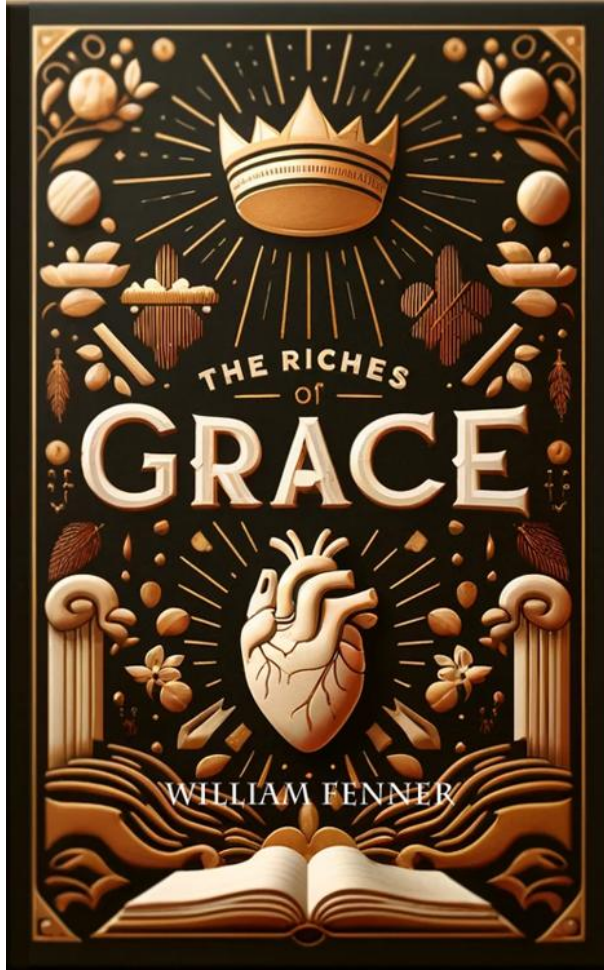


THE RICHES  
of  
GRACE

WILLIAM FENNER



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# **The Riches of Grace**

Showing the Value and Excellency of a Gracious Spirit, by  
Comparing It with the Nature and Spirits of Wicked and Ungodly  
Men, Who Desire Not the Ways of the Lord Jesus.

By that Reverend and Faithful Minister of God's Word, William  
Fenner, B. D., Sometimes Fellow of Pembroke Hall in Cambridge,  
and Late of Rochford in Essex. Finished by Himself.

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## **TO THE CHRISTIAN READER,**

GRACE, MERCY, AND PEACE.

There was never any age or time, Christian reader, since the  
beginning of the world, however corrupt, that was comparable to

this, our thrice unhappy age, in all kinds of corruption, wickedness, and sin. With grief of conscience, I speak it; with weeping, I behold it; and with a sorrowful heart, I lament it. Therefore, seeing wickedness abounds so greatly, the Lord, lest His children, frozen in the dregs of their sins, should perish with the wicked, raises up, in His mercy, good men (as we see the author of this treatise, a man of rare parts) to pluck off the visard of sin from their faces and to lay it open to the view of the whole world. This is so that everyone may see the vileness of their wicked ways and the filthy dregs of sin thrown in their face, may blush at the same, be ashamed, repent, amend, turn to the Lord Jesus, and so eternally be saved.

In this treatise, the sins and wickedness of ungodly men, who desire not the way of the Lord Jesus, are drawn to life, together with the excellencies, riches, and great value of a blessed and gracious spirit.

The author of this treatise was a man of a precious spirit, as may appear by this and other works of his in print. A reverent and worthy divine gives this testimony in his commendations: that he was a minister very conscientious, one that had a great ability given him by God to preach unto and work upon the hearts and consciences of men, to awaken the sleepy, to inform the erroneous, to settle the doubtful, to confirm the wounded. Also, that he was a worthy divine, both in regard to his unwearisome pains in preaching, consuming his own body to save the souls of others, and also of his learning and exemplary piety. They that knew him did love and reverence him; and if any did disesteem him, it was because they did not fully know him. He is now a shining star in the firmament of heaven. Also, there were hundreds of people that will bless God to all eternity for his pains. He needs not our praises but our imitation.

It is true that this work is posthumous, coming out after the death of the author, but I hope it will be the more pleasing to revive the memory of him, whose life and labours were deservedly precious in the esteem of God's people.

This treatise is one of the sparks of the zealous (dead yet living) author, finished by himself, which might have lain covered in the ashes of forgetfulness had it not been blown up by one (well-minded) who received it from the author's own hand. It has been viewed by a reverend divine to prevent errors and to make it complete for the press, which is here presented to your view.

Therefore, Christian reader, let me obtain this much from you: accept his labours as precious, well-wishing towards the truth and the professor thereof.

The subject of this ensuing discourse is published for your benefit. Read it. May the Lord give you understanding to conserve and practice it in your life and conversation. Amen.

## **THE RICHES OF GRACE**

"Therefore," say they unto God, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." - Job 21:14

Job's friends, disputing against him, claimed he was a wicked man because the wrath of God lay so long upon him. Job responds, asking how it could be true doctrine that God only scourges wicked men

when wicked individuals often prosper in the world, enjoying worldly pleasures and delights abundantly.

Now, Job shows that wicked men may prosper in five things:

1. Firstly, in life and health, as the raven may live five times longer than cleaner birds (verse 7).
2. Secondly, in their multitude of children (verse 8). A foul sow has more young than a ewe has lambs.
3. Thirdly, in tranquillity and safety (verse 9).
4. Fourthly, in success and the increase of their substance (verse 10), as the wicked men have a proverb: "the worse man, the better luck."
5. Fifthly, in wealth, security, and pleasure (verse 11-13). "Heart's ease," they say, "is the best flower in the garden."

Then Job sets down two things.

1. Firstly, the sin in the verse read unto you, "They say unto God, depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways."
2. The punishment in the 13th verse: "In a moment they go down into the grave, and verse, the wicked are reserved for the day of destruction; every wicked man God hath laid up, and purposed him to hell, he gives him of prosperity to fat him up, that his damnation may be greater."

The verse read contains in it three things:

1. Firstly, wicked men's contempt of grace, in these words: "We desire not the knowledge of thy ways."
2. Secondly, their contempt of the means of grace in these words: "Depart from us." They could be content that the Lord should depart from them in his ordinance. If no preaching, no praying, no Sabbath, no sign of God amongst them, they would not much care, not much lay it to heart. Nay, they also desire it; they say unto God, "Depart from us."
3. Thirdly, the profaneness of their lives: "They say unto God, Depart from us." Though few say so with their mouths, yet by their lives, so they live, so they behave themselves.

From the first of these, viz. a wicked man's contempt of grace, we observe this doctrine:

That a wicked man does not so much as desire saving grace.

For the clearing of the point, we will define the true desire of grace. A true desire of grace is a supernatural appetite for grace not yet attained, for the goodness of it. There are four things in the true desire of grace:

1. Firstly, it is an appetite of the soul for grace; when the heart even goes out of itself to attain grace. There are words in Psalm 107:3 which express it explicitly, "by the longing soul"; the word signifies a running soul, a soul that not only goes to grace and the means of grace but runs to it with eager desire and speed. An hungry appetite signifies an unfeigned hunger, which is:
  - Unsustainable without food, so that one who truly desires grace cannot be without it. As one said, "Take away heaven, and you

take away all from me," so it is with the poor soul; take away grace, and it can never rest; it can never bear the want of it.

2. Secondly, it is insatiable without food; nothing can satisfy it but food. Though one had all the wealth in the world, they could not be satisfied without food. So it is in the true desire of grace; one could have all the gold of Ophir, all the honours and pleasures of the earth, all contentment under heaven, but cannot be satisfied without grace. They must have grace; no contentment in anything else but grace, grace.
3. Thirdly, hunger is relentless; it will bear no rejection. When one is willing to give large sums for mean food, nor of pains, as evidenced by the woman who went five miles in the famine for food, it will bear no rejection. So the true desire of grace is relentless; whoever truly desires it and cannot get it will not let God alone, nor allow Him to rest but begs and cries for it. They could be content to give all they have for it, and if anything in themselves hinders, they will willingly cast it off. They will go through thick and thin, endure any contempt, any disgrace for it. If they suffer any disgrace, any reproach for grace, they glory and rejoice in it.
4. Fourthly, hunger is humble; it is not selective in its food. If it cannot have delicacies and dainties, it will be content with farmer's food, yea anything. Pigeon's dung will be good food; so one who truly desires grace is of a humble heart. They can be content to welcome children's crumbs and count it an honour to sit with Christ's dogs. Though with Paul's widow they wash the saints' feet, though with David they are door-keepers in God's house, yet if they may have grace, they care not though the



whole world trample upon them, though they be accounted the off-scouring of all things.

5. Secondly, it is a supernatural appetite, to distinguish it from a natural one, which natural men have yet hate grace. Every man naturally cares for his own preservation; therefore, since they cannot be saved but must eternally perish in hell without grace, they will desire it as one may give way to cutting off their arm or leg, rather than their whole body perish. Though they hate the cutting off of those members, yet seeing an unavoidable necessity, they willingly desire it. So the foolish virgins in Matthew 25 desired oil in their lamps not because they loved light, for their deeds were full of darkness, but they saw they would be shut out of heaven and cast into hell without it. Just as a dog desires to vomit, not because it hates the food, for afterward it licks up its vomit again, but because something troubled its stomach. So many a man vomits out their lust, gives up their drunkenness, whoredom, pride, malice, and many other sins because they trouble their conscience, and they are evidently convinced they must go to hell if they live in them. But when their conscience is quiet again, and the pinch is over, they willingly yield themselves to all their former lusts. Some have shown from that place, 1 Peter 1:12, that even the devils have desired knowledge of redemption by Christ. Though others judge differently, it is certain that hell would not be hell if damned men and damned devils did not desire to escape it. But this is not the desire of grace; it is a supernatural appetite.
6. Thirdly, it is an appetite or desire after grace not yet had. The love of grace is a good thing whether had or not; delight is in good when had, desire is in good though not yet had; a good though we attain it not, nor possess it, yet we love it because we

judge and see it to be good, or to have goodness in it. Therefore, we find we delight in it when we have it, and in the want of it, we desire to have it. A person may desire good that they have, but then it is imperfectly had, which may be two ways.

[1] Firstly, in regard to the haver of it, or person having it, by reason of some incapability in him of not receiving it, grace is a whole thing. So is faith, repentance, love, zeal, etc. They are whole and entire graces, which go together, but because we see how good they are, therefore we desire them in a high degree. That desire is of grace not had; it is plain, Isaiah 55:1.

[2] Secondly, in regard to the thing had which cannot be had but successively, as a sermon cannot be delivered all in a word, but something must succeed. Therefore, if there is any goodness in a people, seeing and hearing the goodness of one part, they will desire the other.

[4] Fourthly, for the goodness of it, or that is in it, a wicked man may desire grace for some other reason, but never for the goodness of it. A swine may desire to be raking in the dung-hill where there is a pearl, but it is not for the pearl, but for the muck that is there. So as long as the Gospel and plenty go together; the Gospel and father, and mother and wife, and lands, and houses, and life go together; so long they will hear the Gospel and seem to love it. But when the Gospel and these things part, then they and the Gospel part also. But the true desire of grace is for the goodness that is in it. Balaam could desire even the very heart of a righteous man, but it was when he should be dying; for he saw that if he had it, there was hope of heaven and salvation, but otherwise he must go down to hell. But this desire is nothing. Now that the true desire of grace is not in a wicked man is clear from Isaiah 53:2, where the prophet speaking of

Christ, who is the fountain of all grace, saith thus, "There is no form nor comeliness, and when we shall see him, there is no beauty in him that we should desire him." This is meant of the body of Christ, for as the learned have written, Christ had all parts in the perfection of a body, and of his soul, for it was replenished with all divine graces. "In him dwelleth the fullness of the Godhead bodily," and therefore there was beauty enough in him to have ravished all angels, yea, all the world, and ten thousand more if there were so many. But men in their natural estate see not this; we that are carnal, we that are sinful, we that are in our sins, we that are not truly changed nor renewed in our minds, we see no beauty in him that we should desire him; unless he will bring gold and silver, hawks and hounds, cards and dice. If he would bring these, then we should see some beauty in him, but if he bring nothing but weeping, and mourning, and repentance, the strictness and preciseness, mortifying and crucifying their earthly members; there is no beauty in these things that we should desire him. Wicked men may have a would, but not a willing desire, they wish thus and thus, but as the old proverb is, wishers and woulders were never good householders, but there is no true desire in them of saving grace.

Now as no love is love indeed but true love, otherwise it is hatred; no fire, fire indeed but the true fire; no holiness, holiness indeed but true holiness, for otherwise it is but hypocrisy, so no desire is desire indeed but true desire.

[Reas. 1] Firstly, because grace is above the reach of nature, and therefore an ass cannot desire to be a man, because he cannot conceive better of a man than of himself; for an ass seems best to an ass, a drunkard to a drunkard, a whore to a whore-master. Now if so be that a natural man cannot conceive better of grace than of himself, he cannot desire it. If all the world were fools except one man, that

one man would be accounted the fool, and all the rest wise men. So he that is a true natural fool is highly accounted of by his fellows; so a natural man accounts spiritual men as mad men. "The spiritual man," saith the Prophet, speaking in the language of wicked men, "are mad." (1 Corinthians 2:14) The natural man perceiveth not the things of God, for they are foolishness unto him. A natural man may perceive sweetness in the world, in his gain, in his profits, in his pleasures, in his delights and vanities, and in his lusts; for these things are carnally discerned; but not in the things of God, for they are spiritually discerned. A wicked man may have a great deal of knowledge, that a child of God cannot speak of more truths, nor understand more than he doth, but though a wicked man understandeth spiritual things yet not spiritually, but carnally only and in a carnal sense. This is the reason that a worldling would rather have a £1000 than true grace, that the covetous man would rather be in his counting house, accounting his interest-money and his gains, than at the house of God to hear a sermon; because they are carnally discerned, but these things of God are spiritually discerned. If we who are the ministers of God could drop shillings and pounds amongst men in our preaching to them, they would come to the church more dully, and hear more eagerly and affectionately; but when we deliver the things of God and the everlasting mysteries of salvation, which are above their reach and understandings; if they come to church, they can sit quietly in their pews being no whit affected with the Word as if it were nothing unto them.

[Reas. 2] Secondly, because grace is contrary to nature. Fire cannot desire water, nor water fire, because they are contrary, one expelling the other, for either the water will quench the fire, or else the fire will lick up the water; so nature and grace do thwart one another. Nature would have a man love himself, grace forbids it, and commands to

love God. Nature would have a man be wrathful, choleric, and given to revenge upon every small provocation; but grace forbids all these and the like. "The wisdom of the flesh is enmity against God." (Romans 8:17) Take nature in its best wits, take a natural man in his best understanding, best apprehension, and sweetest affable disposition, take the very flower and height of nature, though never so learned, and yet it is at enmity with God and grace, and therefore impossible it should desire grace. Hereupon it is that the magistrate neglects, true justice is cold or lukewarm in the cause of God, let grace call for the contrary; fathers and masters will not catechize and instruct and bring up their children and servants in the knowledge and fear of the Lord, though grace reproves them never so bitterly for the neglect of it. Diverse Christians will be earthly, dead, lukewarm, let grace stir them up never so earnestly, yet still grace is not welcome, it imposes things contrary; suppose a man should come to a fire and use all the rhetoric and arguments to persuade it not to burn, let him threaten it, "Burn not fire, if you do I will pull you all to pieces," yet it will burn still; for it is contrary to the nature of fire to suspend burning; so it is contrary to nature to suspend its lusts.

[Reas. 3] Because grace is not only above and contrary to nature, but it is a hell unto nature. Grace is a hell to a natural man. Now a rogue cannot desire the stocks, a thief cannot desire the gallows, nor a vagrant the house of correction; no more can a natural man desire grace: for grace arraigns and commits a man, and sends him down to hell gates, into hell itself, if he repents not. I grant a wicked man may think he desires grace when he wishes, "O that I had Christ, O that I were the child of God, and that I had grace!" but if one should come to this man, and tell him what it is to be a child of God, to have Christ and grace, that thus and thus he must be qualified, he must take up the cross of Christ, and follow the precise and strict rules of Christ, and the directions of grace; this man then would even hate those

conditions and so consequently his former wishes. "Woe unto them that desire the day of the Lord, to what end is it for you? The day of the Lord is darkness, and not light." (Amos 5:18) As if the Prophet had said to all wicked men, "You think you desire the day of the Lord, that Christ the Savior might come into the world, but to what end is it? I tell you the day of the Lord is not such a day, Christ is not such a Savior, as you do imagine: The day of the Lord is darkness and not light, a day of sorrow, of grief, of condemnation unto you." So the Lord complains by the Prophet, "You have wearied me." Wherein have we wearied thee, say they? "You have profaned the table of the Lord, ye have snuffed at it," saith the Lord. But we desire the coming of the Lord; yea, saith the Prophet, "The Lord shall suddenly come, but who can abide the day of the Lord? Or who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap." Thou desirest grace, thou that livest in thy sin; I tell thee that is hell and vengeance to thee, for it commandeth thee to crucify thy lusts, and to descend unto the gates of death, in the true humiliation of thy soul, or else it will damn thee in everlasting condemnation of hell.

[Reas. 4] Because nature in a wicked man is in its full strength. Now if nature in the child of God, in whom it is in some measure mollified and subdued, be such an opposite and enemy to the working of grace, stirring up cursed lusts, and the like, to quench the motions and comfortable living of grace, how much more when nature is in its full power and force where there is nothing else? Put meat into a dead man's mouth, and there is no absolute resistance. The child of God is like a sick man troubled with ill humors & diseases, he hath true desire of grace yet weak and low, not raised to that height and power which they shall be when they are perfectly recovered. Therefore the Apostle exhorts the people of God, 1 Thessalonians 5:19, "Quench not the Spirit," because even in them there are some

lusts, and corruptions springing out of the heart, which will be ready to put out the fire of grace.

[Use 1] This is for comfort for all poor broken hearts in whom God hath engendered the true desire of grace. Let such know that the first step to grace is to see they have no grace, and the first degree of grace is the desire of grace. It is not with the body as with the soul; if you will be healed you shall be healed; a man may desire to be healed corporally, and yet his disease continue upon him; but it is not so with the soul; if thou wilt say, "Christ, heal me," thou shalt be made whole. If a man have but the true desire of grace, it shall be given him, Psalms 10:17. "Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble:" when the poor soul is humbled before God in the sense of the want of grace, and breathes and desires after it, the Lord will grant such desires. So Psalm 145:14. "He will fulfill the desires of them that fear him, he also will hear their cry and will help them." One said the greatest part of Christianity is to desire to be a Christian. And another said the total sum of a man's religion in this life consists in the true desires of saving grace. This was the perfection that Saint Paul attained unto, Romans 7:18. "To will is present with me, but I find no means how to perform that which is good." Saint Paul we know was the child of God, and one dearly beloved of God; yet there was the pitch of his godliness; it consisted more in desire than in accomplishment. Canst thou approve by evident and sound arguments that thou hast the true desires of grace? Then know for thy comfort that the Lord's spirit of grace hath been moving and stirring in thee, Philippians 2:13. "It is God that worketh in you both the will and the deed, and that of his good pleasure," not only of his bounty, from whence he hath bestowed many graces even upon such as he will damn afterwards for their accursed abuse of them, with the neglect of the power thereof. But if God have set thy will and the stream of thy affections and desires to himself and to grace, if but thy

will yet it is God's good pleasure from which he did at first elect thee, and gave his son to redeem thee. As it is with sin so it is with grace in this: The desire of murder is murder; the desire of adultery is adultery; the desire to steal is theft. So it is with grace, the desire of faith is faith; the desire of repentance is repentance. But thou wilt say, "What good is it to desire to believe and not to believe; to desire to repent, and not to repent; the desire to have a humble heart, and a broken heart, and yet not to have the heart humble and broken?" I answer, he that hath the true desire of grace hath the greatest part of grace. Suppose a man should be scraping and raking, and grinding the face of the poor, to hoard up a great deal of treasure and riches to himself; which I pray you is the greatest part of his covetousness, the laying up of the money, or his greedy desires and oppressions? Surely I judge his covetous desires and oppressions. For any, even a child of God, may lay up and gather riches, when it pleaseth God to cast them upon him; so that it is not the having of riches but the coveting of them that proves a man to be a covetous man. For not only great usurers and oppressing landlords are covetous worldlings, for I tell thee covetousness may be in a beggar, and under thy leather coat; if thy mind be running after the world, thou that art never at quiet, but thy heart, thy head, thy hand and all is taken up after it, whether thou accomplish thy covetous lusts or no, yet thou art one of those covetous persons spoken of in 1 Corinthians 6:10. Suppose a man should attain to a great measure of grace, that he is marvellously humble, marvellously zealous, marvellously holy and strict in all the ways of God, I would know which is the greatest part of his grace, I suppose his strong and vehement desire.

[ 2] Secondly, set it forth by a similitude, suppose a man should be in a great strait, that all his goods were to be confiscated unto the King: now an execution is ready to seize upon them, unless speedily he make them over to some friend, who will keep them for him; it may



be his friend is an hundred miles from him, so that by no means he can come to him, now he thinks, "Oh that I had such a friend whom if I could but come at, I would cast my whole estate upon him, and repose much trust in him." So the soul that apprehendeth the wrath of God, and the curse of the Law ready to seize on it for damnation, it would fain go to Christ, but he cannot tell how, the sense of his vileness keeps him off, oh he would be glad to leave and cast away all his lusts, and dearest sins, and take up the cross of Christ, and if he could but reach Christ, oh then he would think himself safe, he would lay all upon him, his very soul and salvation. Certainly, this man hath true faith in Christ: for a man would trust him well before he would cast his whole estate upon him. There is an excellent place for this in Haggai 2:6-8. "I will shake all Nations, and the desires of all Nations shall come," where are three things.

[ 1] First, it's a marvellous instinct of the Spirit of God, whereby he shakes all the children he hath in the world, humbling their souls and terrifying their consciences upon the sight of their sins, and they stand in the casts off, castaways.

[ 2] Secondly, their desire of Christ.

[ 3] Thirdly, The desire of all Nations shall come, that is, Christ shall come, where observe that Christ is not called the assurance, but the desire of all Nations, because that there is no child of God, but doth truly desire Christ, though many be his who have not the assurance of it: never did any man desire to eat which had not eaten before, so [I desire to believe] comes from [I do believe.] Let then none be troubled, and fear and complain for the want of faith, for true desire springs from faith as the root of it.

[Use 2] Hence we may see, that grace which wicked men desire is not true grace.

[Object.] You will say men come to Church, they pray, they come to the Sacraments for grace, they profess they would have grace, and will you say that they do not desire it?

[Answ.] I answer with Solomon; The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing, but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat. As it is with a sluggish man that desires his ground should be tilled, but yet will take no pains to plough it; who desires that his business should go forward, that he might have the harvest, yet will not be at the cost and charges needful for it, he may wish and desire a harvest, but shall have nothing: So the soul of a sluggish Christian, of a lukewarm professor, desires faith and repentance, but gets neither; but the soul of a diligent Christian shall have enough to justify him, grace enough eternally to save him. But the soul of a carnal Christian desires faith, but gets but a lazy faith, a faith that will not justify him, a lean or perhaps a lazy repentance that will not save him, a dead performance and profession together: Romans 11:7. Israel, saith the Apostle, hath not obtained that which he sought for, but the Election hath obtained it, first carnal Israel sought for the promises of Christ, but they got it not but the Election hath obtained it.

[Object. 2] But our Saviour says, "Seek and ye shall find."

[Answ. 2] I answer, true, if you seek well; this word is of few letters, but of great force, it is the very form of all Arts: for Rhetoric is the Art of pleading well, and Logic of disputing well, so is Divinity the Art of seeking well, of living well; it is nothing to desire grace, unless you seek it well: the truth is a wicked man desires not true grace, but something that seems to him to be true grace. Now suppose a man were sick, and five pills would cure him, he thinketh four will do it, and therefore neglects the fifth and dies for want of it. So a man having his conscience convinced from the Word of God, that unless

he have such and such faith, such and such graces of the spirit of God, such knowledge, such holiness, he shall be damned. He thinks if I can be but thus and thus, if I can do but thus much, I shall be saved, whereupon he will hear the Word of God, he will pray, he will keep the Sabbath, give over this and that sin, leave his drunkenness, his swearing, and yet when all comes to all, he goes to hell. Why? because true grace which was commanded, and which he should have had, he accounted and called Puritanism and preciseness, and rejected as a superfluous thing; he thinks if he can attain to such a pitch as to live justly and quietly, and to be well governed, and to follow his particular calling, and keep the Church, and perform some good duties, though he be not zealous for God, nor in the worship of God, will not endure reproach for Christ, and for his strict profession: Such a one shall be damned though he have all the grace he looks for. A crimson shoe cannot cure the Gout; so fine comeliness of carriage in a natural man, cannot heal the infection and poison of corrupt nature. An Ass is an Ass still, though he be never so well trapped: so a natural man is a natural man still, though never so well qualified: Hath he love, hath he knowledge, meekness, gentleness, and a kind of humility and liberality? comes he to the Church, hears the Word, receives the Sacraments? yet unless he be mortified and converted, changed and renewed by the Spirit of God, it is impossible he should be saved; Titus 2:11-12. The grace of God which bringeth Salvation, hath appeared unto all men: and teacheth us, that we should deny ungodliness, &c. as if the Apostle would give us to understand that there is a grace that bringeth not Salvation; but that which bringeth Salvation teacheth us to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; if then that grace thou desirest and hast attained to, teach not thee to cast away all sinful corruptions, and do not make thee live holily, it cannot bring thee to heaven. This grace which (saith the Apostle) teacheth us to deny ungodly lusts, as if he had

said, I know it hath appeared to all, all the world hath it offered to them, it hath appeared to them, but they will not learn of it to deny ungodliness, & worldly lusts, and therefore instead of Salvation it bringeth damnation to them; but it teacheth us and brings Salvation to us. But now because men are apt to say everyone boasting, that they desire grace: therefore for the third Use,

[Use 3] Come, examine thyself or thy soul, and we will lay it bare before the Lord, that if thou hast grace thou mayst know of it, if not, thou mayest be convinced of it, and so persuaded in time to seek truly for it.

Now if thou hast a true desire of grace, then it purifieth the conscience from all dead works. If thy Conscience now tell thee, that thou hast any sin and corruption that thou art not willing to lay off; it is an evident demonstration, that thou hast no true desire of grace. A man that hath his hands full of base luggage, if a pearl should be at his feet, unless he empty his hands he cannot take it up, and therefore if he will not cast away that base stuff, we would say he hath no mind to the Pearl. Now thy hands and thy heart are full of corruption; so that though grace lie even at thy feet, yet thou canst not receive it up, unless thou empty thy hands and thy heart.

[Mark. 1] 1. Wherefore, if there be any lust, though never so dear, any bosom sin, which thou wilt not part with, it is an evident sign that thou hast not a true desire of grace: Heb. 3. 18. Willingness and desire to live honestly, and a good conscience are joined together; noting, that so a man cannot have a desire to live piously according to God's will, but he must have a good conscience in all things: If then thy conscience tell thee that thou wilt swear now and then, thou wilt tell a lie upon occasion, and be scandalous to others now and then, and wilt reserve some passage for thy lusts; know that thou

canst not, thou dost not desire grace. For true grace animates the soul to lay off all hindrances of the grace desired.

[Mark. 2] 2. It is a vehement desire, if true; a lukewarm desire is not true desire. As a man hath a desire to a piece of cloth and goes to the Drapers shop to buy it, he judgeth it to be worth twenty or forty shillings, now if the Draper should hold it at three or four pound, he scorns the motion and slings away with detestation of it, he desired it, but his desire was stinted, upon such a condition, at such a price above which he loatheth it. This is the reason why the Ministers of Christ are so unwelcome to men, and their Ministry too. Because they would bring men beyond the price which they would bid for Christ and grace; they would willingly have Christ, have faith, have heaven, but they are loath to take so much pains, to be at so much cost, as they must be at, if they ever have it, suppose thou give over thy whoring, thy swearing, for grace, yet if not thy company keeping, thy lying, thou hast no true desire of grace; though thou give over all thy gross sins, yet if thou retainest thy deadness, thy lukewarmness, though thou give over all thy sins save one, though but in a corner or a nook of thy heart, though I say thou come to this price, yet unless thou wilt give all thou hast, no true desire of grace. For the man that truly desires grace, his desires are vehement such as will part with all things for it; 2 Cor. 7. 11. Yea what vehement desires; the word signifies desire upon desire, one desire upon the back of another, and all for grace. Gen. 30. Give me children or else I die, saith Rachel unto Jacob: So the heart crieth unto the Lord for grace as for a thing without which it perisheth; Augustine saith, that the desire of grace is the thirst of the soul, it is a burning and gnawing desire, that will consume a man with desiring. Here therefore the whole world is convinced of their unprofitable desires. For what dead prayer? what dead hearing? what dead receiving? as if men would teach God how to deny them, or as if they would bid the Lord keep his graces. They

will come and say prayers, and give an ear, but they have no burning nor thirsting desire.

[Mark. 3] 3. Delight in the means of grace: though delight be an effect of true desire, yet it is a sign of grace, because grace in potentia, is in the Ordinance of God; therefore the man that desires grace, he will delight in the Ordinances of grace; he that desires learning, delights in reading and studying the means of it: so he that desires mortification, delights in the powerful preaching, whereby he may have all the corruptions of his heart laid open; he that desires grace, delights in all the means of it, Psal. 37. 4. Delight thyself in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desire of thine heart; Doest not thou only pray, but doest thou delight in prayer? doest not thou only hear the Word, but delightest in hearing the Word? doest thou not only come to the Sacraments, but delight in the receiving? Then thy desire is true desire; when the heart hath this delight, there is an inward drawing the heart to it: Canst thou find a forcible tugging and moving of thy heart and soul to all holy duties, that thou canst not but must at them; but if thou art awkward and untoward unto holy duties, to the worship of God, thy desires are counterfeit.

[Mark. 4] The more delays, the greater desire; delays are as oil cast into the fire, which makes the flame the greater. As a stone, the further it is from its centre, the faster it goes to it: so if thou dost truly desire grace, the longer thy soul is before it can attain it, the more thou art affected after it. The Comicke hath a pretty proverb, "When a man is athirst, it is a miserable thing to go dignify a well to quench it, for every shovelful will but aggravate his drought." So it is with men that desire grace: Prov. 13. 12. Hope desired maketh the heart sick; when a man's desires are held off and still deferred, that yet he cannot have it, it doth even make the heart sick with grief: a man that wants health is sick because he cannot get it, he tumbleth,

and tosseth, and turneth from this side to that side, cannot be at rest; So the soul that truly desireth grace, is even sick for it; it cannot have content in this nor in that, it is never where it would be, it is as a stone cast up from its own centre, till it have gotten Christ and his graces; every delay, though never so small, seems tedious to a man at such a time. But on the contrary, thou hast been without grace it may be these 20. 30. 40. 50. or 60. years; what are thy desires? are they more than before? No, but as before, so they are still; as thou didst pray before, so thou prayest still; as thou heardest before, so thou hearest still; and as thou was faint in thy desires, so thou art still, and such are thy endeavours; it is an evident argument that thou didst never truly desire grace; true desire the longer the more earnest. Therefore the Prophet begins his prayer, Psal. 13. with a "How long, Lord, shall I have this proud heart, shall I never be humble? How long, Lord, shall I have this unbelieving and impenitent heart, shall I never have faith to rest upon thee, and repent of my sins committed against thee? How long, Lord, shall I have such a dead heart, such earthly affections in thy worship and service, shall my heart never be quickened, and my affections never drawn to thee, and fastened nearer to thy service? How long, Lord, shall my heart be under these corruptions shall I never get victory over them? how long shall I serve the devil, shall I never serve my God? how long ere I shall be a factor for heaven, as I have been for earth?"

[Mark. 5] If thy desires be true, then thou hast gotten some grace: As it is in the veins of a man's body, the more they are opened, the more they are filled with blood: and as the bellows the more they are opened, the more they are filled with wind: so it is with the heart, the more it is opened with enlarged desires unto God, the more it is filled by God with grace; the Psalmist hath a sweet passage, Psal. 37. 4. "Thou hast given him his heart's desire," there is no desire on man's part, but there is a "hath given" on God's part: Psal. 145. 16. "there is

no living thing in the world that can desire, but the Lord satisfieth the desire of it." Examine therefore thyself, hast thou desired faith, and yet doest thou distrust God? hast thou desired repentance, and doest thou live in thy sin, never the humbler, never the lowlier, for all thy desires, but as thou wast yesterday, so thou art today, as the last week, so this, as the last year, so this? certainly thy desires are not true.

For then thou shouldest find God satisfying of them: as thou desirest, so thou speedest; little desiring, little speeding; great desire, great speeding; A lamentable thing it is that the desire of grace, so great a thing, should be so little esteemed in the world; men say they have good desires, but they are like wicked God-fathers and Godmothers at the Font: who if the Minister asketh them, "Do you forsake the Devil and all his works, the vanity and pomp of this world;" say, "We forsake them all:" Now let the Devil but tempt them to pride, malice, drunkenness, revenge, and the like, presently they yield to it, they say they forsake them all, but they do but lie; So ask them, "Do you desire grace?" "Yes, that is my desire," saith one, "and I desire it," saith another, but they desire not to cut off their sins, or if they do, it is as Saul cut off the witches, he cut them off with one hand and inquired of them with the other, when he was in a straight: So men can be content to cut off their sins, till a pinch come to draw them to them again, they can lay aside their covetousness till a bait be offered them, to revenge again, to drunkenness again, and so to gaming, whoredom, and the like: that these men do not desire grace is evident.

[ 6] They that truly desire grace, desire the means of grace: men that desire a crop of corn, they will be at the cost, charges, and pains, for ploughing, harrowing, and sowing of their ground, and all other requisites; but notwithstanding their desires of grace, they are both



to be at the cost and pains to hear the Word of God and keep it: Paul and Barnabas going to Paphos, Paulus Sergus hearing of it, presently desireth to hear him Preach; no sooner can a faithful people come to a town but the godly Christians will be at him, to preach to them: No sooner did the Eunuch espy Philip, but he presently calls him into his Chariot to expound the Scriptures to him; But thou mayst hear the Word every Sabbath day, but it may be thou wilt sit at home or in the Ale-house, or if thou hearest, it is but with a slight care: Christ hath commanded thee to pray for labourers, how many prayers hast thou put up to God for faithful Ministers, such as may break to everyone his portion in due season: I fear there are many thousands amongst us to whom these things are as Riddles, men do not desire the breath of grace, I know there are many talkers, but few doers, talkers by the ell, but doers by the inch, men must first be doers and then talkers, some are only great speakers of Religion and holiness: and now you all sit in your Pewes, I know not which is the best Christian among you, you all hear and look upon the Minister, but the trial is anon when the Church doors are shut, and you gone home to your houses, by your meditations, repetitions, prayer, and the like duties to engrave it into your hearts, and that your lives may be guided by it. Many hearers are like ale-houses with fair inscriptions engraven at the entry or walls of the house, as love God, fear God, honour the King, pray continually, be watchful, and the like; yet there is nothing but drunkenness, and cursing, swearing, and all hellish ungodliness within: So it is with men that make fair motions, fair shows, like Ezechiel's hearers, they will hear well enough, but they do not; as talking without doing is nothing, so there can be no doing without talking; a man that hath true grace, he desires to be speaking of it, we believe, and therefore we speak; if a man have grace in his inward soul, it will cast forth a savour into his lips, it will season his speech; the voluptuous man talks of his hounds, and Hawkes; the Drunkard of his cups, the worldling of his plough, and cart, and cows; the

tradesman of his wares, and the women of their household stuff, this or that matter, but scarce a word of God, or the work of grace.

7. Men desire not the companions of grace, like to like, and as the Proverb is, birds of a feather will fly together; Where shall we have the drunkard, but at the Ale-bench? the Whoremaster, but at the drab's house? the gamester, but at the gaming house? the worldling, but with worldly men? They cannot endure the society of the Saints, for they cannot rip up an oath, but some James will rebuke them, saying, "My brethren, swear not at all;" they cannot tell a lie, but some John will tell them of hell, that they shall be cast into the Lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; they cannot drink a pot or two, and be a little merry, but some Paul will tell them that drunkards shall not inherit the Kingdom of heaven; they cannot play the wantons, but someone or other that takes Christ's part, will check them, and tell them that hell openeth her mouth wide to receive them. I never read in any history, sacred or profane, that ever any of the governors of Sodom did visit Lot but when they would have done him mischief.

And again, when they desire not the works of grace, grace bids men live in love and amity and forgive wrongs, now where men conceive malice, and revenge, and receive 6. 10. 20. Sacraments and swallow up wrath and hatred, and spend 1000. shillings in revenge, these desire grace no more than the devil: nay grace will teach a man to deny his lusts, and sinful pleasures, and corrupt desires: I know many think they desire grace; O they would have it fain, but they will not have it in God's sense.

There was a fool sent to fetch wood from the stack, he would not go up to the top of it, but stood pulling at the bottom, and had got but a

few sticks, which if he had gone to the top, he might have had a great many more in less time, but whiles he was pulling at the bottom, at last the whole stack fell upon him and killed him. Just so it is with all men, all the world hath a stack of sin lying upon their backs, and consciences, now they must take away the whole stack before they can be converted: True it is, men pray, "O Lord convert me, O Lord give me thy grace," but they cast not away all their sins, they may be a pulling at this or that, but retain others; they live in their deadness and lukewarmness in God's worship, and in carnal performance of God's duties; at last the whole pile of their sins falls upon them and damns them, body and soul in hell forever.

And lastly, it is an evident sign that men have not true desire of grace, for when grace is offered, then they will not accept of it nor take it. Can a man desire an hundred pounds, and yet when it lieth at his feet, and offered him, will not take it up: God offers thee grace, he calls by his ministers, How long will ye love foolishness? forsake your ways ye foolish, and ye shall live, and walk in the way of understanding, Prov. 8. But now men will not, they cast grace from them; I tell thee hereafter, thou mayst desire grace when grace will not be found; You shall seek me, but you shall not find me, saith Christ. Now I bid you repent, but you will not believe and receive the Gospel, but the time shall come, that you shall seek for me, and that grace which was offered you, but you shall not find me, Ezek. 24. 13. Because I would have purged you, and thou wast not purged, thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness anymore, till I have caused my fury to rest upon thee: even so the Lord saith to every soul to whom he offers the means of grace, Because I would have converted thee and plucked thee from thy sins, but thou wouldst not, I would have purged thee from thy drunkenness, and whoredoms, and from the foul filthiness of your corrupt heart, but ye have neglected and contemned all those means of purging, whereby I would have purged

you. Therefore now mark God's final sentence upon thy destruction, thou shalt never be purged, thou shalt cry and call for mercy, yet thou shalt never have it; mark it now ye that have grace preached unto you, and will not take it, now accept it, God will not let you have it hereafter, if you would never so fain, but they that neglect grace now, grace will neglect them hereafter.

[Object.] But how shall we get our hearts truly to desire grace?

[Answ.] I answer, first, learn to know it: grace is such an admirable thing that if men knew it, they could not but desire it. All men desire good, though it be but a seeming good; this is that reason that drunkards desire drunkenness, and the angry men revenge, because they conceive a good in it: But if the drunkard did but know and consider, that his drunkenness would lead him to hell; if the angry man knew that the end of his lust was damnation, they could have but a small (if any) desire to them, or comfort in them, but if you'd desire grace, then labour to know it; Teach me the way of thy Statutes, and I shall keep them, saith the Prophet Psal. 119. 33. Psal. 9. 10. They that know thy name will put their trust in thee. That man that knows and is acquainted with God, that knows what it is to be patient, humble, holy, lowly, meek, and despised for Christ's sake, that man will put his trust in God, and seeketh after such excellent ornaments, let come what will come of it, that which all men know to be good, all men desire, and therefore few men desire the true good, because few men know it; knowledge of Salvation in the Scripture is put for salvation: a man cannot have his sins pardoned, his heart subdued, and all his corruptions mortified, but he must know what it is.

God never knows any but they know it themselves, those that brag of their knowledge, and yet live in their sin, know not God, they have

perhaps an intellectual and carnal knowledge of him, but no saving knowledge of him, 1 Pet. 2. 9. Therefore one said, if all the learning in the world were put together in one man, yet it is not so much as in the most ignorant child of God, though never so dull and weak in apprehension of other things, yet if he be truly acquainted with Christ, he hath more knowledge than all the Doctors in the world have by their human learning.

[Answ. 2] The taste of grace is sweet and dainty, that if we could but once taste it, our hearts would ever water after it, and we should have little lust to the contrary evil; Luke 5. 39. Thou that tastest of pride, of covetousness, of worldly-mindedness, thou tastest of very rank poison; but if once thou tastest of the pure liquor, and of the good things of faith, repentance, holiness, purity, and the like things of God, thou wouldst never desire the other again: The Prophet David knew not how to bring men to trust in God, but by wishing them to taste how good the Lord is, Psal. 34. 8. Hath there any man had the least relish of grace, though now they mock at it, and reproach it, and their consciences tell them as much.

Before the Israelites tasted of the Manna, they cried out, "What manner of meat is this? here is stuff indeed," but when once they had tasted of it, they adventured the breach of the Sabbath to get it. So men cry out at the Preaching of the Word; "what Preaching is this? here is thundering indeed, of wrath and revenge, hell and damnation, and the like: what, can we not go to heaven without all this pudder and stir?" Alas! men know not the power of the Word, men superficially know God and his ways; like a fool hearing of a Lemon tasteth the pill, and because the pill is bitter he casteth away the Lemon. So thou hearest of this and that Commandment, to mortify thy lusts, to kill thy corruption, or else of opening hell for thee, thy lips stick in these bitter pills, and therefore thou rejectest

the saving sweetness of the Word of God. But I have given over my drunkenness, my swearing, and the like, will some say, yet I feel no such sweetness by it, they say it is a glorious thing to be a professor, to do thus and thus, but I see no such matter. Thou fool thou tastest but the paring and the rind only of Religion, and dost thou therefore conclude that there is no more sweetness in the heart of it? know thou whatsoever thou conceivest, yet God's people that have tasted the sweetness of it account it otherwise; so did David, Psa. 119. 103. "How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea sweeter than honey to my mouth."

[Answ. 2] If you would desire grace, then purge out the ill humours of sin, out of thy soul; Suppose a man hath attained to some knowledge of grace, and taste of it, yet if sin be not purged out, it will dead his desires. Barzillay refused to sit at the Kings table, and eat of the Kings meat, because of the evil humours of his body: So, so long as the old man is not cast off, though the soul stand in never so much need of grace, though it seeth and judgeth of it self damned without it, yet sin puts the soul out of taste, it cannot desire it: Sin is like grease to the horses teeth, it takes away his stomach, though there be never so much meat in the rack, he hath no mind to eat: Wherefore when the Apostle exhorts men to desire the sincere milk of the word, 1 Pet. 2. 2. he first exhorts them to lay aside all malice, guile, hypocrisy, envy, and evil speaking, for except a man first lay aside these corruptions, he cannot desire grace, for thereby the devil greaseth thy teeth, and taketh away the edge of thy soul from the desire of grace. When a man desires to sleep, he desires to hear no noise; so when a man doth desire to sleep in sin, he desires not to hear the voice of grace disturbing him, and the Devil like a diligent Chamberlain draweth the curtains of darkness and security about him. David professeth to God, Psal. 119. 18. that his eyes failed for his promise, When wilt thou comfort me? he had no comfort in his

crown or Kingdom, or any other thing, and therefore he prays, "Oh, when wilt thou comfort me?" but alas! men suffer themselves to be filled with this and that lust, with some corruptions or other. Now when a man's purse is full of stones, there is no room for silver; so when the heart is full of sin, there is no room for grace; Joh. 8. 37. "My Words," saith Christ to the Jews, "have no place in you." As a great Inn filled with guests, all the room is taken up, so as there is no room for others; and by reason of the noise they cannot hear what others call for: so it is when the soul is filled with sin continually bawling for tendance, and accomplishment, there is no room for the Word of God to enter, all the rooms are taken up, there are guests in every corner, all the faculties are filled. Therefore the Apostle James, Jam. 1. 21. exhorts them, "Wherefore lay aside all malice, and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness, the engrafted Word, which is able to save your souls:" all superfluity of wickedness, sin, and evil, though it be never so small or little, it is superfluity, and therefore if ever you would take physic take it fasting, if you desire it should do you most good, so there is no taking of the Word of God, or any means of Salvation, to have any profit by them upon a full stomach; as when the heart is filled with sin, with pride, envy, malice, hypocrisy, earthliness, deadness, untowardness to godly duties.

If thou wouldst desire grace, consider the want of it; wert thou never so graceless, yet if thou didst but know the want of it, thou wouldst desire it: without grace thou art child of hell, a brat of the devil, and an heir to the curse of the great God; better had it been for thee, that thou hadst been borne a dog, or a toad, a serpent, or anything else, than to be borne to live and die without Grace. Art thou proud, and hast not grace to be humbled? know, God will know thee a far off, and then woe, woe, damnation is thy end; Livest thou in any sin and hast not grace to mortify, and in time to kill it? better had it been for

thee that thy cradle had been thy Coffin, and thy mothers womb thy grave, than that thou shouldst live to sin, and die without repentance. O cursed art thou, there are not so many letters in God's book, as thou hast curses for thy portion, it would burst thy heart with grief, if it were sensible of the 100000. part of that woeful grief.

My heart breaketh for the longing for thy judgment: the Prophet considering what a fearful thing it was to be without the comfort of God's word, it breaks his very soul. True desire of grace is sensible of the want of it; I say not therefore that it is without grace, for there is difference between being in want of a thing, and being without a thing; a man may be in want of full health and strength, and yet not without health and strength: so a Christian seeing in himself, not to have attained to the full degree of grace, desiring after it, is sensible of the want of it. A dead man ye may carry to London, or whither you will, he never desires to bait in the way, he feels no hunger nor thirst, whereas a living man cannot travail long, but necessity of nature calls for refreshment; a fearful sign that men are dead in sin, and in the state of eternal death, seeing they can travail up and down their whole lives, and yet feel no want of grace.

[Answ. 5] Lastly, fear to offend God; the fear of evil is the desire of good, fear to transgress against God's Commandments, fear to pray coldly, fear to have a by thought at any of the Ordinances of God, fear to be proud, fear to carry malice, and thoughts of revenge, fear to do any evil to displease thy heavenly Father.

This fear is a mark of true repentance, 2 Cor. 7. 11. Where there is most fear, there is most desire: What is the reason that women are most subject to desire, but because they are most fearful? What is the reason that Stags and Harts (as King James excellently noteth) are so thirsty after revenge, but because they are timorous and fearful by



nature? Who desire most to be exalted, to this and that honour, place, and office, of credit and preferment, but such as fear they shall never have honour enough? Who are more covetous than they that fear they shall never have riches enough? Would I urge you to the desire of grace, I think I can bring such motives out of the Word of God, as will either leave you in the gall of bitterness, or else make you to desire grace.

[Mot. 1] Grace is like the poor man Solomon speaks of in Eccles. 9. 15. who when a King had besieged a City, yet he by his wisdom delivered it, but no man remembered this poor man, though they had been all dead men had not he by his wisdom delivered them, yet no man accounted or esteemed of him. So it is with grace, were it not for grace, we should all be damned; and albeit that grace doth bring Salvation among us, yet where is the man that truly accounts of it even so as to desire it?

[Mot. 2] Consider that there is no good, indeed good to thee, but only in grace: What is it that men desire? is it not good? Psal. 4. Many say, who will show us any good? some good or other all seem to aim at: but it is a wonder, what wide aims men take, some think it is in pleasure, and therefore aim only how they may spend the time merrily, in eating and drinking, in hawking and hunting, in carding and dicing, and the like; some think it in honour, and some in riches, some in learning; some in one thing, and some in another; but alas! thou mayst eat and drink, and yet be damned when thou hast done; thou mayst desire much gold and silver, and yet perish in hell, after thou hast got it; thou mayst desire honour and promotion, and yet be damned when thou hast attained it; these are true, but vain goods, outward and temporary, good only in reference to a further good, so that if a man should rest on them, he should lose all his good. Our Saviour Christ puts a base Pronoun upon them, calling them these

things, as if they were not worthy the naming, Mat. 6. 33. Seek first the Kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof, and all these things shall be added unto you: Where our Saviour forbids his Disciples the seeking of earthly things. In the first place talk not of these things, neither let your thoughts be troubled about them, for they are not what they seem, or as many judge them to be, but if you would have the true good, first seek the Kingdom of heaven. So in James 5. 1, 2, 3. Go too now ye rich men, weep and howl, for the miseries that shall come upon you; your riches are corrupt, & your garments mouth-eaten, your gold and your silver is cankered, and the rust of them shall be a witness against you. Weep and howl ye great men, Knights, Lord's and rich men; if you have no other treasure, your portion shall be damnation and destruction in the day of God's wrath. It is grace alone that is true good, inward substantial good, and the last good of the soul; all other goods they are but finite, but grace inestates a man into the Lord Jesus Christ, an infinite full and perfect good: riches, honour, and wisdom, these things are good, but thou must give account for them, and if thy account be not good, thou shalt be damned for the unprofitable use of them: those things are not like fat Parsonages, which it may be bring 100. or 200. pound into the Parsons purse yearly, and yet may be, they are but 10. or 20. pound in the Kings books: it is not so with grace, but every pound is a pound, every shilling is a shilling, yea every farthing is a farthing in God's book: so that if God hath given thee wisdom, knowledge, riches, houses, honours, or any other talent, know that God hath set it down to a farthing, and thy account shall be as strictly demanded of thee, if thou hast not grace. Grace would discharge a man of all these; when all other goods are but as burdens to men to sink them to hell.

[Object.] I hope I desire grace, may some say, I pray, I read, I hear, I meditate, and confer of good things.

[Answ.] When a man is at a banquet, doth he desire the dishes, or the meat in the dishes? indeed he may pull at the dishes, but reacheth thereby to the meat. Prayer, and Preaching, Sacraments, &c. they are but as it were the dishes; God disheth up his graces in his Ordinances: now should guests when they are at a banquet, sit cutting the dishes, they might cut them, and yet rise a hungry, and starve for all the nourishment they would give. So men cut the meat, and when that is eaten they cast away the dishes; Prayer, Preaching, Sacraments, they must cease, if therefore thou hast not gotten meat out of those dishes, if thou hast not received the grace offered unto thee by them, thou art never the better: thou hast heard the word, but hast thou received the spirit? thou hast prayed, but hast thou gotten grace? thou hast received the Sacraments, but hast thou received Christ, and his graces also? otherwise thou hast nothing. O what a strange thing is it, that men should feed upon dishes, and not seek after the meat in them, and so starve their souls! Did the Prodigal, Luk. 15. feed upon his fathers dishes? No, but on his fat calf; What though I have a golden key, if it will not open the door? What good is it for a man to have brave gally pots about him, if there be no physic in them to heal his sickness? A boat, a boat, cries the passenger, when he would go over the water; what, is it the boat he desireth? No, but that he may pass over the water. We cry out a Sermon, a Sermon, a prayer, a Sacrament, but to what end? we should desire them as a means whereby God conveyeth grace, using them as boats carrying us unto holiness, to faith, love, meekness, humility, &c. otherwise thou wilt be never the better: for if a man have a hundred boats, yet if they cannot carry him over the water, what is he the nearer for them? if a man have heard an hundred Sermons, and have as many prayers, and Sacraments, yet if thereby he have not grace, nor be carried to holiness and Sanctification at the day of Judgment, he shall be at the farthest part of the River, of the Haven of blessedness.

[2] No good can satisfy but only grace: Eccles. 1. 8. All things are full of labour, the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing: suppose the eye should see all the brave and beautiful things in the world, yet the eye is not satisfied with seeing of them: suppose a man should hear all the melodious music, yet would not the ear be satisfied. The woman that came to draw water at Jacob's Well, John 4. 13. our Saviour tells her, Whosoever drinketh of this water, shall thirst again, these things may allay for a time, but not quench a man's thirst. For give a covetous man never so much wealth and riches, yet his thirst is not quenched, but there is room for him to covet again. Give Alexander one world and he will ask for another. Thou art sick and desirest health, thou hast health, yet thou desirest something else: thou art in Prison, thou desirest liberty; when thou hast it, doest thou leave off desiring? No, but thou wouldst have some other thing. Suppose a man were worth ten pound, he desireth to be worth twenty; and when he hath that, he desireth an hundred, and so a thousand pound. All the goods in the world is like Ale-house Beer, which the traveller drinketh of, but it doth not quench his thirst; a man can never satisfy his desire, with any worldly good. If thou wouldst have that which will satisfy thee, then desire grace, for grace is the proper object of the soul. Suppose thou hadst all the brave sights in the world, yet thou couldst not see them with thine eyes; suppose thou hadst all the sweet Musique in the world, yet thou couldst not hear it; for the sights are the objects of the eyes, and Musique of the ears. So all the good things of the world are but for the body, not for the soul; riches, honours, pleasures, and the like, are the objects of the body, and not of the soul, and therefore the soul can never be satisfied with them. A father in his meditations speaks thus, Lord thou hast made my soul for thyself, and it can never be at rest, till it can find rest in thee. The soul is like Noah's Dove which could find no rest (the waters overflowing the earth) till she returned to Noah in the Ark again: so unless thy heart hath found God, and be

drawn up to him the centre of it; thou mayst wander up and down the whole world, and yet never have content. Coudest thou get wealth, honour, wisdom, learning, health, and the like, yet without grace the soul is empty, and hath not satisfaction. They are all transitory, and therefore cannot give content. Suppose a man could have the world, and yet lose it again, it would more vex him and disquiet him than if he had never had it. Hence it is that a poor beggar, that hath always endured want, can bear it better than a broken Gentleman that hath lived in wealth and pleasures in former time, want and necessity is a hundred times more grievous to him: Wilt thou (saith Solomon, Prov. 23. 5.) cast thine eye upon that which is nothing? for riches taketh her to her wings, as an Eagle that flieth to the Heavens: he doth not say that riches flieth like a hawk which by a whistle or some other means will come to the Faulkoner again; but is like an Eagle, which no Art under heaven can bring back again; all thy riches, all thy honours, hast thou never so much of them, they cannot continue long with thee; for either they will leave thee, or thou must leave them at the hour of death, then out goes the soul, and God knows whither; it may be the more honours thou hast, and riches, pleasures, preferments, &c. the worse thy case is, and the greater thy condemnation.

Thirdly, suppose they were permanent, yet they are unnatural to the soul; Can a horse feed upon flesh, or a Lion upon straw? so my beloved, can a man's soul feed upon shillings and pounds? can a man's soul feed upon lusts, and pleasures and vanities? No, the soul is of a spiritual substance, and therefore cannot be satisfied with worldly contentments: as it is with the body, so it is with the soul in this, the necessity of the body, and emptiness thereof is not filled with spiritual things, but with earthly; so a spiritual emptiness must have a spiritual replenishment: Can a man fill a house with grace? No, a house is a body, and therefore must have household stuff, and

the like, which are bodies to fill it: so the soul which is incorporeal is not filled with bodies, with silver and gold, or anything in the world; for all the honours, pleasures, and the like, in the world, are bodily honours, bodily pleasures, and bodily delights, and therefore cannot fill a spiritual emptiness; the fool, that our Saviour speaks of Luke 12. shown himself to be a fool indeed, in that he said to his soul, Soul take thy ease, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, verse. 19. whereas all those goods did only concern his body, for notwithstanding all them, his soul was miserable, empty, and wicked; his body indeed had much goods, much silver and gold laid up for many years, but his soul had never a rag.

Lastly, the soul itself is insatiable, and therefore nothing can satisfy it. The souls of men ever since the Apostasy of the soul from God, by Adam's fall, have wandered up and down like Devils, men run one after this lust, another after that, one after this profit, that preferment, yet find no rest in anything. It is the curse of God upon man's soul, because it would not rest on God, that therefore it should not rest on anything else; the soul shall never have satisfaction, unless grace bring it back again to the same God, from whence it hath fallen, and so set it upon God and Christ: A wicked man may say he is contented, and he thanks God he hath enough; but the reason is, because he thinks he hath grace too, and that enough to carry him to heaven: for if that wicked men knew that they had no grace, or that they had not enough to free them from hell, were they never so rich, honourable, &c. yet they could have but cold comfort. Why, saith the Prophet Isaiah 55. 2. do you lay out your silver, and not for bread, and your labour without being satisfied? Why do you bestow all your thoughts and meditations, all your pains and labours to get the world, to get gain and preferment, to satisfy your lusts? Know this is not bread, it is a Scorpion; it is not fish, but a Serpent; will you feed your bodies with them for a while, and starve your souls

forever? Suppose thou hadst got all that thou canst desire of these goods, and thou comest to lie upon thy death-bed, afflicted with many pains and aches of thy body, and troubled with the stings of an accusing conscience in thy soul, some man would tell thee of thy great honours and preferments, of thy large revenues, and present thy golden coffers, and should say; Sir why do you complain of pains, and aches, and agonies? think of these things: alas, they cannot give ease to the least of thy torments, they cannot shelter thy soul from that fearful dooms sentence, Go ye cursed into everlasting fire: it is not gold nor silver, nor all the wealth in the world, that can deliver a sinner from the wrath of God: wouldst thou have true good? God is only good; he is good in the highest perfection, he is an absolute good without evil, all other good hath its mixture of sorrow, grief, and hatred, with love, delight, and joy. But God is the only good, Prov. 11. 23. The desire of the Righteous is only good, he desires God, and Christ, and the eternal love of God in Christ to be manifested unto him, and therein he roules and rests himself, but the hope of the wicked is indignation, he only desires the base pelf of the world, but the wrath of heaven is with it, and he shall bewail his own soul, that for such base things he should refuse the eternal good and neglect it.

Secondly, God is eminent in all goodness, all other good hath for the most part but one good in it, or three at the most, meat will not clothe a man, nor cloth will not feed a man, but in God there is all good, infinitely greater than man's soul is or can be capable of. Dost thou desire Riches? go to God, and then thou shalt have all that thou canst desire. Dost thou desire honour, and length of days, even eternity? go to God. When a man goes to one place for food, they must go to another place for clothes; shouldest thou go to the Drapers shop for clothes, then thou must go to another place for meat. Thou takest an hundred ways in vain that seekest after the

things of this world; if thou wouldst go to God, thou mightest have all thy desires accomplished, and all thy wants supplied at once in him.

Thirdly, God is such a good that without Him nothing is good, when thou desirest gold, thou desirest not the earth, but the good of it; if thou couldst have the good use of it, thou wouldst not desire the earthen matter of it: the good of gold and silver, of apparel and the like, is from God; whatsoever good it be, if God be not in it, it is not itself; thou hast money in thy purse, if thou hast not God also in thy heart, it is not treasure, but canker; thou that art clothed with never such costly garments, if withal thou art not clothed with Christ's Righteousness, they are not garments to cover thee, but badges of thy loathsomeness, and nakedness before God; the gold, of thy gold; the honour, of thy honours; the pleasure and delight of thy delights; the garment, of thy garments; is God's love in them all. In joy God, and thou hast good of them all, Psal. 63. 1. O God thou art my God, my soul thirsteth after thee, my flesh longeth greatly after thee, in a barren and dry land without water; a barren good, the Juice & sap of the heart, and the root of all good is from God alone.

Lastly, God is such a good, that if thou hast Him not for thy great good, who is of all infinite goodness to His people, who have chosen and preferred for their only good; The same God will be a God of infinite terror and wrath to all such as have rejected Him, and chosen false Gods to themselves. Is God become this evil? Justly mayst thou tremble, and fear all; all the devils in hell, without the wrath of thy God, whom thou hast rejected, the flames of hell would not be terrible, but the Lord's wrath as a fire, and a River of Brimstone doth kindle it. Our God (saith the Apostle) is a consuming fire: the very hell of hell, the fire of fire will God be to thy soul without grace. Wherefore if thou wouldst desire anything to do thy soul good, then



desire grace; grace, or else thou perishest; grace, or else thou diest;  
get grace, or else thou art damned in hell forever.

FINIS.

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