

AGGRAVATION OF SIN



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by Thomas Goodwin

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Was that then which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which it good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.—ROM. 7:13.

WE find our apostle in the 9th verse to have been alive, but struck upon the sudden dead, by an apparition presented to him in the glass of the law, of 'the sinfulness of sin.' 'Sin revived,' says the 9th verse, 'appeared to be sin,' says the 13th verse, looks but like itself, 'above measure sinful;' and he falls down dead at the very sight of it; 'I died,' says he in the 9th; 'it wrought death in me,' says the 13th, that is, an apprehension of death and hell, as due to that estate I was then in. But yet as the life of sin was the death of Paul, so this death of his

was but a preparation to a new life, 'I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live to God,' Gal. 2:19. And here he likewise speaks of God's work upon him at his first conversion; for then it was that he relates how sin became in his esteem, so 'above measure sinful.'

The subject then to be insisted on is the sinfulness of sin, a subject therefore as necessary as any other, because if ever we be saved, sin must first appear to us all, as it did here to him, 'above measure sinful.'

And first, because all knowledge begins at the effects, which are obvious to sense, and interpreters of the nature of things, therefore we will begin this demonstration of the evil of sin, from the mischievous effects it hath filled the world withal, it having done nothing but wrought mischief since it came into the world, and all the mischief that hath been done, it alone hath done, but especially towards the poor soul of man, the miserable subject of it.

Which, first, it hath debased the soul of man, the noblest creature under heaven, and highest allied, made to be a companion fit for God himself, but sin hath stript it of its first native excellency, as it did Reuben, Gen. 49:4, debased the soul more worth than all the world, as Christ himself saith, that only went to the price of it; yet sin hath made it a drudge and slave to every creature it was made to rule; therefore the prodigal as a type is said to serve swine, and feed on husks, so as every vanity masters it. Therefore we find in Scripture, that men are said to be 'servants to wine,' Titus 2:3, servants to riches, and divers lusts, &c.

And hence it is that shame attends upon it, Rom. 4:21. Now shame ariseth out of an apprehension of some excellency debased; and by how much the excellency is greater, by so much is the shame the greater; and therefore unutterable confusion will one day befall sinners, because sin is the debasement of an invaluable excellency.

Secondly, It not only debaseth it, but defiles it also; and indeed there was nothing else that could defile it, Mat. 15:20, for the soul is a most pure beam, bearing the image of the Father of lights, as far surpassing the sun in pureness as the sun doth a clod of earth; and yet all the dirt in the world cannot defile the sun, all the clouds that seek to muffle it, it scatters them all; but sin hath defiled the soul, yea, one sin, the least, defiles it in an instant, totally, eternally.

(First.) One sin did it in the fall of Adam, Rom. 5:17, 'one offence' polluted him, and all the world. Now suppose you should see one drop of darkness seizing on the sun, and putting out that light and eye of heaven, and to loosen it out of the orb it moves in, and cause it to drop down a lump of darkness, you would say it were a strange darkness; this sin did then in the soul, to which yet the sun is but as a taper.

(Secondly.) It defiles it thus in an instant. Take the most glorious angel in heaven, and let one of the least sins seize upon his heart, he would in an instant fall down from heaven, stript of all his glory, the ugliest creature that ever was beheld. You would count that the strongest of all poisons, that would poison in an instant; as Nero* boiled a poison to that height, that it killed Germanicus as soon as he received it; now such an one is sin.

(Thirdly.) Sin defiles it totally. It rests not in one member only, but beginning at the understanding, eats into the will and affections, soaks through all. Those diseases we account strongest, which seize not on a joint or a member only, but strike rottenness through the whole body.

(Fourthly.) It defiles eternally, it being *æterna macula*, a stain which no 'nitre or soap' or any creature can 'wash out,' Jer. 2:22. There was once let in a deluge of water, and the world was all overflowed with it; it washed away sinners indeed, but not one sin. And the world shall be afire again at the latter day, and all that fire, and those flames in hell that follow, shall not purge out one sin.

Thirdly, It hath robbed the soul of the 'image of God,' deprived us of 'the glory of God,' Rom. 3:23, the image of God's holiness, which is his beauty and ours. We were beautiful and all glorious once within, which though but an accident is more worth than all men's souls devoid of it, it being a likeness unto God, 'a divine nature,' without which no man shall see God. Though man in innocency had all perfections united in him *viâ eminentiæ*, that are to be found in other creatures, yet this was more worth than all; for all the rest made him not like to God, as this did; without which all paradise could not make Adam happy, which when he had lost, he was left naked, though those his other perfections remained with him, which is 'profitable for all things,' as the apostle says. The least dram of which, the whole world embalanced with, would be found too light, without which the glorious angels would be damned devils, the saints in heaven damned ghosts, this it hath robbed man of.

Fourthly, It hath robbed man even of God himself. 'Your sins separate,' says God, 'betwixt you and me;' and therefore they are said to 'live without God in the world;' and in robbing a man of God, it robs him of all things, for 'all things are ours,' but so far as God is ours, of God whose face makes heaven, he is all in all, 'his lovingkindness is better than life,' and containeth beauty, honours, riches, all, yea, they are but a drop to him.

But its mischief hath not stayed here, but as the leprosy of the lepers in the old law sometimes infected their houses, garments, so it hath hurled confusion over all the world, brought a vanity on the creature,' Rom. 8:20, and a curse; and had not Christ undertook the shattered condition of the world to uphold it, Heb. 1:3, it had fallen about Adam's ears.

And though the old walls and ruinous palace of the world stands to this day, yet the beauty, the gloss, and glory of the hangings is soiled and marred with many imperfections cast upon every creature.

But as the house of the leper was to be pulled down, and traitors' houses use to be made jakes, so the world (if Christ had not stepped in) had shrunk into its first nothing; and you will say, that is a strong carrion that retains not only infection in itself, but infects all the air about; so this, that not the soul the subject of it only, but all the world.

Lastly, It was the first founder of hell, and laid the first corner-stone thereof. Sin alone brought in and filled that bottomless gulf with all the fire, and brimstone, and treasures of wrath, which shall never be burnt and consumed. And this crucified and pierced Christ himself, poured on him his Father's wrath, the enduring of which for sin was such as that all the angels in heaven had cracked and sunk under it.

But yet this estimate is but taken from the effects of it; the essence of it, which is the cause of all these evils, must needs have much more mischief in it. Shall I speak the least evil I can say of it? It contains all evils else in it; therefore, James 1:21, the apostle calls it 'filthiness, and abundance of superfluity,' or excrement, as it were, of naughtiness, περισσεΐα τῆς κακίας. As if so transcendent, that if all evils were to have an excrement, a scum, a superfluity, sin is it, as being the abstracted quintessence of all evil—an evil which, in nature and essence of it, virtually and eminently contains all evils of what kind soever that are in the world, insomuch as in the Scriptures you shall find that all the evils in the world serve but to answer for it, and to give names to it. Hence sin, it is called poison, and sinners serpents; sin is called a vomit, sinners dogs; sin the stench of graves, and they rotten sepulchres; sin mire, sinners sows; and sin darkness, blindness, shame, nakedness, folly, madness, death, whatsoever is filthy, defective, infective, painful. Now as the Holy Ghost says of Nabal, 'as is his name, so is he;' so may we say of sin: for if Adam gave names to all things according to their nature, much more God, 'who calls things as they are.' Surely God would not slander sin, though it be his only enemy. And besides, there is reason for this, for it is the cause of all evils. God sowed nothing but good seed in the world; 'He beheld, and saw all things were very good.' It is sin hath

sown the tares, all those evils that have come up, sorrows and diseases, both unto men and beasts. Now whatsoever is in the effect, is viâ eminentiæ in the cause. Surely therefore it is to the soul of man, the miserable vessel and subject of it, all that which poison, death, and sickness is unto the other creatures, and to the body; and in that it is all these to the soul, it is therefore more than all these to it, for corruptio optimi pessima; by how much the soul exceeds all other creatures, by so much must sin, which is the corruption, poison, death, and sickness of it, exceed all other evils.

But yet this is the least ill that can be said of it. There is, secondly, some further transcendent peculiar mischief in it, that is not to be found in all other evils, as will appear in many instances.

For, first, all other evils God proclaims himself the author of, and owns them all; though sin be the meritorious cause of all, yet God the efficient and disposing cause. 'There is no evil in the city, but I have done it.' He only disclaimeth this, James 1:13, as a bastard of some other's breeding, for he is 'the Father of lights,' verse 17.

Secondly, The utmost extremity of the evil of punishment God the Son underwent, had a cup mingled him of his Father, more bitter than if all the evils in the world had been strained in, and he drank it off heartily to the bottom; but not a drop of sin, though sweetened with the offer of all the world, would go down with him.

Thirdly, Other evils the saints have chosen and embraced as good, and refused the greatest good things the world had as evil, when they came in competition with sin. So 'Moses chose rather to suffer, much rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin,' Heb. 11:24–28. So Chrysostom, when Eudoxia the empress threatened him, Go tell her, says he, Nil nisi peccatum timeo, I fear nothing but sin.

Fourthly, Take the devil himself, whom you all conceive to be more full of mischief than all the evils in the world, called therefore in the abstract 'spiritual wickedness,' Eph. 6:12, yet it was but sin that first

spoiled him, and it is sin that possesseth the very devils; he was a glorious angel till he was acquainted with it, and could there be a separation made between him and sin, he would be again of as good, sweet, and amiable a nature as any creature in earth or heaven.

Fifthly, Though other things are evil, yet nothing makes the creature accursed but sin; as all good things in the world do not make a man a blessed man, so nor all the evils accursed. God says not, Blessed are the honourable, and the rich, nor that accursed are the poor; but 'Cursed is the man that continues not in all things.' Gal. 3:10, a curse to the least sin; and, on the contrary, 'Blessed is the man whose iniquities are forgiven,' &c., Rom. 4:7.

Sixthly, God hates nothing but sin. Were all evils swept down into one man, God hates him not simply for them, not because thou art poor and disgraced, but only because sinful. It is sin he hates, Rev. 2:15, Isa. 27:11, yea, it alone; and whereas other attributes are diversely communicated in their effects to several things, as his love and goodness, himself, his Son, his children, have all a share in, yet all the hatred, which is as large as his love, is solely poured out upon, and wholly, and limited only unto sin.

All the question will be, What transcendency of evil is in the essence of it, that makes it above all other evils, and hated, and it only, by God, Christ, the saints, &c., more than any other evil?

Why? It is enmity with God, Rom. 8:7. Abstracts, we know, speak essences; the meaning is, it is directly contrary to God, as any thing could be, for contrary it is to God, and all that is his.

As, 1. Contrary to his essence, to his existence, and being God; for it makes man hate him, Rom. 1:30, and as 'he that hateth his brother is a murderer,' 1 John 3:15, so he that hateth God may be said to be a murderer of him, and wisheth that he were not. Peccatum est Deicidium.

2. Contrary it is to all his attributes, which are his name. Men are jealous of their names. God's name is himself; is (1.) it makes a man slight God's goodness, and to seek happiness in the creature, as if he were able to be happy without him; and (2.), it deposeth his sovereignty, and sets up other gods before his face; (3.) it contemns his truth, power, and justice; and (4.), turns his grace into wantonness.

And as to himself, so to whatever is his, or dear to him. Besides, a king hath three things in an especial manner dear to him: his laws, his favourites, his image stamped upon his coin; and so hath God.

First, His laws and ordinances: God never gave law, but it hath been broken by sin; ἀνομία is the definition of it, 'the transgression of the law,' 1 John 3:4; yea, it is called 'destroying the law,' Ps. 119:126. And know that God's law, the least tittle of it, is more dear to him than all the world. For, ere the least tittle of it shall be broken, heaven and earth shall pass. The least sin, therefore, which is a breach of the least law, is worse than the destruction of the world; and for his worship (as envying God should have any) it turns his ordinances into sin.

Secondly, For his favourites, God hath but a few poor ones; upon whom because God hath set his love, sin hath set his hatred.

Lastly, For his image, even in a man's own breast; the law of the members fights against the law of the mind, and endeavoureth to expel it, though a man should be damned for it, Gal. 5:17. 'The flesh,' namely, sin, 'lusteth against the spirit,' for they are contraries. Contrary, indeed, for methinks though it hates that image in others, that yet it should spare it in a man's self, out of self love; but yet, though a man should be damned, if this image be expelled, it yet laboureth to do this, so deadly is that hatred, a man hates himself as holy, so far as he is sinful.

It abounds now so high as our thoughts can follow it no farther. Divines say, it aspires unto infinity, the object against whom it is thus contrary unto being God, who is infinite, they tell us, that objectively sin itself is infinite. Sure I am, the worth of the object or party offended, aggravates the offence; an ill word against the king is high treason, not the greatest indignity to another man. Sure I also am, that God was so offended with it, as though he loves his Son as himself, yet he, though without sin, being but 'made sin' by imputation, yet God 'spared him not;' and because the creatures could not strike a stroke hard enough, he himself was 'pleased to bruise him,' Isa. 53:10. 'He spared not his own Son,' Rom. 8:32. His love might have overcome him to have passed by it to his Son; at least a word of his mouth might have pacified him; yet so great was his hatred of it, and offence at it, as he poured the vials of his wrath on him. Neither would entreaty serve, for 'though he cried with strong cries it should pass from him,' God would not till he had outwrestled it.

And as the person offended aggravates the offence, as before, so also the person suffering, being God and man, argues the abounding sinfulness of it. For, for what crime did you ever hear a king was put to death? their persons being esteemed in worth above all crime, as civil. Christ was the King of kings.

And yet there is one consideration more to make the measure of its iniquity fully full, and to abound to flowing over, and that is this, that the least sin, virtually, more or less, contains all sin in the nature of it. I mean not that all are equal, therefore I add more or less; and I prove it thus: because Adam by one offence contracted the stain of all, no sooner did one sin seize upon his heart, but he had all sins in him.

And so every sin in us, by a miraculous multiplication, inclines our nature more to every sin than it was before; it makes the pollution of nature of a deeper die, not only to that species of sin whereof it is the proper individual act, but to all else. As, bring one candle into a

room, the light spreads all over; and then another, the light is all over more increased: so it is in sin, for the least cuts the soul off from God, and then it is ready to go a whoring after every vanity that will entice it or entertain it.

And this shews the fulness of the evil of it, in that it contains not only all other evils in the world in it, but also all of its own kind. As you would count that a strange poison the least drop of which contains the force of all poison in it; that a strange disease, the least infection whereof brought the body subject to all diseases: yet such an one is sin, the least making the soul more prone and subject to all.

And now you see it is a perfect evil; and though indeed it cannot be said to be the chiefest in that full sense wherein God is said to be the chiefest good, because if it were as bad as God is good, how could he pardon it, subdue it, bring it to nothing as he doth? And then how could it have addition to it, one sin being more sinful than another? Ezek. 8:15, John 19:11. But yet it hath some analogy of being the chiefest evil, as God the chiefest good.

For, first, as God is the chiefest good, who therefore is to be loved for himself, and other things but for his sake, so also is sin the chiefest evil, because it is simply to be avoided for itself; but other evils become good, yea, desirable, when compared with it.

Secondly, As God is the chiefest good, because he is the greatest happiness to himself, so sin, the greatest evil to itself, for there can be no worse punishment of it than itself; therefore when God would give a man over as an enemy he means never to deal withal more, he gives him up to sin.

And thirdly, it is so evil, as it cannot have a worse epithet given it than itself; and therefore the apostle, when he would speak his worst of it, and wind up his expression highest, usque ad hyperbolem, calls it by its own name, sinful sin, ἀμαρτωλὸς ἀμαρτία, Rom. 7:13, that as in God being the greatest good, quicquid est in Deo est Deus ipse,

therefore his attributes and names are but himself, *idem prædicatur de seipso*; so it is with sin, *quicquid est in peccato, peccatum est, &c.*, he can call it no worse than by its own name, 'sinful sin.'

Use I. And what have I been speaking of all this while? Why! but of one sin in the general nature of it. There is not a man here, but hath millions of them, as many as the sands upon the sea shore; yea, as there would be atoms were all the world pounded to dust, it exceeds in number also; and therefore, ere we go any further, let all our thoughts break off here in wonderment at the abounding of sin above all things else: for other things if they be great, they are but a few; if many, they are but small; the world it is a big one indeed, but yet there is but one; the sands, though innumerable, yet they are but small; your sinfulness exceeds in both.

And next, let all our thoughts be wound up to the most deep and intense consideration of our estates; for if one sin abounds thus, what tongue can express, or heart can conceive their misery, who, to use the apostle's phrase, 1 Cor. 15, 'are yet in their sins'? that is, stand bound to God in their own single bond only, to answer for all their sins themselves, and cannot in the estate wherein yet they stand of impenitency and unbelief, plead the benefit of Christ's death, to take off and ease them of the guilt of one sin, but all their sins are yet all their own, which to a man in Christ they are not; for his own bonds are cancelled and given in, and Christ entered into bonds for him, and all his sins translated upon him.

Now for a proper character of their estate, and suitable to this expression:

First, then a man's sins may be said to be still his own, when he committeth sin out of his own, that is, the full frame and inclination of his heart. Thus the devil is said to sin, John 8:44, *ἐκ τοῦ ἰδίου*, 'out of his own,' the whole frame of his spirit is in it; which a man in Christ cannot be so fully said to do, for he hath a new creature in him

'that sinneth not,' 1 John 3:1, 9, that can say even when he sins, 'It is not I, but sin.'

And secondly, then sin is a man's own, when he hates it not, but loves it: 'The world loves his own,' saith Christ, John 15:27, and so doth a wicked man his sin 'more than any good,' which is David's character, Ps. 52:3.

And thirdly, what is a man's own, he nourisheth and cherisheth; therefore Eph. 5:19, 'No man hates his own flesh, but loveth it and cherisheth it;' so do men their sins, when they are their own. Those great and rich oppressors, James 5:5, are said to 'nourish their hearts in wantonness,' and in pleasure, 'as in a day of slaughter;' as living upon the cream of sinning, and having such plenty, they pick out none but the sweetest bits to nourish their hearts withal.

Fourthly, so what a man provides for, that is his own; so says the apostle, 'A man that provides not for his own is worse,' &c. When therefore men make provision for the flesh, as the phrase is, Rom. 13:14, have their caterers and contrivers of their lusts, and whose chiefest care is every morning what pleasures of sin they have that day to be enjoyed, it is a sign that their sins are their own.

In a word, when men live in sin, it is the expression used, 1 Tim. 5:6, 'She that lives in pleasure is dead while she lives.' When the revenues of the comfort of men's lives come in from the pleasures of sin, and that supplies them with all those necessaries that belong to life; as when it is their element they 'drink in like water;' their meat, 'they eat the bread of wickedness,' Prov. 4:17, and it goes down, and troubleth them not; their sleep also, 'they cannot sleep till they have done or contrived some mischief,' ver. 16; their apparel, as when 'violence and oppression covers them as a garment, and pride compasseth them as a chain,' Ps. 73; their recreation also, 'It is a pastime for a fool to do wickedly,' he makes sport and brags of it, Prov. 10:23; yea, their health, being sick and discontented, when

their lusts are not satisfied, as Ahab was for Naboth's vineyard, 'Amnon grew lean' when he could not enjoy his paramour.

All these, as they live in their sins here, and so are dead whilst they live, and so are miserable, making the greatest evil their chiefest good; so when they come to die, as we all; must do one day, and how soon and how suddenly we know not; we carry our souls, our precious souls, as precious water in a brittle glass, soon cracked, and then we are 'spilt like water which none can gather up again,' 2 Sam. 14:14; or but as a candle in a paper lantern, in clay walls, full of crannies, often but a little cold comes in and blows the candle out; and then, without a thorough change of heart before, wrought from all sin to all godliness, they will die in their sins. And all, and the utmost of all, miseries is spoken in that one word; and therefore Christ, when he would sum up all miseries in one expression, tells the Pharisees they should 'die in their sins,' John 8:28.

Use II. And let us consider further, that if sin be thus above measure sinful, that hell, that followeth death, is then likewise above measure fearful; and so it is intimated to be a punishment without measure, Jer. 30:11, compared with Isa. 27, 'Punish them as I punish thee,' says God to his own, 'but I will punish thee in measure.' And, indeed, sin being committed against God, the King of kings, it can never be punished enough. But as the killing of a king is amongst men a crime so heinous that no tortures can exceed the desert of it, we use to say all torments are too little, and death too good, for such a crime. Now, peccatum est Deicidium, as I said before, a destroying God as much as in us lies; and therefore none but God himself can give it a full punishment; therefore it is called 'a falling into God's hands,' Heb. 10:31, which, as he says there, is 'fearful.' For if his breath blows us to destruction, Job 4:9, for we are but dust heaps, yea, his nod, 'he nods to destruction,' Ps. 80:16; then what is the weight of his hands, even of those hands 'which span the heavens, and hold the earth in the hollow of them'? Isa. 40:12. And if God take it into his hands to punish, he will be sure to do unto the full. Sin is man's work, and

punishment is God's, and God will shew himself as perfect in his work as man in his.

If sin be malum catholicum, as hath been said, that contains all evils in it; then the punishment God will inflict shall be malum catholicum also, containing in it all miseries. It is 'a cup full of mixture,' so called Ps. 75:8, as into which God hath strained the quintessence of all miseries, and 'the wicked of the earth must drink the dregs of it,' though it be eternity unto the bottom. And if one sin deserves a hell, a punishment above measure, what will millions of millions do? And we read, that 'every sin shall receive a just recompence,' Heb. 2:2. Oh let us then take heed of dying in our sins, and therefore of living in them; for we shall lie in prison till we have paid the very utmost farthing.

And therefore if all this that I have said of it will not engender answerable apprehensions of it in you, this being but painting the toad, which you can look upon and handle without affrightment, I wish that if without danger you could but lay your ears to hell, that standing as it were behind the screen, you might hear sin spoken of in its own dialect by the oldest sons of perdition there, to hear what Cain says of murdering his brother Abel; what Saul of his persecuting David and the priests of Jehovah; what Balaam and Ahithophel say of their cursed counsels and policies; what Ahab says of his oppression of Naboth; what Judas of treason; and hear what expressions they have, with what horrors, yellings, groans, distractions, the least sin is there spoken of. If God should take any man's soul here, and as he rapt his* into the third heavens, where he saw grace in its fullest brightness; so carry any one's soul into those chambers of death, as Solomon calls them, and leading him through all, from chamber to chamber, shew him the visions of darkness, and he there hear all those bedlams cry out, one of this sin, another of that, and see sin as it looks in hell! But there is one aggravation more of the evil and misery sin brings upon men I have not spoken of yet, that it blinds their eyes and hardens their hearts, that they do not see nor lament their misery till they be in hell, and then it is too late.

Use III. But what, doth sin so exceed in sinfulness, and is the venom of it boiled up to such a height of mischief, that there should be no name in heaven and earth able to grapple with it and destroy it? Is there no antidote, no balm in Gilead more sovereign than it is deadly? Surely yes; God would never have suffered so potent and malicious an enemy to have set foot in his dominions, but that he knew how to conquer it, and that not by punishing of it only in hell, but by destroying it; only it is too potent for all the creatures to encounter with. This victory is alone reserved for Christ, it can die by no other hand, that he may have the glory of it; which therefore is the top of his glory as mediator, and his highest title, the memory of which he bears written in his name JESUS, 'for he shall save his people from their sins,' Mat. 1:21. And therefore the apostle Paul, his chiefest herald, proclaims this victory with a world of solemnity and triumph, 1 Cor. 15:55, 'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, that gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ;' which yet again adds to the demonstration of the sinfulness of it, for the strength of sin was such, that, like Goliath, it would have defied the whole host of heaven and earth. 'It was not possible the blood of bulls and goats should take away sin,' Heb. 10:4; nor would the riches of the world or the blood of men have been a sufficient ransom. 'Will the Lord be pleased with rivers of oil? shall I give my first-born for my transgression?' No, says he, there is no proportion, for thy first-born is but the fruit of thy body, and sin is the 'sin of the soul,' Micah 6:7. It must cost more to redeem a soul than so, Ps. 49:7. No; couldst thou bring rivers of tears instead of rivers of oil—which, if anything were like to pacify God, yet they are but the excrements of thy brains, but sin is the sin of thy heart—yea, all the righteousness that we could ever do, cannot make amends for one sin; for suppose it perfect, whenas yet it is but 'dung,' Mal. 2:3, and 'a menstruous cloth,' yet thou owest it already as thou art a creature, and one debt cannot pay another. If then we should go a begging to all the angels who never sinned, let them lay all their stock together, it would beggar them all to pay for one sin. No; it is not the merit of angels will do it, for sin is the transgression, the destruction

of the law, and the least iota is more worth than heaven and all that is therein.

Only, though it be thus unconquerably sinful by all created powers, it hath not gone beyond the price that Christ hath paid for it. The apostle compares to this very purpose sin and Christ's righteousness together, Rom. 5:15, 20. It is true, says he, that 'sin abounds,' and that one sin, τὸ παράπτωμα, and instanceth in Adam's sin, which staineth all men's natures to the end of the world; yet, says he, the 'gift of righteousness by Christ abounds much more,' abounds to flowing over, ὑπερεπλεόνασε, says the apostle, 1 Tim. 1:14, as the sea doth above mole-hills, Mal. 7:14.* Though therefore it would undo all the angels, yet Christ's riches are unsearchable, Eph. 3:8. He hath such riches of merit as are able to pay ail thy debts the very first day of thy marriage with him, though thou hadst been a sinner millions of years afore the creation to this day; and when that is done, there is enough left to purchase thee more grace and glory than all the angels have in heaven. In a word, he is 'able to save to the utmost all that come to God by him,' Heb. 7:5, let their sins be what they will.

But then we must come to him, and to God by him, and take him as our lord, and king, and head, and husband, as he is freely tendered; we must be made one with him, and have our hearts divorced from all our sins for ever. And why not now? Do we yet look for another Christ? and to allude to us as Naomi said to Ruth, Is there yet any more sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? So say I, Hath God any more such sons? Or is not this Christ good enough? or are we afraid of being happy too soon in being married to him?

But yet if we will have Christ indeed, without whom we are undone, 'how shall we then continue in sin,' Rom. 6, which is thus above measure sinful? No, not in one. The apostle speaks there in the language of impossibility and inconsistency. Christ and the reign of one sin, they cannot stand together.

And, indeed, we will not so much as take Christ until first we have seen more or less this vision here, and sin appear to us, as to him, above measure sinful. Naturally we slight it, and make a mock of, and account it preciseness to stick and make conscience of it; but if once sin thus appears to any but in its own colours, that man will look upon the least sin then as upon hell itself, and like a man affrighted fear in all his ways lest he should meet with sin, and starts at the very appearance of it: he weeps if sin do but see him, and he do but see it in himself and others, and cries out, as Joseph did, 'How shall I do this, and sin?' And then a man will make out for Christ as a condemned man for life, as a man that can no longer live, Oh, give me Christ, or else I die; and then, if upon this Christ appears to him, and 'manifests himself,' as his promise is to them that seek him, John 14:21, his heart thereupon will much more detest and loathe it; he saw it evil afore, but then it comes to have a new tincture added, which makes it infinitely more sinful in his eyes, for he then looks upon every sin as guilty of Christ's blood, as dyed with it, though 'covered by it.' 'The grace of God appearing, teacheth us to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts.' 'The love of Christ constrains him.' Thinks he, Shall I live in that for which Christ died? Shall that be my life which was his death? Did he that never knew sin undergo the torment for it, and shall I be so unkind as to enjoy the pleasure of it? No; but as David, when he was very thirsty, and had water of the well of Bethlehem brought him, with the hazard of men's lives, poured it on the ground, for, says he, 'It is the blood of these men,' so says he, even when the cup of pleasures is at his very lips, It cost the blood of Christ, and so pours it upon the ground. And as the love of Christ constrains him, so the power of Christ doth change him. Kings may pardon traitors, but they cannot change their hearts; but Christ pardons none he doth not make new creatures, and 'all old things pass away,' because he makes them friends, favourites to live with and delight in; and if men 'put on Christ, and have learned him, as the truth is in Jesus, they put off as concerning the former conversation the old man, with the deceitful lusts,' Eph. 4:21, 22, and he ceaseth from sin, that is, from the course of any known sin. They are the apostle's own words which shall judge us; and if we should

expect salvation from him upon any other terms, we are deceived, for Christ is 'the author of salvation to them only that obey him,' Heb. 5:9.

AGGRAVATIONS OF SINNING AGAINST KNOWLEDGE

Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.—ROM. 1:21.

THERE are two general aggravations the apostle insists on, in these two chapters, of the Gentiles' sinfulness: First, their unthankfulness, ver. 21, in 'despising the riches of God's goodness,' chap. 2:4; secondly, of rebellion, in sinning against knowledge, that 'when they knew him, they glorified him not as God.' And of all other, he inculcateth this of sinning against knowledge as the greatest, for, bringing in a long, large, and particular indictment of many several sins, idolatry, ver. 23, unnatural uncleanness, ver. 26, &c., and all kinds of unrighteousness, ver. 29, he doth, both in the beginning and end of the bill, bring in this aggravation, that they sinned against knowledge in all these. So, ver. 18, he begins the indictment and promulgation of God's wrath above all for this, that 'they withheld the truth in unrighteousness,' which was as much as all that unrighteousness committed, barely in itself considered. And then again, in the end, when he comes to pronounce sentence, he comes in with this, after all particulars had been reckoned up, 'Who, knowing the judgment of God against those which do such things, yet do them.'

So that this doctrine is clear from hence, that to sin against knowledge, either in omitting good duties which we know we ought to perform, or committing of sins we know we ought not to do, is the highest aggravation of sinfulness.

I put both in; both sins of omission and commission—for so the particular sins the Gentiles are taxed for here are of both sorts, as not glorifying or worshipping God, as well as turning his glory into a lie, &c.—to omit prayer when your consciences tell you you ought to do it, to omit holy discourse, examining the heart, when you know you ought to do them, are as well sins against knowledge as to tell a lie against your knowledge, or as to steal and forswear, or murder, or be drunk, &c.

Now, when I say it is an aggravation to these sins, my meaning is this, that, take any sin thou thinkest most gross, and view it barely in the act of it, put the act nakedly in the one scale, be it a sin of uncleanness or drunkenness, and then put this circumstance which was added to it in the other scale, that before and when thou didst it thou knewest it to be a sin, this alone weighs as much, yea, more than the sin itself doth; that as it is said of Herod that 'he added this to all his other sins, that he cast John in prison,' who told him of his Herodias, and so is made as much as all his former sins, so is this brought in here, that in and unto all their unrighteousness this was added, they withheld the truth, the light of their consciences (which is as a prophet from God) they did imprison in unrighteousness, ver. 18. And therefore when Daniel would convince Belshazzar of his deservedness to lose his kingdom, and that he was not able to 'hold weight in the balance,' Dan. 5:22, what puts he into the other scale against him to weigh him up, and to shew he was too light? ver. 21, 22, he tells him how his father knew the God of heaven, and how that his knowledge cost him seven years the learning among wild beasts, and 'thou' (says he) 'his son knewest all this, and yet didst not humble thyself.' Here is the aggravation weighs down all; he knew the God of heaven against whom he sinned, and that judgment on his

father for his pride; and then withal he tells him, that 'this God, in whose hands is thy breath, and all thy ways, thou hast not glorified.'

I name this place among many others, because it is parallel with this in the text. I'll name no more, but give reasons and demonstrations for it.

I. First, demonstrations.

The greatness of this kind of sinning might many ways be made appear; we will demonstrate it only by comparing it with other kinds of sinning.

To sin, though out of simple ignorance, when that ignorance is but the *causa sine quâ non* of sinning, that is, so as if a man had known it a sin, he had not done it, doth not yet make the fact not to be a sin, though it lesseneth it. For, Luke 12:48, 'He that did not know his master's will was beaten,' when the thing committed was worthy of stripes, though he did not know so much, because the thing deserves it. And the reason is, because the law being once promulged, as first to Adam it was, and put into his heart, as the common ark of mankind, though the tables be lost, yet our ignorance doth not make the law of none elect. For the law of nature for ever binds, that is, all that was written in Adam's heart, because it was thereby then published in him, and to him for us. But positive laws, as I may call them, as to believe in Christ, &c., anew delivered, bind not but where they are published. Josiah rent his clothes when the book of the law was found, because the ordinances were not kept, although they had not known the law of many years; yet because they ought to have known it, therefore for all their ignorance he feared wrath would come upon all Israel. So also, Lev. 5:17, sins of ignorance were to be sacrificed for; yet however it lesseneth the sin, therefore 'he shall be beaten with few stripes.'

And sure, if ignorance lesseneth them, knowledge aggravates; for *contrariorum eadem est ratio*, therefore 'he that knows shall be

beaten with many stripes.' Yea, such difference is there that God is said to wink at sins of ignorance. Acts 17:30, 'The time of this ignorance God winks at.' Whiles they had no knowledge, God took no notice; yea, and he abates something for such sins, because the creature hath a cloak, hath something to say for itself (as Christ says, John 15:22); but when against knowledge, they have no cloak. Yea, farther, Christ makes a sin of ignorance to be no sin in comparison; so there, 'If I had not spoken and done those works never man did, they had had no sin,' that is, none in comparison; but 'now they have no cloak,' no shelter to award* the stripes, or plea to abate of them.

1. And that you may see the ground of this vast difference between sins of ignorance and against knowledge, consider first, that if a man sin (suppose the act the same) out of ignorance merely, there may be a supposition that if he had known it he would not have done it, and that as soon as he doth know it he would or might repent of it. So, 1 Cor. 2:8, 'If they had known, they had not crucified the Lord of glory.' The like says Christ of Tyre, Sodom, and Gomorrah, that 'if the same things had been done in them, they would have repented.' But now, when a man knows it afore, and also considers it in the very committing it, and yet doth it, then there is no room for such a supposition, and less hope. For what is it that should reduce this man to repentance? Is it not his knowledge? Now if that had no power to keep him from his sin, then it may be judged that it will not be of force to bring him to repentance for it; for by sinning the heart is made more hard, and the knowledge and the authority of it weakened and lessened, as all power is when contemned and resisted, Rom. 1:21, 'Their foolish heart becomes darker.' Aristotle himself hath a touch of this notion in the third of his Ethics, that if a man sin out of ignorance, when he knows it, he repents of it; if out of passion, when the passion is over, he is sorry for what he hath done; but when a man sins deliberately, and out of knowledge, it is a sign he is fixed and set in mischief, and therefore it is counted wickedness and malice. And hence it is that those that have been enlightened with the highest kind of light but that of saving grace, Heb. 6:4, 5, and Heb. 10, 'if they sin wilfully after such a knowledge of the truth,'

God looks on them as those that will never repent. And therefore likewise the school gives this as the reason why the devils sin obstinately, and cannot repent, because of their full knowledge they sin with; they know all in the full latitude that it may be known, and yet go on.

2. Secondly, The vast difference that in God's account is put between sins of knowledge and of ignorance, will appear by the different respect and regard that God hath to them, in the repentance he requires and accepts for them; and that both in the acts of repentance and also in the state of grace and repentance, upon which God accepts a man, or for want of which he rejecteth him.

First. When a man comes to perform the acts of repentance, and to humble himself for sin, and to turn from it, God exacteth not, that sins of ignorance should particularly be repented of. But if they be repented of but in the general, and in the lump, be they never so great, God accepts it. This is intimated, Ps. 19:12, 'Who can understand his error? cleanse me from my secret sins;' that was confession enough. But sins of knowledge must be particularly repented of, and confessed, and that again and again, as David was forced to do for his murder and adultery, or a man shall never have pardon. Yea, farther, greater difference will appear in regard of the state of grace and repentance, for a man may lie in a sin he doth not know to be a sin, and yet be in the state of grace, as the patriarchs in polygamy, and in divorcing their wives; but to lie in a sin of knowledge is not compatible with grace, but unless a man maintaineth a constant fight against it, hateth it, confesseth it, forsaketh it, he cannot have mercy. This cannot stand with uprightness of heart. A friend may keep correspondency with one he suspects not to be an enemy unto his friend, and be true to his friendship notwithstanding; but if he knows him to be an enemy, he must break utterly with the one if he leans to the other.

3. Thirdly, Yet farther, in the third place, so vast is the difference, that some kind of sins committed out of and against knowledge,

utterly exclude from mercy from time to come, which done out of ignorance remained capable of and might have obtained it; as persecuting the saints, blaspheming Christ, &c. Paul's will was as much in those acts themselves, and as hearty as those that sin against the Holy Ghost; for he was mad against the church, and in these sins, as himself says, not sinning willingly herein only, but being carried on with fury as hot and as forward as the Pharisees that sinned that sin; only, says he, 1 Tim. 1:13, 'I did it ignorantly, therefore I obtained mercy.' Though it was ignorantly done, yet there was need of mercy; but yet in that he did it but ignorantly, there was a capacity and place for mercy which otherwise had not been. But thus to sin, 'after a man hath received the knowledge of the truth, shuts a man out from mercy, Heb. 10, and 'there is no more sacrifice for sin,' for such sins; I say, such sins as these, thus directly against the gospel, when committed with knowledge. For sins against the law, though against knowledge, there was an atonement, as appears, Lev. 6:1–8, where he instanceth in forswearing. But to persecute the saints, and Christ's truth, with malice, after knowledge of it, there is no more sacrifice; not that simply the sin is so great in the act itself of persecution, for Paul did it out of ignorance, but because it is out of knowledge: so vast a difference doth knowledge and ignorance put between the guilt of the same sin.

4. And therefore indeed, to conclude this in the last place, this is the highest step of the ladder, next to turning off, the very highest but sinning against the Holy Ghost; which must needs argue it the highest aggravation of sinning, when it ascends so high, when it brings a man to the brink, and next to falling into the bottomless pit, irrecoverably. And therefore to 'sin presumptuously' (which is all one) and to 'sin against knowledge,' as appears, Num. 15:26–30, it being there opposed to sinning out of ignorance (such a sin as David did, of whom it is said, 2 Sam. 12:9, that 'he despised the word of the Lord;' which phrase also is used to express sins of presumption, verse 31 of that 15th chapter of Numbers). To sin, I say, presumptuously is the highest step. So in David's account, Ps. 19:12, 13. For first he prays, 'Lord, keep me from secret sins,' which he

maketh sins of ignorance, and then next he prays against 'presumptuous sins,' which, as the opposition shews, are sins against knowledge; for (says he), 'if they get dominion over me, I shall not be free from that great offence,' that is, that unpardonable sin which shall never be forgiven, so as these are nearest it of any other, yet not so as that every one that falls into such a sin commits it, but he is nigh to it, at the next step to it. For to commit that sin, but two things are required—light in the mind, and malice in the heart; not malice alone, unless there be light, for then that apostle had sinned it, so as knowledge is the parent of it, it is 'after receiving the knowledge of the truth,' Heb. 10:27, 28.

II. These are the demonstrations of it; the reasons are,

1. First, Because knowledge of God and his ways is the greatest mercy next to saving grace: 'He hath not dealt so with every nation.' Wherein? In 'giving the knowledge of his ways;' and as it is thus, so to a nation, so to a man; and therefore Christ speaking of the gift of knowledge, and giving the reason why it so greatly condemneth, Luke 12:48, says, 'For to whom much is given, much is required.' As if he had said, To know his master's will, that is the great talent of all other. There is a much in that. Thus it was in the heathens' esteem also. They acknowledged their foolish wisdom in moral and natural philosophy, their greatest excellency; and therefore Plato thanked God for three things, that he was a man, an Athenian, and a philosopher. And Rom. 1:22, the apostle mentions it as that excellency they did profess. And Solomon, of all vanities, says this is the best vanity, and that it 'exceeds folly as light doth darkness,' Eccles. 2:13. But surely much more is the knowledge of the law, and of God, as we have it revealed to us; this must needs be much more excellent. And so the Jews esteemed theirs, as in this second chapter of the Romans, the apostle shews also of them, that they 'made their boast of the law, and their form of knowledge of it, and approving the things that are excellent.' And what do the two great books of the creatures, and the word, and all means else serve for, but to increase

knowledge? If therefore all tend to this, this is then the greatest mercy of all the rest.

2. For, secondly, God hath appointed knowledge as the immediate guide of men in all their ways, to bring them to salvation and repentance; for to that it leads them. It is that same τὸ ἡγημόνικον, as the philosopher called it; and therefore the law, Rom. 7:1, 2, is compared to a husband, so far as it is written in or revealed in the heart, that as a husband is the guide of the wife in her youth, so is the law to the heart. And whereas beasts are ruled by a bit and bridle, God he rules men by knowledge. And therefore if men be wicked, notwithstanding this light, they must needs sin highly, seeing there is no other curb for them, as they are men, but this: if he will deal with them as men, this is the only way, and therefore if that will not do it, it is supposed nothing will.

It is knowledge makes men capable of sin, which beasts are not; therefore the more knowledge, if men be wicked withal, the more sin must necessarily be reckoned to them; so as God doth not simply look what men's actions and affections are, but chiefly what their knowledge is, and accordingly judgeth men more or less wicked. I may illustrate this by that comparison, which I may allude unto: that as in kingdoms God measures out the wickedness thereof, and so his punishments accordingly, principally by the guides, the governors thereof, what they are, and what they do; as in Jer. 5:4 it appears, where first God looks upon the poor people, but he excuseth them, 'These are foolish, and know not the way of the Lord;' and therefore God would have been moved to spare the kingdom, notwithstanding their sins. But from them, at the 5th verse, he goes to view the rulers, 'I will get me to the great men, for these have known the way of the Lord;' and when he saw that 'these had broken the bands,' then 'how shall I pardon thee for this?' So is it in his judgments towards a particular man: when God looks down upon a man, and sees him in his courses exceeding loose and wicked, he looks first upon those rude affections in him, which are unclean, profane, debauched, greedy of all wickedness. Ay, but, says he, these are foolish of

themselves, but I will look upon his understanding, and upon the superior faculties, which are the guides of these affections, and see what they dictate to these unruly affections to restrain them. And when he finds that the guides themselves are enlightened, 'and have known the way of the Lord,' and that the will and the affections, though informed with much knowledge, yet 'break all bands,' then 'how shall I pardon thee?' thee, who art a knowing drunkard, and a knowing unclean person, &c., so as thus to sin aggravates and maketh sin out of measure sinful.

Now that knowledge and reason is a man's guide, will further appear by this: that even erroneous knowledge doth put an obligation, a bond, and a tie upon a man, which can be in no other respect, but because knowledge is appointed to be a man's guide. Thus, if a man thinks a thing which is in itself common and indifferent to be a sin, and forbidden, as Rom. 14:14, although the law forbids it not, yet 'to him it is unclean,' though in Christ it is not unclean, that is, by the law of Christ. For this his knowledge and judgment of the thing hath to him the force of a law, for it propounds it to him as a law, and as from God, which reason of his God hath appointed as his immediate guide; and the will is to follow nothing that is evil, which is represented to it as evil. This is the law of mere nature in all conditions; therefore if a man should do an action which is in itself good, if he thought it to be evil, he should sin, and so è contra, for he goes against the dictate of nature. So that erroneous knowledge, though against the law, is a law to me, though not per se, yet per accidens. Now therefore if to go against a false light of conscience be yet a sin, though it proves that the commandment allows the thing was done, and was for it, then to go against the true light of the law, how sinful is it!

3. Again, thirdly, the knowledge of the law binds the person so much the more to obedience, by how much the more he knows it; so as though it would be a sin when he knows not the law to transgress it, yet when he knows it, it is a greater sin. It is true, indeed, that conscience and the law, when they meet, make up but one law, not

two distinct laws; and therefore in sinning against knowledge, though a man doth not commit two distinct sins, yet the knowledge of it doth add a further degree of sinfulness to it; as a cloth is the same cloth when it is white that it was when it is dyed with a scarlet dye, yet then it hath a dye, a tincture given it, which is more worth than the cloth: and so, when you sin not knowing the law, the sin is the same for substance it would be if you had known it, yet that knowledge dyes it, makes it a 'scarlet sin,' as Isaiah speaks, far greater and deeper in demerit than the sin itself; and the ground of this is, because laws then come to be in force when they are promulged and made known, so as the more they are promulged and made known, the more is the force of their binding, and so the greater guilt. Therefore, Deut. 12:3, 8, God straightens the cords more, the binding force of the law more upon those Jews' consciences, to whom he at first personally with majesty had promulgated it, than upon their children, though upon theirs also. Now if all God's laws, being made known to Adam, bind us, and are in force, and this when we know them not, then, if we do know them, or might know them, they bind much more, and still the more clearly we know them the obligation increaseth, and the guilt ensuing with it; and the rather, because now when we come to know them, they are anew promulged in a way of a peculiar mercy, we having defaced the knowledge of them in our fall.

4. Fourthly, When the law, being known, is broken, there is the more contempt cast upon the law, and the lawgiver also, and so a higher degree of sinning. And therefore, Num. 15:30, 'He that sins out of knowledge' is said to 'reproach the Lord, and to despise the word.' And therefore Saul sinning against knowledge, Samuel calleth it rebellion; and though it were but in a small thing, yet he parallels it with witchcraft. So also, Job 24:13, they are said to rebel when they sin against light; because rebellion is added to disobedience. For knowledge is an officer set to see the law executed and fulfilled, and makes God present to the conscience. Therefore, Rom. 2:14, it is called a witness, and therefore in sinning against knowledge men are said to sin before the face of the Lord himself; now what a great

contempt is that? Therefore also, Ps. 50:17, the hypocrite sinning against knowledge is said to 'cast the law of God behind his back,' so as there is a contempt in this sinning, which is in no other.

5. Fifthly, The more knowledge a man sinneth against, the more the will of the sinner is discovered to be for sin, as sin. Now voluntarium est regula et mensura actionum moralium, willingness in sinning is the standard and measure of sins. The less will, the less sin; so much is cut off, the less the will closeth with it, at leastwise so much is added by how much the will is more in it; and therefore the highest degree of sinning is expressed to us by sinning willingly, and this after knowledge, Heb. 10. Now though an ignorant man commits the act as willingly, as when Paul persecuted the church, yet he commits it not considered as sin till he hath the knowledge of it; but then when it is discovered to be sin, and the more clearly it is so discovered, the will may be said to join with it as sin. Therefore the apostle says, 'To him that knows to do well, and doth it not, to him it is sin,' James 4:17, because by his knowledge the thing is represented as sin; and so he closeth with it the more, under that notion and apprehension.

6. Sixthly, In sinning against knowledge a man condemns himself, but when out of ignorance merely, the law only doth condemn him; so Rom. 2:1, a man having knowledge in that wherein he judgeth another, he condemneth himself; so Rom. 14, now as self-murder is the highest degree of murder and an aggravation of it, so self-condemning must needs be reckoned. God took it as a great advantage over him that hid his talent, that 'out of thine own mouth I will condemn thee, thou wicked servant.'

The doctrine being thus proved; first, I will explain what it is to sin against knowledge.

Secondly, I will give the aggravations of it.

Thirdly, I will give rules to measure sins of knowledge by, and the greatness of them in any act.

Lastly, the use of all.

1. For the first, what it is to sin against knowledge. First, to explain it, I premise these distinctions.

(1.) The first distinction: that it is one thing to sin with knowledge, another thing against knowledge.

There are many sins do pass from a man with his knowledge, which yet are not against knowledge. This is to be observed for the removal of a scruple which may arise in some that are godly, who else may be wounded with this doctrine through a mistake.

A regenerate man is, and must needs be, supposed guilty of more known sins than an unregenerate man; and yet he commits fewer against knowledge than he.

[1.] First, I say, he is guilty of more known sins; for he takes notice of every sinful disposition that is stirring in him, every by-end, every contrariety unto holiness, deadness to duty, reluctancy to spiritual duties, and when regenerated, beginneth to see and know more evil by himself, than ever he did before; he sees as the apostle says of himself, Rom. 7:8, 'all concupiscence;' and the holier a man is, the more he discerns and knows his sins. So says the apostle, Rom. 7:18, 'I know that in me dwells no good thing.' And ver. 21, 'I find when I would do good, evil is present with me.' And ver. 23, 'I see another law.' All these, he says, he perceived and found daily in himself; and the more holy that he grew, the more he saw them. For the purer and clearer the light of God's Spirit shines in a man, the more sins he knows, he will see lusts streaming up, flying in his heart, like motes in the sun, or sparks out of a furnace, which else he had not seen. The clearer the sunbeam is which is let into the heart, the more thou wilt see them.

[2.] But yet, in the second place, I add, that nevertheless he sins less against knowledge; for then we are properly said to sin against knowledge, when we do take the fulfilling of a lust, or the performance of an outward action, a duty, or the like, into deliberation and consideration, and consider motives against the sin, or to the duty, and yet commit that sin, yield to it, and nourish that lust, and omit that duty. Here now we sin not only with knowledge, but against knowledge, because knowledge stepped in, and opposed us in it, comes to interrupt and prevent us; but now in those failings in duty, and stirring of lusts in the regenerate aforementioned, the case is otherwise, they are committed indeed with knowledge, but not against it. For it is not in the power of knowledge to prevent them, for *motus primi non cadunt sub libertatem*; but yet though such sins will arise again and again, yet, says a good heart, they must not think to pass uncontrolled and unseen. Therefore let not poor souls mistake me, as if I meant throughout this discourse of all sins which are known to be sins, but I mean such sins as are committed against knowledge, that is, when knowledge comes and examines a sin in or before the committing of it, brings it to the law, contests against it, condemns it, and yet a man approveth it, and consenteth to it; when a duty and a sin are brought before knowledge, as Barabbas and Christ afore Pilate, and thy knowledge doth again and again tell thee such a sin is a great sin, and ought to be crucified, and yet thou criest, let it go; and so for the duty, it tells thee again and again it ought to be submitted unto, and yet thou omittest it, and committest the sin, choosest Barabbas rather than Christ: these are sins against knowledge. Now such sins against knowledge break a man's peace, and the more consideration before had, the more the peace is broken.

(2.) The second distinction is, that men sin against knowledge, either directly or collaterally, objectively or circumstantially.

[1.] First, directly, when knowledge itself is the thing men abuse, or fight against, becometh the object, the terminus, the butt and mark shot at, this is to sin directly against knowledge itself.

[2.] The second way, collaterally, is, when knowledge is but a circumstance in our sins, so as the pleasure of some sin we know to be a sin is the thing aimed at, and that our knowledge steps but in between to hinder us in it, and we commit it notwithstanding though we do know it; here knowledge is indeed sinned against, yet but collaterally, and as a stander by, but as a circumstance only, shot at per accidens, concomitanter, and by the by, as one that steps in to part a fray is smitten, for labouring to hinder them in their sin, as the Sodomites quarrelled with Lot; they are both found in this chapter, and therefore come fitly within the compass of this discourse.

First, this collateral kind of sinning against knowledge is mentioned in the 21st verse, where he says, 'They knew God, yet they glorified him not;' there knowledge is made but a circumstance of their sinning, they sinned against it but collaterally. But then that other kind of sinning directly against knowledge is mentioned, verse 28, 'They liked not to retain God in their knowledge;' that is, they hated this knowledge itself, so as now they did not only love sin they knew to be sin, but also they loved not the knowledge of it; so that because both are thus clearly instanced in, we will speak of both more largely.

Now, sins directly against knowledge itself are many. I will reduce the chief heads of them into two branches:

First, In regard of ourselves.

Secondly, In regard of others.

(1.) First, In regard of ourselves, five ways we may thus sin against knowledge itself.

[1.] First, When we abuse knowledge to help us to sin: as, first, to plot and contrive a sin, as Judas plotted to betray his Master, if he could 'conveniently;' so the text says, Mark 14:11, he would do it wisely; and thus those that came to entrap Christ with most cunning questions did sin, and those who plot against the just, Ps. 37:12.

[2.] So, secondly, when men use their wisdoms to tell a cunning lie to cover a sin; as Plato says, men of knowledge sunt ad mendacia potentiores et sapientiores, whereas fools, though they would lie, yet often tell truth ere they are aware.

[3.] But also, thirdly, when they abuse moral knowledge, which yet, as Aristotle says, is least apt to be (I am sure should least be) abused, so as to make a show of good pretences to cover their sins and dissemble them, not only by finding out some cunning artificial colour, as David did in the matter of Uriah, 'Chance of war (says he) falls to all alike;' but when men are so impudently hypocritical as to make use of religious pretexts, as the devil sometimes doth, as Saul, who pretends to Samuel 'I have done the will of the Lord;' and when Samuel told him of the cattle, Oh, says he, 'they are for a sacrifice,' when God had expressly commanded to kill them all. But this shift shifted him out of his kingdom, Samuel pronounced him a rebel in it, rebellion is sin against knowledge, there he knew it. Thus also Jezebel coloured over the stoning of Naboth with a solemn fast. So Judas fisheth for money with a charitable pretence, 'This might have been sold, and given to the poor.' In sins against knowledge, usually the mind endeavours to find out a colour, and that provokes God more than the sin, because we go about to mock him. We see men cannot endure a shift, much less the all-knowing God not to be mocked; and we see it hard to convince such an one. David was fain to be brought to the rack ere he would confess, when he had a shift; and men do seek such shifts only in case of sinning against conscience, for else there were no need, they would be sure to plead ignorance, as Abimelech did.*

Secondly, When men neglect the getting and obtaining of knowledge, which knowledge might keep and hinder them from sinning, and might make them expert in duties. This is as much as to sin against knowledge, although the sins be committed out of ignorance; yet that ignorance being through their own default, it comes all to one, when it may be said of men, as the apostle doth of the Hebrews, chap. 5:12, 'that for the time they have had to learn, they might have been

teachers, they had yet need be taught again the first principles.' If a man had an apprentice, who through negligence and want of heeding and observing what he daily sees and hears about his trade, might have got for his time much knowledge in his trade, whereby he might have saved his master much, which he now hath lost him, and rid and perfected much work he daily spoils him; such careless, blockish ignorance it is just for his master to correct him for, and to charge on him all that waste and loss, because he might have known how to have done better. And therefore even they who thought ignorance in itself no sin (wherein they erred), yet the neglect of knowledge upon this very ground they thought a great sin, and that it would be so far from excusing sins, as that it would aggravate them. So here we see these Gentiles shall not only be reckoned with for the actual knowledge they had attained to, and sinned against; but also for what they might have had and have picked out of the creatures. For so the apostle brings in this here in the 20th verse, that the power of God being clearly seen in the creatures, they neglecting to spell and read it, so much knowledge as they might have got God will reckon to them, and aggravate their sins by.

Thirdly, Which is yet much worse, when men refuse knowledge that they may sin the more freely, and so stop the ear, lest they should be charmed. As when men are loath, and afraid, and dare not read such a book as discovers or might discover that truth to them, the submission to which would prejudice them, and this to the end that they may plead ignorance of their sin. Thus also those that assent not to truth when it comes strongly upon them, but seek to evade it. But, 1 Cor. 14:37, when the apostle had clearly discovered the truth in those things controverted, so as whoever was spiritual, or not fully blind, might see, and would acknowledge the truth, then he shuts up his discourse about them, ver. 38, 'If any be ignorant, let him be ignorant;' for it is wilful, it is affected; he speaks it as elsewhere, Rev. 22:11, it is said, He that is unjust, let him be unjust still;' that is, he that will be unjust, and refuseth to turn, let him go on. This is a great sin, for God, you see, gives such a man over. One that is but neglectful, or dull of capacity, God will take pains with him, to teach

him, and bear with him, as Christ did with his disciples; but if he be wilfully ignorant, he lets him die in his ignorance, and yet will reckon with him, as if all his sins had been committed against knowledge, because he refused to know.

[4.] The fourth is to hate the light, and to endeavour to extinguish it. This is yet much worse, when men hate the word, and the ministers of it, the examples of God's people, and the light they carry with them, they 'shining as lights in a crooked generation,' Phil. 2:15, and yet they hate these, as thieves do a torch in the night, and fly against the light as bats do, and as the Jews did, John 3:20. This Christ says is the great condemning sin of all others. So these Gentiles put Socrates to death for reproving them. And thus men sin also, when they labour to extinguish the light in their own consciences, and 'like not to retain God in their knowledge,' ver. 28, but would study the art of forgetfulness, when men have put the candle out, and drawn the curtains, that they may sin, and sleep in sin more freely and securely. Thus those also sin in a higher measure, who have had a clear conviction that they ought to be thus strict, and ought to sanctify the Lord's day, and pray privately, but now have lost this light, and think they need not be so strict; when men continue not in what they were once assured of, as the apostle speaks, 2 Tim. 3:14, these sin against their knowledge, and are the worst of such sinners. And this estate Aristotle himself makes *statum maligni*, the state of a wicked one, namely, when the sparks of light are extinguished or hated. For when any man's light is lost and turned into darkness by sinning, then, as Christ says, how great is that darkness! When good laws are not only not enacted and embraced, but repealed also (it is Aristotle's similitude, to distinguish an incontinent person and a wicked man), this is an high kind of sinning. So of these Gentiles it is said, 'their foolish heart was darkened,' they had extinguished some of that light God gave them. As some drink away their wits, so some sin away their consciences, and thus by degrees they first sin away the light of the word they had, as they in Jude who were religious once, and then they quench even that little spark of nature that is

left. Also ver. 10, 'corrupting themselves in what they know naturally.'

[5.] Fifthly, Men sin against knowledge yet worse, when they hold opinion against their knowledge. So many are said to do. In 1 Tim. 4:2, he foretells they should 'speak lies in hypocrisy,' and invent lies that should have a pretence of holiness, which they know to be a lie, or else they should not be said to 'speak lies in hypocrisy;' but they do it to maintain their honour and greatness, which must down if their doctrine prove false; and though many are given up to believe their lies, 2 Thes. 2:11, as a punishment of their not loving the truth, yet others of them shall know they are lies, and yet vent them for truths. Thus when men fashion their opinion to the times and ways of preferment, and their dependencies on great ones, or to maintain and uphold a fashion, or out of pride having broached an error maintain it, though the pulling out that one tile doth untile all the house. These are the two causes given of perverting the truth, 1 Tim. 6:4, 5, namely, pride and covetousness, and supposing gain godliness, and so fashioning their religion accordingly; when men are 'knights of the post,' that will write or speak anything, whereby they may get gain and preferment.

(2.) Secondly, Men sin against knowledge in regard of others.

[1.] First, By concealing it. The apostle indeed says in a certain case, 'Hast thou knowledge? keep it to thyself.' He speaks it of opinions or practices about things indifferent, which might scandalize the weak; but if thou hast knowledge which may edify thy brother, thou oughtest to communicate it. Socrates, knowing there was but one God, said, in his apology for his life, that if they would give him life upon condition to keep that truth to himself, and not to teach it to others, he would not accept life upon such a condition; and I remember he expresseth his resolution in words very nigh the same words the apostles used, Acts 4:20, 'Whether it be better to obey God than men, judge you;' and 'We cannot but teach the things we have heard and seen,' says Christ; for knowledge is a thing will boil within

a man for vent, and cannot be imprisoned. It is light, and the end why light was made was to be set up to give light. And Christ argues from an apparent absurdity to put a light under a bushel, which may give light to all the house. Hast thou knowledge of God and of his ways? thou canst not but speak (if withal thou hast but a good heart) to all in the family, to thy wife in thy bosom, &c. God took it for granted that Abraham would teach his children what he should know from him: the same disposition is in all the children of Abraham.

[2.] Secondly, When men endeavour to suppress knowledge. As the Pharisees, they kept the keys of it in their hands, and would not open the treasures of it themselves, nor let others do it neither. So they (Acts 4:16) 'could not deny but a great miracle was done' by the apostles (say themselves), 'but that it spread no further, let us threaten them, and charge them, that they speak no more in his name.' And this they did against their consciences, by their own profession, 'we cannot deny it;' as if they had said, if we could we would, but it was too manifest it was the truth. So when masters keep their servants from the means of knowledge, they are thus guilty.

[3.] Thirdly, When we would make others sin against their consciences. The Pharisees, when the blind man would not say as they said, they cast him out; they would have had him say that Christ was a sinner, when through the small light he had he judged it evident enough that a sinner should not do such a miracle as was never done since the world began. And so Jezebel made the judges and witnesses sin against conscience in accusing Naboth; and so some of the Gentiles, that would hold correspondency with the Jews, would have constrained the Galatians to be circumcised, Gal. 6:12. Those that knew that circumcision was to be abolished, yet they would persuade them to it by club-argument, drawn from avoiding persecution, not from evidence of the truth, or by reasons that might convince them and their consciences; therefore, he says, they 'constrained them.' The persuaders might indeed glory, as having their cause and side strengthened, but they won little credit to their cause by it; for as the persuaders' arguments were suited to flesh, so

the others' yielding was out of flesh, and so 'they glory in your flesh' and weakness, says he; as the papists urged Cranmer, not by arguments, but threats and promises, to recant; this is the greatest cruelty in the world, to have a man murder himself, stab his conscience. To offend a weak conscience is a sin, if but passively, when thou dost something before his face, which his conscience is against; but if thou makest him wound his own conscience, and to do an act himself which his own conscience is against, it is much worse; as if thou beest a master, and hast a servant who pleadeth conscience that he cannot lie for thy advantage in thy shop, or who will not do unlawful business on the Sabbath day, and pleads conscience, wilt thou smite him and whip him? 'God will smite thee, thou whited wall.' How darest thou smite him and so cause him to do that for which God will whip him worse? Shew mercy to those under you, inform their consciences, wring them not, you may hap to break the wards if you do.

2. Now for sins committed collaterally, or per modum circumstantiæ (that I may so express it), against knowledge, they are done either when particular acts of sin are committed, and duties omitted, against light and knowledge; and so the saints may and do often sin against knowledge. Or,

Secondly, in regard of a known estate of sin and impenitency persisted in, when men continue and go on in such a state against conviction of conscience, that such is their estates.

(1.) For the first, because particular acts of sin committed against knowledge are infinite, and there will be no end of instancing in particulars, therefore I will not insist. Only in brief this distinction concerning such acts may be observed, and the observation of it may be useful, that some acts of sins against knowledge are merely transient, that is, are done and ended at once. And though the guilt of them is eternal, yet the extent of the act is finished with the committing it, and reaches no further: as a vain oath, breach of the Sabbath, &c., which acts cannot be repealed, though they may be

repented of. But others there are, which though the act may be but once outwardly and professedly done, yet have an habitual and continued permanency, life, and subsistence given it, such as that until a man doth recall them, he may be said continually to renew those acts, and every day to be guilty of them, and to maintain it, and so habitually to commit them. As it is with laws, which, though made but once, are yet continued acts of the state whilst they stand in force unrepealed, so is it in some sins. For instance, when a man doth take goods from his neighbour unjustly, the act indeed is done but once; but till he restores them, he may be said to steal them; every day, every hour, he continues to do it habitually. So a man having subscribed to falsehood, or recanted the truth publicly, the act, though done but once, yet until a retraction be someways made, he continues that act, and so is daily anew guilty of it. So if a man should marry one whom it is unlawful for him to marry, as Herod did, though that sinful act of espousals whereby they entered into it was soon despatched, yet, till a divorce, he lives in a continual sin. And such acts (of this latter sort I mean) against knowledge, are most dangerous to commit; because, to continue thus in them, though but once committed, hazards a man's estate; and therefore men find, when they come to repent, the greatest snare, and trouble, and difficulty in such kind of sins, to extricate themselves out of them by a meet and true repentance.

But as concerning the first branch of this distinction, namely, of particular acts committed against knowledge, besides this last distinction briefly touched, I will anon give you several aggravations and rules, whereby to measure the sinfulness that is in such acts so committed; but, in the mean time, the second branch of this former distinction must be insisted upon, and therefore I will bring in these aggravations and rules which concern particular acts, as distinct heads, after I have briefly spoken to this other, which is, that,

(2.) Secondly, Those sin against knowledge who go on in an estate of sin and impenitency which they know to be damnable; as Pharaoh, Exod. 9:27, who confessed that he and his people were wicked, and

yet hardened himself in sin most dangerously; and yet three sorts of men may apparently be convinced thus to sin.

First, Those that keep out, and withdraw themselves from professing Christ and his ways, and the fear of his name, out of shame or fear of man, or loss of preferment, or the like worldly ends, when yet they are convinced that they are God's ways, and ought to be professed by them. I do not say that all who do not come in to profess Christ, and that do not join themselves with his people, that they go on against knowledge, for many are ignorant and mistaken about them; but when men are convinced of the truth, and necessity of professing and confessing of it even 'unto salvation' (as the apostle speaks, Rom. 10), and yet out of fear or shame keep still on the other side, drawing in their horns altogether, these go on in an estate of impenitency against knowledge; for put all these together, and it must needs appear to be so. As, first, when they are convinced that this is the truth, and that salvation and the power of religion is only to be found in such ways and men; and secondly, that these are to be practised and professed; and yet, thirdly, out of shame, &c., keep still aloof of, and go on a contrary way; these must needs know that they go on in an estate of impenitency against knowledge. This was the case of many of the Pharisees, who therefore sinned highly; they believed, and were convinced that Christ was the Messiah; and so then to be confessed, and followed, and to be cleaved unto, and then also they must needs know that his followers only were the children of God. Yet, John 12:42, it is said, 'Though they thus believed on him, yet they durst not confess him for fear of the Jews,' and of the Pharisees, and of being 'put out of the synagogues.' At the latter day Christ shall not need to sever such from the rest as he will do the sheep from the goats, for they willingly remain all their days amongst them whom they know to be goats, and refuse the company, and fold, and food, and marks of the sheep which they know to be such; they may apologise, and make fair with the saints, that their hearts are with them, but they will be ranked at the day of judgment as here they ranked themselves, with the 'workers of iniquity.' Of these doth the

psalmist speak, Ps. 125:5, 'Those that turn aside by their crooked ways, them shall the Lord leave with the workers of iniquity.'

Those also thus sin, and are to be joined with these, who know the terms and condition of salvation, and how they must part with all for Christ, and yet will not come to the price; such do go desperately on against knowledge in a bad estate, and do judge themselves unworthy of eternal life. Thus the young man in the gospel he was told that he was to sell all, and that was the condition, and he knew heaven was worth it, and was convinced of the truth herein, that thus he ought to do, for 'he went away sorrowful;' now if he had not known that he went away without happiness, he needed not have been sorrowful at all, but he knew the bargain of salvation was not struck up, and likewise what it struck at, and yet still rested in his former condition, and chose rather to enjoy his many possessions. This man now went on in his state against knowledge.

Secondly, As also those who upon the same or like ground defer their repentance; these go on in a bad estate, and must needs know they do so; for in that they promise to repent hereafter, and take up purposes to do it, when they have gone on a little while longer, to add drunkenness to thirst, they do thereby profess that there is a work of grace which they must attain to ere they can be in the state of grace; for they would not promise so much hereafter, but that they know not how, without such a work, they should be saved. Whilst therefore such shall rest without present endeavouring after it, so long they are judged in themselves to be in a bad estate at present. When men know the curses due to their present estate, and yet say as he, Deut. 29:19, 'I will go on in the way of my heart, and shall have peace' afterward; this man sins most highly, and therefore God's wrath 'smokes against that man,' and he says of him that he 'will not be merciful to him' in that place.

Thirdly, Sunk and broken professors, such cannot but go on in a bad estate against knowledge, when either men are fallen from the practice and profession of what is good, which once they thought

necessary to salvation, or when they continue to hold forth their profession in hypocrisy. Those that have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of Jesus Christ, but are returned to their vomit again, some of these are ingenious,* and acknowledge themselves fallen, and their present estate most miserable, and yet go on in it; and such are to be pitied, but yet are in a most dangerous condition. Saul when he was fallen away, yet had this ingenuity* a while left, he desired Samuel to pray to his God for him, and told David that he was more righteous than he; yet still went on in his courses, and in the end, as some have thought, sinned against the Holy Ghost.

But others there are, who, though they be fallen from all the inward, powerful, and secret performance of duties they once did practise, and from all conscience of sinning, yet retain their profession, which they know to be but an outside. These of all others go on against knowledge; and, Rev. 22:15, they are said to 'make a lie,' not only to tell a lie in words, but to make a lie in deeds. Now a lie is a sin of all others most against knowledge, and indeed against a double knowledge, both facti and juris; and so is this. [1.] That they profess themselves to be that they know they are not. [2.] That they will not endeavour after that state they know they ought to get into if ever saved. This is the condition of many, who, being convinced of the power of religion, have launched forth into a profession, and hoist up sail, but now the tide is fallen, the Spirit withdrawn, the conscience of sin extinguished in them; yet for their credit's sake still bear their sails up as high as ever, even as many merchants do, who are sunk in their estates, still bear a fair show, yea, will seem richer than ordinary, by purchasing lands, &c. Such a professor was Judas, he began seriously, and thought to have gone to heaven, and was earnest in good duties at first, as they also, 2 Pet. 2:18, they really, or ὄντως, escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of Christ; but in the end Judas became a gross hypocrite, one that pretended the poor when he loved the bag, and on the sudden betrayed his master, when yet the disciples knew it not, suspected Judas as little as themselves; and the end of those also, in that fore-

named place, it is said to be 'worse than their beginning.' Now because such sin so highly against knowledge, therefore their punishment is made the regula of all other wicked men's; as when it is said that other sinners 'shall have their portion with hypocrites,' as the wicked angels' punishment is made the measure of men's. 'Go, ye cursed, into the fire prepared for the devil and his angels.' So among men, such gross hypocrites, their punishment is made the rule, and so the chief of all kind of torments which sinners of the sons of men shall undergo.

Application. Now let me speak a word to all such as thus go on in a state of impenitency against knowledge. This is a high kind of sinning, and of all the most desperate, and doth argue more hardness of heart, and 'despising the riches of God's goodness.' For if, as in the Romans, 2:4, to go on in sin when a man knows not, that is, considers not that 'God's mercy leads him to repentance,' is made the sign and effect of a very hard heart, treasuring up wrath, then much more, when thou knowest and considerest thou art in an impenitent condition, and hast many motions leading thee to repentance, is thy heart then to be accounted hard. When a man commits a particular act against knowledge, he haply and usually still thinks his estate may be good, and that he shall not lose God utterly, or hazard the loss of him, only his spirit being at present empty of communion with him, he steals out to some stolen pleasure; but when a man knows his estate bad, and that he is 'without God in the world,' and yet goes on, he doth hereby cast away the Lord, and professeth he cares not for him, or that communion which is to be had by him, as Esau did his birthright.

David, though he despised the Lord, yet he did not cast away the Lord, as Saul did; for Saul ventured utterly to lose him, knowing his estate naught.

David, when he sinned, thought God's eternal favour would still continue, though for the present he might lose the sense of it.

But when a man goes on in a state of sinning, he ventures the loss of God's eternal love, and slights it, and knows he doth so. When a man knows that he is condemned already as being impenitent, and that all his eternal estate lies upon the non-payment of such duties of repentance, &c., and that the guilt of all his sins will come in upon him, and that an execution is out, and yet goes on, this is more than to commit one act against knowledge, whereby he thinks he brings upon himself but the guilt of that one sin; and upon the committing of which, he thinks not the mortgage of all lies, though it deserves it; herein men shew themselves more desperate.

2. In the next place, I come to those rules whereby you may measure and estimate sinning against knowledge in any particular act of sinning; and they are either before the sin, or in sinning; three of either, which I make a second head, to explain this doctrine by.

(1.) First, Before.

[1.] The first rule is, the more thou knewest and didst consider the issues and consequents of that sin thou didst commit, the more thou sinnest against conscience in it: whenas, in Rom. 1:32, 'Thou knowing' (says the apostle) 'that those that commit such things are worthy of death;' that is, thou considerest that hell and damnation is the issue and desert of it, and yet committest it, yea, and this when haply hell fire at present flasheth in thy face, and yet thou goest on to do it: in this case men are said to choose death, and to love it, Prov. 8:36. When a man considers that the way to the whore-house are 'the ways to death,' as Solomon speaks; so when thou, a professor, considerest with thyself before, This sin will prove scandalous, and undo me, disable me for service, cast me out of the hearts of good men, and yet dost it. Thus that foolish king was told again and again, Jer. 38:17–19, that if he would yield to the king of Babel he should save his life, and city, and kingdom, and live there still, but if he would not, he should not escape; but as Jeremiah told him, verse 23, 'Thou shalt cause this city to be burned with fire,' yet he would not hearken. 'This is the word of the Lord,' says Jeremiah, and he knew it

to be so; and yet being a weak prince, led by his nobles, he would not follow his counsel. And thus Judas fully knew the issue; Christ had said again and again, 'Woe be to him by whom the Son of man is betrayed;' and yet went on to do it.

[2.] The second rule is, the more consultations, debates, and motives against it did run through thee before thou didst it, so much the greater and more heinous. How often did mercy come in and tell thee, that if thou lookest for any hope or part in it, thou shouldest not do such an evil! How often came that in, 'Shall I do this, and sin against God?' Did any scripture come in to testify against thee in the nick? Did God send in the remembrance of such a mercy past to persuade thee, or some mercies to come, which thou dependest upon him for? That which made Spira's sin so great was such debates as these before; and this made Darius's sin in casting Daniel into the lion's den so great, he debated it with himself, Dan. 6:14, he was sore displeased with himself, and laboured to the going down of the sun to deliver him. He considered that he was at his right hand in all the affairs of his kingdom, and a man entrapped merely for his conscience, and that to put him to death was to sacrifice him to their malice. He knew him to be holy, and wise, worth all the men that sought after his life had yet yielded; these considerations troubled him afore, and also after, insomuch as he could not sleep for them, verse 18. Now, because that every such consultation should set an impression upon the heart, and countermand the motions of sin, when therefore thou dost it, maugre all such debates and motives to the contrary, this is much against knowledge, and very heinous. Therefore the Pharisees, Luke 7:30, are said to have rejected the counsel of God, εἰς ἑαυτοὺς, in or against themselves, the words will bear either. 'In themselves,' because they knew it, and took it into consideration, and yet rejected it; and 'against themselves,' because it was their destruction.

[3.] The third rule is, that the more confirmations any man hath had of the knowledge of that which he sinneth in, and testimonies against it, the greater sin against knowledge it is: when a man hath had a

cloud of witnesses in his observation against a particular sin, and yet doth it, and goes on in it, it is the more fearful. To go on against that one witness, the bare light and grudging of natural conscience only, is not so much; but when it is further confirmed and backed by the word written, which a man hath read, and with testimonies, out of which a man meets with such places, wherein again and again in reading of it such a practice is condemned, and observes it, and then also hears it reproved in sermons, and of all sins else hears in private conference that sin spoken against also, yea, hath in his eye many examples of others sinning in the like kind, which have been punished, yea, haply himself also; yet to sin against all these is exceeding heinous. Sometimes God orders things so, as a sin is made a great sin by such forewarnings. So he contrived circumstances that Judas sinned a great sin; for Judas knew before that Christ was the Saviour of the world, he knew it by all the miracles he had seen, as also by his gracious words and converse, and he professed as much in following of him; and he had the written word against it, 'Thou shalt not murder the innocent.' But yet further, God, to aggravate his sin to the highest, orders it so, that Christ should tell him of it when he was to go about it, pronounceth a woe to him, Luke 22:22, that 'it had been good for that man that he had never been born,' Mark 14:21. And the disciples they were sorrowful at Christ's speech when he suspected one of them, and shewed an abomination and detestation of such a fact; there was a jury of eleven men, yea, witnesses against it; yea, and Judas against himself, he asked if it were he, yea, and Christ gave him a sop, and told him, 'Thou hast said it, and do what thou dost quickly:' which even then might argue to his conscience that he was God, and searched and knew his heart; and yet he went out and did it immediately. How did he sin against the hair, as we speak, and how did all these circumstances aggravate his sin!

But yet a more clear evidence of this is that instance of Pilate, whom God many ways would have stopped in his sin of condemning Christ, who examining him before the Pharisees, he could find no fault with him as concerning those things whereof they accused him, Luke

23:14, and yet to allay their malice unjustly scourged him, ver. 16. And further, when he sent him to Herod, as being willing to rid his hands of him, Herod also found nothing worthy of death in him, ver. 15, which was another witness might have confirmed him concerning Christ's innocency. Yea, yet further, that the fact might be more aggravated, a most notorious murderer's life must be put into the scale with Christ's, and either the one or the other condemned; and when the people yet chose Barabbas, why, says Pilate, what evil hath he done? ver. 22. Then he distinctly knew and considered that he was delivered up through envy. Yea, and when he was upon the bench, and ready to pronounce sentence as it were, God admonished him by his own wife, Matt. 27:19, whom God himself had admonished in a dream, she sending him word she had 'suffered many things by reason of him that night, and therefore have nothing (says she) to do with that just man;' yea, he himself, when he condemns him, washeth his hands. And thus it falls out in many sinful businesses which men are about, that God often and many several ways would knock them off, and stops them in their way, as he did Balaam, reproves them, as he did him by a dumb ass, 2 Pet. 2:16; so these by some silent passage of providence, and not only so, but by his Spirit also standing in their way, with the threatenings ready drawn and brandished against them, as the angel did with a drawn sword against Balaam; and yet they go on; this is fearful.

(2.) There are three rules also, whereby the sinfulness of sin, as it is against knowledge, may be measured, from what may be observed in the act, as,

[1.] First, The less passion, or inward violence or temptation to a sin committed against knowledge, the greater sin against knowledge it is argued to be. For then the knowledge is the clearer, passion or temptation being as a mist. But then to sin when a man is not in passion, is to stumble at noon-day. For as drunkenness takes away reason, so doth passion, which is a short drunkenness, cloud and mist a man's knowledge. And so Aristotle compares the knowledge of an incontinent person to the knowledge of one that is drunk. When

Peter denied his Master, though he had warning of it before, and so it was against knowledge, and it was by lying, and swearing, and forswearing, which are sins of all others most directly against knowledge, yet he was taken unexpectedly, and when that which might stir up fear to the utmost in him was in his view; for he was then in the judgment-hall, where his Master, just before his face, was arraigned for his life, and he thought he might also have presently been brought to the bar with him, if he had been discovered to have been his disciple; so as his passion being up, his soul was distempered, reason had little time to recover itself, and therefore, though it was against knowledge, yet the less against knowledge, because knowledge had læsam operationem, it had not its perfect work upon his heart; but now Judas, in betraying his Master, had not only warning before, but was not tempted to it, but went of himself, and made the offer to the Pharisees, sought how 'conveniently' to do it, plotted to do it, had his wits about him, had time to think of it, and therefore it was, besides the heinousness of the act, more also against knowledge, and so the greater. So David, when he went to slay Nabal, was in hot blood, in a passion; but when he plotted to kill Uriah, he was in cold blood; he was drunk when he lay with Bathsheba, but sober when he made Uriah drunk: he went quietly and sedately on in it. And there we find David blamed only in the matter of Uriah, not so much for that of Bathsheba.

[2.] Secondly, The more sorrow, renisus, or reluctancy, and regretting of mind there is against a sin, it is a sign that the knowledge of it is the stronger and quicker against it, and so the sin the more against knowledge; for that gainsaying and displeasure of the mind against it ariseth from the strength and violent beating of the pulse of conscience, and opposition of it against the sin; it springs from the greater and deeper apprehension of the evil of the sin in the action which is then in doing. And though that reluctancy be a better sign of the estate of a person than if there were none at all, as there is not in those who are 'past feeling,' and 'commit sin with greediness,' whose estate is therefore worse, and more incapable of repentance, yet the foot itself is argued to be the more

heinous, for it argues it to be against strong, active, stirring knowledge. This argued Herod's sin to be much against knowledge, as indeed it was, Mark 6:26; the text says 'he was exceeding sorrowful:' now that he could not have been, unless he had exceedingly apprehended what a great sin it was to behead John, who he knew was 'a just and holy man,' ver. 20, and who was one that had a great place in his estimation, for 'he observed him,' and was wrought much upon by his ministry; and he knew that he did but sacrifice him to the malice of a wicked woman. And in this case the sin is also hereby made so much the greater, in that conscience doth stir up a contrary violent passion in the heart against the temptation, and therefore yet to do it, when there is such a bank cast up that might resist it, yet then to break all down, such a sin wastes the conscience much.

[3.] Thirdly, On the contrary, the more hardness of heart there is, and want of tenderness, in committing that sin which a man knows to be a sin, it is argued thereby to be the greater sin against knowledge; not only the greater sin, but the greater sin against knowledge. For hardness of heart in sinning is an effect of having formerly sinned much against knowledge before. For as the light of the sun hardeneth clay, so the beams of knowledge and conscience, lighting upon men's hearts, use to harden them, and do make them in the end past feeling. And therefore, in 1 Tim. 4:2, sinning against knowledge is made the cause of a seared conscience, 'they speak lies in hypocrisy;' and therefore knowingly that they are lies, and such lies as damn others as well as themselves, which who believe are damned, 2 Thess. 2:11, 12; and if so, no wonder if it follows, 'having their consciences seared with a hot iron.' It is not a cold iron will sear their consciences, and make them insensible, but a hot iron, a burning and a shining light, which once having had place in their consciences, and being rejected, they begin to be hardened and seared; for knowledge makes sins and the apprehension of them familiar to a man, and so less terrible and frightful in the end, as bears and lions do become to their keepers through custom. Judas had a hard heart when he came to betray his Master; surely his

conscience had smitten him at first more for nimming out of the bag than it did now for this of murder. He could never have had such a hard heart, had he not had much knowledge. Was it not a heart, that when he was challenged to his face, he could set a brazen face on it, and did ask as well as the rest, Is it I? When also Christ cursed him to his face who should do it, and the disciples all abhorred it, had not Judas lived under such blessed and glorious means, and sinned long against knowledge, all this would have startled him and have staggered him in his purpose; but he goes on as if it were nothing, though when he had done it his conscience was then opened too late. When a man formerly hath been troubled with a small sin, more than now with a gross lie, which he can digest better than once the other, or when before, if he omitted praying, it troubled him, now he can go a week without, and is not sensible of it, it is a sign that his knowledge hath hardened him.

III. Thus having given such rules whereby you may estimate the sinfulness of particular acts, I will now proceed to other ways, aggravations taken from the kind of knowledge a man sins against, to sin against what kind of knowledge is most heinous and dangerous. And these are five, drawn from the several qualifications of that knowledge, and the light which men sin against; for the greater, or the more strong and efficacious the light and knowledge is, the greater is the sin of knowledge thou committest. And this I make a third general head to explain this doctrine by, all these five rules being applicable and common both to particular acts against knowledge, and also lying in an estate of impenitency against knowledge, and all other particulars which have been mentioned.

1. First, then, to sin against the inbred light of nature, that is, in such sins, as though thou hadst wanted the light of the word in, thou wouldst have known to be such; this is a high kind of sinning. Such the apostle speaks of, Jude 10, 'What things they know naturally, in these they corrupt themselves, as brute beasts;' putting as it were no difference of actions no more than beasts, no, not in what nature teacheth them; and therefore therein are as beasts, for it is the light

of nature puts the first difference between men and beasts; and in such kind of sins the apostle instanceth in this first chapter, as namely, that of unnatural uncleanness, in three particulars; as, 1. self-uncleanness, ver. 24, ἐν ἑαυτοῖς, that is, alone by themselves; so Beza and Theophilact understand it, which he makes there the first degree of unnatural uncleanness, which is therefore unnatural, because thou destroyest that which nature gave thee for propagation, quod perdis homo est. Then, 2. the unclean love of boys, 'men burning in lust with men,' ver. 27, be it discovered in what dalliance it will, though not arising to an act of sodomy, doing that which is unseemly, ver. 27, which he therefore says, is the perverting the use and intent of nature, and so is a sin against nature, leaving the natural use of women. My brethren, I am ashamed to speak of such things as are done in secret. These kind of sins, by the apostles ranking them, are in a further degree of unnaturalness than any other, because they are made the punishments of other sins, which yet were against the light of nature also, namely, not glorifying God when they knew him; yet that being a sin, the light of nature was not so clear in comparison of these, therefore these are made the punishments of the other, as being more against nature. So for men to be disobedient to parents, stubborn to them, and without natural affection, as the apostle says, ver. 30, 31, this is against nature, even the instinct of it. So unthankfulness, and requiting evil for good, is against a common principle in men's minds. 'Do not the Gentiles do good to those that do good to them?' Your hearts use to rise against such an one out of common humanity; or if you see one cruel and unmerciful, which is another reckoned up, ver. 31, there being usually principles of pity in all men's natures by nature, therefore for one man to prey upon and tyrannize over another, as fishes do over the small ones, as Habakkuk complaineth, chap. 1:14, this is against nature, which teacheth you to do as you would be done to. So covenant-breakers, and lying, and forswearing, mentioned ver. 30, inventors of evil, and truce-breakers, are sins against nature, and natural light. Lying is against a double light, both moral; both juris, which tells us such a thing ought not to be done; and facti, whilst we affirm a thing that is not, the knowledge of the contrary ariseth up in

us against it, though there were no law forbade it; therefore of all sins else, the devil's lusts are expressed by two: lying, which is a sin in the understanding, and malice in the will, John 8:44.

[2.] Secondly, To sin against that light which thou didst suck in when thou wert young, to sin against the light of thy education, this is an aggravation, and a great one. There is a catechism of a blessed mother, Bathsheba, which she taught Solomon when a child, put in among the records of sacred writ, Prov. 31, wherein she counsels him betimes, 'not to give his strength to women;' she foretold him of that sin; and because it is incident to kings most, they having all pleasures at command, she tells him particularly, 'it destroys kings;' and so also 'not to drink wine' was another instruction there he was forewarned of. This aggravated Solomon's fault the more; for, read the second chapter of Ecclesiastes, and we shall find there that he was most guilty in the inordinate love of these two; but he had not been brought up so, his good mother had not thus instructed him. And thus also when God would aggravate his own people's sin unto them, he recalls them to their education in their youth in the wilderness. So Jer. 2:2, 'Go and cry to them, I remember the kindness and towardliness of thy youth;' he puts them in mind of their education by Moses their tutor, and their forwardness then. And so Hos. 12, 'when he was a child I loved him;' and then God had their first-fruits, ver. 3, this he brings to aggravate their backsliding, ver. 5. Therefore the apostle urgeth it as a strong argument to Timothy, to go on to persevere in grace and goodness, that he 'had known the Scriptures from a child,' and therefore for him to fall would be more heinous. The reason is, because the light then infused, it is the first, a virgin light, as I may call it, which God in much mercy vouchsafed to prepossess the mind with, before it should be deflowered and defiled with corrupt principles from the world; and did put it there to keep the mind chaste and pure; and this also then, when the mind was most soft and tender, and so fitter to receive the deeper impression from it. And hence ordinarily the light sucked in then seasons men ever after, whether it be for good or for evil; it forestalls and prejudgeth a man against other principles. And though a man comes

to have more acquired knowledge and reasons after put into him when he is come to perfect age, yet the small light of his education, if it were to the contrary, doth bias him, and keep him fixed and bent that way. So we see it is in opinions about religion, the light then entertained can never be disputed out; so in men's ways and actions, 'Train up a child in his way, and he will not depart from it,' Prov. 22:6. To sin therefore against it, and to put out the beams of it, or defile it, and to wear out the impressions of it, how wicked is it, and what a wretch art thou to do so!

Many of you young scholars* have had a good Bathsheba that instructed you, not to pour out your strength to drink or women, but to pray privately, and to fear God, and love him; and when you come hither, you have good tutors also, who teach you to pray; ministers who instil blessed truths into you, from which one would think you should never depart; yet you do.

Think how grievous this is; for if it is made an excuse for many a man in sinning, that it answers his education, that he never knew or saw better, as you say of many papists, then must it needs, on the contrary, be an aggravation of sinfulness. And as it was Timothy's commendation, that he 'knew the Scriptures from a child,' so it will be thy condemnation, that thou knewest better from a child, and yet rebellest against thy light.

[3.] Thirdly, The more real and experimental the light is men sin against, still the more sin; as when they have learnt it from examples of godly men whom they have lived amongst, or the observations of God's dealings with themselves or others, and not only from the word notionally. To sin against such light, this adds a further degree; not only to sin against the bare light of nature, but also further, when nature hath besides lighted her torch at the Scripture, and then when beyond all this the real examples and observations made of God's dealings with a man's self and others shall confirm all this, this makes a man's sinfulness much more grievous; for as *exempla efficacius docent quam præcepta*, so the knowledge got by

experiments of mercies or judgments is of more force and evidence. Knowledge learnt by experience is the most efficacious. Therefore Christ himself, who knew all things already, yet 'learnt,' in the school of experience, 'by what he suffered.' A little of some knowledge distilled out of a man's own observation is most precious, every drop of it; therefore the apostle urgeth it on Timothy, 'Continue in the things thou hast learned, and been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them,' 2 Tim. 3:14. There is a twofold motive, and both emphatical: first, he was assured in himself; and secondly, that which strengthened that assurance, and was a means to work it, was the example of the holy apostle, and of his own parents, 'knowing of whom thou hast learned it.' And so, verse 10, the apostle again urgeth his own example, 'Thou hast fully known my doctrine and manner of life;' and then also brings to his mind the education of those his godly parents who instructed him. Hence also, Isa. 26:10, it is made an aggravation, that 'in the land of uprightness men deal unjustly.' Thus light drawn from the observation of God's judgments upon others, it much aggravates; it is laid to Belshazzar's charge, 'Thou knewest all this, how God dealt with thy father Nebuchadnezzar,' Dan. 5:22. So some of you come here, and live in a religious society, and see sometimes one, sometimes another of thy colleagues turn to Christ, yea haply, chamber-fellow converted from his evil courses, and yet thou goest on; this is sinning against a great light.

[4.] Fourthly, The more vigorous, strong, powerful the light is that is in thee, and more stirring in thy heart, and joined with a taste, the greater the sins committed against it are to be accounted. The more thou hast tasted the bitterness of sin, and God's wrath, and hast been stung with it as with a cockatrice, the more thou hast tasted God's goodness in prayer, and in the ordinances,—the more of such a knowledge, and yet sinnest, the worse. In John 5:35, Christ aggravates the Jews' unbelief in himself, and their present hardness, that John was to them, not only a 'shining,' but also a 'burning light;' that is, they had such knowledge engendered by his ministry, as wrought joy and heat as well as light; therefore it is added, 'they

rejoiced therein for a season.' And thus their fall, Heb. 6, is aggravated that it was such a light as had tasting with it. For to explain this, you must know, that between ordinary natural light, or that assenting to spiritual truths which is common with men, from traditional knowledge living in the church, that between it and true saving light, or the light of life, there is a middle kind of light, which is more than the common conviction men have, and less than having* light. It is a light which leaves also some impression on the affections, makes them feel the powers of heaven and hell, and be affected with them. Now the more of such light against a sin, be it drunkenness, or uncleanness, or oppression, and yet fallest to it again, the worse. For this is a further degree added to knowledge, and not common to all wicked men. And therefore as those Jews who had not only common means of knowledge, but miracles also, and yet believed not, John 11:47, shall be more condemned; so those who have such tasting knowledge set on by the Holy Ghost, which is as much as if a miracle were wrought, for it is above nature, a supernatural work of the Spirit. And therefore to sin against such light, and such only, is that which makes a man in the next degree of fitness to sin against the Holy Ghost.

[5.] Fifthly, To sin against professed knowledge is an aggravation also, and an heavy one, to sin against a man's own principles which he teacheth others, or reproveth or censureth in others. Titus 1:16, those 'that profess they know God, and yet deny him,' these are most abominable of all others, for these are liars, and so sin against knowledge as liars do; in 1 John 2:4, such an one is called a liar in a double respect, both in that he says he hath that knowledge he hath not, it not being true, and because, also, he denies that in deed which he affirms in word. This is scandalous sinning. So, Rom. 2:24, the Jews, boasting of the law, and of having the form of knowledge in their brains, caused the Gentiles to blaspheme when they saw they lived clean contrary thereunto; and, therefore, a brother that walks inordinately was to be delivered to Satan, 'to learn what it was to blaspheme,' 1 Tim. 1:20, that is, to learn to know how evil and bitter a thing it is, by the torments of an evil conscience, to live in such a

course as made God and his ways evil spoken of, as it befell David when he thus sinned. Yea, 1 Cor. 5:10, 11, though they might keep company with a heathen, because he was ignorant and professed not the knowledge of God, yet if a brother, one that professed, and so was to walk by the same rules, did sin against those principles he professed, then keep him not company. Thus did Saul sin. All the religion he had and pretended to in his latter days was persecuting witches; yet in the end he went against this his principle, he went to a witch in his great extremity at last. And thus God will deal with all that are hollow, and sin secretly against knowledge, in the end. He suffers them to go on against their most professed principles.

These are aggravations in general, applicable both to any act of sinning, or going on in a known state of sinning.

Use. Now, the use of all that hath been spoken, what is it but to move all those that have knowledge to take more heed of sinning than other men, and those of them that remain in their natural estate to turn speedily and effectually unto God? For if sinning against knowledge be so great an aggravation of sinning, then of all engagements to repentance knowledge is the greatest.

First, Thou who hast knowledge canst not sin so cheap as another who is ignorant. Therefore, if thou wilt be wicked, thy wickedness will cost thee ten times more than it would another. Places of much knowledge, and plentiful in the means of grace, are dear places to live in sin in. To be drunk and unclean after enlightening, and the motions of the Spirit, and powerful sermons, is more than twenty times afore; thou mightest have committed ten to one, and been damned less. 'This is condemnation,' says Christ, 'that light came into the world.' Neither canst thou have so much pleasure in thy sins as an ignorant person, for the conscience puts forth a sting in the act when thou hast knowledge, and does subject thee to bondage and the fear of death. When a man knows how dearly he must pay for it, there is an expectation of judgment embittereth all. Therefore the Gentiles sinned with more pleasure than we. Therefore, Eph. 4:18,

19, the apostle, speaking of them, says that through their ignorance and darkness and want of feeling they committed sin with greediness, and so with more pleasure, they not having knowledge, or hearts sensible of the evils that attend upon their courses.

Secondly, Thou wilt, in sinning against knowledge, be given up to greater hardness. 'If the light that is in thee be darkness,' says Christ, 'how great is that darkness.' Therefore, the more light a man hath, and yet goes on in works of darkness, the more darkness will that man be left unto, even to a reprobate mind in the end.

Thirdly, It will procure thee to be given up to the worst of sins more than another man; for God, when he leaves men, makes one sin the punishment of another, and reserves the worst for sinners against knowledge. These Gentiles, when they knew God, they worshipped him not, God gave them up to the worst of sins whereof they were capable, as unnatural uncleanness, &c. But these are not sins great enough for thee, that art a sinner of the Christians, to be given up to drunkenness or adultery, &c.; otherwise than to discover thy rottenness, these are too small sins; but thou shalt be given up to inward profaneness of heart (as Esau was, having been brought up in a good family), so as not to neglect holy duties only, but to despise them, to despise the good word of God and his saints, and to hate godliness and the appearance of it; thou shalt be given up to contemn God and his judgments, to 'trample under foot the blood of the covenant,' or else unto devilish opinions. Those other are too small to be punishments of thy sin, for still the end of such an one must be seven times worse than the beginning, as Christ says it shall. If thou wert a drunkard, a swearer, or an unclean person before, and thy knowledge wrought some alteration in thee, thou shalt not haply be so now at thy fall, but seven times worse, profane, injurious to saints, a blasphemmer, or derider of God's ways and ordinances.

Fourthly, When thou comest to lay hold on mercy at death, thy knowledge will give thee up to more despair than another man. Knowledge, though when it is but newly revealed, it is an help; yet

not made use of, turns against the soul, to wound it, and to work despair; and this both because we have sinned against the means that should have saved us, as also because such as sin against knowledge, sin with more presumption; and the more presumption in thy life, the more despair thou art apt to fall into at death. Therefore, Isa. 59:11, 12, what brought such trouble and 'roarings like bears' upon these Jews? and that when salvation was looked for, that yet it was so far off from them, in their apprehensions? 'Our iniquities' (say they) 'testify to our face, and we know them.' Now, then, sins testify to our face when our conscience took notice of them, even to our faces when we were committing them; and then also the same sins themselves will again testify to our faces, when we have recourse for the pardon of them. Therefore thou wilt lie roaring on thy deathbed, and that thou knowest them will come as an argument that thou shalt not have mercy. As ignorance is a plea for mercy, 'I did it ignorantly, therefore I obtained mercy,' so I did it knowingly, will come in as a bar and a plea against thee, therefore I shall not have mercy.

Fifthly, Both here and in hell, it is the greatest executioner and tormentor. In this sense it may be said, *Qui auget scientiam, auget dolorem*, 'He that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow,' as Solomon speaks; for knowledge enlargeth our apprehension of our guilt, and that brings more fear and torment. 'Have they no knowledge who eat up my people? Yes, there is their fear,' says David. Therefore, Heb. 10:28, after sinning after knowledge, there remains not only a more fearful punishment, but a more 'fearful expectation' in the parties' consciences. And this is the worm in hell that gnaws for ever. Light breeds these worms.

But then you will say, It is best for us to be ignorant, and to keep ourselves so.

I answer, No. For to refuse knowledge will damn as much as abusing it. This you may see in Prov. 1:23, 'Ye fools' (says Wisdom), 'you that hate knowledge, turn, and I will pour my spirit upon you, and make

known my words to you.' Well, ver. 24, 'they refused,' and would none of his reproof; therefore, says God, 'I will laugh at your calamity,' that is, I will have no pity, but instead of pity, God will laugh at you; 'and when your fear comes, I will not answer, because ye hated knowledge,' ver. 29; so as this is as bad, there remains therefore no middle way of refuge to extricate thyself at, and avoid all this, no remedy but turning unto God; otherwise thou canst not but be more miserable than other men. Yea, and this must be done speedily also. For thou having knowledge, God is quicker in denying thee grace, and in giving thee up to a reprobate mind, than another man who is ignorant. He will wait upon another that knows not his will and ways, twenty, thirty, forty years, as he did upon the children of the Israelites that were born in the wilderness, and had not seen his wonders in Egypt, and at the Red Sea; but those that had, he soon swore against many of them, 'that they should never enter into his rest.' Christ comes as a 'swift witness' against those to whom the gospel is preached, Mal. 3:5; he makes quick despatch of the treaty of grace with them. Therefore few that have knowledge are converted when they are old, or that lived long under the means. And therefore you that have knowledge are engaged to repent and to turn to God, and to bring your hearts to your knowledge, and that speedily also, or else your damnation will not only be more intolerable than others, but the sentence of it pass out more quickly against you. Therefore as Christ says, John 12:36, 'Whilst you have the light, walk in it.' For that day of grace which is very clear and bright, is usually a short one. And though men may live many natural days after, and enjoy the common light of the sun, yet the day of grace and of gracious excitements to repent may be but a short one.

AGGRAVATIONS OF SINNING AGAINST MERCY

Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But, after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.—
ROM 2:4, 5.

THIS is the last and most weighty aggravation which the apostle puts into the measure of the Gentiles' sinfulness (which in the former chapter he had, verse 29, pronounced full before), to make it fuller yet. Their sinning against mercies, and despising the riches of God's goodness, patience, and forbearance, the hateful evil and iniquity whereof can be better no way set off and illustrated unto men's consciences, than by a display of the riches of that goodness which men sin against.

My purpose therefore is to unlock and carry you into that more common treasury of outward mercies, and lead you through the several rooms thereof, all which do continually lead you unto repentance; that then, reflecting upon our ungrateful waste and abuse of so many mercies in sinning, thereby our sins, every sin, the least, may yet appear more sinful unto us, 'who are less than the least of all mercies.' Know then, that besides that peculiar treasure of 'unsearchable riches of grace laid up in Christ,' Eph. 2:7, the offer of which neglected and despised adds yet to all that sinfulness, a guilt as far exceeding all that which shall be spoken of, as heaven exceeds the earth, there is another untold mine of riches the earth is full of, as the Psalmist tells us, Ps. 104:24, and the apostle here, which these Gentiles only heard of, and which we partake of all as much as they. As there are riches of grace offered to you which can never be exhausted, so there are riches of patience spent upon you which you will have spent out in the end, the expense of which cast up, will

alone amount to an immense treasure, both of guilt in you and of wrath in God, as these words inform us.

To help you in this account, I will,

1. In general, shew what goodness or bounty, patience, and longsuffering are in God.

2. That there are riches of these spent upon all the sons of men.

3. That these all lead men to repentance. And then,

4. I will expostulate with you and aggravate your sinfulness in going on to despise all these by unrepentance, as the apostle here doth.

1. First, In that God is said here to be (1.) good or bountiful; (2.) patient or forbearing; (3.) longsuffering; they seem to note out three degrees of his common mercies unto men.

(1.) First, He is a good or a bountiful God; for so as goodness is here used, I exegetically expound it. For though it be true that goodness and bounty may differ, yet when riches of goodness are said to be communicated, it imports the same, and is all one with bounty. And such is God. And all those noble and royal qualifications and properties which concur to make one truly good and beautiful, do meet and abound in him, in all those good things which he doth bestow, and are found truly in none but in him, so that it may be truly said, that there is none good but God, as Christ says of him.

Now bounty in the general, which is in God, may be thus described.

It is a free, willing, and a large giving of what is merely his own, looking for no recompence again.

To explain this, that you may see that all these conditions are required to true goodness, and all of them to be found in God only.

[1.] He that is bountiful, he must be a giver and bestower of good things; and all he bestows it must be by way of gift, not by way of recompence unto, or by desert from the party he bestows all on. Therefore Christ says, Luke 6:33, that to do good to those who have done or do good to us, is not thankworthy, nor is it bounty. But God is therefore truly good, because he simply, merely, and absolutely gives away all which he bestows. For he was not, nor can any way become, beholden to any of his creatures, nor had formerly received anything from them which might move him hereunto; so Rom. 11:35, 'Who hath first given him, that he may recompense him again?' Nay, until he gave us a being, we were not capable of so much as receiving any good thing from him.

[2.] He who is truly termed good or bountiful, all that he gives away must be his own; and so all which God bestows it is his own. So Ps. 24:1, 'The earth is the Lord's,' the ground we tread on, the place we dwell in; he is our landlord. But is that all? For the house may be the landlord's when the furniture is the tenant's. Therefore he further adds, 'And the fulness of it' is his also; that is, all the things that fill the world, all the furniture and provision of it both, all the moveables. So Ps. 50:11, 12, 'The cattle and the fowls upon a thousand hills are mine,' says he; and also all the standing goods, 'the corn and oil' which you set and plant, 'are mine,' Hos. 2:9; yea, and the Psalmist, in the 24th Psalm, adds further, that 'they who dwell therein' are his also; not the house and furniture only, but the inhabitants themselves. And this by the most sure and most sovereign title that can be, better than that of purchase or inheritance of and from another; for he hath made them. 'All is thine, because all comes of thee,' says the same David, 1 Chron. 29:11, 12. And all things are not only of him, but through him, Rom. 11:36; that is, they cannot stand nor subsist without him. Even kings, the greatest and most bountiful of men, their bounty is but as that of the clouds, which though they shower down plentifully, yet they first received all from the earth below them.

[3.] He must give largely, it is not bounty else. Now God is therefore said to be rich in goodness, because he is abundant in it. So we find it, comparing Ps. 33:5, with Ps. 104:24, in which it is said, that 'the earth is full of his goodness,' and 'his riches;' which we may judge of, by what he says in the 27th verse of that 104th Psalm, of what an house he keeps, and what multitudes he feeds; 'All these,' saith the Psalmist, 'wait on thee, that thou mayest give them meat; and thou openest thy hand, and they are filled with good.' King Ahasuerus, to shew his bounty, made a feast to his chief subjects, but it was but for half a year, and not to all; some few half years more would well nigh have beggared him; but God doth thus continually. The greatest and most bountiful of men, when they would express the largest of their bounty, speak but of giving 'half of their kingdoms;' so Herod and he did but talk so too; but God bestows whole worlds and kingdoms, as Daniel speaks, Dan. 4:32, and gives them to whom he please.

[4.] He that is bountiful must give all he gives freely, and willingly. Which, though I put together, yet may imply two distinct things. As, first, that he that gives must be a free agent in it, who is at his choice, whether he would give anything away or no. The sun doth much good to the world, it affords a large light, and even half the world at once is full of its glory, yea, and all this light is its own, not borrowed, as that of the moon and stars is; yet this sun cannot be called good or bountiful, because it sends forth this light necessarily and naturally, and cannot choose but do so, nor can it draw in its beams. But God is a free giver, he was at his choice whether he would have made the world or no, and can yet when he pleaseth withdraw his Spirit and face, and then they all perish, Ps. 104:29. Secondly, It must be willingly also; that is, no way constrained, nor by extraction wrung from him who is to be called bountiful. A willing mind in matter of bounty, is more accepted than the thing, 2 Cor. 8:12. Now of God it is said, Dan. 4:32, that he gives the kingdoms of the world to whom he will, and none sways him, or can stay his hand, ver. 35, yea, he gives all away with delight. So Ps. 104:31, having spoken of feeding every living thing, and of other the like works of his goodness throughout that Psalm, he concludes with this, 'God rejoiceth in all his works;'

that is, doth all the good he doth to his creatures with delight. It doth him good (as it were) to see the poor creatures feed.

[5.] Last of all, looking for no recompence for the time to come. This is another requisite in bounty. Says Christ, Luke 6:34, 'If you give to receive again, as sinners do, this is not thankworthy;' but ver. 25, so doth not your heavenly Father. For, says he, 'Do good, and hope for nothing again; so shall you be like your Father,' and then you shall shew yourselves true children of the Most High. In which word he insinuates a reason why God gives all thus; because he is so great and so high a God, as nothing we do can reach him, as David speaks, Ps. 16:2, 'My goodness extends not unto thee;' he is too high to receive any benefit by what we do. And even that thankfulness he exacts, he requires it but as an acknowledgment of our duty, and for our good, Deut. 10:12.

(2.) And so much for the first, namely, what goodness and bounty is; and how God is truly good, and he only so. But this attribute of his, and the effects of it, he exerciseth towards all our fellow-creatures, and did to Adam in paradise. But now to us ward (as the apostle speaks), namely, the sons of men, now fallen, he extendeth and manifests a further riches, namely, of patience and long-suffering, which the devils partake not of, the good angels and other creatures that sinned not, are incapable of. For as Christ says, Luke 6:35, in what he bestows on us, he is kind to such as are evil and unthankful. Mercy is more than goodness, for mercy always doth respect misery; and because all the creatures are subject to a misery, Rom. 8:20–22, of 'bondage and vanity,' therefore 'his tender mercies are over all his works.' But yet patience is a further thing than mercy (as mercy is than goodness), being exercised, not towards miserable creatures only, but towards sinners, and includes in it more three things further towards them.

[1.] Not only that those persons he doth good unto do offend and injure him, but that himself also is exceeding sensible of all those wrongs, and moved by them, and also provoked to wrath thereby; it

is not patience else. So in 2 Peter 3:9, it is not slackness, says he there, 'God is not slack,' that is, he sits not in heaven as one of the idol gods, that regarded not what acts were kept here below, or took not to heart men's carriages towards him; but is longsuffering, or patient, that is, he apprehends himself wronged, is fully sensible of it, 'is angry with the wicked every day,' Ps. 7:11, he hath much ado to forbear; even when he doth forbear and letteth them alone, he exerciseth an attribute, a virtue towards them, namely, patience, in keeping in of his anger, which is as to keep fire in one's bosom.

[2.] But, secondly, this is not all. He doth not simply forbear and restrain his anger, but vouchsafeth that time he forbears them in, that they might repent in it, and his mercies as means leading to repentance. So it follows in that, 2 Pet. 3:9, 'But God is longsuffering to us-ward,' and his longsuffering hath this in it, 'not willing that any should perish, but come unto repentance.' So also Rev. 2:21, it is called 'space to repent.' And all the blessings he vouchsafeth, he gives them as means and guides to 'lead them to repentance,' as here. And Mat. 18:29, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all;' that is, give me a longer day and space to pay the debt in, and be willing to accept it when I bring it, and let me lie out of prison that I may be enabled to pay it.

[3.] Thirdly, There is yet further thing in his patience, namely, a waiting and expectation that men would come in and repent. So Luke 13:7, 'These three years have I come seeking fruit, but have found none.' There was an expectation, a longing, a desire it would bring forth fruit. 'Oh, when shall it once be?' says God, Jer. 13:27.

(3.) In the last place, that other attribute of longsuffering, which is the third, is but as a further degree of patience, but patience lengthened out farther; that is, when God hath been thus patient, hath forborne and waited for their coming in, and that not for three years, but haply thirty, forty years, and still they turn not, his patience then begins, as we would think, to be as it were worn out, and his anger begins to arise, as if he could forbear no longer, as it

was towards that tree, 'Why cumbereth it the ground? cut it down;' yet he goes on to spare a man another year, and many more years still after that, and 'endureth with much longsuffering (as Rom. 9:22) the vessels of wrath,' endures to wonderment, above measure, beyond all expectation, all patience, as it were; this is longsuffering.

2. The second general head is, that there are riches of this his goodness, &c., expended on us.

It is rich goodness, patience, and longsuffering: (1.) rich in themselves, in regard of their abundance, as they came from him; and (2.) rich also in regard of their precious usefulness unto us, as they may be improved by us.

(1.) First, In themselves they are rich. [1.] If we consider what is expended all that while he lays out, not simply his power to sustain and uphold all things and to maintain us freely, so to do is nothing to him. For whilst he doth but so, nothing goes out of purse, or is detracted from him; as I may so speak, he feels not the expense either of power, providence, &c. All this cost him but words. For he 'upholds all, creates all by the word of his power', Heb. 1:3. And thus to maintain the angels, and to have maintained all mankind before they fell, had been no more. But, my brethren, when now he maintains us sinners, not simply power goes forth from him, but his glory is expended and taken from him, and for the while wasted, detracted from. He loseth at present every day infinitely by us, and he is sensible of it; every sin takes glory from him, robs him, as he himself complains: that he who made the world upholds it, keeps it together as the hoops do the barrel—it would fall to pieces else, to nothing—'in whom all live,' as fishes in the sea, yea, upon whom all live; that he should live unknown, unthought of, unserved, yea, disgraced, dishonoured in the world, and have this world lost to him as it were, and sin, the devil, wicked men, to have all the glory from him, to be exalted, to carry the whole world afore them: this spends upon him, he had need of riches to do this.

[2.] Secondly, Consider the multitude of sinners that thus spend and live upon these riches, no less than all the world. He had need of multitudes of patience in him; he forbears not one, but all and every one. We look upon one man, and seeing him very wicked, we wonder God cuts him not off; we wonder at ourselves that God did not cut us off before this, when once our eyes are opened; nay, then, cast your eyes over all the world, and stand amazed at God's forbearance towards it. Take the richest man that ever was, to have millions of men in his debt, it would undo him soon. All the world are in God's debt, and run still in debt every day more and more, and yet he breaks not, nay, breaks not them.

[3.] Nay, thirdly, to manifest this abundance yet more, consider not only the multitude he forbears, but the time he hath done it, to forbear much and to forbear it long. He hath forborne and been out of purse from the beginning of the world, since men were upon the face of the earth, five thousand years and a half already, and how long it is yet to the day of judgment we know not. And yet ye see, he is as patient and as bountiful now in the latter days of the world as he was at the first. Did that greatest convert that ever was, that had not lived past thirty years in his sinful estate (for he was young when he held the stoners' clothes that stoned Stephen), and yet was 'the chiefest of sinners,' did he yet, as himself says, think himself a pattern of longsuffering, 1 Tim. 1:16, thought it a great matter God should forbear so long? What is the whole world then? If he, being but one small, poor vessel, was so richly laden with the riches of God's patience, how is this great bark of the world then fraught that hath gone over so vast a gulf of time? How much of these his riches have been laden in it?

[4.] And then, fourthly, add to this the expensive prodigality of all these sinners in all ages; every sinner spends something, and how lavish are men of oaths? 'All the thoughts of men's hearts from their youth up, they are evil, and only evil, and continually;' and how much then hath every man spent him? Every sin is a debt.

(2.) In the second place, this is a rich goodness and patience in regard of the preciousness and usefulness.

[1.] First, Precious, in regard of what all these manifestations of his goodness and forbearance cost, even the blood of his Son, who as a Lord hath bought and purchased all wicked men, their lives and their reprimand, all that time that here they live; and all the blessings and dispensations of goodness, which here they do enjoy. Christ's mediation so far prevails with God for all the world, that it puts a stop to the present proceedings of justice, which otherwise had said of all, 'That day thou sinnest, thou diest.' So that as Christ may be called the wisdom and the power of God, so also the patience and the long-suffering of God. For, for his sake and through his means it is exercised. God would not shew a drop of mercy but for his Son. Which, I take, strongly and clearly intimated, in that dealing of his with the Jews, Exod. 23:20, compared with Exod. 33:2, 3, 4, &c. Immediately after God had given the law, by the rules and threatenings whereof God the Father in his government was to proceed, and after they had transgressed it, he there declares that he could not go with them. For, according to the rules of his government, he 'should destroy them; but his angel he would send with them,' even Christ, he might shew them mercy, for he was the purchaser of it; and that he was that angel appears in that God tells them, ver. 21, 'that his name was in him,' who also would destroy them, if they turned not and repented, according to the rules of his law, the gospel.

[2.] And precious, secondly, to us, in regard of the usefulness, this goodness and longsuffering tend and serve unto. This makes this stock of time afforded you, by God's goodness, to be riches indeed, that it is 'space to repent,' Rev. 2:21; not a time of reprimand only, but to get a pardon in; and this makes all the good things we enjoy to be precious indeed, that they are means leading us by the hand to repentance. Rich it is, because if your time be laid out as it ought, you may obtain those far surpassing riches of glory reserved for hereafter; win and gain Christ by it, and all his unsearchable riches.

All things receive their worth and valuation from what they tend to, and from what depends upon them, and the use they might be put to. A bond, a man's will, which in itself, as it is a piece of parchment, is not worth one shilling, yet an estate of many thousands may lie and depend upon them. And so time is not simply precious in itself, but in regard of the opportunities of it. And accordingly, in those ordinary passages of our lives do we more or less estimate and count time precious, as the business allotted to it is of more or less consequence. When a matter falls out that concerns us, and requires despatch, and we are cast into straits of time about it, we count every minute precious; so this time of ours, which is the chief and principal of that stock put into our hands by God's patience, being space to repent in, to gain and trade for heaven with, in this respect every minute of it is as much as heaven is worth, and one hour of it may be as much as all the time you are to spend for ever, after this life ended, every minute hath an influence into eternity. And however you may account it, yet the balance of the sanctuary thus estimates your time, calls it your money: 'Why lay you out your money for what is not,' &c., Isa. 55:2.; that is, this precious day of grace, and the thoughts, cares, and endeavours which are brought forth and minted in this time allotted, these are your money you might purchase heaven by. And thus it hath been esteemed by holy and godly men, who yet had less need to value it, having done the main business it was allotted for. David, in the 39th Psalm, ver. 13, being brought very low, 'Oh spare me a little, that I may recover my strength, before I go hence, and be seen no more.' So Hezekiah, Isa. 38, how did he sue for, and when he had obtained fifteen years, how did he bless God? ver. 20. Or if by this you judge not so, think with thyself, what at the day of death thou wouldst account of an hour, of a month, a year? What others, who have lain gasping, would have given a world for time again, as I have heard one crying day and night, 'Call time again;' or if not then, Oh what in hell!

3. The third thing I am to shew is, that all this goodness, patience, and forbearance is afforded towards you as a means, and helps to bring you to repentance. Acts 17:28, God (says the apostle there)

hath allotted to men both their times to live, and also their places of abode and habitations, all richly furnished with blessings to uphold their lives and beings. And to what end are both these thus afforded? That they 'might seek the Lord, if by groping after him,' even as men in the dark, 'they might haply find him.' But man being in the dark, and destitute of guides to bring them unto God, may yet be as far off finding him as ever. Therefore add but the words of my text to what the apostle says there, and we see that this goodness of God takes us by the hand, and 'leads us to repentance,' to turn from sin unto God, and so to find him. And thus led are you unto God by the help of these several guides, which each after other sweetly lead you and point you out to this.

First, All this goodness bears witness to your hearts of a gracious hand that extends itself in all these; therefore in that 17th of the Acts, he subjoins, 'God is not far off any of us.' That there is a good God bestows all things on you, is a thought lies at next door of all his blessings not far off. Yea, 'they all,' says the apostle to the same Gentiles, Acts 14:16, 'do bear witness of him,' though they went on in their own ways, 'yet,' says he there, 'God left not himself without witness;' that is, an impression on their hearts that his good hand bestowed all on them when he 'filled their hearts with food and gladness.'

Secondly, His goodness having brought thus God to men's thoughts, then your own consciences take you, and lead you down into yourselves, and bear witness that you by walking in your own ways do nothing but provoke and offend this good God. So Rom. 2:15.

And then, thirdly, there is an indelible principle common to all men to love those who love them; which after the two former have brought you hitherto, point you to repentance as the conclusion. Shall we go on to sin against this good, so good? return evil for good? Is not this a natural, necessary consequent out of these, to say as they, 'Let us therefore fear the Lord, who giveth us the early and the latter rain,' as it is, Jer. 5:24. And though men are said not to know

this in the text, yet the meaning is, they do not thoroughly and effectually consider thus much, so as thereby to be brought to repentance; yet, however, there is such a witness of all this in all men's hearts, and thus are they led on unto repentance, would they see their way and follow their guide.

The use shall be an use of exhortation, as here the apostle carries it, with men sinful and impenitent, for going on to sin against all this mercy, together with an aggravation of their sinfulness hereby. Men, if young, do usually take the advantage of this their precious time, which of so much longsuffering is vouchsafed them, and of all those precious opportunities and blessings they enjoy, to improve them only in reaping and gathering in to themselves the pleasures of sins, making the time of youth their harvest of sinning, and yet think to escape by repenting afterwards; and then when old, after they have already enjoyed a long and a fair sunshine day to turn to God in, and to have sown much seed to the Spirit, the comfort whereof they might now have reaped, yet, as they have altogether neglected so to do all their youth, so they go on to do so still, whilst they see they have any day left, be it never so near the setting, and do choose rather desperately to venture their estate in the world to come upon the riches of his mercy pardoning, though without all care and endeavour to change their hearts or lives, upon the experience they have had of the riches of his mercy forbearing them in this world, thinking to find him the same in both. With all such, let me reason a little, and from the riches of God's goodness, patience, &c., spent upon them, at once exhortate with them, for their impenitency, and aggravate to them their sinfulness, and also, if possible, prevail with them to go on to despise it thus no longer. And if there be any principle of common ingenuity, any spark (I do not say of grace, but of goodness of nature) left unextinguished, methinks it should affect you, and do some good on you ere I have done.

And to that end, consider a little, and compare together God's loving-kindnesses towards you, and your unkind dealings towards him.

To begin at the beginning of thy being. How much riches of goodness were there laid and buried in thy foundation? when the first corner stone was laid, when thou wert made a man (besides the cost which hath been spent upon this building since), and, cursed as thou art, even that very foundation was laid in bloody iniquities, in which thou wert conceived; and the very materials of soul and body thou consistest of, being tempered with sin, 'like the stone in the wall, and beam out of the timber,' Hab. 2:10, 11, cry out every moment to God against thee, as Edom did, 'Raze it, raze it, even to the very ground,' Ps. 137:7.

Consider how but the other day thou wert mere nothing, and when an infinite number that never were nor shall be were in as great a possibility of being as thou; for when he made this world, he could have laid it aside wholly, and created millions of other worlds, yet he chose thee to have a room in this but one world, for he means to make no more; and this world could have stood without thee, and did before thou wert, and shall do when thou art gone; yet he called thee forth out of nothing, and by his almighty power bade thee stand forth when there was no need of thee. I say, he chose thee to have a being; for as there is an election of things that are to salvation, so out of things that were not unto being. And, wretch that thou art, if thou repentest not, thou destroyest what God hath made, and hadst better have kept nothing still, and never have peeped out, or else to skulk into thy first nothing again, for thou art lost, better never to have been born.

Secondly, Consider yet more goodness. Thou mightest have been admitted into the lowest form of creatures, have been a worm, a flea, a fly, which we men filip and crush to death at pleasure; but to be made a man, created one of the states, barons, lords of the world the first hour, admitted into the highest order, crowned a king in the womb, as David says of man, Ps. 8:5, 'made a little lower than the angels, but crowned with glory and honour,' made to 'have dominion over all the works of his hands.' The one half of thee is more worth than a whole world, thy soul, as Christ says, that went to the price of

souls; upon which God hath bestowed an eternity of being, and made it the picture of his face, his image, when other creatures do wear but his footsteps. And the body, the other piece, and indeed but the case, the sheath (as Daniel's phrase and the Chaldee hath it, Dan. 7:15), of thee, what a curious workmanship is it! 'wonderfully and fearfully made,' as David says, Ps.139:15, 'curiously wrought in the lower parts of the earth.' So there he calls the womb; because as curious workmen, when they have some choice piece in hand, perfect it in private, and then bring it forth to light for men to gaze at, so God out of a tear, a drop, he hath limned out the epitome of the whole world, the index of all the creatures. Sun, moon, stars, are to be found in thee, Eccles. 12:2. And yet, wretch as thou art, thou art withal the epitome of hell, and broughtest into the world with thee the seeds and principles of all the villanies that have been acted in the world; and if thou repentest not, thou hadst better have been a toad or serpent, the hatefulest of creatures, and wouldst change thy condition with them one day.

Thirdly, Being a man, hast thou all thy members that belong unto a man? It is because 'he wrote them all in his book,' Ps. 139:16, if he had left out an eye in his commonplace book, thou hadst wanted it; is not that a mercy? Ask the blind. If thou hadst wanted those windows to look out at, thy body would have been a dungeon, the world a prison; if a tongue, which is thy glory, or an ear, thou hadst lived among men, as a beast among men. And yet when God gave thee all these, what did he but put weapons into an enemy's hand. For hast thou not used all these as 'weapons of unrighteousness?' Rom. 6:13, insomuch as the tongue, but one member, is called 'a world of iniquity' by the apostle; and if thou repentest not, thou hadst better, as Christ says, have entered into the world without an eye, an ear, a tongue, than with these go for ever into hell.

Fourthly, When thou wert taken out of the womb (where thou didst remain, but whilst thou wert a-framing), what a stately palace hath he brought thee into, the world, which thou findest prepared and ready furnished with all things for thy maintenance, as Canaan was

to the children of Israel; a stately house thou buildedst not, trees thou plantedst not, a rich canopy spangled, spread as a curtain over thy head; he sets up a taper for thee to work by, the sun, till thou art weary, Ps. 104:23, and then it goes down without thy bidding, for it 'knows its going down,' ver. 19; then he draws a curtain over half the world, that men may go to rest, 'Thou causest darkness, and it is night,' ver. 20. An house this world is, so curiously contrived, that to every room of it, even to every poor village, springs do come as pipes to find thee water. So Ps. 104:10, 11. The pavement of which house thou treadest on, brings forth thy food, ver. 14. 'Bread for strength, wine to cheer thy heart, oil to make thy face to shine,' ver. 15. Which three are there synecdochically put for all things needful to strength, ornament, and delight. The very chambers of that house (as David calls them), 'drop fatness,' and water the earth, ver. 13. He wheels the heavens about, and so spins out time for thee, every moment of which time brings forth some blessing or other, and no one is barren. Therefore, Ps. 65:11, the year is said to be 'crowned with goodness,' a diadem of goodness encircles it round; and yet thou hast filled this world thou thus art brought into, with nothing but rebellions, as he hath done with blessings, and hast piled up sins to heaven, and thou hast pressed all these armies of blessing thou findest the world filled with, to fight against their Maker, under the devil's banner, whom thy wickedness sets up as 'the god of this world.' And as the year is crowned with goodness, so thy years with wickedness, and no moment is barren; but all thy imaginations are evil continually. Yea, thou hast sinned against heaven and earth, and subjected the whole creation unto vanity, laden the earth, and filled it so with wickedness, that it groans, the axle-tree of it is even ready to crack under thee, and the ground thou treadest on to spew thee out.

Fifthly, Since thou camest into the world, what a long time hath God suffered thee to live in it; he hath not spared thee three years only (as he did the fig-tree), but thirty, forty. And when thou first madest bold to thrust forth thy traitorous head into the world, death (which thy sin brought into the world with it) might have arrested thee, and told thee this world was no place for thee, for hell is only our own place,

Acts 1:25, thou shouldest have been executed the first day. And is not so much time of ease from punishment infinite mercy? Cast but your thoughts upon the angels that fell, that have been in hell from the moment of their sinning; do but think with yourselves what they would give to have so much time cut out of that eternity they are to run through, and to have it set apart for ease, and to be void of torment. If the rich man in hell made it such a great suit, and counted it so great a favour to have but one drop of water, which could but for a little while, scarce more than a moment, have cooled and eased, not his whole body, but the tip of his tongue only, how much more would he have thought it mercy, to have lived so many years again as he had done free from torment! What is it then for thee to live so many years free from the falling of the least drop of that wrath, whereof the full vials should have been poured out many years ago! The same law was out against us which was out against the angels, 'That day thou eatest, thou shalt die the death;' what put the difference? The apostle tells us, 'his longsuffering to usward,' 2 Pet. 3:9; not to them, for in chap. 2 ver. 4, he had told us that 'he spared not the angels which fell,' but posted and threw them into hell as soon as they had sinned.

Sixthly, But further, in the sixth place, is this all? Hath it been barely a time of ease given thee, a time of reprimand? No, it hath been more, 'space to repent,' and so to obtain thy pardon in, Rev. 2:21. And as it hath been more than ease of torment unto thee, so also consider it hath been more than slackness in him that hath afforded it to thee, as the apostle there doth tell us. It is not that he hath took no notice of thy offending him, but he is sensible of every idle thought, of every oath, vain word, and as the Scripture tells us, Gen. 6:6, 7, 'he is pained at the very heart,' insomuch as 'he repents' that ever he made thee. He is 'angry with thee every day' thou risest, every time he looks on thee; whenever he meets thee going into the tavern to be drunk, the whorehouse to be unclean; when he meets thee reeling in the streets, he hath much ado to forbear killing thee, as he had to forbear Moses when he met him in the inn. He is ready to have a blow at thee, and it should not need be any great stroke or fetching his arm

about; if he did but blow on thee, thou wert consumed. To suffer thee to live, doth therefore cost him much riches of patience, but to cut thee off need cost him nothing; he can do that with ease. But further, all is joined with a willingness that thou shouldest repent and not perish, as that place tells thee.

It were much mercy for a traitor to be reprimed, to have a lease of his life for twenty years, though there were no hope nor means of obtaining his final pardon after that time spent, and this also, though but for one treason, and though all that time of his reprimand he carries and behaves himself never so obediently. But unto thee, this time hath been more than a longer day of life, and putting off the execution, which for the guilt of that first rebellion should have been acted on thee in the womb; it hath been time to repent in. And yet hath not this time of thy reprimand made thee so much the more rebellious? And hast not thou spent all this time in making up the measure of thine iniquity full? And hath it been willingness only in God that thou shouldst not perish? Yea more, joined with waiting also, when it should once be, thinking the time long, as longing and desiring that thou wouldst repent, that he might pardon thee. Thus, Jer. 13:27, God expreseth himself, 'When shall it once be?' Yea, and consider how many days of payment have been set, and how many promises made and broken all by thee, and yet still he waiteth unto wonderment. Thou receivedst press-money at thy baptism, when thou didst promise to forsake the devil and all his works, and to begin to serve him, when thou shouldst begin to discern between good and evil. But no sooner did the light of knowledge dawn in thy heart, but thou beganst to fight against him, and thy first thoughts to this day have been only and continually evil. And then, haply, in thy younger years, before thou hadst tasted of the pleasures of sin, he gave thee an inkling, by means of thy education, of his goodness towards thee, and of that happiness to be had in him, and thou hadst the first offer of him, ere thy tender years were poisoned by the world, and he hath dealt with thee again and again, both by his word and spirit, not waited only, but wooed thee, and hath been a suitor to thy heart long; and I appeal to your hearts how many promises you

have made him, of turning from all your rebellions to him, after such a sermon, which was brought powerfully home: in such a sickness, and in such a strait, thy conscience knows full well. And still God hath made trial of thee and given thee longer day; and though thou hast broke with him again and again, yet he hath forborne thee again and again, and hath waited this twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, sixty years, when thou shouldst come in and be as good as thy word, and still thou hast failed him. And yet behold and wonder, and stand confounded at the riches of his longsuffering, that after so many years' expense and promises broken by thee, expectations failed in him, and many mockeries of him, after all this he is yet willing to accept of the remainder, if thou wouldst 'spend the rest of the time left thee in the flesh according to his will,' as the apostle speaks, 1 Pet. 5:2, even to lose principle, use, and all, for what is past, and requires but the same composition was propounded the first day; yea, and not only so, but with promise to become a debtor unto thee, to bestow further riches on thee than ever yet thou sawest or art able to conceive; yea, and all this when he could have his pennyworths out of thee another way, and lose not one farthing by thee, but by punishing thee in hell, recover all 'to the utmost.'

Neither, seventhly, hath it been barely and simply an act of patience and forbearance, though joined with this willingness thou shouldst not perish, or merely a permissive act of suffering thee to live. But God shews forth yet more riches of goodness joined with this longsuffering. 'In him ye live, and move, and have your being;' and dost thou live in him only? Nay, thou livest on him also, upon his costs and charges; 'I have hung upon thee,' says David, 'from my mother's womb.' And consider what thy life is, that of so small a bottom he should spin out so long a thread! Had he not drawn it out of his own power, as the spider doth her web out of her own bowels, it had been at an end the second minute; to maintain that radical moisture, that oil that feeds the lamp and light of thy life, that radicale balsamum, this is as great a miracle as the maintaining the oil in the cruse of the poor famished widow. And further yet, hath he maintained thee only? Nay more, hath he not defended thee, took thy

part, protected thee, took thee under his wing as the hen doth her chickens, to shelter from those many dangers thy life hath been exposed unto? Otherwise, how many ways, ere this, hadst thou been snatched away out of the land of the living? Is thy case the case of the fig-tree only, which before we mentioned, that when God cried, 'Cut it down,' another cried, 'Spare it?' But there have been many have cried, 'Cut thee down,' and God hath cried, 'Spare thee:' there is never a minute but the devil would have had a blow at thy life, as he longed to have had at Job's. That thou, a poor lump of flesh, shouldst walk through, and in the midst of such an host of fierce and cruel enemies, whose hearts are swelled with malice at thee, and God should say to them all concerning thee, as he did to Laban concerning Jacob, 'Touch not this man.' And yet if thou wert not liable to their malice and power, yet consider how many dangers and casualties, besides, thou hast been kept in and from; as falls, drowning, killing many ways, how often have the arrows of death come whisking by thee, took away those next thee (haply of thy kindred, brother, sister, yoke-fellow, of the same house, family with thyself), and yet have missed thee? And if we look no farther than these days of mortality we have lived in, two great plagues in this kingdom, how have the most of us all here survived, and now the third is increasing and growing upon us! To have our lives in such dear years of time, when to have our life for a prey is mercy enough, as Jeremiah told Baruch! That these arrows should fly round about us, over our heads, and miss us; that God's arrests should seize upon men, walking, talking with us, and spare us! How often, many other ways, hath thy neck been upon the block, and the axe held over, and yet hath fallen besides! To go no farther than thy own body, the humours thereof, if God should not restrain them, would overflow and drown it, as the waters would the earth, if God should not say to them, 'Stay your proud waves.' And when in a sickness they have been let out, yet God hath kept a sluice, that so much should break forth, and no more, which should purge and wash the body, and make it more healthful, as the overflowing of Nilus doth. And when then thy body hath been brought low and weak, and like a crasy, rotten ship in a storm, taking in water on all sides, so that all the

physicians in the world could not have stopped those leaks, he hath rebuked wind and sea, hath careened, mended thee, and launched thee into the world again, as whole, as sound, and strong as ever; and God hath said, as Job 33, that thou shouldst not die. In a word, if thou consider but what thy life is, and the dangers it is subject to, thou wilt acknowledge it is as great a wonder to preserve it, as to see a glass that hath been in continual use, gone through many hands, and hath had many knocks and falls, to be kept for forty, fifty, sixty years whole and unbroken. God hath carried thy life in his hand, as it were a candle in a paper lanthorn in a strong windy night, and kept it from being extinct, whenas we often see in many, that a little cold comes but in at a little cranny, and 'blows their candle out,' as Job speaks.

And, eighthly, how have these years and hours of thy time been filled up with goodness? and with how many comforts? For a traitor to live, though but upon bread and water all his days, what favour is it! And so hadst thou lived all this time, never so miserably, though 'all thy days thou hadst eaten thy bread in darkness, and hadst had much sorrow with thy sickness,' as Solomon speaks, Eccles. 5:17. Some there are who, as Job speaks, 'die in the bitterness of their souls, and never eat with pleasure,' Job 21:25, scarce seeing a good day; and if this had been thy case, yet this is infinite mercy. Even whatsoever is on this side hell is mercy. Lam. 3:22, say they in the worst estate the church was ever on earth, 'It is thy mercies,' not mercy only, but multitude of mercies are shewn us, 'that we are not consumed, because his mercies are renewed every morning.' If at the brink of hell, and not in, it is mercy. But hath he not all this while 'filled thy heart with food and gladness,' as the apostle speaks? Acts 14:17. It were infinite to go over the particular kinds of common comforts which God vouchsafes men here; not half the riches of his goodness is yet told, it would require an age to make an inventory of them. Hast a house in the world to hide thy head in, and keep thee from the injuries of the weather (which was more than Christ had)? God he is thy landlord (though it may be thou payest him no rent); 'he it is that builds the house,' Ps. 127:1. Hast a bed to lie upon? He makes it,

especially in thy sickness, Ps. 41:3. Hast thou sleep (which is the nurse of nature, the parenthesis of all thy cares and griefs)? He rocks thee asleep every night; and as he gives thee a house, so he gives thee rest, Ps. 127:2. It is God keeps off those gnats of distracting cares, and griefs, and thoughts, and terrors of conscience, would buz about a man, and keep one continually waking. And when thou sleepest, is thy sleep pleasant to thee? God makes it so, Jer. 31:26. Hast thou clothes to cover thy nakedness? Road old Jacob's indentures, Gen. 28:20, and thou shalt see by them whose finding they are at: if 'thou wilt give me raiment,' that is one of his conditions mentioned. Yea, do thy clothes 'keep thee warm?' Even this is attributed to him, Job 37:17. He fills thee, feeds thee, spreads thy table, serves thee, fills thy cup, as David describes his goodness, Ps. 23:5, and gives thee thy meat in due season; and hath not failed thee a meal's meat, but thou hast had it at thy appointed time, as Job speaks. And hast then health (which is the salt to all these blessings, without which thou wouldst say thou hadst no pleasure in them)? He is 'the God of thy health,' and keeps off diseases, Exod. 15:26. 'I will put none of those diseases on thee; I am the Lord who healeth thee;' that is, preserve thee from them which else would seize on thee. And these mercies he vouchsafeth unto you that are the poorest, and 'loadeth you with these and the like benefits every day.'

But hast thou riches added to these, and abundance? 'The blessing of God maketh rich,' Prov. 10:22. Though thou hadst them by birth, yet he made those friends and parents of thine but feoffees in trust for thee; they were no more, it was God who bequeathed them, Eccles. 2:26. Or whether thou hast got them since by thine own industry, it is he 'gives thee power to get wealth, Deut. 8:18; Prov. 12:24; and out of 'a small estate maketh men great,' Job 8:8. It is he by his providence hath stopped the secret issues and drains of expense, at which other men's estates run out; hath stopped 'that hole in the bottom of the bag,' as the prophet speaks. And with these riches hath he given thee a heart to use them? This, as it is a farther mercy, Eccles. 5:19, and chap. 6:2, so also from him, as it is noted there.

Or hast thou credit, which is better than riches? So says Solomon, Prov. 22:1. It is God who gives it, not thy wisdom, parts, or worth. Eccles. 9:11, 'Favour is not always to men of skill,' that is, not acceptance of what they do, without a farther blessing from God. Therefore, besides the gift of wisdom, he gave a further promise of honour also unto Solomon, 2 Chron. 1:11. It is God who fashions men's opinions. The apostle prays to God his service might be accepted of the saints, though no service was like to be more acceptable, for it was the gathering and bringing in of alms and relief to them. It is he rules men's tongues, bids men bless, as well as he bade Shimei curse; and he hath kept thee from such gross sins, which as flies would have putrefied the ointment of thy good name, who also conceals those thou hast committed, and 'hides thee from the strife of tongues,' Job 5:21.

Hast thou friends, or do any love thee, wherein much of the comfort of our lives consist? And therefore David says of Jonathan, 2 Sam. 1:26, 'Thou wert pleasant to me.' It is God who gives favour in men's eyes. So he did Joseph, Gen. 39:21. If any man or creature doth thee a kindness, he toucheth their hearts, as it is said of the men who clave to Saul, and visits for thee. He made the Egyptians, beyond all reason, the Israelites' friends, gave them favour in their eyes, as the text tells us. And hence, Gen. 33:10, Jacob says, 'He saw the face of God' in reconciled Esau's face, for God's favour appeared in his look. He put you into your callings, ranks, and stations, gives you all your skill, success in them. The meanest of trades, to sow, and plough, and thresh, they are 'from the Lord, who is wonderful in working,' Isa. 28 from the 23d to the end, even as well as the skill of the most curious engraver, limner, or embroiderer; as of Bezaleel, the Scripture says God was his master, taught him. Hast thou enlarged parts and gifts for higher employments? It is not thy birth or age hath acquired them unto thee. Job 32:8, 9, 'Great men are not always wise;' therefore, it goes not by birth. 'Nor have the aged always understanding.' It goes not only by experience, but it is the inspiration of the Almighty. And hast a calling answerable to thy parts, to be a scholar, and have thy mind enriched and ennobled with

the best and choicest jewel the world hath, wisdom and knowledge, whereby the mind is elevated as much above other men's as they are above beasts? God hath been thy great tutor. 'The mind of man is God's candle,' and he maketh wiser than a man's teachers, as he did Moses in Egyptian learning, Daniel, David.

To conclude, Hast thou comfort in all these, in riches, learning, credit, wife, children, meat, drink, &c.? He puts in all the sugar, delight, and pleasure; that especially depends on him, even to fashion the heart to all these. As air lights not without the sun, nor wood heats not without fire, so neither doth thy condition comfort thee without God. And therefore, Acts 14:17, it is said, 'He filled their hearts, as with food, so with gladness.'

And besides all these, consider the many peculiar passages and turnings of his providence towards thee for thy good, the working of things together ever and anon to do thee a good turn, the packing and plotting all for thee, better than thou couldst have plotted for thyself, as thy relief in many straits, success in many businesses. 'He works all our works in us and or us,' as Isaiah speaks, Isa. 26:12. Hath he not taken such special care and providence of thee, as if he had regarded no man else in the world?

And now, when thou hast considered all, bethink thyself withal a little of thy dealings towards him; what have been the effects and fruits of all this goodness? Hold up thy head, man; look God in the face. It is well yet that shame begins to cover thee. How hath that, his patience and longsuffering, vouchsafing thee space to repent, wrought with thee? How nigh to repentance hath it brought thee? Such is the perverseness of man's nature, as Solomon tells us, Eccles. 8:11, that 'because sentence against an evil work is not presently executed, therefore the hearts of the sons of men are fully set to do evil.' Because God defers punishing, they defer repenting. Thou thinkest to spend the most precious of thy time and strength in sinning, and give God the dregs, the bottom, the last sands, thy dotage, which thy very self and friends are weary of; and all these

blessings and comforts which God hath vouchsafed thee, how hast thou used them against him? This oil, which should have been fuel to thy thankfulness, hath increased the fire of thy lusts, and thy 'lusts have consumed them all,' James 4:3. The riches he hath given, thou hast made idols of, and sacrificed thy dearest, morning, daily thoughts and affections unto, as God complains, Ezek. 16 from the 15th, and so on. His meat, as at the 19th verse he calls it, thou sacrificedst to thy belly, which thou hast made thy God; thy strength to women; the wealth he hath given you, you have made use of but to live at a high rate of sinning, and to procure the sweetest bits, the daintiest and most costly sins. The edge of that sword of power God hath put into thy hand thou hast turned against him and his, haply both his children and ministers; so that God, by giving thee all these, hath but made thee more able to offend him, and hath strengthened an enemy, and by sparing thee thus long hath but made thee more bold to do it; all his mercies have but fortified thy heart against him; 'Do ye requite the Lord thus, ye foolish people and unkind?' as Moses expostulates the case, Deut. 32:6. As Christ said to the Jews, 'For which of all my good works do ye stone me?' So say I to you, For which of all his mercies is it ye sin against him? What, to fight against him with his own weapons? to betray all he gives you into the devils, his enemies' hands? What iniquity did you ever find in him, thus to deal? God will one day thus expostulate his cause with you, and 'heap coals of fire upon all your heads,' if that you turn not, because you have rendered him evil for good; and all these mercies thus abused will be as so many coals to make hell fire the hotter. And to reason this point yet further with you out of the text, and what arguments it will afford to work upon you,

Consider, first, what it is thou doest. Whilst thus thou goest on thou art a despiser of the riches of his goodness: that which is opposite to goodness must needs be transcendently evil. What, 'art thou evil because God is good?' and so much the more evil by how much more he is good? Surely there must needs be an unexhausted treasure of wickedness in thee, which will also cause in the end a treasure of wrath in him. What? and sin against mercy, patience, longsuffering,

added to goodness? of all attributes the richest to the most glorious, for it is that he glories in—in the abusing of which therefore he thinks himself most debased—of all attributes the tenderest. What, kick against his bowels? So are his mercies called. Canst hit him nowhere else but there? To despise a man's wisdom, power, learning, is not so much as to despise his love. What canst thou imagine will become of thee when thou comest to die? What is it thou wilt then come to plead and cry for? O mercy, mercy! Why, wretch that thou art, it is mercy thou hast sinned against. Riches of mercy and patience abused turns into fury. I may allude to that speech, 1 Sam. 2:25, 'If a man sin against his brother, the judge shall judge him; but if against God, who shall plead for him?' So, hadst thou sinned against any other attribute, mercy might have pleaded for thee; but if against mercy itself, who shall?

Well, if thou goest on thus to do so still, thou hast a hard heart; it argues the greatest hardness of all other; that is the second. You use not, however it comes to pass, to deal thus with the worst of men, sinners like to yourselves; but to them that love you you tender love again, Luke 6:32. And will you deal so with God? 'Is it a small thing to weary men, but you must weary God also?' says Isaiah, 7:13. He thought it infinitely less to abuse men than God; but you carry yourselves as men to men, but as devils towards God: herein ye have not the hearts of men in you, not principles of common humanity, whereby ye differ from beasts. The 'cords of love' are called 'the cords of a man,' Hos. 11:4. The spirit of man breaks, melts under kindness; beasts indeed ye use to prick with goads, but the cords of a man are the cords of love, no principle being more deeply engraven in men's hearts than this, 'to do good to those who do good to you,' Mat. 5:46. Nay, would ye had herein yet the hearts of beasts, 'The ox knows his owner, the ass his master's crib, but my people have rebelled against me.' A sin so much against nature that he calls upon those creatures who have no more than mere nature in them, viz., the heavens, to stand astonished at it, Isa. 1:2. But as nature elevated by grace riseth higher than itself, so, being poisoned with sin, it is cast below itself, sins against itself, and the principles which are begotten in and with

itself. If it were not so, how were it possible thou shouldst hate him who never did thee hurt? and go on to wound him who weepeth over thee? and despise that in him most which seeks to save thee? and load him with sins, Amos. 2:13, who loads thee daily with his mercies? Ps. 68:19.

There is a third consideration the text suggests, to shew the fearfulness of thy sin in this respect; and that is, that thou goest on every minute sinning and in impenitency, by despising his goodness, to treasure up wrath against the day of wrath. To sin against mercy, of all other increaseth wrath; thou must pay treasures for treasures spent. As thou lavishly spendest riches of mercy, so God will recover riches of glory out of thee. God will not lose by thee, but will reckon with thee in wrath for every offer of patience spent; for every sand of longsuffering that runs out he drops in a drop of wrath into his vials, and it will prove a treasure, such a treasure as shall bring in an eternal revenue of glory unto God, of all his glory lost and riches spent, with advantage; such a treasure as will ask an eternity of time to be spent upon thee, and yet be never emptied or made less; and the longer thou goest on, the greater heap it will swell unto. And dost thou know and consider how fast this treasure fills, and how much the longer thou goest on to add to it, still the more thou addest, still the last year more than all the years before? every minute's impenitency adding to this heap and sum, as new figures added in a sum use to do; the first is but one, the second makes it ten, the third an hundred, the fourth a thousand; and what a sum will this grow to?

Ay, but thou wilt say, Tush, I am in prosperity, in health, wealth, and ease, and to-day shall be as to-morrow, and much more abundant, Isa. 56:12. Well, but fourthly, consider out of the text, that there will come a day at last, the morrow whereof will be a day of wrath. It is treasuring up now, but is not brought forth till the day of wrath, till which day thou mayest go on and prosper, as Job, giving us the reason why wicked men prosper here, says, chap. 21:30, they are 'reserved to the day of wraths,' in the plural, because treasures are laid up against them; thou art yet spared because thy sins are not yet

full, and that treasure is not full, as the sins of the Amorites were not, and all this thy present prosperity fits thee but for hell. So Rom. 9:22, they are said to be 'vessels fitted for destruction,' by longsuffering. And so Nahum tells us, they are but as stubble laid out in the sun a-drying, till it be 'fully dry,' Nahum 1:10, that it may burn the better; and like grapes that are let to hang in the sunshine till they be ripe, Rev. 19:15, and so thou for the 'winepress of God's wrath.'

But thy senseless heart may hap to say, I see no such thing, and these are but threats, I think so; therefore it is said in the text, that it is a treasure, which, as treasures use to be, is hid till that day comes, and then revealed, as the words have it. For though thou seest not this day a-coming, yet God, who sits in heaven, sees thy day a-coming, as David says, Ps. 37:13, who is therefore said to see it, because himself sees it not; and it is coming faster than thou art aware of it. 2 Pet. 2:3, 'Damnation slumbereth not,' though thou dreamest not of it, 'lingereth not:' as a hue and cry it is sent out, and is on its course, and will in the end overtake thee, and that when thou least thinkest of it, 'as a thief in the night,' when thou art asleep, yet dreamest not of it, 1 These. 5, when thou art least prepared for it, as in the old world, when they were eating and drinking. As God watcheth when his child is at the best and ripest, and then takes him; so he will watch thee to take thee for thy neglect at the worst, and give thee haply no time to prepare; they go down to hell in a moment, Ps. 73:19.

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