



ARCHBISHOP
LEIGHTON'S
SERMONS

ROBERT LEIGHTON



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Archbishop Leighton's Sermons

Sermons preached by Dr. Robert Leighton, late Archbishop of Glasgow.

Published at the desire of his friends, after his death, from his papers written with his own hand.

He was a burning and a shining light, and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light, St. John 5:35. He being dead, yet speaketh, Hebrews 11:4.

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TO THE PIOUS AND DEVOUT READER.

THE Discourses here published are but a small taste of a great many more that were written by the same most Reverend Author. A judgment will be made from the reception these meet with concerning the publishing of other discourses by the same pen. His compositions in Latin (which appear to have been written and delivered when he was Principal of the College of Edinburgh) are also

being transcribed for the press and may in a convenient time see the light, for they need not fear it. He never appeared in print upon any occasion in his whole life, and though few men have been more solidly learned in the whole compass of learning than he was, to which he had added a perfect command of the purity of the Latin tongue, and a more than ordinary knowledge of Greek, Hebrew, and other Oriental languages, yet he never once broke through that profound humility, which made him judge himself neither fit to write nor speak, though he did both to great perfection.

Some words that dropped from him occasionally some time before his death against the publishing of his papers put those in whose hands they were under no small difficulties as to what to do with them, until they maturely considered the difference there ought to be made between a settled resolute purpose and a humble answer to a question put to him concerning them. This was considered only as an effect of that modesty, which was eminent in him to a very high degree and which gave a peculiar lustre to all his other excellencies.

The Author was so averse to all controversies that he thought the best way to refine some low notions was to graft great and high thoughts on them. Therefore, instead of attacking them or disputing about them, he studied to improve them to some pious reflection. If he went along with some of the received notions of the age and place he lived in, he made them much brighter and less offensive by his way of handling them.

If the meanness of style which then prevailed threw him into a little more art than agrees with the chasteness of style which now takes place, it is what all men who have raised the strain of their language have fallen into at first. But I will not pretend to excuse that which (I confess) I admire, and by which I myself have been so sensibly

edified that I have been at some pains to cause to be copied out for the press what the Author wrote in so neglected a manner with his own hand.

The Author was the delight and wonder of all who knew him. His thoughts were noble, and his expressions beautiful. His gesture and pronunciation (peculiar to himself) had a gravity, a majesty, and yet a sweetness in them that many severe judges have often said were beyond all that they had ever seen at home or abroad.

That which gave the greatest authority to all he said was that his life was such a continued course of the sublimest virtue and the most elevated piety that has appeared in this age. Those who have known him the most and the longest have often said that in a course of many years' acquaintance, they scarcely ever saw him once out of that deeply serious state in which they themselves wished to be found in their last minutes.

This may look somewhat high to those who knew him not, but those who did know him and are yet alive will, I am confident, justify the truth of this short character. A fuller account of his life is promised by a better pen, and therefore I will say no more on a subject that I am very sensible is too high for me to manage.

To conclude, I, who reckon that the knowledge I had of him for some years, the few sermons I heard him preach, and the many of his composing which I have read, will be no small article of the account I must render at the last and dreadful day, have thought it one part of my duty to be instrumental in communicating these to others, who I hope will profit more by them than I myself have been able yet to do. And in this hope and assurance, I recommend these discourses and the readers of them to the blessing and grace of Almighty God through His Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

Sermon I

Preface

Many and great are the evils that lodge within the heart of man, and they come forth abundantly both by the tongue and by the hand, yet the heart is not emptied of them; yea, the more it vents them outwardly, the more they increase within: well might he that knew the heart so well call it an evil treasure. We find the Prophet Ezekiel in his 8th chapter led by the Lord in vision to Jerusalem to view the sins of the Jews that remained in time of the captivity; when he had shown him one abomination, he caused him to dig through the wall, to enter and discover more, and so directed him several times from one place to another, and still said, "I will show thee yet greater abominations." Thus is it with those whom the Lord leads into an examination of their own hearts (for men are usually strangers to themselves). By the light of his word and spirit going before them, he lets them see heaps of abominations in every room, and the vilest in the most retired and darkest corners; and truly should he leave them there, they would despair of remedy. No, he makes this discovery on purpose that they should sue to him for help. Do so then, as many as have taken any notice of the evils of your own hearts; tell the Lord they are his own works; he formed the heart of man within him, and they are his own choice too. "My son, give me thy heart." Entreat him to redress all those abuses wherewith Satan and sin have filled it, and then to take possession of it himself, for therein consists its happiness. This is, or should be, a main end of our resorting to his house and service: wrong not yourselves so far as to turn these

serious exercises of religion into an idle divertisement. What a happiness were it if every time you come to his solemn worship, some of your strongest sins did receive a new wound, and some of your weakest graces a new strength.

But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. - James 3:17

God doth know that in the day ye shall eat thereof, your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil, was the first hissing of that old serpent, by which he poisoned mankind in the root. Man, not contented with the impression of God's image in which he was created, lost it by catching at a shadow; climbing higher than his station, he fell far below it; seeking to be more than man, to become as God, he made himself less than man; he lodged not at night in honour, but became as the beasts that perish. Ever since, nature's best wisdom is full of impurity, turbulence, and distemper; nor can anything rectify it but a wisdom from above, that both cleanses and composes the soul. It is first pure, and then peaceable.

This epistle, as some that follow, is called general, both by reason of the dispersion of the parties to whom it is addressed, and the universality of the subject which it treats: containing a great number (if not all) of the necessary directions and comforts of a Christian's life, both from the active and passive parts of it. It is evident that the Apostle's main design is to arm the dispersed Jews against all kinds of temptations, both those of affliction in the first chapter at the second verse, and sinful temptations in verse 13. And having discoursed of two special means of strengthening them against both, speaking to God in prayer, and hearing God speak in his word, in the

two last verses of that first chapter, he recommends, as chief duties of religion and sure evidences of integrity in religion, first meekness and moderation chiefly in their speeches, and then charity and purity in their actions; insisting largely upon the latter in the second chapter, and upon the former, the ruling of the tongue, in this third chapter. And here, towards the end of it, he shows the true opposite springs of miscarriage in speech and action, and of right ordering and regulating of both; evil conversation, strifes, and envyings are the fruits of a base wisdom that is earthly, sensual, and devilish (ἐπίγειος, ψυχική, δαιμονιώδης) in verse 15. But purity, meekness, and mercy are the proper effects and certain signs of heavenly wisdom.

The wisdom that is from above is first pure: its gentleness can agree with anything except impurity; then it is peaceable, it offends nobody except purity offend them; it is not raging and boisterous. It is not only pure, being void of that mire and dirt which the wicked are said to cast out like the sea (Isaiah 57:20), but peaceable likewise, not swelling and restless like the sea, as is there said of the wicked; nor is it only peaceable negatively, not offending, but as the word bears (εἰρηνική) pacific, disposed to make and seek peace, and as it readily offends none, so it is not easily offended; it is gentle and moderate (ἐπιεικής), and if offended (εὐπειθής) easily entreated to forgive. And as it easily passes by men's offenses, so it does not pass by but looks upon their distresses and wants; as full of compassion as it is free from unruly and distempered passions, nor does it rest in an affecting sympathy, its mercy is helpful, full of mercy and good fruits, and it both forgives and pities and gives without partiality (ἀδιάκριτος) and without hypocrisy (ἀνυπόκριτος). The word may as well bear another sense, no less suiting both with this wisdom and these its other qualities: that is, not taking upon it a censorious discerning and judging of others. Those who have most of this

wisdom are least rigid to those who have less of it; I know no better evidence of strength in grace than to bear much with those who are weak in it. And lastly, as it spares the infirmities of others, so it makes not false and vain shows of its own excellencies; it is without hypocrisy. This denies two things: both dissimulation and ostentation; the art of dissembling or hypocrite craft is no part of this wisdom; and for the other, ostentation, surely the air of applause is too light a purchase for solid wisdom. The works of this wisdom may be seen, yea they should be seen, and may possibly be now and then commended; but they should not be done for that low end, either to be seen or to be commended; surely no, being of so noble extraction, this having descended from heaven, will be little careful for the estimation of those that are of the earth, and are but too often of the earth, earthly (ἐπίγειος).

The due order of handling these particulars more fully cannot well be missed: doubtless the subject, wisdom from above, requires our first consideration, next the excellent qualities that are attributed to it, and lastly their order is to be considered; the rather because so clearly expressed, first pure, then peaceable, etc.

Wisdom from above: there are two things in that: there's the general term of wisdom, common to diverse sorts of wisdom, though most eminently and truly belonging to this best wisdom. Then there is the birth or original of this wisdom, serving as its difference to specify and distinguish it from all the rest: wisdom from above. Wisdom in general is a very plausible word among men; who is there that would not willingly pass for wise? Yea, often those who are least of all such are most desirous to be accounted such, and where this fails them, they usually make up that want in their own conceit and strong opinion; nor do men only thus love the reputation of wisdom, but they naturally desire to be wise, as they do to be happy; yet through

corrupt nature's blindness, they do as naturally mistake and fall short both of the one and the other, and being once wrong, the more progress they make, they are further out of the way. And pretending to wisdom in a false way, they still befool themselves, as the Apostle speaks (Romans 1:22), "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools" (φάσκοντες εἶναι σοφοὶ ἐμωράνθησαν).

Our Apostle, v. 15, speaking of that wicked wisdom that is fruitful of wrongs, strifes, and debates, and that is only abusively called wisdom, shows what kind of wisdom it is by three notable characters: earthly, natural, and devilish. Though they are here jointly attributed to one and the same subject, we may make use of them to signify some differences of false wisdom. There is an infernal, or devilish wisdom, proper for contriving cruelties and oppressions, or subtle shifts and deceits that make atheism a main basis and pillar of state policy. Such are those that devise mischief upon their beds, etc. (Micah 2). This is serpentine wisdom, not joined with, but most opposite to, dove-like simplicity.

There is an earthly wisdom that does not draw so deep in impiety as the other, yet is sufficient to keep a man out of all acquaintance with God and divine matters, and is drawing his eye perpetually downwards, employing him in the pursuit of such things as cannot fill the soul, except it be with anguish and vexation (Ezekiel 28:4-5). That dexterity of gathering riches, where it is not attended with the Christian art of rightly using them, abases men's souls and wholly indisposes them for this wisdom that is from above. There is a natural wisdom far more plausible than the other two, more harmless than that hellish wisdom, and more refined than that earthly wisdom, yet no more able to make man holy and happy than they. Natural (ψυχική) is the word the Apostle St. Paul uses (1 Corinthians 2), naming the natural man by his better part, his soul;

intimating that the soul, even in its highest faculty, the understanding, and that in the highest pitch of excellency to which nature can raise it, is blind in spiritual objects. Things that are above it cannot be known but by a wisdom from above. Nature neither affords this wisdom, nor can it of itself acquire it.

This is to advertise us that we mistake not morality and common knowledge, even of divine things, for the wisdom that is from above. This may raise a man high above the vulgar, as the tops of the highest mountains leave the valleys below them, yet it is still as far short of true supernatural wisdom as the highest earth is of the highest sphere. There is one main point of the method of this wisdom that is of most hard digestion to a natural man, and the more naturally wise he is, the worse he likes it. If any man would be wise, let him become a fool that he may become wise (1 Corinthians 3:18). There is nothing that gives nature a greater prejudice against religion than this initial point of self-denial. When men of eminent learning or strong politicians hear that if they will come to Christ, they must renounce their own wisdom to be fit for his, many of them go away as sorrowful as the young man when he heard of selling all his goods and giving them to the poor.

Jesus Christ is that eternal and substantial wisdom that came from above to deliver men from perishing in their affected folly, as you find it at large (Proverbs 8). St. Paul, in the first chapter of his first epistle to the Corinthians, calls him the wisdom of God (v. 24). That shows his excellency in himself, and verse 30 tells us that he is made of God our wisdom. That shows his usefulness to us, and by him alone is this infused wisdom from above conveyed to us. In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Colossians 2:3). And from his fullness (if at all) we all receive grace for grace; and of all

graces, first some measures of this wisdom, without which no man can know himself, much less can he know God.

Now this supernatural wisdom has in it both speculation and prudence. It is contemplative and practical. These two must not be separated: "I, wisdom, dwell with prudence" (Proverbs 8:12). This wisdom, in its contemplative part, reads Christ much and discovers in him a new world of hidden excellencies unknown to this old world. There are treasures of wisdom in him (Colossians 2:3), but they are hid, and no eye sees them but that which is enlightened with this wisdom. No, it is impossible, as he says, *όρατα*. But when the renewed understanding of a Christian is once initiated into this study, it both grows daily more and more apprehensive, and Christ becomes more communicative of himself and makes the soul acquainted with the amiable countenance of his Father in him reconciled. No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him (John 1:18). What wonder if the unlettered and despised Christian knows more of the mysteries of heaven than the naturalist, though both wise and learned? Christ admits the believer into his bosom, and he is in the bosom of the Father.

But withal know that all this knowledge, though speculatively high, yet descends to practice; as it learns what God is, so it thence teaches man what he should be. This wisdom flows from heaven, and a heavenly conversation flows from it, as we find it there characterized by these practical graces of purity, peace, meekness, etc.

This wisdom represents to us the purity of God's nature (1 John 3:3). It gives the soul an eye to see the comeliness and beauty of purity, as the philosopher said of virtue: to the end it might be loved, he would wish no more but that it could be seen. And as it thus morally

persuades, so by an insensible virtue, it assimilates the soul to Christ by frequent contemplation. It also produces all the motives to holiness and obedience; it begets these precious qualities in the soul. It gives a Christian a view of the matchless virtues that are in Christ and stirs him up to a diligent, though imperfect, imitation of them. It sets before us Christ's spotless purity, in whose mouth there was no guile, and so invites us to purity. It represents the perpetual calmness of his spirit, that no tempest could reach to disturb it; in his mouth, there was no contentious noise; his voice was not heard in the streets. And this recommends peaceableness and gentleness, and so in the rest here mentioned.

Hence I conceive may be fitly learned for our use, seeing there is a due wisdom and knowledge necessary for guidance and directing in the ways of purity and peace.

It is evident that gross ignorance cannot consist with the truth of religion, much less can it be a help and advantage to it. I shall never deny that a false superstitious religion stands in need of it; not too much scripture wisdom for the people: the pomp of that vain religion, like court masks, shows best by candlelight; fond nature likes it well; the day of spiritual wisdom would discover its imposture too clearly. But to let their foul devotion pass (for such it must needs be, that is born of so black a mother as ignorance) let this wisdom at least be justified by those that pretend to be her children. It is lamentable that amongst us, where knowledge is not withheld, men should through sloth and love of darkness deprive themselves of it. What abundance of almost brutish ignorance is amongst the commons? And thence uncleanness and all manner of wickedness; a darkness that both hides and increases impurity. What's the reason of so much impiety and iniquity in all places but the want of the knowledge of God? (Hosea 4:1-2 and 2 Thessalonians 1:8). Not

knowing Jesus Christ and not obeying his Gospel are joined together. It will be found true that where there is no obedience, there is no right knowledge of Christ: but out of all question, where there is not a competency of knowledge, there can be no obedience; and as these two lodge together, so observe what attends them both. He shall come in flaming fire to render vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thessalonians 1:8).

And if there be any that think to shroud unpunished amongst the thickets of ignorance, especially amidst the means of knowledge, take notice of this: though it may hide the deformity of sin from your own sight for a time, it cannot palliate it from the piercing eye, nor cover it from the revenging hand of divine justice. As you would escape then that wrath to come, come to wisdom's school, and how simple soever ye be as to this world, if you would not perish with the world, learn to be wise unto salvation.

And truly it is mainly important for this effect, that the ministers of the Gospel be active and dexterous in imparting this wisdom to their people. If they would have their conversation to be holy, peaceable, and fruitful, etc., the most expedient way is once to principle them well in the fundamentals of religion, for therein is their great defect. How can they walk evenly and regularly so long as they are in the dark? One main thing is to be often pointing at the way to Christ, the fountain of this wisdom. You bid them be clothed and clothe them not.

How needful then is it that pastors themselves be seers indeed, as the prophets were called of old, not only faithful but wise dispensers, as our Saviour speaks (St. Luke 12:42). That they be διδακτικός, able and apt to teach (1 Timothy 3:2). Laudable is the prudence that tries

much the Church's storehouses, the seminaries of learning, but withal, it is not to be forgotten that as a due furniture of learning is very requisite for this employment, so it is not sufficient. When one is duly enriched that way, there is yet one thing wanting that grows not in schools: except this infused wisdom from above season and sanctify all other endowments, they remain κοινός, common and unholy, and therefore unfit for the sanctuary. Amongst other weak pretences to Christ's favour in the last day, this is one: "We have preached in thy name," yet says Christ, "I never knew you." Surely then, they knew not him, and yet they preached him. Cold and lifeless, though never so fine and well contrived, must those discourses be that are of an unknown Christ. Pastors are called angels, and therefore though they use the secondary helps of knowledge, they are mainly to bring their message from above, from the fountain, the head of this pure wisdom.

Pure: If it comes from above it must needs be pure originally, yea it is formally pure too, being a main trait of God's renewed image in the soul. By this wisdom the understanding is both resigned and strengthened to entertain right conceptions of God in his nature and works. And this is primarily necessary, that the mind be not infected with false opinions in religion. If the springhead be polluted, the streams cannot be pure; it is more important than men usually think, for a good life. But that which I suppose is here chiefly intended is that it is effectively and practically pure. It purifies the heart (Acts 15:9), said of faith (which in some sense and acceptation differs not much from this wisdom), and consequently the words and actions that flow from the heart.

This purity that true wisdom works is contrary to all pollution. We know then in some measure what it is, it rests to inquire where it is, and there is the difficulty; it is far easier to design it in itself than to

find it among men. Who can say I have made my heart clean? (Proverbs 20:9). Look upon the greatest part of mankind, and you may know at first sight that purity is not to be looked for among them. They suffer it not to come near them, much less to dwell with them and within them; they hate the very semblance of it in others, and themselves delight in intemperance and all manner of licentiousness, like foolish children striving who shall go furthest into the mire. These cannot say they have made clean their hearts, for all their words and actions will belie them. If you come to the mere moralist, the world's honest man, and ask him; it may be he will tell you he has cleansed his heart, but believe him not. It will appear he is not yet cleansed because he says he has done it himself, for (you know) there must be some other besides man at this work. Again, he rising no higher than nature, has none of this heavenly wisdom in him, and therefore is without this purity too. But if you chance to take notice of some well-skilled hypocrite, everything you meet with makes you almost confident that there is purity; yet if he be strictly put to it, he may make some good account of the pains he has taken to refine his tongue and his public actions, but he dare not say he has made clean his heart. It troubles his peace to be asked the question: he never intended to banish sin, but to retire it to his innermost and best room, that so it might dwell unseen within him, and where then should it lodge but in his heart? Yet possibly, because what is outward is so fair, and man cannot look deeper to contradict him, he may embolden himself to say he is inwardly suitable to his appearance. But there is a day at hand that shall, to his endless shame, at once discover both his secret impurity and his impudence in denying it.

After these, there follows a few despised and melancholy persons (at least as to outward appearance) who are almost always hanging down their heads and complaining of abundant sinfulness. And sure,

purity cannot be expected in these who are so far from it by their own confession. Yet the truth is that such purity, as is here below, will either be found to lodge among these or nowhere. Be not deceived, think not that they who loathe and (as they can) fly from the unholiness of the world are therefore taken with the conceit of their own holiness. But as their perfect purity of justification is by Christ's imputed righteousness, so likewise they will know and do always acknowledge that their inherent holiness is from above too, from the same fountain, Jesus Christ. The wisdom from above is pure; this their engagement to heaven, for it excludes vaunting and boasting. And besides that, it is imperfect, troubled and stained with sin, which is enough to keep them humble. Their daily sad experience will not suffer them to be so mistaken; their many faults of infirmity cannot but keep them from this presumptuous fault. There is a generation indeed that is pure in their own eyes (Proverbs 30:12), but they are such as are not washed from their filthiness. They that are washed are still bewailing that they again contract so much defilement. The most purified Christians are they that are most sensible of their impurity. Therefore, I called not this an universal freedom from pollution but an universal detestation of it. They that are thus pure are daily defiled with many sins, but they cannot be in love with any sin at all, nor do they willingly dispense with the smallest sins, which a natural man either sees not to be sin (though his dim moonlight discover grosser evils), or if he does see them, yet he judges it too much niceness to choose a great inconvenience rather than a little sin. Again, they differ in another particular: a natural man may be so far in love with virtue after his manner as to dislike his own faults and resolve to amend them, but yet he would think it a great weakness to sit down and mourn for sin and to afflict his soul, as the scripture speaks. The Christian's repentance goes not so lightly, there is a great deal more work in it (2 Corinthians 7:11). There is not only indignation against impurity, but it proceeds to revenge. The saints

we read of in scripture were ashamed of their impurity but never of their tears for it. Let the world enjoy their own thoughts and account it folly, yet sure the Christian that delights in purity, seeing he cannot be free from daily sin, when he retires himself at night, is then best contented when his eyes serve him most plentifully to weep out the stains of the past day. Yet he knows withal that it is only his Redeemer's blood that takes away the guilt of them. This is the condition of those that are truly, though not yet fully, cleansed from the pollutions of the world by the spirit of wisdom and purity. What mean they then, that would argue themselves out of this number because they find yet much dross left, and that they are not so defecated and refined as they would wish to be? On the contrary, this hatred of pollution testifies strongly that the contrary of it, purity, is there. And though its beginnings be small, doubt not, it shall in the end be victorious. The smoking of this flax shows indeed that there is gross matter there, but it witnesses likewise that there is fire in it too; and though it be little, we have Christ's own word for it that it shall not be quenched; and if he favours it, no other power shall be able to quench it. You find not indeed absolute holiness in your persons, nor in your best performances, yet if you breathe and follow after it, if the pulse of the heart beats thus, if the main current of your affection be towards purity, if sin be in you as your disease and greatest grief and not as your delight, then take courage, you are as pure as travellers can be. And notwithstanding that impure spirit, Satan, and the impurity of your own spirits vex you daily with temptations and often foil you, yet in spite of them all, you shall arrive safe at home where perfection dwells.

Wisdom from above is Pure. Be ashamed then of your extreme folly, you that take pleasure in any kind of uncleanness, especially seeing God hath reformed and purged his house amongst us. You that are, or should be, his living temples, remain not unreformed: if you do,

Church reformation will be so far from profiting you that, as a clearer light, it will but serve to make your impurity both more visible and more inexcusable. If you mean that the Holy Ghost should dwell with you, entertain him, avoiding both spiritual and fleshly pollutions. The word here used doth more particularly signify chastity, and certainly, wherever this wisdom from above is, this comely grace is one of her attendants. Whatever any have been in times past, let all be persuaded henceforth to mortify all lustful and carnal affections. Know that there is more true and lasting pleasure in the contempt of unlawful pleasures than in the enjoyment of them. Grieve not then the good Spirit of God with actions or speeches, yea, or with thoughts, that are impure. The unholy soul, like the mystical Babylon (Revelation 18:2), makes itself a cage of unclean birds and a habitation of filthy spirits, and if it continues to be such, it must, when it dislodges, take up its habitation with cursed spirits forever in utter darkness. But as for those that are sincerely and affectionately pure, that is, pure in heart, our Saviour hath pronounced their begun happiness: "Blessed are the pure in heart" (and assured them of full happiness), "for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8). This wisdom is sent from heaven on purpose to guide the elect thither by the way of purity. And mark how well their reward is suited to their labour: their frequent contemplating and beholding of God's purity as they could, while they were on their journey, and their labouring to be like him, shall bring them to sit down in glory, and to be forever the pure beholders of that purest object. They shall see God. What this is, we cannot tell you, nor can you conceive it. But walk heavenwards in purity, and long to be there, where you shall know what it means; for you shall see him as he is. Now to that blessed Trinity be praise forever.

SERMON II.

PREFACE

"I will return to my place," saith the Lord by His prophet, "till they acknowledge their offence and seek My face. In their affliction, they will seek Me early." The Father of Mercies hides Himself from His children, not to lose them, but that they may seek Him; and may learn, having found Him, to keep closer by Him than formerly. He threatens them to keep them from punishment; if His threatening works submission, it is well; if not, He punishes them gently to save them from destruction. He seeks no more but that they acknowledge their offence and seek His face. Wonderful clemency! For who can forbear to confess multitudes of offences that know themselves? And who can choose but seek Thy face that ever saw Thy face and that know Thee? "In their affliction, they will seek Me early." He that prays not till affliction comes and forces him to it is very slothful; but he that prays not in affliction is altogether senseless. Certainly, they that at this time are not more than ordinarily fervent in prayer, or do not at least desire and strive to be so, cannot well think that there is any spiritual life within them. Surely, it is high time to stir up ourselves to prayers and tears. All may bear arms in that kind of service; weak women may be strong in prayer, and those tears wherein they usually abound upon other occasions cannot be so well spent as in this way. Let them not run out in howlings and impatience, but bring them, by bewailing sins, private as well as public, to quench this public fire. And ye men, yea, ye men of courage, account it no disparagement thus to weep; we read often of David's tears, which was no stain to his valour. That cloud that hangs

over us, which the frequent vapours of our sins have made, except it dissolve and fall down again in these sweet showers of godly tears, is certainly reserved to be the matter of a dreadful storm. Be instant, everyone, in secret for the averting of this wrath, and let us now again unite the cries of our hearts for this purpose to our compassionate God, in the name and mediation of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Job XXXIV. 31, 32

Surely it is meet to be said unto God, "I have borne chastisement, I will not offend anymore."

That which I see not, teach Thou me: If I have done iniquity, I will do no more.

The great sin, and the great misery of man is, the forgetting of God; and the great end and use of His works and of His word is, to teach us the right remembrance and consideration of Him, in all estates. These words do particularly instruct us in the application of our thoughts towards Him in the time of affliction. The shortness and the various signification of the words used in the original gives occasion to some other readings, and another sense of them. But this we have in our translation, being not only very profitable but very congruous, both to the words of the primitive text, and to the contexture of the discourse, I shall keep to it, without dividing your thoughts by the mentioning of any other. Neither will I lead you so far about, as to speak of the great dispute of this book, and the question about which it is held; he that speaks here, though the youngest of the company, yet as a wise and calm-spirited man, closes all with a discourse of excellent temper, and full of grave useful instructions, amongst which this is one.

Surely it is meet to be said, or spoken to God. This speaking to God, though it may be vocal, yet it is not necessarily nor chiefly so, but is always mainly, and may often be, only mental; without this, the words of the mouth, however well chosen and well expressed, are to God of no account or signification at all. But if the heart speaks, even when there is not a word in the mouth, it is that which He hearkens to, and regards that speech, though made by a voice that none hears but He, and is a language that none understands but He.

But it is a rare, unfrequented thing, this communing of the heart with God, speaking its thoughts to Him concerning itself, and concerning Him and His dealing with it, and the purposes and intentions it hath towards Him, which is the speech here recommended, and is that divine exercise of meditation, and soliloquy of the soul with itself, and with God, hearkening what the Lord God speaks to us, within us, and our hearts echoing and resounding His words, as Ps. 27. 8, 9. And opening to Him our thoughts of them, and of ourselves, though they stand open, and He sees them all, even when we tell Him not of them, yet because He loves us, He loves to hear them of our own speaking. "Let me hear thy voice, for it is sweet"; as a father delights in the little stammering, lisping language of his beloved child. And if the reflex affection of children be in us, we will love also to speak with our Father, and to tell Him all our mind, and to be often with Him in the entertainments of our secret thoughts.

But the most of men are little within, either they wear out their hours in vain discourse with others, or possibly vainer discourses with themselves, even those that are not of the worst sort, and possibly that have their times of secret prayer, yet do not so delight to think of God and to speak with Him, as they do to be conversant in other affairs, and companies, and discourses, in which there is a great deal of froth and emptiness. Men think by talking of many things, to be

refreshed, and yet when they have done, find that it is nothing; and that they had much better have been alone, or have said nothing. Our thoughts and speeches in most things run to waste, yea are defiled, as water spilled on the ground, is both lost, cannot be gathered up again, and it is polluted, mingled with dust. But no word spoken to God, from the serious sense of a holy heart is lost; He receives it, and returns it into our bosom with advantage. A soul that delights to speak to Him, will find that He also delights to speak to it. And this communication certainly is the sweetest and happiest choice, to speak little with men, and much with God. One short word, such as this here, spoken to God, in a darted thought, eases the heart more when it is afflicted, than the largest discourses, and complainings, to the greatest and most powerful of men; or the kindest and most friendly. It gives not only ease but joy, to say to God, "I have sinned, yet I am thine," or as here, "I have borne chastisement, I will no more offend." The time of affliction is peculiarly a time of speaking to God, and such speech as this, is peculiarly befitting such a time. And this is one great recommendation of affliction, that it is a time of wiser, and more sober thoughts; a time of the returning of the mind inwards and upwards. A high place, fullness, and pleasure draws the mind more outwards; great light, and white colours disgregate the sight of the eye, and the very thoughts of the mind too. And men find that the night is a fitter season for deep thoughts. It's better, says Solomon, to go to the house of mourning, than to the house of feasting; those blacks, made the mind more serious. It is a rare thing to find much retirement unto God, much humility, and brokenness of spirit, true purity and spiritualness of heart in the affluences and great prosperities of the world. It is no easy thing to carry a very full cup even, and to digest well the fatness of a great estate, and great place. They are not to be envied that have them; even though they be of the better sort of men, it's a thousand to one, but that they shall be losers by the gains and advancements of this world, suffering

proportionably great abatements of their best advantages, by their prosperity. The generality of men, while they are at ease, do securely neglect God, and little mind either to speak to Him, or to hear Him speak to them. God complains thus of His own people, "I spoke to them in their prosperity and they would not hear." The noises of coach-wheels, of their pleasures, and of their great affairs so fill their ears, that the still voice, wherein God is, cannot be heard. "I will bring her into the wilderness, and there I will speak to her heart," says God of His church; there the heart is more at quiet to hear God, and to speak to Him, and is disposed to speak in the style here prescribed, humbly and repentingly.

I have borne chastisement - The speaking thus unto God under affliction signifies:

1. That our affliction is from His hand, and to the acknowledgment of this truth, the very natural consciences of men do incline them. Though trouble be the general lot of mankind, yet it doth not come on him by an improvidential fatality. Though man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward (Job 5), yet it comes not out of the dust. It is no less true, and in itself no less clear, that all the good we enjoy, and all the evil we suffer comes from the same hand; but we are naturally more sensible of evil than of good, and therefore do more readily reflect upon the original and causes of it. Our distresses lead us unto the notice of the righteous God inflicting them, and our own unrighteous ways procuring them, and provoking Him so to do, and therefore it is meet to speak in this submissive humble language to Him. It is by all means necessary to speak to Him; He is the party we have to deal withal, or to speak to, even in those afflictions, whereof men are the intervenient visible causes. They are indeed but instrumental causes, the rod and staff in His hand that smites

us; therefore our business is with Him, in whose supreme hand alone the mitigations and increases, the continuance, and the ending of our troubles lie. “Who gave Jacob to the spoil and Israel to the robbers? Did not the Lord against whom we have sinned?” (Isaiah 42:24) So in Lamentations 1:14, “The yoke of my transgressions is bound on by Thy hand.” Therefore it is altogether necessary in all afflictions to speak to Him, and as it’s necessary to speak to Him, it is meet to speak thus to Him, “I have borne chastisement, I will no more offend.” These words have in them, the true composure of real repentance, humble submission, and holy resolution. “I have borne chastisement,” that is, I have justly borne it, and do heartily submit to it. I bear it justly, and take it well. Lord, I acquit Thee, and accuse myself. This language becomes the innocentest person in the world in their suffering. Job knew it well, and did often acknowledge it in his preceding speeches; though sometimes in the heat of dispute, and opposition to the uncharitable, and unjust imputations of his friends, he seems to overstrain the assertion of his own integrity, which Elihu here corrects. You know he cries out, “I have sinned against Thee, what shall I do unto Thee, O thou preserver of man!” and in Job 9:30-31, “If I wash myself with snow-water, and make my hands never so clean, yet shalt Thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me.”

Vain foolish persons fret and foam at the miscarriage of a cause they apprehend to be righteous, but this is a great vanity and inconsiderate temerity in not observing the great and apparent unrighteousness in the persons managing it. But though both the cause and the persons were just to the greatest height imaginable amongst men, yet still were it meet to speak thus unto God in the lowest acknowledgements and confessions, that righteousness

belongs unto Him, and unto us shame and confusion of face. So says the church in Lamentations 3:42, "The Lord is righteous, for I have rebelled against His commandments." Though affliction is not always designedly intended as the chastisement of some particular sin, yet where sin is (and that is the case of all the sons of Adam) affliction coming in, may safely be considered in its natural cognation and alliance with sin, and so press forth humble confessions of sin, and resolutions against it. And thus in Leviticus 26:41, "They shall accept of the punishment of their iniquity," shall take it humbly and penitently and kiss the rod.

Oh! That there were such a heart in us! That instead of empty words that scatter themselves in the wind, our many vain discourses we hold one with another, concerning our past and present sufferings, and further fears, and disputing of many fruitless and endless questions, we were more abundantly turning our speech this way, in unto God, and saying, "We desire to give Thee glory, and take shame to ourselves, and to bear our chastisement, and to offend no more, to return each from his evil way, and to gain this by the furnace, the purging away of our dross, our many and great iniquities, our oaths, and cursings, and lying, our deceit, and oppressions, and pride, and covetousness, our base love of ourselves, and hating one another; that we may be delivered from the tyranny of our own lusts, and passions, and in other things let the Lord do with us as seems good in His eyes." Speaking to God in Ephraim's words, Jeremiah 31:18-20, words not unlike these, would stir His bowels, as there. As it is said, that one string perfectly tuned to another, being touched, the other stirs of itself, when a stubborn child leaves struggling under the rod, and turns to entreating, the father then leaves striking; nothing overcomes him but that. When a man says unto God, "Father I have provoked Thee to this, but pardon, and through Thy grace I will do

so no more,” then the rod is thrown aside, and the Father of mercies, and His humbled child fall to mutual tenderness and embraces.

What I see not teach Thou me, &c. The great article of conversion is the disengagement of the heart from the love of sin. In that posture, as it actually forsakes whatsoever it perceives to be amiss, so it stands in an absolute readiness to return to every duty that yet lies hidden, upon the first discovery; that is here the genuine voice of a repentant sinner, “What I see not teach Thou me, &c.”

This is a very necessary suit, even for the most discerning and clearest-sighted penitent, both in reference to the commandment and rule for discovering the general nature and several kinds of sin; and withal for the application of this general light, to the examen of a man’s own heart and ways, that so he may have a more exact and particular account of his own sins.

The former is the knowledge of the laws of God, and rule by which a man is to try, and to judge himself. The most knowing are not above the need of this request; yea, I am persuaded, the most knowing know best how much they need it, and are most humbled in themselves in the conscience of their ignorance and darkness in divine things, and are most earnest and pressing in this daily supplication, for increases of light, and spiritual knowledge from Him who is the fountain of it, “What I see not teach Thou me.” On the other side, the least knowing, are often the most confident that they know all; and swelled with a conceited sufficiency of their model and determination of all things, both dogmatical and practical. And therefore are the most imperious and magisterial in their conclusions, and the most impatient of contradiction, or even of the most modest dissent.

The wisest and holiest persons speak always in the humblest and most self-deprecating style of their own knowledge, and that not with an affectation of modesty, but in the real sense of the thing as it is, and the sincere account they give of it. And that commonly when they are declaring themselves most solemnly, as in the sight of God, or speaking in supplication to Him with whom they dare least of all dissemble. Whoever he was that spoke these words in Proverbs 30, surely he was a man of eminent wisdom and piety, and yet begins thus, "Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man. I have neither learned wisdom, nor have I the knowledge of the Holy." And though he was so diligent a student, and so great a proficient in the law of God, yet how importunate a petitioner is he for the understanding of it, as if he knew nothing at all? Besides the like expressions in other Psalms, in that one Psalm that, being of such length, has nothing but the breathing forth of his affection to the word and law of God, how often does he in it reiterate that, "Teach me Thy statutes." So often that a carnal mind is tempted to grow weary of it, as a nauseating tautology; but he made it still new, with the freshness and vehemency of his affection. "Make me to understand the way of Thy precepts; give me understanding, and I shall keep Thy law." And "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may see the wonders of Thy law"; unseal mine eyes, as if still veiled and dark. These are the earnest and nobly ambitious desires that daily solicit holy hearts, and stir them to solicit the Teacher of hearts, to be admitted more into the secrets and recesses of divine knowledge, not to those abysses that God intends should be secret still, and from which He has barred out our curiosity, as the forbidden tree of knowledge. These secrets that belong to Himself alone, and concern us not to inquire after, and certainly to be wading in these deeps, is the way to be drowned in them. "The searcher of Majesty shall be oppressed with glory"; yet, there is in man a perverse preposterous desire to pore upon such things as are on purpose hidden, that we

should not inquire after them; and to seek after useless empty speculations of them, which is a luxury and intemperance of the understanding, like unto that, and springing from that, which at first undid us in the root. These are times full of those empty airy questions, and notions in which there is no clearness nor certainty to be attained, and if it were, yet would serve to little or no purpose, not making the man that thinks he has found them out, one jot the better or holier man than he was before. "What avails it," says that devout author, "to dispute and discourse high concerning the Trinity, and want humility, and so displease that Trinity?" The light and knowledge suited according to the intent of this copy, is of another nature, such as purifies the heart, and rectifies the life. "What I see not teach Thou me." That is, of such things as may serve this end, that if I have done iniquity I may do it no more. This is sound and solid knowledge, such a light as enflames the heart with the love of God, and of the beauties of holiness; and still as it grows, makes those to grow likewise. Such are still, we see, David's multiplied supplications in that Psalm; not to know reserved and unuseful things, but "Hide not Thy commandments from me. Thy hands have made me and fashioned me." Now, what is that Thy creature and workmanship begs of Thee? What is that which will complete my being, and make me do honour to my Maker? This is it, "Give me understanding that I may learn Thy commandments." You that would be successful supplicants in this request, wean your hearts from this vanity of desire, such knowledge is as the cypress-trees, fair and tall, but fruitless and sapless. Apply all you know to the purging out of sin, and intend all the further knowledge you desire to that same end. Seek to be acquainted with higher rules of mortification, and self-denial, and charity, than yet you have either practised, or possibly so much as thought on; that by these, your affections and actions may be advanced to greater degrees of purity, and conformity with the holiness of God. And for this end, beg of Him to teach you

what you see not in the exactness of the law and rule. And withal, which is the other thing in this word, that what you see not in the application of it, and search of yourself, He would likewise show you that. For in that, we are commonly as undiscerning and dim-sighted, as in the other; even where men have some notion of the rule and their duty, yet they perceive not their own, even their gross recessions, and declinings from it. Love is a blinding thing, and above all love, self-love; and every man is naturally his own flatterer, he deals not faithfully and sincerely with himself in the search of his own evils. Now this we are to entreat of God, to be led into ourselves, and to be applied to the work of self-searching, by His own hand, not only to have a right apprehension of the law given us, but a true sight of ourselves. Oh! How many hidden, undiscerned, yea unsuspected impurities and follies are there in the hearts of those that are the most diligent in this inquiry, much more in the greater part, even of such as cannot absolutely be denied the name of good men. Some honest intentions, and good desires there are in them; but they are slothful, and unwilling to go to this painful business of trying and judging themselves, and when they set to it, many secret corners, and in those many latent inordinacies do escape their search. "Cleanse me from secret faults," says David, that is, not only those hidden from men, but even from myself, as is clearly his meaning, by the words preceding, "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse Thou me from secret faults." Therefore is it necessary that we desire light of God, "The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord," says Solomon, "searching the innermost parts of the belly"; but it is a candle unlighted, when He does not illuminate it for that search. Oh! What a deal of vanity and love of this world, envy and secret pride, lurks in many of our hearts, that we do not at all perceive, till God causes us to see it, leading us in as He did the prophet in the vision, to see the idolatry of the Jews in his very temple, by which they had provoked Him to forsake it, and go far from His sanctuary; and having

discovered one parcel, leads him in further, and makes him enter through the wall, and adds often, "Son of man hast thou seen these? I will cause thee see yet more abominations, and yet more abominations." Thus is it within many of us that should be His temples, but we have a multitude of images of jealousy, one lying hid behind another, till He thus discovers them to us. Oh! What need have we to entreat Him thus, "What I see not show Thou me!"

Now in both these, both in the knowledge of our rule and of ourselves, though there may be some useful subserviency of the ministry of men; yet the great Teacher of the true knowledge of His law, and of Himself, and of ourselves, is God. Men may speak to the ear, but His chair is in heaven, that teaches hearts, *Cathedram habet in caelo*. Matchless Teacher! that teacheth more in one hour than men can do in a whole age! That can cure the invincible unteachableness of the dullest heart, gives understanding to the simple, and opens the eyes of the blind. So then would we be made wise, wise for eternity, learned in real living divinity, let us sit down at His feet and make this our continual request, "What I see not, teach Thou me."

And if I have done, &c. That's any iniquity that I yet know not of, any hidden sin, let me but once see it, and, I hope, Thou shalt see it no more within me; not willingly lodged and entertained. This speaks an entire total giving up all sin, and proclaiming utter defiance and enmity against it, casting out what is already found out without delay, and resolving that still in further search, as it shall be more discovered, it shall be forthwith dislodged, without a thought of sparing or partial indulgence to anything that is sin, or like it, or may any way befriend it, or be an occasion and incentive of it. This is that absolute renouncing of sin, and surrender of the whole soul, and our whole selves to God: which whosoever do not heartily consent to and

resolve on, their religion is in vain, and (which is here the point) their affliction is in vain; whatsoever they have suffered, they have gained nothing by all their sufferings, if their hearts remain still self-willed, stubborn, untamed, and unpliant to God. And this makes their miseries out of measure miserable, and their sins out of measure sinful; whereas were it thus qualified, and had it any operation this way towards the subjecting of their hearts unto God, affliction were not to be called misery, but would go under the title of a blessedness: “Blessed is the man whom Thou correctest and teachest him out of Thy law.” That suiting with this here desired, “I have borne chastisement: What I see not teach Thou me, and if I have done iniquity, I will do it no more.” Oh! Were it thus with us, M. B., how might we rejoice, and insert into our praises all that is come upon us, if it had wrought or advanced anything of this kind within us, this blessed compliance with the will of God, not entertaining anything knowingly that displeases Him; finding a pleasure in the denial and destruction of our own most beloved pleasures at His appointment, and for His sake, whatsoever is in us, and dearest to us, that would offend us, that would draw us to offend Him, were it the right hand let it be cut off, or the right eye let it be plucked out: Or to make shorter work, let the whole man die at once, crucified with Jesus, that we may be henceforth dead to sin, dead to the world, dead to ourselves, and alive only to God.

SERMON III

PREFACE

There is no exercise so delightful to those that are truly godly as the solemn worship of God, if they find His powerful and sensible presence in it; and indeed, there is nothing on earth more like to heaven than that is. But when He withdraws Himself and withholds the influence and breathings of His Spirit in His service, then good souls find nothing more lifeless and uncomfortable; but there is this difference, even at such a time betwixt them and those that have no spiritual life in them at all, that they find, and are sensible of this difference, whereas the others know not what it means. And for the most part, the greatest number of those that meet together with a profession to worship God are such as do not understand this difference. Custom and formality draw many to the ordinary places of public worship, and fill too much of the room. And sometimes novelty and curiosity to places not ordinary have a large share. But how few are there that come on purpose to meet with God in His worship, and to find His power in it strengthening their weak faith, and weakening their strong corruptions; affording them provision of spiritual strength and comfort against times of trial: And, in a word, advancing them some steps forward in their journey towards heaven, where happiness and perfection dwell? Certainly these sweet effects are to be found in these ordinances, if we would look after them; let it grieve us then, that we have so often lost our labour in the worship of God through our own neglect, and entreat the Lord, that at this time, He would not send us away empty, for how weak so ever the means be, if He put His strength, the work shall be done, in some measure, to His glory, and our edification. Now that He may be pleased to do so, to leave a blessing behind Him, let us pray, &c.

Isaiah XXVIII. 5, 6

In that day shall the Lord of hosts be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty unto the residue of His people: And for a

spirit of judgment to him that sitteth in judgment, and for strength to them that turn the battle to the gate.

ALL the Works of Divine Providence are full of Wisdom and Justice, even everyone severally considered; yet we observe them best to be such, when we take notice of their order, and mutual aspect one to another, whether in the succession of times, or such passages as are contemporary, and fall in together, at one and the same time. As when the Lord brings notable Judgments upon the proud Workers of Iniquity, and at the same time confers special Mercies on His own People, who is there that may not perceive Justice and Mercy illustrating, and beautifying one another? It is true, the full reward and perfect rest of the Godly, is not here below, they would be sorry if it were; nor is this the place of plenary punishment for the ungodly. Men may look for a Judgment too, yet the Lord is pleased at sometimes to give some resemblances, and pledges, as it were, of that great and last Judgment, in remarkable passages of Justice and Mercy, at one and the same time; and such a time it is, that the Prophet foretells in this his Sermon, which concerns the two Sister Kingdoms of Israel and Judah. Having denounced a heavy Calamity to come upon Israel, under the name of Ephraim, he comforts those of Judah, under the name of the residue of His People. They not being so grossly corrupted as the other were, he stays them with this promise: In that day, saith he, when the other shall be overwhelmed, as with a deluge, the Lord of hosts shall be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty unto the residue of His people.

The promise is made up of three benefits, yet the three are but one; or rather, one is all the three to them. The Lord of hosts; it is He, that shall be their honour, wisdom and strength. He shall be a crown, &c. But first, a word of the circumstance of time, In that day.

That Sovereign Lord, who at first set up the lights of heaven to distinguish times and seasons, by their constant motion, and likewise, by His Supreme Providence, ruling the world, hath fixed the periods of states and kingdoms, and decreed their revolutions, their rising, ascending, and their height, with their decline and setting; hath by a special Providence determined those changes and vicissitudes that befall His Church. That which the Psalmist speaks, in his own particular, Psalm 31:15, holds of each believer, and of the Church, which they make up in all ages and places: I said thou art my God, my times are in thy hand; a sure and steady hand indeed, and therefore he builds his confidence upon it. Verse 13: They took counsel against me, but I trusted in thee. And upon this, he prays in faith that the face of God may shine upon him, and the wicked may be ashamed.

Thus then, as many as are looking after a day of mercy, to the Church of God, pray and believe upon this ground, that the time of it is neither in the frail hands of those that favour and seek it, nor in the hands of those that oppose it, how strong and subtle soever they be, but in that Almighty Hand, that doth in heaven and earth what pleaseth Him. If He have said, now, and here, will I give a day of refreshment to my people that have long groaned for it, a day of the purity, and power of religion. If, I say, this be His purpose, they must have somewhat more than omnipotence that can hinder it, when His appointed time comes, to make a day of deliverance dawn upon His Church, after their long night, either of affliction, or of defection, or both; they that contrive against that day-spring, are as vain, as if they would sit down to plot how to hinder the sun from rising in the morning: And they that let go their hopes of it, because of great apparent difficulties, that interpose betwixt their eye, and the accomplishment of that work, they are as weak as if they should imagine, when mists and thick vapours appear about the horizon in

the morning, that these could hinder the rising of the sun, which is so far out of their reach, and comes forth as a bridegroom, and rejoices as a mighty man to run his race, says David. Those mists may, indeed, hinder his clear appearance, and keep it from the eye for a time; but reason tells us, even then, that they cannot stop his course. And faith assures us no less in the other, that no difficulties can hold back God's day, and work of mercy, to His people. But you will say, all the difficulty is to know whether the appointed time be near or not: It is true, we have no particular prophecies to assure us, but certainly when God awakes His children, and makes them rise, this is a probable sign that it is near day: I mean, when He stirs them up to more than usual hopes, and prayers, and endeavours, it is very likely that He intends them some special good; but yet more when He Himself is arisen (as it pleaseth Him to speak) that is, when He is begun to appear, in a more than ordinary manner, of working by singular and wonderful footsteps of providence. This is, no doubt, a sign that He will go on to show remarkable mercy to Zion, and that the time to favour her, yea, the set time is come, Psalm 102:13.

Howsoever then, let the wonderful workings of the Lord move those of you, that have any power and opportunity, to be now (if ever) active for the greatest good, both of the present age, and of posterity; and you that can be no other way useful, yet you shall be no small helpers if you be much in prayer; let both your hopes and your fears serve to sharpen your prayers. Be not too much dejected with any discouragement, neither be ye carnally lift up with outward appearances, for the heart of him that is lifted up, is not upright in him, Habakkuk 2:3. But live, as the just do, by your faith, and if the deferring of your hopes should sicken your hearts (as Solomon speaks) yet stay and comfort them with the cordial of the promises. This you are sure of, you have God's own word engaged for it, that in those latter days Babylon shall be brought to the dust, and the true

Church of Christ shall flourish and increase; and this vision is for appointed time (as Habakkuk says of his) at the end it shall speak, and not lie; though it tarry, wait for it, it will surely come, it will not tarry.

In that day In the day of Ephraim's or Israel's calamity, denounced in the former verses; which, as most do conceive, was when the Assyrian oppressed them, and in the end, led them captive, in the reign of Hosea, as you have the history of it, 2 Kings 17. At which time Hezekiah was King of Judah, as you find in the following chapter; and in that notable reformation wrought by him, with those blessings that followed upon it, is found the accomplishment of this promise to Judah. In that day, &c. The parallel of God's different dealing with these two kingdoms, at the time there specified (in that day) does afford diverse lessons, which might be here not impertinently taken notice of. Only this:

Though Judah also had its own corruptions, when Hezekiah came to the crown, yet it pleased the Lord to spare them, and work a peaceable reformation, making Israel's punishment their warning. Truly, that nation with whom the Lord deals thus graciously, is vilely ungrateful if they observe it not with much humility and thankfulness, and with profit too. If the Lord should answer your desires and hopes with a reformation, in a peaceable way, and should yet lengthen out your long-continued peace, and should make this little past shaking of it, cause it to take root the faster; if He should, I say, do this, where would ye find fit praises for such a wonder of mercy, especially considering that in the meanwhile, He hath made other reformed churches fields of blood, and made, as it were, the sound of their stripes preach repentance to us? But certainly, if hearing the voice of the rod prevail not, we shall feel the smart of it, as this people of Judah did afterwards, because they were not so wise

as to become wiser and better by Israel's folly and calamity. We are expecting great things at our Lord's hands, and our provocations and sins against Him are great; yet there is none of them all puts us in so much danger of disappointment, as impenitency. Were there more repentance and personal reformation amongst us, we might take it as a hopeful forerunner of that public reformation which so many seem now to desire.

The Lord of hosts This style of His, you know, is frequent in the prophets, in their predictions of mercy and judgment, intimating both His greatness and majesty, and His supreme power, for accomplishing His word. No created power can resist Him; yea, all must serve Him. The most excellent creatures can have no greater honour: the greatest are not exempted, nor the meanest excluded from serving Him. In Acts 12:23, you find one of the noblest creatures, and a number of the vilest, made use of at the same time, in the same service. Because Herod did accept the sacrilege of the people, and gave not back to this Lord of hosts His own glory; the angel of the Lord smote him, and the vermin devoured him. And in Egypt, you know, the employing of the destroying angel, and what variety of hosts, this Lord of hosts, did employ to plague them. What madness then is it, to oppose and encounter this great General; even in doubtful cases, to run on blindly, without examining, lest peradventure a man should be found a fighter against God? And on the other side, it's great weakness to admit any fear under His banner. If a man could say, when he was told of the multitude of the ships the enemy had, "Against how many do you reckon me?" how much more justly may we reckon this Lord of hosts, against multitudes of enemies, how great soever? They are to Him as the drop of a bucket, and the smallest dust of the balance; 'tis ignorance and mean thoughts, of this mighty Lord, that makes His enemies so confident; and it is the same evil, in some degree, or at the best,

forgetfulness of His power, that causeth diffidence in His followers, Isaiah 51:12, 13. Now the same Lord of hosts, you know, is likewise called the God of peace; He is, indeed, **ἐν εἰρήνῃ καὶ πολέμῳ περιφανής**. The blessing of peace, and the success of war, are both from Him; and to Him alone is due the praise of both.

Shall be a crown, &c. He shall dignify and adorn them by His special presence; to wit, in the purity of His ordinances, and religion, amongst them; the profession, and flourishing of that, shall be their special glory and beauty. For as the other two benefits concern their civil good, justice flourishing within, and wealth and opulency from without, so doubtless, this first, this glory and beauty, is religion; as the chiefest of the three, and the other two are its attendants. In Psalm 26:8, the sanctuary, the place of their solemn worship, is called the place where God's honour dwelleth, or the tabernacle of His honour. And Psalm 96:9, the glorious sanctuary, or the beauty of holiness. And the ark of God, you know, was called the glory. "The glory is departed from Israel," (said the wife of Phineas) "for the ark of God is taken." Pure religion, and pure worship, is the glory of God amongst His people, and consequently, their glory. Now referring this prophecy to Hezekiah's time, the accomplishment of it is evident, in that work of reformation, whereof you have the full history, 2 Chronicles 29, 30, 31, &c.

If it be thus, that the purity of religion and worship is the crown and glory of a people; and therefore, on the other side, that their deepest stain of dishonour and vileness is the vitiating of religion with human devices; then to contend for the preservation, or the reformation of it, is noble and worthy of a Christian. It is for the crown of Jesus Christ, which is likewise a crown of glory, and diadem of beauty to them, He being their head; it is indeed, the true glory both of kings and their kingdoms. Labour then for constancy in this

work; let no man take your crown from you; you know how busy the emissaries of the Church of Rome have been to take it from us, or, at least, to pick the diamonds out of it, and put in false counterfeit ones in their places. I mean, they stole away the power of religion, and filled up the room with shadows and fopperies of their own devising. It is the vanity of that Church, to think they adorn the worship of God when they dress it up with splendour in her service, which some magnify so much, yet may most truly be called a glistening slavery and captivity. Then is she truly free, and wears her crown, when the ordinances of God are conformable to His own appointment. It is vanity in man, I say, when they dress it up with a multitude of gaudy ceremonies, and make it the smallest part of itself, whereas, indeed, its true glory consists not in pomp, but in purity and simplicity. In Revelation 12, we find the Church, under the name of a woman, richly attired indeed, but her ornaments be all heavenly, the sun her clothing, and her crown of twelve stars; needs she then borrow sublunary glory? No, she treads upon it, the moon is under her feet. There is another woman, indeed, in that same book, arrayed in purple and scarlet, decked with gold and precious stones, and having a golden cup in her hand, but that golden cup is full of abominations and filthiness, and she herself the mother of abominations, Revelation 17:4. The natural man judges according to his reach, but to a spiritual eye there is a most genuine beauty in the service of God, and government of His house, and when they are nearest to the rule, the word of God, then is it, that the Lord Himself is the crown and diadem of His Church.

A crown, &c. Again we consider this personally, as belonging in particular to every believer. They are all made kings and priests unto God the Father, Revelation 1:6. They are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, 1 Peter 2:9. How despicable soever to the world, this is their dignity: The Lord is their crown and diadem; He subdues their

lust, and makes them kings over their own affections, and more than conquerors over all troubles and persecutions, whereas carnal men are continually hurried like slaves, unto base employments, still kept toiling in the ignoble service of their own lusts. They think, indeed, it is their liberty, but that's a baseness of spirit, that complies so well with so vile and servile a condition. And whereas they judge the godly to be the refuse and dross of the earth, and the proper objects of contempt, this is because this their crown, though most glorious, is invisible to the eye of nature. The Lord is a crown: If they knew what this is, they would see enough in it to countervail their outward meanness, and the reproaches the world casts on them, as the Apostle St. Peter hath it, 1 Peter 4:14, "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye, for the spirit of glory and of God resteth on you": He is their crown.

And observe, how this crown is opposed to that blasted glory, and fading crown of pride, spoken of in the former verses.

Who is there that sees not, in daily experience, the vanity and inconstancy of worldly glory, and yet how few are there that wean themselves from it, and learn to disdain it? Still men dote upon that which is not, upon a shadow, a nothing. But would you have a glory that fadeth not, a garland that cannot wither, make the Lord your crown and your glory, and if He be so, glory in Him and in nothing else; "Let not the wise man glory, &c. but let, &c." Jeremiah 9:23.

You that are noble aspire to this crown, as being so far above your perishing honours and bounded powers; and you that are outwardly meaner and lower, see how little cause you have to complain of your condition, seeing you are not debarred from this best and greatest honour. And that you may discern it aright what it is, know that it consists in the renovation of God's image within you, which is in

holiness and righteousness: So the Lord becomes your crown in the kingdom of grace, and by this you may discover whether or no you have attained it. If you can yet delight to wallow in the puddle and pleasures of sin, you are far from this royal condition; but if you find your soul possessed with the love of holiness, and that you are trampling upon profane delights, this may persuade you that God hath enabled you, and crowned you with His grace, and will crown you with glory. Again, try it by this; if the Lord is become your crown and your glory, you will glory in Him, and in nothing else. Though you be wise, you will not glory in your wisdom, nor in strength, nor in riches, nor honours, though you had them all; but if you glory, you will glory in the Lord. And withal, your highest joy will be to see the advancement of His glory; and, if you can, to be any way serviceable to the advancing of it.

And a spirit of judgment, &c. Both to those that sit in judgment, and to the people, for justice is the strongest base and establishment of authority; and withal, the influence of it is most sweet and comfortable to those that are under authority, and where it is wanting, that order and relation of superiors and inferiors, which God hath appointed, in the societies of men, for their good, tends exceedingly to the damage of both. And therefore, where God intendeth to continue the peace and welfare of a people, He is liberal in pouring out much of this spirit of judgment, on those that sit in judgment. On the contrary, it is for a heavy punishment when He withdraws His spirit from rulers, and leaves them wholly to the corruption and vanity of their own spirits.

That sit in judgment To all that are in place of authority and judicature, from the supreme to the lowest magistrate; for this concerns them all, for they be all raised in their subordination, and several places above the people, for the benefit and good of the

people as the stars, that be set so high, yet are placed there to be useful and beneficial to the inferior world.

Now this spirit of judgment comprehends in it, both due wisdom and prudence, for the trial and right judging of affairs, and for the discerning betwixt sound and perverse counsel; and withal a judgment practically good, that cannot be biased from the straight line of equity and justice by any sinister respect.

Now seeing the spirit of judgment is from the Lord, yea, He is this spirit; it ought to persuade those that sit in judgment, to entreat and pray for this, and to depend upon it, and beware of self-confidence. “Trust in the Lord,” saith Solomon, “and lean not to thine own understanding;” if you do, it will prove but a broken reed. And as they that sit in judgment, should entreat His spirit by prayer, so generally, all must share with them in this duty, and make supplication for all that are in authority over them, especially in extraordinary times. Truly, we have matter of thankfulness, that the Lord hath in some measure inclined the royal heart of our sovereign to the desires of his people, and ought still to pray, that the Lord would give the king His judgments. And then, as the Psalmist adds, “The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness,” Psalm 72:3. And for this end, let all that wish the public, yea, their own good, pray much for an abundance of this spirit of judgment to be conferred on them; your eyes and expectations are upon them. If you would enjoy the lamp, you must pour in oil. This spirit, indeed, you cannot pour upon them, but if you pour out many prayers, you may draw it from above, He will give it, who here promises to be a spirit of judgment.

And strength Observe, the way to be powerful and successful against foreign enemies, is, to have religion and justice flourishing at

home; and truly, if it please our God, to answer the desires of His people, at this time, it may so unite the affection and strength of the two kingdoms, (the Lord of hosts being their strength) as to make them a terror to their enemies, whereas they were become a scorn and derision to them. For your particular, labour to make the Lord your glory, to have Christ made unto you, as the Apostle speaks, both wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, which are the glory and beauty of the soul, and redemption from your spiritual enemies; draw strength from Him, to fight and prevail against them, till after the short combat of this life, you obtain the crown, and dwell in His presence, where you shall fear no more assaults, neither of sin nor affliction, but shall be forever happy in the blessed vision of His face. To Him be glory,

Amen.

SERMON IV

PREFACE

External worship doth openly acknowledge a Deity, but want of inward sense in worship secretly denieth it; "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." It is strange to hear so much noise of religion in the world, and to find so little piety. To present the living God with a carcass of lifeless worship is to pay Him with shells of services, and so to mock Him. And it is a more admirable longsuffering in Him to defer the punishment of such devotion than all the other sins in the world. The Egyptian temples were rich and

stately fabrics. A stranger who had looked upon them without would have imagined some great deity within; but if they entered (as Lucian says laughing at them) nothing was to be seen, but only some ape, or cat, or pie'd bull, or some other fine god like those. To behold our fair semblance of religion that frequent this house, it would appear that we were all the temples of the Holy Ghost. But whoso could look within us, would find in many of our hearts, lust, pride, avarice, or some such like secret vice adored as a god; and these are they that while our bodies sit here, do alienate our souls from the service of the Eternal God: So that we are either altogether senseless and dead before Him, or if any fit of spiritual motion rise within us, we find it here, and here we leave it, as if it were sacrilege to take it home with us. But did once that Spirit of grace breathe savingly upon our souls, we should straight renounce and abhor those base idols, and then all the current of our affection would run more in this channel; our services would then be spiritual, and it would be our heaven upon earth to view God in His sanctuary; and the obtaining of the change is and should be one main end of this our meeting, and that it may be the happy effect of it our recourse must be to the throne of grace by humble prayer, in the name of our Mediator Jesus Christ the Righteous.

Isaiah LX. 1 Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.

Admirable is the worth, and depth of Divine Providence; this either we know not, or at least seldom remember; while we forget the wonders of Providence, we direct our thoughts to baser objects, and think not on it; and while we forget the depth of Providence (if at any time we look towards it) we judge rashly and think amiss of it. If this be true of that general Providence whereby God rules the world, 'tis more true of His special Providence towards His Church. This is both

the most excellent piece of it, and therefore best worth the reading, and also the hardest piece, and therefore it requires sobriety in judging; above all other things, he that suddenly judges in this, makes haste to err. To have a right view of it, it must be taken altogether, and not by parcels: Pieces of rarest artifice, while they are a-making, seem little worth, especially to an unskillful eye, which being completed, command admiration. P. Martyr says well, *De operibus Dei. Antequam actum, non est judicandum*. There is a time when the daughters of Zion embrace the dunghill, and sit desolate in the streets, as Jeremiah hath it in the 4th chapter of his Lamentations, verse 5. And at that same time, the voice of Babylon is, "I sit as a queen, and shall see no sorrow," Isaiah 47. All is out of order here. But if we stay a while, we shall see Zion and Babylon appointed to change seats, by the great Master of the world; "Come down," says He, "daughter of Babylon, and sit in the dust," Isaiah 47:1. And here to Zion; "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." It is an entire catastrophe, both parties find a notable alteration together. That same hand that exalts the one, ruins the other. When the sun rises upon the Church, her Antipodes must needs be covered with darkness. As we find it in the next verse to the text, "Darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee."

The Prophet, elevated by the Spirit of God to a view of after ages, as clear as if present, seems here to find his people sitting under the dark mantle of a sad and tedious night, and having long expected the sun's return in vain, before its time, they give over expectation when it's near them, and desperately sold themselves to lie perpetually in the dark. Now the Prophet, as it were standing awake upon some mountain, perceives the day approaching, and the golden chariots of the morning of deliverance hasting forward, and seems to come

speedily with these glad news, to a captive people, and sounds this trumpet in their ears, "Arise, shine, for thy light is come," &c. The very manner of expression is sudden, and rousing without a copulative, not "arise and shine," but "arise, shine," &c.

The words have in them a clear stamp of relation to a low posture, and obscure condition. They suppose a people lying, or sitting without light; deep distress is that dark soil that best sets off the lustre of marvelous deliverances; and among many other reasons of the Church's vicissitudes, why may not this be one: The Lord is more illustrious in the world by that deep wisdom and great power that shines when He raises and restores her from desperate afflictions, than if He had still preserved her in constant ease. He seems sometimes careless of her condition, and regardless of her groans; but even then, is He waiting for the most fit time to be gracious, as our Prophet speaks: And when it is time, out of the basest estate, He brings her forth more fresh, strong, and beautiful than before. "Though you have lain among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold," Psalm 68:13. Do with the Church what you will, she shall come through, and that with advantage, *Mergitur profundo pulchrior exilit*, as one says of Rome. Keep the Church seventy years captive, yet after that, she shall arise and shine more glorious than ever.

But surely the strain of this evangelic prophecy rises higher than any temporal deliverance. Therefore we must rise to some more spiritual sense of it, not excluding the former. And that which some call divers senses of the same Scripture, is indeed, but divers parts of one full sense. This prophecy is out of question, a most rich description of the Kingdom of Christ under the Gospel. And in this sense, this invitation to arise and shine is mainly addressed to mystical Jerusalem, yet not without some privilege to literal Jerusalem

beyond other people. They are first invited to arise and shine, because this sun arose first in their horizon. Christ came of the Jews, and came first to them. "The Redeemer shall come to Zion," says our Prophet, in the former chapter, but miserable Jerusalem knew not the day of her visitation, nor the things that concerned her peace, and therefore are they now hid from her eyes: She delighted to deceive herself with fancies of (I know not what) imaginary grandeur, and outward glory, to which the promised Messiah should exalt her, and did, in that kind, particularly abuse this very prophecy; so doting upon a sense grossly literal, she forfeited the enjoyment of those spiritual blessings that are here described. But undoubtedly, that people of the Jews, shall once more be commanded to arise and shine, and their return shall be the riches of the Gentiles; and that shall be a more glorious time than ever the Church of God did yet behold. Nor is there any inconvenience, if we think that the high expressions of this prophecy have some spiritual reference to that time, since the great Doctor of the Gentiles, applies some words of the former chapter to that purpose, Romans 11:29. They forget a main point of the Church's glory, that pray not daily for the Jews' conversion.

But to pass that, and insist on the spiritual sense of these words, as directed to the whole Church of Christ. They contain a powerful incitement to a twofold act, enforced (as I conceive) by one reason, under a twofold expression, neither of them superfluous, but each giving light to the other, and suiting very aptly with the two words of command: Arise, for the glory of the Lord is risen, and shine, for thy light is come.

I will not now subdivide these parts again, and cut them smaller, but will rather unite them again into this one proposition: The coming and presence of Christ engage all to whom He comes, to arise and

shine. In this proposition may be considered the nature of the duties, the universality of the subject, and the force of the reason. First, the nature of the duties: what it is to arise and shine.

Arising hath either reference to a fall, or to some contrary posture of sitting, or lying; or to one of these two conditions that are so like one another, sleep or death; and to all these, spiritually understood, may it here be referred. This is the voice of the Gospel to the sons of Adam, Arise, for in him they all fell. The first sin of that first man was the great fall of mankind; it could not but undo us, it was from so high a station. Our daily sins are our daily falls, and they are the fruits of that great one. "Thou hast fallen by thine iniquity," says the Lord to His people, Hosea 14:1. For these postures of sitting and lying, the Scripture makes use of them both, to signify the state of sin. Says not St. John, "The world lies in wickedness," 1 John 5:19? Are not the people said to sit in darkness, mentioned in Matthew 4:16? Which is directly opposite to arise and shine. In the darkness of Egypt, it is said, the people sat still, none arose from their places. In the gross mist of corrupt nature, man cannot bestir himself to any spiritual action, but when this light is come, then he may, and should arise.

Now for sleep and death. Sin is most frequently represented, in Holy Writ, under their black visors. To forbear places where they are severally so used, we shall find them jointly in one, Ephesians 5:14, "Arise thou that sleepest, and stand up from the dead;" which place seems to have special allusion to this very text.

The impenitent sinner is as one buried in sleep; his soul is in darkness, fit for sleep, and loves to be so. That he may sleep the sounder, he shuts all the passages of light, as enemies to his rest; and so, by close windows and curtains, makes an artificial night to

himself within; not a beam appears there, though without, the clear day of the Gospel shines round about him. The senses of his soul, as we may call them, are all bound up, and are not exercised to discern good and evil, as the Apostle speaks, Hebrews 5:14. And his leading faculty, his understanding, is surcharged with sleepy vapors, that arise incessantly from the inferior part of his soul, his perverse affections, nor hath his mind any other exercise, in this sleepy condition, but the vain business of dreaming; his most refined, and wisest thoughts, are but mere extravagancies from man's due end, and his greatest contentments nothing but golden dreams, yet he is serious in them, and no wonder, for who can discern the folly of his own dream till he is awake? "He that dreams he eateth, when he awakes finds his soul empty, and not till then," Isaiah 29:8. Now while he thus sleeps, his great business lies by, yet spends he his hand-breadth of time as fast, while he is fast asleep, as if he were in continual employment; judge then if it be not needful to bid this man arise.

Lastly, this voice may import that man is spiritually dead. God is the life of the soul, as it is of the body; while He dwells there, it's both comely and active, but once destitute of His presence, becomes a carcass, where, besides privation of life and motion, there is a positive filthiness, a putrefaction in the soul, unspeakably worse than that of dead bodies, *corruptio optimi pessima*. And as dead bodies are removed from the sight of men, dead souls are cast out from the favorable sight of God, till Christ's saying "Arise" revives them. The ministers of the word are appointed to cry, Arise, indifferently to all that hear them; and Christ hath reserved this privilege and liberty, to join His effective voice, when, and to whom He pleases. A carnal man may show his teeth at this, but who is he that can, by any solid reason, charge absurdity upon this way of dispensing outward and inward vocation? I will not here mention their idle cavils, the

Scripture is undeniably clear in these, that man is naturally dead in sin. The Gospel bids him arise, and it is Christ that is his life, and that raises him. Thus we see, in some measure, what it is for men to arise. Now being risen, they must shine, and that two ways, jointly and publicly, as they make up visible churches; and likewise personally, in their particular conversation. First then, what is the shining of the true Church? Doth not a Church then shine, when church service is raised from a decent and primitive simplicity, and decored with pompous ceremonies, with rich furniture, and gaudy vestments? Is not the Church then beautiful? Yes, indeed, but all the question is whether this be the proper genuine beauty or no; whether this be not strange fire, as the fire that Aaron's sons used which became vain, and was taken as strange fire. Methinks it cannot be better decided than to refer it to St. John in his Book of the Revelations. We find there the descriptions of two several women, the one riding in state, arrayed in purple, decked with gold and precious stones and pearl, Revelation 17:3. The other in rich attire too, but of another kind, clothed with the sun, and a crown of twelve stars on her head; the other's decorement was all earthly, this woman's is all celestial; what need she borrow light and beauty, from precious stones that's clothed with the sun, and crowned with stars; she wears no sublunary ornaments, but, which is more noble, she treads upon them, the moon is under her feet; now if you know (as you do all without doubt) which of these two is the spouse of Christ, you can easily resolve the question. The truth is, those things seem to deck religion, but they undo it. Observe where they are most used, and we shall find little or no substance of devotion under them, as we see in that apostate Church of Rome. This painting is dishonorable for Christ's spouse, and besides, it spoils her natural complexion. The superstitious use of torches and lights in the church by day, is a kind of shining, but surely not commanded here. No, it is an affront done

both to the sun in the heaven, and to the Sun of Righteousness in the Church.

What is meant then when the Church is commanded to shine or be enlightened? These two readings give the entire sense of the word; first, for having no light of herself, she must receive light, and then show it, be enlightened and then shine; she is enlightened by Christ the Sun of Righteousness, shining in the sphere of the Gospel. This is that light that comes to her, and the glory of the Lord that arises upon her; hence she receives her laws and form of government, and her shining is briefly the pure exercise of those, and conformity to them.

And the personal shining of the several members of a Church, is a comely congruity with pure worship and discipline, and it is that which now is most needful to be urged. Every Christian soul is personally engaged first to be enlightened and then to shine, and we must draw our light for ourselves, from that same source that furnishes the Church with her public light. There is a word in the civil law, *Uxor fulget radiis mariti*, the wife shines by the rays of her husband's light. Now every faithful soul is espoused to Christ and therefore may well shine, seeing the Sun himself is their husband; He adorns them with a double beauty of justification and sanctification: by that, they shine more especially to God, by this to men. And may not these two be signified by a double character given to the spouse in the Canticles 6:10? "She is fair as the moon, and clear as the sun;" the lesser light is that of sanctification, fair as the moon; that of justification the greater, by which, she is as clear as the sun: the sun is perfectly luminous, but the moon is but half enlightened; so the believer is perfectly justified but sanctified only in part, his one half, his flesh, is dark, and as the partial illumination is the reason of so many changes in the moon to which changes the sun is not subject at

all, so the imperfection of a Christian's holiness, is the cause of so many waxings, and wanings, and great inequality in his performances, whereas in the meanwhile his justification remains constantly like itself. This is imputed, that inherent. The light of sanctification must begin in the understanding and from thence, be transfused to the affection, the inferior parts of the soul, and from thence break forth and shine into action. This is then the nature of the duties, Arise and Shine.

The universality of the subject which was the second head, is this: that every man that knows Christ is here engaged to shine too; neither grandeur exempts from the duty of shining, nor does meanness exclude from the privilege of shining; men of low condition in this world need not despair of it, for it is a spiritual act, great men need not despise it for it is a noble act to shine by Christ's light. In the 3rd verse of this chapter it is said to the Church, "Kings shall come to the brightness of thy rising." To what end, but to partake of her light, and shine with her. And indeed the regal attire of Christ's righteousness, and the white robes of holiness, will exceedingly well become kings and princes. "Give the king thy judgments, O Lord, and thy righteousness to the king's son."

The third, and last thing propounded was, the force of the reason, that Christ's presence engages to arise and shine, wherein it is supposed that Christ declared in the Gospel is the light which is said here to come, and the glory of the Lord which is said to be risen; so that now, it should be more amply cleared, how Christ is light, and the glory of the Lord, and what his coming and rising is, but of these afterwards. I shall close now with a word of exhortation.

Arise then, for the glory of the Lord is risen. The day of the Gospel is too precious, that any of it should be spent in sleep or idleness, or

worthless business; worthless business detains many of us. Arise immortal souls from moiling in the dust, and working in the clay like Egyptian captives. Address yourselves to more noble work; there is a Redeemer come, that will pay your ransom, and rescue you from such vile service, for more excellent employment. It is strange how the souls of Christians can so much forget their first original from heaven, and their new hopes of returning thither, and the rich price of their redemption, and forgetting all these, dwell so low, and dote so much upon trifles, how is it that they hear not their well-beloved's voice crying, "Arise my love, my fair one, and come away?" Though the eyes of true believers are so enlightened, that they shall not sleep unto death, yet their spirits are often seized with a kind of drowsiness, and slumber, and sometimes even then, when they should be of most activity. The time of Christ's check to his three disciples made it very sharp, though the words are mild, "What? Could you not watch with me one hour?" Shake off, believing souls, that heavy humor. Arise, and satiate the eye of faith with the contemplation of Christ's beauty and follow after him, till you attain the place of full enjoyment. And you others that never yet saw him, arise, and admire his matchless excellency. The things you esteem great, are but so through ignorance of his greatness; his brightness, if you saw it, would obscure to you the greatest splendor of the world, as all those stars that go never down upon us, yet they are swallowed up in the surpassing light of the sun when it arises; "Stand up from the dead, and he shall give you light." Arise and work while it is day, for the night shall come wherein none can work, says our Saviour himself: Happy are they that arise early in the morning of their youth, for the day of life is very short, and the art of Christianity long and difficult. Is it not a grievous thing, that men never consider why they came into the world, till they be upon the point of going out again? Nor think how to live, till they be summoned to die. But most of all unhappy is he, that never wakens out of that pleasing dream of

false happiness, till he fall into eternal misery. Arise then betimes, and prevent this sad awakening.

And being risen, put on your beautiful garments Isaiah 52:1. Draw towards you with the hand of faith, the rich mantle of Christ's righteousness. It is time to awake, says the Apostle, Romans 13:11. And presently after, "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ." And it is a wonder, how a sinner can rest, while he is out of this garment, for there is no other in heaven nor earth that can make him shine to God, and so shelter him from the stroke of justice; put him on then, and so shine; being thus clothed, thou shalt shine in justification, and likewise in sanctity. What a privilege it is to be like God. A sanctified conscience, what can be said against it? And first have an enlightened understanding, for that is the proper seat of light. That ignorant zeal that Rome commends, exposes religion to scorn and contempt; heat without light is the character of the fire of hell. I know all are not tied to a like degree of knowledge, but certainly all are obliged to have a competency and diligence for increase; aspire then to be intelligent Christians, and to know well what you believe. Let your minds be filled with knowledge, as the Apostle speaks. But let it not stop there, it must have influence into the will, *lux est vehiculum caloris*, true light conveys heat. All the knowledge that the natural man hath of Christ, not warming his affection to Christ, is but *ignis fatuus*, a vain light, it shall never lead him to happiness. Saving light produces love, and by that acts. Faith works by love, says the Apostle. That breaks forth and shines in the life, in godliness, righteousness, and sobriety. Shine then in all these, first in piety towards God, for this is the reflection of these rays of light back toward their source. And this will command the other two; no man that shines in godliness, will wallow in injustice and intemperance; guile and wrong cannot endure the light; they that are unjust cannot shine; and let them never offer to shine among Christians that are

not sober, but stained with riot and uncleanness. These foul enormities lay waste the conscience, and put out the light. How can any seed of grace subsist undrowned, that is exposed to a daily deluge of cups? How can that pure spirit, that chose the likeness of a chaste dove, dwell, and give light in that soul that is a nest of impure and filthy lusts? No, there can be no fellowship betwixt this celestial light, whereby we should shine, and those infernal works of darkness. Let profane men hold it a chief strain of wit to scoff at purity, but you that pretend heavenward in good earnest, and mean to shine in glory, shine here in holiness; for without holiness no man shall see God. And do it with these qualifications (1) Constantly in every estate, let not this divine light go out neither by day, in prosperity, nor by night in adversity; in every place do not shine clear, and be dark in your chamber. They that do thus, have their reward: that's a sad word if rightly understood, beware of hypocrisy. Again shine progressively, gaining still more and more victory over darkness, till you attain unmixed and perfect light. The way of the just, says Solomon, is like the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day, Proverbs 4:18. Lastly, shine humbly to His glory, whose light you borrow, not to show forth your own excellencies, but His, who hath called you from darkness to His marvelous light, 1 Peter 2:9. If we be children of light, our brightness must praise the Father of lights: "Let your light so shine before men, that they seeing your good works, not yourselves if you can be hid; (as the sun affords its light and will scarce suffer us to look upon itself) may glorify (not you but) your Heavenly Father," Matthew 5:16. To conclude:

The pure light of the Church is revived, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon you, and upon this glory there shall be a defense. If God be your glory in the midst of you, He will be likewise a wall of fire round about you. All the danger is, if we fall short in the duty of

shining, but as you desire that this glory should abide and dwell amongst you, let all estates of men provoke one another to shine bright in holiness; you who either by birth or office, are in eminent station, know that you were set there to be eminent and exemplary in shining, as stars of more notable magnitude; you who are ministers of this light, know that you are the light of the world, and if the very light become darkness, how great will that darkness be? You that are of a lower order know that you must shine too: for it is a common duty. There is a certain company of small stars in the firmament, which though they cannot be each one severally seen, yet being many, their united light makes a conspicuous brightness in the heaven, which is called the milky way; so though the shining of every private Christian is not so much severally remarkable, yet the concourse and meeting of their light together, will make a bright path of holiness shine in the Church.

Now to the end we may each one shine in our measure, we must learn to turn ourselves often towards Him from whom our light is derived; conversing with Him will make us more and more like Him. There is a secret unknown virtue for this purpose in secret prayer and meditation; were we more in the mount with God, our faces would shine more with men. Let us then rescue from the world all the time we can, to resort frequently thither till such time as the soul, which is now often pulled down again by the flesh, shall let that mantle fall and come down no more: but shine there without spot, and be forever satisfied with her Maker's image.

SERMON V

PREFACE

Art imitates nature, and the nearer it comes to nature in its effects, the more excellent it is. Grace is the new nature of a Christian, and hypocrisy is the art that counterfeits it. The more exquisite hypocrisy is in imitation, the more plausible it is to men, but the more abominable it is to God. It may frame a spiritual man in image so to the life, that not only others, but even the hypocrite himself may admire it. Favoring his own artifice, he may be deceived so far as to say, and to think, it lives, and fall in love with it, but he is no less abhorred by the Searcher of hearts than pleasing to himself. Surely this mischief of hypocrisy can never be enough inveighed against. When religion is in request, it is the chief malady of the Church, and numbers die of it, though because it is a subtle and inward evil, it is little perceived. It is to be feared, there are many sick of it that look well and comely in God's outward worship, and they may pass well in good weather, in times of peace, but days of adversity are days of trial. The prosperous estate of the Church makes hypocrites, and her distress discovers them. But if they escape such trial, there is one inevitable day coming, wherein all secret things shall be made manifest. Men shall be turned inside out, and amongst all sinners that shall then be brought before that judgment seat, the most deformed sight shall be an unmasked hypocrite, and the heaviest sentence shall be his portion.

Oh! That the consideration of this would scare us out of that false disguise in time, and set us all upon the study of sincerity. Precious is that grace in God's esteem, a little of it will weigh down mountains of formal religion, in the balance of the sanctuary. Which of us have not now brought hypocrisy, more or less, into this house of God? Oh! That it were not with the intention to nourish it, but with the desire to be here cured of it, for He alone, who hates it so much, can cure it.

He alone can confer upon us that sincerity, in which He mainly delights. If we have a mind, indeed, to be endowed with it, it is nowhere else to be had. We must entreat it of God by humble prayer, in the name of His well-beloved Son, by the assistance of His Holy Spirit.

Isaiah LX. 1. Second Sermon Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.

Truly, light is sweet, and it is a pleasing thing to behold the sun, says the Preacher, Ecclesiastes 11:7. But the interchange of night with day adds to its beauty, and the longest night makes day the most welcome, as that people well know, whose situation in the world gives them a five or six-month night all of one piece. It is reported of some of them, that when they conceive their night draws towards an end, they put on their richest apparel, and climb up to the highest mountains, with emulation, to see who shall first discover the returning light, which, as soon as it appears, they salute with acclamations of joy, and welcome it with solemn feasting, and all other testimonies of exceeding gladness. But such is the lethargy of sinful man, that he stirs not to meet his spiritual light, and what is worse, when it comes upon him, it finds him in love with darkness. Instead of shouts of joy for this light, many a cry must be sounded in his ears to awaken him, and it is well too if at length he hears and obeys this voice: Arise, shine, for thy light is come, etc. It is clear that the words contain a command and the reason for it: the command to a twofold act, the reason under two expressions, proportionately different. Good reason the Church should arise when the Lord's glory is risen upon her; and it is very congruous she should be enlightened and shine when her light is come. Of those two acts or duties, somewhat was formerly spoken, and the reason likewise was made use of so far as relative to those duties, and tending to their

enforcement. But the meaning of the phrases, in which the reason is expressed, was rather, at that time, supposed than either duly proved or illustrated, so that it will now be expedient to consider, simply in themselves, these latter words: Thy light is come, etc.

So far as this prophecy has respect to the reduction of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity, that temporal deliverance and ensuing peace and prosperity was their light, and that divine power by which it was effected was this glory of the Lord. Indeed, both these expressions are frequently used in such a sense in Holy Writ: "When I waited for light, there came darkness," says Job, in his 30th chapter, 26th verse. So Isaiah 58:20, and many other places. And the glory of the Lord for a singular effect of His power, John 11:40, Isaiah 60:18, and elsewhere. But this literal sense is but a step to elevate the prophet to a sight of Christ's spiritual kingdom, which is usual with him, as our Saviour Himself testifies of another of his prophecies. "These things," said Isaiah, "when he saw his glory, and spoke of Him," John 12:41. It was a sight of that same glory that makes him say, Thy light was true, etc.

In these words, there are three things concerning Christ, represented to the Church's view. First, His beauty and excellency, in that He is called light and the glory of the Lord. Secondly, the Church's propriety and interest in Him, Thy light, and risen upon thee, which has a restrictive emphasis, as the very next verse clearly manifests. As He is originally the glory of the Lord, and the light of the Lord, *Lumen de lumine*, so He is communicatively the Church's light and her glory too, as it is expressed in the 19th verse of this same chapter, "Thy God, thy glory." Thus she has both His worth and her own right in Him to consider. Thirdly, His presence or her actual possession, He is come, and is risen; and in these the Church, and each faithful soul, may find a double spring of affection, one of love, the other of

joy. The transcendent beauty of Christ makes Him the choicest object of love, and her property in Him, or title to Him, together with possession, is the proper cause of solid joy.

First then, this excellency is expressed by these two characters, light and the glory of the Lord. Concerning which, it will be fit both to demonstrate that they are the proper titles of Christ, and here to be taken for Him, as also, to show what they signify in Him.

Indeed, the Apostle in his second epistle to the Corinthians, 3rd chapter, insists much on extolling both the light and the glory of the Gospel. And in the 4th verse of the next chapter, he speaks of the light of the glorious Gospel, but he immediately intimates whence it has this light and glory; the glorious Gospel of Christ, says he, who is the image of God. So that it is most unnecessary to inquire whether the Messiah or the Word that reveals Him be rather here couched under these terms of light and the glory of the Lord. These two agree so well altogether, and these words agree so well to them both, that it would be an injury to attempt to sever them. All the difference will be this, Christ is that incomplex and substantial light, the Gospel that complex light, wherein He appears. But (not to be guilty of dark terms, especially in a discourse of light) I take it in this resemblance: Christ is the sun, and the Gospel His proper sphere, or heaven, wherein He gives light to His Church. He is primarily the glory of the Lord, and the Gospel by participation, because it declares Him, so that much of what shall be spoken here of Christ, will be secondarily to be understood of the Gospel of Christ.

That Christ is light, the Scripture speaks abundantly; his own voice, concerning himself, (notwithstanding the cavil of the Pharisees) is above all exception, for he is truth itself. "I am the light of the world," saith he, "he that follows me shall not walk in darkness," John 8:12.

The Father that sent him gives him the same title, "I will give thee for a light of the Gentiles," Isaiah 42:6 and 49:6. And not to multiply citations of the Prophets and Evangelists, who with one consent all magnify this light, take the true testimony of a false prophet, (and indeed, the favorable witness of an adversary is strongest.) It is that of Balaam, who saw that Christ was light, though (because he saw him afar off, as he says himself, and had not his eye fortified like the true Prophets) he discerned him but as a star. "There shall come a star out of Jacob," Numbers 24:17. But what need we go so far to be certified what this light and glory of the Lord is, the Lord of glory himself, seeing the very next verse to the text assures us of it? "Upon thee shall the Lord arise." And in the 19th verse, "The Lord shall be thy everlasting light, and thy God thy glory."

By this time, I hope it is clear that the Eternal Son of God, co-essential with his Father, was he that gave accomplishment to this prophecy, by appearing to the world wrapped up in the darkness of human nature. He is that day-spring from on high that has visited us, as old Zacharias speaks, Luke 1:78.

Among all created excellencies, none can be borrowed more fitly representing Christ than that of light. And is it not Christ that decks his Church with supernatural beauty, and makes it indeed ἡ κόσμος, a comely world called out of the world? But the manifold agreement of light with Christ does require more particular consideration.

Light is (as they call it) *primum visibile*, the first object of sight. And Jesus Christ, whom the Apostle styles God over all blessed forever, is, *primum intelligibile*, the prime object of the understanding. What's then become of that divine sparkle, that understanding soul, that the Father of Spirits breathes into these bodies, that all our thoughts creep here below, and leave their chief and noblest object

inconsidered? Which of us may not complain (though few of us do) that our souls have either no wings to elevate themselves to the contemplation of him, from whom they issued, or if they make offers at it, our affections, engaged to the world, make us, like a bird tied by the foot, fall presently down again into the mire? It is high time to leave hunting shadows, and to turn our internal eye to the beholding of this uncreated light.

In this elementary world, light being (as we hear) the first visible, all things are seen by it, and it by itself. Thus is Christ, among spiritual things, in the elect world of his Church; all things are made manifest by the light, says the Apostle, Ephesians 5:13, speaking of Christ, as the following verse evidently testifies. It is in his word that he shines and makes it a directing and convincing light, to discover all things that concern his Church and himself, to be known by its own brightness; how impertinent then is that question so much tossed by the Romish Church? How do you know the Scriptures (say they) to be the Word of God, without the testimony of the Church? I would ask one of them again, how they can know that it is daylight, except someone lights a candle to let them see it? They are little versed in Holy Scripture, who do not know that it's frequently called light; and they are senseless who do not know that light is seen and known by itself. "If our Gospel be hid," says the Apostle, "it is hid to them that perish; the god of this world having blinded their minds against the light of the glorious Gospel," etc. No wonder if such stand in need of a testimony, a blind man knows not that it's light at noon day, but by report, but to those that have eyes, light is seen by itself.

Again, it makes all other things that are in themselves to become actually visible (as they speak); so by the word of this substantial word Jesus Christ, all things in religion are tried and discovered. The very authority of the Church which they obtrude so confidently must

be stopped and examined by these Scriptures, which they would make stand to its courtesy. Doctrines, and worship, must be tried by this light; and what will not endure this trial, must not be endured in the house of God. "To the law and to the testimony" (says the Prophet) "if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them," Isaiah 8:20. The rays of Christ's light are displayed through both his Testaments, and in them we see him.

But oh! How sublime is the knowledge of him; none is ignorant that there is light, yet what light is, few know; the best wits are troubled to define it. So all that bear the name of Christians, acknowledge that Christ is, but to know what he is, is of marvellous difficulty. In a speculative way, unfathomable is the depth of his nature and properties, "and his generation who can declare?" says our Prophet. I define not whether his eternal generation or his incarnation in time. These are mysteries that shall hold the very angels busy in admiration forever, and for experiential knowledge by faith, how small is the number of those that are truly acquainted with it?

Again, light fitly resembles Christ in purity; it visits many impure places and lights upon the basest parts of the earth, and yet remains most pure and undefiled. Christ sees and takes notice of all the enormities and sinful pollutions in the world (as David says of the sun, Psalms 19:6), there is nothing hid from his beams. Yet many of those foul evils he cures and purges away these pollutions, and yet is never stained by them in the least degree. He is a physician not capable of infection, and therefore while he dwelt among men, he shunned not publicans and sinners but sought them rather, for with such was his business and employment. Indeed, for a frail man to be too bold in frequenting profane and obstinate persons, though with the intention to reclaim them, is not always so safe. *Metus est ne attrahant*; they may pull him in, that would help

them forth, and pollute him that would cleanse them. But our Saviour, the light of the world, runs no such hazard; he is stronger than the perversest sinner, yea, than the prince of darkness himself, over whom his banners are always victorious, and purer than to be in danger of pollution. His precious blood is a fountain opened for sin and uncleanness; sinners are purified by it, and it is not defiled by them. Thousands have washed in it, yet it shall abide, and always shall be most perfectly pure. And such a high priest was needful for us, ἄκακος, undefiled, and though conversant with sinners, to communicate to them his goodness, yet separate from sinners in immunity from their evil (Hebrews 7:26).

To this agrees well that title, the Prophet Malachi gives him when he calls him the "Sun of righteousness," full of purity and righteousness, as the sun is of light, all luminous, without spot, subject to no eclipse in himself, his light being his own. Though our sins interposed may hide him sometimes from us, as those real eclipses in the sun are rather ours, for we are deprived of light, but not the sun. Christ is many ways most fitly called the sun, for since all created light falls infinitely short of his worth, the prince and chief of them, the sun, cannot but suit best, so far as may be, to set forth his excellency.

The light of the sun is neither parted nor diminished by being imparted to many several people and nations that behold it at one time; nor is the righteousness of this "Sun of righteousness" either lessened to himself or to several believers, by many partaking of it at once; it is wholly conferred upon each one of them, and remains whole in himself. Hence it is that not only Christ invites so liberally sinners to come to him, but even justified persons would so gladly draw all others to lay hold on this righteousness of their Redeemer, knowing well, that if all the world were enriched by it, they themselves would be no whit the poorer.

Again, the sun has a vivifying power, not only of plants and vegetables; but if philosophers be right, *Sol & homo generant hominem*; it has a special influence in the generation of man, but it is both more certainly and more eminently true of this Sun we speak of, in man's regeneration; that he is the proper and principal efficient of it. The Evangelist calls him at once, "The light and the life of men" (John 1:4). To say nothing of him as treasure, he is the source of our spiritual life and motion.

When the sun takes its course towards us in the season of the year, it drives away the sharp frosts and the heavy fogs of winter, it clears the heavens, decks the earth with a variety of plants and flowers, and awakes the birds to the pleasant strains of their natural music. When Christ, after a kind of winter absence, returns to visit a declining Church, admirable is the change that he produces; all begins to flourish by his sweet influence, his house, his worship, his people are all clothed with a new beauty, but it is spiritual, and therefore, none but spiritual eyes can discern it. When he will thus return, all the power and policy of man can no more hinder him than it could stay the course of the sun in its circle. In like manner, a deserted forsaken soul, that can do nothing but languish and droop while Christ withdraws himself, what inexpressible vigor and alacrity finds it at his returning? Then those graces, that while they lurked seemed to have been lost and quite extinguished, bud forth anew, with pleasant colour and fragrant smell. It is the light of his countenance that banishes their false fears, that strengthens their faith, and cures their spiritual infirmities. This Sun is indeed the sovereign physician: "Unto you that fear my name, shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing under his wings" (Malachi 4:2).

Finally, all darkness flees away before him; 'twas his arising in the world that made the day break, and the

shadows flee away. The types and shadows of the law were then abolished. It was his light that dispelled the mists of ignorance and idolatry, and he alone delivers the soul from the night of sin and the misery procured by it. All the stars, and the moon with them, cannot make it day in the world; this is the sun's peculiar power. Nor can nature's highest light, the most refined science and morality, make it day in the soul; for this is Christ's work.

The common light of reason, every man that comes into the world, has from him as his creator, but the special light of grace they alone who are born again, have from him as their saviour. Gross is the darkness of every natural mind until Christ enlightens it. It can neither discern nor receive the things of God. "Ye were darkness," says the Apostle, "but now are you light in the Lord." It's nothing else but a mass of darkness, and the companion of darkness is confusion, as it was in the mass of the world before light was created. And what is there under heaven more confused than a carnal mind? The affections are quite out of order, and though all naught, yet sometimes fighting one with another, and continually hurrying the judgment whither they please. Now to dissipate this darkness, and remedy this confusion, Christ shines externally in his word, but too much daily experience testifies that this is not sufficient. Therefore to those whom he will make children of the light, to meet with this outward light of his word, he gives another internal light by the Spirit. The sun can make dark things clear, but it cannot make a blind man see them. But herein is the excellency of this sun, that he illuminates not only the object but the faculty; he does not only reveal the mysteries of his kingdom but opens blind eyes to behold them. The first lineament of the renewed image of God in man is that light in the understanding, removing not only that simple ignorance of divine things but also those misconceits, false principles, and wicked pertinacity, of which man's mind is naturally full. He that at

first commanded light to shine out of darkness, infuses saving knowledge and light into the dark soul of man. And this light kindles love. It is *vehiculum caloris*, having a powerful influence, begetting heat in the affections. Nor can this divine light be ever again fully extinguished but conducts the soul that has received it, until it be received to the land of light and perfect happiness. Thus in our Redeemer is the fountain of life, as the Psalmist speaks, "And in his light do we see light" (Psalms 36:9).

He is likewise here styled, the glory of the Lord. In the second of Samuel, 4th chapter, the ark of God is called the glory, but it enjoys that name as a type of Christ, in whom that now which the ark contained was fulfilled. The tabernacle is called the dwelling of God's glory (Psalms 26:8), likewise typifying him in the tabernacle, in whose human nature that glory dwells far more excellently (John 1:14, ἐσκήνωσεν, he dwelt in a tabernacle among us, and we saw his glory as the glory of the only begotten Son of God, full of grace and truth). The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews calls him ἀπαύγασμα, the brightness of his Father's glory, and the character of his person. And under these expressions lies that remarkable mystery of the Son's eternal relation to the Father (which is rather humbly to be adored than boldly to be explained) either by God's perfect understanding of his own essence, or by any other notion. It is true, he is called the wisdom of the Father, but this wisdom is too wonderful for us. He is called the Word, but what this Word means, I think we shall not well know, until we see him face to face, and contemplate him in the light of glory. Meanwhile, we may see him to be the glory of the Lord in a safer way and sufficient measure to guide us on to that clear vision reserved above for us. "We saw his glory," says that sublime Evangelist, but how could this excellent glory be seen by sinful men, and not astonish and strike dead the beholders? "He was made flesh and dwelt among us," says he, "and

so we saw his glory." That majesty that we could never have looked upon, he veiled with human flesh, that we might not die but live by seeing him. There he stood behind the wall, and showed himself through the trellis. In him dwelt the fullness of the Godhead (Colossians 2:9), but it was σωματικῶς, bodily, for who could have endured the splendour of the Godhead's fullness, if that cloud of his body had not been drawn betwixt? And through it did shine that grace and truth, that wisdom and power in the work of our redemption, whereby he was clearly manifested to be the glory of the Lord.

Surely we need not now ask the Church, or a believing soul, what is her beloved more than another, or if we do, well may she answer, "He is the chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely," for he is the light of the world, and the glory of the Lord. Let not the numerous titles of earthly potentates be once admitted into comparison with these. If we believe David, in his 62nd Psalm, 9th verse, the stateliest things and persons in the world, being balanced with vanity itself, are found lighter than it. And shall we offer to weigh them with Christ? If we knew him rightly, we would not sell the least glance or beam of this light of his countenance, for the highest favor of mortal men, though it were constant and unchangeable (which it is not). It is ignorance of Christ that maintains the credit of those vanities we admire. The Christian that is truly acquainted with him, enamoured with the brightness of his beauty, can generously trample upon the smilings of the world with one foot, and her frownings with the other. If he be rich or honourable, or both, yet he glories not in that, but in Christ who is the glory of the Lord, even then his chiefest glory. And the light of Christ obscures that worldly splendour in his estimation; and as the enjoyment of Christ overtops all his other joys, so it overcomes his griefs. As that great light drowns the light of prosperity, it shines

bright in the darkness of affliction. No dungeon is so close that it can keep out the rays of Christ's love from his beloved prisoners. The world can no more take away this light than it can give it. "Unto the just ariseth light in darkness," saith the Psalmist, and, "When I sit in darkness the Lord shall be a light unto me," says the Church in Micah 7:8. And as this light is a comfort, so it is likewise a defense that suffers no more distress to come near the godly than is profitable for them. Therefore we find very frequently in Scripture, where this light and glory is mentioned, protection and safety are jointly spoken of. "The Lord is my light, and withal my salvation, whom shall I fear," says David, Psalms 27:1. "The Lord is a sun, and he is a shield too," Psalms 84:11. And truly, I think him shot-proof, that hath the sun for his buckler. And for glory, "Upon all the glory shall be a defense," says our Prophet in his 4th chapter, 5th verse. And the Prophet Zechariah, where he calls the Lord the Church's glory in the midst of her, he calls him likewise a wall of fire round about her, Zechariah 2:5. The only way then to be safe, is to keep this light and this glory entire; to part with any part of this glory is to make a breach in that wall of fire, and if that be a means of safety, let all men judge. No, keep it whole, and then they must come through the fire that will assault you. Nor is this light only defensive of the Church that embraces it, but likewise destructive of all adverse powers. See a clear testimony for this in Isaiah 10:17-18. "And the light of Israel shall be for a fire, and his holy one for a flame (speaking there of the Assyrians), and it shall burn and devour his thorns and his briers in one day, and shall consume the glory of his forest, and of his fruitful field, both soul and body, and they shall be as when a standard bearer fainteth," etc.

Let ever then the Church of God entirely observe this light and glory of the Lord, and she shall undoubtedly be preserved by it. But to

close in a word, first to those that know this light, and then to those that are yet strangers to it.

You who know Christ, glory in him perpetually; well may he be your glory when he is the glory of the Lord. There are some that pretend love to Christ, and yet a taunting word of some profane miscreant will almost make them ashamed of him; how would they die for Christ that are so tender as not to endure a scoff for him? Where is that spirit of Moses, that accounted the very reproaches of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt? Oh, learn to glory in Christ, think highly of him, and speak so too. Methinks it is the discourse in the world that becomes Christians best, to be speaking one to another honourably of Jesus Christ, and of all men, the preachers of his gospel should be most frequent in this subject. This should be their great theme, to extol and commend the Lord Jesus, that they may enflame many hearts with his love. And best can they do this, who are most strongly taken with this love themselves. Such will most gladly abase themselves, that Christ may be magnified, and whatsoever be their excellencies, they still account Christ their glory. And they are richly repaid, for he accounts them his glory. This would seem a strange word if it were not the Apostle's. "They are the messengers of the churches, and the glory of Christ," 2 Corinthians 8:23. Delight who will either in sloth and ignorance on the one hand, or in vain speculations and strains of frothy wit on the other. Surely those preachers shall only be approved in the great day, who have constantly endeavoured in their measure, to speak the best and fittest they could for their Master's advantage. And happy are those Christians of what estate soever, that in all estates make Christ their glory, and in all actions have their eye fixed upon his glory, who is their light and the glory of the Lord.

Now to those that are strangers to Him (would to God none that are to be spoken to were such), to them I say, notice would be given both of the excellency and necessity of Christ. Though it were possible to grope the way to happiness in the dark, yea, none will deny but to be conducted thither by a constant light is both safer and more delightful. But were there any possibility to attain that end without this light, the neglect of it would not be altogether so strange. The wonder of all is this: that Christ alone, being both that life and the way to it, and the truth or light that guides in that way, yet Christians (so called) should esteem and look after Him as little as if He were wholly needless. What meanest thou, O besotted sinner? Is it so light a thing to die in thy sins, and eternally for them, that thou wilt not so much as open and admit the light of salvation? What shalt thou pretend in that terrible day? Though all other kinds of people should offer some excuse, thou who hast heard the Gospel shall be speechless. For not only shall the rigor of justice condemn thee, but mercy itself shall plead against thee, for thou hast despised it. That light did come and was not embraced shall be the main condemnation. How many thousands that make no doubt of heaven, yet shall then fall short of it? It is not a superficial profession that will then pass current. It is not some public sighs and groans from an unsanctified heart, which either come from custom or some present touch of the word, nor yet is it some sudden risings of inward affection towards Christ upon the report of His worth, that shall then serve the turn. The intellectual knowledge of Christ, the distinct understanding, yea the orthodox preaching of His Gospel, the maintaining of His public cause, and suffering for it, shall not then be found sufficient. Only that peculiar apprehension of Christ, those constant flames of spiritual love, that even course of holy walking in His light shall be these characters, whereby Christ shall own His children, and admit them into the inheritance of perfect light. One of the speakers in the Book of Job, discoursing of the prosperity of the

ungodly, calls it but his candle, and tells how long it can last. His candle (says he) shall be put out with him, and that's the longest term of it. If it lasts his lifetime, it shall convey him no further; he goes into eternity in the dark, and therefore, as St. John says, he knows not whither he goeth. "Quo nunc abibis?" said that Emperor to his soul. Is it not a sad thing, when the soul that knows no other but worldly light, must take leave of it and enter into eternal darkness, there to be incessantly tormented with present anguish, and the frightful expectation of the last judgment, where it must take again that body which was the complice of its wickedness to be partaker of its punishment? Where it shall have a double misery to behold crowns of immortality distributed to the godly, after the short combats of this life, and itself thrust out among the devils? Then shall all men be in some way sensible of what is the worth of this now contemned light, the Lord Jesus Christ. The greatest number too late, for they shall be banished from it forever, but the righteous shall then most perfectly know and forever enjoy this light and glory of the Lord, to whom with the Father of lights and Spirit of grace, be eternity of praise and honour.

SERMON VI.

PREFACE.

What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul, said our Saviour, who was to lay down a ransom for it, and knew well that it would cost infinitely more than the world was worth. Yet most men value their own souls at a far lower rate than

the whole world, losing them for broken morsels of it; yea, many times for vain hopes that are never accomplished. And as these men make a miserable bargain, so by the contrary, they that lose the world, or anything worldly, yea though it were the whole, to save their souls, make a profitable loss of it. Nature teaches men to hazard and lose all for the life of the body, rather than lose it (although it often proves very uncomfortable by the loss of these outward things). Yet most men pass their whole lifetime without one serious thought of the excellency and importance of their souls, whose life and happiness is of a higher nature, and neither consists in, nor depends upon anything here below. Hence it is, that while they use the helps of this present life, and the defences of it when it is in danger, and use them with so much diligence and attention, the means of that better life, of their better part, their souls, they either use not at all or so slightly and coldly, that they never find salvation in them. You may find it some way in yourselves, the threatenings and preparations of men against you have awakened and roused you more to think upon means of your temporal safety. But how few are sensible and afraid of the wrath of God, who, as our Saviour tells us, can kill both body and soul, and cast them into hell. You do not lack frequent advertisement from the Word of God, so plentifully preached, that many are perishing; one part in gross ignorance of God, another in profane and licentious living, and the greatest part in a formal and lifeless profession of religion, without the power of it. And yet where are they that lay it to heart, and bestir themselves to rescue their souls from destruction? Certainly, whatsoever men profess, it is unbelief that is the cause of impenitence; men are not convinced of the purity of God's nature, nor sensible of the impurity of their own, therefore they do not apply themselves in good earnest to the work of repentance and reformation, the liveliest part of it. Labour then for a more active and practical knowledge of God and divine truths, such as may humble and renew your souls, not only

that you may be delivered from outward troubles that threaten you, but much more, that you may escape the wrath to come. And because neither the Word preached, nor judgments, nor mercies that are set before you, are sufficient to quicken a dead soul, or soften a hard heart, without the effectual concourse of the Spirit of God, let us have recourse to the Throne of Grace, by humble and earnest prayer, in the name and mediation of Jesus Christ.

Psalm XLII. 8.

Yet the Lord will command his loving-kindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life.

MAN is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards, saith Eliphaz, Job 5:7. And as it is the corruption and sinfulness of his birth and nature that has exposed him to trouble, so nature usually sets him at work, to look out for such things as may preserve, and deliver him from trouble, or at least, mitigate and temper the bitterness of it. And because there is not any one worldly thing that hath either certainty or sufficiency enough to serve at all times, therefore worldly and natural men are forced to make use of variety, and are but badly served with them all. The believing soul hath but one comfort whereon he relies, but it is a great one, which alone weighs down all the rest. Bread strengthens, and wine makes glad the heart of man, Psal. 104:15. But God is the strength of my heart (says the Psalmist) Psal. 73:26. and the gladness of it too. Thou hast put gladness in my heart more than they have, when their corn and wine increaseth; and therefore, while the rest are seeking after some scattered crumbs of goodness in the creatures, Who will show us any good? He fixes his choice upon this one thing, The light of God's countenance; and it is the constant assurance of this, that upholds him; waves beat upon

him, yea, and go over him, yet the Lord will command his loving-kindness to shine upon him.

In this Psalm, we may perceive the Psalmist full of perplexed thoughts, and that betwixt strong desires and griefs, and yet, in the midst of them, now and then, some advantage, and intermixing strains of hope, with his sad complaints; for, immediately before, we heard nothing but the impetuous noise of many waters, deep calling unto deep. In the former verse, we have there, as it were, a touch of the sweet sound of David's harp, Yet the Lord will command his loving-kindness in the daytime.

In the words we have David's confidence, and David's purpose, the one suiting very well with the other. His confidence in God's loving-kindness; Yet the Lord will command his loving-kindness. And his purpose; And in the night his song shall be with me.

It is true, those words (in the night his song shall be with me) may be taken as a part of the expression of his confidence, taking his song, for the matter or subject of the song, the goodness of God; as if he should say, both in the day, and in the night, I shall find the sweet fruits of God's favour and loving-kindness. But not excluding that, I rather take it intended, as his resolution, that it should be his custom, in the quiet season of the night, to look back upon God's goodness manifested to him in the actions and occurrences of the day; and thus entertaining his soul with that secret discourse, he would stir it up to the praises of his God, and withal, would join prayer for the continuance, and further manifestation of it. David (as is hinted before) intermixes strains of hope, not that faint and common hope of possibility, or probability, that after stormy days it may be better with him, but a certain hope that shall never make ashamed; such a hope as springs from faith, yea, in effect, is one with

it. Faith rests upon the goodness and truth of Him that hath promised, and hope raising itself upon faith so established, stands up and looks out to the future accomplishment of the promise. Therefore the Apostle, Heb. 11:1. calls faith The substance of things hoped for, ἐλπίζομένων ὑπόστασις, And the evidence of things not seen; of all other wavering hope, here's, they say, true, Spes est nomen boni incerti. But this can say, The Lord will command his loving-kindness, &c.

The Lord will command] What a sudden change is here! Would you think this were the same man that was even now almost overwhelmed? Thus faith always conquers, though seldom or never, without hard conflict, not only assaulted by troubles without, but, which is worse, by incredulity within; nor assaulted only, but many times brought under, yet does it not succumb and give over, knowing, that even after many foils, yet in the end it shall overcome.

His confidence you may consider, first, oppositely, and then positively, or simply in itself. Oppositely both to his present trouble, and to his complaints, wherein this trouble is expressed, and that is fitly implied, though it be not in the original.

Though the multitude and weight of Job's afflictions, did force out of him some bitter words, and made him look back upon the day of his birth, and curse it, yet faith recovers him from his distemper, and makes him look forward with joy, even as far as to the blessed day of his resurrection, Job 19:25. I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand, at the latter day, upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.

The former words of impatience he spoke indeed, but he adheres to these, and wishes that they were written with an iron pen, and

engraved to abide forever. Therefore we hear of him again in Scripture, as a righteous and patient man, but of these words of his impatience, not a word. In the 77th Psalm, what sad expostulations are these the Psalmist uses: "Will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone forever? Doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?" But see how he corrects them, ver. 10: "Then I said, this is my infirmity, but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High." Thus Jonah, 2 Chap. ver. 3, 4. much like this, but there, literally true. And here deep calls unto deep, yet in the midst of those deeps, faith is not drowned; you see it lifts up its head above water; "Yet the Lord will command, &c." Yea, though it takes particular notice of God's hand in the affliction, yet it goes not to another hand for comfort. "Thy waves and thy billows"; yet that same God, whose waves are like to destroy me, will ere long command his loving-kindness to shine upon me. "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." A wonderful expression of faith. He says not, though he afflict me sore, but though he slay me; not though evil men or Satan should do it, but, though he slay me, yet will I trust in him. What troubled mind can imagine anything harder against itself than this?

1. Learn then to check these excessive doubts and fears, by some such resolute word as this: Turn the promise, first upon thyself, and then upon God. Consider that he hath promised life eternal to believing, and then say, though I saw his hand, as it were, lift up to destroy me, yet from that very hand will I expect salvation; for I have his word engaged for it, that if I believe I shall be saved. I do not say, that a soul under temptation can assure itself, that God is already reconciled to it (and herein possibly lies oftentimes the mistake) for this reflex act of assurance, though it be our duty to seek after it, itself is rather a gift and reward than a duty; but the direct and proper act of faith is of

perpetual use and necessity, and then most, when there is least sense of assurance, and it is no other but a recumbency or reliance, rolling over of the soul upon free mercy. That which breeds us much perplexity, is, that we would invert God's order. "If I knew," say some, "that the promise belonged to me, and Christ were a Saviour to me, I could believe"; that is to say, would first see, and then believe. But the true method is just contrary: "I had fainted," says David, "unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord." He believed it first, and saw it afterwards. And in this same Psalm, laboring to still his disquieted soul, by elevating it above his troubles, to look upon his God; he says to it, "Hope in him now, and ere it be long, thou shalt praise him for the help of his countenance," even while his countenance is withheld. And thus faith ought to triumph over spiritual fears and difficulties.

2. How incongruous is it, that outward dangers or trials should overmatch it. Will you trust God, upon his word, for salvation and eternal happiness, and be diffident for the safety and needful blessings of this temporal life, which life, in comparison, is but a moment, and the best things of it but dross? Consider that you dishonour faith exceedingly, and degenerate from the believing saints of former ages. Indeed, the promises of this life, and that which concerns it, (though godliness with them) yet they are not so absolute, nor are they so absolutely needful for you; but considering the wisdom and love of your Heavenly Father, learn to compose your minds by it.

I will not be afraid, though ten thousands of the people set themselves against me round about, says David, Psalm 3:6. And lest you think him singular, in the 46th Psalm, it is the joint voice of the whole Church of God: We will not fear, though the earth be removed,

and the mountains be cast into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled; though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. There is a river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God: the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved. That is the way to be immovable, in the midst of troubles as a rock amidst the waves. When God is in the midst of a kingdom or city, he makes it firm as Mount Zion, that cannot be removed. When he is in the midst of the soul, though calamities throng about it on all hands and roar like the billows of the sea, yet there is a constant calm within, such a peace as the world can neither give nor take away. On the other side, what is it but the want of lodging God in the soul, and that in his stead, the world is in the midst of men's hearts, that makes them shake like the leaves of trees at every blast of danger? What a shame is it, seeing natural men, by the strength of nature and help of moral precepts, have attained such undaunted resolution and courage against outward changes, yet they that would pass for Christians, are so soft and fainting, and so sensible of the smallest alterations? The advantage that we have in this regard is infinite; what's the best groundwork of a philosopher's constancy, but as moving sands in comparison to the rock that we may build upon? But the truth is, that either we make no provision of faith for times of trial, or if any we have, we neither know the worth, nor the use of it, but lay it by, as a dead unprofitable thing, when we should most use and exercise it. Notwithstanding all our frequenting of God's house, and our plausible profession, is it not too true, that the most of us either do not at all furnish ourselves with these spiritual arms, that are so needful in the militant life of a Christian, or we learn not how to handle them? And are not in readiness for service, as was the case of that improvident soldier, whom his commander found mending some piece of his armour, when they were to give battle. It were not amiss before afflictions overtake us, to try and train the mind

somewhat by supposing the very worst and hardest of them. To say, what if the waves and billows of adversity, were swelled and flowing in upon me; could I then believe? God hath said, I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, with a heap of negations, in no wise, I will not. He hath said, when thou passest through the fire and through the water I will be with thee. These I know, and can discourse of them. But could I repose and rest upon them in the day of trial? Put your souls to it, is there anything or person that you esteem and love exceedingly? Say, what if I should lose this? Is there some evil that is naturally more contrary and terrible to you than many others? Spare not to present that to the imagination too, and labour to make faith master of it beforehand in case it should befall you, and if the first thought of it scares you, look upon it the oftener, till the visage of it become familiar to you, that you start and scare no more at it. Nor is there any danger in these thoughts: Troubles cannot be the nearer by thus thinking on them, but you may be both safer and stronger, by breathing and exercising your faith in supposed cases. But if you be so tender-spirited, that you cannot look upon calamities so much as in thought or fancy, how would you be able for a real encounter? No, sure. But the soul that hath made God his stay, can do both; see it in that notable resolution of the prophet, Habakkuk 3:17. Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength. And in David, Psalm 23:4: Yea, (says he) though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me. You see how faith is as cork to his soul, keeping it from sinking in the deeps of afflictions. Yea, that big word which one says of his morally just man is true of the believer, *Si fractus illabatur*

orbis. Though the very fabric of the world were falling about him, yet would he stand upright, and undaunted in the midst of its ruins.

In This Confidence Considered in Itself, We May Observe the Object of It"

1. The loving-kindness of the Lord.
2. The manner or way by which he expects to enjoy it; the Lord will command it.
3. The time; in the day.

His loving-kindness. He says not, "return to the house of God for deliverance from the heavy oppression and sharp reproaches of the enemy," which would have answered more particularly and expressly to his present griefs, but "his loving-kindness." The reason for expressing himself thus, I conceive to be twofold.

1. In the assurance of this is necessarily comprised the certainty of all other good things. This special favour and benignity of the Lord engage his power and wisdom (both of which you know are infinite) to procure everything truly good for those whom he so favours. Therefore, it is that David chooses rather to name the streams of particular mercies in this their living source and fountain, than to specify them severally. Nor is it only thus more compendious, but fuller too, which are the two great advantages of speech, and this I take to be the other reason.
2. A man may enjoy great deliverances, and many positive benefits from the hand of God, and yet have no share in his loving-kindness. How frequently doth God heap riches, honour, and health on those he hates, and the common gifts of the mind too, wisdom, and learning; yea, the common gifts of his own Spirit, and gives a fair and long day of external prosperity, to those on

whom he never vouchsafed the least glance of his favourable countenance! Yea, on the contrary, he gives all those specious gifts to them with a secret curse as here; as he gave a king in wrath to his people, so he often gives kingdoms in his wrath to kings. Therefore, David looks higher than the very kingdom which God promised him, and gave him, when he speaks of his loving-kindness. In a word, he resolves to solace himself with the assurance of this, though he was stripped of all other comforts, and to quiet his soul herein until deliverance comes, and when it shall come, and whatsoever mercies with it, to receive them as fruits and effects of this loving-kindness. Not prizing them so much for themselves, as for the impressions of that love which is upon them, and it is that image and superscription that both engage and move him most to pay his tribute of praise. And truly, this is everywhere David's temper; his frequent distresses and wants never excite him so much to desire any particular comfort in the creature, as to entreat the presence and favour of God himself. His saddest times are when, to his sense, this favour is eclipsed. "In my prosperity I said I shall not be moved." And what was his adversity that made him of another mind? "Thou hiddest thy face and I was troubled." This verifies his position in that same Psalm: "In thy favour is life."

Thus in the 63rd Psalm

At the beginning: "My soul thirsteth for thee in a dry land where there is no water." Not for water where there is none, but for thee where there is no water. Therefore, he adds in the 3rd verse, "Thy loving-kindness is better than life," and all that be truly wise, and of this mind, will subscribe to his choice. Let them enjoy this loving-kindness and prize it, so that whatever befalls them, their happiness

and joy are above the reach of all calamities. Let them be derided and reproached abroad, yet still, this inward persuasion makes them glad and contented. As a rich man said, though the people hated and taunted him, yet when he came home and looked upon his chests, "Egomet mihi plaudo domi." With how much better reason do believers bear out external injuries? What inward contentment when they consider themselves truly enriched with the favour of God? And as this makes them contemn the contempts that the world puts upon them, so likewise it breeds in them a neglect, and disdain of those poor trifles that the world admires.

The sum of their desires is (as that cynic's was of the sunshine) that the rays of the love of God may shine constantly upon them. The favourable aspect and large proffers of kings and princes would be unwelcome to them if they should stand betwixt them and the sight of that sun. And truly, they have reason. What are the highest things the world affords? What are great honours and great estates, but great cares and griefs well dressed and coloured over with a show of pleasure that promise contentment and perform nothing but vexation? That they are not satisfying is evident, for the obtaining of much of them doth but stretch the appetite and teach men to desire more. They are not solid either. Will not the pains of gout, of strangury, or some such malady (to say nothing of the worst, the pains of a guilty conscience) blast all these delights? What relish finds a man in large revenues and stately buildings, in high preferments and honourable titles, when either his body or mind is in anguish? And besides the emptiness of all these things, you know they lack one main point: continuance.

But the loving-kindness of God hath all requisites to make the soul happy. "O satisfy us early with goodness or mercy," says Moses, "that we may rejoice and be glad all our days," Psalms 90:14. There is

fullness in that for the vastest desires of the soul, satisfy us; there is solid contentment that begets true joy and gladness, and there is permanency, all our days. It is the only comfort of this life and assurance of a better. This is a large subject to insist on, but certainly, the naming of his loving-kindness should beget in each heart a high esteem of it and an ardent desire after it. And if it does so with you, then know that it is only to be found in the way of holiness. He is a holy God and can love nothing that's altogether unlike himself. There must always be some similitude and conformity of nature to ground kindness and friendship and to maintain it; that saying is true, *idem velle & idem nolle firma amicitia*. What gross self-flattery it is to think that God's loving-kindness can be towards you while you are in love with sin, which he so perfectly hates? How can the profane swearer or voluptuous person, or the oppressor, and covetous, or the close hypocrite (worse than any of them) rest upon the loving-kindness of the Lord in the day of troubles? No, surely. But the terror of his wrath shall be added to all their other calamities, and they shall find it heavier than all the rest. God will not pour this precious oil of gladness, this persuasion of his love, into filthy vessels. Even his own children, when they grieve and sadden his Holy Spirit by unholiness, shall be sadly punished by the withdrawing of these comforting and sensible expressions of his love.

Labour then, you that as yet never tasted of this love, to know what it means; forsake and hate that which hitherto hath made you strangers to it. For if you obtain this, it shall comfort you when these things cannot, but would rather prove your greatest torment. And you that have received any testimonies of it, entertain it carefully, for it is your best comfort both in your best days and in your worst days too.

You would all gladly be delivered from these many evils that threaten you, for many they be indeed, and peace is a great blessing. But suppose you were secured from all these fears, and he should command a sudden calm (which truly he can do), would you then think yourselves happy? That life of yours which you so fear to lose by fire or sword, though you had peace, would ere long fall into the hands of some ague, or fever, or consumption, and perish by them. Or, at the longest, a few years will end it. It is a lighted candle, that though nobody blow out, will quickly burn out by itself. But this loving-kindness is not so short-lived; it shall last as long as your souls, and so long as it lasts, they shall be happy. Those goods that you fear shall be pillaged and spoiled in war, how many hazards are they subject to even in peace? Solomon tells you that riches oftentimes (though nobody take them away) make themselves wings and fly away. And truly, many times the undue sparing of them is but the letting of their wings grow, which makes them readier to fly away. The contributing a part of them to do good only clips their wings a little and makes them stay the longer with their owner. (But that by the way.) Howsoever, in the day of death and in the day of wrath, as Solomon says, they profit nothing at all. So then, though you may desire that God would command deliverance for you, yet if you would be truly happy, your greater and more earnest suit would be that he command his loving-kindness to appear to your souls. And having once obtained this, you may possibly be persecuted and endure hard trials, but one thing is made sure: you cannot be miserable, nor shall you want temporal mercies and preservation too, so far as they are good for you. The inward assurance of this love shall carry you strangely and sweetly through all outward vicissitudes. And when the day shall come that all other comforts shall look pale upon you, then shall you find the worth and happiness of this more than ever before.

Command] Make it appear to me. Sometimes God is said to shut up and hide his love from his children, and that is a mournful time with them. But we read not that he shuts out love and ceases altogether to have affection to those whom he once loved. Therefore, when he shows himself again in the gracious manifestations of his mercy, he is not said to begin anew to love them, but only to command his love, which erewhile he had countermanded, to appear.

In the day] If you have a mind to take the day and night figuratively, for prosperous and adverse times, it would lead you in that sense to observe David's constancy in God's praises, that not only in the day of deliverance but even in the night of distress, he resolved a song for God. And truly, many times God gives his children in an afflicted condition more sweetness of spirit, and aptitude not only to pray but to praise, and more spiritual delight in himself than in times of outward peace and prosperity: "He giveth songs in the night," saith Job, and you know the sound of music is most delightful in the night. But to take it properly, he is confident that in the several actions and occurrences of the day he should find the goodness and favourable assistance of the Lord, and then he resolves, which leads to the other part of the text.

In the night time, to meditate on that goodness, and frame a song of praise to the Author of it.

And indeed, what is the whole thread of our life but a chequered twist, black and white, of delights and dangers interwoven? The happiest passing of it is to constantly enjoy and observe the experiences of God's goodness and to praise him for them. David was a wise king and a valiant soldier, yet we see he thought not this experience inconsonant with either of these two conditions. This precious book of Psalms (a great part thereof being his) testifies

clearly that prayer and praises were his great employment. A religious disposition of mind may not only consist with fortitude and magnanimity but is indeed the best principal and cause of both, contrary to the wicked and foolish opinion of profane persons. Which of the two, do you think, might welcome a day of battle with most courage and resolution? He that had passed the preceding night in revelry and carousing, or he that had spent it in prayer and obtained some assurance of a better life? Truly, if they went on with equal forwardness, there is no man, except he were an atheist, but would judge the one to be brutish fury and precipitation, and the other true valour.

His song] In the worst estate, there is ever some matter of praise to be mixed with requests. And truly, we may justly suspect that our neglect of praises makes our prayers unacceptable.

And my prayer] In the best estate here below, praise must be accompanied with prayer. Our wants, necessities, and straits return daily upon us and require new supplies of mercy, and prayer, if we know how to use it right, is the way to obtain them all.

To the God of my life] Or the God that is my life. This word is added as the reason for all that went before. If you ask David why he reposes so much upon the loving-kindness of God, or what he means to spend so much effort in praises and prayer to God, he answers: Because he is my life. He is the author and preserver of my temporal life, and all the passages and accidents of it are in his hand alone. He has also given me and maintains in me a spiritual life; yea, he is the life of my soul. It lives by union with him, as my body does by union with it, and he has laid up life eternal for me. Would Christians think thus indeed? The light of this consideration would dispel their distrustful fears. Certainly, there is atheism at the bottom of them; if

not a denial nor a misconception of God, at least a forgetfulness of God. See Isaiah 51:12-13: "I, even I, am he that comforteth you: who art thou that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man, which shall be made as grass; and forgettest the Lord thy Maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth," &c. Consider then that men have no power over our present life but by the appointment of God. And besides that, we have another life which is infinitely more precious than this, a life spiritual, which is the beginning of eternal life; and this is altogether out of their danger. Colossians 3:3: "Our life is hid with Christ in God." It is hid, and wicked men cannot so much as see it. How then should they take it from us, seeing it is hid, and that not meanly; it is hid with Christ in God? What then shall become of it? Read the next verse, and read it to your comfort, for there is abundance in it if you look right upon it: "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." They that are in God, being united to him through Christ, can never by any power be separated from him; it is an indissoluble union. Death itself, that is the great dissolver of all other unions, civil and natural, is so far from untying this, that it consummates it. It conveys the soul into the nearest and fullest enjoyment of God, who is its life, where it shall not need to desire that God would command or send his loving-kindness, as it were at a distance. It shall be then at the springhead, and shall be satisfied with his love forever.

SERMON VII.

PREFACE.

Wherefore do you spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfies not? says the Prophet Isaiah (55:2). All men agree in this: they would willingly meet with some satisfying good, and yet, if you look rightly upon the projects and labours of the greatest part, you shall find them flying from it and taking much pains to be miserable. Truly, considering the darkness that is upon the soul of man, it is no great wonder to see these miss their way and continue wandering, who hear not the voice of the Gospel to recall them and see not its light to direct them. But this is somewhat strange: where true happiness and the true way to it is propounded and set before men, so few should follow it in good earnest. If the excellency of that good did not allure them, yet one would think that their many disappointments in all other things should drive them home to it. How often do we run ourselves out of breath after shadows, and when we think we have overtaken them and would lay hold on them, we find nothing! Yet still we love to befool ourselves, even against our own experience, which we say, usually makes fools wiser. Still, we choose rather to shift from one vanity to another than to return to that sovereign good that alone can fill the vastest desires of our souls. We prefer to run from one broken cistern to another, as the Prophet calls them, and to take pains to hew them out, rather than have recourse to that fountain of living waters.

One main thing that makes men thus rove and wander is that they do not reflect upon their own course or themselves, upon what the main end they aim at is, and then see whether their way is suitable to that end. If they would be happy (as who would not), then sure things that are empty, uncertain, and certainly perishing will not serve the turn. And truly, as this thought would be seasonable at any time, so especially to us in these times wherein, besides the common uncertainty of outward things, there is an apparent visible hazard that men's lives and fortunes are likely to be put to. Will you make

advantage and gain of your trouble? Thus the looser you find other things tied to you, as it were upon a running knot, secure that one thing, and your portion in it, which is worth all the rest, yea far above them all, and that alone which can be secured and made certain. Wanting this, what though you had peace and health, and all imaginable prosperity, you would still be miserable, being liable to the wrath of God and eternal destruction. But if once united to Christ, and in him reconciled to God and entitled to Heaven, what can fall amiss to you? You shall have joy in the midst of sorrow and affliction, and peace in the midst of war, yea and life in death. But think not to attain this assurance while you continue profane and godless, not seeking it in the way of holiness, for there alone it is to be found, and withal beg it of God by humble prayer.

Psal. CXIX. 136.

Rivers of waters run down mine eyes: because they keep not thy law.

Love is the leading passion of the soul, and all the rest follow the measure and motion of it, as the lower heavens are said to be wheeled about with the first.

We have here a clear instance of it in the Psalmist, testifying his love to God by his esteem and love of the Law or Word of God. What is each of the several verses of this Psalm but a breath and vent of this love, either in itself, or in the causes, or in the effects of it? Where he sets forth the excellencies and utilities of God's Law, there you have the causes of his love; his observing and studying it, his desire to know it more and observe it better, these are the effects of his affection to it. The love itself he often expresses in verses 47, 48, 113, and verse 140: "Thy Word is pure, therefore thy Servant loveth it." And verse 127: "I love thy Commandments above gold, yea above fine

gold." But scarcely accounting that love which can be uttered, in verse 97, he expresses it most by intimating that he cannot express it: "O how I love thy Law!" Hence are his desires (which are love in pursuit) so earnest after it. Among many, that is pathetic, verse 20: "My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy Judgments at all times." Hence likewise his joy and delight (which are love in possession), verse 14: "I have rejoiced in the way of thy Testimonies as in all riches." And verse 16: "I will delight myself in thy Statutes; I will not forget thy Word." We have his hatred of things opposite, which is love's antipathy, verse 113: "I hate vain thoughts: but thy Law do I love." And verse 163: "I hate and abhor lying: but thy Law do I love." And in verse 139, you shall find his zeal (which is no other but the fire of love stirred up or blown into a flame): "My zeal hath consumed me: because mine enemies have forgotten thy Words." And (to omit the rest) in verse 158, his love to the Law shows its sympathy in sorrow for the violation of the Law: "I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved: because they kept not thy Word." And here you find this grief swelling to such a height, that it runs over into abundant tears: "Rivers of water run down mine eyes; because they keep not thy Law."

The words have briefly these rivers in their channel and course: "They run down mine eyes." In their spring and cause, to wit, his sympathy with God's Law broken by men, in the latter clause of the verse: "Because they keep not thy Law." But both together clearly teach us that godly men are affected with deep sorrow for the sins of the ungodly.

More particularly consider: (1) The object of this affection. (2) The nature of it. (3) The degree or measure of it. (4) Its subject.

The object is the transgression of the Law, or to take it (as in the text) in concreto, men, transgressors of the Law: "They keep not thy Law." It is true, the whole creation groaneth under the burden of sin and its effects, as the Apostle speaks; but sin itself is man's enemy, he being that reasonable creature to whom the Law was given. Now in general, it is a matter of grief to a godly mind to consider the universal depravity of man's nature. That he is a transgressor from the womb. That the carnal mind is enmity against God, not subject to his Law, neither while it remains such can it be (Romans 8:6). And this grief will go deeper by remembering from whence he has fallen. When he was newly come forth of the hands of his Maker, that image of God that he stamped upon him shined bright in his soul; the whole frame of it was regular and comely, the inferior faculties obeying the higher, and all of them subject unto God. But how soon was he seduced, and then what a great change ensued? Quantum mutatus ab illo? There is ever since such a tumult and confusion in the soul, that it cannot hear the voice of God's Law, much less obey and keep it. Hence is that complaint of the Psalmist, oftener than once: "They are all gone out of the way, and become abominable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." Mundus immundus (ὁ κόσμος ἐν τῷ πονηρῷ κεῖται) lies buried in it, as the word is used in the inscription of tombs (κεῖται). Look abroad in the world, and what shall you see but a sea of wickedness over the face of the whole, which draws from a godly discerning eye that beholds it these rivers of tears? The greatest part not knowing the true God, nor the true religion, and the true way of his worship. And for those that do, yet how unlike are they to it in their lives! The reformed churches this way, how unreformed in a great part!

But more particularly to branch this out a little in several sorts of men: this godly grief is a very large sphere; it will extend to remote people, remote every way, not only in place but in manners and

religion, even to heathens and gross idolaters. Yea, the very sins of enemies, and of such as are professed enemies to God, yet move the tender-hearted Christian to sorrow and compassion. "Of whom I now tell you weeping, that they are enemies to the cross of Christ," Philippians 3:18. Enemies, and yet he speaks of them weeping; what he writes concerning them he would have written in tears if that had been legible. Thus you see the extension of this grief. But yet, out of all question, it will be more intensive in particulars of nearer concernment. It is the burden of the pious man's heart that his law, who made the world and gives being to all things, should be so little regarded and so much broken through all the world, but yet more especially that in his own Church, amongst his own people, transgression should abound. Sins within the Church are most properly scandals. God manifests himself (so to speak) most sensible of those, and therefore the godly man is so too. Whether they be the continual enormities of licentious and profane persons, which are by external profession in the face of the visible Church, though indeed they be in it but as spots and blemishes, as the Apostle speaks, or whether it be the apostasy of hypocrites, or (which sometimes falls out) the gross falls of true converts—all these are the great grief of the godly. The relations of men, either natural or civil, will add something too; this sorrow will be greater than ordinary in a Christian. He will melt in a particular tenderness for the sins of his kindred, parents or children, husband or wife, and most of all ministers for their people. How pathetically does this appear in St. Paul, 2 Corinthians 12:21: "And lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed." A man cannot but be more particularly touched with the sins of that nation, and of that city, and congregation, and family, whereof he is a member, 2 Peter 2:8: "(For that righteous man dwelling among

them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds.)" The sins of more eminent persons, either in Church or Commonwealth, will most affect a prudent Christian because their inclinations and actions import the public much. Therefore, the Apostle, when he had exhorted to supplications and prayers for all men, he particularly mentions kings and such as are in authority. And truly, when they are abused by misadvice and corrupt counsel, some of these tears were very well spent if poured forth before God in their behalf, for in his hand (as that wise king confesseth) are their hearts compared to rivers of waters. Let their motion be never so impetuous, yet he turns them whither he pleaseth, and who knows but these rivers of waters, these tears, may prevail with the Lord to reduce the violent current of that river (a king's heart) from the wrong channel?

But to proceed: the second thing to be considered in this affection is the nature of it. (1) It is not a Stoical apathy and affected carelessness, much less a delightful partaking with sinful practices. (2) Not a proud setting off their own goodness with marking the sin of others, as the Pharisee did in the Gospel. (3) Not the derision and mocking of the folly of men, with that laughing philosopher; it comes nearer to the temper of the other that wept always for it. It is not a bitter, bilious anger, breaking forth into railings and reproaches, nor an upbraiding insultation; nor is it a vindictive desire of punishment, venting itself in curses and imprecations, which is the rash temper of many, but especially of the vulgar sort. The disciples' motion to Christ was far different from that way, and yet he says to them, "You know not of what spirit ye are." They thought they had been of Elijah's spirit, but he told them they were mistaken and did not know of what spirit they were in that motion. Thus, heady zeal often mistakes and flatters itself. We find not here a desire of fire to come down from heaven upon the breakers of the Law, but such a grief as

would rather bring water to quench it if it were falling on them: "Rivers of waters," etc.

The degree of this sorrow is vehement, not a light transient dislike, but a deep resentment, such as causeth not some few sighs or some drops of tears, but rivers.

It is true, the measure and degree of sorrow for sin, whether their own or others, are different in diverse persons, that are yet true mourners, and they are also different in the same person at diverse times, not only upon the difference of the cause but even where the cause is equal, upon the different influence and working of the Spirit of God. Sometimes it pleases Him to warm and melt the heart more abundantly, and so He raises these rivers in these eyes to a higher tide than ordinary. Sometimes they recede again, but yet this godly sorrow is always serious and sincere; and that's the other quality here remarkable in it. It is not a histrionic weeping, only in public, for the speech is here directed to God, as a more frequent witness of these tears than any other, who is always the witness of the sincerity of them, even when they cannot be hidden from the eyes of men. For I deny not but they may, and should have vent in public, especially at such times as are set apart for solemn mourning and humiliation. Yet, even then, usually these streams run deepest where they are stillest and most quietly conveyed. But howsoever, sure they would not be fewer and less frequent alone than in company, for that's a little subject to suspicion, Jeremiah 9:1. "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people." And 13:17, "But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride, and mine eye shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the Lord's flock is carried away captive."

The subject of this affection is not the ungodly themselves that are professed transgressors of this law. They rather make a sport of sin, as Solomon speaks; they play and make themselves merry with it, as the Philistines did with Samson, till it brings the house down about their ears. But the godly are they that are affected with this sorrow, such as are careful observers of the law themselves, and mourn first for their own breaches, for these are the only fit mourners for the transgression of others.

Now to inquire a little into the cause of this: why the breaking of God's law should cause such sorrow in the godly, as here breaketh forth into an abundance of tears; we shall find it very reasonable if we consider, 1. The nature of sin, which is the transgression or breach of the law, as the Apostle defines it. 2. The nature of this sorrow and these tears. 3. The nature of the godly.

1. Sin is the greatest evil in the world. Yea, truly, (in comparison) it alone is worth the name of evil, and therefore may justly challenge sorrow, and the greatest sorrow. The greatest of evils it is, both formally, in that it alone is the defilement and deformity of the soul, and casually, being the root from whence all other evils spring; the fruitful womb that conceives and brings forth all those miseries that either man feels, or hath cause to fear. Whence are all those personal evils incident to men in their estates, or in their bodies, or minds, outward turmoils and diseases, and inward discontents, and death itself, in all the kinds of it? Are they not all the fruits of that bitter root? Whence arise these public miseries of nations and kingdoms, but from the epidemic national sins of the people as the deserving and procuring cause at God's hand? And withal, oftentimes from the ambitious and wicked practices of some particular men as the working and effecting causes, so that every

way, if we follow these evils home to their original, we shall find it to be sin, or the breaking of God's law. Ungodly men, though they meddle not with public affairs at all, yea, though they be faithful and honest in meddling with them, yet by reason of their impious lives, are traitors to their nation. They are truly the incendiaries of states and kingdoms, and these mourners, though they can do no more, are the loyalist and most serviceable subjects, bringing tears to quench the fire of wrath—rivers of waters. And therefore, sorrow and tears are not only most due to sin as the greatest of evils, but they are best bestowed upon it if they can do anything to its redress, because that is both the surest and most compendious way to remedy all the rest, sin being the source and spring of them all.

This is the reason why in Jeremiah 9:1, when he would weep for the slain of his people, he is straightway led from that to bewail the sin of his people, in verses 2, 3, etc. And in his book of tears and lamentations, he often reduces all these sad evils to sin as causing them, particularly, chapter 5:16, "The crown is fallen from our head: woe unto us that we have sinned." He turns the complaint more to the sin than to the affliction.

Secondly, consider the nature of these tears. Tears spent for worldly losses are all lost; they run all to waste; they are *lachrymae inanes*, empty fruitless things. But tears shed for the breach of God's Law are the means to quench God's wrath. The prayers and tears of a few may avert the punishment of many, even of a whole land. If not, they are still not lost; the mourners themselves always benefit from them, as you have it in that known place, Ezekiel 9. They that mourned for the common abominations were marked, and the common desolation did not take hold of them. This mourning for other men's wickedness both testifies to and preserves the godly man's innocence. I say it

preserves it as well as testifies to it; it keeps them from the contagion of that bad air they live in. For without this, sin would soon grow familiar. It is good for men to keep up and maintain in their souls a dislike of sin, for when once it ceases to be displeasing to a man, it will, ere long, begin to be pleasing to him.

If we consider the nature of the godly, we shall see this mourning suits with it exceedingly, both in regard to his relation to God and to man. God is his Father, and therefore it cannot but grieve him much to see Him offended and dishonoured. Love to God, and consequently to His Law, and love to men, and the desire for their good, is the spring of these rivers. A godly man is tender of God's glory and of His Law. Every stroke that it receives strikes his heart. He has bowels of compassion and would be glad if they were converted and saved.

And he considers every man as his brother and therefore is sorrowful to see him run the hazard of perishing in sin. The former sympathy, whereby the godly man tenders the glory of God, is from his piety. This latter, whereby he pities the misery of man, is from his charity. From these flow the rivers that run down his eyes.

To be too sensitive to worldly crosses and prodigal with tears upon such slight occasions is little better than childish or womanish. But these tears that flow from love to God and grief for sin have neither uncomeliness nor excess in them; abundance of them will beseem any man that is a Christian. Let profane men judge it a weakness to weep for sin, yet we see David do it. Men of arms and valour need not fear disparagement by weeping thus. It is the truest magnanimity to be sensitive to the point of God's honour, which is injured by sin.

Again, the consideration of this truth will reveal the world guilty of much ingratitude to godly men. It has always been the custom of

profane persons to seek to brand religion and godliness with disloyalty and turbulence and to make it pass for an enemy to the peace and prosperity of states and kingdoms. You see clearly with what affection religion furnishes men towards the public, causing them to mourn for common sins and so to prevent (as far as in them lies) common calamities. And this is of no little consequence, for truly it is not foreign power, so much as sin at home, that ruins kingdoms. All the winds that blow without the earth, be they never so violent, stir it not; only that which is within its own bowels makes an earthquake. It was a grave answer of Epaminondas, being asked what he was doing, solitary and pensive, in the time of solemn mirth and feasting: "While my countrymen," says he, "are so peaceably feasting, I am thinking on the best means to preserve that peace to them, that it may continue." This, a little altered, is applicable to the godly. They are often mourning for the sins and praying for the peace of the places where they live, while, in the meantime, the greatest part are multiplying sin and so forfeiting their peace.

Rivers of Waters] This is a mournful, melancholy life that these precisians lead, says the worldling. Yes, truly, if there were no more in it than what he can perceive and judge of. But besides the full joy laid up for them, and the beginnings of it here, there is even in this mourning an unknown sweetness and delight. The philosopher says, even of common tears, that there is some kind of pleasure in them, as some things please the taste by their very tartness. But of these tears, they that know them, know it to be eminently true that they are pleasant. But be this exercise as sad as the profane call it, yet why observe they not that they themselves are much the cause of it, as they may read here, because they keep not God's law.

But to pass by diverse inferences that the words afford, let us take notice of the duty here practiced and how much we are all obliged to

the present practice of it. Who will deny that we have too much matter and occasion for it? Besides the sorrow of Zion, and particularly, the blood-shedding and distress of our brethren, and our own danger, what corner of the land, what rank or condition of people is there, that abounds not in gross and heinous violation of God's law? They keep not thy law. Magistrates and judges turning judgment into gall and wormwood, ministers remiss in that great care, the care of souls; people wallowing in ungodliness and uncleanness, swearing, &c. The greater oppressing the lesser, and the lesser defrauding and wronging the greater. No sensible and notable work of conversion, almost to be seen or heard of amongst us, the Lord absenting himself from his ordinances. O that he would dwell in his house and fill it with a cloud of his glory! What vile uncleanness and wantonness! What shameful drunkenness and excess! And some so far from mourning for others' guiltiness of this sin, that they glory in making others guilty of it and count it a pastime to make others drunk; and this is a far greater sin than drunkenness itself, for these men, while they make beasts of their companions, they make devils of themselves, becoming tempters and provokers to sin. If any such be here, either tremble at the woe that the Prophet Habakkuk, chap. 2, denounces, or confess that you believe not the Scriptures. "Woe to him that gives his neighbour drink, and puts the bottle to him to make him drunken." The cup of the Lord's right hand shall be turned to thee; it is full of heavy vengeance: there is a cup if you like it, to pay you back for the cups you give to others.

Again: how is the land filled with oaths and cursings? How are your streets, and almost all companies where a man can come, defiled, partly with tearing the precious name of God, partly with calling on the devil? There would be no end of reckoning up all particulars; Sabbath-breaking, fraud and covetousness, pride and malice, and

envyings one of another, and the rest. But the sum is this: an universal want of the fear of God and his law.

And the cause of this is, in a great part, ignorance of God and of His law. Truly, it is wonderful, under so much light and such plentiful preaching, to find so much darkness, not only in the skirts and remote places, but even in the prime parts of this land. Multitudes are strangers to the very principles and fundamentals of the religion which they profess. Those who have knowledge abuse it, sinning against it and continuing in profaneness. Without this true religion, it is as impossible to have renewed hearts and lives as to have a house without a foundation or, as we say, a castle in the air. This atheism and ignorance among people is in a great part to be imputed to the corruption and sloth of ministers. Would to God there were not many congregations, not only altogether destitute but also freezing under a cold and lifeless ministry.

You see then, we lack not causes of mourning and humiliation on all hands, but our want is inward—of that due disposition for it, softness of heart, and that love to God which should melt and mollify the heart. Let us then stir up ourselves and one another to this godly sorrow for the sins of the land. There is need of rivers of tears for these heaps of sin, as they tell of his letting in a river to that monstrous stable of Augeas, that could not otherwise have been cleansed in the time allotted him.

And truly, as the duty lies upon all the faithful, the ministers of the Word ought to be most eminent in it, the chief mourners, the precentors, to take up the tune of these themes, Joel 2:17. And all that wish the good of church and kingdom ought to bear a part in them, according to their measure. Have we not much need to entreat reconciliation with God, that He prove not our enemy? Yes, surely,

and were we reconciled with Him, we would have little need to fear the power of man.

Now those who would be profitable mourners for others' sins must by all means have these two conditions I mentioned: to be careful observers of the law themselves, and to mourn for their own failing and breaking of it. To observe the law, it is absolutely needful to know and understand it, and that not only in the letter and surface, but according to the spiritual sense and meaning of it. Without this knowledge, a man may light upon some duty by guess, as it were in the dark, but he cannot observe the law. Not only are they reproachable who glory in their own sins and make sport of the sins of others, but they also mistake it much who think it enough to consider their own with grief, and judge the sins of others an impertinency for them to think on. They mourn not rightly for others who do not begin with themselves, and they never mourn rightly for themselves who end in themselves. He who here thus weeps for others made his bed to swim with these rivers for his own sin, Psalms 6.

As a man must know this law, so he must be inwardly convinced and persuaded of the divinity of it—that it is God's law. He must have a deep apprehension of the majesty and authority of the lawgiver to work reverence, and of His goodness to beget love; and the due mixture of these two will both strongly command and sweeten obedience to His commandments. This obedience, though it is not an absolute and perfect fulfilling of any one of the commandments, yet it is a respect to them all, as this Psalm has it, which is (so to speak) an imperfect kind of perfection. From this respect to the law, which is the observing of it, will flow that other condition of grieving when we break it.

Besides all other things that should make a Christian's own sin grievous to him, there is one thing that cannot but move him much: the consideration of the sorrow and sufferings of Christ. To view the bleedings of the Lord Jesus cannot help but pierce a believing soul and make it say, "Did my Redeemer shed His blood for my sins, and shall I not myself shed tears for them?" I know the natural constitution of some denies them tears, but if it does so to any, make up that want with a sense of inward grief, and it is well enough. The eye of God can discern that as well as the other. But truly, where men have tears for lighter causes (for all other causes are lighter) and none for this, they do not yet feel the weight of sin, except that want be through the depth of sorrow, which sometimes will stop the current of tears, though it used to run at other times. As they say, "Curae leves loquuntur, ingentes stupent" (light cares speak, great ones are struck dumb). But this is a rare and happy impediment.

And to answer another doubt: If you find sometimes worldly griefs stirring you more violently, yet let this godly sorrow affect you more constantly, that it may have the advantage in continuance, even if it falls short in degree.

But as this grief must begin at home, as they say of charity, it must not be so selfish as to rest there. Truly, where it comes in that order, it may be in some way a stronger evidence of sincerity to mourn for others' sins than for our own, for there seems to be more of God in it, because there is less in it of ourselves and our own particular interest.

Now you will possibly think it but an unpleasant duty that you have heard urged all this while. But look forward and consider the issue of it. That which Christ speaks in particular to His disciples is generally true for all Christians, John 16:20: "Ye shall weep and lament," says

He, "but the world shall rejoice; ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned or made into joy." The water of those tears shall be turned into the wine of consolation. The traffic of these rivers is gainful; they export grief and import joy. When these tears are called seed, the harvest crop is called joy. "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." They are here called rivers, and they are answered with a river, Psalm 36:8, for which they shall in the end be perfectly exchanged. "Thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures." And Revelation 7:17: "The Lamb shall feed them, and lead them unto living fountains of waters." Here they run down the eyes and water the cheeks; and there you read that God shall wipe them away from their eyes. Who would not be content to weep, to have God wipe away their tears with His own hand? Be ambitious then to be found amongst the mourners in Zion, and when you remove from this valley of tears, God shall at once fully wipe away all the stain of sin from your souls, and all tears for it from your eyes. And as He shall wipe away the tears with one hand, He will set the crown upon your heads with the other.

SERMON VIII

PREFACE

Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, saith the Psalmist, and he adds this reason: they will be still praising thee. There is indeed, always in God's house both fit opportunity and plentiful matter for his praises. But the greatest number of those that frequent his house do not dwell in it; their delight and affection are not there. Therefore, they cannot praise him. They come in as strangers and have no skill in the songs of praise. Yea, even the very children of the family, that worship in spirit and in truth, find their instruments (their hearts) very often quite out of tune for praises, and sometimes most of all when praises are requisite. They find still such abundant cause of complaint in themselves, weighing down their spirits, that they can hardly at all wind them up to magnify that God of mercy, which is far more abundant.

If we would take a reflex view and look back upon our carriage this day in the presence of our God, who is among us, who would not find much work for sad thoughts? Would not one find that he had a hard and stony heart? Another, a light, inconstant, wandering heart to complain of? A third, an unbelieving heart? And some, all of these? And they (if such there be) that have both deeply sorrowed and been largely comforted will possibly for all that, upon former sad experience, be full of fears and jealousies that this sweet temper will not be of long continuance; that ere long the world, or some lust, will find or make a way to creep in and banish those heavenly thoughts, and trouble that peace and joy which accompanies them.

Yet notwithstanding all these causes of grief or fear, our causes of praise are both more and greater, and it is no reason that the sense of our own evil should prejudice that acknowledgment of God's goodness. Yea, rather it should stir us up to extol it so much the more. Cease not to bemoan the evils of your own hearts, but withal forget not to magnify the riches of his grace, who hath given himself for you and to you. These two will not hinder one another, but the due intermixture of them will make a very good harmony. And the fruit of them will be this: you shall have still more cause to praise and less to complain. When the Lord shall find you humble acknowledgers of his grace, he will delight to bestow more grace upon you and will subdue those iniquities for you which you cannot; and though he is pleased to do it but gradually, by little and little, yet in the end, the conquest shall be full. And then he who is the author and finisher of your faith, though it is his own work, yet because it is done in you, he shall account the victory yours, as obtained by you, and give you as conquerors the crown of glory: "To him that overcometh," saith he, "will I give to sit with me in my throne," &c.

There is nothing here but from free grace: the courage and strength to fight in this spiritual warfare, the victory by fighting, and the crown by victory, flow all from that fountain. "In all these things we are more than conquerors," saith the Apostle, but how? "Through him that loved us." Therefore, if we desire to be such, let us humble ourselves before the throne of grace, entreating both for grace and glory in the name of Christ our mediator.

Cant. I. 3.

Because of the savour of thy good ointments, thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee.

The natural workings and desires of things are agreeable to their being. The beasts, according to their sensitive life, seek those things that tend to the good and preservation of that life, and affect nothing higher than those, and they are satisfied. Man (except such as are in the lowest stage and border upon the beasts) finds nature, even corrupt nature, raising him to higher desires and designs. And yet of the best of them, the Apostle's maxim holds true: they that are after the flesh mind the things of the flesh. And yet he subjoins the excellency of some men beyond the best naturalist: they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit (Romans 8:5). They must be confined to things natural but are strongly moved towards spiritual blessings, and Christ the sum of them. And having once tasted of his sweetness can say, "Because of the savour of thy good ointments," &c. They that are elevated to a supernatural being can admit nothing into competition with his love, and this it is that lies under these words: "Because of the savour of thy good ointments," &c.

Numbers have promiscuously been his guests at this time, and the greatest number think they came to good purpose; but know that you are so far from partaking of Christ in the sacrament, that you have not so much as smelt his perfumes if you be not strongly taken with his love. Great are the praises and many the duties you owe him for such rich favours, and therefore show your goodwill and endeavour some payment. But know that none of them are current except they be stamped with love; if you love not, you do nothing. All your labours and services without it are as so many ciphers; they amount to just nothing. And with it, the meanest of them will find acceptance.

You have briefly in the words Christ's loveliness and the Christian's love; the former the cause of the latter, both couched under borrowed terms, according to the whole strain of this allegorical

song, to which the true experimental knowledge of this divine love is the best commentary.

In all love, three things are necessary: (1) Some goodness in the object, either true and real, or apparent and seeming to be so; for the soul, be it never so evil, can affect nothing but what it takes some way to be good. (2) There must be a knowledge of that goodness; for the most excellent things, if altogether unknown, affect not. (3) There must be a suitableness or agreement of that good thing with the nature of those which should affect it; otherwise indeed, how good soever it is, it is not good to them.

Now all these we have clearly in this love. (1) The goodness, the excellency of Christ expressed by precious ointments. (2) The manifestation and making of it known, signified by the pouring forth of his name. (3) His fitness and congruity with them here mentioned, under this denomination Virgins; such as have the senses of their souls, not stopped with the pollutions of the world, but pure and active, and (therefore as the Apostle speaks, Hebrews 5:14) exercised to discern good and evil. These three requisites thus happily met, must needs produce love. Therefore the virgins love thee.

Because of the savour of thy good ointments. How true is the Apostle's word when he calls Christ the believer's all things, and that radical grace of faith, because it apprehends Christ has a kind of universality; and it is reasonable too, it alone being to the soul what all the five senses are to the body. It is the eye and the mouth, a wonderful eye; it sees him that is invisible (Hebrews 11:27). The mouth, it tastes that the Lord is gracious (1 Peter 2:3). Yea, take these two both together in one place, Psalm 34:8: "O taste and see that the Lord is good." It is the soul's ear, for what else is meant when it is said, "He that hath an ear to hear let him hear"? And was it not that

touch which Christ took special notice of, and with good reason distinguished it from the common touch of the multitude that was crowding about him? That touch alone draws virtue from him: "Somebody hath touched me, for there is virtue gone out of me." And lastly, as it is all those other senses, and Christ its object in reference to them all; so here in its smelling, it finds the savour of his fragrant graces and by that works love, "Because of the savour," &c.

What strange odds are there betwixt the opinion of Christ's spouse and the world that knows him not? They wonder what she sees in him desirable; she wonders that they are not all ravished with his excellencies. They prefer the basest vanities in the world before him; she finds the choicest and richest things in the world too mean to resemble the smallest part of his worth. See in this song how busily and skillfully she goes to all the creatures and crops the rarest pieces in nature and art to set forth her well-beloved, and seems to find them all too poor for her purpose. One while she extols him above all things beautiful and pleasant to the eye; another while above things delectable to the taste, as in the former verse, "Thy loves are better than wine," and here prefers the perfume of his graces to the most precious ointments.

When a natural eye looks upon the sacrament, to wit of the Lord's Supper, it finds it a bare and mean kind of ceremony. Take heed there be not many that come to it and partake of it with others, that prize it little, have but low conceits of it, and do indeed find as little in it as they look for. But oh! What precious consolation and grace doth a believer meet with at this banquet; how richly is the table furnished to his eye; what plentiful varieties employ his hand and taste? What abundance of rare dainties? Yet there is nothing but one here, but that one is all things to the believing soul. It finds his love is sweeter than the richest wine to the taste or best odours to the smell;

and that delightful word of his, "Thy sins are forgiven thee," is the only music to a distressed conscience.

Thy good ointments. The holy ointment of the sanctuary under the law was composed according to God's own prescription, Exodus 30:25. And they were straitly forbidden to imitate it or make any like it, to signify the singular holiness, the matchless worth of the anointing oil of gladness, wherewith our high priest, the Lord Jesus, was anointed above his fellows. And in this he is incomparable, that his ointment he hath not from without. It was his own divine nature that perfumed his manhood with these precious ointments. God and the Spirit of the Lord are said to have anointed him. Psalm 45:7, "Thou lovest righteousness and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows;" and Isaiah 61:1, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek," &c. But know that that Spirit and the Father are one in essence with the eternal Son. In that mystical song much like to this, in Psalm 45:8, it is said that his garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia as he comes forth of his ivory palaces: when he came down from his glorious court above to dwell among men, he apparelled himself like them; he was clothed with human flesh. But yet that vesture was so transcendently enriched with all graces as with costly perfumes, that men might easily know there was more under them than a mere man. Yea, even in that low estate did such beams of his glory shine through, that all whose eyes were open did clearly behold them and knew him to be no less than the only begotten Son of God, by this, that he was so full of grace and truth, John 1:14. And these are, in a word, these precious ointments, whose delightful smell is here commended.

Now to enumerate and describe these graces, what tongue of men, yea, or of angels were sufficient? What other is the main subject of the whole Scriptures? What mean all the figures and ceremonies of the Law; the costly furniture and ornaments of the Temple; the rich vestments of the high priest; that fine linen, that silk and gold, those gems and precious stones? Was any of them, were they all, any other but shadows and dim resemblances of the matchless perfections of Jesus Christ? It is strange that Christians have so low conceits of their high Redeemer! What is the Gospel but a more clear and plentiful pouring forth of those ointments? What was the great labour and business of the holy Apostles but the diffusing of Christ's graces through the world? "I determined to know nothing among you save Christ and him crucified," says St. Paul to his Corinthians. What was that other sacrament and this, but covers under which Christ conveys himself and his graces to the believing soul, while the profane and slight-hearted receivers are sent away with empty elements? Thus you see how ample a subject these graces are in the general. And truly the consideration of any one particular of them might be the employment of many hours. Would you hear the wisdom of Christ; look what the Apostle says of it, Col. 2:3, "In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Not some drops of wisdom, no, nor streams, but a fountain: a treasure, not one treasure, but treasures; many, yea, all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, yet not obvious to every eye, but, as treasures, are hid. The children of wisdom, which are the world's fools, have some knowledge of this his wisdom, and draw from it for their own use; but to sound the depth of it, who can be able?

No less admirable is his holiness. He is both the immaculate lamb and the undefiled sacrifice; such a high priest became us: became us! Yes, holy, harmless and undefiled, Heb. 7:26. The more we were defiled with sin, the more stood we in need of an undefiled and

spotless high priest; it was as expedient that he should be unlike us in that, as that he should be like us in all other things. Therefore, as for the legal priesthood, there was a holy consecrating oil; this immortal high priest was anointed with most entire and complete holiness. This perfect holiness of his is set forth as myrrh, the best ointments and spices, myrrh (which is of a virtue preservative from corruption). He was not only of excellent smell while he lived among men, but this myrrh did likewise preserve and exempt him from contracting any corruption or pollution, by the bad air of sinful company; so that he conversed with sinners, that he might convert them without any danger of infection. And as he was thus extraordinarily anointed with the spirit of wisdom and holiness, so likewise with the spirit of meekness, therefore called the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world: his voice was not heard in the streets. And take in that other grace, which he himself mentions together with his meekness, as being near in nature to it, humility; "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart," Matt. 11:29. Indeed, humility is an odoriferous grace, it is a gracing, decorating grace, and it adds a kind of sweetness and luster to all other graces; yea, it serves singularly as a character for the trial of the truth of all other graces. As balsam, which is the chief of precious ointments, used to be tried, that is the truest and best, that put into any liquor, goes to the bottom, that but slight which swims above; so these graces are most upright, that are accompanied with most humility. And that this may be out of doubt, you know that Jesus Christ (of whom we now speak) as he had most grace, so was he most exemplary in humility; and certainly, the sweet smell of this good ointment did fill the whole house when he washed his disciples' feet, John 13, as it is said of the ointment that Mary poured upon his feet, in the foregoing chapter, John 12.

Amongst many other of his gracious qualities that might be mentioned, there is one we cannot but take particular notice of, his love, the rather, because the fragrant smell of his graces is here said to beget love. Now you know that one of the strongest attractives of love, is love, *magnes amoris amor*, μάγνης ἀμῶρις ἀμῶρ. What made him empty himself of his glory, as the Apostle speaks, but because he was full of love? What made him take on the form of a servant, suffer heat and cold, and hunger, and poverty, but love? What other was it made him digest the persecutions, revilings, and the contradiction of sinners, but love? But the great wonder of his love is this, he died to become our life; "Who hath loved me, and given himself for me," says the great Apostle St. Paul. And hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us, says the beloved Apostle St. John. Was it the nails that held him fast to the cross, when they tauntingly bid him come down? No, it was his love, that was stronger than death. But all this was nothing to the angry countenance of his Father, nor would he ever have ventured upon that, if infinite love had not persuaded him; no wonder if the Apostle call it a love that passeth knowledge. "That you may know," saith he, "the love of Christ which passeth knowledge," Eph. 3:19. Know it we may, and should, but we must know withal, that we cannot know it fully. And this is our comfort, that it is greater than we can comprehend, for if it were not so, it would be less than we stand in need of. So much of his love we may understand, as may abundantly inflame our hearts with love to him; for this purpose hath he revealed it, and made his name like an ointment poured out. And that's the second thing.

His Name - that's the report and manifestation of his excellencies; and if you will take it properly, his name, Jesus, and Christ, or the Messiah, is true of them, for they are significative of these excellencies. Ask an afflicted conscience if Jesus, that is, a Saviour, be not a precious word, that has a sovereign value, both a refreshing

smell and a healing virtue. The hammer of the law may break a stony heart in pieces, but it is only the blood of Jesus that can soften it; and where it is effectually poured, either upon a wounded soul, it heals it, or upon a hard heart, it mollifies it. For that other name, Christ, well may it be called an ointment poured out, for it signifies his anointing. And that the sweet savour of this name may take effect, read but that one passage, Isaiah 61:1: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings," etc. What inestimable riches of consolation are there in each of these effects, to which Christ was anointed, and yet we find not a word among them all for a proud stiff-necked sinner. Here are good tidings, but it is to the meek; comfortable binding up, but it is for the broken-hearted; liberty, but it is for captives and prisoners, groaning under their chains, and desirous to be delivered. Not for such as delight in their bondage; there is oil of joy and garments of praise, but they are provided for mourning dejected spirits that need them; not to the impenitent. On the contrary, there is a terrible word interjected in the midst of these promises, "the day of vengeance of our God;" and that is the portion of Christ's enemies, and such are all incorrigible sinners.

Thus it is, at the same banquet from which you come, one may be filled with spiritual joy, and the very person that sits next, be filled with a secret curse, and return more miserable than he came. But let the disconsolate lamenting sinner lift up his head, and behold Christ, the Son of God, anointed a prophet to preach salvation and liberty to such; a priest to purchase it, and a king to give it.

Now, the pouring out of this name is diverse. Before the coming of the Messiah, his name was poured out in prophecies and promises, in types and legal ceremonies, but more fully when the Word was made flesh; then angels and holy men, yea, and women, spoke clearly

of him. What was his Father's voice at his baptism? The Holy Ghost's descending? What was his own preaching, and miracles, and conversation, but all the pouring forth of his precious name? And in his sufferings and death, what think you? Was not his name then poured forth, yea, his blood with it? Yes, truly, being extended on the cross, and his body pierced in divers places; his precious ointments were shed abroad towards all the quarters of the world; their smell both reached heaven and the visible earth. God the Father (as he was said to do in Noah's sacrifice) did much more smell in his sacrifice a savour of rest, appeasing his wrath, and all believers a savour of peace, a quieting of their consciences. And as aromatic spices, when they are pounded out and beaten, send forth their sweet smells most liberally, so in these his sufferings did the obedience, patience, and love, and all the graces, and the name of our Saviour, most clearly manifest themselves to the world. After he was dead, they embalmed his body, but they knew not that his own virtue would do more than all the ointments and spices in the world could do, not only by preserving his body from corruption, but by raising it the third day. And truly, after his resurrection, his own disciples knew his name better than ever before, and yet more fully after his ascension, when the Holy Ghost came down upon them, which was poured from heaven on them, for this very end, that they might pour forth Christ's name to the ends of the earth, Acts 2.8. And they did so, carrying this precious treasure in earthen vessels, as that elect vessel St. Paul speaks. And ever since, God has continued the pouring forth of this name by the ministry and preaching of the gospel. It is true, there are too many of those that are employed in this work that seek themselves and their own ends rather than his glory whom they preach. And they that are more upright, the very best of them are sinful men, but how mean and unworthy soever they be, despise not the gospel; let the sweet name which they pour forth prevail for itself, that so you may reverence and love it, if you would have salvation by

it; and there is no other name under heaven by which that can be obtained.

As this name is poured forth in the gospel preached, so in the sacraments annexed to it; and particularly in this, when the bread is broken, and the wine poured out. And was not this the earnest desire of the receivers of it this day, it should have been, to have our share in it, for the refreshment and curing of our souls? Nor shall any that came thus be disappointed; and if not presently, yet most certainly, and that in due time they shall find the sweet fruits of it.

You have heard many ways how the name of Christ is poured out, yet there is one more, without which all the rest are ineffectual: it is this, the secret and powerful working of the Spirit of God in the soul. The ordinances and means of salvation do indeed pour forth the name of Christ round about a man, but until the Spirit concurs with them, not one drop falls within the soul. And is he not so much the more miserable, that hears much of Christ and partakes nothing of him? Yes, surely, a man may have much common knowledge of Christ, may understand well, yea, may preach well, concerning his worth and graces, and yet not love him. But there is a particular knowledge of him by the infusion of the Spirit, and where the smallest measure of this is, it presently wins the affection. There is a shedding abroad of the love of God in our hearts, that the Apostle speaks of, Romans 5:5, and this draws us after him, for our love to God is nothing else but the reflection of his love to us. So then, though many hear of Christ, yet because there are but few that have this special knowledge of him, therefore it is that so few do truly esteem him, and love him, and they are such as are here called Virgins: and that's the third thing.

The Virgins - Similitude and conformity of natures beget friendship; pure affections delight in a pure object, and make them such. For the truth is, Christ does not find men naturally suitable to himself, but as he took on our nature, so he washes away the sinfulness of our nature, which he took not on, and makes us that way conformable to his nature. They that are so changed, though they were formerly lovers of sin, yet by conversion, which is called regeneration, are born again, and so become not only chaste but even virgins, spiritually; for by virgins here are not meant such as Romish votaries fancy them to be. No, this virginity may well consist with any lawful state of life.

These virgins are such as are truly holy and pure in heart and life, who, though they are not perfectly free from all sin, have no affection to sin; these are singularly delighted with the smell of Christ's name and graces, while the voluptuous person and the profane worldling dislike and despise it. The virgins bestow their affection whole and entire upon Christ.

How grossly do you delude yourselves, that make your hearts dens of pride, filthy lust, malice, and envy, and thousands of vanities, and yet think to find a corner in them to lodge Christ too? Truly, you would both straiten him in room and give him very bad neighbours. No, they that think not a whole heart too little for him shall never enjoy him.

The Virgins love thee - Grace destroys not the natural passions of the soul, but corrects them only by destroying their corruption, and so they become not only not contrary to grace, but are made the subject and seat of grace. This of love, which is the chief of them, we see it abolishes not, but rectifies it, recalling it to its due object, and

turning it into the right channel, by which it may empty itself into the ocean of goodness.

And this love may well consist with the purity of virgins; yea, it is this love that purifies and makes them such. The virgins love, but whom? Thee; and it is as reasonable a love as it is pure. Therefore they love thee, because thou hast made them, in some measure, apprehensive of thy worth, which commands the love of all that know it; not a cold and indifferent affection, but a superlative, ardent love, far overtopping all their other desires. And good reason, since Christ doth infinitely, and beyond all comparison, surpass all other things desirable. Ask your own hearts if you love Christ thus, for if not thus, you love him not at all. The Apostle St. Paul's love was of this size, Phil. 3:7, 8: "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ; yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ."

Thus, love will not only undergo difficulties and sufferings for Christ without either repining or fainting, but it will even be glad to meet with them, as opportunities to exercise and testify itself; hard things will seem most easy for his sake, and bitter things exceedingly sweet. In a word, to him that loves, nothing is impossible. Love is the leading passion of the soul, and all the rest conform themselves to it: desire and hope, fear, joy, and sorrow. If then you love Christ, the desires and breathings of your soul after him are strong and earnest; if he withdraw himself or appear angry, if either you see him not or see him look discontented, your grief will be so deep that it cannot be allayed by any worldly employments. Yet, upon some former tokens of his love, which is known to be unchangeable, hope will uphold the soul till the beams of his grace scatter the cloud and break through.

Though our Joseph seem strange and speak roughly for a while, he cannot long refrain from discovering his affection. Again, if you love him, unspeakable will be your joy when he smiles upon you; as great will be your delight in possession as your desire is in pursuit. And while you have his presence, it will be too hard a task for any affliction to dismay you. Have you, indeed, heard Christ speak comfortably to you this day at his holy table? How will this enable the soul and arm it against dangers and distracting distrustful fears? "Perfect love casteth out fear," saith St. John, that is, all base and servile fear; but there is one fear that's in no heart but where love begets it, fear to offend. You know how wary and loath men are naturally to displease those they love, therefore it is that love to Christ and a careful observing of his commandments are inseparable companions; yea, love itself is the fulfilling of the law, for it gives up the heart to God and consequently the whole man.

Then there is no return of duty which your receiving of Christ calls for (and what doth it not call for) but is comprised under this one of love. Do you owe him praises? Yes, surely; then love him, that will stir you up to praise him. You never knew, but where much love was in the heart, it made the tongue ready and active upon all occasions to praise the party loved. Love will entertain small courtesies with great thanks, much more where the benefit so far exceeds all possible thankfulness. Ought you to serve and obey him? Doubtless he hath for that purpose redeemed you with his precious blood. And truly there is no obedience nor service so full and so cheerful as that which flows from love. Should you study conformity to Christ and labour to be like him? Yes, for this is to walk worthy of Christ; then there is nothing that assimilates so much as love. Men delight in the society of those whom they love, and by their society, they insensibly contract their customs and become like them. These virgins that love Christ for his graces love to converse with him, and by conversing

with him, they receive of his graces and have a smell of his perfumes. Not only do they, by the smell of his garments or such imposed rites, obtain the blessing; but likewise smell like him by the participation of sanctifying grace, of his wisdom and holiness, in a pure and godly conversation, abstaining from the impure lusts and pollutions of the world, of his meekness and humility. Never think that one and the same soul can have much pride and much of Christ; ever the more grace a man hath, the more sense hath he likewise of his own unworthiness and God's free mercy, and consequently, the more humility. If you love Christ, you cannot choose but be like him in love to your brethren. This is expressly compared by the Psalmist to the precious ointment poured upon Aaron's head that ran down to the very skirts of his garments. Our head and high priest, the Lord Jesus, hath incomparably testified his love to believers, whom he is pleased to call his brethren; they are far from equalling him, either in love to him or one to another, but they do imitate him in both. This is his great commandment, "That we love one another, even as he loved us," which is expressed both as a strange motive and a high example. It is not possible that a spirit of malice and implacable hatred can consist with the love of Christ.

Finally, should you be ready to suffer for Christ? Yes: then love is that which will enable you; and if you were inflamed with this fire, then, though burned for him, that fire would only consume your dross and be soon extinguished, but this would endure forever.

By these and the like evidences, try whether you indeed love the Lord Jesus Christ, and by these fruits. You that profess to love him, testify the sincerity of your love; and be assured, that if you be now found amongst these virgins that love him, you shall one day be of the number of those virgins that are spoken of in Revelation 14:3-4, who sing a new song before the throne of God.

If you hate the defilements of the world, and are not polluted with inordinate affection to the creature, it shall never repent you to have made choice of Christ; he shall fill your hearts with peace and joy in believing. When you come to his house and table, he shall send you home with joy and sweet consolation, such as you would not exchange for crowns and scepters. After some few of these running banquets here below, you shall enter into the great marriage supper of the Lamb, where faith shall end in sight, and hope in possession, and love continue in perpetual and full enjoyment. There, you shall be never weary, but forever happy, in beholding the face of the blessed Trinity. To whom be glory.

Amen.

SERMON IX.

PREFACE.

How true is that word of our Saviour, who is truth itself: "Without me, ye can do nothing." Severed from me, as that branch that is not in me, they that are altogether out of Christ in spiritual exercises do nothing at all. It is true, they may pray, and hear the Word, yea, and preach it too, and yet in so doing, they do nothing—nothing in effect. They have the matter of good actions, but it is the eternal form that gives being to things. They are but a number of empty words and a dead service to a living God. All our outward performances and worship of the body is nothing but the body of worship, and therefore nothing but a carcass, except the Lord Jesus, by his Spirit,

breathes upon it the breath of life. Yea, the worshipper himself is spiritually dead until he receives life from Jesus and is quickened by his Spirit. If this be true, then it will follow necessarily that where numbers are met together (as here), pretending to serve and worship God, yet he has very few that do so indeed, the greatest part being out of Christ; and such, being without him, can do nothing in his service.

Romans VIII. 7.

Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

THE ordinary workings and actions of creatures are suitable to their nature, as the ascending of light things, and the moving of heavy things downwards; so the vital and sensitive actions of things that have life and sense. The reasonable creature, 'tis true, has more liberty in its actions, freely choosing one thing and rejecting another, yet it cannot be denied that in exercising that liberty, their choice and refusal follow the sway of their nature and condition. The angels and glorified souls, their nature being perfectly holy, and unalterably such, cannot sin; they can delight in nothing but in obeying and praising that God, in the enjoyment of whom their happiness consists, still ravished in beholding his face. The saints, again, who have not yet reached that home and are but on their journey, are not fully defecated and refined from the dross of sin. There are in them two parties, natural corruption and supernatural grace, and these keep a struggling within them; but the younger shall supplant the elder. Grace shall, in the end, overcome, and in the meantime, though it be not free from mixture, yet it is predominant. The main bent of a renewed man is obedience and holiness, and any action of that kind he rejoices in, but the sin that escapes him, he cannot look

upon but with regret and discontent. But alas! those who are so minded are very thinly sown in the world, even in God's peculiar fields, where the labourage of the gospel is and the outward profession of true religion is unanimously received. Yet the number of true converts, spiritually-minded persons, is very small, the greatest part acting sin with delight, and taking pleasure in unrighteousness, living in disobedience to God as in their proper element; and the reason is the contrariety of their nature to our holy Lord. The carnal mind is enmity against God.

The mind, **φρόνημα** [phronēma]—some render it the prudence or wisdom of the flesh. Here you have it, the carnal mind, but the word signifies, indeed, an act of the mind, rather than either the faculty itself, or the habit of prudence in it, so as it discovers what is the frame of both those. The minding, as it is used in verse 27, is conform to that of Moses, Gen. 6:5, "Every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart is only evil continually." The word indeed signifies the wise thoughts, so then take the full latitude of it thus: The carnal mind, in its best and wisest thoughts, is direct enmity against God.

Carnal, **σάρξ** [sarx]—what is meant by the flesh here? It is the whole corrupt nature of man, and that we may know by its opposition to the spirit, not to the spirit or soul of a man, for so it has no thoughts nor minding, these being proper to the soul, but opposed to the Spirit of God.

Now the corruption of nature is called the flesh, not without very good reason, not only to signify the baseness of it, the flesh being the more ignoble and meaner part of a man, but because the greatest part of the sins of men's lives are about sensitive objects, and things that concern the flesh or the body. It lets in temptation of sin to the

soul by the doors of the senses, and it gives the last perfection, or accomplishment, to sin by external acting of it. The very first sin, that brought in death and misery with it upon mankind, the pleasure of the eye and of the taste were sharers in the guiltiness of it.

The carnal mind — Man, in regard to his composure, is, as it were, the tie and band of Heaven and Earth; they meet and are married in him. A body he has taken out of the dust, but a soul breathed from Heaven, the Father of Spirits; a house of clay, but a guest of most noble extraction. But the pity is, it hath forgotten its original, and is so drowned in flesh that it deserves no other but to go under the name of flesh. It has become the slave and drudge of the body, and, as the Israelites in Egypt, made perpetually to toil in clay. What is all your merchandise, your trades and manufactures, your tillage and husbandry, but all for the body, in its behalf, for food and raiment? In all these, the mind must be careful and thoughtful, and yet properly they reach it not, for itself hath no interest in them. It is true, the necessity of the body requires much of these things, and superfluous custom far more, but it is lamentable that men force their souls to forget themselves and their proper business, to attend to these things only and be busy in them. They spend all their time and their choicest pains upon perishing things, and, what is worse, engage their affections to them. They mind earthly things, whose end is destruction, Phil. 3:19. The same word that's here, φρόνημα, &c.

Will you consider seriously that your souls run the hazard of perishing because you consider not their spiritual nature? When that earthly tabernacle of yours shall fall to the ground (and ere long it must) your souls must then enter eternity, and though you had as large a share of earthly things as your earthly hearts now would wish, they all lose their use in that moment. They are not a proper good for the soul at any time, and least at that time. If you keep it all your life

long, busy about the interest and benefit of the flesh, the body, how poor will you be when your soul, having provided nothing at all for itself but the guiltiness of a sinful life, sinks into that bottomless pit? Be forewarned then, for to be carnally minded is death, verse 6 preceding the text.

The carnal mind — Now as sin hath abased and degenerated the soul of man, making it carnal, so the Son of God, by taking on our nature, hath sublimated it again, and made it spiritual. The souls that received him are spiritualised, yea, as sin made the soul carnal, grace makes the very body to become spiritual, making it partaker and coworker in spiritual things, together with the soul, in doing and suffering, and participant of the hopes too of an everlasting reward. This is the main Christian character our Apostle gives here, that they are spiritually minded, and that their actions suit their minds. They walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit; whereas before, with the rest of the world, they were eager in the pursuit of honours, profits, and worldly pleasures. Now the stream of their desires runs in another channel. They seek after honour, and are very ambitious of it, but it is such honour as the Apostle speaks of in this epistle, Rom. 2:7. By patient continuance in well-doing, they seek for glory, honour, and immortality. Their mind is upon profit and gain, but it is with the same Apostle, Phil. 3, that they may win Christ, and they account all other things loss in comparison. And their desires are after pleasure too, but not carnal pleasures, those are both base and of short continuance. The pleasures they aim at are those that are at God's right hand, and for evermore, Ps. 16:11. And that path of life he there speaks of, that way of holiness that leads thither, is their delight. Spiritual exercises they go to, not as their task only, but more as their joy and refreshment. And this change the Spirit of God works in the soul, making it (yea, and the body wherein it dwells) from carnal to become spiritual, as the fire, to which the Holy Ghost is

compared, refines sand and ashes and makes of them the purest glass, which is so neat and transparent.

Enmity against God — Sin hath not only made us unlike God, by defacing his beautiful image in us; not only strangers by making us wander far off from him, but enemies; not enemies only, but enmity in the abstract, for that is emphatical. The carnal mind is enmity; nothing else but enmity.

Now this enmity is described in the latter clause of the text by an antipathy, so to call it, or non-compliance with the law of God; it is not subject to the law of God, neither can it be, to wit, while it remains such. There is an absolute impossibility in it, to suit with the law of God, and consequently, with God himself; the reason lies in their opposite qualities. God is spiritual and holy, and so is the law, as our Apostle hath it in the preceding chapter; and the opposition he there makes, betwixt his unregenerate part and the law, is wholly true of the unregenerate man. The law is holy, says he, ver. 12. And ver. 14. It is spiritual; to which too he opposes, but I am carnal, sold under sin.

Where are now those that so vilify grace, and magnify nature? Or, shall I rather say, nullify grace, and deify nature? Here is the best eulogy the Apostle will bestow upon the best of natures: enmity against God. Nay, all the sparkles of virtue and moral goodness in civil men and ancient heathens are no better; besides many other things to be said of the virtues of those philosophers, such as ignorance of Christ, by whom alone this enmity is removed.

I should easily confess, nor (I think) can any deny it, that there is in the very ruins of our nature some character left of a tendency to God, as our chief and only satisfying good, which we may call a kind of love. And when we hear him spoken of, we find it flutter and stir;

hence men so abhor the imputation of hating God and being enemies. Yet this is so smothered under sensuality and flesh, that until we be made spiritual, nothing appears but practical, and, as they call it, interpretative enmity.

There is one thing that stains them enough: they were all, as that Father speaks, *animalia gloriae*. They aimed not in their study of virtue at God's glory, but at their own; and is not that quarrel enough, and matter of enmity? Says not he, My glory I will not give unto another, &c. (Isaiah 42:8).

But what is most useful for you is to convince you of that too good conceit men have of their natural condition; you would take it hardly, the most profane of you all, if any should come to you in particular and tell you, you are an enemy to God. But I answer, there is none of you, if you believe the Scriptures, who will not confess that all men are naturally such; and therefore, except we find in ourselves a notable alteration from the condition of nature, we must accept it that we are enemies, yea, enmity to God. For strangers to become acquainted with him; yea, which is more, for enemies to become friends, is a greater and more remarkable change than to be incident to a man without any evidence and sign of it. I know there is very great variety in the way and manner of conversion; and to some, especially if it be in their tender years, grace may be instilled and dropped in, as it were, insensibly. But this I may confidently say, that whatsoever be the way of working it, there will be a wide and apparent difference betwixt friendship with God and the condition of nature, which is enmity against him. Do not flatter yourselves, so long as your minds remain carnal, ardent in love to the world, and cold in love to God: lovers of pleasures more than of God (as the Apostle speaks). You are his enemies, for with him there is no neutrality. That which they say, taxing it as a weakness in the sex, *aut*

amat aut odit nihil est tertium, is in this case necessarily true of all. And this is God's peculiar, that he can judge infallibly of the inside; those shadows of friendship men use one with another will not pass with him. Deceived he cannot be, but men may easily, and alas! too many do deceive themselves in this matter to their own ruin.

We may learn hence how deep sin goes in our nature and, consequently, that the cure and remedy of it must go as deep. All the parts of our bodies and powers of our souls are polluted originally; our very mind and conscience, as the Apostle speaks, for it is immersed in flesh and enslaved to flesh naturally, and therefore goes under its name. We have become all flesh. That is the spring of our mischiefs; we have lost our likeness with our Father, the Father of Spirits, the purest and most spiritual spirit, till renewed by participation of His Spirit in our flesh.

It is the error, not only of natural men but somewhat of the godly too, that in self-reformation, they set themselves against actual sin, but they lay not the axe to the root of the tree; this root of bitterness, this our inbred and natural enmity against God. And till this be done, the lopping off of some branches will do no good, while the root is in vigour those will grow again, and possibly faster than before. Bewail every known act of sin as much as you can, for the least of them deserves it; but withal, let the consideration of them lead you into thoughts of this seed of rebellion, the wickedness of our nature, that takes life with us in the womb, and springs and grows up with us. This will humble us exceedingly and raise our godly sorrow to a higher tide. We find David takes this course in Psalm 51:5, where he is lamenting his particular sin of adultery and murder. It leads him to the sinfulness of his nature: "I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." He mentions this not to extenuate and diminish his sin—no, he is very far from that strain—but adds it as a

main aggravation. Indeed, the power of original sin in the regenerate is laid very low, yet not altogether extinct, which they find often to their grief and makes them cry out with our Apostle in the former chapter, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?" The converted are already delivered (as he adds) from the dominion of it, but not from the molestation and trouble of it. Though it is not a quiet and uncontrolled master, as it was before, yet it is in the house still as an unruly servant or slave, ever vexing and annoying them. This body of death they shall still have cause to bewail till death releases them. This leprosy has taken so deep in the walls of this house that it cannot be perfectly cleansed till it be taken down; and it is this, more than any other sorrows or afflictions of life, that makes the godly man not only content to die but desirous, longing with our Apostle, to be dissolved and be with Christ, which is far better.

As this teaches us the misery of man's nature, so it sets off and commends exceedingly the riches of God's grace. Are men naturally his enemies? Why then, admire his patience and bounty a little, and then we will speak of his saving grace. Could not he very easily ease himself of his adversaries (as he says by the prophet)? Lacks he power in his right hand to find out and cut off all his enemies? Surely no, not only does he have the power to destroy them all in a moment, but the very withdrawing of his hand that upholds their being (though they consider it not) would make them fall to nothing. Yet is he pleased not only to spare transgressors but to give them many outward blessings: rain and fruitful seasons, as the Apostle speaks in Acts 14. And the earth that is so full of man's rebellion is yet more full of his goodness: "The earth is full of thy goodness" (Psalm 33:5). It is remarkable that the same reason which is given in Genesis 6:5 for the justice of God in drowning the world is in chapter 8:21 rendered as the reason for God's resolved patience ever since.

His grace in finding a way of reconciliation and not sparing his own Son, his only begotten Son, to accomplish it; nor did he spare himself. O matchless love! To lay down his life, not for friends but for strangers! Not only so, but enemies, for unrighteous and ungodly persons, such as be at enmity against him (Romans 5:7-8, &c.). And having done this, he sends his Word, the message of reconciliation, to rebels, and sends his Spirit into the hearts of those whom he has appointed to salvation, to change their spirits, that they perish not in disobedience. He brings them near that were far off, having slain this enmity by the death of his Son.

As many of you then, as have hitherto heard this message of reconciliation in vain, be persuaded at last to give ear to it. This is all that God's ambassadors require, according to their instructions from himself, that men would lay down that enmity against him and not be so foolish as to willfully perish in it (2 Cor. 5:20).

Consider that this enmity is (1) unjust and (2) unhappy. Unjust it is, being against him who is the chief object of love, who is altogether goodness, both in himself and towards his creatures. It is too much not to love him with the most ardent and superlative affection, but to entertain enmity against him is madness. As he said to one who asked why the beautiful are loved, "It is a blind man's question." Certainly, we are blind if we see not cause enough, not only to desist from enmity but to be inflamed with his love. One glance of his amiable countenance is sufficient to cause the most rebellious heart to yield, lay down arms, and forever devote itself to his service. No, we know him not, and therefore we hold out against him. Is he not the living spring of all our comforts? Have we not from him life and breath and all things? And is he not ready to forgive iniquity, transgression, and sin? Let mercy melt our hearts to him, those sweet rays of love. Let his loving-kindness overcome these stubborn

hearts or spirits of ours. Among enemies, the weaker usually seeks first for peace, but here the mighty, almighty God comes to entreat agreement with sinful clay.

But if this prevails not, then think how unhappy this enmity is. You that are so afraid of men, and these weak men, of men like yourselves, whose breath is in their nostrils; will you not tremble at his power and be afraid to continue in terms of hostility against him who is the Lord of Hosts, who has power over the soul and body both, to kill both and cast them into Hell? What is the stoutest of men but as stubble to the flame of his wrath? Our God is a consuming fire. The sinners in Zion are afraid (says the prophet); they say, "Who shall dwell with devouring fire and everlasting burnings?" Then if you would not perish when his wrath is kindled, take that word of Eliphaz, Job 22:21: "Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace, thereby good shall come unto thee."

And to you, as many as he has taken into friendship with himself, look backward to the gulf you have escaped, and forward to the happiness you are appointed to, and let the joint consideration of both awaken your hearts and tongues to praises. How can your hearts contain such a wonder of love, as he has manifested to you, and not run over in songs and praise?

And as you owe him praises, so study, being made his friends, to become more like him. That same *idem velle et idem nolle*, to love and hate the same things with him, will be a sure testimony of friendship. And because carnality, or fleshly and earthly-mindedness, is here made the character of enmity, mortify these affections, nail them to that cross of Christ, whereby the enmity was taken away. And further, being once admitted into friendship, labour for a further degree of intimacy with him, and forbear everything

that may hinder that. Use frequent converse with him, for that both entertains and increases friendship. If anything falls out on your part (as it too often does) that may occasion any strangeness between you and your God, rest not till it be removed. If you walk in this way, it shall undoubtedly, at length, bring you where you shall abide in his presence forever, and shall no more fear any breach or interruption of enjoying him. To him be praise.

Amen.

SERMON, X.

Rom. XIII. 5. *Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for Wrath, but also for Conscience' sake.*

The wisdom and goodness of God, that shines in the natural order and dependence of things in the frame of the great world, appear likewise, and commend themselves to us, in the civil order He hath instituted in the societies of men, the lesser world. As out of the same mass He made the heaven, and the earth, and the other elements betwixt them, one higher than another, and gave them different stations and qualities, yet so different as to be linked and concatenated together, *Concordia Discordia*, and all for the concern and benefit of the whole.

Thus for the good of men, hath the Lord assigned these different stations of rule and subjection, though all of one race (Acts 17), raising from among men some above the rest, and clothed them with

such authority, as hath some representment of himself, and accordingly communicating to them his own name, "I have said you are gods." And the very power that is in magistracy to curb and punish those that despise it, the Apostle useth as a strong and hard cord to bind on the duty of obedience, a cord of necessity. But he adds another of a higher necessity, that binds more strongly and yet more sweetly, that of conscience, *wherefore ye must needs be subject not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake.*

Observe. 1. This is the main consideration that closes the discourse, the great cord that binds on and fastens all the rest, all the arguments foregoing, therefore, are mainly here to be pressed. Have a reverent and conscientious respect for the ordinance of God in the institution of government, and to the providence of God in His choice of those particular persons whom He calls to it. Contain thyself in thy own station, and submit to those set higher by the Lord, in obedience to Him. This indeed is the only true spring of all obedience, both to God and to men for Him, and according to His ordinance. To regulate the outward carriage, without the living principle of an enlightened and sanctified conscience within, is to build without a foundation. This is the thing God eyes most; He looks through the surface of men's actions to the bottom, follows them into their source, examines from what persuasives and reasons they flow; He sees not only the handle of the dial, but all the wheels and weights of the clock that are the cause of its motion, and accordingly judges both men and their actions to be good or evil as the inward frame and secret motions of the heart are in His own worship. The outside of it may have the same visage and plausible appearance in a multitude convened to it and concurring in it, and no human eye can trace a difference, and yet, oh, what vast difference doth God's eye discover amongst them! He sees the multitude of those that are driven to His house by the power of civil and church laws, or carried

to it only with the stream of company and custom, and those, I fancy, take up the most room in our churches. But He sees here and there, where such are in any corner that worship Him in singleness of heart, out of conscience to His holy command, and of their many obligations that dare not let pass any opportunity they can reach of doing service to their Lord, and that dare not slight His word. And thus, coming for conscience' sake, they do present their souls to receive His word, give their hearts up to receive the impression of it, put themselves under it, to be stamped by it according to that Rom. 6:17: "But ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you." So likewise, He sees those that bear His name to His people, the ministers of His word; if they preach constantly and live blamelessly, and are diligent and irreprovable in all the external parts of their walking: This last satisfies men's questions in their inspection and visitings, but God's enquiry and visiting searches deeper. He asks from what heart all this comes, if from a holy conscience of the weight and high importance of their holy calling, and a faithful respect to the interest of their Master's glory and His people's souls. And thus, He, as supreme judge, sits and considers the proceedings of judges and magistrates, not only whether they do that which is just, for often they cannot easily or safely do otherwise, but whether they do it with regard to Him or not; that is, whether they judge righteously for conscience' sake or not; whether they consider Him as sitting above them, when they sit down upon the bench or seat of justice, and do indeed, truly speak righteousness, Psal. 58. Or if in heart they work wickedness, if they have any corrupt end, or hearts that are not straight, He sits on their heart and judges it: Or if this be done either for base gain, or vainglory, or by compulsion, or outward necessity, or danger of censure; or if it be this latter, and inward necessity of conscience, which makes a true willingness.

Thus people, if they obey for wrath, which is, for fear of the magistrate's sword, more than for conscience of the Lord's command, God accounts not this obedience, but in His judgment it goes for no better than rebellion. It is to be feared, too many magistrates and others have in this nation embraced the Reformation, not at all for conscience' sake, but only for wrath, fear of laws and authority. But although we are not able to follow forth this search to the full, that being the Lord's own prerogative, yet, truly, where it is evident to us that there is nothing of conscience, though in civil things it may pass, yet in things that are peculiarly matters of conscience in religion, men ought to be somewhat wary, according to the utmost of due discerning, and are possibly somewhat to blame in promiscuous admitting of such, whose carriage, yea, whose profession and religion, speaks aloud, that their compliance was wholly constrained obedience, only for wrath, and not for conscience.

If civil authority is to be obeyed most for conscience, then church authority, which is more symbolical with conscience and has a nearer reference to it, ought to aim most at that. Conviction and conversion are our work, not constraint—to bring people both by the Word and by a way of discipline, suiting and backing it, to a sense of sin and spiritual thoughts of God and His holy law, that they may be subject more for conscience than for wrath.

And ye people, labour more to find the actings of that holy fear of God and conscience of His will in all your ways; study to have an inward light, a practical sanctifying light, directing you. Be not merely held in as beasts, by the authority and laws of men, but learn to know and be sensible of the sovereign authority of the Most High God and His law, and to have respect unto all His commandments. If this were once done, how regular a motion it would keep amongst all

superiors and inferiors of all sorts, in families and states—the one commanding, the other obeying in God! It would be as sweet music in the celestial choir of their lives and affairs; right-informing and right-moving consciences would be as continual teachers within, directing all in obedience, and would make it both more constant, sweet, and pleasant, as natural motion. Whereas it is grievous and violent, that which is from wrath or outward power, and therefore lasts not. As the Israelites worshipped God aright while their good judges lived, and ran after idols when they were removed.

Again, this same obedience for conscience ennobles and sublimates men's actions, even in civil things, makes them have somewhat divine, turns all into sacrifice to God. When all is done for God, even servants and children obeying masters and parents, subjects obeying magistrates, for His command's sake, and still thinking, in the whole course of their regular due carriage, in their very callings, "This I do for God; my ordinary labour and works, and my just obedience to men, I offer up to Him." This is the philosopher's stone that turns actions of lower metal into gold: "I set the Lord always before me" (Psalm 16:8).

Observation 2: Kings and other powers of the world, who are the enemies, and sometimes the enraged persecutors, of our holy religion, mistake their quarrel and are very wrongfully prejudiced against it. Upon that false supposition, they hate and oppose it, suspecting it as an enemy to their dignity and authority, whereas there is nothing that does so much assert their just power as religion does. Civil laws may tie the hands and tongue to their obedience, but religion binds all due subjection to them upon the very consciences of their people. Therefore, they are both ungrateful and unwise in using their power against religion, which it so much strengthens. Their power should strengthen it, both by way of due return, to

correspond with it in that, and even for its own interest, receiving a new establishment to itself by establishing religion. Even that master of irreligious policy confesses that the profession of religion is a friend to authority, but if the shadow of it does anything that way, we see, contrary to his profane suspicion, the substance and truth of it does much more.

Observation 3: If for conscience' sake, subjection; then surely in nothing against the true rule of conscience and prime object of conscience, the authority and law of God. That is the first and highest, and the perpetual unalterable engagement to Him, binding kings and subjects high and low. If they leave their station, we ought to keep ours still in a straight subjection to God; for the extent of friendship and all other relations, and of all subjection and obedience, is to be ruled and bounded, *usque ad aras*. Give to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, but nothing of God's; neither ours to give, nor his to receive.

For, for this cause you pay tribute also. This, the Apostle gives as a sign of that confessed right that magistrates have to the subjection and obedience of people, that in all nations this homage and acknowledgment is due to them, tribute paid; which he may rather mention because some question might be what Christians should do concerning this. However, this according to the constitution of several places, he takes as granted, to be not only lawful but due to be rendered. Here we are not to insist on the scanning of this, but certainly as the power of a magistrate is not in this, nor in any other thing, absolute and unbounded, so the legal and just paying of tribute and other revenues by the people argues their engagement to those set over them, and is not as wages to a mercenary servant, but an honorary due to their place and calling, who are the ministers of God in civil government. So also convenient, yet liberal maintenance

to the ministers of God's own house is their right, yet (not to enrich them) nor ought it to be given grudgingly, as undue, or superciliously as to servants, but with the cheerfulness and respect agreeable to the Lord's servants, watching for their souls.

All tribute and obedience still relate to this and are grounded on it, the Lord's institution of power and government for the good of men. Though it sometimes proves otherwise in the exercise of it, yet the ordinance is pure, and most wisely suited to its end, from which the sin and corruption of men turn it, but too often; so that one man rules over another to his hurt, to the hurt of both the ruler himself and of the ruled, Ecclesiastes 8:9. There is a time wherein one man rules over another to his own hurt, each proving a scourge to the other, in the just judgment of God upon both for their iniquities, making a fire from Abimelech to devour the men of Shechem, and the men of Shechem deal treacherously with Abimelech.

Yet still, the thing itself remains good. Many skillful physicians may kill instead of curing, yet it is but a caprice to decry all remedies and the use of things medicinal, that the God of nature has furnished for that use. Men may, and alas! most do, prejudice their own health by either intemperate or some way irregular diet, yet this makes nothing against the continual necessity and use of food, nor can dissuade any from using it. Thus the abuses of authority infringe not this: that magistrates are a public good. Yea, the unjust better than none; tyranny better than anarchy; there is some justice done in the most unjust government.

But thus they that are exalted to rule ought to consider who raised them, and for what they are raised, and so faithfully to do justice. They are raised high, as the stars are set in their orbs, for influence and the good of the inferior world, and as the mountains which rise

above the valleys, not to be places of prey and ruin, but by the streams they send out to refresh them. So from magistrates, judgment ought to run down as water, and justice as a mighty stream; they ought to consider themselves as ministers (though called magistrates with relation to the people), yet ministers in relation to God, λειτουργοί, and the people's in him, as the word διακόννοι imports, being constant laborers for their good: even the sun, a minister, God's minister of heat and light to the earth. Would they look up thus to God, it would make them look down on their inferiors, not with the ill aspect of pride and cruelty, but the benign looks of goodwill, fidelity, and vigilance for their welfare, knowing that they are appointed for this very use in the world, not referring to that which is nearest here, and nearest themselves, the receiving of tribute, but the remotest good, which is the chief for which their tribute and themselves are appointed, the punishing of the wicked, and encouragement of the good.

Render therefore to all their dues, tribute to whom tribute, etc. The Apostle enlarges his exhortation to the general rule of equity; the humble, upright mind will willingly suit with this and pay respect to men in obedience to God, and therefore primarily to him, whom most neglect. Honour and fear are due to him as to our Father and Master, and yet where is it to be found? "If I be a Father where is mine honour? And if I be a Master where is my fear?" Malachi 1:6. The tribute of praise and glory in all these is due, and ought not to be purloined, nor any part detained, but how few are faithful in this? Much uncustomed goods pass among our hands in the course of our lives, many things wherein we are not mindful to give glory, entire glory to God; but he cannot be deceived. If we go on, he will take us in our quietest conveyance, and all will be forfeited. We shall certainly lose all if all glory does not return to him; all that we have

and are, should we daily and heartily offer up to him, from whom we have life and breath, and all things.

Owe no man anything, but to love one another, etc. That which the Apostle set before himself, as his own study and exercise, Acts 24:16, he does in the latter part of this epistle set forth at large as the duty of every Christian, to keep a conscience void of offense towards God and men. And having in the former part of it treated amply and excellently of the doctrine of Christians' faith and salvation, and ascended to its highest cause, he descends from thence to give the rules of a Christian life; and he reduces them to those two: to give the Lord his due, which is, ourselves entire; our bodies ought to be a living sacrifice, Romans 12:1. And that they are not without the soul; and it is love in the soul that offers up this whole burnt offering to God, the fire that makes it ascend. Towards men likewise, love is all, of which in many several acts of it, he spoke likewise in the former chapter, verse 9, etc. And having inserted an exhortation to subjection to human authority as a divine institution, he now returns to that main comprehensive and universal duty of love, and passes fitly from the mention of other particular dues to superiors, to this, as the general due, or standing debt, all men owe one to another. So, I conceive, this is not intended for the further pressing of that particular duty of subjection, by reducing it (seeming hard in itself) to the sweet and pleasant rule, or law of love, but that he passes wholly from that particular to this common duty, so as that is not excluded but comprehended here with the rest, though not specially aimed at; but a little rivulet running a while in its own channel, in the foregoing discourse, falls here in again, to the main current of the doctrine of love, begun in the former chapter. And here he chooses, adapting it to the strain of the discourses immediately foregoing it, to express this under the notion of a debt, Owe nothing but love.

1. Other debt removed: Owe nothing. That is, be not willing to continue debtors of anything to any, by undue retaining of such things, which being paid are not owing. (2) This is a constant debt, that you must still pay, and yet still owe, love; and the reason added is most enforcing, that we be willing, and continue both payers, and yet debtors of it; the dueness of it appears in this, that the law requires it; and the completeness of it, that it is all the law requires. Love is the fulfilling of the law, which is amplified in the two subsequent verses.

This is most fully true, take love fully as it looks on its full object, God and man; and so it is the fulfilling of the whole law that relates to those two in its two tables. Take it particularly as acting towards men (as here it is) and so it fulfills that part of the law, that whole table that respects man; most of those commandments are expressly here set down, and the omission of one is fully supplied by that additament, if there be any other. Then again, it is cleared by the common aim and result of them all, to keep our neighbour undamaged, and that, love does most surely and fully, therefore fulfills all. That negative "work no ill" answers the strain of all the commandments, which is to defend our neighbours from our ill, being most of them such, and all of them such that are here specified, yet both they, and this sum of them, involving the contrary, working of all possible good to our neighbour, in which still love suits it, nothing being both more averse from wrong, and more active in good, than love, as the same Apostle has it, 1 Corinthians 13. Besides that, it cannot do, no, not so much as think evil, it is naturally carried to bounty and kindness, and cannot cease from doing good; a plant that is fruitful all the year long.

The Apostle has very good authority for this abridgment of the Law; our Saviour himself, Matthew 22:40, and he takes it out of the Books

of the Law themselves, and certifies us that it is the substance and sum of both the Law and the Prophets. Were this love absolutely perfect, the fulfilling of the Law would be so too; and where it is sincere, as the Apostle requires it, there is a sincere and evangelical obedience, or fulfilling of the Law.

In the text consider: (1) The largeness of its object. (2) The largeness of its acting. (3) The height of its true original.

First: So far as thou canst acquit thyself, owe nothing else to any but love, owe that to all; not alike familiar converse necessarily to all, nor alike measure of beneficence, nor alike degree of love, but yet love alike sincere and real to all. Not either a false or an empty fair carriage, but holy Christian love, love rooted in thy heart and springing up in thy actions, even towards all men, as thy opportunity and ability serves thee, and their condition requires of thee. Not hating nor despising any for their poverty in estate, or deformity of body, or defects of mind, nor for that which works most on men, injuries done to thyself; all they can do cannot give thee an acquittance, or free thee of this debt of love, for thou art bound to another. This is the rule of Jesus Christ, and the badge of Christians, to love their very enemies; but this, oh! how rare? How few attain it? Yea, how few endeavor it? On the contrary, it is by many given over as a desperate, impossible business, they judging of it not according to that Spirit of Christ that is his, but according to the corrupt rancour and bitterness of their own natural perverse spirits. Yea, too many disdain it as a poorness and sheepishness of spirit to suffer and forgive; be it so, yet such a sheepishness as makes a man like Jesus Christ, who as a sheep before the shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth when his heart within was compassionate towards them, as appeared when he opened it concerning them, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." This is true greatness of

spirit, to partake of His, that is the highest and best of spirits, and is the Spirit of meekness and love. How much is this above the common spirit of the world? Truly, base and poor is that which is discomposed and put out of frame with every touch, whereas this is mighty, and triumphs indeed over all provocations and injuries.

2. Let us consider the largeness of its acting; it goes through the Law, fulfils it all. That command that is first in the second table, which is not here expressed, is it not love that makes all concerned in it fulfil it? Love produces mildness and moderation in superiors, and faithfulness and willing obedience in inferiors; it makes both authority and subjection sweet and easy, where love commands and love obeys. And for the next, "Thou shalt not kill," does not love, as the sun's beams, put out the fire by its divine heat, consuming the earthly, yea, the infernal fire of fixed malice or rash anger that burns naturally in the hearts of men? Such anger is called brutish (Ezek. 21:31) and on the contrary, Proverbs 17:27, the ambiguity is happy, "of an excellent or of a cool spirit," for the cool spirit is so; cool from base passion, but truly burning with this love. And then it is by very small, and many times merely imaginary causes, so easily blown up, that it flames forth into gross murders, or at least such injuries and violences, or contentions and revilings, as go in God's account and are written down in his book as murders. He does not misjudge nor misname things, but they are really what he accounts them. Love can generously pass over these things, about which folly and pride make such a noise. "Oh! can I bear this and that?" and thou wouldest, by so saying, speak thy stout-heartedness. Fool, is this stoutness and strength? Is it not rather the greatest weakness to be able to bear nothing? Have not the weakest persons much of that kind of stoutness and strength, who are the soonest moved and disquieted, women and

children, and sick or aged persons? But love, Christian love to thy brother, makes the mind truly strong and composed, not easily stirred against him for every trifle; nay, nor for greater matters. Love can endure much, yea, all things, says the Apostle (1 Cor. 13), it has the strength to stand under them and stand firm, whereas base minds, void of love, break all to pieces under a very small weight. Love bears all as the supporters of a strong and firm building, or rather, as a house, it covers all, for so it signifies. Love does not blaze abroad the failings of men, yea, it hides much, covers a multitude of sins, not only from the eyes of others but even from a man's own eyes. It makes him not behold and dwell on those things that might provoke him; yea, it is ingenious and inventive of the fairest constructions of things, taking them by the best side, in the most favourable sense, and so long as there is any agreeable way to interpret anything favourably, it will not have a hard thought of it. It thinks no ill, as there it is: not only does it not have active evil thoughts of revenge or returning evil, but willingly does not judge ill of what is done by others, even things that might provoke. Love does not reckon wrongs so high as a lack of charity moves most to do, it sets them low. And as a healthful constitution is sweet itself, and relishes all things right, there is more true pleasure and content of mind in forgiving than ever any man found in revenge; that is but a feverish delight that malice and anger work, perhaps greedily, but is indeed a distemper. This love is the very root of peace and concord, a humble grace that is not lifted up and insolent, and so does not breed conflicts about trivial matters. It esteems others well and itself meanly, so that it cannot be easily crossed by any in matters of undervaluing. But vain spirits are puffed up with a little approbation and as easily kindled with any affront or perceived disgrace. Love is not lightly put out of temper, as sickly constitutions are disturbed by any blast or

wrong touch of diet. It is of a stronger digestion and firmer health.

Then for the command, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," all things of that kind, though they spring from a kind of love, are not from this love from above, but from the love that is sensual and devilish. Love is not the true name of it, but base and brutish lust, and generally all profane societies and associations of men one with another are most contrary to this pure love. The drunkards that are cup-friends are full of conflicts and have no constancy but are unstable as that wherein their friendship lies, their liquor. They are a vile, despicable society, not worthy of men, much less of Christians. This sin has an affinity with uncleanness and is usually ranked there. Right love to a drunkard is not to sit down and guzzle with him but to reprove and labour to reclaim him, and where that cannot be done, to avoid him. To wicked persons, we owe not a complacency or delight, which is most contrary to this love, but hating their sin we owe them love, and the desiring and (as far as love can) the procuring of their conversion and salvation. Wicked converse cannot consist with this love, which is the fulfilling of the Law. A combination for breaking it, joining their strength together for that end, is contrary to this love. Love rejoices not in iniquity but in the truth, making men not rejoice together in sin. So foul unclean affections, and a society in order to gratifying them, are most contrary to it; true love is most tender of the chastity of others and cannot abide an impure thought in itself.

So in not stealing. Love would be loath to enrich or advantage itself upon the damage of others in any kind; it most faithfully and singly seeks the profit and prosperity of our neighbour, even as our own. And if this took place, how much use would it be in the world? But oh! it is rare. This *meum* and *tuum* is the grand cause of the ill

understanding and discords that are amongst men when it is not managed by this love but by self-love.

The tendering and preserving of the good name of our brethren is a proper and very remarkable fruit of this love, which is so far from forging false defaming stories, that it will rather excuse if it may be done, or if not, will pity the real failings of men that tend to their reproach; and on the contrary, will teach men to rejoice in the good carriage and good esteem of their brethren as of their own.

In the end, love works such a complacency in the good of others, and such a contentment with our own estate, that it most powerfully banishes that unruly humour of coveting, which looks on the condition of others with envy, and on our own with grudging and discontent.

This law of love written within does not only rectify and order the hands and tongue, but the jealousies, the very stirrings of the heart; it corrects the usual disorder of its motion and bars those uncharitable inordinate thoughts that abound and swarm in carnal minds.

3. The original of this love is that other love which corresponds to the other part, the first and chief point of the Law: our duty towards God. Love to him is the sum and source of all obedience. When the whole soul and mind are possessed with that, then all is acceptable and sweet that he commands; first, what he commands as immediately referable to himself, and then what is the rule of our carriage to men, as being prescribed and commanded by him. For so, and no otherwise, is this love the fulfilling of the Law, when it flows from that first love, love to God, whose Law it is that commands this other love to men. Some may have something like it, by a mildness and ingenuity of

nature, being inoffensive and well-willing towards all; but then only does it fulfil the Law when, out of regard to the Law of God, it obeys, and obeys out of love to him whose Law it is. So then, the love of God in the heart is the spring of right and holy love to our neighbour, both (1) because in obedience to him, whom we love sovereignly, we will love even sincerely, because he will have it so. That is reason enough to the soul possessed and taken up with his love. It loves nothing, however lovely, but in him and for him, in order and subordination to his love, and in respect to his will; and it loves anything, however unlovely, taking it in that contemplation. It loves not the dearest friend but in God, and can love the hatefulest enemy for him. *Amicum in Deo et inimicum propter Deum* (Augustine). His love can beautify the most unamiable object and make it lovely. He says of a worthless undeserving man, or thy most undeserving enemy, "Love him for my sake, because it pleases me"; that's reason enough to one that loves him. (2) There is that dilating sweetening virtue in love to God, that it can act no other way to men but as becomes love. Base self-love contracts the heart and is the very root of all sin, the chief wickedness in our corrupt nature; but the love of God assimilates the soul to him, makes it divine, and therefore bountiful; full of love to all. (So these two contradict not, "Love the Lord with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself." If all our love must go to God, what remains for our neighbour? Indeed, all go upwards, and be all placed on him, and from thence it is reflected and regulated downwards to men, according to his will.)

But self-love brings forth pride, cruelty, covetousness, uncleanness, disdain of others, and all such kinds of monsters; so it is the main breaking of the Law.

All that can be said will not persuade men to this until the Lord by his love teaches it and impresses it on the heart. Know that this is the badge of Christ's followers and his great rule and law given to them; and if you will follow him, that you may come to be where he is, then study this: that as our Lord Christ loved us, so also we ought to love one another.

SERMON XI

PREFACE

Great and various are the evils that lodge within the heart of man: hence proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, murders, and many other mischiefs, as our Saviour specifies. They come forth apace, and yet the heart is not emptied of them. But was this heart thus at first, when it came newly forth of the hands of its Maker? Surely, no: man was made upright, but he found out many inventions. Soon did the heart find the way to corrupt itself, but to renew itself is as impossible as to have been the author of its own creation; easily could it deface the precious characters of God's image, but it passes the art of men and angels to restore them. Only the Son of God, who for that purpose took on him our nature, can make us, according to the Apostle's phrase, partakers of the divine nature. It is he alone that can banish these unclean spirits and keep possession so that they return no more. Have not they made a happy change of guests, that have those infernal troops turned out of doors, and the King of Glory fixing his abode within them? This is the voice of the Gospel, "Lift up your heads, ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,

that the King of Glory may enter in." But small is the number of those that open where this voice is daily sounded; yea, some there are that grow worse under the frequent preaching of the Word, as if sin were emulous, and as is said of virtue, would grow by opposition. The truth is, too many of us turn these serious exercises of religion into an idle divertisement. Take heed that formality, and custom, and novelty do not often help to fill up many rooms in our church. It were indeed a breach of charity to entertain the fullness of your assemblies with ill construction. No, it is to be commended. But would to God we were more careful to show our religion in our lives, to study to know better the deceits and impostures of our own hearts, and to gain daily more victory over our secret and best-beloved sins. Let our intentions then be to meet with Christ here, and to admit him gladly to dwell and rule within us. If he conquer our inward enemies, those without shall not be able to hurt us: if he deliver us from our sinful lusts, he will still our own distrustful fears. And that such may be the fruits of our meeting, let us turn ourselves towards the throne of grace, with humble prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ the Righteous.

Psalm LXXVI. 10.

"Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain."

What man is this (said the passengers in the ship) that even the winds and the sea obey him? Christ suddenly turns a great tempest into a greater calm, Matthew 8:27. Surely those are no ordinary words of command, that swelling waves and boisterous winds, in the midst of their rage, are forced to hear, and taught to understand and obey. Therefore, the holding of the seas in the hollow of his hand, the bridling of the wind, and riding upon the wings of it, we find

peculiarly attributed to the Almighty. But no less, if not more wonderful, is another of his prerogatives, to wit, his sovereignty over all mankind, the divers and strange motions of the heart of man; admirable it is to govern those, both in respect of their multitude and irregularity. Consider what millions of men dwell at once upon the face of the earth; and again, what troops of several imaginations will pass through the fancy of any one man, within the compass of one day; it is much to keep an eye upon them, and to behold them all at once, but far more to command and control them all; yet if they were all loyal and willingly obedient, were they tractable and easily curbed, it would be easier for us to conceive how they might be governed. But to bound and overrule the unruly hearts of men, the most of them continually either plotting or acting rebellion against their Lord, to make them all concur and meet at last in one end, cannot be done but by a power and a wisdom that are both infinite. That God (whose name we often mention, but seldom think on his excellency) is alone the absolute monarch of men's hearts, and the ruler of all their motions; he hath them limited while they seem most free, and works his own glory out of their attempts, while they strive most to dishonour him. Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee, &c.

The Psalm is made up of these two different sorts of thoughts, the one arising out of particular experience, and the other out of a general doctrine. These drawn from experience, are set down in the verses preceding the text, and in it, with those that follow, is the doctrine, with a duty annexed to it; which two are faith's main supporters: by past particulars, verify the doctrine, and the generality of the doctrine serves to explain the particular experiences to all wise observers. There is not a treasure of the merits of saints in the Church (as some dream) but there is a treasure of the precious experiences of the saints, which every believer has a right to make

use of; and these we should be versed in, that we may have them in readiness at hand, in time of need, and know how to use them, both to draw comfort from them to ourselves, and arguments to use with God.

The words contain clearly two propositions, both of them concerning the wrath of man; the former has the event of it, "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee." The latter, the limitation of it, "The remainder of wrath thou wilt restrain."

That the virtues and graces of men do praise the Lord, all men easily understand, for they flow from him, his image and superscription are upon them, and therefore no wonder, if of them, he has from them a tribute of glory. Who knows not that faith praises him? Abraham believed and gave glory to God; good works, the fruits of faith, praise him too, "Herein is your heavenly Father glorified" (says our Saviour) "that you bring forth much fruit." But that the inordinate wrath of man should praise him, may seem somewhat strange; were it God's own wrath (as wrath is attributed to him in Scripture) that might praise him, for it is always most just. Or were it a due and moderate anger of man, upon just cause, that were fit for praising him too, in spite of the Stoics; but that wicked and disordered wrath (which is undoubtedly here meant) that the wrath of men, that is both uncomely and dishonourable for themselves (though they think otherwise) that even such a wrath should honour God, and praise him, argues well that he has good right to praises, when everything, even things that seem contrary to his nature, as well as to his law, do pay them to him. And that he has great power and wisdom who obtains what is due to him, even from those persons and things, that of themselves are most unwilling and unfit to pay it. This is the excellent skill of his wisdom, to draw that which shall go into the making up of the precious composition of his praise out of this

poison, for so the word here used for wrathful heat, does sometimes signify; and this wrath often proves so, a deadly poison both to those it is incensed against, and to the very breast that breeds it, and wherein it is kindled.

But for the clearer understanding of this, I conceive it will be requisite to consider more distinctly: (1) What this wrath of man is; (2) How it can praise God; and lastly, the infallibility of this event: Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee.

In Psalm 148, where David summons the creatures to meet in that song of praise, to keep that full consort, he calls not only the heavens and the inhabitants of it, angels and lights, but also those of the lower world to bear their part in it; and not only men, beasts, cattle, creeping things, and the flying of fowl, but also creatures that most resemble this wrath here spoken of: fire, stormy tempest, and dragons, etc. The tenor of the psalm shows that by the wrath of man is to be understood the undue rage of evil and ungodly men against those whom God owns as his people. The word here used signifies a hot or inflaming wrath; indeed, such is the feverish, distempered anger of the Church's enemies. And as too much heat is an enemy to solid reason, this hot wrath of theirs makes them incapable of wise deliberation in themselves, and inflexible to the good advice of others. It is true, they take counsel on how to execute their wrath, as we shall hear anon, but they take no counsel that may cool it. Anger, described by its material cause, is called a boiling of blood about the heart; but this arises from the apprehension of something offensive, kindling a desire for revenge. Now it is a wonder what the powers of the world find in Christ and his harmless flock that can incense them; St. James says of the tongue, that it is set on fire of hell. The same is the origin of this wrath. Why does the heathen rage, says the Psalmist? That is only, to what purpose? Intimating that it is a

fruitless rage and void of success in regard to God's power. But why? That's upon what occasion? Checking the rage as groundless and without cause, in regard to Christ and his Church's innocence. The cause is only within themselves, to wit, that unhappy antipathy of the serpent's seed against the seed of the woman. Thus, this wrath of man is the causeless, malicious enmity of the wicked against the Church of God, and under the name of this passion, I take to be here comprised likewise all the attendants of it, all their crafty complements and devices for the acting of their wrath. As there is mention of the nations' rage against Christ in the second psalm, so likewise of the consultations of those that are of quality fit for it: the rulers take counsel together. Furthermore, this wrath is not merely their inward fire, but the vent of it flames into cruel and outrageous practices, including likewise all the instruments they make use of. And of all these, it's true that God shall gain glory by them: Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee.

The wrath of man (says the Apostle) does not accomplish the righteousness of God; how then can it accomplish his praises? And this is the second thing propounded.

Are grapes gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles? Surely not; therefore I called this praise not the fruit or proper effect of man's wrath, but the event or consequence of it, by the efficacy of divine providence. The wrath of man shall praise thee.

The use which thou wilt make of it shall tend to thy praise. Thou wilt produce such effects from it, both in the Church and upon thine enemies, when thou sufferest thy wrath to break forth, as shall furnish more matter of thy praises than if thou hadst altogether restrained it. To instance this in some few particulars.

'It is the fury of the Church's enemies that has made known to the world the invincible courage and patience of the saints. Those ages that have been most monstrous in persecution have most of all graced Christianity. Had there been no persecuting emperors, who would have heard of those primitive martyrs who triumphed over the cruelty of their torments? Were there no persecution, nor peril, nor sword against believers, we should not have heard the Apostle say immediately after the mention of those, "In all these we are more than conquerors"; they could not have been so much as conquerors, had there been no conflict.

Again, as the wrath of man praises God in the invincible patience of the saints, so likewise in the immovable stability of the Church. Is it not wonderful how so small and weak a company as the Church has often been reduced to, yea, has always been in respect of the world, could escape the mouths of so many lions, so many enraged enemies that were ready to devour it? And that we may see that this tends solely to the praise of her great Protector, look at the Church's song penned by the royal prophet, it is the 124th Psalm: "If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, when men rose up against us, then they had swallowed us up quick." The great monarchies and kingdoms of the world, that have risen with so much splendour, have had their periods and been buried in the dust. That golden-headed and silver-bodied image degenerated into worse metal as it went lower, and the brittle feet were the cause of the fall and breaking of all the rest; but the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, though despicable in the world and exposed to the wrath of the world in all ages, stands firm and cannot be removed. There is a common emblem of the winds blowing from all quarters, and upon the globe of the earth, being in the middle of them, is written "Immobility." This fitly resembles the Church. Why? It seems to be the sport of all the winds, but is indeed so established, that all of them, yea, the very gates of

hell, cannot prevail against it. Now the more the Church's enemies labour and moil themselves to undo her, the more do their weakness and the power of her Lord appear; so that thus the wrath of man does praise him.

When was the Church free from the world's wrath? (To say nothing of the Church of the Jews.) Did not those wicked emperors of Rome think to have made the Christian Church short-lived, to have drowned her, newly born, in floods of her own blood? And in latter ages, who knows not the cruelties that have been practised by the Turk in the East, and the proud prelate of Rome in the West? By which she has sometimes been brought to so obscure and low a point, that if you can follow her in history, 'tis by the tract of her blood; and if you would see her, 'tis by the light of those fires in which her martyrs have been burnt. Yet has she still come through, and survived all that wrath, and still shall, till she be made perfectly triumphant.

Further: Man's wrath tends to God's praise in this, that God, giving way to it, does so manage it by his sublime providence, that it often directly crosses their own ends, and conduces manifestly to his. Pharaoh thought that his dealing more cruelly with the Jews in their tasks and burdens was wisdom: "Let us work wisely," says he. But whereas their ordinary servility had become familiar to them, and they were tamed to it, that same accession of new tyranny did prepare and dispose the Israelites for a desire of departure, and their departure made way for Pharaoh's destruction. Undigestible insolency and rage, hastening to be great, make kingdoms cast them off, which would have been far longer troubled with their wickedness had it been more moderate; surely then the wrath of man commends the wisdom of God, when he makes him by that contrive and afford the means of his own downfall. "The steps of his strength shall be

straightened, and his own counsel shall cast him down," says Bildad (Job 18:7). And that is a sad fall; as that eagle that was shot with an arrow trimmed with her own feathers.

But to close this point. It is beyond all question that the deserved punishment of man's unjust wrath always glorifies the justice of God, and the more He gives way to their wrath, the more notable shall be both their punishment and the justice of it. Though God seems neglectful of His people and His praise while man's wrath prevails, the truth is, He never comes too late to vindicate His care of both. When He defers longest, the enemy pays dear interest for the time of forbearance. In His eternal decree, He resolved to permit the course of man's wrath for His own glory, and when the period which He has fixed is come, He stops man's wrath and gives course to the justice of His own. Nor is there then any possibility of escaping; He will right Himself and be known by executing judgment. Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee. And that is the third thing propounded, the infallibility of the event.

The author of nature governs all His creatures, each in a suitable way to the nature He has given them. He maintains in some things a natural necessity of working, contingency in others, and in others, liberty. But all of them are subject to this necessity of effecting inevitably His eternal purposes; and this necessity is no way repugnant to the due liberty of man's will. Some entertain and maintain the truth; some plot; others act and execute against it; some please themselves in a wise neutrality and will appear so indifferent that it would seem they might be accepted by all sides as judges of controversies. And all these find no less liberty to wind and turn themselves whither they please, than if no higher hand had the winding of them. Shall not only the zeal of the godly, but even the wrath of the enemy, and the cold discretion of the neutral, all tend to

His praise whose supreme will has a secret, but a sure and infallible sway in all their actions? Whilst some passengers sit, some walk one way, some another; some have their faces towards their journey's end, some have their backs turned upon it, this wise pilot does most skilfully guide the ship to arrive with them all at His own glory. Happy they that propound and intend His glory as He Himself does, for in them shall the riches of His mercy be glorified; they that oppose Him lose this happiness, but He is sure not to lose His glory for all that, to wit, the glory of His justice. His right hand shall find out all His enemies; surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee.

The consideration of this truth, thus in some measure unfolded, may serve to justify the truly wise dispensation of God against our imaginary wisdom. Were the matter referred to our modelling, we would assign the Church constant peace and prosperity for her portion, and not consent that the least air of trouble should come near her. We would have no enemies to molest her, nor stir against her, or if they did stir, we would have them be presently repressed, and these in our judgment, would be the fairest and most glorious tokens of His love and power, whose spouse she is. But this carnal wisdom is enmity against God, and to the glory of God, which rises so often out of the wrath of His enemies. Had God caused Pharaoh to yield at the very first, to the release of His people, where would have been the fame of those miraculous judgments in Egypt, and mercies on the Israelites, the one setting out and illustrating the other? Where would have been that name and honour that God says He would gain to Himself, and that He did gain out of Pharaoh's final destruction, making that stony-hearted king and his troops sink like a stone in the waters, as Moses sings? Observe his proud boastings immediately before his ruin, "I will pursue," says he, "I will overtake, I will divide the spoil, my lust shall be satisfied on them; I will draw my sword, and my hand shall destroy them." Soon after, the sea

quenches all this heat. Commonly, big threatenings are unhappy presages of very ill success. That historian says well of God; and indeed, as He abhors these boastings, so He delights in the abasing of the lofty heart whence they flow, and it is His prerogative to gain praise to Himself out of their wrath. "Hast thou an arm like God?" says the Lord to Job, "then look upon the proud and bring them low" (Job 40:9). When Sennacherib came up against Jerusalem, his blasphemies and boastings were no less vast and monstrous than the number of his men and chariots; good Hezekiah turned over the matter to God, spreading the letter of blasphemies before Him. God undertook the war, and assured Hezekiah that the Assyrian should not so much as shoot an arrow against the city, but return the same way he came (2 Kings 19). And the deliverance there promised and effected, is conceived to have been the occasion of penning this very Psalm. Surely, when an angel did in one night slay 185,000 in their camps, that wrath and those threats tended exceedingly to the praise of the God of Israel. The hook that He put in Sennacherib's nostrils (as the history speaks) to pull him back again, was more remarkable than the fetters would have been if He had tied him at home, or hindered his march with his army.

Who is he then that will be impatient because of God's patience, and judge Him slack in judgment, while the rage of the wicked prevails for a while? Know that He is more careful of His own glory than we can be, and the greater height man's wrath arises to, the more honour shall arise to Him out of it. Did not His omnipotence shine brighter in the flames of that furnace into which the children were cast, than if the king's wrath had been at first cooled? Certainly, the more both it and the furnace had their heat augmented, the more was God glorified. "Who is that God," said he blasphemously and proudly, "that can deliver you out of my hands?" A question indeed highly dishonouring the Almighty, but stay till the real answer

comes, and not only shall that wrath praise Him, but that very same tongue, though inured to blasphemy, shall be taught to bear a main part in the confession of these praises. Let that apostate emperor go taunting the head and tormenting the members of that mystical body; his closing with "Νενίκηκας, Γαλιλαΐε" ("Thou hast overcome, O Galilean," meaning Christ) shall help to verify that: whether its course be shorter or longer, man's wrath ends always in God's praise. In like manner, the closing of the lions' mouths spoke louder to His praise that stopped them than if He had stopped Daniel's enemies in the beginning of their wicked design. So hot was their rage that the king's favourable inclination to Daniel (of which in other cases courtiers use to be so devout observers), yea his contesting and pleading for him, did profit him nothing. But they hurried their king to be the executioner of their unjust malice, though themselves were convinced that nothing could be found against him but only concerning the law of his God. In Daniel 6:14, it is said, "He set his heart upon him to deliver him, and laboured to do it till the going down of the sun," and then those counsellors and counsels of darkness overcame him. But upon this black night of their prevailing wrath followed immediately a bright morning of praises to Daniel's God. When the lions that were so quiet company all night to Daniel made so quick a breakfast of those accursed courtiers that had maliciously accused him, even so let thine enemies perish, O Lord, and let those that love thee be as the sun when he goes forth in his might.

The other proposition concerns the limiting of this wrath: "The remainder of wrath thou wilt restrain."

To take no notice for the present of divers other readings of these words, the sense of them, as they are here very well rendered, may be briefly this: that whereas the wrath of man to which God gives way

shall praise Him, the rest shall be curbed and bound up, as the word is. No more of it shall break forth than shall contribute to His glory. Here should be considered divers ways and means by which God uses to stop the heady course of man's wrath and hinder its proceeding any further. But only,

Let us take from it this lesson: that the most compendious way to be safe from the violence of men is to be in terms of friendship with God. Is it not an incomparable privilege to be in the favour, and under the protection, of one whose power is so transcendent that no enemy can so much as stir without His leave? Be persuaded then, Christians, in these dangers that are now so near us, everyone to draw near to Him; remove what may provoke Him; let no reigning sin be found either in your cities or in your villages, for He is a holy God. Is it a time to multiply provocations now, or is it not rather high time to be humbled for the former? What shameless impiety is it to be now licentious or intemperate? To be proud, to oppress or extort? To profane God's day and blaspheme His name? All these sins, and many others, abound amongst us, and that avowedly. Without abundant repentance for these, we shall smart, and the wrath of our enemies, though unjust in them, shall praise God in our just punishment. Though doubtless, He will own His church, and be praised likewise in the final punishment of their wrath, that rise against it. There is a remarkable expression in the 99th Psalm, of God's dealing with His people: He was favourable to them, though He took vengeance on their inventions. A good cause and a covenant with God will not shelter an impenitent people from sharper correction. It is a sad word God speaks by His prophet to His own people: I myself (says He) will fight against you. A dreadful enemy; and none indeed truly dreadful but He. O prevent His anger, and you are safe enough. If perverse sinners will not hear, yet let those that are indeed Christians mourn in secret, not only for their own sins,

but let them bestow some tears likewise upon the sins of others. Labour to appease the wrath of God, and He will either appease man's wrath or, however, will turn it jointly to our benefit and His own glory. Let the fear of the most high God, who has no less power over the strongest of His enemies than over the meanest of His servants; let His fear (I say) possess all our hearts, and it will certainly expel that ignoble and base fear of the wrath of man. See how the prophet opposes them in that 8th of Isaiah: Fear not their fear (says he) nor be afraid, but sanctify the Lord, and let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread; fear not but fear. This holy fear begets the best courage; the breast that is most filled with it abounds most in true magnanimity. Fear thus, that you may be confident, not in yourselves, though your policy and strength were great: Cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm; but confident in that God, who is too wise and vigilant to be surprised, too mighty to be foiled, and too rich to be outspent in provision; who can suffer His enemy to come to the highest point of apparent advantage, without any inconvenience, yea, with more renown in His conquest. And so a Christian who is made once sure of this (as easily he may) is little careful about the rest; his love to God prevailing over all his affections, makes him very indifferent to what becomes of himself or his dearest friends, so God may be glorified. What though many fall in the quarrel (which God avert), yet it is sufficient that truth in the end shall be victorious. Have not the saints in all ages been content to convey pure religion to posterity, in streams of their own blood, not of others? Well, hold fast by this conclusion, that God can limit and bind up the most violent wrath of man, that though it swell it will not break forth. The stiffest heart, as the current of the most impetuous rivers, is in His hand, to appoint its channels, and turn it as He pleaseth; yea, it is He that hath shut up the very sea with bars and doors, and said, Hitherto shalt thou come and no further; here shall thy proud waves be stayed, Job 38:10-11. To see

the surges of a rough sea come in towards the shore, a man would think that they were hastening to swallow up the land, but they know their limits, and are beaten back into foam. Though the waves thereof toss themselves as angry at their restraint, yet the small sand is a check to the great sea, yet can they not prevail, though they roar, yet can they not pass over it, says Jeremiah 5:22.

The sum is this: what God permits His church's enemies to do, is for His own further glory; and reserving this, there is not any wrath of man so great, but He will either sweetly calm it or strongly restrain it. To Him be praise, &c.

Sermon XII

Psalm CXII:7. "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord."

All the special designs of men agree in this: they seek satisfaction and quietness of mind, that is, happiness. This then is the great question: Who is the happy man? It is here resolved in verse 1: "Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth in his commandments."

This blessedness is unfolded as a rich landscape, that we may view the well-mixed colours, the story and texture of it. The whole alphabet in capital letters; and take all and set them together, 'tis a most full, complete blessedness, not a letter wanting to it. Amongst the rest, what we have in these words is of greater magnitude and

brightness than many of the rest: "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings."

Well may it begin with a Hallelujah, a note of praise to Him in whom this blessedness lies. O what a wretched creature were man, if not provided with such a portion, without which is nothing but disappointment; and thence the racking torment and vexation of a disquieted mind, still pursuing something that he never overtakes.

The first words serve as the inscription: "The blessednesses of that man," etc. So the particulars follow, where outward blessings are so set as to look and lead higher, pointing at their end, the infinite goodness whence they flow, and whither they return, carrying along with them this happy man.

These promises of outward things are often evidently accomplished to the righteous, and their seed after them, commonly after they have been brought very low. But when it is otherwise with them, they lose nothing. It is good for many, yea, it is good for all the godly, to have less of these lower things, to raise their eyes to look after higher; the eyes of all, both those who are held somewhat short, and those who have abundance in the world.

These temporal promises were more abundant and more frequently fulfilled in their very kind in the times of the Law. Yet still the right is constant, and all ages give clear examples of the truth of this word. Where it is thus, it is a blessing created by its aspect to this promise, and so differs from the prosperity of ungodly men. And where it is otherwise with the righteous and their seed, it is no shift but a most solid comfort to turn their eyes to a higher compensation.

But however it goes, this still holds: "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings," notwithstanding the hardest news that can come to his ears,

of anything that concerns himself or his children, or the rest of God's children in his charge in the world. "His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord."

First, let us take a little of the character of this blessed man. Who is it that is thus undaunted? The man that feareth God.

All the passions are but several ebbings and flowings of the soul, and their motions are the signs of its temper. Which way it is carried is mainly to be remarked by the beating of its pulse. If our desires, hopes, and fears are in the things of this world and the interests of the flesh, this is their distemper and disorder. The soul is in a continual fever; but if they move Godwards, then it is composed and calm, in a good temper and healthful point, fearing and loving Him, desiring Him and nothing but Him, waiting for Him, and trusting in Him. And when any one affection is right, and in a due aspect to God, all the rest are so too, for they are radically one, and He is the life of that soul that is united to Him. And so, in Him, it moves in a peculiar spiritual manner, as all do naturally in the dependence of their natural life, on Him who is the fountain of life.

Thus we have here this fear of God, as often elsewhere set out as the very substance of holiness and evidence of happiness. And that we may know there is nothing either base or grievous in this fear, we have joined with it delight and trust. "Delighteth greatly in His commandments," which is that badge of love to Him to observe them, and that with delight, with great exceeding delight. So then, the fear is not that which love casts out, but that which love brings in. This fear follows and flows from love, a fear to offend, whereof nothing is so tender as love; and that, in respect of the greatness of God, has in it, withal, a humble reverence. There is, in all love, a kind of reverence, a cautious and respectful wariness towards the party

loved; but especially in this, where not only we stand in a lower relation, as children to our Father, but the goodness that draws our love doth infinitely transcend our measures and reach. Therefore, there is a rejoicing with trembling, an awful love, the fearing the Lord and His goodness, Hosea 3:5. This both fear and trust, the heart touched by the Spirit of God, as the needle touched with the lodestone, looks straight and speedily to God, yet still with trembling, being filled with this holy fear.

"That delighteth"—Oh! This is not only to do them but to do them with delight; somewhat within is connatural and symbolical. Yea, this very law itself is written within, not standing as a hard taskmaster over our head, but impressed within as a sweet principle in our hearts, and working from thence naturally. This makes a soul find pleasure in purging out sensual pleasures and ease in doing violence to corrupt self, even undoing it for God, having no will but His. The remnants of sin and self in our flesh will often rise up, but this predominant love dispels them. So this fear works with delight.

And further, that we may know how serene and sweet a thing it is, it is here likewise joined with confidence. Trusting, a quickening confidence always accompanies it, and so, undoubtedly, it is a blessed thing. Blessed is he that feareth. Fear sounds rather quite contrary, having an air of misery; but add, Whom? He that feareth the Lord. That touch turns it into gold. He that so fears, fears not; he shall not be afraid. All petty fears are swallowed up in this great fear, as a spirit inured with great things is not stirred nor affected at all with small matters. And this great fear is as sweet and pleasing as these little fears are anxious and vexing; secure of other things. If my God be pleased, no matter who is displeased; no matter who despises me, if He accounts me His. Though all forsake me, my dearest friends grow estranged, and look another way, if He rejects me not,

that is my only fear; and for that, I am not perplexed. I know He will not. As they answered Alexander when he sent to inquire what they most feared, thinking possibly they would have said, "Lest he should invade them." Their answer was, "We fear nothing but lest heaven should fall upon us;" which they did not fear neither. A believer has no fear but of the displeasure of heaven, the anger of God falling upon him. He fears that; that is, he accounts that only terrible; but yet he does not fear, does not apprehend it will fall on him, being better persuaded of the goodness of his God. So this fear is still joined with trust, as here, so often elsewhere, Psalm 33:18, 40:3, and 147:11.

There is no turbulence in this fear; it is calm and sweet. Even that most terrible evil, that which this fear properly apprehends and flies from—sin—yet the fear of that does not lead to distraction. Though there is little strength and many and great enemies, mighty Anakims of temptations from without, and corruption within, and so good reason for a holy humble fear and self-distrust, yet this should not beat us off. Yea, it is most fit to put us on to trust in Him who is our strength. Courage! The day shall be ours, though we may be often foiled and down, and sometimes almost at a hopeless point, yet our head is on high. He hath conquered for us and shall conquer in us; therefore, upon this confidence, so fear as not to fear. Why should I fear in the days of evil, when the iniquity of my heels shall compass me about? (Psalm 49:5). Which I take is some grievous affliction, and that with a visage of punishment of sin; guiltiness to be read in it, yet not fear. If I trusted in wealth and boasted myself in the multitude of riches, then, that being in hazard, I must fear; leaning on that, it failing, I might fall. But this is my confidence (ver. 15): God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave, for He shall receive me. Wealth cannot, but He can. It buys not a man out from His hand, but He buys from the hand of the grave. So the word is.

For the visible heavens, even their fall and the dissolution of nature, would not affright a believer. Psalm 41:1: Si fractus illabatur orbis, &c.

Alas! Most persons have dull or dim apprehensions and shallow impressions of God; therefore, they have little either of this fear or this trust. God is not in all their thoughts, but how to compass this or that design, and if they miss one, then to another. They are cast from one wave upon another, and if at any time they attain their purpose, find it but wind, a handful of nothing; far from what they fancied it.

Oh, my brethren, my desire is that the faces of your souls were but once turned about, that they were towards Him, looking to Him, continually fearing Him, delighting and trusting in Him, making Him your all. Can anything so elevate and ennoble the spirit of a man as to contemplate and converse with the pure ever-blessed spring and Father of spirits? Beg that you may know Him, that He would reveal Himself to you, for otherwise no teaching can make Him known. It is like lighting candles to seek the sun, to think to attain this knowledge without His own revealing it. If He hides His face, who then may behold Him? Pray for this quickening knowledge, such knowledge as will effectually work this happy fear and trust.

You who have attained anything of it, desire and follow on to know the Lord; particularly, so that your hearts may repose on Him; so fear as you may not fear. He would have our spirits calm and quiet, for when they are in a hurry and confusion, they are fit for nothing. All within makes a jarring unpleasant noise, as of an instrument quite out of tune.

This fear of God is not, you see, a perplexing, doubting, and distrust of His love; on the contrary, it is a fixed resting and trust in His love. Many who have some truth of grace are, through weakness, filled

with disquieting fears; so possibly, though they perceive it not, it may be in some a point of wilfulness, a little latent undiscerned affectation of scrupling and doubting, placing much of religion in it. True, where the soul is really solicitous about its interest in God, that argues some grace, but being vexingly anxious about it, argues that grace is low and weak; a spark there is even discovered by that smoke. Yet, if the great smoke still continues, and nothing is seen but it, it argues there is little fire, little faith, little love.

And this, as it is unpleasant to thyself, so to God, as smoke to the eyes. What if one should be always questioning with his friend whether he loved him or not, and upon every little occasion were ready to think he does not? How would this disrelish their society together, though truly loving each other? The far more excellent way, and more pleasing both to ourselves and to God, is to resolve on humble trust, reverence, and confidence, most afraid to offend, delighting to walk in His ways, loving Him and His will in all, and then resting persuaded of His love though He chastises us. And even though we offend Him and see our offenses in our chastisements, yet He is good, plenteous in redemption, ready to forgive. Therefore, let Israel trust and hope; let my soul roll itself on Him and adventure there all its weight. He bears greater matters, upholding the frame of heaven and earth, and is not troubled nor burdened with it.

The heart of a man is not sufficient for self-support; therefore, naturally, it seeks out some other thing to lean and rest itself on. The unhappiness is, for the most part, that it seeks to things below itself. These being both so mean and so uncertain, cannot be a firm and certain stay for it. These things are not fixed themselves; how can they then fix the heart? Can a man have firm footing on a quagmire or moving sands? Therefore, men are forced in these things to continually shift their seat, seeking about from one to another, still

rolling and unsettled. The believer only has this advantage: he has a rest high enough and sure enough, out of the reach of all hazards. His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord (Psalm 112:7).

The basis of this happiness is, "He trusteth in the Lord." So the heart is fixed; and so fixed, it fears no ill tidings.

This trust is grounded on the Word of God, revealing the power and all-sufficiency of God, and withal, His goodness, His offer of Himself to be the stay of souls, commanding us to rest on Him. People wait on I know not what persuasions and assurances, but I know no other foundation to build faith on but the Word of promise, the truth and faithfulness of God opened up, His wisdom, and power, and goodness, as the stay of all these, that renouncing all other props will venture on it and lay all upon Him. He that believes sets to his seal that God is true; and so he is sealed for God, his portion and interest secured. Isaiah 7:9: "If you will not believe, surely ye shall not be established."

This is the way to have peace and assurance, which many look for first: "Thou will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee" (Isaiah 26:3). So here, the heart is fixed by trusting.

Seek then clearer apprehensions of the faithfulness and goodness of God, hearts more enlarged in the notion of free grace, and the absolute trust due to it; thus shall they be more established and fixed in all the rollings and changes of the world.

"Heart fixed" or prepared, ready, pressed, and in arms for all services; resolved not to give back, able to meet all adventures, and stand its ground. God is unchangeable, and therefore faith is

invincible that sets the heart on Him, fastens it there on the Rock of Eternity. Then let winds blow, and storms arise, it cares not.

This firm and close cleaving unto God has in it the affection, which is inseparable from this trust, love with faith; and so a hatred of all ways and thoughts that alienate and estrange from God, that remove and unsettle the heart. The holiest, wariest heart is surely the most believing and fixed heart; if a believer will adventure on any one way of sin, he shall find that will unfix him and shake his confidence more than ten thousand hazards and assaults from without. These are so far from moving, that they commonly settle and fix the heart more, causing it to cleave closer and nearer unto God. But sinful liberty breeds unrest and disturbs all. Where sin is, there will be a storm; the wind within the bowels of the earth makes the earthquake.

Would you be quiet and have peace within in troublous times? Keep near unto God, beware of anything that may interpose between you and your confidence. It is good for me (says the Psalmist) to be near God; not only to draw near, but to keep near, to cleave to Him, and dwell in Him. Oh, the sweet calm of such a soul amidst all storms; thus once trusting and fixed, then no more fear. Not afraid of evil tidings, not any ill hearing. Whatever sound is terrible in the ears of men, the noise of war, news of death, even the sound of the trumpet in the last judgment, he hears all this undisquieted.

Nothing is unexpected when once fixed on God; then the heart may put cases to itself, and suppose all things imaginable, the most terrible, and look for them. Not troubled before trouble with dark and dismal apprehensions, but satisfied in a quiet unmoved expectation of the hardest things. Whatsoever it is, though particularly not thought on before, yet the heart is not afraid of the

news of it because it is fixed, trusting in the Lord; nothing can shake that foundation nor dissolve that union, therefore no fear. Yea, this assurance stays the heart in all things, however strange and unforeseen to it, all foreseen to my God, on whom I trust, yea, fore-contrived and ordered by Him. This is the impregnable fort of a soul, all is at the disposal and command of my God. My Father rules all; what need I fear?

Everyone trusts in something; as for honour, and esteem, and popularity, they are airy vain things, but riches seem a more solid work and fence, yet they are but a tower in conceit, not really. Proverbs 18:11: "The rich man's wealth is his strong city, and as an high wall in his own conceit." But "the name of the Lord is a strong tower indeed" (Proverbs 18:10). This is the thing: all seek some fence and fixing; here it is, we call you not to vexation and turmoil, but from it. And as St. Paul said, Acts 17: "Whom ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you"; ye blindly and fruitlessly seek after the show. The true aiming at this fixedness of mind will make that, though they fall short, yet by the way they will light on very pretty things that have some virtue in them, as they that seek the philosopher's stone. But the believer hath the thing, the secret itself, of tranquillity and joy, and this turns all into gold, their iron chains into a crown of gold, 2 Corinthians 4:17-18.

This is the blessed and safe estate of believers. Who can think they have a sad, heavy life? Oh! it is the only lightsome, sweet, cheerful condition in the world. The rest of men are poor, rolling, unstayed things, every report shaking them, as the leaves of trees are shaken with the wind (Isaiah 7:2). Yea, lighter than so, as the chaff that the wind drives to and fro at its pleasure (Psalm 1:4). Would men but reflect and look in upon their own hearts, it is a wonder what vain, childish things the most would find there, glad and sorry at things as

light as the toys of children, at which they laugh and cry in a breath; how easily puffed up with a thing or word that pleases us, bladder-like, swelled with a little air, and it shrinks in again in discouragements and fear upon the touch of a needle's point, which gives that air some vent.

What is the life of the greatest part but a continual tossing between vain hopes and fears, all their days spent in these? Oh! how vain a thing is a man, even in his best estate, while he is nothing but himself, his heart not united and fixed on God, disquieted in vain. How small a thing will do it! He needs no other but his own heart; it may prove disquietment enough to itself, his thoughts are his tormentors.

I know some men are, by a stronger understanding and moral principles, somewhat raised above the vulgar, and speak big of a constancy of mind, but these are but flourishes, an acted bravery; somewhat there may be that will hold out in some trials, but far short of this fixedness of faith. Troubles may so multiply as to drive them at length from their posture, and come on so thick with such violent blows as will smite them out of their artificial guard, disorder all their Seneca and Epictetus, and all their own calm thoughts and high resolves. The approach of death, though they make a good mien and set the best face on it, or if not, yet some kind of terror may seize on their spirits, which they are not able to shift off. But the soul trusting in God is prepared for all, not only for the calamities of war, pestilence, famine, poverty, or death, but in the saddest apprehensions of the soul, above hope, believes under hope, even in the darkest night, casts anchor in God, reposes on Him when it sees no light. Isaiah 50:10: "Yea, though He slay me," says Job, "yet will I trust in Him"; not only though I die, but though He slay me; when I

see His hand lift up to destroy me, yet from that same hand will I look for salvation.

My desire is to stir in your hearts an ambition after this blessed estate of the godly that fear the Lord and trust in Him, and so fear no other thing. The common revolutions and changes of the world, and those that in these late times we ourselves have seen, and the likelihood of more and greater coming on, seem dreadful to weak minds. But let these persuade us the more to prize and seek this fixed, unaffrighted station; no fixing but here where we make a virtue of necessity.

Oh! That you would be persuaded to break off from the vile ways of sin that debase the soul and fill it full of terrors, and disengage from the vanities of this world to take up in God, to live in Him wholly, to cleave to and depend on Him, to esteem nothing beside Him. Excellent was the answer of that holy man to the emperor, first essaying him with large offers of honour and riches to draw him from Christ. "Offer these things," says he, "to children, I regard them not." Then, after he tried to terrify him with threats. "Threaten," said he, "your effeminate courtiers, I fear none of these things."

Seek to have your hearts established on Him by the faith of eternal life, and then it will be ashamed to distrust Him in any other thing. Yea, truly, you will not much regard nor be careful for other things, how they be; 'twill be all one, the better and worse of this moment, the things of it, even the greatest, being both in themselves so little and worthless, and of so short continuance.

Well, choose you; but all reckoned and examined, I would rather be the poorest believer than the greatest king on earth. How small a commotion, small in its beginning, may prove the overturning of the greatest kingdom, but the believer is heir to a kingdom that cannot

be shaken. The mightiest and most victorious prince, that hath not only lost nothing but hath been gaining new conquests all his days, is stopped by a small distemper in the middle of his course. He returns to his dust; then his vast designs fall to nothing, in that very day his thoughts perish. But the believer, in that very day, is sent to the possession of his crown; that is his coronation day; all his thoughts are accomplished.

How can you affright him? Bring him word his estate is ruined; "Yet my inheritance is safe," says he. Your wife, or child, or dear friend is dead; "Yet my Father lives." You yourself must die; "Well then, I go home to my Father, and to my inheritance."

For the public troubles of the Church, doubtless it is both a most pious and generous temper to be more deeply affected for these than for all our private ones, and to resent common calamities of any people. But especially of God's own people, has been the character of men near unto Him. Observe the pathetic strains of the prophets bewailing when they foretell the desolation even of foreign kingdoms, much more for the Lord's chosen people, still mindful of Zion and mournful for her distresses (Jer. 9:1 and the whole Book of Lamentations; Ps. 137:5-6, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem"). Pious spirits are always public, as even brave heathens for the commonwealth: so he, in that of Horace:

"Little regarding himself, but much solicitous for the public."

Yet even in this, with much compassion, there is a calm in a believer's mind. How these agree none can tell but they that feel it, finding amidst all hard news, yet still a fixed heart trusting. Satisfied in this, deliverance shall come in due time (Ps. 102:13). And that in those judgments that are inflicted, man shall be humbled and God exalted (Isa. 2:11; 5:15-16). And that in all tumults and changes, and

subversion of states, still His throne is fixed, and with that, the believer's heart likewise (Ps. 93). So, Psalm 29:10: "The Lord sitteth upon the flood: yea, the Lord sitteth King forever." Or sat in the flood, possibly referring to the general deluge, yet, that then God sat quiet and still sitteth King forever. He steered the ark and still guides His Church through all. So, Psalm 46 throughout that whole Psalm. In all commotions, the kingdom of Christ shall be spreading and growing, and the close of all shall be full victory on His side, and that's sufficient.

Of this, a singular example is in Job, who was not daunted by so many ill hearings but stood as an unmoved rock amidst the winds and waves.

In this condition, there is so much sweetness that if known, a man might suspect himself rather selfishly taken with it than purely loving God; such joy in believing, or at least, such peace, such serene calmness, is in no other thing in this world. Nothing without or within a man can be compared to this of trusting in His goodness, for He is God, and on His faithfulness, giving His promise for thy warrant. He commands thee to roll thyself on Him. The holy soul still trusts in the darkest apprehensions; if it is suggested thou art a reprobate, yet will the soul say, I will see the utmost, and hang by the hold I have till I feel myself really cast off, and will not willingly fall off. If I must be separated from Him, He shall do it Himself; He shall shake me off while I would cleave to Him. Yea, to the utmost, I will look for mercy, and will hope better: though I found Him shaking me off, yet will I think He will not do it. It is good to seek after all possible assurance, but not to fret at the want of it, for even without these assurances, which some Christians hang too much upon, there is in simple trust and reliance on God, and in a desire to walk in His ways, such a fort of peace, as all the assaults in the world are not able

to make a breach in. And to this add, that unspeakable delight in walking in His fear joined with this trust. The noble ambition of pleasing Him makes one careless of pleasing or displeasing all the world. Besides, the delight in His commandments, so pure, so just a law, holiness, victory over lusts, and temperance, has a sweetness in it that presently pays itself because it is His will.

It is the godly man alone who, by this fixed consideration in God, looks the grim visage of death in the face with an unappalled mind. It damps all the joys and defeats all the hopes of the most prosperous, proudest, and wisest worldlings. As he said, when shot, "Avocasti ab optima demonstratione." It spoils all their figures and fine devices. But to the righteous, there is hope in his death: he goes through it without fear, without Caligula's "Quo vadis?" Though riches, honours, and all the glories of this world are with a man, yet he fears, yea, he fears the more for these because here they must end. But the good man looks death out of countenance, in the words of David, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me" (Psalm 23:4).

SERMON XIII

Matthew XIII. 3. And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow, &c.

The rich bounty of God has furnished our natural life, not merely for strict necessity but with great abundance. Many kinds of beasts, fowls, fishes, herbs, and fruits have been provided for the use of man.

Similarly, our spiritual life is supported with variety; the Word, the food of it, contains not only all necessary truths once simply set down, but also a great variety of doctrine for our more abundant instruction and consolation. Amongst the rest, this way of similitudes has a notable commixture of profit and delight.

Parables not unfolded and understood are a veil, as here to the multitude, and in that are a great judgment, as in Isaiah 6:9, cited here. But when cleared and made transparent, they become a glass to behold divine things more commodiously and suitably to our way. All things are filled with such resemblances, but they require the dexterous hand of an active spirit to bring them forth. This way, besides other advantages, is much graced and commended by our Saviour's frequent use of it.

The parable here is fitted to the occasion: multitudes came to hear him, and many were not a whit the better. He instructs us in this point, the great difference between the different hearts of men, so that the same Word has very different success in them.

In this parable, we shall consider these three things: (1) The nature of the Word in itself. (2) The sameness and commonness of the dispensation. (3) The difference in operation and production.

The word "seed" has in it a productive virtue to bring forth fruit according to its kind; that fruit is a new life, not only a new habit and fashion of life without, but a new nature, a new kind of life within, new thoughts, a new estimate of things, new delights and actions. When the Word reveals God, His greatness and holiness, then it begets pious fear and reverence, and the study of conformity to Him; when it reveals His goodness and mercy, it works love and confidence; when it holds up in our view Christ crucified, it crucifies the soul to the world and the world to it; when it represents the rich

things laid up for us, that blessed inheritance of the saints, then it makes all the lustre of this world vanish, shows how poor it is, weans and calls off the heart from them, raising it to these higher hopes, and sets it on the project of a crown. So it is a seed of noble thoughts and of suitable behaviour in a Christian, as in the exposition of this parable, it is called the Word of the Kingdom.

Seed, an immortal seed, as St. Peter calls it, springing up to no less than eternal life.

This teaches us:

1. To highly esteem the great goodness of God to those places and times that were most blessed with it. Psalm 147:19-20: "He showeth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel; he hath not dealt so with any nation, and as for his judgments, they have not known them."
2. That the same dispensation is to be preached indifferently to all wherever it comes, as far as the sound can reach. Thus, it was greatly extended in the first promulgating of the Gospel; "their sound went out through all the earth," as the Apostle allusively applies that of the Psalmist.
3. This also teaches ministers to liberally sow this seed at all times, according to Ecclesiastes 11:6: "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand," &c., praying earnestly to Him, who is the Lord not only of the harvest but of the seed time, and of this seed, to make it fruitful. This is His peculiar work. So the Apostle acknowledges in 1 Corinthians 3:6: "I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase."

4. Hence, we also learn that the success is very different. This is most evident in men; one is cast into the mould and fashion of the Word and is so moulded and fashioned by it; another is not changed at all; one heart melts before it, another remains hardened under it.

So then, this is not all, to have the Word and hear it, as if that would suffice and save us (as we commonly fancy), "The Temple of the Lord, The Temple of the Lord." Multitudes under the continual sound of the Word yet remain lifeless and fruitless and die in their sins. Therefore, we must inquire and examine strictly what becomes of it, how it works, and what it brings forth. This parable declares that many are fruitless for this very reason. We need not press them, they are three to one here; yea, that is too narrow, the odds are far greater, for these are just the kinds of unfruitful grounds, and under each of these, there are huge multitudes of individuals, so that there may be a hundred to one, and it is to be feared, in many congregations, it is more than that.

Whence then comes the difference? Not from the seed, for that is the same to all; nor from the sower, for though they be diverse and of different abilities, it matters little or nothing. Indeed, the fittest to preach is he who is most like his message and comes forth not only with a handful of this seed in his hand but with a store of it in his heart, the Word dwelling richly in him. Yet, however, the seed he sows, being this Word of life, does not depend on his qualifications in any kind, whether of common gifts or special grace. People mistake this much, and it is a carnal conceit to hang on the advantages of the minister or to focus too much on that. The sure way is to look up to God and to look into thine own heart; an unchanged, unsoftened heart, like evil soil, disappoints the fruit. What though sown by a weak hand, yea, possibly a foul one, yet if received in a clean and

honest heart, it will fructify much. There is in the world a needless and prejudicial differentiation of men, from which people will not depart despite all we can say.

The first bad ground is a highway. Now we have a commentary here from which we may not, nor will not, depart; it is authentic and full. Verse 19: "They that understand not," gross brutish spirits, who do not perceive what is said, are as if they were not there, sitting like blocks, one log of wood upon another, as he said. This is our brutish multitude. What pity it is to see so many who do not even have a natural apprehension of spiritual truths? The common road of all passengers, of all kinds of foolish brutish thoughts, seeking nothing but how to live, and yet not knowing to what end, have no design, trivial, highway hearts, all temptations pass at their pleasure, profane as Esau, which some critics draw from a word signifying the threshold, the outer step that every foul foot treads on.

These retain nothing, there is no hazard of that, and yet the enemy of souls, to make all sure, lest peradventure some word might take root unawares, some grain of this seed, he is busy to pick it away; to take them off from all reflection, all serious thoughts, or the remembrance of anything spoken to them. And if any common word is remembered, yet it does no good, for that is trodden down as the rest, though most is picked up because it lies on the road, as expressed by St. Mark 4:4.

The second is stony ground. Hard hearts, not softened and made penetrable to receive deeply this engrafted word with meekness, with humble yieldance and submission to it, are the rocks. Yet in these, there is often some receiving of it, and a little slender moisture above them, which the warm air may make spring up a little; they receive with joy, have a little present delight in it, are moved and taken with

the sermon, possibly to the shedding of some tears. But the misery is, there is a want of depth of earth; it sinks not.

No wonder if there is some present delight in these, therefore the word of the kingdom, especially if skilfully and sensibly delivered by some more able speaker, must needs please a mind that heeds what is said of it. Even if it were a fancy, yet it is a fine pleasant one: such love as the Son of God to die for sinners, such a rich purchase made as a kingdom, the word of the kingdom, such glory and sweetness. Therefore, the description of the New Jerusalem, Revelation 21. Suppose it to be but a dream, or one of the visions of the night, yet it is exceedingly fine; it must needs please a mind that heeds what is said of it. There is a natural delight in spiritual things, and thus the word of the prophet, as the Lord tells him, was as a minstrel's voice, a fine song so long as it lasts, but it dies out in the air. The relish and air of it may remain for a while in the imagination, but not long; even that wears out and is forgotten. So here it is heard with joy, and some of it springs up presently. They commend it, and it may be, they repeat some passages, yea, possibly desire to be like it, to have such and such graces as are recommended, and upon that think they have them, are presently good Christians in their own conceit, and to appearance some change is wrought. And it appears to be all that it is, but it is not deep enough. They talk possibly too much, more than those whose hearts receive it more deeply; there it lies hidden longer, and little is heard of it. Others may think it is lost, and possibly they themselves do not perceive that it is there. They are exercised and humbled by it, and find no good in their own hearts; yet there it is hidden, as David says, "Thy word have I hid in my heart." And as seed in a manner dies in a silent smothering way, yet it is in order to fructifying and reviving. It will spring up in time, and be fruitful in its season; with patience, as St. Luke hath it, of the good ground; not so suddenly, but much more surely and solidly.

But most are presently mushroom Christians, soon ripe, soon rotten. The seed never goes deep, it springs up indeed, but anything blasts and withers it; there is little root in some, and if trials arise, either the heat of persecution without, or a temptation within, this sudden spring seed cannot stand before either.

Oh rocky hearts! How shallow, shallow are the impressions of divine things upon you? Religion never goes farther than the upper surface of your hearts, few deep thoughts of God, of Jesus Christ, and of the things of the world to come; all are but slight and transient glances.

The third is thorny ground. This relates to the cares and pleasures, and all the interests of this life. See St. Mark 4:1 and St. Luke 8:5. All these together are the thorns, and these grow in hearts that do more deeply receive the seed and send it forth, and spring up more hopefully than either of the other two, and yet choke it. Oh! the pity.

Many are thus almost at Heaven, with so much desire of renovation and some endeavors after it, and yet the thorns prevail. Miserable thorns! The base things of a perishing life draw away the strength of affections, sucking the sap of the soul. Our other seed and harvest, our corn and hay, our shops and ships, our tradings and bargains, our suits and pretensions for places and employments of gain or credit, husband and wife and children, and house and train, our feastings and entertainments, and other pleasures of sense, our civilities and compliments; a world of those in all the world are these thorns, and they overspread all. The lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life.

And for how long is all the advantage and delight of these? Alas! That so poor things should prejudice us of the rich and blessed increase of this divine seed.

The last is good ground. A good and honest heart; not much fineness here, not many questions and disputes, but honest simplicity, sweet sincerity, that is all, a humble single desire to eye, and to do the will of God, and this from love to himself. This makes the soul abound in the fruits of holiness, receiving the word as the ground of it; different degrees are indeed, some thirty, some sixty, and some a hundredfold, yet the lowest aiming at the highest, not resting satisfied; yet growing more fruitful, if thirty last year, desiring to bring forth sixty this.

This is the great point, we ought to examine it, for much is sown and little brought forth; our God hath done much for us, what more could be done? Yet when grapes were expected, wild grapes were produced. What becomes of all? Who grows to be more spiritual, more humble and meek, more like Christ, more self-denying, fuller of love to God, and one to another? Some, but alas! Few. All the land is sown, and that plentifully, with the good seed: But what comes for the most part? Cockle and no grain. **Infelix lolium.**

We would do all other things to purpose, and not willingly lose our end; not trade and gain nothing; buy and sell, and live by the loss; not plow and sow, and reap nothing. How sensible do we feel one ill year, and shall this alone be lost labour, that well improved were worth all the rest? Oh! How much more worth than all? Shall we only do the greatest business to the least purpose? Bethink yourselves, what do we here? Why come we here? If we still remain as proud and passionate, and as self-willed as before, what will all great bargains, and good years, and full barns, avail within a while? That word, "Thou fool, this night shall they fetch away thy soul," how terrible will it be?

We think we are wise in not losing our labour in other things; why, 'tis all lost, even where most gained. What amounts it to? Cast up:

Vanity and vexation of spirit is the total sum; and in all our projecting and bustling, what do we but sow the wind, and reap the whirlwind? Sow vanity, and reap vexation?

This seed alone being fruitful, makes rich and happy, springs up to eternal life. Oh, that we were wise, and that we would at length learn to hear every sermon as on the utmost edge of time, at the very brink of eternity, for anything we know for ourselves, or any of us may be really so; however, it is wise and safe to do as if it were so. Will you be persuaded of this? It were a happy sermon if it could prevail, for the more fruitful hearing of all the rest henceforward: we have lost too much of our little time; and thus, with the Apostle, I beseech you, I beseech you, receive not the grace of God in vain.

Now that you may be fruitful, examine well your own hearts, pluck up, weed out, for there are still thorns, some will grow, but he is the happiest man that hath the sharpest eye, and the busiest hand, spying them out, and plucking them up. Take heed how you hear, think it not so easy a matter. Plow up, and sow not among thorns, Jeremiah 4.

And above all pray, pray before, after, and in hearing, dart up desires to God, he is the Lord of the harvest, whose influence doth all; the difference of the soil makes indeed the difference of success, but the Lord hath the privilege of bettering the soil. He that framed the heart, changes it when and how he will. There is a curse on all grounds naturally, that fell on the earth for man's sake, but fell more on the ground of man's own heart within him: Thorns and briars shalt thou bring forth. Now 'tis he that denounced that curse, that alone hath power to remove it, he is both the sovereign owner of the seed, and changer of the soil, turns a wilderness into Carmel by his Spirit; and no ground, no heart, can be good till he change it.

And being changed, much care must still be taken in manuring, for there is still that in it which will bring forth many weeds. It is a mother to them, and but a stepmother to this seed. Therefore,

Consider it, if you think this concerns you; he that hath an ear to hear, as our Saviour closes, let him hear. The Lord apply your hearts to this work, and though discouragements arise without or within, and little present fruit appears, and corruption is rather stronger and greater, yet watch and pray, wait on, it shall be better. This fruit is to be brought forth with patience, as St. Luke has it. And this seed, this word, the Lord calls by that very name, the very word of his patience; keep it, hide it in thy heart, and in due time it shall spring up. And this patience shall be required but for a little while; the day of harvest is at hand, when all in any measure fruitful in grace shall be gathered into glory.

SERMON XIV

2 Corinthians VII:I *Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*

It is both of unspeakable sweetness and usefulness for a Christian to often consider the excellence of that estate to which he is called. This consideration cannot fail to prompt him to very high resolutions and carry him on in the divine ambition of being daily more suitable to his high calling and hopes. Therefore, these are often set before Christians in the Scripture and are pressed here by the Apostle upon

a particular occasion of the avoidance of near combinements with unbelievers. He mentions some choice promises that God makes to his own people and of their near relation to, and communion with, himself. Upon these he enlarges and raises the exhortation to the universal endeavour of all holiness.

In the words are:

1. The thing to which he would persuade.
2. The motive.

The thing is holiness in its full extension and intention, purging ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

The purging out of filthiness and perfecting of holiness express, as usually they are distinguished, those two parts of renewing grace: mortification and vivification. But I conceive they are not so truly different parts as different notions of the same thing, the decrease of sin and increase of grace being truly one thing, as the dispelling of darkness and the augmenting of light. So here the one is rendered as the necessary result, yea, as the equivalent of the other; the same thing indeed: purging from filthiness and in so doing perfecting holiness; perfecting holiness and in so doing purging from filthiness. That perfection by which is meant a growing progressive advance towards perfection.

The words, without straining, give us as it were the several dimensions of holiness:

- The breadth: purging all filthiness.
- The length: parallel to man's composure, running all along through his soul and body, purging filthiness of the flesh and spirit.

- The height: perfecting holiness.
- The depth: that which is the bottom whence it rises up, a deep impress of the fear of God. Perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Cleanse ourselves: It is the Lord who is the sanctifier of his people. He purges away their dross and tin; he pours clean water according to his promises, yet he calls us to cleanse ourselves. Even having such promises, let us cleanse ourselves. He puts a new life into us, causes us to act, and excites us to exercise it and call it up to act in the progress of sanctification.

Men are strangely inclined to a perverse construction of things. Tell them that we are to act, and work, and give diligence, then they would fancy doing in their own strength and being their own saviours. Again, tell them that God works all our works in us and for us, then they would take the ease of doing nothing. If they cannot have the praise of doing all, they will sit still with folded hands and use no diligence at all. But this is the corrupt logic of the flesh, its base sophistry. The Apostle reasons just the contrary. *Philippians 2:12: It is God who works in us both to will and to do.* Therefore, a carnal heart might say, we need not work, or at least, may work very carelessly. But he infers, *Therefore let us work out our salvation with fear and trembling,* in more humble obedience to God and dependence on him, not obstructing the influences of his grace and by sloth and negligence provoking him to withdraw or abate it. Certainly, many in whom there is truth of grace are kept low in the growth of it by their own slothfulness, sitting still and not bestirring themselves and exercising the proper actions of that spiritual life by which it is maintained and advanced.

From all filthiness. All kinds of sinful pollutions; not as men commonly do, reforming some things and taking to themselves

dispensations in others, at least in some peculiar sin—their mistress, their Herodias, their Delilah. No parting with that; yea, they would rather forgo many other things as a kind of composition for retaining that.

Of flesh and spirit. The whole man must be purified and consecrated to God, not only refined from the gross outward acts of sin, but from the inward affection to it and the motions of it, so that the heart does not go after it, as in Psalm 131. Under the restraints of outwardly committing sin, it may do so, and very often does. Just as the Israelites lusted after the flesh pots, their hearts remained in Egypt still, though their bodies were brought out. This is what must be done: affection to sin must be purged out. That is, we must cleanse the ground, not only lop off the branches, but dig about, loosen, and pluck up the root. Though fibres of it will still stick, we ought continually to find them out and pluck them up.

Further, these not only include the inner part of all sins, but also some sins that are mostly or wholly inward, that do not heavily involve the body or are acted by it. These filthinesses of the spirit are less discerned than those of the flesh and, being more difficult to discern, are also more difficult to purge out: pride, self-love, unbelief, curiosity, etc. Though these are more refined sins, they are still pollutions and defilements—indeed, of the worst sort, as they are more spiritual, and thus filthiness of the spirit. Fleshly pollutions are things of which the devil is not capable in themselves, though they excite men to them, and so they are called unclean spirits. But the highest rank of sins are those that are properly spiritual wickednesses. In men, these are the chief strengths of Satan, the inner works of these forts and strongholds, as in 2 Corinthians 10:4.

Many who are not much tempted to common gross sensualities possibly have a kind of disdain for them, through education, morality, strength of reason, and natural conscience, which carry them above such sins. Yet, they still have many of these heights—those lofty imaginations that rise against God and the obedience of Christ—all of which must be demolished.

Perfecting holiness. Not content with low measures, so much as keeps from hell. But aspiring towards perfection, aiming high at self-victory, self-denial, and the love of God, purer and hotter, like a fire growing, flaming up, and consuming the earth. Though men fall short of their aim, it is good to aim high; they shall shoot so much higher, though not fully as high as they aim. Thus, we ought to be setting the state of perfection in our eye, resolving not to rest content below that and to come as near it as we can, even before we attain it, as in Philippians 3:11-12. This is to act as one who has such a hope, such a state in view, and is still advancing towards it.

In the fear of God. No working but on firm ground, no solid endeavors in holiness where it is not founded in a deep heart, a reverence of God, a desire to please him and be like him, which springs from love.

Most men are either wholly strangers to this or are but slight and shallow in it, and therefore make so little true progress in holiness.

Then there is the motive, having these promises.** Being called to so fair an estate, so excellent a condition to be the people, yea, the sons and daughters of God, therefore they are called to come forth from Babel, to separate themselves from sin, and to purge it out. Holiness is his image in his children; the more of it, the more suitable to that blessed relation and dignity, and the firmer are the hopes of the inheritance of glory.

Consider sin as a filthiness, hate it. Oh, how ugly and vile is lust, how deformed is swelling pride! All sin is an aversion from God, casting the noble soul into the mire and defacing all its beauty. Turning to present things, it pollutes itself with them. He who was clad in scarlet embraces the dunghill, as Jeremiah laments in another sense.

Purity and Holiness: A Call to Sanctification

Purity of things is an unmixture and simplicity corresponding with their own being, and so is the soul when elevated above the earth, and sense, and united unto God, contemplating him, and delighting in him. All inordinate bent to the creatures, or to itself (which is the first and main disorder) defiles and debases it. And the more it is sublimed and freed from itself, the purer and more heavenly it grows, and partakes the more of God, and resembles him the more.

This then is to be our main study: first, to search out our iniquities, the particular defilements of our nature—not only gross filthiness, drunkenness, lasciviousness, etc., but our love of this earth, or of air, or vanity of mind, our self-will and self-seeking. Most, even of Christians, are short-sighted in their own secret evils, the filthiness of spirit especially, and use little diligence in this enquiry. They do not seek light from God, to go in before him, and to lead them into themselves, as the prophet had in the discovery of idolatries at Jerusalem. Oh, that we could once see what heaps of abominations lie hidden in us, one behind another!

Then, having searched out, we must follow on, to purge out—not to pass over, nor spare any, but to delight most in casting out the best-beloved sin, the choicest idol that has had most of our service and sacrifices, to make room for Jesus Christ.

And never cease in this work, for still there is need of more purging. One day's work in this disposes for, and engages to, further, to the next; for as sin is purged out, light comes in, and more clear discoveries are made of remaining pollutions. So then, there must still be progress: less of the world, and more of God in the heart every day. Oh, this is a sweet course of life; what gain, what preferment, is to be compared to it?

And in this, it is good to have our ambition growing; the higher we rise, to aspire still higher, looking further than before, even toward the perfection of holiness. It is not much we can here attain to, but surely, it is commonly far less than we might. We do not improve our condition and advantages as we might do. The world is busy driving forward their designs; men of spirit are animated by both better and worse success. If anything miscarries, it sets them on the more eagerly to make it up in the right management of some other design. And when they prosper in one thing, that enables and encourages them to attempt further. Shall all things seem worth our pains? Are only grace and glory so cheap in our account, that the least diligence of all goes that way? Oh! strange delusion!

Now, our cleansing is to be managed by all holy means: word and sacrament, more wisely and spiritually used than commonly with us; and private prayer, that purifies and elevates the soul, takes it up into the mount and makes it shine. Particularly, supplicating for the Spirit of holiness and victory over sin is not in vain. It obtains its desires of God, the soul becoming that which it is fixedly set upon. Holy resolution—Christians are much wanting in this, faint and loose in their purposes. The consideration of divine truths, the mysteries of the kingdom, the hope of Christians, and rich and great promises, that is particularly here the motive—these are all the means, holy means; they are as their end is the perfection of holiness.

Having these promises. Now consider whether it is better to be the slaves of Satan or the sons of God. Measure delight in God with the low base pleasures of sense. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. These gradually go on together and are perfected together.

Why then is there such an invincible love of sin in the hearts of men? At least, why is there so little love of holiness and endeavour after it? Why such mean thoughts of it, as a thing either indecent or unpleasant, when it is the only noble and delightful thing in the world? The soul, by other things, is drawn below itself, but by holiness, it is raised above itself and made divine. Pleasures of sin are for a season, the pleasure of a moment exchanged for those of eternity. But even in the meantime, in this season, the soul is fed with communion with God, one hour of which is more worth than the longest life of the highest of the world's delights.

SERMON XV

Psalm CXIX. 32. I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.

To desire ease and happiness, under a general representation of it, is a thing of more easy and general persuasion. There is somewhat in nature to help the argument, but to find beauty in, and be taken with, the very way of holiness that leads to it, is more rare and depends on a higher principle. Self-love inclines a man to desire the rest of love, but to love and desire the labour of love, is love of a higher and purer

strain. To delight, and be cheerful in obedience, argues much love as the spring of it; that is the thing the holy Psalmist does so plentifully express in this Psalm, and he is still desiring more of that sweet and lively affection that might make him yet more abundant in action. Thus here, "I will run," &c. He presents his desire and purpose together; the more of this grace thou bestowest on me, the more service shall I be able to do thee.

This is the top of his ambition, while others are seeking to enlarge their barns, their lands, or estates, or titles, kings to enlarge their territories or authority, to encroach on neighbouring kingdoms, or be more absolute in their own. Instead of all such enlargements, this is David's great desire, an enlarged heart to run the way of God's commandments.

And these other (how big soever they sound) are poor, narrow desires; this one is larger and higher than them all, and gives evidence of a heart already large; but as it is miserably in those, it is happy in this: much would still have more.

Let others seek more money, or more honour. Oh, the blessed choice of that soul that is still seeking more love to God, more affection, and more ability to do him service, that counts all days and hours for lost, that are not employed to this improvement, that hears the Word in public, and reads it in private for this purpose, to kindle this love, or to blow the spark, if any there be already in the heart, to raise it to a clear flame, and from a little flame to make it burn yet hotter, and purer, and rise higher. But, above all means, is often presenting this in prayer to him, on whose influence all depends, in whose hand our hearts are, much more than in our own. It follows him with this desire, and works on him by his own interest, though there can be really no accession of gain to him by our services; yet he is pleased so

to account with us as if there were, therefore we may urge this: "Lord, give more, and receive more, I will run the way of thy commandments when thou shalt enlarge my heart."

We have here in the words a required disposition and a suitable resolution. The disposition relates to the resolution, as the means of fulfilling it, and the resolution relates to the disposition, both as the end of desiring it and as the motive of obtaining it. The resolution occurs first in the words.

"I will run," &c. The way resolved on is that of God's commandments, not the road of the polluted world, not the crooked ways of his own heart, but the highway, the royal way, the straight way of the kingdom, and that in the notion of subjection and obedience, the way of thy commandments. This man naturally struggles against and repines at, to be limited and bounded by a law is a restraint, and a vain man could possibly find in his heart to do many of the same things that are commanded, but he would not be tied, would have his liberty, and do it of his own choice. This is the enmity of the carnal mind against God, as the Apostle expresses it, it is not subject to the law of God, neither can it be; it breaks these bonds, and casts away the cords of his authority. This is sin, the transgression of a law, and this made the first sin so great, though in a matter one would think small, the eating of the fruit of a tree; it was rebellion against the Majesty of God, casting off his law and authority, and aspiring to an imagined self-deity. And this is still the treasonable pride, or independency, and wickedness of our nature, rising up against God that formed us of nothing.

And this is the power and substance of religion, the new impress of God upon the heart, and obedience and resignation to him, to be given up to him as entirely his, to be molded and ordered as he will,

to be subject to his laws and appointments in all things, to have every action and every word under a rule and law, and the penalty to be so high, eternal death. All this, to a carnal or haughty mind, is hard; not only must every action and word, but even every thought be subject; not so much as a thought free, every thought brought into captivity, as the Apostle speaks. And so the licentious mind accounts it, not only the affections and desires, but the very reasonings and imaginations are brought under this law.

Now, to yield this as reasonable and due to God, to own his sovereignty, and to acknowledge the law to be holy, just, and good, to approve, yea, to love it, even where it most contradicts and controls our own corrupt will and the law of sin in our flesh; this is true spiritual obedience, to study and inquire after the will of God in all our ways, what will please him, and, having found it, to follow that which is here called the way of his commandments; to make this our way, and our business in the world, and all other things but accessories and by-works; even those lawful things that may be taken in, and used as helps in our way. As the disciples, passing through the corn, plucked the ears, and did eat in passing, as a by-work, but their business was to follow their Master. And whatsoever would hinder us in this way must be watched and guarded against; to reject that we must either remove and thrust it aside; or if we cannot do that, yet we must go over it, and trample it underfoot, were it the thing or the person that is dearest to us in the world; till the heart be brought to this state and purpose, it is either wholly void of, or very low and weak in, the truth of religion.

We place religion much in our accustomed performances, in coming to church, hearing and repeating sermons, and praying at home, keeping a routine of such and such duties. The way of God's commandments is more in doing than in discourse. In many, religion

evaporates itself too much through the tongue, while it appears too little in their ways. Oh! but this is the main thing; one act of charity, meekness, or humility speaks more than a day's discourse. All the means we use in religion are intended for a further end, which if they attain not, they are nothing. This end is to mortify and purify the heart, to mold it to the way of God's commandments in the whole tract of our lives, in our private converse with one another, and our retired secret converse with ourselves, to have God still before us, and his law our rule in all we do, that he may be our meditation day and night, and that his law may be our counselor, as this Psalm has it, to regulate all our designs and the works of our callings by it. To walk soberly, and godly, and righteously in this present world, to curb and cross our own wills where they cross God's, to deny ourselves our own humor and pride, our passions and pleasures, to have all those subdued and brought under by the power of the law of love within us. This, and nothing below this, is the end of religion. Alas! amongst multitudes that are called Christians, some there may be that speak and appear like it, yet how few are there that make this their business, and aspire to this, the way of God's commandments.

His intended course in this way, he expresses by running; 'tis good to be in this way even in the lowest motions, love will creep where it cannot go. But if thou art so indeed, then thou wilt long for a swifter motion; if thou dost but creep, be doing, creep on, yet desire to be enabled to go; if thou goest, but yet halting and lamely, desire to be strengthened to walk straight, and if thou walkest, let not that satisfy thee, desire to run. So here David did walk in this way; but he earnestly wishes to mend his pace, he would willingly run, and for that end he desires an enlarged heart.

Some dispute and descant too much on whether they go or not, and childishly tell their steps, and would know at every pace whether they

advance or not, and how much they advance, and thus amuse themselves, and spend the time of doing and going in questioning and doubting. Thus it is with many Christians, but it were a more wise and comfortable way to be endeavouring onwards, and if thou makest little progress, at least to be desiring to make more; to be praying and walking, and praying that thou mayest walk faster, and that in the end thou mayest run, not satisfied with anything attained, but yet by that unsatisfiedness not to be so dejected as to sit down or stand still, but rather excited to go on. So it was with St. Paul, Phil. 3:13: Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press forward. If anyone thinks that he hath done well and run far, and will take a pause, the great Apostle is of another mind, "Not as if I had attained." Oh no! Far from that, he still sets forward, as if nothing were done, as a runner, not still looking back at how much he has run, but forward to what he is to run, stretching forth to that, inflamed with frequent looks at the mark and end. Some are retarded by looking at what is past, as not satisfied, they have done nothing as they think, and so stand still discontented; but even in that way, it is not good to look too much to things behind, we must forget them rather and press onwards.

Some, if they have gone on well, and possibly run a while, yet if they fall, then they are ready, in a desperate malcontent, to lie still, and think all is lost; and in this peevish fretting at their falls, some men please themselves, and take it for repentance, whereas indeed it is not that, but rather pride and humour; repentance is a more submissive humble thing. But this is that which troubles some men, at their new falls, especially if after a long time of even walking or running (as they think) their project is now spoiled, their thoughts are broken off, they would have had somewhat to have rejoiced in if they had still gone on to the end, but being disappointed of that, they think they had as good let alone, and give over. Oh! But the humble

Christian is better taught, his falls teach him indeed to abhor himself, they discover his own weakness to him, and empty him of self-trust, but they do not dismay him to get up and go on, not boldly and carelessly forgetting his fall, but in the humble sense of it walking the more warily, but not the less swiftly; yea, the more swiftly too, making the more haste to regain the time lost by the fall. So then if you would run in this way, depend on the strength of God, and on his Spirit, leading thee, that so thou mayest not fall, and yet if thou dost fall, arise; and if thou art plunged in the mire, go to the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness, and wash there, bemoan thyself before thy Lord; and if hurt, and bleeding by thy fall, yet look to him, desire Jesus to pity thee, and bind up, and cure thy wound, washing off thy blood, and pouring in of his own.

However it is with thee, give not over, faint not, run on; and that thou mayest run the more easily and expeditiously, make thyself as light as may be, lay aside every weight, Heb. 12:1-2. Clog not thyself with unnecessary burdens of earth, and especially lay aside that which of all other things weighs the heaviest, and cleaves the closest; the sin that so easily besets us, and is so hardly put off us, that folds so connaturally to us, and we therefore think will not hinder us much. And not only the sins that are more outward, but the inner close-cleaving sins, the sin that most of all sits easily to us, not only our cloak, but our inner coat, away with that too, as our Saviour says in another case, and run the race set before us, our appointed stage, and that with patience, under all oppositions, and discouragements from the world without, and sin within. And to encourage thee in this, look to such a cloud of witnesses that compasseth us about to further us; as troubles, temptations, and sin do to hinder us. They encountered the like sufferings, and were encountered with the like sins, and yet they ran on and got home. Alexander would have run in the Olympic Games if he had had kings to run with; now in this race,

kings, and prophets, and righteous persons run; yea, all are indeed a kingly generation, each one heir to a crown as the prize of this race.

And if these encourage thee but little, then look beyond them, above that cloud of witnesses, to the Son, the Sun of Righteousness; looking off from all things here, that would either entangle thee or discourage thee, taking thine eye off from them, and looking to him that will powerfully draw thee and animate thee. Look to Jesus not only as thy forerunner in this race, but also as thy undertaker in it, the author and finisher of our faith; his attaining the end of the race is the pledge of thy attaining, if thou follow him cheerfully on the same encouragements that he looked to, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despised the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of God.

"When thou shalt enlarge my heart." In all beings, nature is the principle of motion, and according as it is more or less perfect in its kind, those motions that flow from it are more or less vigorous. Therefore hath the Psalmist good reason, to the end his spiritual course may be the steadier and faster, to desire that the principle of it, the heart, may be more enabled and disposed, which here he expresses by its being enlarged.

What this enlargement of the heart is, a man's own inward sense should easily explain to him; sure it would, did men reflect on it, and were they acquainted with their own hearts, but most are not. They would find the carnal natural heart a narrow, contracted, hampered thing, bound with cords and chains of its own twisting and forging, and so incapable of walking, much less of running in this way of God's commandments, till it be freed and enlarged.

The heart is taken generally in Scripture for the whole soul, the understanding, and will, in its several affections and motions; and

the speech being here of an enlarged heart, it seems very congruous to take it in the most enlarged sense.

It is said of Solomon that he had a large heart (the same word as here) as the sand of the seashore; that is, a vast comprehensive spirit, that could fathom so much of nature, greater and lesser things. He spoke of trees, from the cedar in Lebanon to the hyssop in the wall, and of great beasts, and small creeping things.

Thus, I conceive, the enlargement of the heart comprises the enlightening of the understanding; there arises a clearer light there, to discern spiritual things in a more spiritual manner, to see the vast difference betwixt the vain things the world goes after, and the true solid delight that is in the way of God's commandments; to know the false blush of the pleasures of sin, and what deformity is under that painted mask, and not be allured by it; to have enlarged apprehensions of God, his excellency, greatness, and goodness; how worthy he is to be obeyed and served. This is the great dignity and happiness of the soul; all other pretensions are low and poor in respect of this. Here, then, is enlargement to see the purity and beauty of his law, how just and reasonable, yea, how pleasant and amiable it is, that his commandments are not grievous, that they are beds of spices; the more we walk in them, still the more of their fragrant smell and sweetness we find.

And then consequently, upon the larger and clearer knowledge of these things, the heart dilates itself in affection, the more it knows of God, still the more it loves him, and the less it loves this present world; love is the great enlarger of the heart to all obedience. Then nothing is hard, yea, the harder things become the more delightful.

All love of other things doth pinch and contract the heart, for they are all narrower than itself. It is framed to that wideness in its first

creation, capable of enjoying God, though not of fully comprehending Him. Therefore, all other things gather it in and straighten it from its natural size. Only the love of God stretches and dilates it. He is large enough for it; yea, it, in its fullest enlargement, is infinitely too narrow for Him. Do not all find it, if they will ask themselves, that in all other loves and pursuits in this world, there is still something that pinches? The soul is not at its full size, but as a foot in a tight shoe, is somewhere bound and pained, and cannot go freely, much less run, though another that looks on cannot tell where. Yet each one feels it. But when the soul is set free from these narrow things and is raised to the love of God, then it is at ease and at large, and has room enough; it is both elevated and dilated. This word signifies both a high-raised soul and is sometimes taken for proud and lofty. But there is a greatness and height of spirit in the love of God and union with Him that does not vainly swell and lift it up, but with the deepest humility, joins the highest and truest magnanimity. It sets the soul above the snares that lie here below, in which most men creep and are entangled, in that way of life that is on high to the just, as Solomon speaks.

Good reason hath David to join these together, and to desire the one as the spring and cause of the other. An enlarged heart, that he might run the way of God's commandments.

Sensible joys and consolations in God do encourage and enlarge the heart, but these are not so general to all, nor so constant to any. Love is the abounding fixed spring of ready obedience, and will make the heart cheerful in serving God, even without those felt comforts when He is pleased to deny or withdraw them.

In that course or race, constancy, activity, and alacrity are understood, and all these flow from the enlargement of the heart:

1. **Constancy:** A narrow enthralled heart, fettered with the love of lower things and cleaving to some particular sins, or but one, and that secret, may keep foot a while in the way of God's commandments, in some steps of them, but it must give up quickly. It is not able to run on to the end of the goal. But a heart that hath laid aside every weight, and the most close-cleaving and besetting sin, as it is in that place to the Hebrews, hath stripped itself of all that may falter or entangle it. It runs, and runs on, without fainting or wearying. It is at large, having nothing that pains it in the race.
2. **Activity:** Not only holding on, but running, which is a swift, nimble race. It stands not bargaining and disputing, but once knowing God's mind, there is no more question or demur. "I made haste and delayed not," as in this Psalm. The word is, did not stay upon, why, and wherefore. He stood not to reason the matter but ran on. And this love, enlarging the heart, makes it abundant in the work of the Lord, quick and active, dispatching much in a little time.
3. **Alacrity:** All done with cheerfulness, so no other constraint is needful, where this overpowering sweet constraint of love is. "I will run," not be hauled and drawn as by force, but skip and leap, as the evangelic promise is, that the lame shall leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing. "For in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert," (Isaiah 35:6). The spouse desires her beloved to hasten as a roe and hind on the mountains of spices, and she does so, and each faithful soul runs towards Him, to meet Him in His way.

It is a sad, heavy thing to do anything as in obedience to God while the heart is straightened, not enlarged towards Him by His divine

love. But that once taking possession and enlarging the heart, that inward principle of obedience, makes the outward obedience sweet. It is then a natural motion. Indeed, the soul runs in the ways of God as the sun in his course, which finds no difficulty, being naturally fitted and carried to that motion. He goes forth as a bridegroom and rejoices as a strong man to run a race.

This is the great point that our souls should be studious of: to attain more evenness, nimbleness, and cheerfulness in the ways of God. For this end, we ought to seek above all things this enlarged heart. 'Tis the lack of this that makes us bog down, drive heavily, and run long upon little ground. Oh! My beloved, how shallow and narrow are our thoughts of God? Most, even of those that are truly godly, are led on by a kind of instinct and carried they scarce know how, to give some attendance on God's worship and to avoid gross sin, going on in a blameless course. 'Tis better thus than to run to excess of riot and open wickedness with the ungodly world. But, alas! This is but a dull, heavy, and languid motion where the heart is not enlarged by the daily growing love of God. Few, few are acquainted with that delightful contemplation of God that ventilates and raises this flame of love. Petty things bind and contract our spirits so that they feel little joy in God, little ardent active desire to do Him service, to crucify sin, to break and undo self-love within us, to root up our own wills to make room for His, that His alone may be ours, that we may have no will of our own, that our daily work may be to grow more like Him in the beauty of holiness. You think it a hard saying to part with your carnal lusts and delights, and the common ways of the world, and to be tied to a strict exact conversation all your days. But oh! The reason for this is that the heart is yet straightened and enthralled by the base love of these mean things, and that is from ignorance of things higher and better. One glance of God, a touch of His love, will free and enlarge the heart so that it can deny all, and part with all,

and make an entire renouncing of all, to follow Him. It sees enough in Him, and in Him alone, and therefore can neither quietly rest on, nor earnestly desire anything beside Him.

Oh! That you would apply your hearts to consider the excellency of this way of God's commandments. Our wretched hearts are prejudiced; they think it melancholy and sad. Oh! There is no way truly joyous but this. "They shall sing in the ways of the Lord," says the Prophet. Do not men, when their eyes are opened, see a beauty in meekness, temperance, and humility, a present delightfulness and quietness in them? Whereas in pride, passion, and intemperance, there is nothing but vexation and disquiet. And then consider the end of this way, and this race in it: rest and peace forever. 'Tis the way of peace both in its own nature and in respect of its end. Did you believe that joy and glory that is set before you in this way, you would not any of you defer a day longer, but forthwith you would break from all that holds you back, and enter into this way, and run on cheerfully in it. The persuasion of these great things above would enlarge and greaten the heart and make the greatest things here very little in your eyes.

But would you attain to this enlarged heart for this race? As you ought to apply your thoughts to these divine things and stretch them on the promises made in the Word, above all, take David's course: seek this enlargement of heart from God's own hand, for it is here propounded and said before God by way of request. See what is my desire. I would gladly serve thee better and advance more in the way of thy commandments. Now this I cannot do till my heart is more enlarged, and that cannot be but by thy hand, "When thou shalt enlarge my heart." Present this suit often. 'Tis in His power to do it for thee. He can stretch and expand thy straitened heart, can spread and hoist the sails within thee, and then carry thee on swiftly; filling

them not with the vain air of man's applause, which readily runs a soul upon rocks and splits it, but with the sweet breathings and soft gales of His own Spirit that carry it straight to the desired haven.

Findest thou sin cleaving to thee and clogging thee? Cry to Him, "Help, Lord, set me free from my narrow heart. I strive but in vain without thee, still it continues so. I know little of thee; my affections are dead and cold towards thee. Lord, I desire to love thee. Here is my heart, and lest it fly out, lay hold on it, and take thine own way with it, though it should be in a painful way, yet draw it forth, yea, draw it that it may run after thee." All is His own working, and all His motive is His own free grace. Let who will fancy themselves masters of their own hearts and think to enlarge them by the strength of their own stretches of speculation; they alone are in the sure and happy way of attaining it, who humbly suit and wait for this enlargement of heart from His hand that made it.

SERMON XVI

Romans VIII. 33-34: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth."

Other men may fancy and boast as they please, but there are none in the world but the godly alone that are furnished with sufficiency, strong supports, and comforts against all possible hazards. Of these, the Apostle treats most freely, sweetly, and plentifully in this chapter. He secures believers in their Christ, touching these two great evils:

after condemnation and present affliction. He assures them that the one cannot befall them and the other cannot hurt them.

For their immunity from the former, they have the clear word of the gospel and the seal of the Spirit; and that former privilege made sure, as the far greater, secures the other as the lesser.

They are freed from condemnation, and not only so, but entitled and insured to a kingdom. What hurt then can affliction do? Yea, it does good; it not only cannot rob them of their crown, but it carries them on towards it, as their highway to it. "If we suffer with him, we shall also be glorified together." Yea, all things to the children of God prove advantageous. Severally taken, in their present sense, they may seem evil, but taken jointly in their after-issue, their working together is all for good. In their simple nature, possibly they are poison, yet tempered and prepared, they shall prove medicinal. "All these things are against me," said old Jacob, and yet he lived to see even all these were for him. The children of God are indeed so happy that the harshest things in their way change their nature and become sweet and profitable. This much by their prayers, that have a divine incantation in them, they breathe forth the expressions of that love to God, by which they are characterized, "them that love God." And that is put on their hearts, the impression of His love to them, to which they are here led by the Apostle, as to the springhead of all. All their comforts and privileges flow thence, yea, all their love and their faith appropriating those comforts and privileges. Yea, the very treasury of all together, Jesus Christ himself, is the free gift of this free love. He, as the greatest, ascertains all things besides, and unspeakably less.

These two are such mighty arguments that no difficulty nor grief can stand before them: the love of God. He is with us; who then can be against us? All the world it may be, but that all is nothing. Once it

was nothing, it was that God who is our God, who loves us and is for us, who made it something. If He wills, it may again be nothing; and as it is at its best, it is nothing being compared with another gift that He has bestowed on us. Having bestowed that, sure if there is anything in this world that can do us any good, we shall not want it. He that spared not his own Son, but gave him to the death for us, will He not with him give us all things?

These two are such mighty arguments that no difficulty nor grief can stand before them. The love of God. He is with us; who then can be against us? All the world, it may be, but that all is nothing. Once it was nothing; it was that God, who is our God, who loves us and is for us, that made it something. And if He wills, it may again be nothing. And as it is at its best, it is nothing compared with another gift that He has bestowed on us. Having bestowed that, surely if there is anything in this world that can do us any good, we shall not want it. He that spared not His own Son, but gave Him to the death for us, will He not with Him give us all things?

And to close all, He makes these two great immunities good to us in Christ. He fixes there; we are freed from all fear of condemnation or of being hurt by affliction. No accusation nor guilt can annul the righteousness of Christ, and that is made ours. No distress nor suffering can cut us off from the love of God; and if it cannot do that, we need not fear it. All other hazards are no hazard, that being sure.

And in confidence of this, the Apostle gives the defiance, casts a challenge to angels, to men, to all the world, upon these two points: Who shall accuse? Who shall separate? Accuse to God, or separate from Him. Whatever times may come, the hardest that any can apprehend or foretell, if these two be not sufficient furniture against them, I know not what is.

Men are commonly busied about other events concerning themselves and theirs—what shall become of this or the other, and what if this or that fall out—but the conscience, once raised to this inquiry, the soul being awake to discern the hazard of eternal death, all other fears and questions are drowned and lost in this great question: Am I condemned or not? Is my sin pardoned or no?

And then, a satisfying answer received concerning this, all is quiet. The soul reposes sweetly on God and puts all its other concerns into His hands. Let Him make me poor and despised; let Him smite and chastise me. He has forgiven my sin; all is well. That burden taken off, the soul can go light, yea, can leap and dance under all other burdens. Oh, how it feels itself nimble, as a man eased of a load that he was even fainting under. Oh, blessed is the man whose sin is taken off, lifted from his shoulders, that's the word, Psal. 32:1, laid over upon Christ, who could bear the whole load and take it away, take it out of sight, which we could never have done—they'd have sunk us forever. That one word ἀῖρω (airō), John 1:29, signifies both, and answers to the two, Isa. 53:4. He has borne our grief and carried our sorrows; lifted them away. Oh, how sweet a burden, instead of this, is that engagement of obedience and love to Him as our Redeemer, and that is all He lays on us. If we follow Him and bear His cross, He is our strength and bears both it and us. So then, this is the great point, the heart's ease, to be delivered from the condemning weight of sin.

And certainly, while men do not think thus, their hearts have very slight impressions of the truth of these things. I fear the most of us scarcely believe this condemnation to come, at least very shallowly, and so they cannot much consider the deliverance from it provided to us in Jesus Christ. I cannot see how it is possible for a heart persuaded of these to be very careful about anything besides. You that eat and drink, and labour, and trade, and bestow all your time

either in the pains or the pleasures of this earth, what think you of eternity? Is it a light thing for you to perish forever? After a few days vainly spent, to fall under the wrath of God forever? Oh, that you would be persuaded to think on these things.

And you that have an interest in this free and blessed estate, why are your spirits so cold? So infrequent in the thoughts of it? Why are you not rejoicing in the Lord? Gladdening yourselves in secret when you remember this? Go the world as it will, my sin is forgiven me; mistake me, accuse me who so will, my God has acquitted me in His Christ, and He loves me and lives to intercede for me.

Methinks I hear some say, "Ay, they that could say that might be merry indeed; but, alas! I have no such assurance. Who can lay anything to the charge of God's elect? That's true, but here is the great point of so hard a resolution, am I one of these?"

That the Apostle doth thus specify the owners of this consolation by this high and hidden character of their election is not to render it doubtful and dark. For his main aim, on the contrary, is both to extend it as far as it can go and to make it as clear as may be to all that have interest in it. He designs them by the primitive act of love fixing on them, so as it is now manifested to them in the subsequent effects, that flow from the elect called and sanctified, and conformed to Jesus Christ, both by his Spirit within them, and the sufferings that without arise against them in the world; such, as being the sons of God, are led by the Spirit of God, and walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

And these things, indeed, considered as their characters, the stamp of God on them, the impressions of their election to life, do check the vain confidence of all carnal ungodly professors of the name of Christ, and tell them that their pretended title to him is a mere

delusion. Certainly, whosoever lies in the love of sin and takes the flesh for his guide, that accursed blind guide is leading him into the pit. What gross folly and impudence is it for any man, walking in the lusts of his own heart, to fancy and aver himself to be a partner of that redemption, whereof so great a part is to deliver us from the power of our iniquities, to renew our hearts, and re-unite them to God, and possess them with his love.

The great evidence of thy election is love. Thy love to him gives certain testimony of his preceding eternal love to thee, so are they here designed, they that love God; thy choosing him is the effect and evidence of his choosing thee. Now this is not laborious, that needs to be disputed amidst all thy frailties; feel the pulse of thine affection, which way beats it, and ask thy heart whether thou lovest him or not; in this, thou hast the character of thy election.

Know you not that the redeemed of Christ and he are one? They live one life; Christ lives in them, and if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his, as the Apostle declares in this chapter. So then, this we are plainly to tell you, and consider it; you that will not let go your sins to lay hold on Christ, have as yet no share in him.

But on the other side: The truth is that when souls are once set upon this search, they commonly wind the notion too high, and subtilize too much in the dispute, and so entangle and perplex themselves, and drive themselves further off from that comfort that they are seeking after. Such measures and marks of grace they set to themselves for their rule and standard, and unless they find those without all controversy in themselves, they will not believe that they have an interest in Christ and this blessed and safe estate in him.

To such I would only say, are you in a willing league with any known sin? Yea, would you willingly, if you might be saved in that way, give

up yourself to voluptuousness and ungodliness, and not at all desire to follow Jesus Christ in the way of holiness? Then truly, I have not anything as yet to say for your comfort, only there is a salvation provided, and the door is yet open, and your heart may be changed. But on the other side, are the desires of thy soul after Christ, whole Christ, to be righteousness, and withal sanctification to thee? Wouldst thou willingly give up thyself to be ruled by him and have him thy King? Hadst thou rather choose to suffer the greatest affliction for his sake, to honour him, than commit the least sin to displease him? Doth thy heart go out after him when thou hearest him spoken of? Dost thou account him thy treasure, so that all the world sounds but as an empty shell to thee when he is named? Says thy soul within thee, "Oh! that he were mine, and oh! that I were his, that I could please him and live to him?" Then do not toss thy spirit, and jangle and spin out thy thoughts in fruitless, endless doubtings, but close with this as thy portion, and be of good comfort, thy sins are, or will be, forgiven thee.

I add yet further, if thou sayest yet, that thou findest none of all this, yet I say there is warrant for thee to believe and lay hold on this righteousness here held forth, to the end that thou mayest then find those things in thee, and find comfort in them. Thou art convinced of ungodliness, then believe on him that justifies the ungodly. Thou art condemned, yet Christ is dead and risen. Fly to him as such, as the Lamb slain, he that was dead and is alive, and then say, "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, or rather that is risen. Who shall accuse?" It is true they may clamor and make a noise, both Satan and thy conscience, but how can they fasten any accusation on thee? If they dare accuse, yet they cannot condemn, when the judge hath acquitted thee and declared thee free, who is greater than all, and hath the absolute power of the sentence. All charges and libels come too late after he hath once pronounced a soul righteous. And

who shall condemn? It is Christ that died. If the sentence of the law be brought forth, yet here's the answer: It ought not to be twice satisfied; now once it is in Christ. He hath died, and that stands for the believer. Whosoever flies to him and lays hold on him for life, he cannot die again; nor canst thou die, for whom he died once, or rather is risen. That raises the assurance higher and sets it firmer, for this evidences that in his death all was paid, when he, being the surety, and seized on for the debt, and once Death's prisoner, yet was set free. This clears the matter that there is no more to be said. And yet further, in sign that all is done, he is raised to the height of honor above all principalities and powers, is set at the right hand of the Father, and there he sits and lives to make intercession, to sue out the fulfilling of all for believers, the bringing of them home, lives to see all made good that he died and covenanted for. So now his righteousness is thine that believest, any challenge must meet with Christ first, and if it seize not on him, it cannot light on thee, for thou art in him, married to him. And the same triumph that he speaks, Isaiah 50:8, whence these words are borrowed, that is made thine, and thou mayest now speak it in him. I know not what can cast him down that hath this word to rest upon and to comfort himself in.

SERMON XVII

Romans VIII: 35 *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?*

Is this he that so lately cried out, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me?" that now triumphs, "O happy man! Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"

Yes, 'tis the same. Pained then with the thoughts of that miserable conjunction with a body of death, and so crying out, "Who will deliver? Who will separate me from that?" Now he hath found a deliverer to do that for him, to whom he is forever united, and he glories now in his inseparable union and unalterable love, that none can divide him from. Yea, it is through him, that presently after that word of complaint he praises God, and now in him he triumphs. So vast a difference is there between a Christian taken in himself and in Christ. When he views himself in himself, then nothing but wretchedness, a polluted perishing wretch. But then he looks again and sees himself in Christ, and there he's rich, and safe, and happy. He triumphs, and he glories in it above all the painted prosperities and against all the horrid adversities of the world. He lives in his Christ content and happy and laughs at all enemies.

And he extends his triumph, he makes a common good of it to all believers, speaks it in their name, "Who shall separate us," and would have them partake of the same confidence and speak in the same style with him. It is vain that men fancy these to be expressions of revelations, or some singularly privileged assurances, then they would not suit their end, which is clearly and undoubtedly the encouragement of all the children of God upon grounds that are peculiar to them from all the rest of the world but common to them all, in all ages, and all varieties of condition.

It is true, all of them have not a like clear and firm apprehension of their happy and sure estate, and scarce any of them are alike at all times. Yet they have all and always the same right to this estate and

to the comfort of it, and when they stand in a right light to view it, they do see it so and rejoice in it.

There are indeed some kind of assurances that are more rare and extraordinary, some immediate glances, or coruscations of the love of God upon the soul of a believer; a smile of his countenance, and this does exceedingly refresh, yea, ravish the soul, and enables it mightily for duties and sufferings. These he dispenses arbitrarily and freely where and when he will; some weaker Christians sometimes have them, while stronger are strangers to them, the Lord training them to live more contentedly by faith till the day of vision come.

And that is the other, the less ecstatic, but the more constant and fixed kind of assurance, the proper assurance of faith. The soul, by believing, cleaves unto God in Christ as he offers himself in the Gospel, and thence is possessed with a sweet and calm persuasion of his love, that being the proper work to appropriate him, to make Christ, and in him, eternal life, ours. So 'tis the proper result and fruit of that its acting, especially when it acts anything strongly to quiet the soul in him. Then, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and from that peace, joy; yea, even glorying in tribulation, as there follows. And these springing not from an extraordinary sense or view but from the very innate virtue of faith working kindly, and according to its own nature.

Therefore, many Christians do prejudice their own comfort and darken their spirits by not giving freedom to faith to act according to its nature and proper principles. They will not believe till they find some evidence or assurance, which is quite to invert the order of the thing, and to look for fruit without settling a root for it to grow from.

Would you take Christ upon the absolute word of promise tendering him to you, and rest on him, so this would ingraft you into life itself, for that he is, and so those fruits of the Holy Ghost would bud and flourish in your hearts. From that very believing on him would arise this persuasion, yea, even to a glorification and an humble boasting in his love, who shall accuse, who shall condemn, who shall separate.

The undivided companion and undoubted helper and preserver of this confidence of faith is an active love to Christ, a constant study of holiness, and strife against sin, which is the grand enemy of faith, that obstructs the very vital spirits of faith, that makes it sickly and heavy in its actings, and causes the palsy in the hand of faith, that it cannot lay so fast hold. Therefore, this you would be careful of, yea, know that of necessity it attends faith, and as faith grows, holiness will grow, and holiness growing will mutually strengthen and establish faith. The comforts of the Holy Ghost are holy purifying comforts, and the more the soul is purified and made holy, the more is it cleared and enlarged to receive much of these comforts. Blessed are the pure in heart, they shall see God; unholiness is as damps and filthy mists in the soul, it darkens all.

Hence, it is evident in what way Christians may and ought to aspire to this assurance. It is their portion, and in this way, they are to aspire to it and shall find it. If not presently, yet let them wait and go on in this way, they shall not miscarry.

Again, it appears that this assurance is no enemy to holy diligence, nor a friend of carnal security. On the contrary, it is the only thing that eminently ennobles and emboldens the soul for all adventures and services. Base fears and doubtings, wherein some place much of religion, and many weak Christians seem to be in that mistake, to think it a kind of holy spiritual temper to be questioning and

doubting. I say, these base fears can never produce anything truly generous, no height of obedience; they do nothing but entangle and disable the soul for every good work. Perfect love casts out this fear and works a sweet, unperplexing fear, a holy wariness not to offend, which fears nothing else. And this confidence of love is the great secret of comfort and of the ability to do God service. Nothing makes so strong and healthful a constitution of the soul as pure love. It dares submit to God, and resign itself to him; it dares venture itself in his hand and trust his word, and seeks no more but how to please him. A heart thus composed goes readily and cheerfully unto all services, to do, to suffer, to live, to die, at his pleasure, and firmly stands to this, that nothing can separate it from that which is sufficient to it, which is all its happiness, the love of God in Christ Jesus.

That is indeed his love to us, but so as it includes inseparably the inseparableness of our love to him. For observe the things specified as most likely, if anything, to separate us; shall tribulation, distress, etc. Now these especially, being endured for his sake, cannot immediately have any likely visage of altering his love to us but rather confirm us in it. But these shall not separate us either, by altering our love to him, by driving us from him, and carrying us into any way of defection, or denial of his name, and so cut us off from our union with him and interest in his love. And that is the way wherein the weak Christian will most apprehend the hazard of separation. Now the Apostle speaks his own sense and would raise in his brethren the same confidence as to that danger.

No fear; not one of these things shall be able to carry us away; these mighty waves shall not unsettle our faith, nor quench the flame of our love. We shall be victors and more in all, but how? Through him that hath loved us.

This, his love, makes sure of ours. He has such a hold on our hearts that he will not let go, nor suffer us to let go our hold; all is secured by his strength. He will not lose us, nor shall any be able to pluck us out of his hand.

Jesus Christ is the medium of this love, the middle link that keeps all safe together between God and man, so closely united in his personal nature, and the persons of men in and by him, to the Father. So here it is first called the love of Christ, and then in the close, the love of God in Christ. The soul is first carried to him as nearest, but so carried by him into that primitive love of God that flows in Christ, and that gave even Christ to us as before. And this is the bottom truth, the firm ground of the saints' perseverance, which men, not taking aright, must needs question the matter, yea, may put it out of question upon their suppositions; for if our own purposes and strength were all we had to rely on, alas! how soon we would be shaken.

So the love of God in Christ is not only mentioned here as the point of happiness from which we cannot be removed, but as the principle of firmness that makes itself sure of us, and us of it, and will not part with us.

Now it is no pride in a Christian, but the truest humility to triumph and glory in this. This is what makes all sure; this is the great comfort and the victory of the saints.

He that loved us and bought us so dearly will not lightly slip from us. Yea, upon no terms will he let us go, unless some stronger than he is meet with him and by force bereave him of us, which we know is impossible. He and his Father, who are one in themselves and in their strength, and one in this love, are greater and stronger than all; and he that once overcame for us, always overcomes in us.

Thus he lets temptations and tribulations assail us, and this neither disproves his love nor endangers his right to us. Yea, it does but give proof and evidence of the invincible firmness of both. He suffers others to lie soft, and sit warm, and pamper their flesh at leisure, but he has nobler business for his champions, his worthies, and most of all for the stoutest of them. He calls them forth to honourable services, to the hardest encounters he sets them on, one to fight with sickness, another with poverty, another with reproaches, and persecutions, with prisons, and irons, and with death itself. And all this while, loves he the less, or they him? Oh, no, he looks on and rejoices to see them do valiantly. 'Tis the joy of his heart; no sight on earth so sweet to him; and 'tis all the while by his subduing, and in his strength, that they hold out in the conflict and obtain the conquest.

And thus they are the more endeared to him by these services, and these adventures of love for him, and he still likewise is the more endeared to them. Certainly, the more anyone suffers for Christ, the more he loves Christ, as love does grow and engage itself by all it does and suffers, and burns hotter by what it encounters and overcomes, as by fuel added to it. As to Jesus Christ by what he suffered for us, we are the dearer to him, so he is to us by all we suffer for his sake.

Love grows most by opposition from others whosoever, when it is sure of acceptance and the correspondence of mutual love in the party loved. Above all, this heavenly divine love is strong as death, a vehement flame, a flame of God indeed, as the word is, and many waters cannot quench it, not all these that here follow one another, tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword. Yea, in the midst of these, I say, it grows. The soul cleaves closer to Christ, the more attempts are made to remove it from him, though

killed all the day long. (This passage from the Psalms is most fit both to testify that persecution is not unusually the lot of the saints, and to give an instance of their firm adherence to God in all troubles, as the Church there professes. And if the saints in that dispensation could reckon in such a manner, much more ought Christians, upon a clearer discovery of the covenant of grace, and their union with God in Christ.) The saints are as in a common butchery in the world, yet not only as sheep for the slaughter, but sometimes as sheep for the altar, men thinking it a sacrifice. They that kill you (says our Saviour) shall think they do God service; yet even this pulls not from him. They part with life; Ay, why not? This life is but a death, and he is our life for whom we lose it.

All these do but increase the victories and triumphs of love, and make it more glorious. As they tell of her multiplying labours, to that champion they are not only conquerors, but more than conquerors by multiplied victories, and they gain in them all both more honour and more strength. They are the fitter for new adventures, and so more than simple conquerors. We overcome and are sure not to lose former conquests, but to add more, and conquer on to the end, which other conquerors are not sure of. Oftentimes they outlive their own successes and renown, and lose on a sudden what they have been gaining a whole lifetime. Not so here. We are secured in the author of our victories. 'Tis through him that hath loved us, and he cannot grow less; yea, shall still grow greater till all his enemies be made his footstool.

Having given the challenge and finding none to answer, and that all, the most apparent, are in a most rhetorical accumulation silenced—tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword, etc.—he goes on confidently in the triumph and avers his assurance of full and final victory against all imaginable power of all the

creatures. Neither death nor life, nor the fear of the most terrible death, nor the hope or love of the most desirable life. And in the height of this courage and confidence, he supposes impossible enemies, angels, principalities, etc., unless you take it of the angels of darkness only. But if it could be possible that the others should offer at such a thing, they would be too weak for it. No sense of any present things or apprehensions of things to come, not anything within the vast circle of the world above or below, nor any creature can do it. Here sin is not specified because he is speaking of outward oppositions and difficulties expressly, and because that is removed by the former challenge, "Who shall accuse?" That asserting a free and final acquittance of all sin, a pardon of the curse, which yet will never encourage any of these to sin that live in the assurance of this love. Oh no, and these general words do include it too. Nothing present nor to come, etc. So it is carried clear, and is the satisfying comfort of all that Jesus Christ hath drawn after him and united in his love.

'It is enough, whatsoever they may be separated from, the things or persons dearest in this world, 'tis no matter, the jewel is safe, none can take my Christ from me, and I safe in him as his purchase, none can take me from him. And being still in his love and through him in the Father's love, that is sufficient. What can I fear? What can I want? All other hazards signify nothing. How little value are they of? And for how little a while am I in danger of them? Methinks all should look on a believer with an emulous eye and wish his estate more than a king's.

Alas, poor creatures, rich men, great men, princes and kings, what vain things are they that you embrace and cleave to? Whatsoever they be, soon must you part. Can you say of any of them, "Who shall separate us?" Storms may arise and scatter ships that sail fairly

together in fair weather. Thou mayest be removed by public commotions and calamities from thy sweet dwellings and societies and estates, etc. You may even live to see and seek your parting. At last, you must part, for you must die. Then farewell parks and palaces, gardens and honours, and even crowns themselves. Then dearest friends, children, and wife must be parted with. And what hast thou left, poor soul, that hast not Christ, but that which thou wouldst gladly part with and canst not? The condemning guilt of all thy sins?

But the soul that is in Christ, when other things are pulled away, he feels little or nothing. He cleaves to Christ, and these separations pain him not. Yea, when that great separatist, death, comes that breaks all other unions, even that of the soul and body, yet so far is it from separating the believer's soul from its beloved Lord Jesus that, on the contrary, it carries it into the nearest union with him and fullest enjoyment of him forever.

Sermon XVIII

Isaiah LIX :1-2 Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save, neither his ear heavy that it cannot hear.

But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.

Our vain minds are naturally fruitful in nothing more than in mistakes of God. For the most part, we think not on him, and when

we do, we fancy him according to our own affections, which are wholly perverse and crooked.

Men commonly judge it a vain thing to spend much pains and time in worshipping him. And if they are convinced in this, and tied to it by the profession of his name, then they think all religion is a shell of external diligences and observances, and count it strange if this be not accepted. In the former chapter, we find this in the prophet's contest with the people about their fasting and their opinion of it. He cuts up their sacrifices and lets them see what was within. The skin was sound and looked well, but being opened, the entrails were found rotten. And here he enters into another contest against the latent atheism of their hearts. After their manner of seeking God, not finding him and not being delivered, they are ready to think that he either cannot or will not help. They rather rest on that gross mistake than inquire into themselves for the true cause of their continuing calamities. They incline rather to think it's some indisposition in God to help than what it truly is—a want of reformation in themselves that hinders it. It is not likely that they would say this outright in plain terms, nor speak it formally and distinctly within, not even in their thoughts. Yet they might have a confused dark conceit of this. Much of the atheism of man's heart is of this fashion—not formed into resolved propositions but latent, in confused notions of it, scarcely discernible by himself, at least not searched out and discerned in his own breast. There they are, and he sees them not. Not written assertions, but flying fumes filling the soul and hindering it from reading the characters of God that are written upon the conscience.

The impenitency of men, in any condition, and particularly under distress, is from the want of clear apprehensions and deep persuasions of God—of his just anger provoked by their sin, and of

his sweetness and readiness to forgive and embrace a returning sinner. His sovereign power is able to rid them out of the greatest trouble, his ear is quick enough to hear the cries, yes, the least whispering of a humbled heart in the lowest deep of sorrow, and his arm is long enough to reach them and strong enough to draw them forth. "He that comes unto God must believe that he is," says the Apostle. So certainly, he that believes that, must come; it will sweetly constrain him; he cannot but come that is so persuaded. Were men's hearts much impressed with that belief in all their troubles, they would eye men less and God more. Without delay, they would fasten upon the Church's resolution, as in Hosea 6:1, "Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up." This is the very thing that the prophet would here persuade by this present doctrine. Having impleaded them guilty, he sets them a copy of humble confession (verse 12, etc.). Hence the frequent complaints in the Psalms, "Why hidest thou thyself?" (Psalm 22:2). "I cry, but no hearing."

In these two verses, two things appear: a sad condition and the true cause of it.

The condition, I think, I have reason to call sad; it is God hiding his face so that he will not hear. This may be the personal estate of his children or the public estate of his Church. From a soul he hides his face—not so much in the withdrawing of sensible comforts and sweet tastes of joy, which to many are scarce known, and to such as do know them, commonly do not continue very long. But it is a suspension of that lively influence of his divine power for raising the mind to the contemplation of him and communion with him in prayer and meditation. Yet this influence may be, even where those relishes and senses of joy are not. The returns of it appear in beating down the power of sin, or abating and subduing it, making the heart

more pure and heavenly, more to live by faith in Christ, to be often at the throne of grace, and to receive gracious answers, supplies of wants, and assistances against temptations. Now when there is a cessation and obstruction of these and such like workings, the face of God is hid, the soul is at a loss, seeks still and cannot find him whom it loves. In this condition, it cannot take comfort in other things; they are too low. It is a higher and nobler desire than to be satisfied or diverted with the childish things that even men delight in, who know not God. It is a lovesickness which nothing can cure but the presence and love of the party loved. Nothing can so much as allay the pain, give an interval of ease, or recover a fainting fit but some good word or look, or at least some kind message from him. Set thee in a palace with all delights about thee and a crown on thy head, yet if his love has ceased on thy heart, these are all nothing without him. It was after David was advanced to his kingdom (Psalm 30), and in the Psalm of the dedication of his royal house, that he said, "Thou hidest thy face, and I was troubled." All is dark; all the shining marble, gold, and azure lose their lustre when thou art not here dwelling with me.

And thus for the Church, God is the proper light, the beauty, the life of it. Deck it with all this world's splendour, with all the dresses of pompous worship—these are not its genuine beauty, and they provoke him who is its ornament (Jeremiah 2:32) to depart. But give it the native purity and beauty of holy ministers and ordinances well regulated, yet even that is but a dead comeliness, proportion, and feature without life when God is absent.

As for matters of deliverance and working for her, which is here the subject, none can do anything in that—not the wisest, nor the best of men, with all their combined wit and strength, when he retires and does not show himself on behalf of his people and work their works for them.

These have, it may be, some kind of prayer possibly. They offer at extraordinaries and yet obtain nothing, are not heard. The saddest note in all the song of Lamentations 3:43-44, "Thou hast covered with anger, and persecuted us; thou hast slain, thou hast not pitied. Thou hast covered thyself with a cloud, that our prayer should not pass through." Still, while that door stands open, there is hope and remedy for other evils. But that being shut, what can a people or a soul expect but growing troubles, one sorrow upon the back of another? Yea, that is the great trouble—the hiding of his face and refusing to hear. Observe Job 34:29, "When he giveth peace, who then can make trouble?" Now the other, in the same terms, would have been, "When he makes trouble, who can give peace?" But instead, it is, "When he hides his face, who then can behold him?" No peace but in beholding him; and nothing but trouble—that is the grand trouble—when he hides his face. This is expressed in both cases, whether it be personal or national, against a nation or a man only.

This is the thing wherein the strength of other troubles lies, that gives them weight, when they impart and signify thus much, that the face of God is hid from a soul or a people. We ought to inquire if this be not our condition at this time. Hath he not hid his face from us? Are we not left in the dark, so that we know not which way to turn? Either we must sit still and do nothing, for if we stir we do but rush one upon another, as in darkness, contesting each to have the way. Yet when it is given us, we know not well which way to go. And we think to be cleared, but it fails us, as in this chapter, verse 9. We wait for light but behold obscurity, for brightness, but we walk in darkness. We grope for the wall as blind and stumble at noon day as in the night. Our counsels are strangely darkened, and there is no right understanding one of another. By all debates, little or no clearing of things is attained, but our passions are more inflamed,

and parties are further off. The light of sound judgment is gone, and with it the heat of love. Instead of which, that miserable infernal heat—heat without light—mutual hatreds and revilings, both sides (verbally at least) agreeing in the general terms both of their desires and designs, and yet falling out about modes and fashions of them. And to say no more of parties, the enemies of religion on both hands, right and left, in action and in power, and only those that love that, we conceive, is the way of truth, standing as a naked prey to whichever of the two shall prevail. Desires and prayers we have presented, and as yet see no appearance of an issue, but further confusions, even fasting to strife and debate. And where are there any that look like persons to stand in the gap, lifting up holy hands, without wrath or doubting? Hearts are still as unhumbed, and lives as unreformed as ever. New intestine troubles are most likely to arise, few or none laying it to heart, and with calm, lowly spirits mourning before God for it. Ephraim against Manasseh, and Manasseh against Ephraim, and they both against Judah, and for all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.

But generally, men ought to be less in descanting one on another and more in searching and enquiring each into himself. Even where it may seem zeal, yet nature and passion may more easily let in the other. But this self-search and self-censure is an uneasy task, the most unpleasant of all things to our carnal, self-loving hearts. But the heavy hand of God shall never turn from us, nor his gracious face turn towards us, till there is more of this amongst us. Most say their prayers, and as they are little worth, they look little after them. But M.B. would we continue to call and find favourable answers, we must be more within. The heart made a temple to God, wherein sacrifices do ascend. But that they may be accepted, it must be purged of idols, nothing left in any corner, though never so secret, to stir the jealousy of our God, who sees through all. O happy is that heart that is as

Jacob's house purged, in which no more idols are to be found, but the holy God dwelling there alone as in his holy temple.

"Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened," etc. Much of all knowledge lies in the knowledge of causes, and in practical things, much of the right ordering of them depends on it. The true cause of a disease found out is half the cure. Here we have the miseries of an afflicted people reduced to their real cause. That which is not the cause is first removed. "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened," etc.

We are not only to be untaught this error that we think not so, but to be taught to believe and think on that truth, that God is still the same in power and goodness, to keep up the notion of it in our hearts. So we may call in past experiences and relations of God's former workings for his people, and that with much use and comfort. He that brought forth his people out of Egypt with an outstretched arm, as still they are reminded of that deliverance by the prophets, and called to look on it as the great instance and pledge of their restoration by the same hand, can again deliver his people when at the lowest. Isaiah 50:2, where the like words to these.

And in this belief, we shall not faint in the time of deep distress, our own or the Church's, knowing the unalterable, invincible, infinite power of our God, that all the strength of all enemies is nothing, and less than nothing to his. Their devices are knots of straw. What is it that is to be done for his church, if her and his glory be interested in it? There remains no question in point of difficulty that hath no place with him. The more difficult, yea, impossible for us, or any human strength, the more fit work for him. "Because it is hard for you, shall it also be hard for me?" saith the Lord in the prophet. And where Jeremiah uses that argument in prayer, he hath his answer returned

in the same words, as the echo to the prayer, resounding from heaven. Jeremiah 32:17, 27. And that in relation to the great reduction of the Jews from Babylon, as is expressly promised, verse 36-37, etc. And there the prophet gives that first great example of divine power, the forming of the world, verse 17. "Behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power."

Men think it's an easy common belief, and that none doubt the Omnipotence of God. But oh! the undaunted confidence it would give to the heart, being indeed firmly believed, and wisely used and applied to particular exigencies. Men either doubt, or which upon the matter, for the use of it is all one, they forget who the Lord is, when their hearts misgive them, because of the Church's weakness, and the Enemies' power. What is that upon the matter? Remember whose is the Church, God's, and what his power is, and then see if thou canst find any cause of fear, Isaiah 41:14, "Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men few, or weak men of Israel." So the word is, "I will help thee," saith the Lord, "and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel." So Isaiah 51:12, "I, even I am he, that comforteth you, (there is the strength of it) who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man, which shall be made as grass?" And forgettest, verse 13, "the Lord thy Maker that stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth, etc." Do but think aright on him, and then see if it be possible for thee to fear. All thy little doubts and despondencies of mind will fly and vanish away before one clear thought of thy God. Though the world were turning upside down, it shall go well with them that fear him.

And as this apprehension of God strengthens faith, so it quickens prayer, it stirs thee up to seek to him for help, when thou knowest and rememberest that there it is; there is help in him, power enough, and no want of readiness and good will neither, if we apply ourselves

to seek him aright, his hand is as strong to save, and his ear as quick to hear as ever, and in this that his ear is not heavy, is both signified his speedy and certain knowledge of all requests sent up to him, and his gracious inclination to receive them. Now these persuasions do undoubtedly draw up the heart towards him.

Again, as they strengthen faith and quicken prayer, they teach us repentance, direct us inward to self-examination, to the searching, and finding out, and purging out of sin. When deliverance is delayed, for we are sure it stops not upon either of these on God's part, either shortness of his hand, or dullness of his ear. Whence is it then? Certainly it must be somewhat on our side that works against us, and prejudices our desires. So here, thus you see the clear aim of it, "Behold the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save, nor his ear heavy that it cannot hear: What is it then that hinders? Oh! it is this, out of all doubt, Your iniquities separate."

Old sins unrepented of, and new sins still added, as all unrepentant sinners do; now this separates between you and God, for he is a Holy God, a Just God, hates iniquity, and between you and your God, that pleads no connivance at your sins, but rather nearer inspection, and sharper punishment, he will be sanctified in these that are near him, in them especially; their sin is greatened much by that relation, your God, to sin against him so grossly, so continuedly, with so high a hand, and so impenitent hearts, not reclaimed by all his mercies, by the remembrance of his covenant made with you, and mercies bestowed on you, nor by the fear of his judgments threatened, nor by the feeling of them inflicted, no returning nor relenting, not of his own people to their God. Sure, you must be yet more punished. "You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore will I punish you for all your iniquities." I let others escape with many things that I cannot pass in you; you fast and pray it may be, you

howl and keep a noise, but you amend nothing, forsake not one sin, for all your sufferings, and for all your moanings and cries; you would be delivered, but do not part with one of your lusts, or wicked customs, even for a deliverance, and so the quarrel remains still.

"It is that that separates, is as a huge wall betwixt us, betwixt me and your prayers, and betwixt you and my helping hand, and though I do hear and could help, yet I will not till this wall be down; you shall not see me, nor find by any gracious sign that I hear you. This hides his face that he will not hear."

This way God has established in his ordinary methods with his people, though sometimes he uses his own privilege, yet usually he links sin and calamity together, and repentance and deliverance together.

Sin separates and hides his face, not only from a people that professes his name, but even from a soul that really bears his name stamped upon it: Though it cannot fully, and forever cut off such a soul, yet in part, and for a time it may, yea to be sure, it will separate, and hide the face of God from them. Their daily inevitable frailties do not do this, but either a course of careless walking, and many little unlawful liberties taken to themselves, that will rise and gather as a cloud, and hide the face of God. Or someone gross sin, especially if often reiterated, will prove as a firm stone wall, or rather as a brazen wall, built up by their own hands betwixt them and heaven, and will not be so easily dissolved or broke down; and yet till that be, the light of his countenance, who is the life of the soul, will be eclipsed, and withheld from it.

And this considered, (besides that law of love that will forbid such foul ingratitude, yet I say, this considered, even our own interest) will make us wary to sin, though we were sure not to be yet

altogether separated from the love of God by it; yet if thou that hast any persuasion of that love, darest thou venture upon any known sin? Thou art not hazardless and free from all damage by it, if thou hast need of that argument to restrain thee, then before thou run upon it, sit down and reckon the expense, see what it will cost thee if thou do commit it, thou knowest that once it cost the heart blood of thy Redeemer to expiate it, and is it a light matter to thee; and though that paid all that score, nothing thou canst suffer being able to do anything that way, yet as an unavoidable present fruit of it, it will draw on this damage. Thou shalt be sure for a time, it may be for a long time, possibly most of thy time, near all thy days it may darken much that love of God to thee, which if thou dost but esteem of, think on it, it changes not in him, but a sad change will Sin bring on thee, as to thy sight and apprehension of it; many a sweet hour of blessed communion with thy God shalt thou miss, and either be dead and stupid in that want, and mourn after him, and yet find thyself, and sighs, and tears hold out, the door shut, yea, a dead wall raised betwixt thee and him, and at best much straightening and pains to take it down again; contrary to other walls and buildings, that are far more easily pulled down than built up, but this a great deal easier built up than pulled down. True, thy God could cast it down with a word, and 'tis his free grace that must do it otherwise, thou couldst never remove it, yet will he have thee feel thy own handywork, and know thy folly. Thou must be at pains to dig at it, and may be cost thee broken bones in taking it down, pieces of it falling heavy and sad upon thy conscience, and crushing thee, as David cried out at that work, Psalm 51: for a healing word from a God, "Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice;" it will force thee to say, "O fool that I was, what meant I? Oh! it is good keeping near God, and raising no divisions." What are sins? False delights, but make ado, and have ado, a man to provide his own vexation. Now this distance from God, and all this turmoil, and

breaking, and crying ere he appear again, consider if any pleasure of sin can countervail this damage, sure when thou art not out of thy wits, thou wilt never make such a bargain for all the pleasure thou must make out of any sin, to breed thyself all this pains, and all this grief, at once, to displease thy God, and displease thyself, and make a partition between him and thee. Oh! sweet and safe ways of holiness, walking with God in his company and favour; he that orders his conversation aright, he sees the loving-kindness of the Lord, 'tis shewn to him, he lives in the sight of it.

But if any such separation is made, yet is it thy great desire to have it removed; why? There is hope. See to it, labour to break down, and pray to him to help thee, and he will put to his hand, and then it must fall, and in all thy sense of separation, look to him that brake down the middle wall, Ephesians 2: There it is spoken of, as betwixt men, Jews and Gentiles, but so as it was also between the Gentiles, and God separated from his people, and from himself, verse 16, to reconcile both to God in one body. And verse 18, "Through him we have access by one Spirit to the Father." And then he adds, that they were no more strangers and foreigners, dwelling on the other side of the wall, as the word is, but fellow citizens, etc.

Oh! that we knew more what it were to live in this sweet society, in undivided fellowship with God. Alas! how little is understood this living in him, separated from sin, and this world, which otherwise do separate from him; solacing our hearts in his love, and despising the base muddy delights that the world admires, hoping for that new Jerusalem, where none of these walls of sin, nor any one stone of them are, and for that bright day wherein there is no cloud nor mist, to hide our sun from us.

Now for the condition of the Church know this to be the great obstruc-
ter of its peace, making Him to withdraw His hand, and hide His face,
and to turn away His ear from our prayers, and loathe our fasts, Isaiah 1:15,
Jeremiah 14:12. The quarrel stands, sin not repented and removed, the wall
is still standing, oaths, and Sabbath breaking, and pride, and oppression,
and heart burnings still remaining. Oh! what a noise of religion and reformation,
all sides are for the name of it, and how little of the thing? The Gospel itself
is despised, grown stale as trivial doctrine. Oh! my beloved, if I could speak
many hours, without intermission, all my cry would be, repent and pray. Let us
search and try our ways, and turn unto the Lord our God. Oh! what walls of
everyone's sin are set to it! Dig diligently to bring down thine own, and for
these huge walls of public national guiltinesses; if thou canst do nothing to
them more, compass them about as Jericho, and look up to Heaven for their
downfall. Cry, Lord, these we ourselves have reared, but without Thee who
can bring them down? Lord, throw them down for us, a touch of Thy hand,
a word of Thy mouth, will make them fall. Were we less busied in
impertinencies, and more in this most needful work, it might do some good;
who knows but the Lord might make His own way clear, and return and visit
us, and make His face to shine that we might be saved.

FINIS.

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