4:19, 'But my God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory by Jesus Christ.' The riches of glory are unconceivable riches. Search is made through all the bowels of the earth for something to shadow it by. The riches of this glory is fitter to be believed than to be discoursed of, as some of the very heathens have acknowledged.

This Point is Opened and Proved by Eight Arguments

[2.] But, secondly, as express scripture speaks out this truth, that Christ is very rich, so there are eight things more that do with open mouth speak out Christ to be very rich.

(1.) First, You may judge of his riches, by the dowry and portion that his Father hath given him. In Ps. 2:7, 'Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee; ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.' He is the heir of all things; all things above and below, in heaven and earth, are his. Heb. 1:2, 'God hath in these last days spoken to us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things.' Christ is the richest heir in heaven and earth. Men cry up this man to be a good match and that; and why so, but because they are great heirs? Ah! but what are all the great heirs of the world to this heir, the Lord Jesus? Joseph gave portions to all his brethren, but to Benjamin a portion five times as good as what he gave the residue. So the Lord scatters portions among the sons of men. He gives brass to some, gold to others; temporals to some, spirituals to others; but the greatest portion of all he hath given into the hands of Christ, whom he hath made the heir of all things: Rev. 11:15, 'And the seventh angel sounded, and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The

kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.' So in chap. 19:11, 12, 'And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse, and he that sat upon him was called faithful and true, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns.' Mark that! What are princes' single crowns, and the pope's triple crown, to Christ's many crowns? Certainly he must be very rich, that hath so many kingdoms and crowns. Wait but a while, and you shall see these scriptures made good, &c.

(2.) Secondly, You may judge of his riches, by his keeping open house for the relief and supply of all created creatures, both in heaven and in earth.

You look upon those as very rich that keep open house for all comers and goers; why, such a one is the Lord Jesus Christ; he keeps open house for all comers and goers, for all created creatures both in heaven and earth. Ps. 104:24, 'The earth is full of thy riches, so is the great and wide sea, where are things creeping innumerable, both small and great.' 'He opens his hand, and he satisfies every living creature,' says the Psalmist, Ps. 145:16. So Isa. 55:1, 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, let him come and buy wine and milk, without money and without price. Wherefore dost thou lay out thy money for that which is not bread, and thy strength for that which doth not profit?' All creatures, high and low, honourable and base, noble and ignoble, blessed and cursed, are fed at the cost and charge of the Lord Jesus Christ. They are all fed at his table, and maintained by what comes out of his treasury, his purse. All angels and saints above, and all saints and sinners below, are beholden to Christ for what they enjoy. Oh! the multitudes, the numberless number of those that live upon the cost and charge of Christ. Can you number the stars of heaven? can you number the sands upon the sea-shore? then may you number the multitudes, the millions of angels and men that are maintained upon the cost and charge of the Lord Jesus. In Col. 1:16, 17, 'For by him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions,

or principalities, or powers, all things were created by him, and for him. And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.'

(3.) Thirdly, You may judge of the riches of Christ by the time that he hath fed and clothed, cherished and maintained, so many innumerable millions of angels and men.

He hath maintained his court above and below, upon his own cost and charge, for almost six thousand years. Oh, to keep such a multitude, if it were but for a day, would speak him out to be richer than all the princes in the world; but to keep so many millions, and to keep them so long, what doth this speak out, but that Christ is infinitely rich, rich in goodness and mercy? It would beggar all the princes on earth, to keep but one day the least part of those that Christ maintains every day, &c.

(4.) But, fourthly, you may judge of the riches of Christ by this, that he doth not only enrich all the saints, but all of the saints.

That is, he enriches all the faculties of their souls; he enriches their understandings with glorious light; their consciences with quickness, pureness, tenderness and quietness; and their wills with holy intentions and heavenly resolutions; and their affections of love, joy, fear, &c., with life, heat, and warmth, and with the beauty and glory of the most soul-enriching, soul-delighting, soul-ravishing, and soul-contenting objects &c. All saints' experiences seal to this truth, and therefore a touch shall suffice, &c.

(5.) Fifthly, Judge of the riches of Christ by this, that notwithstanding all the vast expense and charge that he is at, and hath been at for so many millions of thousands, and that for near six thousand years, yet he is never the poorer; his purse is never the emptier.

There is still in Christ a fulness of abundance, and a fulness of redundance, notwithstanding all that he hath expended. It were blasphemy to think that Christ should be a penny the poorer by all

that he hath laid out for the relief of all those that have their dependence upon him. Col. 1:19, 'It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell.' Not stay or abide a night or a day and away, but should dwell. The sun hath not the less light for filling the stars with light. A fountain hath not the less for filling the lesser vessels. There is in Christ plenitudo fontis, the fulness of a fountain. The overflowing fountain pours out water abundantly, and yet remains full. Why, the Lord Jesus is such an overflowing fountain; he fills all, and yet remains full. Christ hath the greatest worth and wealth in him. As the worth and value of many pieces of silver is in one piece of gold, so all the petty excellencies scattered abroad in the creature are united to Christ; yea, all the whole volume of perfections which is spread through heaven and earth, is epitomised in him, &c.

(6.) Sixthly, The Lord Jesus is generally rich, and that speaks him out to be rich indeed. He is generally rich. You have few persons that are generally rich. That is a rich man indeed, that is generally rich; that is, that is rich in money and rich in land, and rich in commodities, and rich in jewels, &c. Now the Lord Jesus Christ is one that is generally rich; he is rich in all spirituals; he is rich in goodness, rich in wisdom and knowledge; he is rich in grace, and rich in glory. Yea, he is generally rich in respect of temporals. 'He is the heir of all things.' He is the heir of all the gold in the world, and of all the silver, and of all the jewels, and of all the land, and of all the cattle in the world, as you may see by comparing some scriptures together. Hos. 2:5, 8, 9, 'For their mother hath played the harlot, she that conceived them hath done shamefully; for she said, I will go after my lovers that gave me my bread and my water, and my wool, and my flax, and my oil, and my drink.' But mark what follows: verses 8, 9, 'For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal; therefore will I return, and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and will recover my wool and my flax, given to cover her nakedness.' So in Ps. 24:1, 'The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof, the round world, and all that dwell therein.' All others are either usurpers or stewards; it is the Lord Jesus that is the

great landlord of heaven and earth. So in Ps. 50:8–10, 'I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices, or thy burnt-offerings; I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he-goats out of thy folds: for every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains, and the wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee; for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof.' It is all mine, saith the Lord.

Thus you see that the Lord is generally rich, rich in houses, in lands, in gold, in silver, in cattle, &c., in all temporals as well as in spirituals; but where will you find a man that is generally rich either in spirituals or temporals? It is true, you may find one Christian rich in one grace, and another Christian rich in another; but where will you find a Christian that is generally rich, that is rich in every grace: that is rich in knowledge, in faith, in love, in wisdom, in humility, in meekness, in patience, in self-denial? Abraham was rich in faith, and Moses was rich in meekness, and Job was rich in patience, and Joshua was rich in courage, and David was rich in uprightness, &c. But where will you find a saint that is rich in all these graces? Or where will you find a man that is generally rich, in respect of temporals, as to be rich in lands, and rich in moneys, and rich in wares, and rich in jewels, &c. But now the Lord Jesus Christ is generally rich, both in respect of spirituals and temporals. 'In having nothing I have all things,' saith one, 'because I have Christ; having therefore all things in him, I seek no other reward, for he is the universal reward,' &c.

(7.) Seventhly, You may judge of the riches of Christ, by the tribute and rent that is due to him.

He is the great landlord and owner of all that angels and men possess above and below. All created creatures are but tenants-at-will to this rich landlord, the Lord Jesus. He puts out and puts in as he pleases; he lifts up one, and casts down another; he throws down the mighty, and sets up the needy, according to the pleasure of his own will. 'Whom he will he destroys, and whom he will he saves alive,' Ps.

113:7; 148:14; Luke 1:52. Whom he will he binds, and whom he will he sets at liberty; whom he will he exalts, and whom he will he abases; whom he will he makes happy, and whom he will he makes miserable, &c. The psalmist, Ps. 148, upon this account, calls upon all celestial and terrestrial creatures, to pay their tribute of praise to the Lord. He hath given them all their beings, and he maintains them all in the beings that he hath given them.

The ancient Hebrews, as Josephus relates, set marks and tokens sometimes on their arms, sometimes at their gates, to declare to all the world the tribute and praise that was due to the Lord, for all his benefits and favours shewed unto them. Bernard saith, 'We must imitate the birds, who morning and evening, at the rising and setting of the sun, omit not to pay the debt of praise that is due to their creator.'

(8.) Eighthly and lastly, judge of the riches of Christ by the multiplicity and variety of temporal and spiritual gifts and rewards that he scatters among the children of men.

He gives honours to thousands, and riches to thousands, and peace to thousands, and pardon to thousands, and the joys and comforts of the Holy Ghost to thousands. There is not a moment that passes over our head, but he is a-scattering of jewels up and down the world; he throws some into one bosom, and others into others, but the best into the bosom of his saints. Oh, the abundance of peace, the abundance of joy and comfort! Oh, the fear, the faith, the love, the kindness, the goodness and sweetness, that the Lord Jesus Christ scatters up and down among the precious sons and daughters of Zion, besides all temporal favours. There is not a saint that receives so much as a cup of cold water, but Christ rewards it abundantly into the bosom of the giver, Mat. 10:42. By all which you may well judge, that certainly the Lord Jesus is very rich, for if he were not, he could never hold out in scattering of rich rewards among so many millions, and for so many thousand years, as he hath done.

And so much for the proof of the point, viz., that the Lord Jesus is very rich.

We come now in the second place to discover to you,

Four Grounds and Reasons Why the Lord Jesus Christ

is Held Forth in the Word to be so Very Rich

II. The grounds and reasons why the Lord Jesus Christ is held forth in the word to be so very rich.

And they are these that follow:

[1.] First, To encourage poor sinners to look after, and to be willing to match with him.

Poverty hinders many a match. The Lord did foresee from eternity, that fallen man would never look after Christ, if there were not something to be gotten by Christ. The Lord hath therefore in his wisdom and goodness to fallen man, thus presented him as one exceeding rich, that so poor sinners might fall in love with him, and be willing to give up themselves to him; Prov. 8:34, 35, 'Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors;' as princes' guards do at princes' gates and doors. Now, the arguments to draw out the soul thus to wait upon the Lord, lie in the next words, 'For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord.' The Hebrew runs thus, 'For finding me he shall find lives, and shall draw forth the favour of the Lord.' Divine favour is as it were a jewel locked up; ay, but by finding Christ, by getting Christ, the soul gets this jewel, that is more worth than a world; yea, by gaining him, the soul gains lives; to wit, a life of grace, and a life of glory, and what would the soul have more?

A second ground of this is,

[2.] Because he is ordained by the Father to convey all riches of grace to his chosen and beloved ones.

John 1:16, 'Of his fulness we all receive grace for grace;' and this we receive by divine ordination. John 6:27, 'Labour not,' saith Christ, 'for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth to everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.' God the Father hath sealed Christ; he hath designed Christ, he hath set Christ apart for this very work, that he might give grace unto us. God hath ordained to convey all fulness of light to the air by the sun, and therefore hath put a greater fulness of light into the sun. God hath ordained all fulness of nourishment to the branches by the roots, and therefore hath put a fulness of juice into the roots. So the Lord hath ordained that all the riches of grace, of peace, of glory, &c., that believers shall enjoy here and in heaven, they shall have from the Sun of righteousness, from this blessed root the Lord Jesus Christ; and therefore the Father hath filled this Sun with light, this root with heavenly juice, because he is by divine ordination to convey all spiritual and glorious riches into the hearts of his chosen and beloved ones, John 15:21, 22.

A third ground is,

[3.] To take away all excuse from ungodly and wicked men, and that they may be found speechless in the day of vengeance, when the Lord shall come to reckon with them.

Ah, sinners! how will you that have turned your backs upon Christ, who is thus rich, be able to answer it in the day when God shall reason the case with you? When God shall say, Sinners, hath it not been often told you that Christ is rich in mercy, and rich in goodness, and rich in grace, rich in pardons, rich in loves, and rich in glory, rich in spirituals, rich in temporals, and rich in eternal, and yet you have slighted this Christ, you have turned your backs upon this Christ, you have preferred your lusts, and the world, and the service of the devil, above this Christ. Oh! how dumb, how speechless will sinners be, when the Lord shall thus plead with them. Oh! how will their countenances be changed, their thoughts troubled, and their joints loosed, their consciences enraged, and their souls terrified, when

they shall see what a rich match they have refused, and thereupon how justly they are for ever accursed, &c.

[4.] Lastly, It is upon this account,

That he may be a complete Redeemer to us, and that nothing may hinder our souls closing with the Lord Jesus Christ.

We stand in need of one that is rich; rich in grace to pardon us, rich in power to support us, and rich in goodness to relieve us, and rich in glory to crown us. There is none but such a Christ can serve our turns. We stand in need of one that is rich, that is generally rich, one that is rich in money to pay all our debts. We have run much upon the score with God, and none can pay this score but Christ. Our sins are debts that none can pay but Christ. It is not our tears but his blood, it is not our sighs but his sufferings, that can satisfy for our sins. We are much in debt to God for the ground we tread on, the air we breathe in, the beds we lie on, the bread we eat, the clothes we wear, &c.; and none can pay this debt but Christ. Angels and saints may pity us, but they cannot discharge the least debt for us, &c. Christ must pay all, or we are prisoners for ever, &c. We stand in need of one that is rich in goodness. We are a needy people, and are still in want. Christ must be still a-giving, or we shall be still a-languishing. If he shut his hand, we perish and return to dust. Our temporal wants are many, our spiritual wants are more, and if Christ do not supply them, who will? who can? Nay, our wants are so many and so great, that Christ himself could not supply them, were he not very, very rich.

And thus I have given you a brief account of the reasons of the point, why the Lord Jesus is held forth by the Scripture to be so very rich.

We shall now come to the third thing proposed, and that is,

The Excellency of the Riches of Christ

above all other riches in the world, held forth in seven particulars

III. The excellency of the riches of Christ above all other riches in the world.

I shall briefly run over this third branch, and so come to the application, which is most in my eye, and upon my heart.

[1.] First, The riches of Christ are incomparable riches: Prov. 3:13–15, 'Happy is the man that findeth Wisdom,' that is, the Lord Jesus Christ, 'and the man that getteth understanding; for the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her.' One grain of grace is far beyond all the gold of Ophir and all the silver of the Indies, which are but the guts and garbage of the earth. We may say of the riches of this world, compared with the riches of Christ, as Gideon sometime said of the vintage of Abiezer, 'The gleanings of Ephraim are better than the vintage of Abiezer.' So the gleanings, the smallest gatherings of the riches of Christ, are far better, more excellent, more satisfying, more contenting, more ravishing than all the riches of this world.

'The whole Turkish empire,' saith Luther, 'is but a crust that God throws to a dog.' The wise merchant, Mat. 13:44, 45, parts with all to gain this pearl of price; the truth is, other riches are but a burden. Gen. 13:2, 'Abraham was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold. The Hebrew word chabbedh is, 'He was very heavy in cattle, in silver, and in gold'; to signify, that riches are but heavy burdens. A little will serve nature, less will serve grace, but nothing will serve men's lusts.

Pheraulus, a poor man, on whom Cyrus bestowed so much, that he knew not what to do with his riches, being wearied out with care in keeping of them, he desired rather to live quietly, though poor, as he

had done before, than to possess all those riches with discontent; therefore he gave away all his wealth, desiring only to enjoy so much as might supply his necessities. Let worldly professors think seriously of this story and blush, &c.

[2] Secondly, The riches of Christ are inexhaustible riches. As I have shewed you, Christ can never be drawn dry.

The Spanish ambassador coming to see the treasury of St Mark, in Venice, which is cried up throughout the world, fell a-groping whether it had any bottom, and being asked why, answered, 'In this among other things, my great master's treasure differs from yours, in that his hath no bottom, as I find yours to have,' alluding to the mines of Mexico and Potosi, &c. Certainly Christ's treasures have no bottom, all his bags are bottomless; but Scripture, history, and experience, do abundantly testify that men's bags, purses, coffers, and mines, may be exhausted or drawn dry, but Christ's can never. Millions of thousands live upon Christ, and he feels it not; his purse is always full, though he be always giving, &c.

[3.] Thirdly, The riches of Christ are soul-satisfying riches. Oh those riches of grace and goodness that be in Christ, how do they satisfy the souls of sinners! A pardon doth not more satisfy a condemned man, nor bread the hungry man, nor drink the thirsty man, nor clothes the naked man, nor health the sick man, than the riches of Christ do satisfy the gracious man. John 4:13, 14, 'Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of living water springing up to everlasting life.' Grace is a perpetual flowing fountain. Grace is compared to water. Water serves to cool men when they are in a burning heat, so grace cools the soul when it hath been scorched and burned up under the sense of divine wrath and displeasure. Water is cleansing, so is grace; water is fructifying, so is grace; and water is satisfying, it satisfies the thirsty, and so doth grace. 'Shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us,' John 14:8. But now earthly riches can

never satisfy the soul; but as they said once of Alexander, 'that had he a body suitable to his mind, he would set one foot upon sea, and the other upon land;' he would reach the east with one hand, and the west with the other. And doubtless the same frame of spirit is to be found in all the sons of Adam. In Eccles. 5:10, 'He that loves silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase. This is also vanity.' If a man be hungry, silver cannot feed him; if naked, it cannot clothe him; if cold, it cannot warm him; if sick, it cannot recover him, much less then is it able to satisfy him. Oh! but the riches of Christ are soul-satisfying riches. A soul rich in spirituals, rich in eternals, says, I have enough, though I have not this and that temporal good, &c.

[4.] Fourthly, The riches of Christ are harmless riches. They are riches that will not hurt the soul, that will not harm the soul. Where is there a soul to be found in all the world that was ever made worse by spiritual riches? Oh but earthly riches have cast down many, they have slain many. If poverty, with Saul, hath killed her thousands, riches, with David, hath killed her ten thousands. Eccles. 5:13, 'There is a sore evil which I have seen under the sun, namely, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt.' Earthly riches are called thorns, and well they may; for as thorns, they pierce both head and heart; the head with cares in getting them, and the heart with grief in parting with them. Oh the souls that riches have pierced through and through with many sorrows! Oh the minds that riches have blinded! Oh the hearts that riches have hardened! Oh the consciences that riches have benumbed! Oh the wills that riches have perverted! Oh the affections that riches have disordered and destroyed! Earthly riches are very vexing, very defiling, very dividing, and to multitudes prove very ruining.

It was a wise and Christian speech of Charles the Fifth to the Duke of Venice, who, when he had shewed him the glory of his princely palace and earthly paradise, instead of admiring it, or him for it, only returned him this grave and serious memento, *Hœc sunt quœ faciunt invitos mori*, these are the things which make us unwilling to die, &c.

[5.] Fifthly, The riches of Christ are unsearchable riches. This is plain in the text, 'Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.' There are riches of justification, riches of sanctification, riches of consolation, and riches of glorification in Christ. All the riches of Christ are unsearchable riches. A saint with all the light that he hath from the Spirit of Christ, is not able to search to the bottom of these riches. Nay, suppose that all the perfections of angels and saints in a glorified estate should meet in one noble breast, yet all those perfections could not enable that glorious glorified creature for to search to the bottom of Christ's unsearchable riches. Doubtless when believers come to heaven, when they shall see God face to face, when they shall know as they are known, when they shall be filled with the fulness of God, even then they will sweetly sing this song, 'Oh the height, the depth, the length, the breadth of the unsearchable riches of Christ!' As there is no Christ to this Christ, so there are no riches to his riches, &c. Oh but such are not the riches of this world, they may be reckoned, they may be fathomed, &c.

[6.] Sixthly, The riches of the Lord Jesus Christ are permanent and abiding riches; they are lasting, they are durable riches. That is a choice scripture, Prov. 8:18, 'Riches and honour are with me, yea, durable riches and righteousness.' The Hebrew word that is rendered 'durable riches' signifies old riches. All other riches are but new, they are but of yesterday as it were. Oh! but with me are old riches, durable riches. All other riches, in respect of their fickleness, are as a shadow, a bird, a ship, an arrow, a dream, a post, &c. This Valerian, Valens, and Bajazet, three proud emperors, found by experience, and so have many kings, and generals, and nobles, as Scripture and history do abundantly evidence. Earthly riches are very uncertain, 1 Tim. 6:17. They are ever upon the wing; they are like tennis balls, which are banded up and down from one to another. As the bird hops from twig to twig, so do riches from man to man. This age can furnish us with multitudes of instances of this nature, &c.

[7.] Seventhly and lastly, They are the most useful riches, to sweeten all other riches, mercies, and changes, &c., which speaks out the excellency of these riches above all other riches. The more useful anything is, the more excellent it is. Now the riches of Christ are of all things the most useful to poor souls. When the soul is under the guilt of sin, nothing relieves it like the riches of Christ. When the soul is surrounded with temptations, nothing strengthens it like the riches of Christ. When the soul is mourning under afflictions, nothing comforts it like the riches of Christ. When state, friends, and trading fails, nothing makes a Christian sing care away like the riches of Christ, &c. The riches of Christ sweeten all other riches that men enjoy. If a man be rich in parts, or rich in grace, rich in faith, rich in knowledge, rich in wisdom, rich in joy, rich in peace, &c.; or if a man be rich in temporals, rich in money, rich in wares, rich in jewels, rich in lands, &c., the glorious and unsearchable riches of Christ sweeten all his riches, and the want of these riches embitters all the riches that men enjoy. When men's consciences are enlightened and awakened, then they cry out, what are all these worldly riches to us, except we had an interest in the riches of Christ? As Absalom once said, 'What are all these to me, except I see the king's face?'

I have read of one that, upon his dying bed, called for his bags, and laid a bag of gold to his heart, and then cried out, 'Take it away, it will not do, it will not do.' There are things that earthly riches can never do.

They can never satisfy divine justice;

They can never pacify divine wrath;

Nor they can never quiet a guilty conscience.

And till these things are done, man is undone. The crown of gold cannot cure the headache, nor the honourable garter cannot cure the gout, nor the chain of pearls about the neck cannot take away the

pain of the teeth. Oh but the unsearchable riches of Christ give ease under all pains and torments.

Nugas, the Scythian king, despising the rich presents and ornaments that were sent unto him by the emperor of Constantinople (Michael Paleolagus), asked him that brought them, 'Whether those things could drive away calamities, diseases, or deaths?' looking upon all those presents as no presents, that could not keep off calamities from him. Verily, all the riches and glories of this world cannot keep off the least calamity, neither can they make up the want of the least mercy. But the riches of Christ do both keep off calamities, and make up the want of all mercies that the soul craves or needs. All which speak out the excellency of the riches of Christ above all other riches. We come now unto,

1st Use is, To exhort Christians to labour to be spiritually rich.

IV. The uses of this point.

And the first use that we shall make, is a use of exhortation, to exhort you all, seeing Christ is so rich, to labour to be spiritually rich. Oh labour to be rich in grace. In the handling of this use I shall propound this method.

[1.] I shall lay down some considerations that may provoke your souls to labour to be rich in grace.

[2.] I shall propound some directions or helps, to help you to be rich in grace, which is as much a mercy as a duty, &c.

[3.] I shall lay down some propositions concerning the soul's being rich in grace.

[4.] I shall shew you how you may know whether you are the persons that are rich in grace, or no.

I shall begin with the first, and be a little the more large upon it, because it is a point of mighty weight and concernment; and then be the more brief in the three following particulars.

For the first, by way of motive, I shall only propound these following considerations, to provoke your souls to labour to be rich in grace. Laborandum was one of the emperors' motto, and must be every Christian's.

[1.] First, Consider that the more rich the soul is in grace, the higher the soul will be in joy and comfort.

It is the greatest measures of grace that usher in the greatest measure of joy and comfort into a believing heart. Christians, have you tasted of the consolations of God? Have you at times sat down and drank of these wells of salvation? Are your hearts carried out for more of those waters of life? Then labour to be rich in grace. A little star yields but a little light, and a little grace will yield but a little comfort, but great measures of grace will yield a man not only a heaven hereafter, but also a heaven of joy here. Divine comfort is a choice flower, a precious jewel, and only to be found in their bosoms that are rich in grace. Spiritual comforts are such strong waters, that weak Christians are not able to bear them. Great measures of grace carry with them the greatest evidence of the truth of grace; and the clearer evidence there is in the soul of the truth of grace, the higher will joy and comfort spring. The soul is apt to hang her comforts on every hedge, to shift and shank in every by-corner for comfort; but as air lights not without the sun, and as fuel heats not without fire, so neither can anything soundly comfort a Christian without the God of grace, without his being rich in grace. Great measures of grace carry with them the greatest evidence of a man's union and communion with God, and the more a man's union and communion with God is evidenced, the more will the soul be filled with that joy that is

unspeakable and full of glory, and with that comfort and peace that passes understanding. In great measures of grace a man may read most of the love and favour of God; and the more a man sees of the love and favour of God to him, the more high the springs of comfort rise in him. In great measures of grace, as in a crystal glass, the soul sees the glorious face of God shining and sparkling, and this fills the soul with joy: Acts 9:31, 'Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.' The more their graces were increased, the more their comforts were augmented.

'If one drop of the joy of the Holy Ghost should fall into hell, it would swallow up all the torments of hell,' saith Austin. Oh! who would not then labour to increase in grace, that he may abound in joy? The promise lies most fair before their eyes that are rich in grace. Their interest in it is most clear, and rarely that they go without it, unless it is by taking part sometimes with Satan against their interest in Christ, or sometimes through the power of unbelief, which indeed cuts off all the comfort of the soul, or by looking after other lovers, or by not hearkening to the voice of the Comforter, &c. Christians, you often complain of the want of joy and comfort. Oh! do but abound in grace, and you won't complain of the want of comfort. 'Without delight the soul cannot live,' saith one; 'take away all delight, and the soul dies.' Let this that hath been spoken, provoke every Christian to labour to be rich in grace.

[2.] But, Secondly, consider this, you have singular opportunities and choice advantages to be rich in grace.

There is a price put into your hands, but where are your hearts? In former times God gave our grace by drops, but now by flagons, Cant. 2:5. Opportunities, if not improved, will, as that sword that Hector gave Ajax, be turned into your own bowels. This will be a sword in thy bowels, that there hath been soul-enriching opportunities, and thou hast neglected them, and turned thy back upon them. The

thoughts of this will one day be the scorpions that will vex thee, the rod that will lash thee, the thorns that will prick thee, and the worm that will gnaw thee. 'The stork,' saith the prophet, 'knows his appointed times; and the turtle, and the crane, and the swallow, observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the Lord,' Jer. 8:7. The market for your souls is open; slip not your season, lest with the foolish virgins you go to buy when it is too late, Mat. 25. The merchant will not slip his opportunity of buying, nor the sailor his of sailing, nor the husbandman his of sowing, and why should you slip yours of growing rich in grace? Many men lose their souls, as Saul lost his kingdom, by not discerning their time to be spiritually rich.

Tamerlane at first hung out a white flag, but if they slipped that opportunity, then a red, and so death and destruction followed, &c. The Lord Jesus hangs out the white flag of mercy in these days, to entice souls to come in, and to share with him in his glorious and unsearchable riches, in the riches of his grace and mercy; but if you stand out, Christ hath a red flag, and if that be once put out, you are lost for ever. Thrice happy are those that take the first opportunity of closing with Christ, and of subjecting themselves to Christ.

Plutarch writes of Hannibal, 'That when he could have taken Rome he would not, but when he would have taken Rome he could not.' When many men may have mercy, they won't, and when they would have mercy, they shan't, Prov. 1:24, seq. Mercy and grace are sometimes upon the bare knee. Christ stands knocking at sinners' doors; he is willing to come in and make sinners rich and happy for ever; he calls upon souls to open to him, Rev. 3:20, seq. 'Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is the King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle,' Ps. 24:7, 8. The King of glory comes not *vacuis manibus*, empty-handed; no, he comes with his hands and heart full of rich and royal presents, and blessed and enriched for ever are those that open to this King of glory, &c.

[3.] Thirdly, Consider this, souls rich in grace shall have their names immortal.

Every man naturally would have, if it were possible, his name immortal. Now there is no way in the world to have your names immortal, like this of growing rich in grace. A man that is spiritually rich shall live, and his name shall live when he is dead. In Neh. 7:2, it is said of Hananiah, that 'he was a faithful man, and feared God above many;' or, 'he feared God above multitudes,' as the Hebrew hath it: merabbim, from rahab. His name lives, though his body for many hundred years hath been turned to dust. So in Acts 7:55, 'Stephen was a man full of the Holy Ghost.' Though Stephen was stoned, yet his name lives, his memorial is precious among the saints to this very day. So in Heb. 11:38, they were such 'of whom this world was not worthy.' And in the third Epistle of John, the six first verses, compared with ver. 12, Gaius and Demetrius, who were rich in grace, have crowns of honour set upon their heads, their names live, and are a sweet savour to this very day, &c. So in Ps. 112:6, 'The righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance, but the name of the wicked shall rot.' The great man's name, and the rich man's name, shall rot, saith he, but 'the name of the righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance.'

The Persians use to write their kings' names in golden characters; so the Lord writes the names of souls rich in grace in golden characters. Their names are always heirs to their lives. Believe it, there is no such way in the world to have immortal names, like this of growing rich in grace. One man thinks to make his name immortal, by making himself great; another by heaping up silver and gold as the dust of the earth or the stones of the street, and another by doing some strange exploits, &c. But for all this the Lord will make good his word, 'the name of the wicked shall rot.' If God be God, his name must rot; but 'the righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance;' they leave their names behind for a blessing, Isa. 65:15. It is sad to consider what many poor carnal creatures have done and suffered to make their names immortal. The Romans'

desires of praise and a name, made them bountiful of their purses, and prodigal of their lives.

Erostratus set the temple of Diana on fire, on that night that Alexander was born, only that he might be talked of when he was dead.

Calvin observes, that Servetus in Geneva, in the year 1555, gave all his goods to the poor, and his body to be burned, and all for a name, for a little glory among men. But these poor creatures have all missed the mark. There is no way, Christians, to have your names immortal, like this, of growing rich in grace. Satan nor the world shall never be able to bury such men's names, who are rich in grace; their names shall rise in glory here, as well as their bodies hereafter.

[4.] But then, fourthly and mainly, consider, that spiritual riches will enable you to live up to your principles.

That man that hath but so much grace as will keep hell and his soul asunder, will never live up to his principles. Souls weak in grace are too apt to deny, and in their practices to contradict, their own principles; and oh that this age could not furnish us with too many instances of this nature! Oh! what is that that is the reproach of religion, and the dishonour of God and the gospel, but this, that professors live below their principles, that they live not up to their principles? And let me tell you, Christians, there is nothing but a rich measure of grace that will enable a soul to live up to his principles. A man that is not rich in grace will never be able to live up to his own principles, but will upon every occasion and temptation be ready to wound two at once; the honour of God and his own soul. Yea, men that are not rich in grace, will be ready to deny their own principles, as many weak Christians did in persecuting times.

But you will say to me, What are those gracious and holy principles, that a rich measure of grace will enable a man to live up to?

I will instance only in those that have most worth and weight in them, and they are worthy of all your thoughts.

(1.) First, It is your principle, that you must rather suffer than sin.

It is your principle rather to undergo the greatest calamities, than willingly to commit the least iniquity. Now, pray tell me, what will enable a Christian to live up to this principle? Will a little grace, a little knowledge of God, a little faith in God, a little love to God, a little zeal for God, a little communion with God? Will this do it? Surely no. It must be much grace that must enable the soul to live up to this principle. When sin and suffering have stood in competition, many weak Christians have chosen rather to sin, than to suffer, which hath opened many a mouth, and sadded many a heart, and wounded many a conscience. Yea, such by their not suffering, have suffered more than ever they could have suffered from the wrath and rage of man. Oh! but now spiritual riches will enable a man to live up to this principle, as you may see in Daniel, who had an excellent spirit in him, who was rich in grace, and filled with the Holy Ghost; he lives up to his principles; he lives out his principles, when he was put hard to it; when he must either neglect the worship of his God and make a god of his king, or to the lions' den. Now, Daniel chooses rather to be cast into the lions' den than not to do homage to his God; he had rather suffer much, than that God should lose a dram of his glory. Of the same spirit and metal were those worthies, Heb. 11, who, when they were put to it, did rather choose to suffer the very worst of miseries, than they would in the least dishonour the Lord, wound their own consciences, and make work for repentance, &c. And so did Jovinian, Eusebius, Galeacius [Carraciolus], Basil, Vincentius, Bolilas, &c. By all which you see, that Christians that are spiritually rich, live up to this principle, viz., to suffer rather than sin, when sin and suffering stand in competition; which babes in grace cannot do.

(2.) Secondly, It is your principle, that grace and virtue are to be pursued after, for their own worth, beauty, and excellency.

But pray, tell me, what will carry a Christian out to this principle? Will a little grace carry a man out to pursue after grace, for the beauty, holiness, excellency, and spirituality that is in it? Alas! we see by daily experience that it will not do it. All other considerations put together, are little enough to draw men on to pursue after grace for its native beauty and excellency. Many seek Christ, but it is for loaves more than for love, John 6:26; and they pursue after the means of grace, not for the beauty, excellency, and glory that is stamped upon the means, but one to maintain his honour, and another to keep up his name, and another to bring in credit or custom, and another to please his friends, and another to silence his conscience, &c., but few there be, if any, but those that are rich in grace, that are true to this principle, that pursue after grace for its own beauty and excellency. It was a notable expression of David, who was a man rich in grace, Ps. 119:140, 'Thy word is very pure, therefore thy servant loveth it.' Oh! for a soul to love grace, and the word of grace, for its own interest, for the holiness, purity, and glory of it. This speaks out the soul to be rich in grace. So Paul, a man rich in grace, pursues after grace for its own interest, for the beauty and excellency of it. He forgets 'what is behind, and presses forward after the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, that if by any means he might attain to the resurrection of the dead,' Philip. 3:13, 14. That is, to that perfection that the dead shall reach to in the morning of the resurrection, &c.

The young philosophers were very forward to get the precepts of their sect, and the rules of severity, that they might discourse with kings and nobles, not that they might reform their own manners. Many professors in this age are like those philosophers; they are very industrious to get knowledge, that they may be able to discourse, and that they may be eyed, owned, and honoured among others, for their knowledge and understanding. But now souls that are rich in grace, they labour after greater measures of grace, out of love to grace, and because of an excellency that they see in grace. Grace is a very sparkling jewel, and he that loves it, and pursues after it for its own native beauty, hath much of it within him, &c.

(3.) Thirdly, It is your principle, that men must subject themselves, and square all their actions by the word of God.

Now, what will make a man live up to this principle? Will a little grace? Surely no, Isa. 8:10. But great measures of grace will. Zacharias and Elizabeth were rich in grace, and they lived up to this principle: Luke 1:5, 'They walked in all the commandments of the Lord blameless.' The apostles were rich in grace, and they lived up to this principle: 2 Cor. 1:12, 'This is our rejoicing, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, we have had our conversation in the world.' So in 1 Thes. 2:10, 'Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily, justly, and unblameably, we have behaved ourselves among you that believe.' Oh! here are souls that live up to their principles. A Christian that is rich in grace is excellent all over.

George, prince of Anhalt his family is said to have been ecclesia, academia, curia, a church, a university, and a court. A Christian that is rich in grace hath a heart as large as his head, yea, a heart that is as large as the whole will of God: Acts 13:22, 'I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after my own heart, which shall fulfil all my will.' In the Greek it is, all my wills, θελήματα, to note the universality and sincerity of his obedience. Souls rich in grace practise that themselves which they prescribe to others. Lessons of music and copies must not be read only, but acted also. Souls rich in grace are good at this, and they will be good in all places and cases. They are as good at the particular duties of religion, as at those that are more general; they are good fathers, and good masters, and good husbands, as well as good Christians, in a more general sense. But now souls that have but a little grace, they are much in the general duties of religion, but very defective in the particular duties of religion, as sad experience doth abundantly evidence. Those that have a blemish in their eye, think the sky to be ever cloudy; and nothing is more common to weak spirits, than to be criticising and contending about other duties, and to neglect their own. But such that are rich in grace, make it their glory to subject themselves to the rule of righteousness; as Baldasser, a German minister, cried out, Let

the word of the Lord come, let it come, saith he, and we will submit to it, if we had many hundred necks to put under. It must be much grace that must enable a man freely, fully, and sweetly to subject himself and his actions to the word of the Lord.

(4.) Fourthly, It is your principle, that you must deny yourselves, your own profit, ease, pleasure, &c., for a public good.

And this the Scripture requires. It is your principle to deny yourselves, your own honour, pleasure, profit, &c., for a public advantage, when your particular advantages stand in competition with the public. Now self must be laid by, and the public must carry the day. Oh, but will a little grace enable a man to live up to this principle! Woful experience shews the contrary. Ay, but now, take me a man that is rich in grace, and he will live up to this golden principle, as you may see in Nehem. 5:14–18. Nehemiah was a man eminent in grace, and he chose rather to live upon his own purse than upon the public purse: 'Moreover, from the time that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, from the twentieth year even unto the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes the king, that is, twelve years, I and my brethren have not eaten the bread of the governor. Behold the former governors that had been before me, were chargeable unto the people, and had taken of them bread and wine, besides forty shekels of silver; yea, even their servants did bear rule over the people: but so did not I, because of the fear of God. Yea, also I continued in the work of this wall, neither bought we any land: and all my servants were gathered thither unto the work. Moreover, there were at my table an hundred and fifty of the Jews and rulers, besides those that came in to us from among the heathen. And yet for all this,' saith he, 'I required not the bread of the governor, because the bondage was heavy upon the people.' Oh, here was a brave spirit indeed; he was far from enriching himself by others' ruins, from emptying others' purses to fill his own. But he is dead, and it seems this brave spirit is buried with him. There are few of his name, and fewer of his spirit, if any in this world, and therefore well might he pray, 'Think upon me, my God, for good, according to

all that I have done for this people.' And accordingly God did think upon him for good, and made him very famous and glorious in his generation. And that is a remarkable passage concerning Moses: Num. 14:12–21, 'I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a great nation, and mightier than they,' saith God to Moses. 'Therefore let me alone to destroy them and cut them off, for they are a rebellious generation. And I will make thee a mightier nation for honour, riches, and power, than they. Nay,' saith Moses, 'this may not be, Lord.' Oh, the people must be spared, the people must be pardoned, and the people must have thy presence with them, and rather than it should be otherwise, let my name, Lord, be blotted out of the book of life. Lord! I care not how ill it goes with my particular, so they may live. Can the self-seekers of our age think seriously of this and not blush?

So Mordecai was a man of a brave public spirit: Esther 10:3, 'Mordecai the Jew was next unto King Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews, and accepted of the multitude of his brethren, seeking the wealth of his people.' Or as the Hebrew hath it, 'Seeking good for his people;' that is, he made it his business to seek their good. Christ also was full of grace, and had a brave public spirit; he laid out himself and laid down himself for a public good; and so did Paul, &c. Few in our days are of his opinion and mind, who was rather willing to beautify Italy than his own house. 'That pilot dies nobly,' saith Seneca, 'who perisheth in the storm with the helm in his hand.' Such that seek themselves more than the public good must be served as Æsop did his fellow-servant; he gave him warm water to drink, by which means he vomited up the stolen figs. Friends, it is not a little grace that will make a man prefer the public good, above his own particular good, but much grace will; therefore labour to be rich in grace.³

(5.) Fifthly, It is your principle, that you are to do the duties that God requires of you, and quietly leave the issues and events of all to the wise dispose of God.

But pray tell me, will a little grace enable a man to live up to this principle, to do his duty, and to leave issues and events to him to whom they belong? Surely no. Eccles. 9:10, 'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might, for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest. Mark, he doth not say, what thy head finds to do, for that may find a thousand things; nor what thy heart finds to do, for that may find ten thousand things; but what thy hand finds to do; that is, look what work God cuts out to thy hand to do, that do with all thy might, for there is no working in the grave. We are to do much good in a little time; we are made here, and set to be a-doing something that may do us good a thousand years hence, yea, that may stand us in stead to eternity. Our time is short, our task is great, the devil knows that his time is but short, and that is the reason why he is so active and stirring, why he does outwork the children of light, in a quick despatch of the deeds of darkness. Christians, do not deceive yourselves; it is not shows of grace, nor little measures of grace, that will enable a man to live up to this principle, but great measures of grace will, as you may see in the three children, 'We are not careful to answer thee, O king, in this matter; if it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hands, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.' We know our duty, and that we will keep to, whatever the issue and event be. So those worthies, Ps. 44:19, 'Though thou hast sore broken us in the place of dragons, and covered us with the shadow of death, yet have we not forgotten thee, neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant.' Here was much of Christ and grace within. So in Acts 21, when Paul was to go up to Jerusalem to suffer, his friends, by many tears and arguments, laboured to dissuade him, for fear of some sad issue and event that would follow. But Paul, rich in grace, answered, 'What mean ye to weep, and break my heart, for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus.' I will go up to Jerusalem, and I am willing to go up, though I die for it. Ay, here is a soul that lives up to his principle, Ay, but now souls that are weak

in grace, as we have had large experience of it in our times, they are more taken up and busied about the events and issues of things, than they are with their own duties. When they should be a-praying, a-believing, a-waiting, and acting for God, they have been a-questioning and fearing what the issue and event of this, and that, and the other thing would be. And indeed they have been high and low, as secondary causes have wrought, which hath made many of their lives a very hell. But now those that are rich in grace, they say as once he did, 'Let us be of good courage, and let us play the men for our people, and for the cities of our God, and the Lord do that which seemeth him good,' 2 Sam. 10:10–12. Let us do our duties, and let the Lord do as pleaseth him, &c.

(6.) Sixthly, It is your principle, that men are to be prepared, and to stand fast against all sudden assaults and invasions that may be made upon them.

Many a valiant person dares fight in a battle or a duel, who yet will be timorous and fearful if suddenly surprised in a midnight alarm. Many precious souls, when they have time to consider of the evil of sin, the holiness of God, the eye of God, the honour of God, the glory of the gospel, the joys of the saints, and the stopping of the mouths of sinners, will rather die than sin; they will rather suffer anything than do the least thing that may be a reproach to Christ. Oh! but when a sudden occasion or temptation is presented, why, then they often fall; as David, by chance, spied Bathsheba washing herself, and falls before the temptation; he is conquered and carried captive by that sudden occasion. But that is a more comfortable and considerable passage that you have concerning Joseph, in Gen. 49:23, 24, 'The archers sorely grieved him,' saith the text, 'and shot at him, and hated him: but his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob.' Joseph never wanted counsel nor courage when he was at the worst. Souls rich in grace usually stand firm under the greatest and suddenest pressures, assaults, and invasions, as you may see in Paul, 2 Cor. 1:9–12; and so the three children; and so Daniel; and so those

worthies, Heb. 11:35, 'They would not accept of deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection.' Many sudden assaults and attempts were made upon them; their enemies would fain have stormed them, and overcome them; sometimes by golden offers, sometimes by terrible threats, but they are invincible; nothing stirs them, nothing takes them. Really, friends, it must be much grace that will make a man live up to this principle; and there is nothing that speaks out more the strength of grace in a man, than his standing against sudden assaults and invasions that by the devil and the world are made upon him. You may talk of this, but without much grace you will never be able to do it, &c.

(7.) Seventhly and lastly, It is your principle, that your hearts art to be ready for every work that God shall impose upon you.

You are not to choose your employment, neither are you to refuse any employment that God shall put upon you. You are always to have an open ear, a ready hand, an obedient heart, and a willing cheerful soul to fall in with what work or service soever it is that God shall put upon you; this is your principle. Ay, but tell me, Christians, will a little grace enable a man to live up to this principle? I judge not. You are to stand ready to change your employment from better to worse, if the Lord shall be pleased to order it so. You are to be ready to change your crown for a cross; to change that employment that is honourable, for that that is mean and low; and that which is more profitable, for that which is less profitable: as it were from the ruling of a province, to the keeping of a herd; from being a lord, to be a servant; from being a servant to great men; to be a servant to the meanest servant, yea, to the poorest beast. Certainly a little grace will never enable a man bravely and sweetly to live up to this principle. Their hearts that are poor in grace, are like a wounded hand or arm, which being but imperfectly cured, can only move one way, and cannot turn to all postures and all natural uses.

Weak Christians are very apt to three things, to choose their mercies, to choose their crosses, and to choose their employments.

They are often unwilling that God himself should choose out their way or their work. But now souls that are rich in grace, they are at God's beck and check; they are willing that God shall choose their work and their way; they are willing to be at his dispose; to be high or low; to serve or to be served; to be something or to be nothing, &c. Now I beseech you, Christians, that you would seriously and frequently remember this, that there is nothing in all the world that is such an honour to God, and a glory to the gospel, as for Christians to live up to their principles; nor nothing such a reproach to God and his ways, as this, for men to live below their principles, and to act contrary to their principles. And you will never be able to live up to your principles, nor to live out your principles, except you grow rich in grace; therefore labour, I say, labour as for life, to abound in grace, &c.

[5.] Now the fifth motive is this, consider that souls rich in grace are a mighty blessing to the land and place where they live.

There are no such blessings in the world to parishes, cities, and nations, as those souls are, that are rich in grace. Oh they are great blessings to all places where they come; they are persons that are fit for the highest and noblest employments. There is not the highest work that is too high for a man that is rich in grace; nor the hottest work that is too hot for a man rich in grace; nor the lowest work below a man rich in grace. Such a man will not say, I would do it, but that it is below my place, my blood, my parts, my education. May Christ have honour? may others have good? If so, I will do it, saith the soul that is rich in grace, whatever comes of it, and bless God for the opportunity: Dan. 6:3, 'Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm.' Why was Daniel set upon the throne, but because there was a glorious excellent spirit in him, that fitted him for the highest employment? So Joseph was a blessing to his master's family, and the people among whom he lived. No such blessings to people and places, as souls rich in grace. So in Neh. 7:2, 'I gave my brother Hanani, and Hananiah the ruler of the

palace, charge over Jerusalem;' and why he? 'for he was a faithful man, and feared God above many.' Oh the wisdom, the prudence, the zeal, the courage, the compassion, the patience, the self-denial, that should be in magistrates! There is a truth in that old maxim, *magistratus virum indicat*, magistracy will try a man. None fit to rule, but such that are rich in grace; such a one will be *pater patriæ*, father of his country. What a world of good may a man do with worldly riches, in a parish, in a city, in a nation! but that is nothing to the good that a man may do that is rich in grace. Oh the sins that he may prevent! Oh the judgments that he may divert! Oh the favours and blessings that he may draw down upon the heads and hearts of people! I presume you forget not what a blessing Moses, Joseph, Job, Nehemiah, Mordecai, and Daniel, proved to the people among whom they lived; and these were all rich in grace. A man rich in wisdom, rich in faith, rich in goodness, &c., oh what a blessing may he prove to ignorant souls, to staggering souls, to wandering souls, to tempted souls, to deserted souls, &c. Look, what the sun is to us, that may a soul rich in grace be to others, &c. O friends! would you be blessings to your families? would you be blessings to the city, to the nation? Oh then labour to be rich in grace, and do not think it enough that you have so much grace as will keep you from dropping into hell, and that will bring you to heaven; but labour to be rich in grace, and then you will prove indeed a blessing to the place and nation where you live.

The Romans, when they did perceive any natural excellency to be in any persons, though they were never so poor and mean, they would take them from their dinners of turnips and water-cresses, to lead the Roman army. It is true, that natural and moral endowments will enable men to do much; but grace will enable men to do ten thousand times more. There is no work too high nor too hard for souls rich in grace; and therefore, as you would be choice instruments in the Lord's hand, and eminently serviceable in your generations, oh labour to be rich in grace! It is not he that, hath most wit in his head, but he that hath most grace in his heart, that is most fit for generation-work.

[6.] Sixthly, A rich measure of grace will bear out your souls in several cases, therefore labour to be rich in grace.

A rich measure of grace will bear out the soul under great means of grace. When a soul is spiritually rich, this will bear him out under great means. Such a one will be able to look God in the face with joy and comfort; he can say, It is true, Lord, I have had more means than others, and lo! I am grown richer than others. Thou hast taken more pains with me than with others, and lo! I bring forth more fruit than others: my five talents are become ten. But a little grace will not bear men out under much means of grace.

Again, A great measure of grace will bear the soul out under a great name, as well as under great means. For a man to have a great name to live, and yet to have but a little life, is a stroke of strokes; to be high in name and little in worth, is a very sad and sore judgment. To have a name to be an eminent Christian, and yet to be poor in faith, in love, in wisdom, in knowledge, &c., is the greatest unhappiness in the world. This stroke is upon many in these days. But that which is saddest of all is this, they feel it not, they observe it not. But now he that is rich in grace, hath something within that will bear him out under a great name in the world.

Again, a great measure of grace will bear you out under great desires, as well as under a great name. A man that is rich in grace may ask what he pleases; he is one much in with God, and God will deny him nothing. The best of the best is for this man; he may have anything; he may have everything that heaven affordeth. He is able to improve much, and therefore he may ask much, and have it.

It was a sweet saying of one, 'O Lord, I never come to thee but by thee, I never go from thee without thee.'

Sozomen saith of Apollonius, that he never asked anything of God, but he had it.

And another, speaking of Luther, saith, *Hic homo potuit apud Deum quod voluit*, He could have what he would of God. Rich men may long for this and that, and have it; they have something that will fetch it, but poor men may not. Oh! now, who would not labour as for life, to be rich in grace? Oh! this will bear you out under great means, and under great names, and under great desires; therefore, rest not satisfied with a little grace.

But then, seventhly and lastly,

[7.] Souls rich in grace are the honour of Christ, and the glory of Christianity.

As it is the glory of the stock, when the grafts grow and thrive in it, even so it is the glory of Christ when those that are ingrafted into him thrive and grow. This declares to all the world that Christ keeps a good house, and that he doth not feed his children with trash, but with the choicest delicates; that he is open-handed and free-hearted. It is the glory of the father when the child grows rich under him, and the glory of the master when the servant grows rich under him; and so it is the glory of Christ when poor souls grow rich under him. The name of Christ, and the honour of Christ, is kept up in the world by souls that are rich in grace. They are the persons that make others think well and speak well of Christ. You may at your leisure read the first and second epistles to the Thessalonians, and there you shall see what an honour they were to the Lord Jesus and the gospel who abounded in spiritual riches. Such Christians that are like to Pharaoh's lean kine reproach three at once, God, the gospel, and their teachers: and this age is full of such Christians. It is your greatest work in this world to keep up the honour and the glory of the Lord, and this you can never, you will never do, except you labour to be rich in grace. Let others 'labour for the meat that perisheth,' do you 'labour for that which endureth to everlasting life.' When you come to die, and when you come to make up your accounts, it will never be a grief, but a joy unto you, that you have made it your greatest business and work in this world to be rich in grace.

But here you may say,

What means must we use that we may grow rich in grace?

I answer:

[1.] First, Let no discouragements take you off from labouring to be enriched with spiritual riches.

A soul that would be spiritually rich must be divinely resolved, that come what can come, he will hold on in the use of means, that he may be rich with the riches of Christ. Joshua was resolute in this point: 'Choose you whom ye will serve, whether the Lord, or those other gods that your fathers served; as for my part, I and my house will serve the Lord,' Josh. 24:15; Luke 13:24, 'Strive to enter in at the strait gate.' The Greek word signifies, 'to strive with all your might,' with all your strength, to strive even to an agony, to strive as they did for the garlands in the Olympic games. The word here used seemeth to allude to their striving for the garland, where they put out themselves to the utmost. So in John 6:27, 'Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you, for him hath God the Father sealed.'

I have read of one that did not fear what he did, nor what he suffered, so he might get riches: 'For,' saith he, 'men do not ask how good one is, or how gracious one is, but how rich one is.' Oh, sirs! the day is a-coming when God will ask how rich your souls are; how rich you are, in faith, in wisdom, in knowledge, in fear, &c.; and not how rich you are in money, or in jewels, or in land, or in goods, but how rich are you in grace; which should provoke your souls to strive in the face of all discouragements to be rich in grace. What will not the merchant do, and the mariner do, for these temporal riches? Oh the dangers, the hazards, the tempests, the storms, the deaths that they run through for earthly riches, which are never without their sting! And

shall not Christians labour in the face of all oppositions after spiritual riches?

It is reported of Nevessan the lawyer, that he should say, 'He that will not venture his body can never be valiant; and he that will not venture his soul will never be rich.' I am sure that man that will not venture, and venture hard, in the face of all discouragements, to be spiritually rich, will never be rich. He may be good in the main, and may go to heaven in a storm; but he will never be rich in spirituals, that will not venture himself to the uttermost for the gain of spiritual riches.

[2.] Secondly, Be fixed under a Christ-exalting and a soul-enriching ministry.

Under that man's ministry that makes it his business; not a thing by the by but his business, his work; not to tickle the ear, to please the fancy, but to enrich the soul, to win the soul, and to build up the soul. 2 Tim. 4:3, 'For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts shall they heap up to themselves teachers, having itching ears.' This age, yea, this city is full of such slight, light, mad souls, that love nor like nothing but what is empty and airy.

Junius confesses, 'that in his time there was one confessed that he had spent above twenty years in trying religions,' pretending that scripture, 'Try all things, and hold fast that which is good.' It is sad to see how many in our days, under pretences of angelical attainments, make it their business to enrich men's heads with high, empty, airy notions, instead of enriching their souls with saving truths. If these are not strangers to that wisdom that is from above, I know nothing. Prov. 11:30, 'He that winneth souls is wise.' The Hebrew word signifies to catch souls, by using all art and industry, as fowlers do to take birds. No wisdom to that which wins souls from sin and the world, and that wins souls to Christ and holiness; no teaching to this. Remember this, you will never be rich in grace if you care not who

you hear, nor what you hear. That Christ that commands you to take heed how you hear, commands you also to take heed who you hear. And every soul won to God is a new pearl added to a minister's crown, &c.

But you will say to me,

How should we know which is a soul-enriching ministry, that so we may wait on it?

Take these three rules:

(1.) First, Judge not of the soul-enriching ministry by the voice of the minister, nor by the multitude of hearers that follow him, nor by his affected tone, nor by his rhetoric and flashes of wit, but by the holiness, heavenliness, and spiritualness of the matter.

Some preachers affect rhetorical strains; they seek abstrusities, and love to hover and soar aloft in dark and cloudy expressions, and so shoot their arrows over their hearers' heads, instead of bettering their hearers' hearts. Gay things in a sermon are only for men to gaze upon and admire. What are high strains and flashes of wit, new-minted words and phrases, but like gay weeds and blue bottles to the good corn. Truth is like Solomon's spouse, 'all glorious within.' She is most beautiful when most naked, as Adam was in innocency.

The oracle would have Philip of Macedon use silver lances in winning an impregnable fort, &c., but ministers must not use golden sentences, strong lines, froth of wit. It is iron, and not gold, that killeth in the encounter. It is the steel sword, not the golden, that winneth the field, &c.

(2.) Secondly, Judge of it by its revealing the whole counsel of God, the whole will of God, revealed in his word.

In Acts 20:27, 'For I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God.' Some there be that make it their business only to

advance the glory of Christ, and to darken the glory of the Father; and some cry up the glory of the Father, and yet cast clouds and darkness upon the glory of the Son. And what dirt and scorn is cast upon the Spirit by many vain, blasphemous persons in these times is notoriously known; and if these men are not far from declaring the whole counsel and will of God, I know nothing. Christ must be held out in all his offices, for they all tend to the enriching of poor souls, to the adding of pearls to a Christian's crown. And clearly it is sad to consider how many there be that cry up one office and cry down another. Some cry up the kingly office of Christ, but mind not his prophetic office; and some cry up his prophetic office, but trample upon his kingly office; and some cry up both his kingly and prophetic office, and yet make slight of his priestly office. Christians, fix yourselves under his ministry that gives the Father his due, the Son his due, and the Spirit his due; that makes it his business to open the treasures and the riches both of the one and the other, and to declare to you the whole will of God; for many there be that 'withhold the word in unrighteousness,' Rom. 1:18, and that will only acquaint you with some parts of the will of God, and keep you ignorant of other parts, whose condemnation will be great as well as just, &c.

(3.) Thirdly and lastly, You may judge of it by its coming nearest to the ministry of Christ and his apostles.

There was no ministry so soul-enriching and soul-winning as the ministry of Christ and his apostles. Oh! the thousands that were brought in by one exercise! Let men of frothy wits say what they will, there are no preachers to these that come nearest in their ministry to Christ and his apostles. *Loquamur verba Scripturæ*, &c., said that incomparable man, Peter Hamus: 'Let us speak the very words of Scripture, for so did Christ, the prophets, and apostles; let us make use of the language of the Holy Ghost, and for ever abominate those that profanely disdain at the stately plainness of God's blessed book, and that think to correct the divine wisdom and eloquence with their own infancy and sophistry.' God's holy things ought to be handled

with fear and reverence, rather than with wit and dalliance. Spiritual niceness is the next degree to unfaithfulness. No ministry to that which comes nearest to Christ, &c.

[3.] The third direction is this, If ever you would be rich in grace, be rich in spirituals, then keep humble.

Ps. 25:9, 'The humble he will teach his way, and the meek he will guide in judgment; James 4:6, 'He resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.' 'He sets himself in battle-array against the proud,' as the Greek hath it, 'but he gives grace to the humble.' He pours grace into an humble soul, as men do water or wine into an empty vessel. Of all souls, humble souls do most prize spiritual riches; of all souls they most improve spiritual riches; of all souls they are most fearful of losing spiritual riches. In Isa. 57:15, 'Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, With him will I dwell that is of an humble and contrite spirit, and that trembles at my word.' The word there rendered dwell is an Hebrew participle, and signifies dwelling. 'Thus saith the high and lofty One, dwelling with him that is of an humble and a contrite spirit.' Humility, as the violet, though the lowest, yet is the sweetest of flowers. The word notes to us thus much: that God will not dwell with an humble man as a wayfaring man dwells with his relations, a few nights and away. Dwelling notes a constant and not a transient act of God. God will for ever keep house with the humble soul; when once they meet, they never part. There is no such way to be rich as to be poor and low in our own eyes. This is the way to enjoy his company in whom all treasures are.

[4.] Fourthly, Improve the riches that you have.

Improve that knowledge, that faith, that light, that love that you have. Those that had two talents did, by the improvement of them, gain other two; and those that had five did, by the improvement of them, gain ten: Prov. 10:4, 'The diligent hand maketh rich.' Take hold of all opportunities to enrich your souls with spiritual riches. Men will easily, readily, greedily, and unweariedly close with all

opportunities wherein they may get earthly riches; and why should not you be as diligent in taking hold of all opportunities to enrich your precious souls? Is not the soul more than raiment, more than friends, more than relations, more than life, yea, more than all? And why, then, do you not labour to enrich your souls? Thou wert better have a rich soul under a thread-bare coat, than a thread-bare soul under a silk or golden coat. If he be a monster among men, that makes liberal provision for his servant, his slave, and starves his wife, what a monster is he that makes much provision for his baser part, but none for his noble part! A slothful heart in the things of God is a heavy judgment: Prov. 24:30, 'I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding,' or, as the Hebrew hath it, 'the man that had no heart,' that is, to make use of his vineyard, 'and lo, it was all grown over with thorns and nettles,' &c. Oh the lusts, the wickednesses that will overgrow slothful, sluggish souls! Spiritual sluggards are subject to the saddest strokes. Oh the deadly sins, the deadly temptations, the deadly judgments that spiritual sluggards will unavoidably fall under! None such an enemy to himself, none such a friend to Satan, as the spiritual sluggard. It is sad to think how the riches of Christ, the riches of consolation, the riches of justification, the riches of glorification, are brought to many men's doors, and yet they have no hearts to embrace them: no judgment to this. 'Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it?' Prov. 17:16. Well, spiritual sluggards, remember this, when your consciences are awakened, this will be a sword in your souls, that you might have been saved, you might have been spiritually and eternally enriched, but that you have trifled and fooled away golden opportunities and your own salvation. Wealth without wit is ill bestowed, &c.

[5.] Fifthly, Walk uprightly, holily, and obedientially.

If ever you would be spiritually rich, look to your walking. It is not the knowing soul, nor the talking soul, but the close-walking soul, the obediential soul, that is in spirituals the richest soul. Others may be

rich in notions, but none so rich in spiritual experiences, and in all holy and heavenly grace, as close-walking Christians: Ps. 84:11, 'The Lord will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.' The upright walker shall be both of his court and council; he shall know anything, and have anything. In John 14:21, 23, compared, 'If any man love me, he will keep my commandments, and I will love him, and my Father will love him.' What then? 'We will make our abode with him, and will manifest ourselves to him.' Certainly they cannot be poor that enjoy such guests as these; they must needs be full who enjoy them that are fulness itself. God and Christ are overflowing fountains, and holy souls find it so.

[6.] Sixthly, Be most in with those souls that are spiritually rich.

Let them be thy choicest companions, that have made Christ their chiefest companion. Do not so much eye the outsides of men, as their inside; look most to their internal worth. Many persons have an eye upon the external garb of this and that professor, but give me a Christian that minds the internal worth of persons, that makes such as are most filled with the fulness of God, to be his choicest and his chiefest companions.

In Ps. 16:2, 'My goodness extends not to thee,' says David—now David speaks in the person of Christ,—'but to the saints that are in the earth, in whom is all my delight.' There are saints, and there are excellent saints. Now those are the excellent ones, that are most rich in heavenly treasures; and these you should make your bosom friends, your choicest companions: Prov. 13:20, 'He that walketh with wise men shall be wise;' that is, he shall be more wise, more humble, more holy, and more abounding in all spiritual riches. The word *חלוך*, that is rendered walk, is an Hebrew participle, and signifies walking; to note to us, that it is not he that talks with the wise, nor he that commends the wise, nor he that takes a step or two or three with the wise, that shall be wise, but he that gives up himself to the society and Company of the wise, that shall be more and more

wise, more and more gracious, more and more holy. He that cometh where sweet spices or ointments are stirring, doth carry away some of the sweet savour, though himself think not of it. The spouse's lips drop as the honeycomb: Cant. 4:10, 'The tongue of the just is as choice silver,' he scatters pearls, he throws abroad treasures where he comes: Prov. 15:7, 'The lips of the wise disperse knowledge.' The Hebrew word, יָרָו, from zarah, is a metaphor from scattering abroad with a fan, or from seedsmen scattering abroad of their seed in the furrows of the field. They scatter their light, their love, their experiences, among those with whom they converse, as seedsmen scatter their seed in the field. Christ says his spouse's lips are like a thread of scarlet, with talking of nothing but a crucified Christ; and thin like a thread, not swelled with other vain and wicked discourses.

The old zealous primitive Christians did so frequently, and so effectually mind and talk of the kingdom of heaven, and of the riches and glory of that state, that the Ethnicks began to be a little jealous that they affected the Roman empire; when, alas,² their ambition was of another and a nobler nature: Ps. 37:30, 'The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh judgment; for the law of the Lord is in his heart.' Prov. 12:28, 'The tongue of the wise is health, his tongue is a tree of life, whose leaves are medicinal.' No way to be rich in spirituals, like being much in with precious souls, whose tongues drop marrow and fatness.

Utterance is a gift; and dumb Christians are blameworthy, as well as dumb ministers. We should all strive to a holy ability and dexterity of savoury discourse. If Christ should come to many of us, as he did to his two disciples, in that last of Luke, on Sabbath days and other times, and say to us, as to them, 'What manner of communication had ye,' or have ye? oh! with what paleness of face and sadness of countenance should we look! The story of *Loquere ut videam* is common. 'Speak that I may see thee,' said Socrates to a fair boy. When the heart is full, it overfloweth in speech. We know metals by their tinkling, and men by their talking. Happy was that tongue in the primitive time, that could sound out *Aliquid Davidicum*,

anything of David's doing; but much more happy is he that speaks out Aliquid Christi, anything of Christ from experience.

[7.] Seventhly, If ever you would be spiritually rich, then take heed of eating or tasting of forbidden fruit.

This stripped Adam of his crown, of his jewels, and of all his rich ornaments in a moment, and of the richest and greatest prince that ever breathed, made him the miserablest beggar that ever lived. Oh take heed of tasting of poison, of eating of poison. A person that hath ate poison will not thrive, let him take never such wholesome food. The choicest cordials will not increase blood, and spirits, and strength, but the man will throw up all. Poor souls that have been tasting of poison, are apt to find fault with the minister, and sometimes with this and that, as the cause of their not growing rich in spirituals; when, alas! the only cause is their eating of poison. These are like him in Seneca, that having a thorn in his foot, complained of the roughness of the way as the cause of his limping. Sirs, it is not the minister, nor this, nor that, but your eating of forbidden fruit, that is the cause of your non-thriving in spirituals. Sin is the soul's sickness, and nothing more prejudices growth than sickness. Christians, if ever you would be trees, not only having the leaves of honour, but the fruits of righteousness, then take heed of sin, abhor it more than hell, and fly from it as from your deadliest enemy, &c.

[8.] Eighthly and lastly, Be sure to maintain a secret trade with God.

You know many men come to be very rich in the world by a secret trade. Though many have not such an open trade as others, yet they have a more secret trade, and by that they gain very great estates, as many of you here in London know by experience. Take it, friends, as an experienced truth, there is no such way under heaven, to be rich in spirituals, as by driving of a secret trade heaven-wards. It is true, it is good for men to attend upon this, and that, and the other public administration; for in all divine administrations God shews his

beauty and glory. Ay, but such that delight to be more upon the public stage than in the closet, will never be rich in spirituals. They may grow rich in notions, but they will never grow rich in gracious experiences, Ps. 63:2, 3; 27:4; 84:10. Oh! God loves to see a poor Christian shut his closet door, Mat. 6:6, and then to open his bosom, and pour out his soul before him. God hath very choice discoveries for souls that drive a secret trade; the best wine, the best dainties and delicates are for such. And I never knew any man or woman in my life, that was richer in grace, than those that were much in closet communion with God. Much of a Christian's spiritual strength lies in secret prayer, as Samson's did in his hair. Nothing charms Satan and weakens sin, like this. Secret prayers are the pillars of smoke wherein the soul ascendeth to God, out of the wilderness of this world. Secret prayer is Jacob's ladder, where you have God descending down into the soul, and the soul sweetly ascending up to God. No way to be rich in spirituals like this. Therefore be sure to maintain and keep up a secret trade between God and your own souls. Oh let God hear often of you in secret. In Cant. 7:5, 'The king is held in the galleries.' Oh! in the secret walks, the soul meets with the King of glory. Oh! there the soul hangs upon Christ; there the soul sucks and draws virtue from Christ; and there the soul is made rich with the riches of Christ. Christ is much delighted and taken with secret prayer: Cant. 2:14, 'O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs,' that art got into a hole, 'let me hear thy voice, let me see thy countenance; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is lovely.' Secret meals are very fattening, and secret duties are very soul-enriching. Christians! set more close to this work, and if you don't thrive by it, trust me no more. And thus you see by what means you may grow rich in grace.

3. The third thing I propounded to speak to was,

Some propositions concerning spiritual riches.

And the first proposition is this:

[1.] All that do grow rich in grace, they grow rich gradually.

The sun ascends by degrees; children, plants, and trees they grow by degrees; so do saints in spirituals. It is true, many men as to temporals, by the death of some friend, or this and that providence, grow rich in a sudden; but no soul that is rich in grace, but grows rich gradually. In Prov. 4:18, 'But the path of the just is like the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.' He proceeds from virtue to virtue, until at length he shines like the sun in its strength. And so in Mal. 4:2, 'Unto you that fear my name, shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing under his wings, and you shall go forth and grow up as calves of the stall.' Hosea 14:5-7, 'I will be as the dew unto Israel, he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon. They that dwell under his shadow shall return, they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine; the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon.' I shall but hint at this now, because I have spoken more fully to it already, &c.

The second proposition is this:

[2.] Few or none are rich in all graces.

There are some men in the world that are generally rich, that are rich in money, and rich in land, and rich in goods, but where you have one man that is a general rich man in this sense, you have ten thousand that are only rich in some one thing, as money, goods, or land, &c.; so it is here. It is a hard thing, if possible, to find a soul that is generally rich; that is rich in every grace, that is rich in faith, and rich in wisdom, and rich in love, and rich in patience, &c. Abraham was rich in faith, and Job was rich in patience, and Moses was rich in meekness, and David was rich in zeal, &c; but none of these were rich in every grace. And so in these days you may find one Christian rich in one grace, and another Christian rich in another grace; but where will you find a Christian that is rich in every grace? Such that are rich in some graces, are yet very defective and lame in other graces. The

saints once at Rome were richer in wisdom and knowledge than the saints at Thessalonica, Rom. 15:14; and the saints at Thessalonica were richer in faith, love, patience, and charity than the saints at Rome, 1 Thes. 1:4, 2:8, compared with 2 Epistle 1:3, 4. It is with saints as with sinners, one sinner excels in one vice, another in another vice; so one saint excels in one virtue, and another in another virtue. One is rich in joy, in comfort; another is rich in humility, in fear; another in faith and hope; and another in love, &c. And mark how this arises.

It arises sometimes from hence, that every saint doth endeavour to excel in that particular grace that is most opposite to his bosom sin. Now every saint's bosom sin is not alike. It may be pride is one man's bosom sin, and hypocrisy another man's bosom sin, &c. Now it is the very nature of grace to make a man strive to be most eminent in that particular grace that is most opposite to his bosom sin, and upon this account it comes to pass that one is rich in one grace, and another in another.

Again, some saints have frequent occasions to act and exercise such and such graces. Others are called forth to act such and such graces. Now the more any particular grace is acted, the more that particular grace is increased. Frequent acts cause a stronger habit both in graces and in sins. If all Christians should be rich in all graces, what difference would there be between heaven and earth? What need would there be of ordinances? And when would Christians long to be dissolved, and to be with Christ? &c.

The third proposition is this:

[3.] Souls may be rich in grace, and yet not know it, and yet not perceive it.

The child is heir to a crown, to a great estate, but knows it not. Moses his face did shine, and others saw it, but he perceived it not. So many a precious soul is rich in grace, and others see it, and know it, and

bless God for it, and yet the poor soul perceives it not. Now because a right understanding of this may be of much use to some sadded, dejected souls, I will shew you how this comes to pass.

First, Sometimes it arises from the soul's strong desires of spiritual riches. The strength of the soul's desires after spiritual riches, doth often take away the very sense of growing spiritually rich. Many covetous men's desires are so strongly carried forth after earthly riches, that though they do grow rich, yet they cannot perceive it, they cannot believe it. It is just so with many a precious Christian; his desires after spiritual riches are so strong, that they take away the very sense of his growing rich in spirituals. Many Christians have much worth within them, but they see it not. It was a good man that said, 'The Lord was in this place, and I knew it not,' &c. Gen. 28.

Again, This ariseth sometimes from men's neglecting the casting up of their accounts. Many men thrive and grow rich, and yet by neglecting the casting up of their accounts, they cannot tell whether they go backward or forward. It is so with many precious souls; they grow in grace and are spiritually rich, and yet by neglecting the casting up of their accounts, they do not know it, they do not perceive it, &c.

Again, sometimes it ariseth from the soul's too frequent casting up of its accounts. If a man should cast up his accounts once a week or once a month, he may not be able to discern that he doth grow rich, and yet he may grow rich; but let him compare one year with another, and he shall clearly see that he doth grow rich. Though most are to blame for neglecting the casting up of their accounts, yet some are to blame for casting up their accounts too often; for by this means they are not able to perceive their spiritual growth, and so can neither be so thankful nor so cheerful as otherwise they might. Let there be some considerable time between your casting up of your accounts, and you will find that your souls are grown rich, though for the present you perceive it not.

But then again, sometimes it ariseth from the soul's mistake in casting up of its accounts. The soul many times mistakes; it is in a hurry; and there the soul puts down ten for a hundred, and a hundred for a thousand; as sometimes men in hurrying over their books, they slip and make mistakes, and so they think there is nothing got, whereas indeed there is much got, and in the close they shall find it so. Many a gracious soul many times takes a great deal of grace for a little, and little grace for no grace. Look, as hypocrites put down their counters for gold, their pence for pounds, and always prize themselves above the market; so sincere souls do often put down their pounds for pence, their thousands for hundreds, and still prize themselves below the market, &c.

The fourth proposition is this:

[4.] That saints must endeavour to grow rich in every grace.

It is the duty and the glory of saints to endeavour to grow rich in every grace. So the apostle, 2 Pet. 1:5 to 12, 'Add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge,' &c. It is the work, the duty, the glory of a Christian, to be still adding one grace to another. So in chap. 3:18, 'Grow in grace,' that is, in every grace, but more particularly and specially, 'in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.'

'Grow in grace.' That is, grow in love, in faith, in humility, in meekness, &c., but especially 'in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour,' because there was a special remedy against the error of those times, &c. All the graces that be in you are weak; and therefore you had need to strengthen them all.

Again, You have the seeds of all corruptions in you; and is there any way to be rid of every sin, but by thriving in every grace?

Again, You have opportunities as well to thrive in one grace as in another.

Again, Will not Satan labour might and main to keep your graces low and poor? You never hurt him less, you never honour Christ less, you never mind your work less, than when grace is weak and low. This he knows, and therefore labours to keep your graces down.

Again, are not you liable to several changes in this world? As, to be rich and poor, exalted and abased; now to relieve, and anon to be relieved; now well, and anon sick; now strong, and anon weak; now in storms, and anon in calms; now tempted, and anon delivered; now in one condition, and anon in another condition; now up, now down; now forward, now backward, &c. Now pray tell me, doth not the several changes and variety of providences that we meet with in this world bespeak us to be rich, not in some, but in every grace? Don't a state of prosperity bespeak a man to be rich in wisdom, rich in humility, rich in love, and rich in compassion, that his heart may be kept close to God in that state, and that he may do nothing unworthy of God, who hath done so much for him? And now, when God shall change the manner of his administrations towards such a man, when God shall put out his candle, pull off his robes, and clothe him with rags, and set him with Job upon the dunghill, don't this condition bespeak much patience, much contentation, much self-denial, much faith? How else will this man bravely bear up, when God shall write such bitter things against him, and pass the sentence of death upon his nearest and his dearest comforts? If a man be not rich in one grace as well as in another, when God shall bring changes upon him, and pour him from vessel to vessel, his life will be a burden, a hell to him, &c.

Again, consider this: growing rich in every grace renders a Christian most lovely and beautiful in grace; as a growth in all the members of the body renders the body most lovely and beautiful. The perfect beauty and comeliness of the body rises from the symmetry and fitness of the parts unto one another. Rare and excellent beauty ariseth from the comeliness of all parts. If one part be comely, and another deformed, then there is no perfect beauty. Well, remember this, there is no such beautiful Christians as those that grow rich in

every grace. Oh! they are the beauty of Christ, the honour of the gospel, and the glory of Christianity.

And so much for the fourth proposition, viz. that we must labour to be rich in every grace.

The fifth proposition that I shall lay down is this,

[5.] Saints should labour more particularly and more especially to be rich in faith.

Though it is of concernment to believers to be rich in every grace, yet it is of special concernment to them to labour to be rich in this particular grace of faith. In Jude, ver. 20, 'Building up yourselves in your most holy faith.' It is not enough to have faith, but they must build up themselves and build up one another 'in their most holy faith.'

There are three things that the Scripture calls precious:

First, The blood of Christ: in 1 Peter 1:19, 'Ye are not redeemed with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish, and without spot.'

Secondly, The promises are called precious promises: 2 Peter 1:4, 'Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises.'

Thirdly, Faith is called precious faith: ver. 1, 'Unto them that have obtained like precious faith with us.' Now, though it be of concernment for every saint to labour to be rich in every grace, yet more especially and more particularly to be rich in this grace of faith; and that upon this account that follows:

(1.) First, Because that faith is the soul's greatest and choicest fence, against her worst enemies.

In Eph. 6:16, 'Above all, take the shield of faith, whereby ye may be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.'

'Above all, take the shield of faith.' Neglect no part of your armour, but above all, look to the shield of faith. Look, what the shield is to the body, that is faith to a believer's soul, to secure him against all the fierce and fiery darts of Satan.

It is reported of Satan that he should say of a learned man, Tu me semper vincis, 'Thou dost always overcome me. When I would exalt and promote thee, thou keepest thyself in humility; and when I would throw thee down, thou liftest thyself up in assurance of faith.' Faith makes the soul invincible; it makes the soul victorious; it leads captivity captive; it binds Satan in chains; it foils him at every weapon; and therefore, above all, labour to be rich in faith.

(2.) Secondly, Growth in faith will advance the growth of all other graces.

All other graces thrive in the soul as faith thrives, and no otherwise. Be rich in this, and be rich in all; be weak in this, and be weak in all. Faith hath an influence upon all other graces; it is like a silver thread that runs through a chain of pearls; it puts strength and vivacity into all other graces. You never knew a man rich in any grace that hath not been rich in faith. Every man's hope, joy, fear, love, humility, patience, &c., is as his faith is. In Heb. 11:1, 'Faith is the evidence of things not seen, and the substance of things hoped for;' or, as the Greek hath it, ὑπόστασις, 'the substance of things hoped for.' All other graces live upon faith's cost and charge. Look, what the breast is to the child, wings to the bird, oil to the wheels, and the soul to the body, that is faith to all other graces in the soul of man.

It is reported of the crystal, that it hath such a virtue in it, that the very touching of it quickens other stones, and puts a lustre and a beauty upon them. I am sure it is true of faith. There is such a divine virtue and power in faith, that it will quicken and cast a lustre and a

beauty upon all other graces in the soul of man; and therefore you should labour as for life to be rich in this particular grace of faith.

(3.) Thirdly, consider this, Of all graces that be in the soul of man, faith is the most useful grace; and therefore you should, above all, labour to be rich in faith.

It is a Christian's right eye, without which he cannot see for Christ; it is his right hand, without which he cannot do for Christ; it is his tongue, without which he cannot speak for Christ; it is his very vital spirits, without which he cannot act for Christ.

Some say that king Midas had obtained of the gods, that whatsoever he touched should be turned into gold. I am sure that whatever faith toucheth, it turneth into gold, that is, into our good. If our faith touches the promises, it turns them into our good; whatsoever faith lays its hand upon, it appropriates to itself, and turns it into the soul's good. If faith looks upon God, it saith, 'This God is my God for ever and ever, and he shall be my guide unto death,' Ps. 63:1; 89:26. When it looks upon Christ, it saith with Thomas, 'My Lord, and my God,' John 20:28. When it looks upon the crown of righteousness, it saith, 'This crown is laid up for me,' &c. Faith is bread to nourish us, and wine to cheer us, and a cordial to strengthen us. Faith is a sword to defend us, a guide to direct us, a staff to support us, a plaster to heal us, a friend to comfort us, and a golden key to open heaven unto us. Faith, of all graces, is the most useful grace to the soul of man. 'Without faith it is impossible to please God,' Heb. 11:6; 4:2. All those services are lost, wherein faith hath not a hand. You may write loss upon all the prayers you make, and upon all the sermons you hear, and upon all the tears you shed, and upon all the alms you give, if all be not managed by a hand of faith.

(4.) Fourthly, You should labour above all to be rich in faith, because faith is that princely grace that Christ is most taken with.

Cant. 4:9, 'Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse, thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes,'—that is, with that piercing eye of faith that looks up to my mercy-seat—'with one chain of thy neck.'

There are two things that with open mouth speak out Christ to be most taken with the faith of his people.

And the first is, his uncrowning himself to crown his people's faith. Christ doth often take the crown off his own head, and put it upon the head of faith. Witness such passages as these, which are frequent in Scripture, 'Thy faith hath healed thee,' 'Thy faith hath saved thee,' 'Thy faith hath made thee whole,' &c. Christ takes the crown off his own head, and puts it upon the head of faith; and no wonder; for of all graces, faith takes the crown off a man's own head, and puts it on the head of Christ. Man naturally is apt to crown anything but Christ. He is apt to crown his prayers, and crown his desires, and crown his endeavours, &c. Oh but now faith acts like a king of kings, and uncrowns all, and sets the crown upon the head of Christ.

And then a second thing that speaks out Christ to be most taken with the grace of faith is this, that he overlooks all other graces in comparison of faith, as you may see in the Canaanite woman, Mat. 15:21–29. The poor woman shews a great deal of compassion, a great deal of wisdom, a great deal of humility, a great deal of love, and a great deal of self-denial; but in the close saith Christ, 'O woman, great is thy faith, be it unto thee even as thou wilt.' He doth not say, O woman, great is thy love; nor, O woman, great is thy wisdom; nor, O woman, great is thy humility and self-denial; nor, O woman, great is thy patience, &c.; but, 'O woman, great is thy faith! He overlooks, as it were, all other graces, and sets the crown upon the head of faith: 'O woman, great is thy faith.' So in Mark 5, the woman that had a bloody issue twelve years comes to Christ for cure, and in the close of the story saith Christ to her, 'Woman, thy faith hath made thee whole.' He doth not say, Woman, thy pressing hard to come to me hath made thee whole, but 'Thy faith hath made thee whole.' He doth

not say, Woman, thy earnest desires and endeavours to be made whole hath made thee whole, but 'Thy faith hath made thee whole.' He doth not say, Woman, thy fear and trembling hath made thee whole, but 'Thy faith hath made thee whole,' &c. So in Luke 7:50, 'Thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace.' Though she wept much, and loved much, yet Christ doth not say, Thy tears have saved thee, thy sorrow hath saved thee. He doth not say, Thy humility, thy charity hath saved thee; but 'O woman, thy faith hath saved thee.' Christ overlooks all other graces, as it were, and casts a lovely eye upon the grace of faith, &c.

(5.) And then again, in the fifth place, you should above all labour to be rich in faith, because of all graces in the soul of man, faith makes him most lively and active.

There is no grace, I say, no grace in the soul of man, that makes him so full of life and action, as the grace of faith. Faith is the *primum mobile*, the first pin, the first wheel that moves all the golden wheels of obedience. In Heb. 11, you read what those worthies did; they left their country, their kindred, upon a bare command of God. Faith hath Rachel's eye, but Leah's womb; it makes souls very fruitful in ways of well-doing. Faith is as the spring in the watch, that moves the wheels. Not a grace stirs till faith sets it on work. Faith is like Solomon's virtuous woman, that sets all her maidens on work. Faith sets joy on work. 'Abraham desired to see my day, and saw it, and rejoiced.' Faith sets love on work; it works by love; Gal. 5:6, it sets hope on work, Rom. 8:24, 25; it sets godly sorrow at work, Zech. 12:10; it sets patience at work. I believe that God is wise and loving, and what he doth is out of some noble design to do my soul good; this spins out patience. Faith fits a man to do, to suffer, to wait, to walk, &c., therefore labour above all to be rich in faith.

(6.) And then, sixthly, of all graces, faith renders the soul most invincible; and therefore you should labour above all to be rich in faith.

It renders the soul invincible and unconquerable under all the hardships and trials it meets with in this world. Faith makes a man triumph in all the changes and conditions of this life. It was their faith that made them invincible in Dan. 3:16–18, 'O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship thy golden image which thou hast set up.' And so Daniel's faith stopped the lion's mouth; it made him too strong for the strongest beasts of prey, as you may see in Dan. 6. Though the enemies of a believer are very subtle, strong, and experienced, and though the battle be hot and long, yet a soul rich in faith shall have the day. Faith will render a believer victorious in the close: 'He may suffer death,' as Cyprian said to Cornelius, 'but never conquest.' Faith renders the soul a lion, a rock, &c. It is reported of some of the Roman and Grecian captains, that they proved always victorious, and were never beaten by any. Such is the nature of faith; it renders a soul victorious in all engagements. In all engagements faith brings a man bravely off, and enables him to keep his ground, and triumph. Ps. 60:6–10, 'God hath spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice: I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth. Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine; Ephraim also is the strength of my head; Judah is my lawgiver; Moab is my wash-pot; over Edom will I cast out my shoe: Philistia, triumph thou because of me,' &c. It is not great resolutions, nor big words, nor high looks, but faith, that will make a man stand fast in shaking times. No hand can put the garland upon a Christian, but the hand of faith, &c. Faith alters the tenses, it puts the future into the present; Gilead is mine, &c.

(7.) And then, seventhly, above all labour to be rich in faith, because Satan will labour might and main to weaken your faith.

Oh! the great design of Satan is not so much to weaken you in externals, as it is to weaken you in internals. Satan can be contented that men should have their heads full of notions, and their mouths

full of religion, and their bags full of gold, and their chests full of silver, and their shops full of wares, so their souls be either void of faith, or but poor and low in faith. Satan's greatest plot is to weaken the faith of Christians. Luke 22:31, 32, 'And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.' Satan hath an aching tooth at thy faith; his design is upon that; he will labour might and main to weaken that, to frustrate that, and therefore 'I have prayed that thy faith fail not.' Satan knows that nihil retinet qui fidem perdidit.

(8.) And then, eighthly, consider this, of all graces, faith contributes most to the bringing down of mercies and blessings upon yourselves and friends; and therefore you should above all labour to be rich in this particular grace of faith.

Faith contributes to the bringing down of blessings upon ourselves. In Dan. 6:23, 'Daniel was delivered,' saith the text, 'because he believed in his God.' It was his faith, and not his prayers; it was his faith, and not his tears; it was his faith, and not his sighs that stopt the lion's mouths, and wrought deliverance for him. So in Ps. 27:13, 'I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.' So in 2 Chron. 20:20, 'Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper,' and so they did. That is a very famous scripture to this purpose, 2 Chron. 13:15–17, 'Then the men of Judah gave a shout: and as the men of Judah shouted, it came to pass, that God smote Jeroboam, and all Israel, before Abijah and Judah. And the children of Israel fled before Judah, and God delivered them into their hands. And Abijah and his people slew with a great slaughter: so there fell down slain of Israel five hundred thousand chosen men.' Here was a great slaughter; no wars, no slaughters comparable to those the Scripture speaks of And the reason is rendered, verse 18, 'Because they relied upon the Lord God of their fathers.' Were men more rich in faith, they would be more rich in other blessings, &c. And as faith is the only way to bring down a blessing upon ourselves, so faith is

the only way to bring down blessings upon our friends and relations. Though another man cannot be saved by my faith, yet he may be blessed with many blessings, upon the account of my faith. In Mat. 15:22–29, it was the Canaanitish woman's faith that brought a blessing of healing upon her daughter. And so in Mat. 8:6–14, the centurion's faith healed his servant that was sick of a palsy, 'and from that very hour he was healed.' The servant got well by his master's faith. And so likewise in Mark 9, the faith of the father prevailed for the dispossessing of his son. 'If thou canst believe,' saith Christ, 'all things are possible.' And the poor man said with tears, 'Lord, I believe, help my unbelief.' And presently Christ charged the foul spirit to come out of him, &c. A believing husband, a believing wife, a believing child, or a believing servant, may bring down, by the actings of faith, many a blessing upon their relations. Faith hath a happy hand, and never but speeds in one kind or another. It hath what it would, either in money or money's worth.

Apollonius, saith Sozomen, never asked anything of God, either for himself or his friends, but he had it. And one pointing to Luther said, 'There is a man can have anything of God that he will ask.' Faith hath a kind of omnipotency in it, it is able to do all things, &c.

And as faith brings down blessings upon our own heads and the heads of our friends, so it often brings down wrath upon our enemies. There is nothing contributes so much to our enemies' ruin as faith doth. I am confident it hath neither been armies, nor navies, nor parliaments, that have had the chief hand in bringing down the proud and stout enemies of Christ and Zion, in this and other nations, but the faith of his despised people. One enemy may stand before the face of another, but what enemy can stand before the face and power of faith? That is a remarkable scripture, Heb. 11:33, 'Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of aliens.' Other means were used, but that which did the work, and struck all dead,

was faith. Faith engages God in every encounter, and who can stand before a consuming fire?

Polybius, speaking of Horatius his keeping of the field against his enemies' forces, saith, 'That his enemies were more afraid of his faith than of his warlike strength.' And truly there is nothing that renders men more dreadful to an understanding enemy than their faith. Oh! it is brave for men to believe down the power of darkness, to believe down those that war against the Lamb, &c. No way to get an enemy down like this; nor no way to keep an enemy down like this; no way to save a kingdom like this; nor no way to keep a kingdom like this. The nation is beholden to none so much as to believing souls. O England! England! thou hadst long before this been a prey to men that delight in blood, had it not been for the faith of the worm Jacob, &c. Christians! as you would have Christ, go on and do more and more for England; as you would be crowned with the choicest and the chiefest blessings, and as you would have vengeance executed upon all that hate, that wage war against and persecute Christ and the saints, be mighty in believing.

(9.) Ninthly and lastly, Faith is a root grace; and will the branches flourish if the root wither?

Oh! therefore, water this root, have an eye to this root. If you have a choice root in any of your gardens, oh how careful are you of it! you will mind it and water it and look to it, &c. Well, of all graces faith is the root grace, and if this die you will find your graces to languish. Your hope, love, fear, patience, humility, joy, &c., can never outlive your faith. These live together and they die together; therefore, above all, labour to be rich in faith, for this is a root grace, and if this flourish all other graces will flourish; but if this decay, all other graces will lose their strength, beauty, glory, &c.

And thus much for the fifth proposition. We come now to the sixth proposition, and that is this:

[6.] That no gracious souls do at all times alike grow and thrive in spiritual riches.

A child sometimes shoots up more in a month than he doth at other times in many months, and sometimes more in a year than he does afterwards in many years. And do not plants and trees sometimes shoot up more in a week than in many, &c. So, many a Christian thrives more, and gets more spiritual riches in one month than in many, in one year than in many. I appeal to your experiences, Christians! don't you find it so? I know you do. To cite Scripture to prove this would be to cast water into the sea, and to light candles to see the sun at noon. Sin and Satan do sometimes work more violently and more strongly in the souls of saints than at other times. Now, when sin and Satan work most, and prevail most, then grace thrives least. As the life of grace is the death of sin, and the growth of grace the decay of sin, so the increase of sin is the decay of grace, and the strengthening of sin is the weakening of grace.

Again, No saints have at all times alike gales of the Spirit of God, and therefore they do not grow in spiritual riches at all times alike. No ships have at all times the same gales of wind, &c. A man thrives in spiritual riches as the gales of the Spirit of God are upon him, and no otherwise. When the Spirit of the Lord doth blow most sweetly and strongly upon his heart, then his graces thrive and flourish most, then those beds of spices do yield the most fragrant smell; but when the Spirit of the Lord doth withdraw and withhold his influences, how doth the strength and glory of grace wither and decay! Latimer said of the Spirit, that it is coming and going, &c.

The herb heliotropium doth turn about, and open and shut, according to the motion of the sun; so do the graces of the saints according to the internal gales, motions, and operations of the Spirit, &c.

Again, no saints have at all times the like external advantages and opportunities of growing rich in spirituals. They have not the word, it

may be, in that power and life as formerly; or it may be they enjoy not the communion of saints as formerly; or if they do, yet perhaps those that have formerly been as fire to warm and inflame them, are now become water to cool them, and deaden them; or it may be they have not those advantages for closet duties as formerly; or it may be, the course of nature is changed; and if so, it is no wonder that they thrive not in spirituals as formerly. When children have not as good food, and as good lodging, and as good looking after as at other times, no wonder if they thrive not as at other times. When men have not the same advantages and opportunities to grow rich in the world as formerly, do we wonder that they thrive not as before? Surely no.

And sometimes this arises from the breaking of some bone by sin. David found it so. Many a man, by breaking a bone, is much hindered from thriving in the world. Oh! this broken arm, this broken leg, hath cost me many a fair pound which otherwise I might have got. Oh friends! sin is the breaking of the bones, the breaking of a man's peace and communion with God; it is the breaking of his hope and confidence in God; it is the disjoining of a man from God; and so it hinders a man's spiritual growth: Isa. 59:1, 2; chap. 64:7; Gal. 6:1. Believe it, Christians! if you play and dally with sin, if you fall in with sin, if you make one with sin, you will never grow rich in spirituals. Sin will cause such a breaking of bones, as will undoubtedly hinder the prosperity of your souls. And so much for the sixth proposition.

[7.] The seventh and last proposition that I shall propound is this: A man may grow rich in those graces that are more remote from Christ, that are less conversant about Christ, when he doth not grow rich in those graces, that, as special favourites, stand always at the elbow of Christ, and are most busied and conversant about Christ. Let me open it thus to you:

You know at court there are some that have the honour to attend always at the prince's elbow, and there are others that appertain to the same prince, but are more remote in their employments for him,

&c. So in the soul, there are some graces that are more remote, and not so conversant about the person of Christ, as now humility, self-denial, patience, meekness, temperance, sobriety, and the like. Now, though these graces do appertain to the same prince, though they are all servants of the Lord Jesus, yet notwithstanding they are more remote, and busied about other objects and things. Oh! but now faith and love are choice favourites, that always stand at the elbow of Christ. Faith and love are Christ's greatest favourites in heaven. Now I say, a Christian may grow rich in those graces that are more remote from Christ, that are less conversant about the person of Christ, when he doth not grow rich in those particular graces that are most active about the person of Christ. He may grow rich in humility, in self-denial, in meekness, in temperance, &c., when he doth not grow up in joy and delight and comfort, &c. The tree grows downward, when it doth not grow upward; so a soul may grow rich in some particular graces, when he doth not grow rich in other graces. He may grow rich in those graces that are more remote from Christ, when he doth not grow rich in those graces that are more conversant about the person of Christ. Some limbs and branches of a tree grow more than others.

And so I have done with these propositions; the serious minding of them may prevent many objections, and to many give satisfaction in several cases, &c.

The fourth and last thing propounded was, to give you,

4. Some notes of a person that, is spiritually rich.

Clearly, as there are few worldly rich men to those that are poor, so there are few in this professing age, that will be found to be spiritually rich, compared with the multitude of Laodiceans that swarm in these times. We have many that say they are rich, and that think they are rich, when the truth is they have either no grace, or but a very little grace; and these five following things do clearly evidence it, &c.

[1.] First, Rich men have more variety of objects to delight themselves with, than poor men have.

They have houses and gardens, and lands and cattle, and silver and gold, and jewels and pearls, and what not, to delight themselves with. Oh! but poor men have not such variety of objects to delight themselves with, as rich men have. It is just thus in spiritual riches. A man that is rich in grace hath more variety of spiritual objects, about which his soul is most conversant, than a man that is poor in grace. He hath more objects of love, of joy, of delight, of content, to busy and exercise his soul about, than others that are weak in grace: 2 Cor. 6:10, 'Enjoying nothing, and yet possessing all things.' A soul rich in grace possesses and enjoys all things in Christ, and Christ in all things. They enjoy all good in him who is the chiefest good, who is the spring and fountain of good. Joseph, in Pharaoh's court, had more variety of objects to delight him, than his brethren had to delight themselves in their father's house, &c.

I have spoken largely to this already, and therefore shall content myself in giving you this hint. It stands upon you to inquire what variety of objects you have to delight your souls in. But,

[2.] Secondly, Rich men can reach to those things that poor men cannot reach to.

I would have such and such things, saith the poor man, as the rich man hath; I would fare as he fares, and wear as he wears, and do as he doth, but my stock will not reach it. So a soul that is spiritually rich can reach to those things that one that is poor in grace cannot reach unto. He can reach to those joys, to those comforts, and to those contents, to those heights of communion with God, and to those visions and apprehensions of God, that a soul that is not rich in grace cannot reach to. Oh! I would fain have that comfort, and that joy, and that peace, and that communion with God, and those visions of God, that such and such souls have, saith a poor Christian; but I cannot; my stock will not reach to it. It is an argument a man is

grown higher, when he can reach higher than he could before, whether it be a beam or a pin, &c. So it is an argument, that a soul is grown rich in grace, when he can reach beyond what formerly he could reach unto; when he can reach beyond his enlargements, beyond his in-comes, beyond his comforts, to a Christ; when in duty, he can reach above duty; when in an ordinance, he can reach to Christ, above the ordinance; when under enlargements, he can reach above enlargements, to Jesus Christ. Oh! but now a man that hath but a little grace, he can rarely reach above his duties, above ordinances, above enlargements, to Christ. He is very apt to sit down and warm himself with the sparks of his own fire, and to feed upon ashes, as the prophet speaks, Isa. 1:11, 44:20, &c. But now, a soul that is rich in grace, says, Well! these ordinances are not Christ, these refreshings are not Christ, these meltings are not Christ, these enlargements are not Christ; these are sweet, but he is more sweet; these are very precious, but he is most precious. And thus those that are spiritually rich do out-reach all others, &c.

[3.] Thirdly, Rich men can with more ease and pleasure bear burdens, than poor men can.

When taxes and burdens are laid upon poor men, they sigh, and shrug, and complain that they are not able to bear them, when rich men make nothing of them. So souls that are rich in grace can bear burdens without a burden; they can bear crosses, afflictions, and persecutions, with abundance of ease, cheerfulness, and contentedness of spirit; they do not shrug, nor grumble, but bear the greatest trials with greatest sweetness, as you may see in Acts 5, 'They went out rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer for the name of Jesus.' So Paul, 2 Cor. 12:10, 'I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake.' 'I take pleasure.' The Greek word is an emphatical word, εὐδοκῶ; it is the same word that God the Father uses to express his infinite delight in his Son: Mat. 3:17, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased;' or, 'in whom I am infinitely delighted.' The same word the apostle uses to express the wonderful

delight that he took under all his sufferings; he rejoices and leaps under all his burdens. Oh! but now a soul that is poor in grace, he cannot bear a burden without a burden; every light affliction turns him, and sinks him; every molehill is a mountain; every scratch on the hand is a stab at the heart; every wave is a sea, and the poor Christian sighs and groans, and cries out, Oh! no sorrow to my sorrow! no loss to my loss! no cross to my cross! but souls rich in grace act quite contrary, as hath been hinted and proved, &c.

[4.] Fourthly, Rich men are most envied.

History and Scripture speak out this, as well as our own experience. The rich man above all others is the greatest object of envy, and it is as true that such that are most rich in spirituals are of all men the most envied. Moses and Aaron were rich in spirituals, and oh, how were they envied by Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and other wicked wretches! Ezra, Nehemiah, and Mordecai, were rich in spirituals, and who more envied? Among all the prophets and apostles, those have been most envied, that have most abounded in spiritual worth; and to this very day, none are such objects of scorn and envy, as those that have most of Christ within. Men that have more leaves than fruit, that have a golden outside, but a threadbare inside, are less envied than those that are 'all glorious within.' Men of greatest excellencies, are the main objects upon which the eye of envy is placed, Ps. 45:13. Saul's envious eye was placed upon David, and Cain's upon Abel, and Esau's upon Jacob, and Herod's upon John, and the Pharisees' upon Christ. Envious souls are like the ravens, that fly over the sweet garden, and light upon the stinking carrion. Envy doth ever ascend; it never descends. An envious man can with more ease die miserably, than see another live happily. An envious heart weeps to see others' mercies, and joys to see others' miseries. An envious heart is like the mermaid, which never sings but in a storm, and never mourns but in a calm. An envious man cannot endure those excellencies in others that he wants in himself; he loves not any light that outshines his own, any crown that outweighs his own, &c. Socrates calls envy *Serram animœ*, the soul's saw, &c.

Cimon, the famous general of the Athenian commonwealth, hearing a friend of his highly commending his martial achievements, answered, 'That they were not worthy of commendations, because they were not envied,' &c.

[5.] Fifthly, Rich men are most tempted and assaulted.

Pirates do not use to set upon empty vessels, but those that are most richly laden; and beggars need not fear the thief, though the rich man do. Those that have been most rich in spirituals, have been most assaulted and tempted by Satan. Witness Abraham, Job, Joshua, Peter, Paul, yea, Christ himself. The best men have always been most and worst tempted. None so much in the school of temptation, as those that are most rich in grace. There are none that are such blocks, such mountains in Satan's ways, as these; none do him that mischief as these; none are so active and so resolute in their oppositions against him as they, &c.; and therefore none so assaulted and tempted as they. And thus by these five things you may know whether you are rich in grace or no.

Use 2. The next use is this:

If the Lord Jesus Christ be so rich, then do not join anything with him, in the great work of your redemption and salvation.

There are riches enough in Christ to pay all your debts, and to satisfy divine justice to the utmost farthing, without being beholden to your prayers, tears, or humiliations. Christ will be Alexander or Nemo on earth. Kings love no consorts; power is impatient of participation.

When Augustus Cæsar desired the senate to join two consuls with him, for the carrying on the government of the state, the senators answered, 'That they held it a diminution to his dignity to join any with so incomparable a man as Augustus Cæsar was.' [Suetonius].

Was it a diminution to his dignity to join others with him in the government of the state? And is it not a diminution of the dignity and

glory of Christ, to join your actions and your endeavours with his blood, in the business of your redemption? In Isa. 63:3, 'I have trodden the wine-press alone; and of the people there was none with me.' And in Isa. 44:24, 'Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I am the Lord that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone, that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself.' It is a sad reproach to Christ to join anything with him in the great business of your salvation; therefore abhor it more than hell itself: let Christ be all in all. We must say of Christ as it was once said of Cæsar, *Socium habet neminem*, He may have a companion, but he must not have a competitor, &c.

Again, Thirdly,

Use 3. If Christ be so rich, then take heed of three things.

(1.) First, Take heed of sitting down dejected and discouraged under any losses or troubles that do befall you, or that have or shall befall you for the name of Christ.

Christ is generally rich; he is able to make up all your losses and wants: Philip. 4:19, 'But my God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory by Jesus Christ,' as he did the widow's vessel. The fountain hath not the less water for the vessel it fills, nor the sun the less light for that it gives forth to the stars; so the Lord Jesus Christ hath never a whit the less for what he gives forth unto his saints.

When Zedislaus, the king of Poland's general, had lost his hand in his service, the king sent him a golden hand. Ah, Christians! when you lose this or that for him, he will send you a golden hand; if you lose a penny for him, he will give you a pearl. Christ will not live long in any man's debt; if he should, he would lose his glory, &c.

(2.) Secondly, If the Lord Jesus be very rich, Oh then take heed of despairing by reason of your sins.

I confess, the least sin should humble the soul, but certainly the greatest sin should never discourage the soul, much less should it work the soul to despair. Read 1 Tim. 1:13–15, and despair, I had almost said, if thou can' st. Despairing Judas perished, Acts 2, when as the murderers of Christ, believing on Christ, were saved. Despair is a sin exceeding vile and contemptible; it is a word of eternal reproach, dishonour, and confusion; it declares the devil a conqueror; and what greater dishonour can be done to Christ, than for a soul to proclaim before all the world the devil a crowned conqueror? A despairing soul is magor missabib, a terror to himself; his heart a hell of horror; his conscience an aceldama, a field of black blood. He hath no rest at home nor abroad, at bed nor board, but is as if infernal devils followed him in fearful shapes, terrifying and tormenting his perplexed soul. Eternity of misery, feared or felt, begets that monster which, like Medusa's head, astonisheth with its very aspect, and strangles hope, which is the breath of the soul. As it is said, dum spiro, spero, so it may be inverted, dum spero, spiro; other miseries may wound the spirit, but despair kills it dead, &c.

(3.) Thirdly, If Christ be so rich, then take heed of presuming.

Take heed of taking encouragement to sin upon this account, that Christ is rich in grace and mercy. Christ is a lion as well as a lamb; he hath a sword as well as a sceptre. To argue from the riches of mercy to sinful liberty is the devil's logic. A soul that thus reasons is a soul left of God, a soul that is upon the last step of the ladder, a soul that Satan hath by the hand; and the eternal God knows whither he will lead him. What the women sung of Saul and David, that 'Saul had slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands,' 1 Sam. 18:6, 7, that I may say of despair and presumption, 'Despair hath slain her thousand, but presumption hath slain her ten thousand.' 'Shall we sin that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?' Rom. 6:1, 2. As the beams of the sun, shining on the fire, put out the fire, so the shinings of God's mercy on us should extinguish sin in us, as the apostle argues, 2 Peter 3:15, from Paul, Rom. 2:4. Christ seems to say to souls, as Theseus said

once, 'Go,' says he, 'and tell Creon, Theseus offers thee a gracious offer, yet I am pleased to be friends, if thou wilt submit. This is my first message, but if this offer prevail not, look for me to be up in arms.' Ah souls! if you shall abuse the riches of grace to a presumptuous sinning against Christ, Christ will take up arms, and you shall die for it.

The next use is this:

Use 4. If Christ be so rich, Oh! then, open to Christ when he knocks.

Christ knocks by his word, and he knocks by his rod; he knocks by his Spirit, and he knocks by his messengers, and he knocks by conscience. Oh, open to him! for he is very rich. Though you shut the door against a poor man, yet you will open it to one that is rich; and why not then to Christ, who would fain have entrance? Rev. 3:20, 'Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.'

'Behold, I stand.' I that am the King of glory, I that am 'King of kings, and Lord of lords,' Ps. 24:7–9, Rev. 17:14. I that am rich in mercy, rich in goodness, rich in grace, rich in glory, 'I stand at the door and knock.' I that have gold to enrich you, I that have eye-salve to enlighten you, I that have glorious apparel to clothe you, I that have mercy to pardon you, I that have power to save you, I that have wisdom to counsel you, I that have happiness to crown you, 'I stand at the door and knock.'

'If any man open.' If the master will not, yet if the servant will; if the mistress will not, yet if the maid will; if the parent will not, yet if the child will; if the rich man will not, yet if the poor man will; if the pharisee won't, yet if the publican will;

'I will come in, and sup with him, and he with me.' Jesus Christ hath the greatest worth and wealth in him. As the worth and value of many pieces of silver is in one piece of gold, so all the heavenly

excellencies that are scattered abroad in angels and men, are united in Christ; yea, all the whole volume of perfection which is spread through heaven and earth is epitomised in Christ.

They say it is true of the oil at Rheems, that though it be continually spent in the inauguration of their kings of France, yet it never wastes. Christ is a pot of manna, a cruse of oil, a bottomless ocean of all comforts and contents that never fail. A saint may say, 'In having nothing, I have all things, because I have Christ. Having therefore all things in him, I seek no other reward, for he is the universal reward.'

And then again,

Use 5. If Christ be so rich, then sit down and wonder at his condescending love.

That one so rich should fall in love with such that are poor, wretched, miserable, blind, and naked, Rev. 3:17–21, &c.; that one so high should look so low as poor we; that one so great, that one who is the Lord and heir of all, should match with us that have nothing at all. 'O the breadth, the length, the depth, the height' of Christ's love to unlovely souls! to such that had neither portion nor proportion; that had neither external nor internal worth that might in the least draw his love towards them, Heb. 1:2–4, Philip. 3:17–19, &c., Ezek. 16:16. You were indebted to God for the clothes you wear, for the bread you eat, for the houses you live in, the air you breathe in, the beds you lie on, the ground you tread on, &c. Now for Christ to love such, and to be willing to bestow himself upon such nothings, oh! how should this work them to spend their days in admiring and contemplating upon his kindness and goodness!

I have read a story of an elephant, who being fallen down, and unable to help himself or get up again, by reason of the inflexibleness of his legs, a forester coming by helped him up, wherewith the elephant, by the very instinct of nature, was so affected, that he followed this man,

would do anything for him, and never left him till his dying day. The application is easy.

The next use that we shall make of this point is this.

Use 6. If Christ be so rich as hath been discovered to you, then prize Christ above all.

As the people prized David above themselves, saying, 'Thou art worth ten thousand of us,' 2 Sam. 18:3, so should saints lift up Jesus Christ above themselves, and above everything below himself. He that lifts not Christ up above all hath no interest in Christ at all; he that sets not Christ above all is not a disciple of Christ: Luke 14:26, 'If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.' Surely they do not truly love Christ who love anything more than Christ.

It was a notable saying of Jerome, 'If my father should hang upon me, my brethren should press round about me, and my mother should stand before me, I would throw down my father, I would break through my brethren, and I would trample upon my mother, to come to Christ.'

Other saints have lifted up Christ above all their lands, relations, and lives, as you may see in Heb. 11; and so did a multitude of the martyrs under the ten persecutions, &c. As Pharaoh set up Joseph above all, and made him governor of the land, and as Darius set up Daniel over all, so you must prize Christ, and set up Christ above all.

Remember a few things, that this may the better stick upon your hearts.

[1.] First, A Christ highly prized will be a Christ greatly delighted in.

Every soul delights in Christ as he prizes Christ, and no otherwise. The reason of reasons why Christ is no more delighted in, is because

he is no more prized among the sons of men: Cant. 2:5, 'As the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, so is my well-beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was pleasant to my taste.' The seeing of this object delights the eye of a believer, the hearing of this object delights the ear of a believer, the enjoying, the possessing of this object delights the heart of a believer: 'I sat down under his shadow with great delight.'

The apple-tree is delightful for shadow, so is Christ; he is a shadow to poor souls when they are scorched with troubles within and terrors without: Isa. 32:2, 'And a man,' that is, Christ, 'shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, and as a covert from the tempest, as rivers of waters in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.'

The apple-tree is delightful for pleasantness of fruit, so is the Lord Jesus for those pleasant fruits of righteousness and holiness that grow upon him.

And the apple-tree is delightful for varieties, so is Christ; for there are all varieties of excellencies in himself: Col. 1:19, 'It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell.' We delight in persons and things as we prize them, and no otherwise. Jonathan highly prized David, and delighted in him accordingly. Jacob highly prized Rachel, and delighted in her answerably. You will delight in Christ as you prize him; if you prize him but a little, you will delight in him but a little.

[2.] Secondly, Remember this, a Christ highly prized will be a Christ gloriously obeyed.

Every man obeys Christ as he prizeth Christ, and no otherwise. The higher price any soul sets upon Christ, the more noble will that soul be in his obedience to Christ. If Christ were more prized in the world, he would be more obeyed in the world. A soul that highly prizeth Christ is better at obeying than at disputing any command of Christ. If Christ will command such a soul to step over the world's crown to

take up his cross, the soul will do it, as you may see in Moses, Heb. 11:24–26. He sets a higher price upon Christ's cross than upon Pharoah's crown. When Christ's cross and the world's crown stood in competition, upon a bare command of God Moses steps over the world's crown to take up Christ's cross: 'He chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.' And so Abraham, upon a bare command of God, leaves his country, and his near and dear relations. He wholly resigns up himself to God; he puts his hand into God's, and is willing that God should lead him whither he pleases, and do with him what he pleases.

I remember an excellent saying of Luther, *Malle ruere cum Christo, quam regnare cum Cæsare*, 'I had rather,' saith he, 'fall with Christ than stand with Cæsar.' And indeed every gracious soul that highly prizes Christ will rather choose to fall with Christ than to neglect his obedience to Christ. By obeying Christ we gain more honour than we can give; by kissing the Son we even command him, and make him ours, &c.

[3.] Thirdly, Christians, remember this, all the causes of prizing persons and things are eminently and only in Christ; which bespeaks you all to set a very, very high price upon the Lord Jesus. Christ's beauty needs no letters of commendation. You prize some for their beauty; why, the Lord Jesus Christ is the fairest among the children of men, Ps. 45:1, 2; Cant. 5:10, 'My beloved is white and ruddy; the chiefest,' or, the standard-bearer, 'among ten thousand.' You prize others for their strength; why, the Lord Jesus Christ hath in him everlasting strength: Isa. 26:4, 'Trust in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength; he is the rock of ages.' You prize others for bearing their father's image; why the Lord Jesus bears the image of his Father: Heb. 1:3, 'He is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person.' You prize others for their wisdom and knowledge; such a one is a very wise man, you say, and therefore you prize him; and such a one is a very knowing man, and therefore you prize him; why, all the treasures of wisdom

and knowledge are in Christ: Col. 2:3, 'In whom,' saith he, speaking of Christ, 'are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.' The truth is, all those perfections and excellencies that are in all angels and men, they all centre in Christ, they are all epitomised in Christ. All the angels in heaven have but some of those perfections that be in Christ. All wisdom, and all power, and all goodness, and all mercy, and all love, &c., is in no glorified creature, no, not in all glorified creatures put together. But now in Christ all these perfections and excellencies meet, as all water meets in the sea, and as all light meets in the sun. Others you prize for their usefulness; the more useful persons and things are, the more you prize and value them. The Lord Jesus Christ is of universal use to his people; why, he is the right eye of his people, without which they cannot see; and the right hand of his people, without which they cannot do, &c. He is of singular use to all his people. He is of use to weak saints, to strengthen them; and he is of use to doubting saints, to resolve them; and he is of use to dull saints, to quicken them; and he is of use to falling saints, to support them; and he is of use to wandering saints, to recover them. In prosperity he is of use to keep his saints humble and watchful, spotless and fruitful; and in adversity he is of use to keep them contented and cheerful. All which should very much engage our hearts to prize this Christ.

Again, we prize things as they suit us; why, Christ is not only a good, but a suitable good. Christ is light to enlighten us, John 1:8, 9; and he is life to enliven us, Philip. 2:30. He is riches to supply us, and he is raiment to clothe us; he is a staff to support us, and he is a sword to defend us; he is bread to nourish us, and he is water to refresh us, and wine to cheer us; and what would we have more?

[4.] Fourthly, Yet once more, that this may stick upon us, let us consider, that where we are highly prized there we highly prize.

Why, the Lord Jesus Christ doth exceedingly prize every believing soul; yea, even such poor weak saints, that many swelled souls slight and despise as persons of no worth, because they want that light and

knowledge, and those parts and gifts, that others have. Well, Christians, remember this, Christ prizes you as the apple of his eye, Zech. 2:8; he prizes you as his jewels, Mal. 3:17; he prizes you as his portion, Deut. 32:9, 'The Lord's portion is his people;' he prizes you as his glory, Isa. 46:13; he prizes you as his ornaments, Ezek. 7:20; he prizes you as his throne, Jer. 45:5; he prizes you as his diadem, Isa. 62:3; he prizes you as his friends, John 14; he prizes you as his brethren, Heb. 2:11, 12; he prizes you as his bride, Isa. 62:5; he prizes you above his Father's bosom, for he leaves that to do you service, John 16:28; yea, he prizes you above his very life, he lays down his life to save your souls, John 10. Now, oh who would not highly prize such a Christ, that sets such an invaluable price upon such worthless souls!

[5.] Fifthly and lastly, consider, That your high prizing of Christ will work you to value the least things of Christ above the greatest worldly good.

It will make you value the least nod of Christ, the least love-token from Christ, the least good look from Christ, the least good word from Christ, the least truth of Christ, &c., above all the honours, treasures, pleasures, and glories of this world: Ps. 119:72, 'The law of thy mouth is better than thousands of gold and silver.' Luther would not take all the world for one leaf of the Bible. And oh that a serious consideration of these things might work all your hearts to a high prizing of the Lord Jesus!

Use. 7. The next use that we shall make of this point, is this,

If Christ be so rich, then trust to Christ.

Who will not trust a rich man? Every one strives to trust a rich man: 'The rich hath many friends,' Prov. 14:20. Why, the Lord Jesus Christ is very rich; will you be persuaded to trust him? Oh trust him with your best treasures, with your choicest jewels, with your names, souls, estates, relations! The apostle was excellent at this: 2 Tim.

1:12, 'I know him,' saith he, 'in whom I have believed, that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him, until that day.' I have committed my soul to him, and my life to him, and my name to him, and all my mercies and enjoyments to him. The child cannot better secure any precious thing it hath, than by putting it into the father's hands to keep. Our mercies are always safest and surest when they are out of our hands, when they are in the hands of God. We trust as we love, and we trust where we love; where we love much, we trust much. Much trust speaks out much love; if you love Christ much, surely you will trust him much.

That was a notable bold expression of Luther, 'Let him that died for my soul, see to the salvation of it.' I have committed my soul to him, I have given it up into his hands, who is my life, who is my love, and let him look after it, let him take care of it. In securing of that, he secures his own glory. Oh that Christians would trust in this rich Christ for a supply of necessaries! Is Christ so rich, and will you not take his word that he will not see you want? Will you trust a rich man upon his word, and will you not trust a rich Christ upon his word? Do you believe he will give you a crown, and will you not trust him for a crust? Do you believe he will give you a kingdom, and do you doubt whether he will give you a cottage to rest in? Has he given you his blood, and do you think that he will deny you anything that is really for your good? Surely he will not, he cannot.'

Again, Trust him for power against all the remainders of sin in you.

Hath Christ freed you from the damnatory power of sin, and from the dominion of sin, and will not you trust him for deliverance from the remainders of sin? Ps. 65:3, 'Iniquities prevail against me: as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away.' Oh excellent faith! Rom. 8:1, 6:14.

Again, Trust him to bring you into the land of rest.

Do you think that this Joshua is not able to carry you through all difficulties, dangers, and deaths? Do you think that he will leave you to die in the wilderness, who have already had some glimpses of heaven's glory? Oh trust to this Christ for the bringing your souls into the promised land! Christ would lose his glory should you fall short of glory, &c.

Use 8. Again, If Christ be so rich, then do not forsake him, do not leave, do not turn your backs upon him.

Is there riches of justification, and riches of sanctification, and riches of consolation, and riches of glorification in Christ? Yes, why then do not depart from him, do not shake hands with him. That is a sad complaint of God in Jer. 2:12, 13, 'Be ye astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the Lord. For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.' It is madness and folly to fly from the fountain to the stream, from the light of the sun to the light of a candle. And is it not greater madness and folly to forsake the Creator to run after the creature? Oh say as Peter, 'Whither should we go, thou hast the words of eternal life,' John 6:68. To run from Christ, is to run from all life, peace, and joy; it is to run from our strength, our shelter, our security, our safety, our crown, our glory. Crabs, that go backward, are reckoned among unclean creatures, Lev. 11:10. The application is easy.

Origen coming to Jerusalem, after that he had shamefully turned his back upon Christ and his truth, and being exceedingly pressed to preach, at last he yields, and as he opened the book, he happened to cast his eye upon that place of the psalmist, 'What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth, seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my word behind thee?' Ps. 50:16, 17. Now the remembrance of his own folly so reflected upon his conscience, that it made him close the book and sit

down and weep. Such as forsake a rich, a full Christ, shall have weeping work enough.

That is a very dreadful scripture, Jer. 17:13, 'All you that forsake the Lord, shall come to be ashamed, and they that depart from him, shall be written in the dust.' Can you read this text, backsliding souls, and not tremble? &c.

Use 9. Again, If the Lord Jesus Christ be so rich, Oh! then all you that have an interest in him, labour mightily to clear up your interest, and to be more and more confident of your interest in so rich a Jesus.

My brethren, it is one thing for a man to have an interest in Christ, and another thing to have his interest cleared up to him. I do speak it with grief of heart, that even among such Christians that I hope to meet in heaven, there is scarce one of forty, nay, one of a hundred, that is groundedly able to make out his interest in the Lord Jesus. Most Christians live between fear and hope, between doubting and believing. One day they hope that all is well, and that all shall be well for ever; the next day they are ready to say that they shall one day perish by the hand of such a corruption, or else by the hand of such or such a temptation; and thus they are up and down, saved and lost, many times in a day.

But you will say unto me, What means should we use to clear up our interest in Christ?

I will tell you.

There are six singular means that you should labour after, for the evidencing more and more your interest in Christ. And take it from experience, you will find that they will contribute very much for the evidencing your interest in Christ.

[1.] And the first is this, Faithfully and constantly fall in with the interest of Christ.

Holiness is the interest of Christ, the gospel is the interest of Christ, the precious ordinances are the interest of Christ, &c. Now the more sincerely and roundly you fall in with the interest of Christ, the more abundantly you will be confirmed and persuaded of your interest in Christ. Such souls as fall in with strange interests, or with base and carnal interests, may justly question whether ever they had any real interest in Christ. Christians! did you more sincerely and fully fall in with Christ's interest, you would less question your interest in Christ; this would scatter many a cloud.

[2.] Secondly, Be kind to the Spirit of Christ.

Do not grieve him, do not slight him. If you should set this Spirit a-mourning, that alone can evidence your interest, that alone can seal up your interest in Christ, by whom shall your interest in Christ be sealed up? Oh do not grieve the Spirit by acting against light, against conscience, against engagements; do not grieve him by casting his cordials and comforts behind your backs; do not grieve him by slighting and despising his gracious actings in others; do not cast water upon the Spirit, but wisely attend the hints, the items, and motions of the Spirit, and he will clear up thy interest in Christ, he will make thee say, 'My beloved is mine, and I am his,' Cant. 2:16.

[3.] Thirdly, Labour more and more after a full and universal conformity to Jesus Christ.

The more the soul is conformable to Christ, the more confident it will be of its interest in Christ: 1 John 4:17, 'Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world.' 'As he, so are we.' The child is not more like the father than we are like our Saviour. The child is the father multiplied, the father of a second edition. Our summum bonum consists in our full communion with Christ, and in our full conformity to Christ. Oh! if men were more universally conformable to Christ in their affections, ends, designs, and actings, &c., they would have abundantly more clear, full, and glorious evidences of

their interest in Christ. A more full conformity to Christ in heart and life will make your lives a very heaven, &c. As all good orators endeavour to be like Demosthenes, so all good Christians should endeavour to be like Jesus Christ; for therein lies their glory and perfection.

[4.] Fourthly, Interest Christ in the glory of all you enjoy, and in the glory of all you do.

This is a precious way to have your interest in Christ more and more evidenced to your own souls, 1 Cor. 10:31. Such as are good at this, as are much in this, will find Christ every day a-clearing up more and more their interest in himself. It is not usually long night with such souls. Oh Christians! interest Christ more and more in the glory of all your graces, interest him in the glory of all your duties, interest him in the glory of all your abilities, as Christ doth interest you in himself, in his Spirit, in his graces, in his riches, in his titles, in his dignities, in his offices. Ah Christians! did you interest Christ more in all you have, in all you are, and in all you do, you would never be so full of fears, and doubts, and questions about your interest in Christ as you are, John 1:16, Rev. 1:5, 6, 1 Peter 2:9. Your interesting of Christ in all you have and do, will speak out not only the truth of your love, but also the strength and greatness of your love; and where men love much, where they love strongly, there they do not question the truth of their love.

The heathen gods were contented to divide their honours amongst themselves, and hence the senate of Rome rejected Christ, from taking him to be a god, after that they had consulted about it; for, said they, if Christ come to be acknowledged a god, he will not share with the rest, he will have all himself; and so upon this reason they refused him. Christians! Christ will not have any competitor; he will rather part with anything than with his glory: Isa. 42:8, 'I am the Lord, that is my name, and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.' Christ will rather part with his life than with his honour; therefore, let every Christian say as David

does: 1 Chron. 29:11–13, 'Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand is power and might, and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all. Now, therefore, our God we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name.' And clearly, friends, the more your hearts are led forth to interest Christ in all you enjoy, and in all you do, the more clear and glorious evidence you will have of your interest in Christ. Let his honour and glory lie nearer and nearer to your hearts, and you shall see that he has set you as a seal upon his arm, as a seal upon his heart.

[5.] The fifth means to gain the knowledge of your interest in Christ is, By cleaving to Christ, and whatsoever is dear to Christ, in the face of all miseries, difficulties, and dangers.

It is nothing to cleave to Christ in fair weather, when every one cleaves to Christ, when every one professes Christ; but to cleave to him in a storm, when every one runs from him, this speaks out a child-like disposition; it speaks out a Jacob's spirit: Ps. 44; Acts 5; Heb. 11; Dan. 3; Acts 21:13. Surely he must needs have much of Christ, that nothing can take off from cleaving to Christ. When the soul says to Christ, as Ruth said to Naomi, 'Whither thou goest I will go; and where thou lodgest I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God shall be my God. The Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me,' Ruth 1:15–18. When neither the frowns of men, nor the reproach of men, nor the contempt of men, nor oppositions from men, can take the soul off from cleaving to Christ, it will not be long before Christ speaks peace to such a soul: Ps. 63:8, 'My soul followeth hard after thee, thy right hand upholds me.' In the Hebrew it is, 'My soul cleaveth to thee,' or 'is glued to thee,' as Jonathan's soul cleaved to David, and as Jacob's soul cleaved to Rachel, in the face of all difficulties and troubles. Doubtless, when the soul cleaves to Christ in the face of all afflictions

and difficulties, this carries with it very much evidence of its interest in Christ. In temporals men cleave to persons and things, as their interest is in them; and so it is in spirituals also. Christ cannot, Christ will not, throw such to hell that hang about him, that cleave to him.

[6.] Sixthly and lastly, If you would know whether you have an interest in Christ, then be very much in observing what interest Christ has in you.

Observe whether he has the interest of a head, a husband, a father, or no. Christ has a general interest in all creatures, as he is the Creator and preserver of them; and he has a head's interest, a husband's interest, a father's interest, only in them that have a saving interest in him. The interest of the head, the husband, the father, is the greatest interest; it is the sweetest interest, it is a commanding interest, it is a growing interest, it is a peculiar interest, it is a lasting interest; and really, if the Lord Jesus hath such an interest in you, you may be as confident that you have a real and glorious interest in him, as you are confident that you live. And thus much for the means whereby you may come to know your interest in rich Jesus.

Before I close up this discourse, give me leave to speak a few words to poor sinners who, to this very day, are afar off from this Jesus, who is so rich in all excellencies and glories. Ah poor hearts! you have heard much of the riches of the Lord Jesus, and oh that I could persuade with you to get an interest in this Christ! Get this Christ, and you get all; miss him, and you miss all. It is a matter of eternal concernment to your souls. Nothing can make that man miserable that hath this rich Christ; nothing can make that man happy that wants this rich Christ. In Prov. 4:5–7, 'Get wisdom (that is Christ), get understanding, forget it not. Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get wisdom, and with all thy getting get understanding.' And so in Prov. 16:16, 'How much better is it to get wisdom than gold? and to get understanding, rather to be chosen than silver?' Hadst thou all the power of the world, without an interest in Christ, thou wouldst be but weak, 1 Cor. 1:25–29. Hadst thou all the wit and

learning in the world, without an interest in Christ, thou wilt be but a fool. Hadst thou all the honours in the world, yet without an interest in Christ, thou wouldst be but base. Hadst thou all the wealth in the world, yet without an interest in Christ, thou wouldst be but a beggar, Dan. 4:17; Luke 16:22–26, &c. Oh, therefore, labour for an interest in Christ! Oh, turn the wise merchant at last! The wise merchant in the Gospel parts with all to buy the pearl, to get an interest in Christ, Mat. 13:45–47. Oh it is your greatest wisdom, it is of an eternal concernment to your souls, to sell all, to part with all, for an interest in the Lord Jesus! Oh do not deal with your own souls, when Christ is tendered and offered to you, as sometimes simple people do when they go to market; they might have a good pennyworth, but that they are loath to part with some old piece of gold that has been given them by a father or a friend; somewhat willing they are to have a good pennyworth, but unwilling they are to part with their gold. It is so with many poor sinners, when the Lord Jesus Christ is presented to their souls as a very glorious pennyworth, somewhat willing they are to have him, but unwilling they are to part with their old good, with some old sweet darling lust. But, sinners, don't you deceive your own souls; sin and your souls must part, or Christ and your souls can never meet. Sin and your souls must be two, or Christ and your souls can never be one. Christ is a most precious commodity; he is better than rubies, Prov. 8:11, or the most costly pearls; and you must part with your old gold, with your shining gold, your old sins, your most shining sins, or you must perish for ever. Christ is to be sought and bought with any pains, at any price. We cannot buy this gold too dear. He is a jewel more worth than a thousand worlds, as all know that have him. Get him, and get all; miss him and miss all.

Nine Directions to Poor Souls that Would Fain Get an Interest in Christ

Now if ever you would get an interest in Christ, and so by gaining an interest in him, be possessed of all the riches and glory that come by him, then be sure to get your hearts possessed with these nine principles that follow.

[1.] And the first principle is this, That the great end and design of Christ's coming into the world was the salvation of sinners.

Get this principle rooted in your spirits. 'I came not to call the righteous,' saith he, 'but sinners to repentance,' Mat. 9:13, Mark 2:17. And in 1 Tim. 1:15, 'This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.' Christ lays aside his royal crown; he puts off his glorious robe; he leaves his Father's bosom; he takes a journey from heaven to earth; and all to save poor lost sinners. That which Christ had most in his eye, and upon his heart, in his coming into the world, was the salvation of sinners. Lay up this truth, feed upon this honey-comb.

[2.] Secondly, Get this principle rooted upon your hearts, viz., That none ever yet obtained an interest in Christ but unworthy creatures.

When you are pressed to get an interest in Christ, you are ready to say, Oh 'I am unworthy,' will Christ ever look after such a one as I am?

I answer, yes; for this is a most certain principle, that none ever attained an interest in Christ but unworthy creatures. Was Paul worthy before he had an interest in Christ? What worthiness was in Matthew when Christ called him from the receipt of custom? And what worthiness was in Zaccheus when Christ called him down from the sycamore tree, and told him that this day salvation was come to his house? Was Manasseh or Mary Magdalene worthy before they had an interest in Christ? Surely no. Though you are unworthy, yet Christ is worthy; though you have no merit, yet God has mercy; though there is no salvation for you by the law, yet there is salvation for you by the gospel.

Again, Christ requires no worthiness in any man before he believes; and he that won't believe before he is worthy will never believe. If you look upon God with an evangelical eye, you shall see that he that is most unworthy is most capable of mercy. A real sense of our own unworthiness renders us most fit for divine mercy. This objection, I am unworthy, is an unworthy objection, and speaks out much pride and ignorance of the gospel, and of the freeness and riches of God's grace, &c.

[3.] Thirdly, Let this principle dwell in you, viz., That Christ hath lost none of his affections to poor sinners by going to heaven.

Oh how did his bowels work toward sinners when he was on earth! And certainly they work as strongly towards them now he is in heaven. His love, his heart, his good-will, is as much towards them as ever. Christ is Alpha and Omega; the phrase is taken from the Greek letters, whereof Alpha is the first, and Omega the last, Rev. 1:8. I am before all, and I am after all. 'Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever,' Heb. 13:8. [Vide Grotius.] Christ is the same before time, in time, and after time. Christ is unchangeable in his essence, in his promises, and in his love to poor sinners.

[4.] Fourthly, Get this principle riveted in your hearts, That he is able to save to the uttermost all those that come unto God by him.

Heb. 7:25, 'He is able to save to the uttermost;' that is, to all ends and purposes, perfectly and perpetually. He needs none to help him in the great business of redemption; he is thorough Saviour; 'he has trod the wine-press alone,' Isa. 63:3.

[5.] Fifthly, Get this principle riveted in your hearts, That the want of such preparations or qualifications that many men lay a great stress upon, shall be no impediment to hinder your soul's interest in Christ, if you will but open to Christ, and close with Jesus Christ.

Rev. 3:20, 'Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open to me, I will come in to him, and will sup with

him, and he with me.' Pray tell me at whose door was this that Christ stood and knocked? Was it not at the Laodiceans' door? Was it not at their door that thought their penny as good silver as any? that said they were rich, and had need of nothing, when Christ tells them to their very faces, 'that they were poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked.' None more unprepared, unqualified, and unfitted for union and communion with Christ than these lukewarm Laodiceans; and yet the Lord Jesus is very ready and willing that such should have intimate communion and fellowship with him.

'If any man will open, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.' The truth of this you have further evidenced, Prov. 1:20–24, and 8:1–6, and 9:1–6. All these scriptures with open mouth speak out the truth asserted, viz., That the want of preparations or qualifications shall not hinder the soul's interest in Christ, if the soul will adventure itself by faith upon Christ. I pray, what qualifications and preparations had they in Ezek. 16, when God saw them in their blood, and yet that was a time of love, and God even then spread his skirt over them, and made a covenant with them, and they became his. What qualifications or preparations had Paul, Mary Magdalene, Zaccheus, and Lydia, &c.? And yet these believed in Christ, these had a blessed and glorious interest in Christ, &c.

Ay, but some may object, and say,

Obj. What is the meaning of that text, Mat. 11:28, 'Come unto me, all you that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest'?

Ans. There is a threefold answer to be given to this objection.

First, Though the invitation be to those that are weary and heavy laden, yet the promise is made to coming, to believing.

Secondly, This text shews only this, that those that are burdened and bowed down under sin, and under the sense of divine wrath, are to come to Christ, and that there is no way for them to obtain ease and

rest but by coming to Christ. But this text doth not shew that only these must come to Christ, or that only these may come to Christ.

Thirdly, and lastly, No one scripture speaks out the whole mind of God; and therefore you must compare and consult this scripture with the scriptures, and instances lately cited, and then you will clearly see that souls may believe in Christ, and come to obtain an interest in Christ, though they are not so and so prepared, nor so and so qualified, as some would have them.

[6.] Sixthly, Get this principle rooted in your hearts, That Christ is appointed and anointed by the Father to this very office of receiving and saving poor sinners.

Turn to Isa. 61:1–4, John 6:28, and Ps. 68:18, 'Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive; thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also (what for?), that the Lord God might dwell among them.' Christ has received gifts for rebellious sinners, for rebellious Sabbath breakers, for rebellious swearers, for rebellious drunkards, &c.

'That the Lord God might dwell among them.' That is, that he might have near communion and fellowship with them.

[7.] Seventhly, Get this principle rooted in you, That it is the delight of Christ to give poor sinners an interest in himself.

He is not only able to do it, but it is his delight to do it. Christ's soul is in nothing more. Witness his leaving his Father's bosom; witness his laying down his crown; witness those many sufferings and deaths that he went through in this world; witness those gospel acclamations, Mark 16:16, Rev. 22:17; witness those persuasive exhortations and gracious impetrations and entreaties, Ezek. 44:13, Mat. 11:28, 2 Cor. 5:20; witness divine injunctions and comminations, 1 John. 5:20, Mat. 11:21; witness those pathetic lamentations, Mat. 23:37, Luke 19:42, Ps. 81:13; and witness the inward motions and secret excitations of his blessed Spirit, Gen. 6:3,

all which speak out his great willingness and delight to save poor sinners; so in Ps. 40:7, 8, 'I delight to do thy will, O my God; thy law is in my heart;' or, as the Hebrew hath it, בתוך מעי, 'It is in the midst of my bowels.' Now mark, the will of the Father was the salvation of sinners. This was the will of the Father, 'That Jesus Christ should seek and save them that are lost,' Mat. 18:11. Now, saith Christ, 'I delight to do thy will, O my God;' it is the joy and rejoicing of my heart to be a-seeking and a-saving lost sinners. When Christ was an hungry, he went not into a victualling house, but into the temple, and taught the people most part of the day, to shew how much he delighted in the salvation of sinners, &c.

[8.] Eighthly, Get this principle riveted in your hearts, That as there is nothing in Christ to discourage you from looking after an interest in him, so there is everything in Christ that may encourage you to get an interest in him.

Look upon his name: 'Thy name is an ointment poured out, and therefore do the virgins love thee,' Cant. 1:3. The name of Jesus hath a thousand treasures of joy and comfort in it, saith Chrysostom; and so hath all his other names. If you look upon Christ in his natures, in his offices, in his graces, in his beauties, in his gifts, and in his works, you will find nothing but what may encourage you to believe in him, and to resign up yourselves to him. Ah, poor sinners, what would you have? Is there not power in Christ to support you, and mercy in Christ to pardon you, and grace in Christ to heal you, and goodness in Christ to relieve you, and happiness in Christ to crown you, and what would you have more? Oh that you would believe!

[9.] Ninthly, Let this principle be rooted in you, That the surest way, and the shortest cut to mercy, and to get an interest in Christ, is by a peremptory casting of the soul by faith on Christ.

There is no way under heaven to be interested in Christ but by believing. There is no way to get an interest in the riches of Christ but this, 'he that believes shall be saved,' let his sins be never so great;

'and he that believes not, shall be damned,' let his sins be never so little. And so much shall suffice to have spoken concerning this great and weighty point. I shall follow what hath been said with my prayers, that what has been said may work for your internal and eternal welfare, &c.

Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles, the unsearchable riches of Christ, Eph. 3:8.

There are other two observations that arise from these words. I shall, by divine assistance, speak something to them, and so finish this text. And the first is this, viz.,

The Sixth Doctrine

That it is the great duty of preachers or ministers to preach Jesus Christ to the people, proved

Doct. That it is the great duty of preachers to preach Jesus Christ to the people.

'To me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.'

It is the great duty of ministers to preach the Lord Christ to the people.

I shall prove it, and then open it to you.

I. In Acts 5:42, 'And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach.' What? Jesus Christ. So in Acts 3:20, 'And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you.' So in 1 Cor. 1:23, 24, and 2 Cor. 4:5, 'We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus'

sake.' So in Acts 4:2, and 2:35, and 9:20. As soon as Paul was converted, straightway he preached Christ in the synagogue, that he was the Son of God.

Now for the opening of the point, I shall only attempt two things.

(1.) Give you the reasons why it is the great duty of ministers to preach Christ to the people.

(2.) Which will be the main, to shew you how they are to preach Christ to the people.

I confess this a very useful point in these days, wherein many men preach anything, yea, everything but a crucified Jesus. Well, Christians, remember this, as it is your duty to take heed how you hear, so it is as much your duty to take heed who you hear. Many there are that count and call themselves the ministers of Christ, and yet have neither skill nor will to preach Jesus Christ, to exalt and lift up Jesus Christ in lip or life, in word or work. A sad reckoning these will have to make up at last.

Five Reasons Why Ministers Must Preach Christ to the People

II. But to come to the reasons of the point, why it is the great work and duty of ministers to preach Jesus Christ to the people.

[1.] First, Because that is the only way to save and to win souls to Jesus Christ.

There is no other way of winning and saving souls, but by the preaching of Christ to the people. In Acts 4:10–12 compared, 'Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.' You may preach this and that, and a thousand things to the people, and

yet never better them, never win them. It is only preaching of Christ, that allures and draws souls to Christ: John 17:3, 'This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.' Ah, nothing melts the hearts of sinners, nor wins upon the hearts of sinners, like the preaching of the Lord Jesus. It is true, the teaching of this and that opinion, may please many a man's fancy, but it is only the preaching of Christ that changes the heart, that conquers the heart, that turns the heart, &c. Peter, by preaching of a crucified Christ, converts three thousand souls at once, Acts 2:14–42. Were Christ more preached, men would be more enamoured with him. He is only precious to them that hear of him, and that believe in him. Christ is in all respects incomparable; and therefore, as you would honour him, and win upon others, make him more and more known to the world, 1 Peter 2:7, &c.

[2.] Secondly, They are to preach Christ to the people, because it is the choicest and the chiefest way to ingratiate Christ with poor souls.

This brings Christ and the soul together, and this keeps Christ and the soul together. Nothing endears Christ to the soul like this. We see, by woful experience, Christ neglected, despised, scorned, and trampled upon by most; and no wonder, for many preach themselves more than Christ, and they preach men more than Christ, and their own notions and impressions more than Christ. Surely Christ is but little beholding to such ministers, and, I think, the souls of men as little; and oh that they were so wise as to consider of it, and lay it to heart! Surely a real Christian cares not for anything that hath not aliquid Christi, something of Christ in it. There is a strange and strong energy or forcibleness in hearing Christ and his beauties and excellencies displayed and discovered.

The daughters of Jerusalem, by hearing the church presenting Christ in so high a character, and by describing and painting him out in such lively colours, are so enchanted and inflamed that, might they but know where to find him, they would be at any pains to seek him. When Christ is set forth in his glories, with much affection and

admiration, others fall in love with him, as you may see by comparing Cant. 5:10, seq., with chap. 6:1.

[3.] Thirdly, It is their great duty to preach Jesus Christ to the people, because the preaching up of Christ is the only way to preach down antichrist, or whatever makes against Christ.

Some would have antichrist down, yea, they would have him down root and branch, but there is no such way for his total and final overthrow as the preaching of Christ; for the more the glory, fulness, perfection, and excellency of Christ is discovered, the more the horrid vileness and matchless wickedness of the man of sin will be discovered and abhorred, &c.: 2 Thes. 2:3, 4, 7–10, 'And then shall that wicked one be revealed.' The Greek word properly signifies a lawless, yokeless, masterless monster; one that holdeth himself subject to no law.

Pope Nicholas the First said 'that he was above law,' because Constantine stiled the pope God; and of the same opinion were most of the popes.

'Whom he shall consume.' The Greek word signifies to consume by little and little, till a thing come to nothing.

'With the spirit of his mouth.' That is, with the evidence and glory of his word in the mouths of his messengers. The ministers of the word are as a mouth whereby the Lord breatheth out that glorious, mighty, and everlasting gospel which shall by degrees bruise antichrist and all his adherents, and break them in sunder like a rod of iron, &c.

When Christ was born, all the idols that were set up in the world, as historians write, fell down. When Jesus Christ comes to be lifted up in a nation, in a city, in a town, in a family, yea, in any heart, then all idols without and within will fall before the power, presence, and glory of Jesus. Since Luther began to lift up Christ in the gospel, what a deal of ground has antichrist lost! and he does and will lose more and more, as Christ comes to be more and more manifested and

lifted up in the chariot of his word. Many in these days that speak much against antichrist, have much of antichrist within them. And certainly there is no such way to cast him out of men's hearts, and out of the world, as the preaching and making known of Christ, as the exalting or lifting up of Christ in the gospel of grace.

[4.] A fourth reason why they are to preach Christ to the people is this, because else they contract upon themselves the blood of souls.

There is no other way for them to avoid the contracting of the blood of men and women's souls upon them, but the preaching of Christ unto them. Now, a man were better to have all the blood of the world upon him than the blood of one soul. The blood of souls, of all blood, cries loudest and wounds deepest. The lowest, the darkest, and the hottest place in hell will be the sad and dreadful portion of such upon whose skirts the blood of souls shall be found at last. Hence that passage of Paul in 1 Cor. 9:16, 'Woe unto me if I preach not the gospel.' The motto that should be writ upon preachers' study-doors, and on their walls, and on all the books they look on, on the beds they lie on, and on the seats they sit on, &c., should be this, 'The blood of souls, the blood of souls.' The soul is the better, the noble part of man; it bears most of the image of God; it is capable of union and communion with God. Christ sweat for it, and bled for it; and therefore woe to those merchants that make merchandise of the souls of men. This was a comfort and an honour to Paul, that he kept himself from the blood of souls, Acts 20:25–27. He appeals to them that they were witnesses that 'he was free from the blood of all men.' Paul had held out Jesus Christ in his natures, in his names, in his offices, and in all his excellencies and perfections, and so frees himself from the blood of all men. And ministers can no way secure themselves from the blood of souls, but by preaching up and living out a crucified Jesus.

[5.] The last reason is this, because the preaching of Christ contributes most to their comfort here, and to their reward hereafter; therefore they are to preach the Lord Christ to the people.

When Luther was upon a dying bed, this was no small joy and comfort to his spirit. 'Thee, O Lord,' saith he, 'have I known, thee have I loved, thee have I taught, thee have I trusted, and now into thy hand I commend my spirit.' There can be no greater joy to a minister than, by preaching Christ, to win souls to Christ: 1 Thes. 2:19, 20, 'For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming. Ye are our glory and joy.' They that by preaching Christ win souls to Christ shall shine as the stars in the firmament, Dan. 12:3. Every soul won to Christ is a glorious pearl added to a preacher's crown: 1 Peter 5:4, 'And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, you shall receive a crown of glory.' A crown imports perpetuity, plenty, and dignity, the height of human ambition.

It is the opinion of some that there are three places of exaltation in heaven:

The first and highest is for converting ministers.

The second is for suffering martyrs.

The third is for persevering Christians.

Without doubt, those ministers shall be high in heaven who make it their heaven to hold forth Christ, and to win souls to Christ; who are willing to be anything, to be nothing, that Christ may be all in all to poor souls. And thus I have given you the reasons of the point.

I shall now come to the second thing, which is the main, and that is, to shew you,

II. How ministers are to preach Christ to the people.

Many weak and slight spirits in these days think that it is as easy to preach as to play, and so they hop from one thing to another, and those that are not qualified nor fit for the least and lowest employment, yet judge themselves fit enough for the greatest and the

weightiest employment in the world, and that which would certainly break the backs, not only of the best and strongest men, but even of the very angels, should not God put under his 'everlasting arms.' No labour to that of the mind, no travail to that of the soul, and those that are faithful in the Lord's vineyard find it so. Luther was wont to say that if he were again to choose his calling, he would dig, or do anything, rather than take upon him the office of a minister. And many other eminent lights have been of the same opinion with him.²

But what are those rules that every preacher is to observe in his preaching of Christ to the people?

How Christ is to be Preached,

Shewed in Eleven Things

I answer, These eleven:

[1.] First, Jesus Christ must be preached plainly, perspicuously, so as the meanest capacity may understand what they say concerning Christ. They must preach Christ for edification, and not to work admiration, as too many do in these days. Paul was excellent at this kind of preaching, 1 Cor. 14:18, 19. He had rather speak five words to edification than ten thousand words to work admiration in ignorant people. So in 1 Cor. 2:4, 5, 'And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power; that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God;' as if he should say, such preach with little power who come with the excellency of speech, or with the enticing words of man's wisdom. Ah! many there are,—I speak it with grief, and to their shame,—that delight to soar aloft in obscure discourses, and to express themselves in new-minted words and phrases, and to shew high strains and flashes of wit, and all to work admiration in the ignorant. Such kind of preachers are as clouds, and painted glass windows, that hinder the light from shining in upon

souls, that hinder the sun of righteousness from breaking forth in his beauty and glory upon the spirits of poor creatures. Woe unto these men in the day when such souls shall plead against them, when they shall say, Lord, here are the persons whose office and work was to make dark things plain, and they have made plain things dark and obscure, that we might rather wonder at them than any ways profit by them.⁴ Aaron's bells were of pure gold. Our whole preaching must be Scripture proof, or we and our works must burn together. The profoundest prophets accommodated themselves to their hearers' capacities. Holy Moses covers his glistering face with a veil when he was to speak to the people. Yea, it is very observable that the evangelists spake vulgarly many times for their hearers' sake, even to manifest incongruity, as you may see in John 17:2, Rev. 1:4. But above all, it is most observable concerning God the Father, who is the great Master of speech, when he spake from heaven, he makes use of three several texts of Scripture in one breath: Mat. 17:5, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear him;' 'This is my beloved Son,' that scripture you have in Ps. 2:7; 'In whom I am well pleased,' this you have in Isa. 42:1; 'Hear him,' this you have in Deut. 18:15; all which may bespeak them to blush, who through curious wiseness disdain at the stately plainness of the Scripture! Oh how unlike to God are such preachers, that think to correct the divine wisdom and eloquence with their own infancy, vanity, novelty, and sophistry! Yea, Jesus Christ himself, the great doctor of the church, teaches this lesson: Mark 4:33, 'And with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it;' not as he was able to have spoken. He could have expressed himself at a higher rate than all mortals can! he could have been in the clouds. He knew how to knit such knots that they could never untie, but he would not. He delights to speak to his hearers' shallow capacities. So in John 16:12, 'I have many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now.' He that speaks not to the hearers' capacities is as a barbarian to them, and they to him.

'He is the best teacher,' saith Luther, 'that preaches vulgarly, that preaches most plainly.' He is not the best preacher that tickles the

ear, or that works upon the fancy, &c., but he that breaks the heart and awakens the conscience. It is sad to consider how many preachers in these days are like Heraclitus, who was called 'the dark doctor,' because he affected dark speeches. Oh how do many in these days affect sublime notions, uncouth phrases, making plain truths difficult, and easy truths hard! 'They darken counsel by words without knowledge,' Job 38:2. But how unlike to Christ, the prophets, and apostles these dark doctors are, I will leave you to judge; nor would I have their accounts to make up for all the world; I will leave them to stand or fall to their own Master. God loves, owns, and crowns plain preaching. Though some account it foolishness, yet 'to them that are saved, it is the power of God and the wisdom of God,' 1 Cor. 1:20–30. I have stayed the longer upon this first direction, because of its great usefulness in these deluding days.

[2.] Secondly, As they must preach Christ plainly, so they must preach Christ faithfully, Prov. 13:17, 25:13, Job 33:23. Ministers are stewards, 1 Cor. 4:2; and you know it is the duty of a steward to be faithful in his stewardship, to give to every man the portion that is due to him, cheering up those hearts that God would have cheered, and weakening those wicked hands that God would have weakened, and strengthening those feeble knees that God would have strengthened. Ministers are ambassadors; and you know it is the great concernment of ambassadors to be very faithful in their master's messages. God looks more, and is affected and taken more, with a minister's faithfulness than with anything else. A great voice, an affected tone, studied notions, and silken expressions, may affect and take poor weak souls; but it is only the faithfulness of a minister in his ministerial work that takes God, that wins upon God: Mat. 25:21–23, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of the Lord:' a joy too big to enter into thee, and therefore thou must enter into it. This was Paul's glory, Acts 20:27, that he 'had not shunned to declare unto them the whole counsel of God.' Neither fear nor favour swayed him one way or another, but he was faithful in his Master's work, and usually God crowns him and his labours most, and sends most fish into his net, that is most faithful, though

he be less skilful; that hath more of the heart in the work, though he hath less of the brain.

The maid in Plutarch being to be sold in the market, when a chapman asked her, 'Wilt thou be faithful if I buy thee?' 'Ay,' said she, *etiamsi non emeris*, 'that I will though you do not buy me.' So ministers must be faithful, though God should not buy them, though he should not thus and thus encourage them in their work. Their very feet are beautiful who are faithful, and their message most comfortable to those that sigh and mourn, that labour and languish under the sense of sin and fear of wrath, Isa. 52:7.

[3.] Thirdly, They must preach Christ humbly as well as faithfully: 2 Cor. 4:5, 'We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.' Paul doth not compliment as the men of the world do, 'Your servants, sir,' but he spake as it was, for there are no greater servants than those that are servants to the souls of men for Jesus' sake. So John was very humble in the exercise of his ministry: John 3:30, 31, 'He must increase, but I must decrease,' &c.

Luther used to say, 'that a minister must take heed of bringing three dogs into the pulpit, viz., pride, covetousness, and envy.' The friends of the bridegroom must not woo and sue for themselves, but for the bridegroom. Dispensers of the gospel are the bridegroom's friends, and they must not speak one word for the bridegroom and two for themselves, as hath been the trade of many weak and worthless men. It is the greatest glory of a minister in this world to be high in spiritual work and humble in heart. Vain-glory is a pleasant thief; it is the sweet spoiler of spiritual excellencies. Paul was very humble in the exercise of his ministry: none so high in worth as he, nor none so low nor humble in heart as he. Though he was the greatest among the apostles, yet he accounts himself 'less than the least of all saints;' yea, he counted it not only his duty but his glory, to be a servant to the weakest saints: 'To the weak I became as weak;' 'Who is weak,

and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not,' 1 Cor. 9:22, 2 Cor. 11:29.

[4.] Fourthly, As they are to preach the Lord Jesus Christ humbly, so they are to preach him wisely. In Prov. 11:30, 'He that winneth souls is wise;' and indeed the greatest wisdom in the world is requisite to the winning of souls to Christ. He that wins souls, or he that catcheth souls, as the fowler doth birds, as the Hebrew word imports [Veloakeach, taketh, from Lakach, to take], or fishermen fishes, 'he is wise.' There is a holy and a heavenly craft required in the winning of souls to Christ: 2 Cor. 12:16, 'Nevertheless being crafty,' saith the apostle, 'I caught you with guile.' He speaks of a holy and heavenly craft.

It is written of the fox, that when he is very hungry after prey, and can find none, that he lies down and feigneth himself dead, and so the fowls light upon him, and then he catcheth them. Paul, hungering after the welfare of the Corinthians' souls, makes use of his heavenly craft to catch them. There is a great deal of wisdom required to hold out Christ unto the people, not only as a good, but as the greatest good, as the choicest good, as the chiefest good, as the most suitable good, as an immutable good, as an independent good, as a total good, and as an eternal good. Christ must thus be held forth to draw souls to fall in love with him, and to work their hearts to run out after him. There is wisdom required to answer all cavils and objections that keep Christ and poor souls asunder. There is wisdom required to take souls off from all false bottoms that they are apt to build upon; there is wisdom required to present Christ freely to souls, in opposition to all unrighteousness, and to all unworthiness in man; there is wisdom required to suit things to the capacities and conditions of poor souls, to make dark things plain, and hard things easy. Ministers must not be like him in the emblem that gave straw to the dog and a bone to the ass; but they must suit all their discourses to the conditions and capacities of poor creatures, or else all will be lost; time lost, pains lost, God lost, heaven lost, and souls lost for ever.

[5.] Fifthly, They must preach Christ, zealously, boldly, as well as wisely, Acts 4:20. When they had charged them that they should preach no more in the name of Christ, Why, say they! what do you tell us of the whip, or of prisons, or of this and that? 'We cannot but speak the things we have seen and heard.' So in Jer. 20:9, 'Thy 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;' Isa. 58:1, 'Cry aloud, spare not; lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Israel their sins.' And Isaiah had his tongue touched with a coal of fire from the altar, chap. 6:6, 7. And when the disciples were to go and preach the gospel, the fire sat upon their tongues, Acts 2:34. The worst of men are in a dead sleep, and the best of men are too often in a sinful slumber, as the spouse in Cant. 5:2, and the wise virgins in Mat. 25; and therefore faithful ministers had need cry aloud; they had need to be courageous and zealous, to awaken both sinners and saints, that none may go sleeping to hell. Every coward is a murderer, as the philosopher well observed. The cowardice of the minister is cruelty; if he fear the faces of men he is a murderer of the souls of men. Ministers must say, as Hector in Homer, 'I will combat with him, though his hands were as fire, and his strength as iron.' Let men's hands be as fire and their strength as iron, yet ministers must deal with them, and strive to make a conquest on them, Ezek. 2:3, seq.

Luther professed that he had rather be accounted anything than be accused of wicked silence in Christ's cause. 'Let me be accounted,' says he, 'proud, let me be accounted covetous, let me be accounted a murderer, yea, guilty of all vices, so I be not proved guilty of wicked silence for the Lord Jesus Christ.'

Themistocles being about to speak to the general of the Greek's army, against Xerxes, he held up his staff, as if he had been about to strike him, 'Strike,' said Themistocles, 'but yet hear.' So should ministers say, strike, but yet hear; rail, but yet hear; despise, but yet hear; censure, but yet hear; oppose, but yet hear; do what you will, but yet

hear. Non amat, qui non zelat, saith Augustine, 'He is no friend to God that is not zealous for him.'

When one desired to know what kind of man Basil was, there was, saith the history, presented to him in a dream, a pillar of fire with this motto, Talis est Basilius, Basil is such a one, all on a-light fire for God. So every minister should be all on a-fire for God.

[6.] Sixthly, They are to preach Christ laboriously, painfully, frequently.³ A minister must be like the bee, that is still a-flying from one flower to another to suck out honey for the good of others. Should not that dreadful word make every idle shepherd tremble: Jer. 48:10, 'Cursed be he that doth the work of the Lord negligently;' 1 Cor. 15 ult., 'Be ye stedfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.' Oh the dreadful woes that are pronounced in Scripture against idle shepherds! Jer. 23:1; Ezek. 13:3, 34:2; Zech. 11:17; Mat. 23:13–16, 23, 25, 27. The great Shepherd of our souls, the Lord Jesus, was still a-feeding of his flock, and much in provoking others to the same work: John 21:15, 'Feed my lambs, feed my sheep;' 2 Tim. 4:2, 'Preach the word in season, and out of season.' Christ wept for souls, and bled for souls, and prayed for souls; and shall not ministers sweat much for souls, and work much for the good of souls? Doubtless they will give but a sad account to Christ that make anything serve to fill up the hour; that spend two or three hours at the end of a week to fit themselves for Sabbath exercises. Idleness is hateful in any, but most abominable and intolerable in ministers; and sooner or later none shall pay so dear for it as such. Witness the frequent woes that are denounced in Scripture against them. Where should a soldier die but in the field? And where should a minister die but in the pulpit?

Pompey, in a great dearth at Rome, having provided store of provisions for his citizens that were ready to perish, and being ready to put to sea, he commanded the pilot to hoist sail and be gone. The pilot told him that the sea was tempestuous, and that the voyage was

like to be dangerous. 'It matters not,' said Pompey, 'hoist up sail; it is not necessary that we should live, it is necessary that they should be preserved from ruin and famine.' So should ministers say, it is not necessary that we should live, but it is necessary that poor souls should live and be happy for ever; it is necessary that they should be acquainted with the things of their peace; it is necessary that they should be delivered from the power of Satan and from wrath to come; and therefore it is necessary that we should be frequent and 'abundant in the work of the Lord,' and not plead storms and tempests, or that a lion is in the way.

It was Vespasian the emperor's speech, and may well be applied to ministers, *Oportet imperatorem stantem mori*, an emperor ought to die standing.

[7.] Seventhly, As they are to preach Christ painfully, so they are to preach Christ exemplarily: 1 Peter 5:3, 'Be thou an example to the flock.' They must preach Christ as well in life as in doctrine. Ministers must not be like the drugs, that physicians say are hot in the mouth and cold in operation; hot in the pulpit, and cold and careless in their lives and conversations. They must say, as Gideon said to his soldiers: Judges 7:17, 'Look on me and do likewise;' Mat. 5:16, 'Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.' They are called angels, and they are called stars, because they should shine in righteousness and holiness.

What Cæsar once said of his wife, 'that it was not enough for her to be without fault, but she should be without all suspicion of fault,' may well be applied to ministers, who, of all men in the world, should be most free from the very appearances of evil. The lives of ministers oftentimes do convince more strongly than their words; their tongues may persuade, but their lives command.

Tace lingua, loquere vita, 'Talk not of a good life,' said the heathen, 'but let thy life speak.' God appointed that both the weights and

measures of the sanctuary should be twice as large as those of the commonwealth, to shew, that he expects much more of those that wait upon him in the sanctuary than he doth of others. Ministers should be like musk among linen, which casts a fragrant smell, or like that box of spikenard, which being broken open, filled the house with its odour.

Gregory saith of Athanasius, that his life was a continual sermon and wooing men to Christ. Aristotle requires this in an orator, that he be a good man; how much more then should God's orators be good and gracious? When Eli's sons were wicked, the people abhorred the offering of the Lord, 1 Sam. 2:17; and what is that that renders the things of God so contemptuous and odious in the eyes of many people in this nation, but the ignorance, looseness, profaneness, and baseness of those that are the dispensers of them. Unholy ministers pull down instead of building up. Oh the souls that their lives destroy! These, by their loose lives, lead their flocks to hell, where theirselves must lie lowermost.

A painter being blamed by a cardinal for putting too much red upon the visages of Peter and Paul, tartly replied, that he painted them so, as blushing at the lives of those men who styled themselves their successors. Ah how do the lewd and wicked lives of many that are called and accounted ministers, make others to blush!

Salvian relates how the heathen did reproach some Christians, who by their ungodly lives, made the gospel of Christ to be a reproach: 'Where,' said they, 'is that good law which they do believe? Where are those rules of godliness which they do learn? They read the holy Gospel, and yet are unclean; they hear the apostle's writings, and yet are drunk; they follow Christ, and yet disobey Christ; they possess a holy law, and yet do lead impure lives.' As this is very applicable to many professors in those days, so it is applicable to many preachers also.

I have read of a scandalous minister that was struck at the heart, and converted in reading those words: Rom. 2:21, 'Thou which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?' If this treatise should fall into any such hand, oh that it might have the same operation! Wicked ministers do more hurt by their lives than they do good by their doctrine.

I have read of a gentlewoman that turned athiest because she lived under a great learned doctor that preached excellently but lived very licentiously.

The heathen brings in a young man, who hearing of the adulteries and wickedness of the gods, said, 'What! do they so, and shall I stick at it?' So say most, when their teachers and leaders are lewd and wicked, what! do they such and such abominations, and shall we stick at it?

When one deboist in life among the Lacedemonians stept up and gave good counsel, they would not receive it; but when another of a better life stept up and gave the same counsel, they presently followed it. The application is easy. Every minister's life should be a commentary upon Christ's life; nothing wins and builds like this.³

[8.] Eighthly, Ministers must preach feelingly, experimentally, as well as exemplarily. They must speak from the heart to the heart; they must feel the worth, the weight, the sweet of those things upon their own souls that they give out to others: 1 John 1:1–3, 'That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the word of life (for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us); that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.' The highest mystery in the divine rhetoric, is to feel what a man speaks, and then speak what a man feels.

Praxiteles exquisitely drew love, taking the pattern from that passion which he felt in his own heart.

It was said of Luther, that he spake as if he had been within a man. Ministers must so speak to the people, as if they lived in the very hearts of the people; as if they had been told all their wants, and all their ways, all their sins, and all their doubts. No preaching to this, no preachers to these.

Ministers should not be like Cæsar's soldier, that digged a fountain for Cæsar, and himself perished for want of water. Yet many such there be in these days, that dig and draw water out of the wells of salvation for others, and yet themselves eternally perish, by their non-drinking of the waters of life. If they are monsters, and not to be named among men, that feed and feast their servants, but starve their wives, then what monsters are they that feed and feast other men's souls, with the dainties and delicates of heaven, but starve their own? No misery, no hell to this!

[9.] Ninthly, As ministers must preach the word feelingly, experimentally, so they must preach the word rightly. They must divide and distribute the word according to every one's spiritual estate and condition. They must give comfort to whom comfort belongs, and counsel to whom counsel belongs, and reproof to whom reproof belongs, and terror to whom terror belongs: 2 Tim. 2:15, 'Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth;' or, word for word, 'Rightly cutting into parts the word of truth,' Isa. 40:1, 2, 50:4; 2 Cor. 5:10–12. Some say [Gerhard, Perkins, &c.] the metaphor is taken from the priests of the Old Testament, who having slain the beasts that were to be sacrificed, did joint and divide the same in an accurate manner. Others say [Chrysostom, Bullinger, Theophylact, &c.] it is a metaphor taken from a cutter of leather, who cutteth off that which is superfluous, when he cutteth out reins and thongs. So in the handling of the word, questions that are superfluous and unprofitable, ought to be cut off; and that only is to be held forth that

makes for the hearer's instruction, edification and consolation. Others say the metaphor is taken from the cutting and squaring out of the streets and highways, and setting out the bounds of men's lands and possessions. Others by cutting the word of truth aright, understand the raising of right instructions, by following the rule of the word, only as a ploughman that draweth or cutteth a right furrow in the ground.

To divide the word aright, is to cut out, saith Calvin and others, to every one his portion, as a parent cutteth out bread to his children, or a cook meat to his guests. A general doctrine not applied, is as a sword without an edge, not in itself, but to the people, who by reason of their own singular senselessness and weakness, are not able to apply it to their own estates and conditions; or as a whole loaf set before children, that will do them no good. A garment fitted for all bodies, is fit for nobody; and that which is spoken to all is taken as spoken to none. Doctrine is but the drawing of the bow, application is the hitting of the mark. How many are wise in generals, but vain in their practical inferences! Such preachers are fitter for Rome than England. Souls may go sleeping and dreaming to hell before such preaching, ere such preachers will awaken them and shew them their danger. Oh that therefore the people were so wise as, that when sin is reproved, judgments threatened, miseries promised, and Christ freely and fully offered, they would apply all to their own souls! This is the misery of many in our days; they come to sermons as beggars come to banquets, carrying nothing but the scraps away with them.

[10.] Tenthly, They must preach the word acceptably, as well as rightly: Eccles. 12:10, 'The preacher sought to find out acceptable words;' or words of delight, as the Hebrew has it, 'and that which was written was upright, even words of truth.' Ministers' words should be divinely delectable and desirable; they should divinely please, and divinely profit; they should divinely tickle, and divinely take both ear and heart. A minister should be a weighty speaker; he should clothe his doctrine in such a comely, lovely dress, as that he may by it slide insensibly into his hearers' hearts. Ministers should clothe their

matter with decent words. The leaves give some beauty to the tree. Good matter in an unseemly language, is like a bright taper in a sluttish candlestick, or like a fair body in unhandsome clothes, or like a gold ring on a leprous hand. 'Truth,' saith one, 'loves to be plain, but not sluttish.' As she loves not to be clad in gay colours, like a wanton strumpet, so not in lousy rags like a nasty creature. Aaron's bells were golden bells, dulce sonantes, sounding pleasantly, and not as sounding brass, or tinkling cymbals. Holy eloquence is a gift of the Holy Ghost, Acts 18:24, and may doubtless, as well as other gifts of the Spirit, be made prudently useful to the setting forth of divine truth, and the catching of souls by craft, as the apostle speaks, 2 Cor. 12:16. Surely where it is, it may be made use of as an Egyptian jewel to adorn the tabernacle.

Lactantius [De falsa Sap. lib. v. cap. 1] hath well observed, that philosophers, orators, and poets, were therefore very pernicious, in that they easily ensnared incautious minds with sweetness of speech; therefore his advice is, even in delivering the truth of Christ, to sweeten the speech for the winning of them to Christ, who will neither hear, nor read, nor value, nor regard the truth, except it be polished and trimmed up in a lovely dress.

[11.] In the last place, and so to add no more, as they must preach the word acceptably, so they must preach the word constantly. They must not lay down the Bible, to take up the sword, as some have done for worldly advantages, 1 Cor. 7:10, 24; they must not leave the word to serve tables, Acts 6:1, as others have done upon the same account; they must not change their black cloaks, for scarlet cloaks; they must abide and continue in their places and employments; they must neither change their work nor their master: Acts 6:4, 'But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.' They would not assign their charge to some surrogates or deputies, that themselves might live at ease. No! they were peremptorily resolved to hold on, to continue in these two choice duties, prayer and ministry of the word. So in chap. 26:22, 'Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing

both to small and great, saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come.' 1 Tim. 4:15, 16, 'Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them, [έν τούτοις ἴσθι, spend thy time in them], that thy profiting may appear to all, or in all things. Take heed unto thyself, and unto thy doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee;' 2 Tim. 3:14, 'But [Μένε. abide, keep thy station, thou wilt be put to it, thou wilt meet with earthquakes] continue thou in the things which thou hast learned, and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them;' Eccles. 12:9, 'And moreover, because the preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he gave good heed, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs.'

Hosea was fourscore years a prophet in Israel, and yet did not convert them; yet notwithstanding all discouragements he continued constant, and that with abundance of freshness and liveliness.

Chrysostom compares good pastors to fountains that ever send forth waters, or conduits that are always running, though no pail be put under. [Chrysost. in Mat. Hom. xv.]

Erasmus saith of Jerome, *Minima pars noctis dabatur somno, minor cibo, nulla otio*, He allowed least time for sleep, little for food, none for idleness. It best becomes a minister to die preaching in a pulpit.

Now if this be so, then by way of use let me say, That this truth looks very sourly and wistly upon all those that preach anything rather than Christ.

The Lord be merciful to them! How have they forgotten the great work about which their heads and hearts should be most exercised, to wit, the bringing in of souls to Christ, and the building up of souls in Christ. Where do we find in all the Scripture, that Christ, his prophets or apostles, did ever in their preaching meddle with businesses of state, or things of a mere civil concernment? 'My kingdom is not of this world. Who has made me a judge?' says Christ.

Three Rules or Directions

that such are to observe, as would preach Christ aright to the people

I hope it will not be counted presumption in me if I shall propound a few rules for such to observe that are willing to preach Christ to poor souls. I will only propound three.

[1.] And the first is this, If you would preach Christ to the people, according to the rules last mentioned, then you must get a Christ within you.

There is nothing that makes a man indeed so able to preach Christ to the people, as the getting a Christ within him; and it is very observable, that the great rabbies and doctors that want a Christ within, they do but bungle in the work of the Lord, in the preaching of a crucified Jesus; and were it not for the help of Austin, Chrysostom, Ambrose, and Tertullian, &c., what sad, dead, and pitiful work would they make! Yea, for want of a Christ within, how little of Christ do they understand! How little of Christ do they make known, notwithstanding all their borrowed helps! Paul was a man that had got a Christ within him: Gal. 2:20, 'I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life that I live is by the faith of the Son of God,' &c. Compare this with Gal. 4:19, 'My little children, of whom I travail in birth till Christ be formed in you.' A Christ within, makes him travail in birth. The Greek word translated, 'I travail in birth,' signifies not only the travail of the woman at the birth of the child, but also the painful bearing thereof before the birth. The pains of travail breed not a greater desire to see a man-child born into the world, than Paul's love bred in him, till Christ were anew formed in them, 2 Cor. 11:23. No man did so much for the winning of souls to Christ as Paul, nor no man had so much of a Christ within him as Paul. Nothing will naturalise a minister's heart to his work like a Christ within; nothing will make him so wise, so painful, so watchful, so careful to win souls, as a Christ within; nothing will make him

hold out and hold on in the work of the Lord, in the face of all oppositions, persecutions, dangers, and deaths, as a Christ within; nothing will make a man strive with sinners, and weep over sinners, and wait upon sinners for their return, as a Christ within. Such ministers as have not a Christ within them, will find no comfort, and as little success, in their preaching of Christ. Above all gettings, get a Christ within, or else after all thy preaching, thyself will be a cast-away.

[2.] Secondly, They that would preach Christ to the people, must study more Scripture truths, Scripture mysteries, than human histories.

They must study God's book more than all other books. The truth and antiquity of the book of God finds no companion, either in age or authority. No histories are comparable to the histories of the scriptures, for, 1, antiquity; 2, rariety; 3, variety; 4, brevity; 5, perspicuity; 6, harmony; 7, verity.

'Gregory' calls the Scripture, *cor et animam dei*, the heart and soul of God; for in the Scriptures, as in a glass, we may see how the heart and soul of God stands towards his poor creatures. It was the glory of Apollos that he was mighty in the Scripture, Acts 18:24; John 5:39, 'Search the Scriptures,' saith Christ. The Greek word signifies to search as men search for gold in mines, ἐρευνᾶτε. You must search the Scriptures, not superficially but narrowly. The Scriptures are a great depth, wherein the choicest treasures are hid; therefore you must dig deep if you will find: Col. 3:16, 'Let the word of Christ dwell richly in you;' or as the Greek hath it, ἐνοικεῖτω ἐν ὑμῖν. 'Let the word of Christ indwell in you, as an engrafted word, incorporated into your souls.' Let the word be so concocted and digested by you, as that you turn it into a part of yourselves. You must be familiarly acquainted with the word; you must not let it pass by you as a stranger, or lodge and sojourn with you as a wayfaring man; it must continually abide with you, and dwell richly in you: 2 Tim. 3:16, 17, 'All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for

doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.' All books and helps are not comparable to the Bible, for the completing and perfecting of a man for the work of the ministry.

That which a papist reports of their sacrament of the mass, that there are as many mysteries in it as there are drops in the sea, dust on the earth, angels in heaven, stars in the sky, atoms in the sunbeams, or sands on the sea-shore, &c., may be truly asserted of the word of God; no study to the study of the Scripture for profit and comfort. Count Anhalt, that princely preacher, was wont to say, 'That the whole Scriptures were the swaddling bands of the child Jesus,' he being to be found almost in every page, in every verse, in every line.

Luther would often say, 'That he had rather that all his books should be burned, than that they should be a means to hinder persons from studying of the Scripture.'

[3.] The third and last rule I shall lay down, is this, Such as would preach Christ aright to the people had need dwell much upon the vanity of human doctrines.

The vanity of which doctrines may be thus discovered:

First, They do not discover sin in its ugliness and filthiness as the Scriptures do. They search but to the skin, they reach not to the heart; they do not do as the master did in Jonah's ship, when they were in a storm.

Secondly, Human doctrines have no humbling power in them. They may a little tickle you, but they can never humble you; they cannot cast down Satan's strongholds; they cannot melt nor break the heart of a sinner; they cannot make him cry out with the leper, 'Unclean, unclean.'

Thirdly, Human doctrines nourish not the noble part, the soul of man. The prodigal was like to starve before he returned to his

father's house. A man may study much, and labour much, and lay out much of his time and spirits about human doctrines, and yet after all be like to Pharoah's lean kine. A man that studies human doctrines doth but feed upon ashes.

Fourthly, Human doctrines cannot cure a wound in the conscience. The diseased woman spent all she had upon physicians, but was not a penny the better. The remedy is too weak for the disease. Conscience, like Prometheus' vulture, will still lie gnawing notwithstanding all that such doctrines can do.

Fifthly, Human doctrines are so far from enriching the soul, that they usually impoverish the soul. They weaken the soul; they expose the soul to the greatest wants and to the greatest weaknesses; they play the harlot with the soul; they impoverish it, and bring it to 'a morsel of bread.' Who so poor in spiritual experiences and heavenly enjoyments as such that sit under the droppings of human doctrines?

Sixthly, Human doctrines make men servants to the humours and corruptions of men; they make men-pleasers of men rather than pleasers of God; yea, they make men set up themselves and others, sometimes in the room of Christ, and sometimes above Christ. I hope these few short hints may prevail with some to fall in with this counsel, that so they may the better preach the Lord Jesus to the people.

And so much for this doctrine.

Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, Eph. 3:8.

Having spoken much concerning ministers' duty, I shall now speak a little concerning their dignity, and so finish this text.

'Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of

Christ.' This grace, this favour, this honour is given to me, that I should preach, &c. I look not upon it as a poor, low, mean, contemptible thing, but as a very great honour, 'that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.'

The observation that I shall speak to is this:

THE LAST DOCTRINE

That the office of a faithful minister is an honourable office

Obs. That the office of a minister or preacher is honourable.

For the understanding of this point, premise with me two things:

First, That by a minister, I understand one that is qualified according to gospel rules, and that is internally called by God, and externally called by the people of God, to the ministerial office.

The second thing that I would have you premise with me for the understanding of the point is this, that the common appellation of those that are set apart for the preaching of the gospel in the New Testament is δῆκονοι, ministers. So in 1 Cor. 3:5; 2 Cor. 3:6, and chap. 6:4, and chap. 11:15, 23; 1 Tim. 4:16, and in divers other places, the word minister is a title of office, service, or administration given frequently to the preachers of the gospel. As for the names of ambassadors, stewards, and the like, wherewith they are often honoured, they are figurative, and given to them by allusion only.

These two things being premised, we shall now proceed to the opening of the point.

1. And, in the first place, I shall prove that the office of a minister is an honourable office.

2. And then, in the second place, I shall shew you what honour is due to them.

3. And then, in the third place, I shall shew you how you are to honour them.

4. And then, in the last place, we shall bring home all by a word of application.

Christians, give me leave to tell you this by the way, that since the gospel hath shined in England, a godly, faithful, painful ministry was never more subtilly and vehemently struck at by men that make a fair show, and by men of corrupt opinions and wicked lives. This age affords many church-levellers as well as state-levellers. Some there be, that under that notion of plucking up corrupt ministers, would pluck up by the very roots the true ministry. But God has and will be still too hard for such men. If they will be monsters, God will be sure to be master. His faithful ministers are stars that he holds in his right hand, Rev. 2:1; and men shall as soon pull the sun out of the firmament, as pull them out of the hand of God.

Seven things Speak Them Uut to be Honourable

Now, considering that there is such a spirit abroad in the world, I hope no sober, serious Christians will be offended at my standing up to vindicate the honour of a godly, faithful ministry. In order to which, I shall first prove that the office of a minister is honourable; and to me these following things speak it out:

[1.] First, The several names and titles that are given to them in Scripture, doth speak them out to be honourable. They are called fathers, stewards, ambassadors, overseers, and angels, as you all know that know anything of Scripture. To spend time to prove this, would be to light candles to see the sun at noon.

[2.] Secondly, Their work is honourable. Their whole work is about souls, about winning souls to Christ, and about building souls up in Christ; and to these two heads the main work of the ministry may be reduced. The more noble the soul is, the more honour it is to be busied and exercised about it: James 5:20, '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.'

'Let him know,' that is, let him take notice that an honourable and glorious work is done by him. The soul is the immediate work of God; the soul is the image of God; the soul is capable of union and communion with God; the soul is worth more than a world, yea, than a thousand worlds. Christ prayed for souls, and wrought miracles for souls, and wept for souls, and left his Father's bosom for souls, and bled out his heart's blood for souls, and is gone to heaven to make provision for souls, yea, he is now a-making intercession for souls. All which speaks out the excellency of their office whose whole work is about souls.

The Jews say of Moses his soul, that it was sucked out of his mouth with a kiss. Souls are dear and sweet to Christ.

[3.] A third thing that speaks out this truth is this, they are fellow-labourers with God; they are co-workers with God in the salvation of sinners. And this is a mighty honour, to be a fellow-labourer with God, to be a co-worker with God: 1 Cor. 3:9, 'For we are labourers together with God.' Who would not work hard with such sweet company? Who would not affect, prize, love, and honour such service? Ministers are called the light and salt of the world, because they enlighten blind souls, and season unsavoury souls, and so save them from corruption and perdition, Mat. 5:14; John 5:35; Mat. 5:13; Mark 9:49, 50. Oh, to be joined in any work with God, is an honour beyond what I am able to express!

The senate of Rome accounted it a diminution of Augustus Cæsar's dignity to join any consuls with him for the better carrying on the

affairs of the state. Oh, but our God doth not think it a diminution of his dignity, that even his poor despised servants should be fellow-labourers and co-workers with him in the salvation of souls.

[4.] Fourthly, The honourable account that the Lord hath of them in this employment, speaks out this truth, that their office is honourable. In Mat. 10:41, 42, compared, 'He that receiveth you, receiveth me; he that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward;' and Luke 10:16, 'He that receiveth you, receiveth me; and he that despises you, despises me.' This honourable account God hath of all his faithful servants in this employment. Kings and princes have their ambassadors in very high account: so has God his.

[5.] The fifth thing that speaks out this truth is this, they serve an honourable master. They serve him that is all ear to hear, all hand to punish, all power to protect, all wisdom to direct, all goodness to relieve, and all mercy to pardon. They serve that God that is optimum, maximum, the best and greatest. God hath within himself all the good of angels, men, and universal nature; he hath all dignity, all glory, all riches, all treasure, all pleasure, all delight, all joy, all beatitudes. Mark, abstracts do better express God than concretes and adjectives. God is being, bonity,² beauty, power, wisdom, justice, mercy, and love itself. 'God is love,' saith the apostle, in the very abstract. God is one infinite perfection in himself, which is eminently and virtually all perfections of the creatures. And oh then, what an honour must it be to those that are employed under so honourable a master!

[6.] Sixthly, Their very work and service is honourable. Why else did the apostle cry out, 'Who is sufficient for these things?' There is no such embassage in the world as this is in which they are employed: Eph. 6:19, 20, 'Pray for me, that I may make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds.' Faithful ministers do represent the person of the King of kings and Lord of

lords; their work is to treat of peace between God and man, or of open hostility between the Creator and the creature, 2 Cor. 5:19, 20.

[7.] Seventhly, and lastly, Their reward from God is honourable. Though the world crown them with thorns, as it did their Lord and master before them, yet God will crown them with honour: Dan. 12:3, 'They shall shine as the stars in the firmament.' You know ambassadors have not preferments while they are abroad, but when they come home into their own country, then their princes prefer them, and put much honour upon them. So will God deal with his ambassadors: 2 Tim. 4:7, 8, 'I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.' So in Isa. 49:4, 5. 'I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain; yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my reward with my God. Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength.' So in 2 Cor. 2:15, 'For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ in them that are saved, and in them that perish.' Ministers shall be rewarded according to their faithfulness and diligence, though some perish. It shall be with them as with vine-dressers. You know vine-dressers are rewarded according to their diligence and faithfulness, though some vines never bear, nor bring forth fruit at all. As ministers are diligent and faithful, so the reward, the crown, shall be given forth at last. You know the barber is as much rewarded for trimming a blackamore, though all his pains in rubbing him can never make him white, as he is for trimming and rubbing another man that is white, and by a little pains is made more white. This is many a faithful minister's grief, that he takes a great deal of pains in rubbing and washing, as it were, to make souls white and clean, pure and holy, and yet they remain after all as black as hell; but surely their reward shall be never the less with God. The nurse looks not for her wages from the child, but from the parent. If ministers, like clouds, sweat themselves to death that souls may be

brought to life, great will be their reward, though their souls should perish for ever, for whom they have wept, sweat, and bled.

God won't deal by faithful ministers, as Xerxes did by his steerman, who crowned him in the morning, and beheaded him in the evening of the same day. No; God will set an everlasting crown upon their heads who remain laborious and faithful to the death. The world for all their pains will crown them with thorns, but God at last will crown them with glory; he will set a crown of pure gold upon their heads for ever. And thus you have the point proved.

The second thing that I am to do is to shew you,

What Honour that is Due to Faithful Ministers

Shewed in Three Things

2. What honour that is which is justly due to faithful ministers.

Now, this I shall shew you in three things. There is a threefold honour that is due unto them.

[1.] First, Honourable countenance is due unto them that are in so honourable a place and office as they are in: 1 Cor. 4:1, 'Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God;' 1 Thes. 5:12, 13, '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 high in love for their work's sake;' or, 'to esteem them more than exceedingly,' or, more than abundantly, as the Greek will bear, *ὑπερεκπερισσοῦ*. And so in 1 Tim. 5:17, 'Let the elders that rule well be accounted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.' The Greek word *κοπιῶντες*, that is here rendered labour, signifies not simply to labour, but to labour with much travail and toil, to

labour even to lassitude, as he doth that cleaveth wood, or that toileth in harvest, or that goeth a warfare. Preaching is a most painful work, and enfeebleth a man exceedingly; whence the prophet cries out, 'My leanness, my leanness,' Isa. 24:16. No pains, no labour, no work to that of the brain, to that of the mind, nor none so worthy of praise as those that are most in that labour, in that work. No men's work is so holy and heavenly as theirs, nor no men's work is so high and honourable as theirs, and therefore none deserve to be more honoured than they, though not for their own sakes, yet their work's sake. Shall Turks and papists so highly esteem and honour every hedge-priest of theirs above their merits, and shall not Christians much more honour their faithful ministers? Faithful ministers must have countenance as well as maintenance, they must have reverence as well as recompense. You are not to nod the head and put out the lip, to scoff, and mock, and jeer at them: Gal. 4:14, 'And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus.' When Ehud told the king of Moab, 'I have a message to thee from God, O king,' he arose from his throne and bowed himself, Judges 3:20. Isa. 50:7, 'How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, thy God reigneth.'

'How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet!' What is their face then? What is their doctrine then? Their very feet, when dirty, sweaty, and dusty, are yet very beautiful and lovely.

It was a common saying at Constantinople, that it was better the sun should not shine than that Chrysostom should not preach.

I have read of one that said, 'if he should meet a preacher and an angel together, he would first salute the preacher, and then the angel afterward.' If you do not give them honourable countenance, Jews and Turks, papists, and pagans, will in the great day of account rise up against you, and condemn you. I could say much of what I have

observed in other nations and countries concerning this thing, but I shall forbear. Should I speak what I have seen, many professors might well blush.

The Grecians used to give far greater respect and honour to their philosophers than to their orators, because that their orators did only teach them to speak well, but their philosophers did teach them to live well. Oh what honour then is due to them that do teach you both to speak well and to live well! both how to be happy here and how to be blessed hereafter. And thus you see that honourable countenance is due to faithful ministers.

[2.] Secondly, There is an honour of maintenance, as well as an honour of countenance that is due to them: 1 Tim. 5:17, 18, 'Let the elders that rule well be accounted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. For the Scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn, and the labourer is worthy of his reward.' It was not the manner in the Eastern countries to thrash out corn as we do, but their oxen trod it out, to which the apostle allegorically compares laborious pastors, who after a sort crush out that corn of which the bread of life is made: Gal. 6:6, 'Let him that is taught in the word, communicate to him that teacheth in all good things. Be not deceived, God is not mocked, for what a man soweth, that shall he also reap.' So in 1 Cor. 9:7–11, 'Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock and eateth not of the milk of the flock? Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?' Mat. 10:9, 10, 'Provide neither gold nor silver, nor brass, in your purses, nor scrip for your journey, neither two

coats, neither shoes, nor staves, for the workman is worthy of his meat.' God's appointment in all these texts bespeak it.

Again, you may consider the necessity of it. How shall they go on in their warfare if they be troubled with the things of this life? Again, they are to give themselves wholly to the work of the ministry, 1 Tim. 4:5. And again, the equity and justice of the duty Christ and the apostle shews in the forenamed scriptures, Mat. 10:10, 1 Cor. 9:10. The maintenance of the minister should be so free, and so liberal, as may testify that you honour him in your hearts, and as may keep him from contempt and scorn in the world. There are multitudes that grumble at the expense of a penny for the maintenance of those divine candles that waste themselves to give light to them; that will rather die to save charges than spend a little money to save their lives, yea, their souls. They like well of religion without expense, in Basil; and a gospel without charge, but if it grow costly, it is none of their money. The scripture says, 'Buy the truth, sell it not.' You can never overbuy it, whatsoever you give for it; you can never sufficiently sell it, if you had all the world in exchange for it.

It is said of Cæsar that he had greater care of his books than of his royal robes; for swimming through the water to escape his enemies, he carried his books in his hand above the water, but lost his robes. But alas! what are Cæsar's books to God's book? The word is the field, and Christ is the treasure that is hid in that field. The word is a ring of gold, and Christ is the pearl in that ring of gold, and is it then worth nothing? Many deal with faithful, painful ministers, as carriers do with their horses, they lay heavy burdens upon them, and exact work enough, and give them but easy commons; and then to recompense this, they hang bells at their ears and necks. They shall be commended and applauded for brave excellent preachers, and for great painstakers, &c. That maintenance that is justly due to the ministers of the gospel is honourable; it ought to be suitable to their condition and dignity. The maintenance that is due to them, is of the same nature with that which is given to princes and magistrates, by

those who are under them, and not a common maintenance which superiors give to their inferiors or servants.

[3.] Thirdly, There is an honour of obedience and service that is due to them. And indeed, of all honours, this is the greatest honour that can be cast upon a faithful minister, the honour of obedience: Heb. 13:7, 'Remember them that have the rule over you, who have spoken to you in the word of God;' and verse 17, 'Obey them that rule over you.' Oh, submit yourselves, for they 'watch for your souls as they that must give an account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief, for that is unprofitable for you.'

'Obey them that have the rule over you.' The word ἡγουμένοις, that is rendered 'Rule over you,' in the seventh and seventeenth verses, signifies captains, guides. Faithful ministers are your captains, they are your guides, they are your chieftains, they are your champions that bear the brunt of the battle, the heat of the day; and therefore you must obey them, even as soldiers do their captains. So in 2 Thes. 3:14, 'And if any man obey not our words, note that man, and have no company with him.' Brand him as infamous, beware of him, let him see a strangeness in you towards him, that all may avoid him as one whose company is dangerous and infectious. Ah Christians! by your submission to their doctrine, you highly honour them, and you make their heavy task to be easy and sweet unto them. Christians! it will be your honour and happiness in the day of Christ, that you have lived out what they have made out to you. I suppose you remember that happiness is not entailed to hearing, or knowing, or talking, but to doing. 'If ye know these things, blessed and happy are you, if you do them,' John 13:17. There are some diseases that are called opprobria medicorum, the reproaches of physicians; and there are some people that may be truly called opprobria ministrorum, the reproach of ministers, and those are they that are great hearers, and talkers, and admirers of ministers, but never obey the doctrines delivered by them. The Corinthians were Paul's honour, they were his living epistles, they were his walking certificates, they were his letters-testimonial, 2 Cor. 3:2, 3. The obedience and fruitfulness of

the people is the minister's testimonial, as the profiting of the scholar is the master's commendation. Oh what an honour is it to a minister, when it shall be said of him, as one said once of Octavius, 'When he came into Rome he found the walls all of base materials, but left them walls of marble!' So here is a minister that found the people dark and blind, but left them enlightened; he found them dead, but left them alive; he found them a proud people, but hath left them humble; a profane people, but hath left them holy; a carnal people, but hath left them spiritual; a worldly people, but hath left them heavenly; a wavering people, but hath left them settled and rooted, &c. No honour to a faithful minister like this. And thus you see what honour is due unto them, &c.

Use. And now let me make a word of use. Christians! if their office be so honourable, then honour them. Oh, give them the honour that is due unto them. Will you make conscience to give others their due, and will you make no conscience of giving ministers their due? Are there any that are greater blessings to a nation than faithful ministers? Who have stood more in the gap to turn away wrath than they? Who have begotten you to Christ through the gospel but they? Who have turned you from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God but them? Who have built you up in the light and love of Jesus but them? &c. Oh, do not cast scorn and reproach upon them, but give them that honour that is due unto them!

Quest. How Must Christians Honour their Faithful Ministers

But you will say to me, How shall we honour them?

I answer, you must honour them these five ways:

[1.] First, You must honour them by hearing them, and giving credit to their message. The want of this honour troubled Jonah too much; 'Who hath believed our report?' Not to believe the report that they

make concerning God and Christ, &c., is to cast the greatest dishonour that can be upon them. The wise men, Mat. 2, went many weary hundred miles to find Christ at Jerusalem; some think near a thousand miles. The Queen of Sheba, some say, went 964 miles to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and what was Solomon's wisdom to that wisdom of Christ that is held forth to souls in the ministry of the gospel. The holy martyrs thought no weather too hot, no winter too cold, no journey too long, nor no torment too great, to enjoy the preaching of the gospel, though darkly. The heathen priests began with hoc age; they thought it a very irreligious thing to be remiss and vain, though in a vain religion. Oh that vain professors would remember this, and blush!

[2.] Secondly, You may honour them, by standing fast in the doctrine of the Lord delivered by them: 1 Thes. 3:8, 'Ye are our joy, our crown, if ye stand fast in the Lord;' else, saith the apostle, ye kill our very hearts. If after all our studying, wrestling, sweating, and preaching, ye shall play apostates, and leave the precious ways of God, and run after notions and vain opinions which cannot profit you, nor better you, you will kill many at once: your own souls and our hearts.

[3.] Thirdly, You should honour them, by being followers of them, so far as they are followers of Christ. So in 1 Cor. 4:16, 'Be ye followers of me, even as I am of Christ.' Chap. 11:1; Heb. 13:7; 2 Thes. 3:7; Phil. 3:7. All these scriptures bespeak you to be followers of them as they are followers of Christ.

Alexander had somewhat a wry neck, and his soldiers thought it an honour to be like him. Oh, it is an honour to ministers, when their people are like them in knowledge, wisdom, love, humility, holiness!

Plutarch said of Demosthenes that he was excellent at praising the worthy acts of his ancestors, but not so at imitating them. Ah, many in these days are excellent at praising and commending the holy and gracious actings of their ministers, but not so at imitating them!

[4.] Fourthly, You must honour them by bearing them upon your hearts when you appear before the Lord in the mount: Eph. 6:13 19; 2 Thes. 3:1, 2; 1 Thes. 5:25; Col. 1:2, 4; Heb. 13:8; Acts 12:5. All these scriptures do bespeak Christians to bear their faithful ministers upon their hearts when they are a-wrestling with God. None usually are opposed as they. Their wants are many, their weaknesses are more, their work is great, their strength is small. Oh pray, pray more and more for them; yea, pray believingly, pray affectionately, pray fervently, pray unweariedly, that they may speak from the heart to the heart, that they may speak things that are seasonable and suitable to the capacities and conditions of his people. They can tell when they want your prayers, and when they enjoy your prayers; did you pray more for them, they might do more for your internal and eternal good, than now they do.

[5.] Lastly, You must honour them by adhering to them, and abiding with them in all their trials, afflictions, and tribulations that do or shall attend them. It is brave to own them in a storm, to own them when others disown them, when others oppose them, and act highly against them. Paul looked upon himself as much honoured by Onesiphorus owning of him in his chains: 2 Tim. 1:16, 'The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain: but, when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me. The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day: and in how many things he ministered unto me at Ephesus, thou knowest very well.' Chrysostom, in an oration, says of Christians, 'That they would not be kept from visiting the confessors in prison, although it was forbidden with many threatening terrors, and it was great danger to them.'

But to draw to a close, you have heard that the office of a faithful minister is honourable, and you have heard what honour is due unto them. Let me therefore desire you all to take heed of scorning, contemning, and despising of those that are faithful, that are qualified according to gospel rules. That is a sad word, 2 Chron.

36:15–18. God sent his messengers early and late to reclaim them, but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy, nor no healing. David never played such a harsh part all his days, as he did to the Ammonites that despitefully used his ambassadors, as you may see at large in 2 Sam. 10.

The Romans sacked the famous city of Corinth, and razed it to the ground, for a little discourtesy they offered to their ambassadors. And they slew many of the Illyrians and the Tarentines for misusing of their ambassadors. And do you think that the Lord is not as tender of the credit and honour of his faithful ministers, and that he will not avenge the affronts, wrongs, and injuries that are done unto them? Surely he will: Jer. 29:17–19, 'Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Behold, I will send unto them the sword, the famine, and the pestilence, and will make them like vile figs, that cannot be eaten, they are so evil. And I will persecute them with the sword, with the famine, and with the pestilence, and I will deliver them to be removed to all the kingdoms of the earth, to be a curse, and astonishment, and an hissing, and a reproach among all nations, whither I have driven them.' But why will God do this? 'Because they have not hearkened to my word, saith the Lord, which I sent unto them by my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them; but ye would not hear, saith the Lord,' See 2 Kings 17:13–15. Now mark, though these temporal judgments are not visible among us, yet spiritual judgments, which are the worst of judgments, are very visible. Though there be no sword, no famine, no pestilence, yet there is spiritual madness, spiritual drunkenness, spiritual giddiness. Oh the blind minds, the corrupt judgments, the hard hearts, the seared consciences, that are to be found among the professors of this age! As there are no mercies to spiritual mercies, so there are no judgments to spiritual judgments. Jer. 13:12; Ezek. 23:33; 1 Tim. 4:2; Titus 1:15. Oh the slighthness, the coldness, the deadness, the barrenness that is abroad in the world! God suits his judgments to men's sins; the greatest sins are always attended with the greatest judgments. In

these days men sin against more glorious means, more great love, more clear light, more tender bowels of mercy, &c., than formerly; and therefore God gives men up to more sad and dreadful spiritual judgments than formerly.

They say when Hercules drew up Cerberus from hell, he led him in a chain, and he went quietly till he came to the horizon and saw the peeping of the light, but then he pulled so strongly that he had like to have pulled the conqueror and all back again. Ah it is sad when men had rather live in darkness, and die in darkness, and to hell in darkness, than they will see the light, enjoy the light, and walk in the light! Many fret at the light, and at those that bring it, as the Ethiopians once a year solemnly curse the sun. Such souls stand in much need of pity and prayer.

And thus, according to my weak measure, I have given out what God has given in from this scripture, and shall follow it with my prayers, that it may be a word of life and power both to writer, reader, and hearer. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria in Æternum.

MONERGISM BOOKS

The Unsearchable Riches of Christ, by Thomas Brooks, Copyright © 2020

All rights reserved under International and Pan-American Copyright Conventions. By payment of the required fees, you have been granted the non-exclusive, non-transferable right to access and read the text of this e-book on-screen. No part of this text may be reproduced,

transmitted, downloaded, decompiled, reverse engineered, or stored in or introduced into any information storage and retrieval system, in any form or by any means, whether electronic or mechanical, now known or hereinafter invented, without the express written permission of Monergism Books.

ePub,.mobi & .pdf Editions December 2020. Requests for information should be addressed to: Monergism Books, PO Box 491, West Linn, OR 97068