

# The Cure of the Fear of Death

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# **The Cure of the Fear of Death**

**by Nicholas Byfield**

Showing the course Christians may take to be delivered from these fears about death, which are found in the hearts of the most. A Treatise of singular use for all sorts.

By NICHOLAS BYFIELD, Preacher of God's Word at Isleworth in Middelsex.

HEB. 2. 15. He died, that he might deliver them, who through the fear of death, were all their life time subject to bondage.

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**TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE AND  
NOBLE LADY**

LADY ANNE HARRINGTON, May God the Father and the LORD JESUS CHRIST bestow grace and comfort upon you abundantly.

MADAME,

As I contemplated the doctrine that I should focus on in my ministry, especially in the place where the Lord had providentially placed me, I felt a strong inclination to delve into the Cure of the Fear of Death. This is because it is often observed that many people are held in bondage by such fears, and I firmly believe that our lives would become sweeter and even holier if we could overcome the fear of death. Moreover, I noticed a certain deficiency on this subject in most of the writings about death. I am aware that some may consider my endeavor impossible, but I trust that pious and discerning Christians will withhold judgment once they have thoroughly examined my reasons.

My sincere desire to serve God's Church and provide relief to those Christians who lack better resources has emboldened me to present this Treatise to the public. In your absence, I have taken the liberty of dedicating this work in your name, and I also wish to express my heartfelt gratitude for the many kindnesses shown to me and my family when you were pleased to listen to my teachings. I would be delighted if my testimony regarding the exceptional graces bestowed upon you by God and the numerous good deeds you have performed in the places where you have resided would contribute to magnifying your honour in the Churches of Christ or bring comfort to your own heart in God and His Son, Jesus Christ.

I have not chosen your Honour for this Dedication due to any particular suitability to this Treatise, considering your age or your remote location. It is my fervent hope that God will grant you many more years of happiness on this earth. Moreover, I recall a past

occasion when you displayed little fear of death, even when the Lord seemed to call you through illness.

May the same God who has graced your heart with heavenly gifts and made you an instrument of so much good and contentment to that most excellent Princess, with whom you now reside, and towards whom you have shown such faithful observance, deep affection, and attentive care, continue to bestow all spiritual blessings upon you, multiply the joy in your heart, and make you grow in favour and virtuous deeds. With utmost humility, I seek your pardon for my boldness in this matter and entrust your Honour to God and to the word of His Grace, which will build you up to eternal life.

With all humble respect, N. BIFEILD.

Isleworth, July 14, 1618.

## **CHAPTER I**

### Showing the Scope and Parts of this Treatise

My intention in this Treatise is to demonstrate how a devout individual may confront the fear of death and discover the means to live without being afraid to die. This is a crucial and exceedingly necessary aspect of life. When death is not feared, life becomes truly sweet, and one's heart becomes like Mount Zion, unshakable and undisturbed. Such a person fears no enemy, for the absence of fear of death is the ultimate triumph over fear, and to die happily is to die

willingly. The primary task of Preparation is accomplished when our hearts are convinced and ready to embrace death without hesitation.

To elaborate on this point, I will distinctly address three matters:

Firstly, I will prove that living without the fear of death is an achievable goal. We can be freed from this fear just as a sick person can be cured of an ordinary ailment.

Secondly, I will illustrate how unbecoming it is for a Christian to fear death. This will serve as motivation to seek the remedy for this affliction.

Lastly, I will explain the means through which we can be liberated from the fear of death if we choose to employ them. I will address the first two points briefly and the last one more extensively.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **Proving that we may be cured of the fear of death**

To begin with, it is evident that Christ died not only to deliver us from the harm of death and from the devil as its executioner but also from the fear of death. To deny the effectiveness of Christ's death and its power to achieve this end would be to question the virtue of His sacrifice, which is unthinkable (Hebrews 2:14-15). Moreover, this is made even more apparent in that very passage, where Christ's death is shown to possess the ability to cure the fear of death in any of the Elect if they avail themselves of the means provided. Just as Christ's

death has the power to mortify our sins, but we must actively draw upon this virtue through appropriate means, similarly, the fear of death may exist in some of God's Elect not because Christ is unable to deliver them, but because they are inert and unwilling to pursue the means to overcome such fears. The Physician has the ability and usually does cure the same disease, but they do not follow His prescribed remedies.

Secondly, the Apostle discusses the desire for death, stating that God has worked within us to attain the same inclination (2 Corinthians 5:5). We have been newly created by God, aspiring to immortality within ourselves. We find ourselves in a state where, if we fulfill the purpose of His workmanship, we shall never be content until we possess the happiness of the next world, as expressed in the notion of being absent from the body and present with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8).

Thirdly, this aspect has been foretold in the Prophecies. It was prophesied long ago that Christians, being aware of Christ's victory over death, would not only cease to fear death but also triumph over it, exclaiming, "O Death, Where is thy sting?" (Isaiah 25:8, Hosea 13:14, 1 Corinthians 15:54-55).

Fourthly, when Christ first calls His Disciples, He lays down the condition that they must deny themselves and not hold their lives dear to them (Luke 14:26).

Fifthly, we are taught to pray in the Lord's Prayer, "Thy Kingdom come." This Kingdom encompasses both the Kingdom of Grace and the Kingdom of Glory. Thus, our prayers demonstrate our desire for it and through prayer, we become increasingly fervent in our yearning.

Sixthly, as we are born again to a lively hope of our inheritance, if we are afraid of the time of our translation to heaven, then how can we genuinely hope for it? The desire to go to heaven is part of the seed planted in our hearts during regeneration (1 Peter 1:3-4).

Seventhly, we have the examples of various individuals who desired to die and were unafraid in that respect. Jacob awaited God's salvation (Genesis 49:18), Paul resolved that to die and be with Christ is best of all for him (Philippians 1:21), and Simeon prayed to God for his release in death (Luke 2:29). The Prophet spoke in the name of the godly, expressing a longing for the salvation of Israel to come out of Zion (Psalm 14:7). Throughout history, Martyrs considered it a singular glory to die. In 2 Corinthians 5:2 and 7, the godly are described as sighing to be absent from the body and present with the Lord, and this sentiment is shared by the first fruits of the Holy Ghost, those eminent Christians mentioned in Romans 8:21.

Finally, it is not only certain godly individuals who have achieved this state, but the entire Church is depicted in Revelation 22 as praying for the coming of Jesus Christ and desiring His swift return. In 2 Timothy 4:8, the love for Christ's appearing is the characteristic of a child of God.

This concludes the discussion of the first point.

## **CHAPTER III**



## Showing how unseemly it is to fear death

Now, turning to the second point, we can see the manifold ways in which it is unseemly for Christians to fear death.

1. By yielding to the fear of death, we bring shame upon our Religion. Although we proclaim our faith in words, our actions deny it. Let Papists tremble at death, for they are taught that one cannot be certain of going to heaven upon death. However, for us who profess knowledge of salvation, to be shaken by the prospect of passage to eternal glory displays, at the very least, a great weakness of faith and brings disgrace to our Religion.
2. As previously demonstrated, fearing death weakens the significance of Christ's sacrifice, obstructs God's purpose in creating us, hinders the fulfillment of the Prophecies, contradicts our initial agreement with Christ, mocks our prayer for God's Kingdom to come, clouds the evidence of our regeneration, and opposes the example of the godly throughout history.
3. Many Pagans firmly resolved themselves against the fear of death due to their belief that nothing awaited them after death. They reasoned that they would experience no suffering then, just as they had not before birth. Are we Christians, who hear daily about the glorious salvation offered by Christ, to be more fearful than they were? Let them fear death, who know not the hope of a better life.
4. Shall we resemble the wicked? Their deaths are compulsory, but shall ours be so as well? Wicked men would not willingly part with their earthly bodies nor inherit the next life. Since God has made us different in the outcome of death, should we make

ourselves similar to them in our reluctance to die? Let Felix tremble at the doctrine of death and judgment (Acts 24:25), but let all the godly lift their heads high, knowing that the day of redemption draws near (Matthew 24, etc.).

5. Should we fear a mere shadow? Death, strictly speaking, is the separation of the soul from God, but the separation of the soul from the body is merely the shadow of death. When do we see men trembling with fear over spiritual death, which is called the First Death, though far more dreadful than what we refer to as bodily death? The Scripture, indeed, designates Damnation as the second death, placing the other outside of that category.
6. This fear is termed bondage in this text, and shall we willingly make ourselves slaves? Or shall we be like slaves who dare not present themselves before their Masters?
7. If we cherish a love for long life, why are we not even more enamoured with eternal life, where the duration is longer and the state is infinitely happier? Are we so infatuated that when God offers us better than we desire, we are still afraid of Him?
8. Shall we be worse than children or madmen? Neither of them fear death. Is it possible that simplicity or idiocy has greater power over them than reason or Religion does over us?
9. Do we not condemn the Israelites when reading their story of desiring to return to Egypt and murmuring vehemently against the promise of entering the Land of Canaan? What did living in Egypt offer them but service under cruel Taskmasters for the making of bricks and clay? Was not Canaan the place of their rest, a land flowing with milk and honey? Similarly, for all those who wish to cling to life and fear to die, this world is but Egypt,

and to live in this world is to serve, like slaves, in mundane pursuits. Even the Church, separate from the world, can find it no better than a barren wilderness. On the other hand, Heaven is a spiritual Canaan, and what is death if not the victorious crossing over Jordan to possess a place of unmatched rest and pleasures more abundant than milk or honey can represent?

10. Adam might have had more reason to fear death, for he never witnessed anyone die an ordinary death. Yet, for us to be frightened by death, when we witness thousands perish on our right hand and ten thousand on our left, and that every day, is an inexcusable condition. The gate of death is continually open, and we see a constant flow of people thronging into it.
11. When Moses cast down his rod, it turned into a serpent, and the text, acknowledging Moses's weakness, states that he fled from it. However, the Lord commanded him to take it by the tail, and behold, it became a rod again. Even so, death initially appears dreadful, like a new-made serpent, and even the godly themselves, due to lack of consideration, flee from it. But if, at God's command and without fear, they would lay hold of this seemingly dreadful serpent, it would transform back into a rod, and even into a golden scepter in our hands, vastly improved by the change. Moreover, we never read that Moses ever feared this serpent again after experiencing its transformation. We, too, have often, through the eyes of faith, witnessed the work of God in conquering death, so why do we continue to flee?
12. It is said in Romans 8:20 that all creatures groan, awaiting the liberation of the sons of God. Are we to be worse than beasts? Does the whole of nature, as it were, yearn for this time of

change, while man remains either stupefied or carried away by senseless fears, avoiding his own felicity?

13. Consider whether it is more advantageous for death to come to us or for us to go to death. One thing is certain: it is futile to evade the inevitable. For it is appointed unto all men once to die (Hebrews 9:24, Psalm 89). Who among the living will not see death? (Psalm 89). Death is the destiny of all flesh (Joshua 24). Given this certainty, let us ponder: death is like an armed adversary with whom we must eventually fight. If we are wise and choose to approach death intentionally, we can don our armor in advance, ensuring that the encounter is without danger to us. After all, the weapons of our warfare are mighty through God, and we are assured of victory through Jesus Christ. Conversely, waiting for death to come upon us is akin to a man who knows he must face a formidable adversary yet, due to indolence, roams about unarmed until he falls into the clutches of his enemy. Must you then fight at such a disadvantage?
14. It is utterly unseemly to fear that which is both common and certain. Among all afflictions, death is the most widespread. While one may be spared from other afflictions, no one can escape death, and God has deliberately made that which is most grievous to be the most ubiquitous, perhaps to lessen its force and terror. It is monstrously foolish to futilely strive to avoid that which no one has ever eluded. To teach men of their inevitable mortality, the Lord clothed our first Parents with the skins of dead beasts and sustains us with dead flesh. Each time we eat of slain beasts, we are reminded of our own end. Are we to be perpetually uneducated and unarmed, even as we pass daily by the graves of the dead and hear their tolling bells?

15. Lastly, should we be afraid of an enemy who has been defeated hand to hand by Christ and thousands of the Saints? Especially when we consider the assurance of victory. Every Christian can triumph in this battle even before the victory is secured (1 Corinthians 15:55).

Thus concludes the discussion of the first two points.

## **CHAPTER IV**

Showing that a Christian is happy in many ways in death

Now, I turn to the third point, which is the primary focus and requires our utmost attention. This is the means through which we can be cured of the fear of death, and we must all diligently apply ourselves to it. The disease is stubborn, and humans tend to be sluggish, avoiding the effort required for the cure. Satan, by all means, seeks to keep us from contemplating our mortality, and the world provides daily distractions to draw us away from Christ's teachings on this matter. Moreover, our own hearts are deceitful, and our nature tends to grow weary of the doctrine even before we put any of the directions into practice. We may entertain a thousand notions, claiming it is either impossible or unnecessary to address this doctrine. Perhaps for some of us, the fear of death may not be felt until the discourse of the remedy is over, leaving it as inconsequential as water spilled on the ground. But let us all awaken and, relying on the power and strength of Christ, who died to free us

from the fear of death, let us apply the remedies to the sore until it is thoroughly healed.

There are two ways to cure this fear of death: contemplation and practice. Some things, if we carefully consider them, will have a miraculous healing effect.

Contemplation can be of two kinds: 1. Meditations that create a desire for death as motivation, and 2. Meditations that address the objections causing the fear of death in our minds. As for the first, two things, if deeply pondered, will bring about a significant transformation in our hearts. 1. The first is the happiness we attain through death, and 2. The second is the miseries we endure in life.

Can anyone be afraid of being happy? If we fill our heads and hearts with arguments revealing the happiness that comes with death, we will not be so insensible as to tremble at the thought of dying.

Our happiness in death can be expressed in numerous aspects, and illustrated through many similes, teeming with life and virtue, to cure this ailment of fear.

1. Death brings an end to all the tempests and perpetual storms that toss our lives. It serves as the Haven and Port of rest. Are we so foolish as to desire the continuation of such dangerous tempests over reaching the peaceful haven towards which our journey leads?
2. Death is akin to sleep, as the dead are said to be asleep (1 Thessalonians 4:14). Just as sleep is a bed of rest for a weary laborer, so is death a place of rest for the diligent Christian. In death, they find rest from the toilsome labors of this life (Isaiah

37, Revelation 14:13). Has a laborer ever feared the time when he must lie down and rest?

3. The day of death is the day of receiving wages, where God pays each godly person their reward. Just as a hired laborer longs for the time when they shall receive their wages for their work (Job 7:2), so should we eagerly anticipate this time, especially since the rewards will surpass anything bestowed by man, even if the whole visible world were given to us.
4. In death, the servant gains freedom, and the heir reaches full age, and it is a glorious liberty. Is there any freedom on earth greater than this? (Romans 8:21). Should the heir desire to remain under age, with tutors and governors still overseeing, or should the servant fear the day of freedom?
5. In death, the banished return, and the Pilgrims enter their Father's house. In this life, we are exiled like men banished from Paradise, Pilgrims and Strangers in a far Country, absent from God and heaven. But in death, we are received into Paradise and find our permanent home in those everlasting habitations in our Father's house (Luke 17, John 14:2, Hebrews 13:11). Can we be so senseless as to fear this?
6. Death marks our birthday; it is not truly the last day but rather the beginning of an everlasting day. Is there any grievance in that?
7. Death is the funeral of our vices and the resurrection of our graces. Death is the daughter of Sin, and in death, that is fulfilled: The daughter shall destroy the mother. We shall never again be infected with sin, troubled by ill natures, or terrified by offending. Death will perfectly heal us of all the diseases that

were impossible to cure in this life, and a glorious resurrection of graces will occur. Our gifts will shine like the Stars in the Firmament. Can we still be foolish enough to fear death?

8. In death, the soul is liberated from its prison, for the body in this life is a loathsome and dark prison of restraint. The soul, while in the body, is confined, unable to exercise itself freely in natural or supernatural matters. The body's senses and appetites rule so fiercely that the soul is compelled to prioritize the body's satisfaction, unable to fully follow the light of Nature or Religion. The truth is withheld or shut up through unrighteousness (Romans 1:18). The soul is annoyed by the many loathsome smells of sin and filthiness committed by the body. Moreover, the body serves as a dark prison, restricting the soul's vision through small openings or casements. However, death comes as a strong wind that dissolves this cloud, allowing the soul to bask in the clear light and breaks down the prison walls, allowing the soul to enter into the open light.
9. The soul's liberty in death can be likened to another simile. The world is the sea, our lives are like galleys at sea, tossed by continual tides or storms, and our bodies are like galley-slaves subjected to hard service under the tyranny of the great Turk, the devil. The soul within, like the heart of some ingenuous galley-slave, may be free, detesting the servitude inwardly and loathing that tyrant. But as long as the soul is tied to the body, it cannot escape. Death comes like an irresistible Giant, carrying the galleys to the shore, dissolving them, and setting the prisoners free. Shall this glorious liberty of the soul be a cause for terror? Do we prefer to remain in captivity?



10. In this life, we are clothed in rotten, ragged, foul garments. The Apostle shows that death does nothing else but remove these ragged garments and clothe us with the glorious robes of salvation, more luxurious than the robes of the greatest monarch (2 Corinthians 5:2, 3). It is true that the godly have some desire to be clothed upon, wishing for new garments without shedding the old ones. However, that is not appropriate, for a prince should not wear gorgeous attire on the outside while wearing base rags underneath. Desiring to go to heaven without dying is akin to wanting to put on new clothes without removing the old ones. Is it burdensome to change clothes by setting aside our old ones for such rich garments? We are like lazy people who love to have good clothes and clean linen but are loath to take off their old clothes or dirty linen.
  
11. In the same passage, the Apostle compares our bodies to an old mud-walled house or a rotten tent, while our estate in heaven is a most glorious and princely palace, made by the most skilled workman ever. It is a building that will never require repair (2 Corinthians 5:1). For a godly person to die is to move from a rotten old house on the verge of collapse to a sumptuous palace. Is it wrong for a landlord to have his tenant vacate a wretched cottage to bestow upon him his own mansion house? Likewise, God removes us by death from our earthly bodies to settle us in those everlasting habitations, the building made without hands in heaven (John 14:2, Luke 17).
  
12. A person who has never experienced it might think that seed cast into the ground would be ruined because it rots there. However, nature has shown how that grain returns with advantage, curing that misconception. A farmer is not so foolish as to pity himself or his seed; he does not lament, "Alas, is it not

a pity to throw away and spoil this good seed?" Similarly, what are our bodies but like the best grain? The bodies of the Saints are God's choicest corn. Does death do anything more to God's grain than cast it into the earth? Do we not believe that our bodies will rise like grain, better than when they were sown? So why should we still be afraid?

Paul said he would be dissolved to be with Christ (Philippians 1:21). In this statement, he implies two aspects of death: first, the dissolution of the soul from the body, and second, the union of the soul with Christ. Which is better for us: to have the body or to have Christ? The same Apostle elsewhere expresses confidence that he and others would rather be absent from the body and present with the Lord than the other way around (2 Corinthians 5:7, 8).

The true reason why people fear death is that they only consider the dissolution and not the union with Christ.

14. In 1 Corinthians 9:24, our life is compared to a race, and eternal life to an incorruptible Crown, a rich prize. Death marks the end of the race, the moment of reaching the goal or the end of the race. Has any runner been so foolish as to be sorry that, with victory, they approached the race's end? Shall we be afraid of death, which ends the toil, sweat, and danger of the race and rewards us with endless applause and a glorious recompense?
15. In the Ceremonial Law, there was a year called the year of Jubilee, an acceptable time when every man who lost or sold his lands could return and regain possession upon the blowing of a trumpet. Thus, they were recovered from their former extremities. In this life, we are like the poor men of Israel, having lost our inheritance and living in constrained conditions. However, death is our Jubilee, and upon the trumpet of death,

we all who die return and enjoy a better estate than we ever sold or lost. If the year of Jubilee was an acceptable time, why should our Jubilee not be acceptable to us? (Isaiah 61:2).

16. Death is the day of our coronation; in this life, we are heirs apparent to the Crown, Kings Elect, but cannot be crowned until death (2 Timothy 4:8). Should a king be afraid of the day of his coronation?

In conclusion to this first part of contemplation: If we seriously set our eyes on the glory to come, can our eyes be so dazzled that we fail to see, admire, and hasten towards it? Ask Paul, who was in heaven, what he saw, and he will tell you things that cannot be uttered—happiness beyond the capacity of mortal language to describe. If there were as much faith on earth as there is glory in heaven, our hearts would be set ablaze with fervent desires for it. But our unbelief undoes us and fills us with these servile and foolish fears.

Thus, we conclude this part of meditation, drawn from the happiness we attain through death. It should lead us to agree with Solomon that the day of death is better than the day of one's birth.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **Revealing the Miseries of Life for the Wicked**

Now, let us uncover the miseries of life, whose contemplation should diminish our wretched attachment to it.

The miseries of life can be viewed in two ways: First, the burdens that accompany our natural existence; and second, the troubles that afflict the very life of Grace.

Regarding the miseries that plague human life in its natural state alone, who can fully enumerate them? I will only touch upon a few key aspects.

First, ponder your sins, and three dreadful things may fill your thoughts with awe. Firstly, you are guilty of Adam's sin, as it brought guilt upon all humanity: "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin" (Romans 5:12). Secondly, your nature is entirely corrupt and wicked from birth, for you were conceived in sin (Psalm 51:4). This stain clings to your nature, and only the blood of Christ can cleanse it (Hebrews 12:1). This corruption affects all faculties of your soul, leading to ignorance, a natural inclination towards evil, and an approval of error rather than truth and sound doctrine (1 Corinthians 2:14, Romans 8:7, 2 Corinthians 3:5, Proverbs 14:12). You may notice how difficult it is to think a righteous thought and how your mind is prone to evil thoughts (Genesis 6:5).

Furthermore, consider your conscience, which is impure, polluted, lacking light, life, and glory. It resides within you like a prisoner in a dark dungeon, excusing you for many faults and accusing you for things that are not even faults in reality. When it accuses you of sin, it rages and falls into unbridled fury and terror, showing no bounds of hope or mercy.

If you observe your affections, you will find them impotent towards good and prone to rebellion against God, ready to be inflamed by worldly enticements or the Devil (Philippians 2:13, Galatians 5:24).

Lastly, consider the innumerable actual sins you commit daily in thought, affection, word, and deed. Each of them, no matter how small, deserves eternal punishment, and you commit sins in every stage of life, in prosperity and adversity, at home and abroad, out of weakness and presumption. If David could say, "They have so compassed me about, and taken hold of me, that I am not able to look up" (Psalm 40:12), how much more might you cry out in the face of your intolerable burden of sin?

Thus, your life is plagued with these unspeakable disorders, forming the first part of your wretchedness in life.

Secondly, if you consider how God has already avenged Himself and what may still befall you, how can your heart bear it?

1. You are a banished soul, exiled from Paradise, never to enjoy the best parts of the earth.
2. The earth is cursed to you, and you witness the creatures suffering due to your sin, groaning all around you.
3. Your soul is most miserable, with your mind and conscience dwelling in darkness and terror, entrenched with strongholds of the Devil. Your heart is spiritually dead like a stone within you (Ephesians 4:17, 2 Corinthians 10:5, Ephesians 2:1, Ezekiel 36:27).
4. Your body suffers deformities and various afflictions, causing you pain either through labor or diseases to which you are prone. Every part of you is susceptible to various ailments (Deuteronomy 28:21, Genesis 3:19). Solomon rightly said, "All things are full of labor; man cannot utter it" (Ecclesiastes 1:8), thus making life a vanity and vexation.

5. If you examine your outward condition in the world, your heart may be gripped with fear. Consider:

- The common plagues and judgments that afflict the world, such as wars, famines, earthquakes, pestilence, and other calamities.
- The personal crosses and troubles that affect you, including the loss of wealth or the struggles within your family (Deuteronomy 28:15, 16, etc.).
- The things God withholds from you, depriving you of blessings that others enjoy (Isaiah 59:1, 2, Jeremiah 5:25).
- The curse on your blessings, where prosperity becomes your downfall (Malachi 2:3, Ecclesiastes 5:13).

Lastly, consider the potential dangers you face daily. There are oceans of wrath hanging over your head (John 3:36), and God may plague you with terrors of conscience or reprobate senses, spiritual judgments, or painful diseases and ruin in various aspects of life. But above all, the thought of the judgment of Christ and the everlasting pains of Hell should compel you to cry out, "What must I do to be saved and escape this dreadful state?"

Since my aim is chiefly to persuade the godly and not the unrepentant, and because even death itself is no relief for those living in sin without repentance, who have reason to loathe life but no reason to embrace death, I will move on from them and focus on the life of the righteous who have ample reason to detest life and long for the day of death.

# CHAPTER VI

## Revealing the Miseries of Godly Men in Life

Now, the miseries experienced by the godly man in life fall into two categories: firstly, those caused by lacking certain things; and secondly, those due to possessing certain things that make one weary of life.

I will only briefly touch upon the first category. Consider that in this life, there are six things, among others, that we lack and can never attain while living here.

First, we lack the glorious presence of God while still in our mortal bodies; the Lord is absent (2 Corinthians 5:8). Should this not be enough to make us loathe life? Should we value this wretched vessel more than our glorious God, whose very presence in eternal splendor will fill us with boundless delight? Oh, the vision of God! If we could but see God face to face, we would detest any absence that hinders the enjoyment of such unspeakable beauty, which would enrapture the most indifferent heart with an unquenchable love.

Secondly, we lack the sweet fellowship of our dearest friends—a fellowship unparalleled if we consider both the perfection of the creatures with whom we shall commune and the perfect manner of that communion. Who would want to be withheld from the assembly of the first-born, from the company of innumerable angels and the spirits of the righteous? Alas! Most of us do not even have one true and perfect friend in the whole world, and yet we make the friends we have the foundation of much contentment in our lives. But what is an earthly friendship compared to that in heaven, where thousands of angels and saints will rejoice in us and welcome us with unending

delight? If only we had the eyes of faith to consider this, every hour would feel like a year until we join them.

Thirdly, in this world, we lack the perfection of our own natures; we are but maimed and deformed creatures here. We will never possess the full understanding of our humanity until we are in heaven, and our holiness of nature and gifts will not reach its consummation until after our earthly death.

Fourthly, in this world, we lack liberty—our glorious freedom cannot be fully experienced here. This is something the spirits of the best of men have longed for with much sighing (Romans 8:21, 22). Who would choose to live in a prison or a dungeon rather than in the palace of royal freedom? As implied earlier, we are in bondage in various ways during our time on earth.

Fifthly, we shall never find full contentment here. Even if a man lives for many years, his soul will not be satisfied with good things; in fact, it is better for him to have never been born (Ecclesiastes 6:3, 6, 7). There is nothing in this life that can provide lasting and genuine contentment. Experience teaches us that whatever we admire or love the most only brings vanity and vexation of spirit. Should we be so foolish as to forget the rivers of pleasures that flow at God's right hand (Psalm 16:11)?

Sixthly, in this world, we lack our crown—the immortal and incorruptible inheritance purchased for us with the blood of Christ. Should our hearts not burn with longing for possession? Should we still desire to live in want and remain as minors? What should move us if such an incomparable crown cannot? We toil so strenuously to possess even a small portion of the earth, yet we are sluggish when it comes to desiring the kingdom that our Father has given us. Are we so deluded by spiritual madness that we fear passing through the



gate of death to attain such a life? What prince would choose to live without a crown if he could have it, and acquire it rightfully and without danger? And what great heir would be saddened by the news that all his lands had fallen to him?

## CHAPTER VII

### The Miseries of a Christian in Respect of God in this Life

Thus, I have discussed what a Christian lacks in this life. Now, let us turn our attention to what he possesses and cannot avoid while living. In this regard, a Christian's life is often distressed and far from being beloved, whether he considers God, the evil angels, the world, or even himself.

Firstly, if he considers God, two things should make life distasteful and cause him to lose affection for it. The first is the danger of displeasing God. Who would want to live in a way that offends God or grieves His Spirit or in any manner that angers Him? While this reason might have little effect on the hearts of wicked men, it holds great power in the heart of a humble Christian. For such a Christian, God's loving kindness is valued more than life itself, and nothing is more bitter than the thought of displeasing the God who is so majestic and abundant in mercy toward him. It would be a heavy burden on our hearts to imagine displeasing our best friend, especially if he were a great person or a prince. How much more should we desire to be free from any condition that might displease our good God and instead long to be in a place where we are sure

never to anger Him again? The second thing that should diminish our affection for life is that God continually thwarts us in the matters of this life. God deliberately watches over us, and when He sees us finding contentment in life, He introduces something that makes it all exceedingly bitter. These corrections of God should be noted all the more when we consider various aggravations related to them, such as:

1. God corrects every son whom He loves; none can escape (Hebrews 12:4).
2. A man is often most opposed and thwarted in the things he loves most.
3. A man will always lack what he wishes, even in matters in which others are not lacking. A hidden vexation clings to a man's estate; his heart runs after things that can only be found in the callings of others. The countryman praises the city life, and the citizen speaks highly of the countryside. So, in all men, there is a preference for the callings of others and a dissatisfaction with their own (Ecclesiastes 6).
4. There is no discharge in the war, and a man must expect crosses every day. Every day brings its grief (Ecclesiastes 8:8, Luke 9:24, Matthew 6:34).
5. God does not reveal the times of our corrections but executes them according to the unchangeable purpose of His own counsel. They come upon us like a snare on a bird. Solomon says that man's misery is great because there is a time for every purpose, and no one can know beforehand what will be or when

it will happen (Ecclesiastes 8:6-8, 9:12).

6. No man can determine love or hatred based on what is before him. A godly man may not receive outward blessings any more than a wicked man who may have them in great abundance. Similarly, no outward misery falls upon the wicked that could not befall the godly as well. All things come alike to all, and there is one event for the righteous and the wicked, the clean and the unclean, those who swear and those who fear an oath. As the good, so is the sinner. Solomon calls this an evil among all things done under the sun, that there is one event for all (Ecclesiastes 9:1-3).
7. This bitterness is increased because God does not dispense things based on human means or likelihoods. The race is not always to the swift, nor victory to the strong. Bread is not always given to the wise, nor riches to those of understanding, nor favor to men of skill. Rather, time and chance happen to them all (Ecclesiastes 9:11).
8. Apart from present miseries, many miseries lie ahead. It is argued that the dead are happier because they are taken away from the miseries to come (Isaiah 57:1-2). This too should lessen our love for life since we do not know what fearful changes may come either in our outward circumstances or in matters of religion. What if war should come upon us with all its desolations and terrors? What if pestilence returns or we are left at the mercy of the violent? What if God fights against our possessions through fire, inundations, or the like? Who can tell what fearful changes may occur in matters of religion? Would it not be best to be in heaven, where we are safe from all these uncertainties? Moreover, miseries may befall our own bodies,

our children, or friends, etc. All these factors should diminish our love for life when we consider God.

## CHAPTER VIII

### The Misery of Life in Respect of Evil Angels

Now, let us turn our attention to the evil angels, and these things may frighten us.

First, they are everywhere, roaming the world in the earth, air, and seas; no place is free from them. These fiery serpents are present everywhere in the wilderness of the world. We lead our lives in the midst of innumerable dragons, and yes, they even exist in the most heavenly places in this life. The Church is not exempt from them. A person cannot stand anywhere before the Lord without a devil at his right hand (Ephesians 2:2, 6:13, Zechariah 3:1, Job 1).

Surely, the presence of such foul spirits should make us dislike the place where they dwell. In that very respect, the earth seems like a kind of hell.

Secondly, it should trouble us more that we must inevitably enter into conflict with these devils and face their temptations, being buffeted and attacked by them. A man who knows he must enter the field to respond to a challenge will find little rest in himself. But alas! It is a thousand times easier to wrestle with flesh and blood than with these principalities, powers, spiritual wickednesses, and great rulers of the world (Ephesians 6:13).

Besides, it adds to the distress of life to consider the subtlety and cruelty of these devils, who are like crooked serpents, Leviathan, dragons, and roaring lions, seeking whom they may devour. Though these things may have little effect on the hearts of wicked men, the temptations of life are a grievous burden to the godly mind. This much on evil angels.

## CHAPTER IX

### The Misery of Life in Respect of the World

Thirdly, consider the nature of the world in which you live, either in its apparent miseries or in the vexations that accompany the best things it has to offer or give you. Let's begin with the apparent miseries:

1. The world is like a wilderness, and no one lives here without innumerable wants, as if in a desert.
2. It is a true Egypt to the godly, imposing hard tasks and servile conditions. Life can never be free from grievous burdens and relentless molestations.
3. The world is, indeed, like Sodom, full of general and unspeakable filthiness. All the world lies in wickedness, and it's hard to find even one righteous person in a whole city or parish. If God were to search for just five righteous men who are truly godly, they would not be found in most assemblies, not even in the church.

4. Moreover, this world is like a pesthouse, spiritually considered. Every person a godly man comes near has a mischievous plague-sore running upon them, and even the godly themselves are not without the disease. So, there is a constant risk of infecting or being infected in all places or companies. Who would love to live in a pesthouse when they can dwell in a place forever free from all infection?
5. Furthermore, this world is a Golgotha, a place of dead men; we live amongst graves. Almost all we see or have to deal with are like men truly dead. What should we reckon of the life of men's bodies when their souls are dead, and both soul and body are sentenced to eternal death? Almost everyone we encounter is like a malefactor under sentence, ready to be executed, with the wrath of God hanging over their heads and unquenchable fire kindled against them. Shall we be so besotted as to love the dead more than the living or the company of vile and miserable malefactors in a prison rather than the fellowship of the glorious princes of God in their palace of endless and matchless bliss?
6. Sixthly, why should we love the world that hates us and casts us off as men forgotten? Are we not crucified to the world? (Galatians 6:14). Do not wicked men hate us, envy us, and speak all kinds of evil against us because we follow what is good? The world loves its own, but it cannot love us because we are not of this world. Can darkness love light? Or can the sons of Belial care for the sons of God? In this world, we will face trouble, and if we did not find peace in Christ, we would be the most miserable of all men (John 15:19, Ecclesiastes 4:4, John 17:14, 2 Corinthians 6:17, John 16:33). And if they hate us for doing good, how will they triumph if we falter? We should desire death, even to be delivered from the fear of giving the world a

reason to triumph or blaspheme because of us. Indeed, the hatred of the world is so extreme that a righteous man may perish in his righteousness, while a wicked man prolongs his days in his wickedness (Ecclesiastes 7:15, 8:14).

7. Do we experience any special misery in this world? Behold the tears of the oppressed, and there is none to comfort them. We are either not pitied or not regarded, or the world's compassion is as fleeting as the morning dew, gone like a tale that is told. Our misery will persist, but soon there will be no one to comfort us. The comforters we find in this world are miserable, which is why Solomon praised the dead who are already dead more than the living who are yet alive (Ecclesiastes 4:1-2).
8. Usually, there is no Christian who does not bear some special misery in this world, be it poverty, debt, disease in his body, or similar afflictions.
9. We suffer the loss of our friends, the companions of our life and the sources of contentment for us. Now, who would want to stay behind when they are gone?

Thus, much regarding the apparent miseries of this world.

## **CHAPTER X**

The Vanities of the Seeming Felicities of the World

Now, I shall discuss the vanities that cling to the seeming felicities of the world and demonstrate that there is no reason to be enamored with life due to any of them.

The best things the world boasts of are honors, credit, lands, houses, riches, pleasures, birth, beauty, friends, wit, children, acquaintances, and the like. However, there are several aspects that clearly prove that there can be no genuine contentment or happiness in them:

1. All things are full of labor; who can express it? Men must toil for earthly blessings; seldom is there any outward blessing obtained without much difficulty, pain, danger, care, or grievance in some way.
2. How little of these things can most people attain? Even if one possessed the entire world, it would not bring true happiness, let alone the small portions of the world that most individuals can attain.
3. It is evident that people cannot agree on what constitutes the chief good in these things. Life is therefore futile concerning these matters, as there are countless projects and a variety of opinions. Throughout the ages, no experience has led to a unanimous resolution of which of these things hold true felicity. "Who knows what is good for a man in this life, all the days of his vain life, which he spends as a shadow?" (Ecclesiastes 6:12).
4. In all these things, there is nothing new; they have remained the same or similar throughout time. Common things lose their appeal (Ecclesiastes 1:9, 3:15).
5. The world passes away, and its desires vanish; the eye is never satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing. If a man lives



many days, his soul is not filled with good; the desire for these things will fade. People cannot continue to love them perpetually. Life is spent wishing for the future and lamenting the past, loathing what has been experienced, and longing for what has not yet been tasted. Even if these desired things were obtained, they would never truly satisfy us any more than what we have already had. Thus, people weary themselves seeking a variety of earthly things yet find no contentment. The vexation that clings to them still breeds loathing. This is akin to being seasick, where changing rooms or places will not provide relief as long as the seas swell, winds blow, and humors are stirred. Similarly, carrying with us a nature full of ill humors and the inherent vanity in the pleasures of the world renders any change of place or delights inadequate for satisfying us (Ecclesiastes 6:13).

6. How can these earthly things satisfy when their nature is so worthless and futile? They are like mere shadows; they may appear tangible, but attempting to grasp them leaves us with nothing. "Man walks in a vain shadow, and disquieteth himself in vain. He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver" (Ecclesiastes 6:9, Psalms 39).
7. Moreover, all these earthly things come with a snare; they are like pitch that defiles a person. Temptations are always lurking beneath them, and the pursuit and enjoyment of them breed many noisome lusts in the soul (1 Timothy 6:9).
8. These outward things are uncertain and transitory. Riches have wings and will suddenly fly away; fame is but a fleeting breath, and the glory of man is like the flower of the field, which blooms today and withers tomorrow. The fashion of this world passes

away. Furthermore, at the last day, all these senseless things we currently hold dear will be burnt and consumed in the fire (Isaiah 40:6, 1 Corinthians 7:31).

9. There is no support in these things; they cannot help us in the evil day or when the hour of temptation comes upon us.
10. One may damn their own soul by excessively desiring these things; the abuse of them may testify against people on the day of Christ (Amos 5:1, Philippians 3:18).
11. In these things, all are subject to one condition; the same fate befalls the wise man as well as the fool (Ecclesiastes 2:14).
12. All things are subject to God's unavoidable disposal; no matter how much a person acquires, God will have the final say in its disposition. Whatever God does will remain, and no one can add to it or diminish from it (Ecclesiastes 3:1).
13. A person may have an abundance of these things yet lack the heart to use them. Evil is so deeply rooted in the hearts of people that they cannot find contentment in the things they possess. They may be worse off than an untimely fruit (Ecclesiastes 6:1, 7, 9:3).
14. Every day brings its own share of evil; afflictions are so intertwined with these outward things that their taste is often marred with bitterness. There is scarcely a day without grief, and usually, the crosses of life outnumber its pleasures, so much so that those who rejoice should do so as if not rejoicing.
15. Lastly, if all these considerations may not suffice, remember that you are mortal; life is short, passing like a dream, merely a span

long. Your days are few and often filled with evil. All these things are accompanied by the certainty of death; life is granted with the condition of dying (Genesis 47:9, Job 14:1). Life passes like the wind (Job 7:7). Indeed, our days consume like smoke (Psalm 102:3). All flesh is like grass (Isaiah 40:6). From this head of our mortality, arise many considerations deduced:

16. All these things are but the necessities of your inn; you are a stranger and a pilgrim, and you can only enjoy them as a passerby. You can carry nothing out of this world. Just as you came into the world, so must you leave it (Ecclesiastes 5:13-15).
17. The time, place, and manner of your death are uncertain; there is no time or place exempt from death. Death can come in court, church, camp, or even in the womb. While there is only one way to enter this world, there are countless ways to exit it, making the possession of all things remarkably uncertain.
18. When you die, all will be forgotten; there is no remembrance of former things, and there shall be no remembrance of things to come. That which was, in the days to come, shall be forgotten. Even a man who has done right may be forgotten in the city (Ecclesiastes 1:11, 1 Chronicles 2:16, Ecclesiastes 8:10). Solomon, for this reason, hated life (Ecclesiastes 2:17).
19. When you die, you will either leave no descendants, or you will leave children behind. If you die without descendants, you will realize how infatuated you were in seeking these outward things with such care and toil. You will ask yourself, "For whom do I toil and defraud myself of pleasure?" Gathering these things, you will not know who shall enjoy them (Ecclesiastes 4:8). If you die and leave offspring, you may be troubled by one of two things. Either you may be despised during your lifetime by those

for whom you endured hard labor, and those who come after you may not rejoice in you (Ecclesiastes 4:15-16). Or, you may leave the fruit of your labors to a fool or a wicked person. Who knows whether he who will rule over your labor will be wise or foolish? These very considerations made Solomon hate all his labor, which he had taken under the sun. He came to the point of despairing of all his labors, knowing that despite using his wisdom and knowledge to attain great things, he might leave all to someone who has not labored in wisdom. All of this is vexation of spirit (Ecclesiastes 2:18-24).

Alternatively, you may have children, and your riches may perish before your death, leaving nothing in your hand to leave them (Ecclesiastes 5:14).

## **CHAPTER XI**

### **The Miseries of Life in Respect of Ourselves**

Thus, we have reason to be weary of life not only in respect of God, evil angels, and the world but also because man carries enough in himself to mar the enjoyment of this present life. For:

1. The remnants of the corruption of our nature still lie within us like poison, leprosy, and pestilence. Though we are under God's cure, we are not entirely free from the sore; we are still like Lazarus. This realization led Paul to despair when he cried out, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body

of death!" (Romans 7). If we are not of the same mind as Paul in this respect, it is because we lack Paul's goodness and grace. This corruption of nature is even more grievous when considering the generality of its spreading infection, its incurableness, and its ill effects.

- First, it is like a leprosy that spreads all over us. There is no sound part in us, from our minds and memories to our wills and affections. Even our consciences remain impure within us, and there is no good nature in any faculty of our souls; it is a miserable mixture of vile infection.
- Second, its incurableness makes it worse. We are bound to sin, and there is a necessity of offending. Just as it was said of the flesh, "I can neither live with thee, nor without thee." The flesh is an inseparable ill companion in our lives, and we cannot escape it.
- Third, some of the effects of this corruption in us include the civil war it causes in our souls. No matter what concerns our happiness, it cannot be achieved without a mutiny in our own hearts. The flesh is like a domestic rebel that daily lusts against the spirit, as the spirit lusts against the flesh (Galatians 5:17).
- Fourth, it breeds insufficiency in us for our callings. Even the greatest apostle must cry out, "Who is sufficient for these things?" Although God's work is all fair, every person is burdened with defects, mistakes, and insufficiencies in their course of life.
- Fifth, it induces perpetual madness in our hearts, which is in some respects worse than that of lunatics. Lunatics may be mad only at certain times of the year, but man is seldom or never free from this inward madness of the heart. Solomon said, "The heart of the sons of men is full of evil,

and madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that, they go to the dead." This madness manifests in the inability of men to find settled contentment in the things they enjoy. Death often comes upon them before they can fully enjoy the blessings, whether temporal or spiritual, and this corruption of nature taints everything in a man's possession, thus marring the taste of all things.

- Sixth, it fills our hearts and lives with innumerable evils, engendering and breeding a multitude of evil thoughts, desires, and sins in our lives and conversations. As the godly David lamented, "Innumerable evils have compassed me about, and I am not able to look up. They were more than the hairs of his head, therefore his heart failed him" (Psalms 40:12).
- Seventh, it continually betrays us to Satan and the world in all the occasions of our life.
- Eighth, it plays the tyrant and leads us astray, giving wretched laws to the members. Each sin, which is the offspring of this corruption, is like a fury that frightens and amazes us. There is a race of demons brewing within us when Satan and the flesh generate together.

2. As we are miserable in respect of the remnants of corruption, we are also miserable in respect of the remnants of the punishment of sin on our spirits. Our hearts have never been fully free since the first transgression, and our minds are still filled with darkness. Even godly men genuinely cry out that they are like beasts at times, lacking understanding. In many passages of life, they carry themselves like beasts (Proverbs 3:3, Psalms 139, Ecclesiastes 3:18). The joys of God's presence are often kept from us, and our consciences remain in a kind of prison. When they go to the seat of judgment to give sentence in any cause,

they come forth with fetters on their legs, like prisoners themselves. Moreover, many personal scourges afflict our souls in this life.

3. Lastly, the condition of our bodies should not be overly pleasing to us. Our deformities, infirmities, and the danger of further diseases should tire us and make us realize that being present in the body while absent from the Lord is no lovely thing. Thus, these are the miseries of our lives. Now, it remains to proceed to the second type of contemplations, which are removals: meditations that address the objections in the hearts of men.

## **CHAPTER XII**

### **Comforts against the Pain of Death**

There are certain objections in the minds of all men that, if removed, would uproot the fear of death. I will address some of the chief ones and provide answers to them:

**Objection:** Some people say they are not afraid of death considering its gain and the happiness that follows it, but they fear the pain of dying. It is the difficulty of the passage that troubles them.

**Solution:** In response to this fear, several things should be considered to reveal its folly.

First, you dislike death because of the pain it entails. Yet, there is pain in curing a wound, and people endure it. Shouldn't death, which

accomplishes the great cure of healing all your wounds and diseases, be more welcomed?

Second, entering a haven is not without its difficulties. Would you rather remain in the tempest than seek refuge in the haven?

Third, you claim not to like death due to the pain, but why do you like life, which often subjects you to worse pain? People do not object to the pains of life, which they endure without dying. Almost everyone has endured greater pains in life than can be endured in death, yet we still cling to life. Our folly lies in this: While experiencing some pains of life, we call for death to relieve us, but when we recover, we love life again and loathe death.

Fourth, we are mistaken concerning death. The last gasp is not death itself. To live is to die, for as much as we live, we also die. Every step of life is a step of death. One who has lived half their days is already half dead. Death takes away our infancy, then our youth, and so on. Everything you have lived is already dead.

Fifth, it is evident that death itself has no pain; it is our life that ends with pain. We behave as if a person, after recovering from sickness, accuses their health of causing the final pains. What is death but not being in the world? And is it painful to be out of the world? Were we in any pain before we were born? Then why do we accuse death for the pains our life inflicts upon parting? Is not sleep a resemblance of death?

Sixth, if our entrance into the world is marked with tears, should it be any wonder that our exit is the same?

Seventh, we make the passage more difficult by approaching death with a troubled and irresolute mind. The terror in parting is often



due to ourselves.

Eighth, consider the humors of most people. Many will endure infinite pains for a small living or promotion in this world. Soldiers, for a small price, will expose themselves to unspeakable dangers, often at the command of others, without a guaranteed advantage for themselves. Will people harm themselves for things of little value and yet fear a little pain when an immediately glorious state awaits them in heaven?

Ninth, let not people pretend the pains of death, for that is only a fig leaf covering their lack of faith. They will suffer from gout or stone for a long time rather than face a sweet death with the easiest possible conditions.

Tenth, if none of these persuades, consider this mystery: Fear not the pains of death, for death is terrible when inflicted by the law, but it is easy when inflicted by the gospel. The curse has been lifted from you; you are not under the law but under grace. Christ died a terrible and cursed death so that every death might be blessed to us. Furthermore, God, who greatly loved you in life, will not neglect you in death. The death of His saints is precious in His sight. What can be said against the terror of death but this verse from the Apostle: "Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through Jesus Christ." He has removed the sting from death. "O Death, where is your sting?" (1 Corinthians 15:55).

Lastly, you have the Spirit of Christ within you, which will support, strengthen, ease, and remain with you throughout the combat. The godly may die more easily than the wicked. We cannot judge their pain; the body may experience severe agony while the person feels nothing, and the soul may be at sweet ease, preparing itself to behold God immediately.

## CHAPTER XIII

### Comforts against the Loss of the Body in Death

2. Objection: Oh! But in death, a man is destroyed; he loses his body, and it must be rotted in the earth.

Solution: First, it has been previously shown that the separation of the soul from God is properly death, but the separation of the soul from the body is only the shadow of death, and we have no reason to be afraid of a shadow.

Second, the body is not the man; the man remains even without the body. Our Savior Christ proved that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are still living even though their bodies were consumed in the earth, and God was still their God. True, death seizes the body, but a Christian, at most, suffers only a little of death.

Death is like a serpent; the serpent must eat dust, and so death can feed only on our dust, which is the body; it cannot touch the soul. Wicked men suffer the full power of death because it seizes both their bodies and souls, and in their case, it is true that death destroys a man.

Third, suppose we lose the body in death; even then, it should not be terrible. As previously shown, the body is but a prison for the soul, an old rotten house, or a ragged garment. It is like the bark of a tree or a shell. So, what great loss can there be in any of these?

Fourth, this separation is only temporary; we do not forever lose the body. Our bodies will be restored; they are kept safe for us until the day of Christ. Our graves are God's chests, and He highly values the bodies of His saints. They will be raised again on the last day. God will command the earth to bring forth her dead and give a true account to Him (Revelation 20). This assurance is not only in God's promise but also in His Son, whom He raised from the dead. Christ's resurrection is a full assurance of the safety and resurrection of our bodies. Christ is our head, and just as a man is safe when his head is above water even if the rest of his body is submerged, so are we safe in the body of Christ.

Fifth, we should be even more satisfied by considering that we will have our bodies back, but in a much better state. Those mortal bodies we lay down in death will be restored to us as glorious bodies, like the body of the now glorified Christ (Philippians 3:21). Therefore, death loses by taking away our bodies; we have a great victory over death. The grave is like a furnace to refine our bodies, and they shall come out immortal and incorruptible.

## **CHAPTER XIV**

### **The Desire for Long Life Confuted**

3. Objection: Oh! But if I could live long, I would desire no more. If I could not die until I were fifty or sixty years old, I should be content to die then.

Solution: There are many things that show the vanity and folly of desiring long life:

1. If you are willing to die at any time, why not now? Death will be the same to you then as it is now.
2. Just as a person in a tempest at sea is not angry or grieved because they will soon be carried into the haven, why should you be displeased with death, which will end all your miseries? If you believe that death is the end of your troubles, why delay the inevitable?
3. Time will not ease your debt until it is paid; your cares will continue. Therefore, you might as well pay at the earliest opportunity, if it must be paid anyway.
4. In this world, there is neither young nor old. When you have lived to the age you desire, your past time will be as nothing. You will still expect what is to come, and you will be just as ready to demand longer respite then as you are now.
5. Why would you stay here so long? There will be nothing new, only what you have already experienced. Often indulging in the same thing will not quench your thirst; you have an incurable thirst in your heart, and earthly things cannot satisfy you.
6. Would you not consider someone a fool who mourns because they were not alive a hundred years ago? You are no better; you mourn because you cannot live a hundred years here.
7. You have no power over tomorrow to make it happy for you. If you die young, it is as if you had lost a die with which you might as well have lost as won.

8. Consider the proportion of time you desire for yourself; calculate how much will be spent in sleep, care, disgrace, sickness, trouble, weariness, emptiness, fear, and add to all this the weight of sin. Then think about how small a portion of time is left, and how little good it will do you. How can that time be advantageous to you with such a mixture of evil? It is certain that to live long is to be long troubled, and to die quickly is to be quickly at rest.
9. Lastly, if nothing else convinces you, consider this: There is no comparison between time and eternity. What is the span of time compared to eternity? If you love life, why not love eternal life as well, as mentioned before?

## **CHAPTER XV**

### Of Those Who Wish to Live to Do Good

4. Objection: But I would live long to do good, benefit others, and serve God by setting an example for others.

Solution: 1. Examine your own heart; perhaps this desire to do good to others is only a pretext to further your own interests. You may not be seeking the public good, but your own.

2. God, who assigns you His work, knows how long it is fitting for you to continue in it. He knows how to make use of the labors of His workers. He will not call you from your work until He has made provisions to carry out His business without you.

3. It may be that if you continue in your work for too long, you might ruin it. Your last works may not be as good as your first. It is best to quit while you are still doing well.
4. If God will reward you as much for half a day's work as for a whole day's work, should you not praise Him all the more?
5. While it is true that the best comfort in life is found in a religious lifestyle, your religion will not be hindered by going to heaven; rather, it will be perfected. There is no comparison between your goodness on earth and that in heaven. Although you may do much good here, it is also certain that you do much evil here.
6. If you persuade yourself that you can mend others through your example, you are mistaken. A thousand men may be infected in a contaminated town before one is healed. It is tempting God to desire to remain in this infectious world longer than our time; the best way is to distance ourselves from the contagion. Just as the influx of diverse fresh waters into the sea does not remove its saltness, two or three virtuous individuals cannot reform a world filled with wickedness.

## **CHAPTER XVI**

### Why Men May Not Take Their Own Lives to Escape the Miseries of Life

5. Objection: But then it seems that a man's best course would be to end his life since life is filled with so much evil and death

promises much good.

Solution: 1. I believe most of us may be trusted to avoid that danger. While the soul aspires to the future good, the body is inclined to the earthly and weighs us down like a heavy clog.

2. The proper course is not to cast ourselves out of the world, but to cast the world out of our hearts. Taking one's life is both unseemly and extremely unlawful. It is unseemly because, while we should willingly depart from this world, it is dishonorable and cowardly to run away from the battle. You are God's soldier, appointed to your post, and it is a shameful act to abandon your place. When Christ, the great Captain, calls for a retreat, then it is honorable to give way. Moreover, you are God's tenant, and your life is held at will. The Landlord may take it from you, but you cannot surrender it at your own pleasure without disgrace. Hating life only for its toils is extreme laziness.

3. As it is unseemly, it is also unlawful and even damnable. It is unlawful because a soldier who flees from his captain commits a grave offense. Likewise, a Christian who takes their own life commits a sin. The commandment is not only "You shall not kill other men," but also "You shall not kill," meaning not yourself or others. Besides, there are no examples in Scripture of any righteous person taking their own life; it is only seen among notorious wicked individuals like Saul, Achitophel, Judas, and others. Furthermore, it is damnable because one who abandons their work before God calls them loses it and incurs eternal death. Just as a soldier who runs away dies for it when captured, so the Christian who takes their own life perishes. In essence, they commit self-murder.

## CHAPTER XVII

### Why We Should Not Be Troubled to Part with Our Friends

6. Objection: Some might say, "I could more willingly die, but I find it grievous to part with my friends and acquaintances. I cannot willingly leave my family and loved ones. Life is sweet because of their presence, love, and companionship."

Solution: It is true that for some, the greatest contentment in life comes from their relationships, but several things must be considered:

First, among a hundred individuals, hardly one can truly claim to have even a single loyal and trustworthy friend worthy of being a strong support in life.

Second, even for those who have felicity in their friendships, what is it in comparison? One pleasant dream contains more delight than a month of contentment that can be derived from friends. Alas! The satisfaction you derive from them is but a small fraction of your life.

Third, you witness your friends gradually depart from you day by day, either through death or distant separation, making them as good as dead to you. Since they are gone, who would not long to follow them?

Fourth, the friends left behind are not guaranteed to remain loyal; people are both mutable and mortal. Those who are now dear to you may turn into foes or grow distant and weary of you.



Fifth, if none of the above satisfies you, consider the friends you shall find in heaven. This answer goes beyond all exceptions.

Lastly, through death, you do not lose your friends; instead, you shall find and enjoy them in another world for all eternity. Thus, there is no reason to be reluctant to die for the sake of your friends.

7. Objection: Some might say, "All my grief is parting with my spouse and children, leaving them especially in an unsettled state."

Solution: 1. Have you forgotten the consolation that says, "God will be a father to the fatherless and a Judge and Protector of the widow's cause"? He will provide for both the fatherless and the widow, as many Scriptures assure us (Psalms 146:9; 68:6; Proverbs 15:25).

2. You leave them only for a time; God will restore them to you again in a better world.
3. By leaving them, you gain the presence of God and His eternal union, which will mean more to you than many thousand wives or children ever could. He who finds God in heaven can be hurt by the loss of no other company.

## **CHAPTER XVIII**

**Why We Should Not Be Sorry to Leave the Pleasures of Life**

8. Objection: Others might say, "My heart is deeply troubled because in death, I must part with the pleasures of life."

Solution: Several things can ease your mind concerning this objection. Your pleasures may be either sinful or lawful:

1. If they are sinful pleasures, you show your hatred of God by loving them and heap up wrath upon your own soul by indulging in them. But even if your pleasures are lawful in themselves, consider the following:
2. The pains you experience in life are and will be greater in number and duration than your pleasures. No pleasure has ever lasted as long as the fit of an Ague (fever).
3. Consider the possible end of these pleasures. They may lead to shame, loss, or severe sickness. Even if not, your heart may eventually tire of them, for they are vanity and will prove to be vexation of spirit.
4. You are far from giving your life for Christ if you are unwilling to let go of the excesses of life for Him.
5. Indulging in excessive delights reveals the greatest weakness, so much so that you might say of laughter, "You are mad" (Ecclesiastes 2:2).
6. Death does not rob you of pleasures; instead, it brings you to the pleasures that await at God's right hand forevermore (Psalms 16:11).

## CHAPTER XIX

### Why We Should Not Be Reluctant to Leave the Honors of the World

9. Objection: If anyone objects, it might be the reluctance to leave their honors or high position in the world. I can provide various answers.

Solution: 1. Why should you be so enamored with the honors of this world when you consider how insignificant your promotion is or can be? The whole earth is but like a full stop or center compared to the vast circumference of the whole world. In true judgment, it is almost impossible to discern how a person can rise higher in a center. Even if you possessed all the earth, you would not be more exalted than occupying a mere full stop—a little spot compared to the rest. How extremely vain is your nature to be affected by the possession of less than the tiniest fraction of a point?

2. Seriously consider the bondage that your promotion brings. You cannot live freely; you are fettered with the cares, fears, and griefs that accompany your greatness. There is little difference between you and a prisoner, except that the prisoner wears iron fetters while yours are of gold, and theirs bind the body while yours weigh on your mind. In this regard, you are even less contented than some prisoners who can find joy in their hearts while you are burdened with cares and griefs.
3. Even if you were to attain great heights, you cannot protect yourself from the miseries of your condition or guarantee the preservation of everything you enjoy. No matter how high you climb, clouds, winds, storms, and terrible lightning can find you, making you think that the lower ground is safer. You stand like a

person on top of a pinnacle, unaware of how soon you may fall down fearfully.

4. Even if you were certain to enjoy your exalted position in the world, you are not sure to preserve your honor. It may be tainted with unjust aspersions or marred by some fault of your own. Just as a dead fly can spoil a whole box of ointment, one sin can mar your glory (Ecclesiastes 10:1).
5. You do not lose honor by dying, as there are eternal crowns of glory in heaven that will never wither or be corrupted. These crowns can never be held with care or envy, nor can they be lost with infamy.

## **CHAPTER XX**

### **Why It Should Not Trouble Us to Part with Riches**

10. **Objection:** If you are infected with the love of riches and are reluctant to die because you do not want to leave your estate and outward possessions, consider the following:

**Solution:** 1. You came into the world naked, so why should it grieve you to leave the world without possessions?

2. You are merely a steward of what you possess, so why should it grieve you to leave what you have managed to the disposal of your master?

3. You have experienced and found that contentment of the heart is not achieved through the abundance of outward things. Even if you had all the pearls of the East and were master of all the mines of the West, your heart would not be filled with good. By accumulating riches, you only heap up restlessness.
4. Riches have wings; you may live to lose everything due to fire, water, thieves, suretyship, injustice, unthrifty children, or similar reasons.
5. They are riches of iniquity. There is a snare in riches and nets in possessions. Your gold and silver are like traps or poison. It is exceedingly difficult and almost impossible for you to be a rich person without becoming a sinful person, especially if your heart is fixated on the love of money and the haste to become wealthy.
6. You must leave them eventually, so why not now? You cannot enjoy them forever, so why should you trouble your heart about them?
7. By death, you exchange them for better riches and shall possess a more enduring substance. You will enjoy the unsearchable riches of Christ, and you can never be fully rich until you reach heaven.
8. Objection: Someone might say, "I should not fear death if only I knew what kind of death I shall die. It could be sudden, by violence, without the presence or assistance of my friends, or something similar."

**Solution:** Since we all must die, it matters less what kind of death we experience. We should not focus so much on how we die but rather on where we shall go when we are dead.

2. Christ died a cursed death so that every death might be blessed for us. For the one who lives righteously cannot die miserably. Blessed is the one who dies in the Lord, regardless of the kind of death they experience.

## CHAPTER XXI

### Curing the Fear of Death Through Practice

So far, we have explored how to cure the fear of death through meditation. Now, we must delve into how this cure can be perfected and accomplished through practice. There are several aspects we need to focus on in our daily lives that will greatly help extinguish this fear, without which the cure may not be solidified.

1. First and foremost, we must cultivate contempt for the world and strive to let go of our attachment to worldly things. It becomes easier to embrace death when our hearts are free from love for this world. Let us depart from the world before the world departs from us, truly learning the lesson to "use the world as if we used it not." This precept should not be too hard to follow. Athletes abstain from all things to obtain a perishable crown, so how much more should we be willing to deny the allure of worldly pleasures to pursue an incorruptible crown? (1 Corinthians 9:24).

We should learn from Moses, who willingly forsook the pleasures of Egypt, choosing to suffer affliction with God's people rather than be

called the son of Pharaoh's daughter (Hebrews 11:26).

To accomplish this, we must first restrain all unnecessary cares and worldly business, striving to be quiet and focusing only on our own responsibilities. Secondly, we should avoid associating too closely with those who admire and seek after worldly things, and instead, be in the company of Christians who not only speak about the contempt of the world but also practice it, strengthening our love for heaven. Thirdly, we should regularly examine what worldly things our hearts are most drawn to and pray to God to lessen our liking and desire for them. Fourthly, we should continually ponder on meditations that reveal the vanity and worthlessness of the world's possessions. This concludes the first remedy.

2. Secondly, we must practice a thorough mortification of our beloved sins. Our sins must die before we die, or else we will not fare well. The fear of death is often connected to weak faith, and full assurance of faith firmly establishes the heart against these fears and fosters a desire for the coming of Christ. Paul could be confident because he knew whom he believed in and that He was able to keep what Paul had committed to Him (2 Timothy 1:12).

Furthermore, we should strive to live upright and blameless lives. When a person can live without offense, they can die with peace, just as Samuel and Paul could confidently claim their integrity of conduct (1 Samuel 12:3; Acts 26:26, 27; 2 Corinthians 1:12).

3. Thirdly, assurance is a remarkable medicine to dispel this fear. We should obtain the assurance of God's favor and our calling and election. When we have this assurance, we can look forward to the heavenly kingdom without fear. The fear of death is always linked to weak faith, while the full assurance of faith removes these fears and creates a certain desire for the coming

of Christ. Paul could be confident when he could say, "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him" (2 Timothy 1:12).

Additionally, we should strive to acquire a particular knowledge and assurance of our happiness in death and salvation. We should study the arguments that reveal our blessedness in death. Frequent participation in the sacraments is also beneficial, as they serve as confirmations of our eternal inheritance through Christ.

4. The charge given to Hezekiah to set his house in order (Isaiah 38) is crucial for this cure. We should settle our outward affairs and make our wills with sound advice, providing for our wives and children according to our means. Much of the fear and anxiety about death can be alleviated when our wills are wisely prepared. It is unwise to leave the making of our wills until sickness befalls us, as we may face difficulties in memory and understanding, and it also neglects our duty of preparing for death throughout our lives.
5. We may also help ourselves by making friends with the riches of iniquity, following the example of the unjust steward in the parable, using worldly possessions wisely so that they benefit us in eternity (Luke 16).
6. Regular meditation on death is a potent way to overcome this fear. By learning to die daily, we can reduce or remove the fear of dying. Remembering our mortality and the brevity of life is an excellent practice, as the forgetfulness of death makes life sinful and death terrifying (Deuteronomy 32:19; Psalm 90:12; Lamentations 1:9). Starting this exercise early is advised, as we are told to remember our Creator in the days of our youth (Ecclesiastes 12:1).



7. Lastly, since we may still find this fear burdensome and our natures deceitful, we should turn to prayer with a sincere heart, asking God for this very cure. Like David, Moses, and Simeon, we should pray earnestly for this fear to be removed. Christ died to deliver us from this fear, so we have the privilege to seek God's help through prayer to develop it in us.

In conclusion, we have demonstrated that it is possible and unbecoming to lack this cure. The way has been shown through both meditation and practice. If it is not accomplished in us, the cause lies within ourselves. If we are soundly advised and disciplined, we can attain it throughout our lives and joyfully sing with the saints the triumphant song mentioned in the Old and New Testaments: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" Death is swallowed up in victory, and we are conquerors through Christ, who loved us and gave Himself to death for us, even Jesus Christ the righteous. To Him, along with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all praise in the churches throughout all ages forever.

Amen. FINIS.

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