

MANY WILL SAY . . .

GOSPEL INTERPRETATION –
TRUE and FALSE

Dedicated to my parents Donald & Joan Mackay.

WELCOME to the pages listed below
They have been set up by me, the author, to respond,
as I am able, to questions or comments on the book.
I look forward to helping you with your enquiries and
to having fellowship you. May the Lord bless you now
and eternally through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

Email
manywillsay@gmail.com

Facebook users:
Manywillsaymackay @Manywillsay

Twitter users:
manywillsay @manywillsay

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TRUE and FALSE

John Mackay

*Sow a thought, reap an action
Sow an action, reap a habit
Sow a habit, reap a character
Sow a character, reap a destiny.*

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INTRODUCTION

It has been both my privilege and burden to write this book. I have not done so lightly, but am conscious of not being equal to the task and aims of the writing.

The purpose for doing so has been twofold.

Firstly my aim is to alert people to the possibility that, as in other important matters, we are liable to be mistaken, it is no different for spiritual issues.

In fact with the devil trying his utmost to make us err, it is even more likely to occur spiritually. Secondly, the Lord willing, it would be an honour to be instrumentally used to disturb even one complacent Christian so they may return to following Him.

The writing uses as its centrepiece one particular verse from the book of Matthew, but it also draws from the surrounding context in the chapter and associated evidence in adjacent chapters. It draws on the broad themes contained in the text to illustrate issues relevant to the subject of gospel interpretation.

The book is anthological. Throughout it I have recruited the expertise of theologians from recent church history in order to more fully consider the points at issue. I have quoted them extensively but have edited their comment for the purpose of avoiding dated language and idiom while preserving their meaning as accurately as possible.

I have quoted from the King James version of the bible and placed modern equivalent words in parenthesis for clarity in some places.

2 MANY WILL SAY . . .

As a poor unworthy sinner travelling on the way to eternity may all who read this meet at last around the throne of God and be guests at the great marriage supper of the Lamb.

May this book render all praise, honour and glory to the wonderful name of our precious Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

GOSPEL INTERPRETATION – TRUE and FALSE:

“MANY WILL SAY TO ME IN THAT DAY, LORD, LORD, HAVE WE NOT PROPHESED IN THY NAME? AND IN THY NAME HAVE CAST OUT DEVILS? AND IN THY NAME DONE MANY WONDERFUL WORKS? AND THEN WILL I PROFESS UNTO THEM, I NEVER KNEW YOU: DEPART FROM ME, YE THAT WORK INIQUITY.”
MATTHEW 7 V 22,23

“I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.”
Galatians 1 v 6–8

An eminent theologian notes his reaction to the personal observation of the short but holy life of a missionary with an unambiguous Gospel testimony:

“Any interpretation of the Gospel, in any century, that produces even one David Brainerd is worthy of our investigation”

SECTION ONE



CHAPTER 1

SAVED OR NOT?

How do you know you are saved? Surely it is of the utmost importance that you make absolutely sure that you are. You cannot afford to make a mistake here. The endless ages of eternity are at stake for you.

What does the bible teach? Can you think you are saved and be mistaken?

The text we are considering seems to suggest just that. In it Christ himself is addressing people who considered themselves Christians.

What about elsewhere in the bible? Does it confirm our interpretation or are we taking the text out of its context and twisting scripture?

In addressing three separate churches of professing Christians three different apostles, John, Paul and Peter suggest either expressly or imply that conclusions about being saved are arrived at by examination of ourselves:

“And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.”

1st John 2 v 3,4

“We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not *his* brother abideth in death., But whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels *of compassion* from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.”

1st John 3 v 14,17–19

“But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of *that* bread, and drink of *that* cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body. For this cause many *are* weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.”

1st Corinthians 11 v 28–32

“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates? But I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates.”

2nd Corinthians 13 v 5,6

“And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make *you that ye shall* neither *be* barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

2nd Peter 1 v 5–11

Our Lord himself explained that a person may be entirely deluded about their being saved. In the following illustration those deceived in this way were overjoyed because they were convinced they had truly believed and been saved and were on their way to heaven:

“Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower. When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side. But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; Yet hath he not root in himself, but (en)dureth for a while: for when tribulation or

persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by(gradually) he is offended.”
 Matthew 13 v 18–21

There is a similar sentiment present in the old testament:

“There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof *are* the ways of death.”
 Proverbs 14 v 12

In our text, then, are mentioned people who wrongly thought they were saved. Not only a few, but many, people made this terrible mistake.

“Enter ye in at the strait(narrow) gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.”
 Matthew 7 v 13,14

This doesn’t mean only a few people will be saved but that a relatively small number will find salvation when compared to the very large number of people who lived in the whole of history:

“After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.”
 Revelations 7 v 9,10

The text also informs us what kind of people made this mistake. That is, they were the workers of iniquity. That characterized them. However they thought they were doing good and didn’t recognize their sin and wickedness, or perhaps refused to do so.

They were not hypocrites who know they are creating a false impression to deceive others. These people were deluded and really thought that they were saved. They took the name of Christian to identify themselves and truly thought they were following similar to the church in Sardis:

“And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.”
 Revelations 3 v 15

The Apostle James warns about this problem also:

“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass(mirror): For he beholdeth(sees) himself, and goeth his way, and straightway(immediately) forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth *therein*, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed. If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man’s religion *is* vain.” James 1 v 22–26

The people described in our text did not think they were trusting in their own good works to save them. They believed in Christ as mediator in name but not in reality. It was a false groundless belief. They were deluded, being proud of their self righteous works, describing them to the Judge as ‘wonderful’ and were convinced of their authenticity and goodness. The people pointed to their works as evidence of their faith, but the problem was that they really did not know the difference between good and evil works.

“For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.” Galatians 6 v 3,4

The subsequent verse to our title text continues this theme. The first word is ‘therefore’ telling us that this a further explanation of Christ’s words in our text. He says that both the wise and the foolish were building. They were both ‘doing’ but only the wise did good things. The foolish people did not follow Christ’s sayings but evil things-they were building too. It was not that they were deceiving others to use religion for their own ends but really believed they would gain favour with God and get to heaven.

“Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built

his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.”
 Matthew 7 v 24–31

There is a time, we know not when,
 A point we know not where,
 That marks the destiny of men
 To glory or despair.

There is a line by us unseen,
 That crosses every path;
 The hidden boundary between
 God’s patience and his wrath.

To pass that limit is to die—
 To die as if by stealth;
 It does not quench the beaming eye
 Or pale the glow of health.

The conscience may be still at ease,
 The spirit lithe and gay;
 That which pleases still may please,
 And care be thrust away

But on that forehead God has set,
 Indelibly a mark
 Unseen by men, for men as yet
 Are blind and in the dark

And yet doomed man’s path below
 May bloom as Eden bloomed;
 He did not, does not, will not know,
 Or feel that he is doomed

He knows, he feels that all is well,
 And every fear is calmed;
 He lives, he dies, he wakes in hell,
 Not only doomed, but damned.

Oh, where is this mysterious bourn
By which our path is crossed;
Beyond which God himself hath sworn,
That he who goes is lost.

How far may we go on in sin?
How long will God forbear?
Where does hope end, and where begin
The confines of despair?

An answer from the skies is sent,
“Ye that from God depart,
While it is called today, repent,
And harden not your heart.”

CHAPTER 2

A SHORT AND A LONG SENTENCE

Our title text is a short sentence in the bible containing a long sentence pronounced on those addressed. The 'day' mentioned in the text is the last great day in history where everyone will be judged based on what they did- their actions in the broadest sense-including their thoughts and words too. Noone will be declared innocent or acquitted on that day because of their works, which can never meet the demand of Gods justice to the least extent but rather they do any good works as the result of their being saved.

On that day God will use peoples actions to demonstrate to the whole world the reality of a Christians faith in Christ's saving work compared to others lack of faith. He will use it to show what kind of works were good and were doing his will and so reveal that those who did them were those who truly trusted in Christ's merits alone for salvation and also that those who wrongly thought they were saved did not possess saving faith:

“But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God;

Who will render to every man according to his deeds: To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; But glory, honour, and

peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: For there is no respect of persons with God.”

Romans 2 v 5-11

“For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works”

Matthew 16 v 27

“Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.”

John 5 v 28,29

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad.”

2 Corinthians 5 v 10

“when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God,”

2 Thessalonians 1 v 7,8

“And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.”

Revelations 20 v 11,12

Matthew chapter twenty five also indicates that in our text the last day is what is referred to (verse thirty one.) Note that the words addressed to the unsaved at the judgement seat in verse forty one are exactly the same as used to address the unsaved in our text- “Depart from me”.

It similarly shows in that chapter that the people are judged based on their actions as evidence of their spiritual standing and that some of the unsaved thought they were doing good but they deceived themselves. It gives greater detail of this assertion by them:

“When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth *his* sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed *thee*? or thirsty, and gave *thee* drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took *thee* in? or naked, and clothed *thee*? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done *it* unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done *it* unto me. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did *it* not to one of the least of these, ye did *it* not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.”

Matthew 25 v 31– 46

The day mentioned in our text is the final judgement day for another reason.

In our text Jesus is addressing others. He implies that he is the judge in the final judgement who is pronouncing the sentence of the final, eternal, state of people- “depart from me”- pointing out that they are departing from him forever-God in our human nature, the only way of salvation and hope:

“How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were

oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly; Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, *even* to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God *to be* the Judge of quick(living) and dead.”
Acts 10 v 38–42

“In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.”
Romans 2 v 16

Our title text mentions those who prophesied in his name, or, in new testament parlance- preachers or bible teachers. They were not standing up for their Lord but being half hearted, making sure they were comfortable and neglecting their duties. They were deluded too and thought they had faith but they hadn’t really repented.

The clear message of our title text then, is this, that the gospel isn’t only about faith but repentance also. In the New Testament the gospel call is always to repent and believe. They are never divorced from one another. Its not only about securing a place in heaven but giving up sinning as well. It is not only about being released from sins punishment but no longer committing sin. Those in the text had not repented. They thought they believed but their apparent faith didn’t produce repentance:

“If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.”
2nd Chronicles 7 v 14

“Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.”

Let us listen to a comment from that great Baptist preacher, C.H. Spurgeon:

“He shall save his people from their sins.”
Matthew 1 v 21

“Many persons, if they are asked what they understand by salvation, will reply, “Being saved from hell and taken to heaven.” This

is one result of salvation, but it is not one tithe of what is contained in that boon. It is true our Lord Jesus Christ does redeem all his people from the wrath to come; he saves them from the fearful condemnation which their sins had brought on them; but his triumph is far more complete than this. He saves his people “from their sins.” Oh! sweet deliverance from our worst enemies. Where Christ works a saving work, he casts Satan from his throne, and will not let him be master any longer. No man is a true Christian if sin reigns in his mortal body. Sin will be in us—it will never be utterly expelled till the spirit enters glory; but it will never have *domination*. There will be a striving for domination—a lusting against the new law and the new spirit which God has implanted—but sin will never get the upper hand so as to be absolute monarch of our nature. Christ will be Master of the heart, and sin must be mortified. The Lion of the tribe of Judah shall prevail, and the dragon shall be cast out. Is sin subdued in you? If your *life* is unholy your *heart* is unchanged, and if your heart is unchanged you are an unsaved person. If the Saviour has not sanctified you, renewed you, given you a hatred of sin and a love of holiness, he has done nothing in you of a saving character. The grace which does not make a person better than others is a worthless counterfeit. Christ saves his people, not in their sins, but *from* them. “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” “Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.”

2nd Timothy 2 v 19

If not saved from sin, how shall we hope to be counted among his people? Lord, save me now from all evil, and enable me to honour my Saviour.”

Another great preacher said this:

Firstly,

“And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”

Luke 24 v 47

I do not come to show you what it was to preach the gospel to them. It was, says Luke, to preach to them ‘repentance and remission of sins’ in Christ’s name; or, as Mark has it, to urge them to ‘repent and believe the

gospel' (Mark 1 v 15). Not that repentance is a cause of remission, but a sign of our hearty reception of it. Repentance is therefore put here to intimate, that no pretended faith in the gospel is good that does not come with it; he does this on purpose, because he does not want them deceiving themselves: with what faith can people expect remission of sins in the name of Christ, that is not heartily sorry for them? Or how will a man be able to give to others a satisfactory account of his sincere subjection to the gospel, if he is still impenitent?

So repentance is here joined with faith, in the way of receiving the gospel. Without faith it cannot be received at all; and without repentance it cannot be received genuinely. When Christ says, he would have a repentance and remission of sins preached in his name among all nations, it is as much as to say, I wish that everyone everywhere would be sorry for their sins, and accept mercy at God's hand through me, in case they fall under his wrath in the judgment; as I have said, without repentance, whatever pretence of faith people have, they cannot escape the wrath to come. Wherefore Paul said, God commands 'all men everywhere to repent,' (in order to their salvation): 'because he hath appointed a day, in the which he shall judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained' Acts 17 v 31.

Secondly,

Since Jesus Christ would have mercy offered to the biggest sinners first, let souls see that they get a proper hold of it in case they, fall short of it. Faith only knows how to deal with mercy; so do not put presumption in its place. I have observed, like there are herbs and flowers in our gardens, so there are their counterfeits in the field; they are distinguished from the other by the name of wild weeds. So there is faith and wild faith; and wild faith is presumption. I call it wild faith, because God never placed it in his garden, his church; it is only to be found in the field, the world. I also call it wild faith, because it only grows up and is nourished where other wild notions flourish. So take care of this and all will be well: presumption is a very offensive thing in the eyes of God: "The soul," he says, "that doeth ought(anything) presumptuously (whether he be born in the land, or a stranger), the same reproacheth the Lord; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people;" Numbers 15 v 30.

The thoughts of this made David tremble, and pray that God would hold him back from presumptuous sins, and not allow them to dominate him; Psalm 19 v 13.

Presumption puts itself in the place of faith, when it tampers with the promise for life, while the soul hasn't yet repented. So you have in the text, to prevent this, both repentance and remission of sins to be offered to Jerusalem; not remission without repentance. All that do not repent will be damned, let them presume about grace and the promise all they like. Luke 13 v 1–3.

Presumption then, severs faith and repentance, concluding, that the soul will be saved by grace, though the person was never made sorry for their sins, nor the love of the heart turned away from sinning. This is to be self-willed, as Peter says; and this despises the word of the Lord who puts repentance and faith together; Mark 1 v 15. And “because he hath despised the word of the Lord, and hath broken his commandment, that soul shall utterly be cut off: his iniquity shall be upon him.” Numbers 15 v 31.

Let people look at it, who still continue in their sins: if they hope, as they are, to be saved and get to heaven, they presume on the grace of God. Presumption and not listening to God's word are put together; Deuteronomy 17 v 12.

Again people presume when they are resolved to keep on sinning, and yet expect to be saved by God's grace through Christ. This is as much as to say, God likes sin as well as I do, and does not care how people live, as long as they lean on his Son. The people that build up Zion with blood are of this sort, and build Jerusalem with iniquity; that judge for reward, and teach for hire, and divine for money, and lean upon the Lord; Micah 3 v 10, 11. This is doing things with a high hand against the Lord our God, and attempting to deceive him. They will not be found at the day of God among that great company of Jerusalem sinners that will be saved by grace, but among those that have been the great abusers of the grace of God in the world. Those who say, Let us sin that grace may increase, and let us do evil that good may come, their damnation is just. They are a great way off from that salvation that is presented by Jesus Christ to the Jerusalem sinners.

I have therefore these things to propose to that Jerusalem sinner that would know, if he would be so bold as to venture himself on this grace.

Firstly, Do you see your sins? Secondly, Are you weary of them? Thirdly, Would you be saved with all your heart by Jesus Christ? If it is truly like this with you, however great your sins have been, however bad you feel your heart, however far you are from thinking that God has mercy for these: you are the person, the Jerusalem sinner, that the Word of God has conquered, and who it offers free remission of sins to, by the redemption

that is in Jesus Christ. When the jailor cried out, “Sirs, What must I do to be saved?” The answer was, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” The person who sees his sins in the right way, is brought to his wit’s end by them; and he is willing to part with them, and to be saved by the grace of God.

If this is your case, do not be afraid, do not give way to despair; you do not presume, if you believe to life everlasting in Jesus Christ: yes, Christ is prepared for people like you. Therefore take good courage and believe. The design of Satan is to tell presumptuous people, that presuming God will show them mercy is good; but to persuade the believer, that believing is offensively bold dealing with God. I never heard a presumptuous person in my life say that he was afraid that he presumed; but I have heard many an honest humble soul say, that they have been afraid that their faith was presumption. Why should Satan trouble people whose ways he knows will bring them to him? And who expects that he would be quiet when people take the right course of action to escape his hellish snares? This, therefore, is the reason why the truly humbled are opposed, while presumptuous people go on in ease. Satan hates the truly humble, but he laughs to see the foolishness of those who presume.

Does your hand and heart shake? The promise smiles on you. “To this man will I look,” says God, “even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at my word;” Isaiah 66 v 2.

What I have said about presumption does not relate to the humble in spirit at all. I am for gathering up the stones and taking the obstacles out of the way of God’s people: and warning people that put the obstacle of their iniquity in front of themselves, and also warning those that are presuming on God’s mercy; to look at themselves; Ezekiel 14 v 6–8.

Our text stands firm as ever it did, and our observation still has force, that Jesus Christ would have mercy offered in the first place to the biggest sinners. So let noone despair, let noone presume; let noone despair that are sorry for their sins, and wants to be saved by Jesus Christ; let noone presume that keep on liking their sins, though they seem to know the very great grace of Christ; for though the door stands wide open for the reception of the penitent, yet it is fast enough barred and bolted against the presumptuous sinner. Don’t be deceived, God is not mocked, whatever a man sows, he will reap. God cannot be flattered out of his mercy, or persuaded by deceiving lips; he knows those who trust in him, and that sincerely come to him by Christ for mercy; Nahum 1 v 7.

It is not then the great measure of the sins committed, but the not coming heartily to God by Christ for mercy, that shuts men out of doors. Their not coming heartily is a sin and it is such a sin as causes that all other sins stay unforgiven.

God complains about this. "They have not cried unto me with their heart; they turned, but not to the most High. They turned feignedly;" Jeremiah 3 v 10; Hosea 7 v 14, 16. His soul hates this; but the penitent, humble, broken hearted sinner, even if his transgressions are red as scarlet, red like crimson, like the sand in number; though his transgressions cry to heaven against him for vengeance, and seem to cry there louder than do his prayers, or tears, or groans for mercy, yet he will be saved. To this person God will look; Isaiah 1 v 18; 66 v 2

A Jerusalem Sinner saved by John Bunyan: the application

'By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament. And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. *Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.*' Hebrews 7 v 22–25

Before the throne of God above
I have a strong and perfect plea.
A great high Priest whose Name is Love
Who ever lives and pleads for me.
My name is graven on His hands,
My name is written on His heart.
I know that while in Heaven He stands
No tongue can bid me thence depart.

When Satan tempts me to despair
And tells me of the guilt within,
Upward I look and see Him there
Who made an end of all my sin.
Because the sinless Saviour died
My sinful soul is counted free.

For God the just is satisfied
To look on Him and pardon me.

Behold Him there the risen Lamb,
My perfect spotless righteousness,
The great unchangeable I AM,
The King of glory and of grace,
One in Himself I cannot die.
My soul is purchased by His blood,
My life is hid with Christ on high,
With Christ my Saviour and my God!

CHAPTER 3

CHANGED MIND, UNCHANGED HEART

“I never knew you”

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

This may seem to be an unexpected thing for God to tell the unsaved. After all he is all knowing. He is omniscient:

“O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known *me*. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted *with* all my ways. For *there is* not a word in my tongue, *but*, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. *Such* knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot *attain* unto it.”

Psalm 139 v 1–6

“For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.”
1st John 3 v 20

“Great *is* our Lord, and of great power: his understanding *is* infinite.”
Psalm 147 v 5

“Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.”
Acts 15 v 18

“Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things *are* naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.”
Hebrews 4 v 13

God was indicating something different to his intellectual knowledge of these people. They were unsaved not because of what they knew in their minds, but what they did not know in their hearts. They were hard hearted. A hard heart is one that is incapable of being moved to pity or tenderness, unfeeling. One writer describes it as a heart not easily moved to virtuous feelings and desires, like a stone, insensible, unmoved and hard to be impressed. The heart is cold, a stony heart as opposed to a heart of flesh, that has feeling and is sensibly, touched and moved. The contrast is between the tender heart and heartlessness. It is a heart of tender regard in relation to offending God and towards other people and their eternal and temporal, or practical, concerns. God looks for wholehearted devotion alone. The people who find God when searching for Him, are the people who wanted to know him above everything else. If a person keeps some reserve to give to sin their meanderings will be fruitless. They will stay unfulfilled and God won't reveal himself to them.

“and the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh” Exodus 14 v 8

“Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments throughout their generations, and that they put upon the fringe of the borders a ribband of blue: And it shall be unto you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the LORD, and do them; and that ye seek not after your own heart and your own eyes, after which ye use to go a whoring:” Numbers 15 v 38,39

“she is hardened against her young ones, as though they were not hers: her labour is in vain without fear;” Job 39 v 16

“Blessed *are* the pure in heart: for they shall see God.”
Matthew 5 v 8

“He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.”
Matthew 19 v 8

“And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.”
Mark 7 v 21–23

“If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man’s religion is vain.”
James 1 v 26

“To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.”
Jude v 15

The biblical contrast is with a heart of tenderness and of devotion, a heart soft or broken over doing wrong:

“because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the Lord, when thou heardest what I spake against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and has rent(torn) thy clothes, and wept before me; I also have heard thee, saith the Lord.” 2 Kings 22 v 19

“O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise. For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give *it*: thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.”
Psalm 51 v 15–17

“A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.”
Proverbs 15 v 1

“And a certain woman named Lydia...whose heart the Lord opened”
Acts 16 v 14

In our text those referred to were not without some kind of special revelation. They did not lack this privilege compared to many others:

“For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.” Acts 17 v 23

They had a knowledge of Gods existence, arising from the design and grandeur of the creation around them, including his provision for the earth and its creatures. The enquiry in their minds – what is the meaning of life, proved there is a meaning and purpose to it – because if there was not, then this way of conceiving would be unknown. Even the kind and order of events in their lives witnessed to people about Gods existence and sovereign rule. They had their consciences informing them about right and wrong. They had a knowledge of gospel truth. They understood them with their minds but they did not know the reality of this truth in their spirit and by experience. The spiritual light they received was considerable but they remained blind to it.

There are some things that cannot be known only by thinking about them purely-experience of them is necessary to know what they really are-just as science needs experiment to prove its claims. For example, a person can know about the idea of physical pain in their mind but it is a very different thing experiencing it physically and emotionally. Similarly, these people had no intimate knowledge, no loving, close, heart relationship with Christ. They didn’t have care, respect and reverence towards him. They only knew about him as an idea and did not know Him personally, as a real, living person, meeting and experiencing a profound sense of God in their beings. They knew only spiritual emptiness and did not have true faith. Jesus himself describes it like this and the following verses corroborate also:

“And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” John 17 v 3

“When he slew them, then they sought him: and they returned and enquired early after God. And they remembered that God *was* their rock, and the high God their redeemer. Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues. For their heart was not right with him, neither were they steadfast in his covenant.” Psalm 78 v 34–37

“He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied

of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.” Mark 7 v 6

“But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.” Luke 8 v 15

“Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken.” Luke 24 v 25

“He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.” John 12 v 40

“And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” Acts 8 v 36,37

“Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.” Acts 11 v 23

“For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed *it* unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified *him* not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies

between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;” Romans 1 v 17–25,28

“For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” Romans 10 v 10

Many people then, make the mistake of thinking they are saved when their minds are changed, but they do not have a truly changed heart. Some are shown by God that they are guilty sinners. They see there is a standard of right and wrong in our experience, termed a Law, and that there will also be a Judge of, and punishment for, breaking that Law. However, people must also be shown the perfect answer of Christ’s work for their need, in order to chose him as Saviour, and not falter at seeing their guilt before God, suppressing being convinced of their sin, maintaining their rebellion against Him. e.g.

“And Pharaoh sent, and called for Moses and Aaron, and said unto them, I have sinned this time: the LORD *is* righteous, and I and my people *are* wicked.” Exodus 9 v 27

“And Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD, and thy words: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice.” 1st Samuel 15 v 24

“Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What *is that* to us? see thou *to that*.” Matthew 27 v 3

“Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have

crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men *and* brethren, what shall we do?"

Acts 2 v 22–24,36,37

"And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: *it is* hard for thee to kick against the pricks.(guilty conscience)"

Acts 9 v 5

"Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers *did*, so *do* ye." Acts 7 v 51

"And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee."

Acts 24 v 24,25

Some may rest satisfied in very deficient attempts to obey Gods law after being convinced of guilt and they become very proud of their efforts. They attempt to sate their conscience by trying to do good as they view it through corrupt spiritual vision. These people are ashamed over sin but do not sorrow over the evil of sin as an offence against an infinitely holy, good God. The latter is part of true repentance which the saved possess:

"And said, O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over *our* head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens. Since the days of our fathers *have we been* in a great trespass unto this day; and for our iniquities have we, our kings, *and* our priests, been delivered into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, and to a spoil, and to confusion of face, as *it is* this day. And now for a little space grace hath been *shewed* from the LORD our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a nail in his holy place, that our God may lighten our eyes, and give us a little reviving in our bondage. For we *were* bondmen; yet our God hath not forsaken us in our bondage, but hath extended mercy unto us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to give us a reviving, to set up the house of our God, and to repair the desolations thereof, and to give us a

wall in Judah and in Jerusalem. And now, O our God, what shall we say after this? for we have forsaken thy commandments, Which thou hast commanded by thy servants the prophets, saying, The land, unto which ye go to possess it, is an unclean land with the filthiness of the people of the lands, with their abominations, which have filled it from one end to another with their uncleanness. Now therefore give not your daughters unto their sons, neither take their daughters unto your sons, nor seek their peace or their wealth for ever: that ye may be strong, and eat the good of the land, and leave *it* for an inheritance to your children for ever. And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, seeing that thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities *deserve*, and hast given us *such* deliverance as this” Ezra 9 v 6–13

If a person seems to repent in only some aspects of their life this is hypocrisy and not turning with the whole heart to God. The hypocrite is lazy and halfhearted. Halfheartedness is not enough to be saved:

“If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Ye shall walk after the LORD your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him. And that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death; because he hath spoken to turn you away from the LORD your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage, to thrust thee out of the way which the LORD thy God commanded thee to walk in. So shalt thou put the evil away from the midst of thee.” Deuteronomy 13 v 1–5

“And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah hath not turned unto me with her whole heart, but feignedly, saith the LORD.” Jeremiah 3 v 10

“Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the law.”
Malachi 2 v 9

“Servants, obey in all things *your* masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: And whatsoever ye do, do *it* heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;”
Colossians 3 v 22,3

In contrast, the saved display wholeheartedness, devote all to God and are comprehensively changed. The saved meditate and contemplate the truth about God (theology) and have experience of him in a heart relationship-or experiential religion. Gospel truth sinks deep down into their hearts and becomes love and worship, humble adoration and praise, a sense of reverence towards his holy character and deep unworthiness over their sinfulness.

“Blessed *are* they that keep his testimonies, *and that* seek him with the whole heart. They also do no iniquity: they walk in his ways.”
Psalm 119 v 2

By way of example, in the case of the old testament kings such as Jehu, God prospered him yet he was not saved. Jehu thought he was a good person but did not give himself to God without reserve or wholeheartedly. He became proud of his deeds:

“And he said, Come with me, and see my zeal for the LORD. So they made him ride in his chariot.”
2nd Kings 10 v 16

“Thus Jehu destroyed Baal out of Israel. Howbeit *from* the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, Jehu departed not from after them, *to wit*, the golden calves that *were* in Bethel, and that *were* in Dan. And the LORD said unto Jehu, Because thou hast done well in executing *that which is* right in mine eyes, *and* hast done unto the house of Ahab according to all that *was* in mine heart, thy children of the fourth *generation* shall sit on the throne of Israel. But Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the LORD God of Israel with all his heart: for he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, which made Israel to sin.”
2nd Kings 10 v 28

King Jeroboam was a wicked leader in Gods sight:

“Go, tell Jeroboam, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Forasmuch as I exalted thee from among the people, and made thee prince over my people Israel, And rent the kingdom away from the house of David, and gave it thee: and *yet* thou hast not been as my servant David, who kept my commandments, and who followed me with all his heart, to do *that only which was* right in mine eyes; But hast done evil above all that were before thee: for thou hast gone and made thee other gods, and molten images, to provoke me to anger, and hast cast me behind thy back:” 1st Kings 14 v 7–9

Similarly Jehoram continued to sin like Jeroboam but not to the same extent as his father:

“Now Jehoram the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in Samaria the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned twelve years. And he wrought evil in the sight of the LORD; but not like his father, and like his mother: for he put away the image of Baal that his father had made. Nevertheless he cleaved unto the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which made Israel to sin; he departed not therefrom.” 2nd Kings 3 v 1–3

“And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD above all that *were* before him. And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him.” 1st Kings 16 v 30,31

“And Ahab said to Elijah, Hast thou found me, O mine enemy? And he answered, I have found thee: because thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the LORD.” 1st Kings 20 v 21

Contrast this with the wholeheartedness in other rulers in the land of Israel:

“And he sought Ahaziah: and they caught him, (for he was hid in Samaria,) and brought him to Jehu: and when they had slain him,

they buried him: Because, said they, he is the son of Jehoshaphat, who sought the LORD with all his heart.”

2nd Chronicles 22 v 9

“And the king(Josiah) stood in his place, and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD, and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes, with all his heart, and with all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant which are written in this book.”

2nd Chronicles 34 v 31

Knowledge of Gods law is not saving, even if it is known not only as a fact but also experienced in certain respects at least. The Holy Spirit produces conviction of sin convincing some individuals of personal guilt and culpability but goes no further with them. Others are greatly attracted to the gospel answer and almost submit to it. They are softened in their heart but the rebellion isn't completely removed e.g. King Agrippa in the book of Acts. They may receive an impression of what forgiveness is, and not only of guilt and punishment. This is clear spiritual, gospel light shown to and rejected by a person. It may be what is represented in Hebrews chapter 6 v 4–6:

“For *it is* impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put *him* to an open shame.”

But, some people do see their total sinfulness and utter inability to please God in order to be saved. Some arrive here and despair, while others God is pleased to save. In this saving or heart change people are persuaded to embrace the gospel fully. They see that faith in Christ's sacrifice alone and his righteousness, answer their case and is alone acceptable to God to obtain his favour. They come to totally distrust their own merit and works as righteousness to satisfy Gods perfect justice. All rebellion is abandoned and they wholly yield themselves to Christ's claims and authority and renounce all their own efforts to please God.

This total submission to and devotion of heart and spirit to the Lord was shown by Caleb:

“But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it.” Numbers 14 v 24

“And the LORD’S anger was kindled the same time, and he sware, saying, Surely none of the men that came up out of Egypt, from twenty years old and upward, shall see the land which I sware unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob; because they have not wholly followed me: Save Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite, and Joshua the son of Nun: for they have wholly followed the LORD.” Numbers 32

King Josiah also was declared to be singular in his devotion:

“And like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to the LORD with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there *any* like him.” 2nd Kings 23 v 25

It is our heart then, that determines how people behave, not their mind. If a person doesn’t want to do or like doing something they generally don’t do it, except if forced to against their will. People can know a particular action is wrong yet will still do it, even knowing that God will judge them for their doing it:

“And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.”

Romans 1 v 28–32

CHAPTER 4

THE HEART

What do we mean by the ‘heart’? It is the will and affections. Affections are our feelings and desires. A persons will is the decision making or choosing part of them. People always chose what they want and like. Even if there are only two unpleasant options available the less unpleasant option is chosen, which shows they are aiming at what they want and desire. In other words a person always choses the object of their affections. For example, in common parlance people may say they do not have the willpower to give a habit up. If they really wanted to however, if their will was really inclined to give the habit up they would chose to give it up and actually do so. Our hearts then are the very essence of our spiritual beings:

“Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.”
Psalm 37 v 4

The desire of the heart in this text, refers not to material things, but to God himself, as the one who is desired supremely.

A change of our heart is needed to be truly saved. Those whose heart is changed have truly repented and their attitude towards sin is transformed:

“Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.”
Psalm 51 v 10

Even for a saved person the devil undermines them and they can at times be deceived as to whether they are sinning not unlike the heart of the unsaved:

“The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked: who can know it?”
Jeremiah 17 v 9

“For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do *them*. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God. I will also save you from all your uncleannesses: and I will call for the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you. And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that ye shall receive no more reproach of famine among the heathen. Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that *were* not good, and shall lothe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations.” Ezekiel 36 v 25

God is sovereign. He alone changes the heart:

“Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou *art* the LORD God, and *that* thou hast turned their heart back again.” 1st Kings 18 v 37

The encouragement is though, that everyone can be saved except those who reject the gospel. God may save a person even after they reject the gospel for a long time if they change and accept it instead. The gospel can and must be offered to everyone so they can accept or reject it. An unsaved sinner cannot chose to do any good on their own. They cannot chose to obey God in one thing including repenting or believing. Not to repent and believe in Christ is a sin.

“And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:” Acts 17 v 30

If an unsaved person could do one good thing they could have some merit before God. This would mean that they could contribute to obtaining Gods favour and so cooperate with Christ in his saving work. Also, it would be unfair of God to punish them forever if the unsaved had done some good themselves. The Holy Spirit convinces the saved the gospel testimony is

true and makes them willing to embrace Christ. The unsaved person does not want Christ ordinarily and is not interested in becoming a Christian until they are shown Christ by the Holy Spirit and persuaded that He is beautiful, attractive and indeed the only choice to make, capable of saving from sin and death:

“Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.”
John 5 v 39,40

Jesus, the Saviour of men and Son of God, says:

“He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.” John 1 v 10–14

“All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” John 6 v 37

It is God alone then, that makes them willing to chose Christ. If a person is willing to truly come to Christ then they can be absolutely sure Christ will receive them. Christ himself said:

“And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.” Luke 11 v 9,10

“At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and *he* to whomsoever the Son will reveal *him*.

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke *is* easy, and my burden is light.” Matthew 11 v 25–30

“Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?

For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.

He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.” Isaiah 53 v 1–3

“Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers *did*, so *do* ye...

When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with *their* teeth.” Acts 7 v 51,54

“For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness.”

1st Corinthians 1 v 21–23

“But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed *them* unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.

Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not

the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.”

1st Corinthians 2 v 9–14

CH Spurgeon: Morning and Evening—November 8th.

“The Master saith, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples?”

Mark 14:14

Jerusalem at the time of the passover was one great inn; each householder had invited his own friends, but no one had invited the Saviour, and he had no dwelling of his own. It was by his own supernatural power that he found himself an upper room in which to keep the feast. It is so even to this day—Jesus is not received among the sons of men save only where by his supernatural power and grace he makes the heart anew. All doors are open enough to the prince of darkness, but Jesus must clear a way for himself or lodge in the streets. It was through the mysterious power exerted by our Lord that the householder raised no question, but at once cheerfully and joyfully opened his guestchamber. Who he was, and what he was, we do not know, but he readily accepted the honour which the Redeemer proposed to confer upon him. In like manner it is still discovered who are the Lord’s chosen, and who are not; for when the gospel comes to some, they fight against it, and will not have it, but where men receive it, welcoming it, this is a sure indication that there is a secret work going on in the soul, and that God has chosen them unto eternal life. Are you willing, dear reader, to receive Christ? then there is no difficulty in the way; Christ will be your guest; his own power is working with you, making you willing. What an honour to entertain the Son of God! The heaven of heavens cannot contain him, and yet he condescends to find a house within our hearts! We are not worthy that he should come under our roof, but what an unutterable privilege when he condescends to enter! for then he makes a feast, and causes us to feast with him upon royal dainties, we sit at a banquet where the viands are immortal, and give immortality to those who feed thereon. Blessed among the sons of Adam is he who entertains the angels’ Lord.

In the following verse from the New Testament, there were those seeking not able to find:

“Strive to enter in at the strait(narrow) gate for many I say shall seek to enter in and shall not be able” Luke 13 v 24

Notice those in the verse sought, but did not greatly exert themselves, strain, struggle or agonize to find God. They did not give their whole heart to diligently searching for God but were only halfhearted, complacent and insincere in their search for him.

This was also the problem with the way Esau came to obtain Gods richest blessing:

“Lest there *be* any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.” Hebrews 12 v 16,17

Those people are described as seeking but not striving with all their might. The seeking of true faith is noted to be painstaking and not disinterested whilst not necessarily producing immediate results. Notice the term *diligently* in the following quote:

“But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” Hebrews 11 v 6

“And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. When his disciples heard *it*, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved? But Jesus beheld *them*, and said unto them, With men this is impossible;” Matthew 18 v 26

Do these difficulties leave people in despair when trying to search for and find God? The second half of the same text gives hope–

“but with God all things are possible.”

God makes the following promises to those trying to find Him:

“And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever.”

1st Chronicles 28 v 9

“And there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee: for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities.”

Isaiah 64 v 7

“that they should seek the Lord if haply(perhaps) they might feel after him and find him, though he be not far from any one of us.”

Acts 17 v 27

The language in both the old and new testaments is the same on this point. The verse in Acts seventeen clearly tells us finding God is not always easy but can be a struggle. God puts no obstacles in front of us but only removes barriers in us to receiving salvation through Christ. We are so corrupt that we often obstruct our own way. People have to shut out all reservations and sell all to gain heaven:

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.”

Matthew 13 v 45,6

The trial of a persons sincerity as they seek God is illustrated by Christ’s encounter with the Syrophenician woman:

“Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, *thou* Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshipped him, saying,

Lord, help me. But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast *it* to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great *is* thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour." Matthew 15 v 21–28

In the old testament account, when it came to the test to see if her idols would be abandoned, Orpah failed, but Ruth was determined to follow the true God:

“And Naomi said, Turn again, my daughters: why will ye go with me? *are* there yet *any more* sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands?

Turn again, my daughters, go *your way*; for I am too old to have an husband. If I should say, I have hope, *if* I should have an husband also to night, and should also bear sons; Would ye tarry for them till they were grown? would ye stay for them from having husbands? nay, my daughters; for it grieveth me much for your sakes that the hand of the LORD is gone out against me. And they lifted up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother in law; but Ruth clave unto her. And she said, Behold, thy sister in law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister in law. And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, *or* to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people *shall be* my people, and thy God my God.” Ruth 1 v 11–16

The account of the Rich young Ruler is about giving up all idols, the first commandment, rather than a general command to everyone to give up all their possessions. It is submitting the whole heart and true repentance:

“And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? *there is* none good but one, *that is*, God. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy

father and mother. And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth. Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions.”
Mark 10 v 17–22

Many people who become saved search for God over a period of time rather than being saved the first time they come into contact with the gospel. When they realize God is creator and judge and that they are guilty sinners in his presence they search genuinely to be saved. Even Paul, who is sometimes said to be an example of a sudden conversion was resisting the convictions of sin by the Holy Spirit for some time prior to being saved as described in the account of his conversion. He did not immediately yield to Christ's demands but was convicted while observing the Christians he persecuted and their holy responses eg. Stephen. At the end of this period Christ met him on the Damascus road and he repented and believed at that instant:

“And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: *it is* hard for thee to kick against the pricks (his guilty conscience).”
Acts 9 v 5

If a person is still living a sinful wicked life they should search for God. He is sovereign in how long or short they may spend searching and if and when he gives salvation. He has promised He will be found when he is searched for with the whole heart:

“And ye shall seek me, and find *me*, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.”
Jeremiah 29 v 13

Faith is given to a person as a gift from God and it is through ‘grace’ or sinners receiving Gods ‘unmerited favour’ and so He chooses to save them:

“But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him. And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.”
John 6 v 64,65

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them”
Ephesians 2 v 8–10

As we believe in Christ we are given the ability to repent and change our behaviour by the power of the Holy Spirit. (This exercise of power is also termed ‘grace’ or ‘graces’ in its different aspects.) Unsaved people cannot do any good. They can only love themselves, unless God changes them by his sovereign power to exercise the grace of faith in Christ as Saviour from the guilt and power of sin:

“And I will give them an heart to know me, that I *am* the LORD: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart.”
Jeremiah 24 v 7

“When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.”
Acts 11 v 18

Searching for God to try and find him is not the same as doing good actions to gain his favour. A person can never become saved by doing good deeds. Those who reach heaven are only justified because of Christ’s merit in Gods sight:

“These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, *being* the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.”
Revelations 14 v 4,5

The following poems sum it up:

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee;
Let the water and the blood,
From Thy wounded side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure;
Save from wrath and make me pure.

Not the labour of my hands
 Can fulfill Thy law's demands;
 Could my zeal no respite know,
 Could my tears forever flow,
 All for sin could not atone;
 Thou must save, and Thou alone.

Nothing in my hand I bring,
 Simply to the cross I cling;
 Naked, come to Thee for dress;
 Helpless look to Thee for grace;
 Foul, I to the fountain fly;
 Wash me, Saviour, or I die.

While I draw this fleeting breath,
 When mine eyes shall close in death,
 When I soar to worlds unknown,
 See Thee on Thy judgment throne,
 Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
 Let me hide myself in Thee.

And,

Nothing, either great or small—
 Nothing, sinner, no;
 Jesus died and paid it all,
 Long, long ago.

“It is finished!” yes, indeed,
 Finished, ev’ry jot;
 Sinner, this is all you need,
 Tell me, is it not?

When He, from His lofty throne,
 Stooped to do and die,
 Ev’rything was fully done;
 Harken to His cry!

Weary, working, burdened one,
 Wherefore toil you so?

Cease your doing; all was done
Long, long ago.

Till to Jesus' work you cling
By a simple faith,
Doing is a deadly thing
Doing ends in death.

Cast your deadly "doing" down—
Down at Jesus' feet;
Stand in Him, in Him alone,
Gloriously complete.

AND

There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Immanuel's veins:
And sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.

The dying thief rejoiced to see that fountain in his day; And there
may I as vile as he wash all my sins away.

Dear dying lamb! thy precious blood shall never lose its power, Till
all the ransomed church of God be saved to sin no more.

Ever since by faith I saw the stream thy flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme and shall be till I die.

Then in a nobler, sweeter song. I'll sing thy power to save, When
this poor lispings, stammering tongue lies silent in the grave

Lord, I believe thou hast prepared, unworthy though I be, For me a
blood brought free reward, a golden harp for me!

Tis strung and tuned for endless years, and formed by power
divine, To sound in God the fathers ears no other name but thine.

How do we know then, if our hearts are really changed? Let us hear
what Mr Owen thinks.

CHAPTER 5

WHAT IS A SAVING, CHANGED HEART (1)

Comment by JOHN OWEN

“We observe concerning being born again that ordinarily there are certain *prior* and preparatory operations in and on peoples souls, that precede and *dispose* to it. This process is different from being born again and it cannot be derived from it. This is the position of the divines of the church of England at the synod of Dort. I speak in this position only of adults, not converted until they have used the means of grace in and by their own reasons and understandings; the disposition I intend is only *materially* so. It does not contain grace of the same nature as being born again itself.

A *material disposition*, disposes or in some way makes a subject suitable for receiving something that will be communicated, added, or infused into it as its form. For example dryness makes wood ready for being set on fire.

A *formal disposition however*, is where one degree of the same kind disposes the subject to greater degrees of it; that is not what we mean.

In natural generation there are various dispositions of the matter before the form is introduced. So the body of Adam was formed before the rational soul was breathed into it; and Ezekiel’s bones came together with a noise and shaking before the breath of life entered into them. I will here give only a summary account of this *preparatory work*:

There are some things required of us as a duty in order for us to be born again which are in the *power of our own natural abilities*. Nothing but

corrupt prejudices and stubbornness in sinning prevents or impedes people from doing them. These are divided into two kinds: —

Firstly, *external attendance* to the supply of the word of God, with the other external means of grace. “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God,” Romans 10 v 17: it is hearing the word of God which is the ordinary means of producing faith in the souls of men. This is required from all who the gospel comes to: they are able to do this themselves, as well as any other natural or civil action. Where people do not do it, where they despise the word at a distance and where they do not do it with diligence and choice, it is merely from supine negligence of spiritual things, worldly security, and contempt of God; which they must answer for.

Secondly, a diligent *intention*, in attending to the means of grace, to understand and receive the things revealed and declared as the mind and will of God. God has given people their reasons and understandings for this purpose, to use and exercise them about their duty towards him, based on the revelation of his mind and will. This is why he calls on them to remember that they are only human beings, and to turn to him.

To do these things is in the liberty and power of the rational faculties of our souls, assisted with common aids God gives to all people in general. People who diligently apply their rational abilities in and about spiritual things, as externally revealed in the word and the preaching of it, usually attain great advantages by it, and excel their equals in other things; like Paul did when he was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel. If people were as intent and diligent in their endeavours after knowledge in spiritual things, as revealed in a way suited to our capacities and understandings, as they are to get skill in occupations, sciences, and other mysteries of life, it would be very different for them. The neglect of this is also the fruit of sensuality, spiritual laziness, love of sin, and contempt of God; all which are the voluntary actions of peoples minds.

These things are required from us so we become born again and our wills can freely choose to comply with them. However —

The omission of them, people’s neglect of them, is the *principal occasion*, and cause of the eternal ruin of most of the souls the gospel is preached to:

“This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil,”
 John 3 v 19.

Most people know full well they do no more in this matter what they are *able* than what they *should*. All pleadable excuses of inability and weakness are useless. They can only know here, and will be forced to confess afterwards, that it was merely from their own cursed laziness, with love of the world and sin, that they were diverted from diligently attending the means of conversion and painstaking exercise of their minds about them. Complaints about this against themselves will make up a great part of their last dreadful cry.

In the most diligent use of outward means, men are *not able of themselves* to attain to being born again, or complete conversion to God, without a special, effective, internal work of the Holy Spirit of grace on their whole souls.

Ordinarily, God, in effectively distributing his grace, meets with those who diligently attend to the external administration of the means of it in comparison to those who despise and neglect them. Sometimes, he goes out of the way to meet with and bring home to himself a persecuting Saul, taking him in, and taking him from a course of open sin and rebellion; but ordinarily he distributes his saving grace among people who attend to the common means of it: he glorifies his word by this, and gives out pledges of his approval of our obedience to his commands and institutions.

Secondly, There are certain *internal spiritual effects* (which the word preached is the immediate instrumental cause of) produced in peoples the souls that ordinarily precede the work of being born again, or real conversion to God:

1. Illumination;
2. Conviction;
3. Reformation.

The first of these is relevant to only the mind; the second, the mind, conscience, and feelings and desires; and the third, the life and conduct: —

The first is *illumination*. At present, I will only consider it ordinarily *prior* to being born again, and materially disposing the mind towards

it. All the spiritual light we attain to by any means, or knowledge that we have in or about spiritual things, things of supernatural revelation, come under this term illumination. There are three degrees of it: —

Firstly there is what merely comes from an industrious application of the *rational faculties* of our souls to know, perceive, and understand the doctrines of truth as revealed to us. Much knowledge of divine truth may be obtained by this that others, through their negligence, laziness and pride, are unacquainted with. This knowledge is illumination, — that is, a light superadded to the innate conceptions of men’s minds beyond what they can extend to themselves. It is concerning things the heart of man could never conceive on its own — this very knowledge is communicated by their revelation,

1 Corinthians 2 v 9, 11.

The reason why very few exercise themselves to attaining this knowledge, corresponding to their abilities, is because of the hostility which is naturally present in the worldly minds of everyone to the things that are revealed. Within this description I comprise all knowledge of spiritual things that is merely natural.

Secondly, there is an illumination which is a special effect of the Holy Spirit by the word on the minds of men. Related to this, some who fall totally from God and perish eternally are said to have been “once enlightened,” Hebrews 6 v 4. This light variously affects the mind, and makes a great addition to what is *purely natural*, or attainable by the mere exercise of our natural abilities. It adds *perspicuity* to it, making the things discriminated more clear and perspicuous to the mind. So men provided with it are said to “know the way of righteousness,” 2 Peter 2 v 21, — clearly and distinctly to comprehend the doctrine of the gospel as the way of righteousness. They know it not only or merely as true, but as a way of righteousness, — the way of God’s righteousness, which is “revealed from faith to faith,” in the gospel Romans 1 v 17, and the way of righteousness for sinners in the sight of God, Romans 10 v 3, 4. It adds a greater *assent* to the truth of the things revealed than mere natural reason can rise to. So those illuminated in this way are frequently said to “believe,” their faith being only the assent of their

minds to the truth revealed to them. So it is said about Simon the magician, Acts 8 v 13, and about various Jews,

John 2 v 23, 12 v 42.

It adds to them some kind of *transient joy*. They “receive the word with joy,” and yet have “no root in themselves,” Luke 8 v 13. They “rejoice in the light” of it, at least “for a season,” John 5 v 35. People illuminated in this way will be variously affected with the word, unlike people whose natural faculties are not spiritually excited.

It often adds *gifts* also, that this spiritual light is, the common matter of. When in exercise these gifts are formed and fashioned in great variety.

This kind of spiritual light, the effect of this illumination, is the subject-matter, and contains in it the substance, of all spiritual gifts. It is one sort of gift when it is when exercised in one way, or one kind of duty, and another kind in another. Where it is promoted to produce gifts, which it is principally by exercise, it wonderfully affects the mind, and raises its perceptions of spiritual things. This degree of illumination is not being born again, nor does it follow necessarily or infallibly from it. Many may be illuminated in this way, and yet never be converted. A *third degree* is required for that.

In order of nature it is *prior* to a full and real conversion to God, and is materially preparatory and disposing to it; saving grace enters into the soul by spiritual light. Because it is a gift of God it is the duty of everyone to labour to participate in it, however many abuse it.

Conviction of sin is another effect of the preaching of the word preceding real conversion to God. This in general the apostle describes, 1 Corinthians 14 v 24, 25, “If all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, he is convinced of all: and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God.”

Various things are included in this, or associated with it; —

A disquieting sense of the guilt of sin with respect to the law of God, with his threatenings and future judgment. Things that previously were treated as unimportant and mocked now weigh down the soul and constant disturb it. “Fools make a mock of sin;” they traverse their ways, and snuff up the wind like the wild ass; but in their month, when conviction has burdened them, you may find them. By this conviction peoples minds are variously affected with fears and anguish, in various degrees, related to the impressions made on them by the word. The degrees are not *dictated* as necessary duties for people experiencing their convictions, but only *described* as they usually happen, to the relief and direction of such

people: — like a man going to give directions to another how to guide his route in a journey at sea, he tells him that in such a place he will meet with rocks and shallow ledges, storms and cross winds, so if he does not steer very carefully he will be in danger of disaster. He does not dictate to him as his duty to go among these rocks and into these storms, but only directs him how to guide himself if he does meet with them, as he certainly will to some extent or other, unless he travels completely the wrong route.

Also included, sorrow or grief for sin committed because the deed is past and cannot be rectified; which is the essential reason for this condemning sorrow. This the Scripture calls “sorrow of the world,” 2 Corinthians 7 v 10; divines, usually, *legal sorrow*, in conjunction with the sense of the guilt of sin mentioned it brings men into captivity under fear, Romans 8 v 15.

Humiliation for sin, which is the exercise or working of sorrow and fear in external acts of confession, fasting, praying, and such like. This is the true nature of legal humiliation, 1 Kings 21 v 29.

Unless these things swallow up the soul in despair, it will be filled with thoughts, desires, inquiries about a *rescue* out of that state ; as in Acts 2 v 37 and Acts 16 v 30.

Often a *great reformation of life* and change in affections follows this; as Matthew 13 v 20; 2 Peter 2 v 20; Matthew. 12 v 44.

All these things may happen in the minds of men by the effect of contact with the word of God, the bible, and yet the work of being born again may be never completed in them. They are good in themselves, and fruits of the kindness of God towards us but they may not only be lost as to any spiritual advantage, but also be abused to our great disadvantage. This happens by our own sin, and so we contract a new guilt on our souls. It commonly happens in one of these three ways; —

Some are not careful or wise to *promote this light and conviction* towards the end it tends to and is designed for. Their message is, to turn the minds of people, and to take them away from their self-confidence, and to direct them to Christ. Where this is not attended to, where they are not used and promoted to the pursuit of this end, they imperceptibly decay, and come to nothing.

In others they are overcome by the power and violence of their lusts, the

love of sin, and effectiveness of temptation. They are sinned away everyday, and leave the soul in ten times worse a condition than they found it.

Yet another group of people who experience them rest in these things, as though they comprised the whole work of God towards them, and guided them in all the duties required of them.

This is the state of many who extend their power, in the last instance, to any considerable reformation of life, and attending to duties of religious worship. But this falls away because of the way peoples worldly minds abuse these things, because they retain their enmity against God. In their own nature they are good, useful, and material preparations for being born again, disposing the mind towards receiving Gods grace.

And the doctrine of these things has been variously handled, distinguished, and applied, by many learned divines and faithful ministers of the gospel. They joined those experiences which they had observed in their own hearts and the consciences of others who they dealt with to that light which they received into themselves from the infallible word of truth, which were suitable for the purpose; and in distributing this truth, depending on the “measure of the gift of the grace of Christ,” which they had received, had a useful and fruitful ministry in the world, resulting in many conversions to God.

Thirdly, All the things mentioned produced instrumentally by the word are *effects* of the power of the *Spirit* of God. The word itself, working in the minds of people, will not affect them to save them. We need go no farther to confirm this than merely to consider the preaching (with the effects which it had towards many) of the prophets, Isaiah 49 v 4, Jeremiah 15 v 20, Ezekiel 33 v 31, 32; of Jesus Christ himself, John 8 v 59; and of the apostles, Acts 13 v 41, 45, 46. So to this day, the Jews, who enjoy the letter of the Old Testament, without the administration of the Spirit, are as full of blindness, hardness, and obstinacy, compared with anyone in the world who is utterly deprived of it. Many today sit all their days listening to the preaching of the word, and yet have none of the effects mentioned worked in them, while others who hear the same words at the same time and place, are really affected, convinced, and converted. It is, therefore, the influence of the Spirit, in and by the word, which produces all or any of these effects on peoples minds; he is the fountain of all spiritual illumination. They that are “enlightened” are said to be made “partakers of the Holy Spirit,” Hebrews 6 v 4. He is promised by our Saviour “to convince the world of sin,” John 16 v 8: although that place it refers only one kind of sin, yet it is

sufficient to establish a general rule, that all conviction of sin is from and by him. If the light he gives and the convictions he works in them is only an object of contempt to them, no wonder men live securely in their sins.

There is an objection of some weight against assigning this work to the energy of the Holy Spirit:

“If it is granted that all these things may be worked in peoples minds and souls, yet they may come short of the saving grace of God, how then can he be thought of as the author of such a work? Will we say that he designs only a weak and imperfect work in peoples hearts? or that he deserts and gives up the work of grace he has undertaken in them because he was unable to achieve and complete it?”

In many, possibly most people, who are affected in this way, *real conversion* to God follows. The Holy Spirit by these preparatory actions makes way for the introduction of the new spiritual life into the soul: it is a work that is perfect in its kind.

Wherever this work fails and come short of what it has a *tendency* to produce, it is not because of any weakness and imperfection in its own nature, but because of the sins of the people who experience it. Even common illumination and conviction of sin have, in their own nature, a tendency to produce sincere conversion, in a similar sense as the law has to bring us to Christ. If this is not the outcome, it is always occurs because of the interposition of the wilfulness and stubbornness of the people illuminated and convicted. They do not sincerely promote what they have received, and do not faint merely from lack of strength to proceed, but by the free action of their own wills, they refuse the grace which is farther offered to them in the gospel. This will, and its resistance to the work of the Spirit, God is pleased to take away in some people. It is sovereign grace when and where it is removed. The sin of men and their guilt is in it where it continues; no more is required for this than that it is voluntary. It is will, not ability, that gives right or wrong to moral actions.

The Holy Spirit in his whole work is a *voluntary agent*. He works what, when, and how he pleases. Only these two things are required in his operations:

First, That in themselves they are *good* and *holy*. *Secondly*, That they are *effective* for the end he designed them for.

That he should always design them to the utmost extent of what they have a moral tendency towards, though no real efficiency for, is not required. To explain, his operations are in their own nature good and holy. Illumination is so; so is conviction and sorrow for sin, with a subsequent change of affections and amendment of life. What he works in any of these effectively and infallibly achieves the *end he* aims at which is no more than that people are illuminated, convinced, humbled, and reformed. He does not fail in these purposes.

He is pleased to take on the management of the law, to make a person realize they are prisoners, so they will be driven to search for freedom; and so he is called the “Spirit of bondage unto fear,” Romans 8 v 15. This work is the third ground described in our Saviour’s parable of the sower. It receives the seed and springs up hopefully, until, by cares of the world, temptations, and business of life, it is choked and lost. Matthew 13 v 22. Because it often makes a great appearance of and resemblance to being born again, or real conversion to God, so that neither the world nor the church is able to distinguish between them, it should be a great concern to all who claim to be Christians to examine carefully if any other kind of work of the Spirit of God has taken place in their own souls. Though it is a good work, and it is usefully subservient to being born again, if people attain to no more than this, if they proceed no farther, they will be damned forever. Many people deceive themselves, speaking peace to their souls about the effects of this work; it is not only insufficient to save them, and all people at all times, but also becomes a means of their present security and future destruction. I will give a few instances of what this work, with all the parts of it, even promoting it as much as possible, cannot effect; so people may make a judgment how things stand in their own souls about it: —

All the effects of this work are in the mind, conscience, affections, and conduct. It follows then that the *will* is neither really changed nor internally transformed by it. Now, the will is the ruling, governing part of the soul just as the mind is the guiding and leading part. While this remains unchanged the power and reign of sin continue in the soul, though not undisturbed yet unruined. It is true, there are many checks and controls, from the light of the mind and reflections of conscience, in this state influencing the decisions of the will, so it cannot sin with that freedom, security, and lack of restraint as it did previously.

Its delight and greediness in sinning may be calmed and quieted by those frequent representations of the terror of the Lord made to it on the one hand, and the pleasure of eternal rest on the other: yet, setting aside all considerations foreign to its own principle, the bent and inclination of the will itself is to sin and evil continually. The will to sin may be restrained by a thousand considerations which light and convictions will influence it with, but it is not taken away. This shows itself when the very first movements of the soul towards sinful things are pleurably complacent, until they are controlled by light and fear. This argues for an unsaved will in a persons soul, if it is constant and universal.

The effects of this work on the *mind*, the first place affected with it, do not proceed far enough to give it *delight*, *complacency*, and *satisfaction* in the lively spiritual nature and excellency of the things revealed to it. The true nature of saving illumination is this, that it gives the mind such a direct intuitive insight and prospect into spiritual things so that, in their own spiritual nature, they please, and satisfy it, so it is transformed into them, cast into the mould of them, and rests in them, Romans 6 v 17, 12 v 2; 1 Corinthians 2 v 13–15; 2 Corinthians 3 v 18, 4 v 6.

This work we have described does not reach to this ; in any discovery that is made of spiritual things to the mind, it does not find an immediate, direct, spiritual excellency in them. It only sees some benefit or advantage to be attained by using them to obtain that advantage. It will not give such a spiritual insight into the mystery of God’s grace by Jesus Christ, called “his glory shining in the face of Jesus Christ,” 2 Corinthians 4 v 6, so the soul, in its first direct view of it, should, for what it is in itself, admire it, delight in it, approve it, and find spiritual comfort and rejuvenation in it. It communicates such a light, such a knowledge that a person loves it, in its effects, as a way of mercy and salvation.

3. This work extends to the *conscience* also; but it does not *purge the conscience from dead works, that we should serve the living God*. This is the effect of a real application of the blood of Christ by faith to our souls, Hebrews 9 v 14. It effects two things on the conscience: —

It renders it more *ready*, *quick*, and *sharp* the reprovng and condemning of all sin than it was before. To condemn sin, depending on its light and guidance, is natural to and inseparable from the conscience of man; but its readiness and ability to exercise this condemning power may be weakened and obstructed, because of cultural teaching and progress in sin in a person in the world. But when conscience is brought under the power

of this operation, having its directing light augmented, so it sees more of the evil of sin than before, it is more ready and quick in its judging and condemning power than it was before.

Conscience is assisted and directed by this work to condemn *many things in sin* which before it approved of; its judging power is still proportionate to its light, and many things are now discovered to be sinful which were not thought to be under the mere natural guidance it had before. Yet, considering all this, it does not purge the conscience from dead works. Conscience is not influenced to such an abhorrency of sin for itself as continually to direct the soul to an application to the blood of Christ so it will be cleared from the guilt and released from the power of sin. It contents itself to keep everything in a disorder, and confusion, by its constant condemning both sin and sinners.

4. This work operates greatly on the *affections*. We have given instances in the *fear, sorrow, joy, and delight* about spiritual things that are stirred up and produced by it. Yet it is inadequate in two things of a thorough work on the affections themselves: it does not *fix* them; and it does not *fill* them. It is required that our affections are fixed on heavenly and spiritual things, and true grace will effect it: Colossians 3 v 1, 2, "If ye be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above."

The joys, the fears, the hopes, the sorrows, with reference to spiritual and eternal things, which the work mentioned produces, are transient, uncertain, unstable, not only in degree, but as to their very existence. Sometimes they are like a river ready to overflow its banks, — people cannot help but pour them out on all occasions; and sometimes like waters that fail, — no drop comes from them. Sometimes they are hot, and sometimes cold; sometimes up, and sometimes down; sometimes all heaven, and sometimes all the world; without equality, without stability. But true grace fixes the affections on spiritual things. As to the degrees of their exercise, there may be and is great variety, depending on how they are excited, aided, assisted, by grace and the means of it, or obstructed and impeded by temptations and diversions. But the constant bent and inclination of saved affections is towards spiritual things: Scripture everywhere testifies to this and experience confirms it.

The work mentioned here does not fill the affections, however it may take them up and pacify them. It comes like many strangers to a hotel to stay, which take up a great deal of room, and make an appearance as if

noone were in the house but them; and yet they do not turn out the family which stays there, but who remain there also. Light and conviction, come into the mind and affections as if they would fill them, and possess them for themselves alone; yet, when they have done all, they leave the quiet places of the house for the world, and sin, and self. They do not displace them out of the affections, and fill up their places with spiritual things. But saving grace fills up the affections with spiritual things, fills the soul with spiritual love, joy, and delight, and exercises all other affections towards the right objects. It does not deny a place to any other things, relations, possessions, enjoyments, merely as they are natural, and are content to be lower in priority than God and spiritual things; but if these become worldly, disorderly, or predominant, it rejects them.

This work is often carried very far in a *reformation of life* and conduct, so it will express the whole *form of godliness*.

But it is has *three types of defect* and imperfection;

It will allow *raging* and *reigning* sins of ignorance.

The conducting light in this work because it does not lead to abhorring of all sin as sin or to a pursuit of holiness to be universally conformable to Christ, but is only concerned with particular commands it often leaves behind great sins unregarded. So it left persecution in Paul before his conversion. And other similar sins will escape its utmost search ruining the soul.

Its reforming the conduct is seldom *universal* in all *known sins*, unless it is temporary, while the soul is under extreme *pursuit* of self-righteousness. Paul in that condition had preserved himself so that, according to the law, he was blameless; and the rich young man thought he had kept all the commandments from his youth. But considering the utmost that this work can produce, after the effect of its first impressions begin to subside, lust will reserve some way of expressing itself.

The *conduct* of people who live and remain under the power of this work shows only a fading and decaying effect. Coldness, laziness, negligence, love of the world, and a false sense of security advance constantly in them. By a long abstinence from open sensual sins, and stating a contrary interest to them, they are not given up to them, yet, by decays of the power of their convictions, and the ground that sin gains in them, they become walking and talking skeletons in religion, useless, worldly people. But where the soul has real saving grace, it is thriving constantly. They go from strength to strength, from grace to grace, from glory to glory, and will

be fat and flourishing in old age. By these things we learn to distinguish in ourselves between the preparatory work of the Holy Spirit and real saving conversion to God.”

*John Owen volume 3: The Holy Spirit chapter 2:
works of the Holy Spirit preparatory unto regeneration*

CHAPTER 6

WHAT IS A SAVING, CHANGED HEART (2)

by Jonathan Edwards

“Those affections that are truly holy, are primarily founded on the loveliness of the moral excellency of divine things. Or (to express it otherwise) a love to divine things for the beauty and sweetness of their moral excellency is the first beginning and spring of all holy affections.

The word *moral* is not to be understood here as meaning an external conformity to the duties of the moral law, and especially the duties of the second table; or intending no more than such seeming virtues, as proceed from natural principles, in opposition to those virtues that are more internal, spiritual, and divine; such as honesty, justice, generosity, good nature, and public spirit of many of the heathen are called moral virtues, in distinction from the holy faith, love, humility, and heavenly-mindedness of true Christians: I say, the word *moral* is not to be understood in that way here. Divines commonly make a distinction between moral good and evil, and natural good and evil. By moral evil, they mean the evil of sin, or that evil that is against duty, and contrary to what is right and ought to be. By natural evil, they do not mean that evil which is properly opposed to duty; but what is contrary to mere nature, without any respect to a rule of duty. So the evil of suffering is called natural evil, such as pain and torment, disgrace, and the like: these things are contrary to mere nature, contrary to the nature of both bad and good, hateful to wicked people and devils, as well as good people and angels. So similarly natural defects are called

natural evils, when a child is disabled or has learning difficulties; these are natural evils, but are not moral evils, because they do not properly constitute the nature of the evil of sin. On the other hand, as by moral evil, divines mean the evil of sin, or that which is contrary to what is right; so by moral good, they mean that which is contrary to sin, or that good in beings who have will and choice, by which as voluntary agents, they are, and act, as it suits them to be and to act, or so as is most fit, and suitable, and lovely. By natural good, they mean that good that is entirely of a different kind from holiness or virtue, that is what perfects or suits nature, considering nature abstractly from any holy or unholy qualifications, and without any relation to any rule or measure of right and wrong.

So pleasure is a natural good; so is honour, so is strength; so is speculative knowledge, human learning, and wisdom.— So there is a distinction to be made between the natural good that people possess, and their moral good; and also between the natural and moral good of the angels in heaven: the great capacity of their understandings, and their great strength, and the honourable circumstances they are in as the great ministers of God's kingdom, as a result of which they are called thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers, is the natural good which they possess; but their perfect and glorious holiness and goodness, their pure and flaming love to God, and to the saints and to one another, is their moral good. So divines make a distinction between the natural and moral perfections of God: by the moral perfections of God, they mean those attributes which God exercises as a moral agent, or by which the heart and will of God are good, right, and infinitely attractive and lovely; such as his righteousness, truth, faithfulness, and goodness; or, in one word, his holiness. By God's natural attributes or perfections, they mean those attributes, according to our way of conceiving of God, comprise, not the holiness or moral goodness of God, but his greatness, such as his power, his knowledge, by which he knows all things, and his being eternal, from everlasting to everlasting, his omnipresence, and his awful and terrible majesty.

The moral excellency of an intelligent voluntary being is more immediately seated in the heart or will of moral agents. That intelligent being, whose will is truly right and lovely, is morally good or excellent.

This moral excellency of an intelligent being, when it is true and real, and not only external or merely seeming and counterfeit, is holiness. Therefore holiness comprehends all the true moral excellency of intelligent beings: there is no other true virtue, but real holiness. Holiness comprehends all

the true virtue of a good person, their love to God, their gracious love to others, justice, and mercifulness, their gracious meekness and gentleness, and all other true Christian virtues that they have, belong to their holiness. So the holiness of God in the more extensive sense of the word, and the sense in which the word is commonly, if not universally used concerning God in Scripture, is the same with the moral excellency of the divine nature, or his purity and beauty as a moral agent, comprehending all his moral perfections, his righteousness, faithfulness, and goodness. As in holy people, their love, Christian kindness and mercy, belong to their holiness; so the kindness and mercy of God belong to his holiness. Holiness in man is only the image of God's holiness; there are not more virtues belonging to the image than are in the original: derived holiness has not more in it than is in that underived holiness which is its fountain: there is no more than grace for grace, or grace in the image, answerable to grace in the original. As there are two kinds of attributes in God, according to our way of conceiving of him, his moral attributes, which are summed up in his holiness, and his natural attributes of strength, knowledge, &c., that constitute the greatness of God; so there are two kinds of image of God in people, his moral or spiritual image, which is his holiness, that is the image of God's moral excellency (this was lost by the fall), and God's natural image, consisting in man's reason and understanding, his natural ability, and rule over the creatures, which is the image of God's natural attributes.

From what has been said, it may easily be understood what I intend, when I say that a love to divine things for the beauty of their moral excellency, is the beginning and spring of all holy affections. It has been already shown, that the first objective ground of all holy affections is the supreme excellency of divine things as they are in themselves, or in their own nature; I now proceed further, and say more particularly, that that kind of excellency of the nature of divine things, which is the first objective ground of all holy affections, is their moral excellency, or their holiness. Holy persons, in the operation of holy affections, love divine things primarily for their holiness: they love God, in the first place, for the beauty of his holiness or moral perfection, as being supremely amiable in itself. Not that the saints, in the operation of gracious affections, love God only for his holiness; all his attributes are amiable and glorious in their eyes; they delight in every divine perfection; the contemplation of the infinite greatness, power, knowledge, and terrible majesty of God, is pleasant to them. But their love to God for his holiness is what is most fundamental and essential in their

love. Here it is where true love to God begins; all other holy love to divine things flows from hence: this is the most essential and distinguishing thing that belongs to a holy love to God, with regard to the foundation of it. A love to God for the beauty of his moral attributes leads to, and necessarily causes a delight in God for all his attributes; for his moral attributes cannot be without his natural attributes: for infinite holiness supposes infinite wisdom, and an infinite capacity and greatness; and all the attributes of God do as it were imply one another.

The true beauty and loveliness of all intelligent beings primarily and most essentially comprises their moral excellency or holiness. The loveliness of the angels is composed of this, without which, with all their natural perfections, their strength, and their knowledge, they would have no more loveliness than devils. It is a moral excellency alone, that is in itself, and on its own account, the excellency of intelligent beings: it is this that gives beauty to, or rather is the beauty of their natural perfections and qualifications. Moral excellency is the excellency of natural excellencies. Natural qualifications are either excellent or otherwise, according as they are joined with moral excellency or not. Strength and knowledge do not render any being lovely, without holiness, but more hateful; though they render them more lovely, when joined with holiness. So the elect angels are the more glorious for their strength and knowledge, because these natural perfections of theirs are sanctified by their moral perfection. But although the devils are very strong, and have great natural understanding, they are not the more lovely: they are more terrible indeed, but not the more amiable; but on the contrary, the more hateful. The holiness of an intelligent creature, is the beauty of all his natural perfections. And so it is in God, according to our way of conceiving of the divine Being: holiness is in a particular manner the beauty of the divine nature. So we often read about the beauty of holiness, Psalm. 29 v 2, Psalm. 96 v 9, and 110 v 3. This renders all his other attributes glorious and lovely. It is the glory of God's wisdom, that it is a holy wisdom, and not a wicked subtlety and cunning. This makes his majesty lovely; and not merely dreadful and horrible, that it is a holy majesty. It is the glory of God's immutability, that it is a holy immutability, and not an inflexible intransigence in wickedness.

And therefore it is necessary, that a sight of God's loveliness must begin here. A true love to God must begin with a delight in his holiness, and not with a delight in any other attribute; no other attribute is truly lovely without this, and no otherwise than as (according to our way of conceiving

of God) it derives its loveliness from this; and therefore it is impossible that other attributes should appear lovely, in their true loveliness, until this is seen; and it impossible that any perfection of the divine nature should be loved with true love until this is loved. If the true loveliness of all God's perfections arises from the loveliness of his holiness; then the true love of all his perfections arises from the love of his holiness. Whoever does not see the glory of God's holiness, cannot see anything of the true glory of his mercy and grace: they see nothing of the glory of those attributes, as any excellency of God's nature, as it is in itself; though they may be affected with them, and love them, as they concern their own interest: these attributes are no part of the excellency of God's nature, as that is excellent in itself, any otherwise than as they are included in his holiness, more largely taken; or as they are a part of his moral perfection.

As the beauty of the divine nature is primarily composed of God's holiness, so is the beauty of all divine things. The beauty of the saints is made up of this, that they are saints, or holy ones; it is the moral image of God in them, that is their beauty; and that is their holiness. The beauty and brightness of the angels of heaven is made up of this, that they are holy angels, and so not devils. Daniel. 4 v 13, 17, 23; Matthew. 25 v 31, Mark 8 v 38, Acts 10 v 22, Revelations. 14 v 10. The beauty of the Christian religion is composed of this, above all other religions, that it is so holy a religion. This comprises the excellency of the word of God, that it is so holy: Psalm. 119 v 140, "Thy word is very pure, therefore thy servant loveth it." Ver. 128, "I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way." Ver. 138, "Thy testimonies that thou hast commanded are righteous, and very faithful." And, "My tongue shall speak of thy word; for all thy commandments are righteousness." And Psalm. 19 v 7-10, "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever: the judgments of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey, and the honey comb."

The amiableness and beauty of the Lord Jesus is primarily made up of this, so he is the chief among ten thousands, and altogether lovely, even in that he is the holy one of God, Acts 3 v 14, and God's holy child, Acts 4 v 27, and he that is holy, and he that is true, Revelations 3 v 7. All the spiritual beauty of his human nature, comprising his meekness, lowliness,

patience, heavenliness, love to God, love to men, condescension to the low and vile, and compassion to the miserable, &c., all is summed up in his holiness. And the beauty of his divine nature, which the beauty of his human nature is the image and reflection of, is also primarily composed of his holiness. The glory of the gospel is primarily made up of this, that it is a holy gospel, and so bright an emanation of the holy beauty of God and Jesus Christ: this is the spiritual beauty of its doctrines, that they are holy doctrines, or doctrines according to goodness. This comprises the spiritual beauty of the way of salvation by Jesus Christ, that it is so holy a way. This comprises supremely the glory of heaven, that it is the holy city, the holy Jerusalem, the habitation of God's holiness, and so of his glory, Isaiah. 63 v 15. All the beauties of the new Jerusalem, as it is described in the two last chapters of Revelation, are only various representations of this. See chap. 21 v 2, 10, 11, 18, 21, 27, chap. 22 v 1, 3.

And therefore it is primarily on account of this kind of excellency, that the saints love all these things. So they love the word of God, because it is very pure. It is on this account they love the saints; and it is on this account above all that heaven is lovely to them, and those holy tabernacles of God amiable in their eyes: it is on this account that they love God; and it is on this account primarily that they love Christ, and that their hearts delight in the doctrines of the gospel, and sweetly acquiesce in the way of salvation revealed in it. There is given to those that are regenerated, a new supernatural sense, that is as it were a certain divine spiritual taste, which is, in its whole nature, diverse from any former kinds of sensation of the mind, as tasting is diverse from any of the other five senses, and something is perceived by a true saint in the operation of this new sense of mind, in spiritual and divine things as entirely different from anything that is perceived in them by unsaved people, just as the sweet taste of honey is diverse from the ideas people get of honey by looking at it or feeling it.

Now the beauty of holiness, is that thing in spiritual and divine things, which is perceived by this spiritual sense, that is so diverse from all that unsaved people perceive in them; this kind of beauty is the quality that is the immediate object of this spiritual sense; this is the sweetness that is the proper object of this spiritual taste. The Scripture often represents the beauty and sweetness of holiness as the grand object of a spiritual taste and spiritual appetite. This was the sweet food of the holy soul of Jesus Christ, John 4 v 32, 34: "I have meat to eat that ye know not of—My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." I know of no part

of the holy Scriptures, where the nature and evidences of true and sincere godliness have so much set purpose and are so fully and largely insisted on and delineated, as the 119th Psalm; the Psalmist declares his design in the first verses of the Psalm, and he keeps his eye on this design all along, and pursues it to the end: but in this Psalm the excellency of holiness is represented as the immediate object of a spiritual taste, relish, appetite, and delight in God's law; that grand expression and emanation of the holiness of God's nature and prescription of holiness to the creature, is all along represented as the food and pleasure, and as the great object of the love, the appetite, the complacency and rejoicing of the gracious nature, which prizes God's commandments above gold, yea the finest gold, and to which they are sweeter than the honey and honey comb; and that on account of their holiness, as I observed before. The same Psalmist declares, that this is the sweetness that a spiritual taste relishes in God's law: Psal. 19:7, 8, 9, 10, "The law of the Lord is perfect; the commandment of the Lord is pure; the fear of the Lord is clean; the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart;—the judgments of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether; more to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and the honey comb."

A holy love has a holy object. The holiness of love is especially composed of this, that it is the love of what is holy, as holy, or for its holiness; so that it is the holiness of the object, which is the quality it fixes on and terminates. A holy nature must necessarily love that in holy things supremely, what is most agreeable to itself; but surely that in divine things, that above all others is agreeable to a holy nature, is holiness, because holiness must be above all other things agreeable to holiness; for nothing can be more agreeable to any nature than itself; holy nature must be above all things agreeable to holy nature: and so the holy nature of God and Christ, and the word of God, and other divine things, must be above all other things agreeable to the holy nature that is in the saints.

Also, a holy nature doubtless loves holy things, especially on the account of which sinful nature has enmity against them; but what supremely sinful nature is at enmity against holy things, is their holiness; it is for this, that the carnal mind is at enmity against God, and against the law of God, and the people of God. Now it is just arguing from contraries; from contrary causes to contrary effects; from opposite natures to opposite tendencies. We know that holiness is of a directly contrary nature to wickedness; as therefore it is the nature of wickedness primarily to oppose and hate

holiness; so it must be the nature of holiness primarily to tend to, and delight in holiness.

The holy nature in the saints and angels in heaven (where the true tendency of it best appears) is principally engaged by the holiness of divine things. This is the divine beauty which primarily engages the attention, admiration, and praise of the bright and burning seraphim: Isaiah. 6 v 3, "One cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory." And Revelations. 4 v 8, "They rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." So the glorified saints chap. 15 v 4, "Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? For thou only art holy."

And the Scriptures represent the saints on earth as adoring God primarily on this account, and admiring and praising all God's attributes, either as deriving loveliness from his holiness, or as being a part of it. So when they praise God for his power, his holiness is the beauty that engages them: Psalm. 98 v 1, "O sing unto the Lord a new song, for he hath done marvelous things: his right hand, and his holy arm hath gotten him the victory." So when they praise him for his justice and terrible majesty: Psalm. 99 v 2, 3, "The Lord is great in Zion, and he is high above all people. Let them praise thy great and terrible name; for it is holy." Ver. 5, "Exalt ye the Lord our God, and worship at his footstool; for he is holy." Ver. 8, 9, "Thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions. Exalt ye the Lord our God, and worship at his holy hill: for the Lord our God, is holy." So when they praise God for his mercy and faithfulness: Psalm. 97 v 11, 12, "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous; and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness." 1 Samuel. 2 v 2, "There is none holy as the Lord: for there is none besides thee; neither is there any rock like our God."

By this therefore everyone may test their affections, and particularly their love and joy. Various kinds of creatures show the difference of their natures, very much in the different things they relish as their proper good, one delighting in what another abhors. There is such a difference between true saints, and unsaved people: unsaved people have no sense of the goodness and excellency of holy things at least for their holiness; they have no taste for that kind of good; and so may be said not to know that divine good, or not to see it; it is wholly hidden from them; but the saints, by the mighty power of God, have it discovered to them; they have that supernatural, most noble and divine sense given them, by which they perceive

it; and it is this that captivates their hearts, and delights them above all things; it is the most amiable and sweet thing to the heart of a true saint, that is to be found in heaven or earth; that which above all others attracts and engages his soul; and in that above all things, he places his happiness, and which he looks to for solace and pleasure to his mind, in this world, and full satisfaction and blessedness in another. By this, you may examine your love to God, and to Jesus Christ, and to the word of God, and your joy in them, and also your love to the people of God, and your desires after heaven; if they are from a supreme delight in this sort of beauty, without being primarily moved from your imagined interest in them, or expectations from them. There are many high affections, great seeming love and rapturous joys, which have nothing of this holy relish belonging to them.

Particularly, by what has been said you may test your discoveries of the glory of God's grace and love, and your affections arising from them. The grace of God may appear lovely two ways; either as a profitable good to me, that which greatly serves my interest, and so suits my self-love; or as a beautiful good in itself, and part of the moral and spiritual excellency of the divine nature. It is in this last respect that the true saints have their hearts affected, and love captivated by the free grace of God in the first place.

From the things that have been said, it appears, that if persons have a great sense of the natural perfections of God, and are greatly affected with them, or have any other sight or sense of God than that which is made up of, or implies a sense of the beauty of his moral perfections, it is no certain evidence of being saved; as particularly people's having a great sense of the awful greatness and terrible majesty of God; this is only God's natural perfection, and what men may see and yet be entirely blind to the beauty of his moral perfection, and have nothing of that spiritual taste which relishes this divine sweetness.

What is spiritual, is entirely different in its nature, from all that it is possible any unsaved person should be the subject of, while he continues graceless. But it is possible that those who are wholly without grace should have a clear sight and very great and affecting sense of God's greatness, his mighty power, and awful majesty; for this is what the devils have, though they have lost the spiritual knowledge of God, consisting in a sense of the amiableness of his moral perfections; they are perfectly destitute of any sense or relish of that kind of beauty, yet they have a very great knowledge of the natural glory of God (if I may so speak), or his awful greatness and

majesty; they view this, and are affected with the perception of it, and therefore shake with fear in his presence. Everyone will see this glory of God at the day of judgment; God will make all rational beings to see it to a great degree indeed, angels and devils, saints and sinners: Christ will manifest his infinite greatness, and awful majesty, to everyone, in a most open, clear, and convincing manner, and in a light that none can resist, “when he shall come in the glory of his Father, and every eye shall see him;” when they will cry to the mountains to fall upon them, to hide them from the face of him that sits on the throne, they are represented as seeing the glory of God’s majesty, Isaiah. 2 v 10, 19, 21. God will make all his enemies see this, and to live in a most clear and affecting view of it, in hell, to all eternity. God has often declared his immutable purpose to make all his enemies to know him in this respect, in so often joining these words to the threatenings he denounces against them: “And they shall know that I am the Lord;” he has sworn that everyone will see his glory in this respect: Numbers. 14 v 21, “As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord.” And this kind of manifestation of God is very often spoken about in Scripture, as made, or to be made, in the sight of God’s enemies in this world, Exodus. 9 v 16, and chap. 14 v 18, and 15 v 16, Psalm. 66 v 3, and 46 v 10, and in many scriptures. This was a manifestation which God made of himself in the sight of that wicked congregation at Mount Sinai; deeply affecting them with it; so that all the people in the camp shook with fear. Wicked men and devils will see, and have a great sense of everything that concerns the glory of God, except the beauty of his moral perfection; they will see his infinite greatness and majesty, his infinite power, and will be fully convinced of his omniscience, and his eternity and immutability; and they will see and know everything relating to his moral attributes themselves, except the beauty and amiableness of them; they will see and know that he is perfectly just, and righteous, and true, and that he is a holy God, has purer eyes than to view evil, who cannot look on iniquity; and they will see the wonderful manifestations of his infinite goodness and free grace to the saints; and nothing will be hidden from their eyes, except the beauty of these moral attributes, and that beauty of the other attributes, which arises from it.

And so unsaved people in this world are capable of having a very affecting sense of everything else that relates to God, except this.

Nebuchadnezzar had a great and very affecting sense of the infinite greatness and awful majesty of God, of his supreme and absolute rule, and

mighty and irresistible power, and of his sovereignty, and that he, and all the population of the earth were as nothing in his presence; and also had a great conviction in his conscience of his justice, and an affecting sense of his great goodness, Daniel. 4 v 1, 2, 3, 34, 35, 37.

And the sense that Darius had of God's perfections, seems to be very much like his, Daniel. 6 v 25, &c. But the saints and angels view the glory of God comprising the beauty of his holiness; and it is this sight only that will melt and humble the hearts of people, and wean them from the world, and draw them to God, and effectively change them. A sight of the awful greatness of God, may overpower people's strength, and be more than they can endure; but if the moral beauty of God is hidden, the enmity of the heart will remain in its full strength, no love will be stirred, all will be ineffective to gain the will, but that will remain inflexible; in comparison with the first glimpse of the moral and spiritual glory of God shining into the heart, produces all these effects as it were with omnipotent power, which nothing can withstand.

The sense that natural men may have of the awful greatness of God may affect them in various ways; it may not only terrify them, but it may elevate them, and raise their joy and praise, as their circumstances may be. This will be the natural effect of it, under the real or supposed receipt of some extraordinary mercy from God, by the influence of mere principles of nature. It has been shown already, that the receipt of kindness may, by the influence of natural principles, affect the heart with gratitude and praise to God; but if a person, at the same time that they receive remarkable kindness from God, has a sense of his infinite greatness, and that they are but nothing in comparison to him, surely this will naturally raise their gratitude and praise the higher, for kindness to one so much inferior. A sense of God's greatness had this effect on Nebuchadnezzar, under the receipt of that extraordinary favour of his restoration, after he had been driven from among people, and lived with the animals: a sense of God's exceeding greatness raises his gratitude very high; so that he does, in the most lofty terms, praise and magnify God, and calls on all the world to do it with him; and much more if an unsaved person, at the same time that they are greatly affected with God's infinite greatness and majesty, entertains a strong conceit that this great God has made them his child and special favourite, and promised them eternal glory in his highest love, this will have a tendency, according to the course of nature, to raise their joy and praise to a great height.

Therefore, it is beyond doubt that too much weight has been placed, by many people, on discoveries of God's greatness, awful majesty, and natural perfection, operating after this manner, without any real view of the holy majesty of God. And experience abundantly witnesses to what reason and Scripture declare about this; there having been very many people, who have seemed to be overpowered with the greatness and majesty of God, and consequently elevated in the manner that has been spoken about, who have been very far from having appearances of a Christian spirit and temper, in any manner of proportion, or fruits in practice agreeable to this; but their discoveries have worked in a way contrary to the operation of truly spiritual discoveries. Not that a sense of God's greatness and natural attributes is not exceeding useful and necessary. This is implied in a manifestation of the beauty of God's holiness. Though that is something beyond it, it supposes it, as the greater supposes the less. And although unsaved people may have a sense of the natural perfections of God; yet undoubtedly this is more frequent and common with the saints than with unsaved people; and grace tends to facilitate people seeing these things in a better manner than unsaved people do; and not only facilitates them to see God's natural attributes, but that beauty of those attributes, which (according to our way of conceiving of God) is derived from his holiness."

Religious Affections by Jonathan Edwards



SECTION TWO

“DEPART FROM ME YE THAT WORK
INIQUITY”



CHAPTER 7

HEART CHANGE PRODUCES BEHAVIOUR CHANGE

Christ said: "If ye love me, keep my commandments." John 14 v 15

"Thou my sure portion art alone,
which I did choose, O Lord:
I have resolved, and said, that I
would keep thy holy word.

With my whole heart I did entreat
thy face and favour free:
According to thy gracious word
be merciful to me.

I thought upon my former ways,
and did my life well try;
And to thy testimonies pure
my feet then turned I.

I did not stay, nor linger long,
as those that slothful are;
But hastily thy laws to keep
myself I did prepare."
Psalm 119 v 57–60 (Scottish Metrical)

“And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the *son* of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will.” Acts 13 v 22

“What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things *is* death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.” Romans 6 v 21,22

Similarly to our text, in Matthew chapter twenty five in the parables of the ten virgins and the talents the truth is taught about people that wrongly thought they were saved but acted wickedly. It teaches that they thought they did good deeds but were half-hearted and insincere in their efforts. The concluding verses give the verdict and sum up the problem:

“His Lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury(interest). Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Matthew 25 v 26–30

What are the practical implications of a saving change of heart? The text says about the people whose heart wasn't changed-'depart from me ye that work iniquity'. They still sinned. They still behaved wickedly. They did not repent. They departed from God throughout their lives when he commanded them to follow him and when he invited them to come to him. Now their time for being called to account has come and he dismisses them from his presence forever.

“And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee *as* my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, *but* their heart goeth after their covetousness. And, lo, thou *art* unto them as a

very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not.”
Ezekiel 33 v 31,32

“He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?

Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode(residence) with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father’s which sent me.”
John 14 v 21–24

“But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet(suitable) for repentance.”
Acts 26 v 20

“Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with *him*, that we may be also glorified together.”
Romans 8 v 12–17

“In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.”
1st Timothy 2 v 9,10

When we consider that great example of faith, Abraham, we see clearly that his obedience, or good works, was the great evidence of his faith:

“By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place

which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as *in* a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:"

Hebrews 11 v 8,9

The word holy itself, when it is considered, means separate. It primarily refers to God separating off a people for himself but it also suggests that their lives are separate in their moral behaviour from the world or unsaved. The saved person is actively purifying themselves as mentioned in the 3rd verse of the following verses:

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."

1st John 3 v 1–3

Although good works do not in any way contribute to a persons salvation, they are done by the Christian as a result of being saved. They are the effect of faith in them. Only God the Holy Spirit can, and does, produce in them any good actions that they do:

"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them."

Ezekiel 36 v 27

This doesn't mean they make no effort to do good. On the contrary they constantly attempt to do so. If a person has the Holy Spirit in them they will become holy. Behaviour is clearly changed comprehensively when a person is saved, when they repent. If there were no change in behaviour in the saved person then how could it be known if they, or indeed others had repented or that the Christian religion changes not only what a person says, but also what a person does. A person may assess if they are truly saved from these changes in their heart and resulting change in the full range of their moral behaviour:

“But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which *was bestowed* upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.”
1st Corinthians 15 v 10

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”
Galatians 2 v 20

“Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink *this* cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of *that* bread, and drink of *that* cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body. For this cause many *are* weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.”
1st Cor 11 v 27 –31

A persons behaviour indicates their spiritual state. Generally unsaved people wont be doing or trying to do good works or actions, but some are deluded and blind spiritually and think they are saved. Those unsaved trying to do good cannot sustain it compared with backsliding Christians who come back to doing sustained good after a limited period of sinning.

The saved know the difference between right and wrong and turn from it by repenting. They clearly realize they have repented. If they were unsure what wrong was they couldn’t give it up. They do realize what it is and so know their behaviour is changed. God reveals these things by His Holy Spirit showing them in their consciences compared to the standard in his word.

Repentance is a change in our moral behaviour toward God and others in doing our duty to them. So we can perceive that change as others can too – they know if we are doing our duty to them or not. Our duty is defined and specified in Gods moral law. Repentance is a comprehensive, extensive and permanent change in our behaviour not only avoiding certain things but doing good to others. Anyone can say and think they believe and not repent of any sin. They may give up certain sins while simply replacing them with different sins e.g. Pharisees exchanged publically scandalous

sins for pride. Repentance is meaningless if it doesn't involve giving sin up, acting substantially differently. The denial of this is calling evil good:

“Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!”
Isaiah 5 v 20

“Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me throughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin *is* ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done *this* evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, *and* be clear when thou judgest. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden *part* thou shalt make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness; *that* the bones *which* thou hast broken may rejoice. Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.”
Psalm 51 v 1–10

The bible uses the terms wicked and righteous not only to refer to being justified before God or not but also the great difference in lifestyle and behaviour of different kinds of people. The righteous willingly serve and obey God whereas the wicked rebel and disobey him. This is not just a subtle difference but a difference of opposite quality. The righteous are continually giving up sin and turning from it. The following passage clearly shows the difference in moral behaviour between the saved and unsaved, the metaphor of walking(in a definite direction) referring to a type of moral behaviour:

“*There is* therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the

likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded *is* death; but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace. Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ *be* in you, the body *is* dead because of sin; but the Spirit *is* life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.”

Romans 8 v 1–13

A saved person turns from all kinds of sin both internally and in all areas of their external behaviour, but not perfectly in extent or degree. It is utter submission to Gods will as described in the words immediately prior to text – not only talking about but also doing good and behaving well:

“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.”

Matthew 7 v 21

“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh *them* shall have mercy.”

Proverbs 28 v 13

“Then shall they cry unto the LORD, but he will not hear them: he will even hide his face from them at that time, as they have behaved themselves ill in their doings.”

Micah 3 v 4

It is not true that the saved are worse in some areas of their behaviour than the unsaved – they are changed comprehensively. Holiness can be likened to wholeness indicating that all areas of behaviour are transformed in true repentance. If a person seems changed in only part of their behaviour they are either a hypocrite and unsaved, or, saved but backslidden and in the

latter state there can be no certainty in that persons own mind that they are indeed saved.

“*Thou art* my portion, O LORD: I have said that I would keep thy words. I intreated thy favour with *my* whole heart: be merciful unto me according to thy word. I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies. I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments.

The bands of the wicked have robbed me: *but* I have not forgotten thy law. At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee because of thy righteous judgments. I *am* a companion of all *them* that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts. The earth, O LORD, is full of thy mercy: teach me thy statutes.

Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O LORD, according unto thy word. Teach me good judgment and knowledge: for I have believed thy commandments. Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word. Thou *art* good, and doest good; teach me thy statutes. The proud have forged a lie against me: *but* I will keep thy precepts with *my* whole heart.” Psalm 119 v 57–69

“There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife *was* of the daughters of Aaron, and her name *was* Elisabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.” Luke 1 v 5,6

“There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian *band*, A devout *man*, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway. Then Peter opened *his* mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:

But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him. The word which *God* sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:) That word, *I say*, ye know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. And

we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly; Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, *even* to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God *to be* the Judge of quick and dead. To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.”

Acts 10 v 1,34– 43

“Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.

I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness. For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness.” Romans 6 v 16 –20

“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”

Ephesians 2 v 10

“Follow peace with all *men*, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:”

Hebrews 12 v 14

CHAPTER 8

BEHAVIOUR CHANGE OBSERVABLE TO OTHERS

“If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.” 1st John 2 v 29

“Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe: As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children, That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.”

1st Thessalonians 2 v 10–12

The apostle Paul speaks to the Corinthian church in chapter nine of his second letter noting their kindness towards the needs of the saints and giving of themselves to others:

“Avoiding this, that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us: Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men. And we have sent with them our brother, whom we have oftentimes proved diligent in many things, but now much more diligent, upon the great confidence which I have in you.

Whether any do enquire of Titus, he is my partner and fellow-helper concerning you: or our brethren be enquired of, they are the messengers of the churches, and the glory of Christ. Wherefore shew ye to them, and before the churches, the proof of your love,

and of our boasting on your behalf. For as touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you: For I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many. Yet have I sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this behalf; that, as I said, ye may be ready:

And,

And God *is* able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all *things*, may abound to every good work: (As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever. Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for *your* food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness;) Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God. For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God;

Whiles by the experiment(experience) of this ministration (ministry) they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for *your* liberal distribution unto them, and unto all *men*;

2nd Corinthians 8 v 20–24, chapter 9 v 1,2,8–13

Paul, when writing to the thessalonian church tells them to ‘walk’ or behave honestly to those ‘without’ or the unsaved. In the following passage the evidence of a saved heart is shown to be in good behaviour and is clearly demonstrated towards the unsaved:

“For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness. He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit. But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.

And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more; And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own

business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and *that* ye may have lack of nothing.”

Paul in his second letter to Timothy proves this point overwhelmingly with an observable difference between good and wicked behavior. Notice how godliness has an observable form and how he tells Timothy how he fully knew Paul’s godly behavior, manner of life and using this as evidence was confident about his saved state:

“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was.

But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived. But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.” 2nd Timothy 3 v 1–16

Paul also points the church at Phillipi to his own example of obedience which implies it could be seen and known by them while again contrasting with the behaviour of the unsaved:

“Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing. Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* the enemies of the cross of Christ, Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you”
 Philippians 3 v 16–18, 4 v 9

Notice as well in the following scripture passage the emphasis is on good works or behaviour as observable evidence of holiness – note verses – chap 1 v 16, chap 2 vv 3,5,7,10,12,14 chap 3 v 1–3. In chapter 2 verse 5 shows that godly behaviour is observable and gives a particular impression of the gospel to the unsaved. Paul also says Christians no longer behaved in an un holy way while excluding that these good works were responsible for saving them (chap 3 v 5):

“They profess that they know God; but in works they deny *him*, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate. But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine: That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience. The aged women likewise, that *they be* in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, *To be* discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed. Young men likewise exhort to be sober minded.

In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine *shewing* uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you. *Exhort* servants to be obedient unto their own masters, *and* to please *them* well in all *things*; not answering again; Not purloining (stealing), but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our

Saviour in all things. For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,

Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a (special)peculiar people, zealous of good works. These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee. Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, *but* gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men. For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers(various) lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, *and* hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us,” Titus chapter 1 v 16–chapter 3 v 5

The following verses suggest that a saved persons moral behaviour is clearly distinguished as a result of saving grace:

“For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.” Romans 6 v 14

The bible is indicating the reign, the grip, the power of sin is broken when a person is saved. What effect does this mean if not an effect on behaviour. It cannot mean it is confined to the heart and unseen by others:

“But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies:” Matthew 15 v 18,19

Only a truly saved person can or is willing to do this and is saved from the dominating influence and mastery of sin, becoming like Christ who “went about doing good.” The change is obvious to others who have contact with them as displayed in many New Testament references. How can people shine as lights towards the world if they behave no differently to them.

‘Shining’ surely does not only mean communicating to them the gospel but acting no differently. This would be the saved telling others to repent when they hadn’t repented themselves.

“that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world” Philippians 2 v 15

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”
Matthew 5 v 16

“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” John 13 v 35

“Having your conversation(conduct) honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by *your* good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation, and, For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men:”
1st Peter 2 v 12,15

“Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works.”
James 2 v 18

The Lord Jesus Christ himself observed Nathaniel’s behaviour as a man of integrity:

“Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!” John 1 v 47

CHAPTER 9

CAN WE JUDGE OTHERS SPIRITUAL STATE OR NOT?

“Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.” Matthew 7 v 20

In the following passage where it describes people in whom God's Spirit had operated but who had resisted him too much, the writer of scripture tells us that there was observable evidence in the people he was addressing that they had believed truly and were saved (verse 9,10), whereas those who were unsaved also clearly showed it to all (verse 6) Notice how the writer uses the word 'persuaded', forming a conclusion about their saved state based on the evidence of their good behaviour – the things that accompany salvation or good fruit rather than thorns and briars or bad fruit:

“For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: But that which beareth thorns and briars is rejected, and is nigh(near) unto cursing; whose end is to be burned. But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak. For God is not unrighteous to

forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.” And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”
 Hebrews 6 v 4–12

Paul, in Hebrews Chapter 6, observes the saints stamina and endurance commending them that they were not lazy but painstaking and diligent. He urges them to keep on with the same dedication till the end and that this will prove that they were indeed saved.

And, in the following quote, the apostle makes judgements about the behaviour displayed by others and authenticated by those in contact with them:

“Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers; Which have borne witness of thy charity before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well: Because that for his name’s sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles. We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellowhelpers to the truth. I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth *them* out of the church. Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God. Demetrius hath good report of all *men*, and of the truth itself: yea, and we *also* bear record; and ye know that our record is true.”
 3rd John v 5–12

Judgements are made about our own and others behaviour constantly – whether it is good or bad. We all know what is right and wrong – Gods word, particularly the ten commandments and our conscience inform us of it, whether we listen to, or ignore them. To give an example, postmodern ideas of relative morality seem plausible till wrong is done to those who espouse them. It is clearly seen then that believing that someone else’s right

may be their wrong isn't such a great idea in practice. A universal standard of morality is appealed to by all. People resent it when wrong is done to them or that high standard is not reached by others toward them.

Because the heart, the motives and all parts of a persons behaviour cannot be seen, no absolute judgment of their state can be made. Even in a saved person they still have sin and corruption which affects their minds and judgment so no perfect judgment is possible. Despite these truths this by no means prevent an assessment being made but only indicate that it is not perfect or infallible. If no judgement were possible how could it be known whether anyone sinned, repented or was good, bad or indeed a light in the world. How would the church be seen as holy or godly or righteous by the unsaved. To suggest there is no detectable difference between righteous and wicked behaviour is absurd. Christians do sin, but if there is no observable difference between their behaviour and that of the unsaved then the following mean nothing:repentance, a godly life, a witness that stirs the conscience of the unsaved, a holy life that restrains the wicked making them ashamed, admission to church membership on the basis of a judgement assessing whether a persons moral behaviour is consistent with their profession of the gospel, for example.

It is not in dispute then, that Christians sin substantially less than the unsaved. To suggest otherwise is to deny that God does not display his truth, morality and the glory and beauty of holiness in his saints so that Christ's image is reflected in them, and so the unsaved may be motivated to start searching for forgiveness of their sins and salvation.

An infallible, absolute judgement however is never possible. An unsaved person may uncommonly appear to do good works for a limited time and also a saved person may give little evidence that they are saved because of temporary backsliding. Christians are at constant war with sin losing some battles and winning others. They will win the war in the end. They do sin but also greatly overcome and conquer sin except when they are backslidden. It would be antisciptural to suggest there was no clear difference between the saved and unsaved or even to say the difference is not clear or is doubtful. If everyone behaved morally in a way that could only be known as a possible or doubtful difference between good and evil no one could ever be sure of that difference. To say that no one could know if others do right or wrong would be absurd and evil. For example, the bible teaches in the old testament when David declined from ordinary godly living, those around him who were the enemies of God, blasphemed as a

result of observing his evil actions. Similarly, the new testament testifies to receive brothers who had repented back into the communion of the church. How could it be known whether these brothers had repented (or for that matter if anyone repents) unless they had changed in their behaviour?

A saved persons moral behaviour never appears worse than an unsaved restrained person, barring the instance of the saved sinning in an isolated scandalous way – even when backslidden they don't appear worse than a more restrained unsaved person. A newly saved person for example, however wicked they were prior to their conversion is not and does not appear, less good than an unsaved person who has not indulged in more public sins. If all parts or the comprehensive behaviour of the saved or unsaved is taken into account then this clearly displays to all, the saints moral goodness and the unsaveds wickedness. If the saved were worse this would mean they had only given up their sin to a lesser extent than the unsaved person. This would be absurd as the unsaved has not given up any sin i.e. not repented (although some unsaved people sin in a less heinous way than other unsaved people.) It would mean the all powerful sanctifying Holy Spirit changed a saved person less than an unsaved person. The idea makes a nonsense of repentance.

“Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.”

1st John 3 v 4–10

The mind of a saved person however, is still to an extent at least corrupted by sin which in turn influences their judgement. Although absolute conclusions will not be arrived at likely judgements can be made. The more

that becomes known then, of a persons behaviour to others then the more evidence that accumulates for a judgement to be made of a persons likely spiritual state. The saved may cease displaying their holy behaviour for a limited period and rarely for a longer period in their lives.

Only a small part of the behaviour may be known and a pretence may maintained. The less exposure there is to a person the more likely hypocritical behaviour may be maintained and it is also true that some behaviours are easier to falsify than others for a variety of different reasons e.g. pretence at Worship such as long prayers of the Pharisees.

Peoples internal sin may not become external because they realize it would be to their disadvantage – e.g. expressed resentment, anger and rage even, may damage their reputation making them unpopular. They may even hide some sins from those they are in contact with in private though in other areas of their behaviour and the rest of their actions viewed over a period of time indicate, are consistent with and reveal their true spiritual identity.

The question arises however, What about Judas. It seems the other disciples did not seem to see him as unsaved. Near the end of Christ's ministry in the case of the anointing of Christ with the breaking of the alabaster box, Judas demands to know why this costly ointment was wasted on being poured out when the money could have been given to the poor? He loved financial gain too much and this incident irked him. He sold his Saviour for this same reason. The love of money is truly the root of even the most extreme sins. So sin emerged in him in the presence of the other disciples who had the opposite reaction to this incident. They would certainly have had questions about the reality of his being saved then – that he valued the Lord so little. And when the other disciples asked the Lord around the supper table if they would betray him, this likely shows a trembling faith about themselves rather than no suspicions about Judas spiritual standing. But inevitably, like all hypocrites, many around him had limited exposure to him. They didn't know his private life. And like all other hypocrites it was only a matter of time before he revealed himself in his true colours.

Hypocrisy is hard to maintain. The mask takes effort and with the passage of time there is an increasing likelihood of it being unmasked or slipping up or revealing itself in some way. Its one thing to start but hard to maintain it and increasingly wearisome to continue. The numbers that could continue hypocrisy decrease as time increases. The occasional person will maintain it for a longer period but this is exceptional as in Judas case.

There is increasing resentment of the effort involved in maintaining a spiritual front which they hate more and more. The unsaved heart breaks out in sin sooner rather than later. Judas managed to keep his mask on for an unusual length of time.

So, if people appear not to sin in all areas of their lives and this is sustained then they can be judged as likely to be saved.

Edwards comments:

“It must be noted, that no external manifestations and outward appearances whatever, that are visible to the world, are infallible evidences of being saved. These manifestations that have been mentioned, are the best that people can have; and they are such as oblige Christians entirely to embrace professors as saints, and love them and rejoice in them as the children of God, and are sufficient to give them as great satisfaction about them, as is ever necessary to guide them in their conduct, or for any purpose in this world. But nothing that appears to them in others, can be sufficient to produce an *absolute certainty* about the state of others souls: because they do not see their hearts, nor can they see all their external behaviour; much of it is in secret, and hidden from everyone else’s eyes; and it is impossible certainly to determine how far a man may go in many external appearances and imitations of grace, from other principles. Though undoubtedly, if others could see so much of people’s practice, as their own consciences may see of it, it might be an infallible evidence of their state.”

Religious Affections: Gracious and holy affections have their fruit in Christian practice by Jonathan Edwards

John Calvin makes remarks in his commentary on Matthew chapter seven:

“*Not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord.* Christ extends his discussion further: he speaks not only about *false prophets*, who rush onto the flock to tear and devour them, but about mercenary people, who insinuate themselves, under fair appearances, as pastors, though they have no feeling of piety. This doctrine includes all hypocrites, whatever may be their position, but at present he refers particularly to pretended teachers, who seem to excel others. He not only directs his discussion towards them, to rouse them from the indifference, in which they lie asleep like drunk people, but also

warns believers, not to estimate such masks beyond their proper value. In a word, he declares that, as soon as the doctrine of the Gospel will begin to bear fruit by obtaining many disciples, there will not only be very many of the common people who falsely and hypocritically submit to it, but even in the rank of pastors there will be the same treachery, so that they will deny by their actions and life what they claim with the mouth. Whoever desires to be counted as true disciples, must labor to devote himself, sincerely and honestly, to the exercises of a new life. In the Gospel of Luke, it is a general reproof: *Why call you me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?*"

AND,

"We have not made good our point until we deal with the other false argument: since James places a part of justification in works. If you would make James consistent with the other Scriptures and with himself, you must give the word *justify*, as used by him, a different meaning from what it has with Paul. In the sense of Paul we are said to be justified when the remembrance of our unrighteousness is obliterated and we are counted righteous. Had James had the same meaning it would have been absurd for him to quote the words of Moses, "Abraham believed God," &c. The context runs like this: "Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness." If it is absurd to say that the effect was prior to its cause, either Moses falsely declares in that passage that Abraham's faith was imputed for righteousness or Abraham, by his obedience in offering up Isaac, did not merit righteousness. Before the existence of Ishmael, who was a grown youth at the birth of Isaac, Abraham was justified by his faith. How then can we say that he obtained justification by an obedience which followed long after? Wherefore, either James erroneously inverts the proper order (this it were impious to suppose), or he did not mean to say that he was justified, as if he deserved to be deemed just. What then? It appears certain

that he is speaking of the manifestation, not of the imputation of righteousness, as if he had said, Those who are justified by true faith prove their justification by obedience and good works, not by a bare and imaginary semblance of faith. In one word, he is not discussing the mode of justification, but requiring that the justification of believers shall be operative. And as Paul contends that men are justified without the aid of works, so James will not allow any to be regarded as justified who are destitute of good works. Due attention to the scope will thus disentangle every doubt; for the error of our opponents lies chiefly in this, that they think James is defining the mode of justification, whereas his only object is to destroy the depraved security of those who emptily pretended faith as an excuse for their contempt of good works. Therefore, let them twist the words of James as they may, they will never extract out of them more than the two propositions: That an empty appearance of faith does not justify, and that the believer, not contented with such an imagination, shows his justification by good works.”

*Institutes of the Christian religion by John Calvin:
Book three, chapter seventeen*

A person cannot be judged on the basis of isolated instances of sin, even heinous sin. Patterns of behaviour indicate more accurately their spiritual state. People can seem to do good in one area of their behaviour but still may be hypocrites – a persons consistent predominant behaviour in all areas over time is a truer reflection of their state. There are rare instances in the biblical account that saved people have committed more wicked sins such as David’s murder and adultery. These exceptions are in contrast to the biblically recorded behaviour of most saints.

Also, it is difficult to prove from the extreme sinfulness of a particular act of sin, that someone is not saved except if the sin is of the kind that is essentially an utter rejection of God, as for example that outlined in Romans chapter one. Apart from this it is not possible to judge a persons spiritual state from isolated instances of sin which, in the case of true Christians, only serves to prove they are not remotely perfect and that they cannot depend on themselves to be kept from sin:

“For *there is* not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not”
Ecclesiastes 7 v 20

“Because David did *that which was* right in the eyes of the LORD, and turned not aside from any *thing* that he commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite.”

1st kings 15 v 5

Even our own daily experience reminds us that we all have a sense and awareness of others doing right or wrong in their behaviour. People scold and reprimand their children for doing wrong things. People feel wronged and very grieved when wrong is done to them, often criticizing others wrongdoing. Unsaved people in certain situations and under certain constraints and conditions even admit to their own guilt. This shows us that all acknowledge and perceive a clear difference between right and wrong behaviour and expect others to do right. This expectation is even greater for people who claim to be saved, to be followers and imitators of Christ the holy one.

“(For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;)”

Romans 2 v 13–15

The sins people commit may have mitigating factors but they are still sinful. They may sin in ignorance or have misconstrued or poorly understood views of right and wrong which lessen the degree of sinfulness of their action. A person may have a change in their mental state as a result a disorder of our physical bodies which lessens their level of responsibility before God. Take for example Nebuchadnezzar who lost his power of reason and became insane:

“The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles’ *feathers*, and his nails like birds’ *claws*. And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion

is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation:”
Daniel 4 v 33,34

An objection to judging others that may be raised results from a misinterpretation of the following verse:

“Judge not, that ye be not judged.”
Matthew 7 v 1

However, this refers not to all types of judgement of another’s behaviour but rather an hypocritical, uncharitable judging and the context of the verse reveals this:

“For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam *is* in thine own eye?

Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye.”
Matthew 7 v 2–5

In summary then, scripture essentially implies a judgement can be made between good and bad behaviour and it attributes good behaviour to the saints or righteous and bad behaviour to the unsaved or wicked. To argue otherwise is antisciptural. When the following passage is considered the evidence for making a judgement of others spiritual state is clear. The apostle Paul in writing to one church makes clear assessments of others characters and draws a contrast between the wicked world and various examples of good Christian character:

“Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain. Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all. For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me.

But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state. For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's. But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel. Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me. But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly.

Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellowsoldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants., Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation: Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me.”

Philippians 2 v 14–25,29,30

CHAPTER 10

GOSPEL BEHAVIOUR, SIN EXPOSED AND BIBLICAL METAPHORS

God doesn't save people to be as wicked as they were before. If Christians were not different in behaviour it would contradict the claims of the gospel to produce repentance in a person and those yet unsaved observing the gospel would reject it. People not in the church and those hearing the gospel would not know it was really true and genuine unless they saw Christians behaving rightly and doing good instead of the evil that the unsaved person does. If Christians acted badly towards others and treated them just as badly as people who are unsaved they would reject Christianity and the gospel as fraudulent. The truth is, the gospel does really save people from not only the punishment of sin but from the power of sin. It really changes people's behaviour and this change is seen and known to others around them.

Christians witness to unsaved people by telling them to repent, turn from sin and change their wrong behavior. This message must be said humbly and lovingly while pointing to the perfect example, Christ. It should not be said in a proud self righteous manner especially as people are saved only because God, in his grace has chosen them to be saved.

How can Christians tell others this message to repent if they haven't changed their own wrong behaviour to something good and if that change cant be clearly seen by the unsaved people they are telling to repent? In that case, it would be hypocritical to tell others to repent when they hadn't done so themselves. They must tell people who may not be regarded as extremely wicked and seem more respectable in society, not only that they

must give up ideas of their own righteousness and believe in Christ's saving righteousness but also that they must repent of their sin. This implies they are telling them they must give up their wicked behaviour as well as to believe. It would be an insult to Christ who is the Saviour from sin if Christians claimed a person could be saved from sins punishment but could happily continue sinning.

No, there must be a substantial change in a persons behaviour if they are truly saved even though they are still a great distance away from moral perfection.

“Only let your conversation (conduct) be as it becometh (suitable to) the gospel of Christ”
Phillipians 1 v 27

In old age people can give clear evidence of their being saved even although many of their past evil deeds cannot be reversed. This is irrelevant so long as behaviour and attitudes are comprehensively and consistently changed.

Peoples actions have a long term perspective as their effects are felt by others. The bible tells us the memory of the just is blessed. That is their good actions, their gospel behaviour, leaves good effects on those they have left behind when they die. It is like the fragrance of a flower when it has been in one place then moved to another – its pleasant scent lingers.

People can do good or evil after they have died with the effect of some of their actions extending way beyond their death, even for generations. Conversely it is possible to sin against people even after they have died – to slander the reputation they had for example – which God will also judge.

This overarching perspective is relevant because it has ultimate consequences in the last day of history, the day of judgement and so the subject under consideration. In the second part of Matthew twenty five, Christ describes at the day of judgement the good actions that the saved did do and the unsaved did not do. Examining the kind of actions done by the saved they were clearly visible to everyone and very public deeds. These verses again show that the behaviour of the saved is clearly seen and known by the unsaved to be different to their own behaviour and that knowing this will condemn the unsaved in the day of judgement. The unsaved have seen the deeds of the saved during their lives and this condemns them and they know they have no excuse:

“When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And

before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.”

Matthew 25 v 31–46

There may be people in the church who view and are influenced by other members who claim to be saved but live sinful rather than godly lives. They may then measure themselves by this wrong behaviour and so go to hell on a lie. This corrupting influence may spread and as a result the outside world look on and may see no difference in behaviour in even a whole church of so called Christians who have all influenced one another despite a claim to the contrary. Therefore the conclusion may be drawn there is no point in following the gospel and the spiritual tragedy snowballs with those outside the church rejecting it and they are also then lost eternally. An authentic gospel witness is critical, an absolute necessity!

The gospel has its own light of truth. People who have contact with it are culpable if they reject it and chose darkness and wickedness. As said already if people observe others who claim to be saved and see they are no difference in their moral behaviour they will often not believe the gospel because they think it makes no difference to peoples lives. If people see so called Christians around them acting no differently towards them and others they come to regard the gospel as only a theory, an opinion and not reality or fact.

Those who reject the gospel because of others bad example are still culpable, but people are more so if they see the gospel changing lives and behaviour and still reject it. The gospel claims, and indeed does, make a person good in their behaviour.

“For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly.”
Mark 6 v 20

“Young men likewise exhort to be sober minded. In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine *shewing* uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.”
Titus 2 v 6–8

“Having your conversation(conduct) honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.”
1st Peter 2 v 12

“Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation(conduct) of the wives; While they behold your chaste conversation (conduct)coupled with fear.” 1st Peter 3 v 1,2

“Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation (conduct)in Christ.”
1st Peter 3 v 16

When the day of judgment arrives one of the reasons the wicked will stand condemned is because the holy lives of the saints were witnessed by them and were a damning testimony against them in that they did not repent.

The unsaved are called wicked not just because they do not have the righteousness of Christ to make them acceptable with God but because they performed evil actions in their lives:

“Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?” 1st Corinthians 6 v 3

“By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.” Hebrews 11 v 7

“For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men:” 1st Peter 2 v 15

How could Christians silence foolish unsaved people unless those people observed their well doing or obedience as the verse states? The consciences of the unsaved are convicted as they view the holy behaviour of the unsaved. So the saints are termed salt as the wicked are restrained in their wickedness as a result e.g. when evil king Saul was pursuing David to murder him:

“After whom is the king of Israel come out? after whom dost thou pursue? after a dead dog, after a flea. The LORD therefore be judge, and judge between me and thee, and see, and plead my cause, and deliver me out of thine hand. And it came to pass, when David had made an end of speaking these words unto Saul, that Saul said, Is this thy voice, my son David? And Saul lifted up his voice, and wept. And he said to David, Thou art more righteous than I: for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil. And thou hast shewed this day how that thou hast dealt well with me: forasmuch as when the LORD had delivered me into thine hand, thou killedst me not.” 1st Samuel 24 v 14–18

Clearly the saved would not be called salt or a preservative of good unless the unsaved could see the difference in the behaviour of the righteous compared to their own. The saved could not tell the unsaved to give up sin if the unsaved cannot see what sins the saved have stopped doing. It makes

a mockery of the gospel message if it doesn't produce repentance clearly viewed by all.

Unsaved people are glad and gloat on the occasions when the saved lower their standards. They feel freer to commit sin. They want to drag the saved down to their level. They hate holiness because it condemns their behaviour.

A person's spiritual state then is known by what he produces – if it is good or evil – by his moral behavior. This same principle is stated in many places in the bible where it uses the metaphor of a tree producing fruit. The following quotes show that meaning of the term fruit is godly behavior. We begin with the verses preceding our title text:

“Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither *can* a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.”

Matthew 7 v 17–21

In other words Christ is saying whoever not only talks about, but does, his fathers will is saved, and this is the nature of what they produce and it is perceived by others. What Christ means by fruit is further confirmed and explained in the parallel gospel passage:

“And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but perceivest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Either how canst thou say to thy brother, Brother, let me pull out the mote that is in thine eye, when thou thyself beholdest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother's eye. For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. For every tree is known by his own fruit. For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which

is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh. And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"

Luke 6 v 41–46

"Blessed *is* the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight *is* in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. The ungodly *are* not so: but *are* like the chaff which the wind driveth away."

Psalm 1 v 1–4

"The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing;"

Psalm 92 v 12–14

"Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to *our* father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham."

Luke 3 v 7,8

"He spake also this parable; A certain *man* had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser(gardener) of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth(burdens) it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung *it*: And if it bear fruit, *well*: and if not, *then* after that thou shalt cut it down."

Luke 13 v 6–9

"That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God."

Philippians 1 v 10,11

“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timotheus *our* brother, To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse: Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love *which ye have* to all the saints, For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel; Which is come unto you, as *it is* in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as *it doth* also in you, since the day ye heard *of it*, and knew the grace of God in truth: As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellowservant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ; Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit. For this cause we also, since the day we heard *it*, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;” Colossians 1 v 1–10

“And let ours also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful.” Titus 3 v 14

“Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.”

Hebrews 12 v 11

Christ himself confirmed this metaphor to mean good actions in the passage in John chapter 15, explaining the meaning of the term fruit as obedience to Himself:

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every *branch* that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye *are* the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without

me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast *them* into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.”
 John 15 v 1–10

When the ‘fruits’ of the Holy Spirit in a persons life are considered it is self evident from the kind of changes described in the saved person that others will know their effects because they are essentially in at least some respects the manner in which actions are done to others. These fruits could be argued to be only an ideal to be aimed but not realized. This is disproved however, by the words following the list of fruits in Galatians. True Christians have crucified the flesh – they not only try and fail – but actually do, produce holy fruits, holy works with the text itself stating this kind of behaviour is ‘manifest’. Also since they are the produce of Gods own Spirit they will most certainly be a reality in peoples experience.

“Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told *you* in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.”
 Galatians 5 v 18–24

Christians are termed lights in the world. They shine, or imitate Christ, which implies in it being noticed by the unsaved. God does not save people to be only a little changed, a little different, barely distinguishable from the unsaved but to be clear witnesses for him, a clear testimony to others that God makes them holy. They are a torch, a beacon testifying to the reality of God and his power to turn them from sin to godliness. A person may think they love God – do they ‘love’ him enough to change their behaviour?

CHAPTER 11

HYPOCHRISY AND REALITY

By contrast an unsaved person may think they are saved similarly to those people mentioned in our text, and can, for some time, appear to do good works. They are unable to sustain this and they decline and abandon their course of action. If all their behaviour were seen they would be shown to be unsaved. Examples of this are Demas(new testament) and king Joash(old testament). They were deluded, genuinely believing they were saved.

Hypocrites on the other hand know they are not saved but try to make others believe that they are saved for personal advantage e.g. Judas and his greed. The group in the New testament who are a clear example of the hypocrite or deliberate actor are the Pharisees. They regarded themselves as religious people but Christ dispelled that myth to them. Only a limited aspect or part of their behaviour is viewed in public. Those who knew them as private citizens and were exposed to more of their behaviour saw their hypocrisy and that they were in reality evil – their close contacts and families, for example. In the clearest and fullest explanation of what they were, Christ in Matthew chapter twenty three shows they talked of doing good but did not do what they themselves said. They engaged in those public religious activities to try and persuade people they were good and for their own gain.

“Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, Saying
The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat: All therefore
whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do
not ye after their works: for they say, and do not. For they bind
heavy burdens and grievous to be born, and lay them on men’s

shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi... Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity."

Matthew 23

"Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after. Likewise also the good works of some are manifest beforehand; and they that are otherwise cannot be hid."

1 Timothy 5 v 25

The verse in Timothy clearly says that for some unsaved people they have hidden sins which will only be revealed at the day of judgement making a reference to hypocrites like the Pharisees who were seen as sinners by those who knew them in more than their public capacity. Similarly some good works of saved people are humbly done in a private rather than a public capacity but will shine out on the judgement day. This verse also states that those unsaved whose evil deeds are 'otherwise' cannot be hidden from others, 'beforehand' or, in other words, during this life, rather than at the judgement.

Although the unsaved may delight when they recognize a hypocrite, their claim that all Christians must be hypocrites is not valid. In fact it is quite the opposite. The fact that there is a possibility of hypocrisy serves to prove that there must also be a reality. It is also true that the saved, being imperfect have a degree of insincerity in their lives. But again this contrasts with their rest of their testimony and witness and so it is usually those

people who are fiercely opposed to truth, will use it against the Gospel cause. Certainly if there are no good works or obedience, there is no faith – that person is unsaved as the following texts clearly demonstrate:

“For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be(are) obedient in all things.”

2nd Corinthians 2 v 9

“Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some *others*, epistles of commendation to you, or *letters* of commendation from you? Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men. *Forasmuch as ye are* manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.”

2nd Corinthians 3 v 1–3

“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, *even as* by the Spirit of the Lord.”

2nd Corinthians 3 v 18

“Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men. And we have sent with them our brother, whom we have oftentimes proved diligent in many things, but now much more diligent, upon the great confidence which *I have* in you. Whether *any do enquire* of Titus, *he is* my partner and fellowhelper concerning you: or our brethren *be enquired of*, *they are* the messengers of the churches, *and* the glory of Christ. Wherefore shew ye to them, and before the churches, the proof of your love, and of our boasting on your behalf.”

2nd Corinthians 8 v 21–24

“And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.

Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.”

2nd Corinthians 11 v 14,15

“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. For if a man think himself to be something,

when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For every man shall bear his own burden. Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things. Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all *men*, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.” Galatians 6 v 1–10

The following verses make a clear link between those saved, their righteous behaviour and their example to others in their actions. Paul bases his knowledge that these people are elect or saved on their external, visible and upright moral behaviour:

“We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father; Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost. So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.” 1st Thessalonians 1 v 2 –7

“For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God. Ye *are* witnesses, and God *also*, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe:” 1st Thessalonians 2 v 9,10

“For this is the will of God, *even* your sanctification,”

1 Thessalonians 4 v 3

“And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; And to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake. *And* be at peace among yourselves.” 1st Thessalonians 5 v 12,13

“We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth; So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure.” 2nd Thessalonians 1 v 3,4

“If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly.” Titus 1 v 6

“Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom *be* glory for ever and ever. Amen.” Hebrews 13 v 20,21

“Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth(see) himself, and goeth his way, and straightway(immediately) forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth *therein*, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the word, this man shall be blessed in his deed.” James 1 v 19–25

Examples from the old testament of this change in moral behaviour of the saved are King David, Asa and also Caleb. They were not sinless but good predominated clearly, and obviously, throughout their lives except at times of backsliding. They were called godly and could be seen as such in their behavior. God, through the scripture writers, describes the product

of a persons heart as their moral behaviour or as it is compared to active motion or 'walking'. It can be thought of as motion in a Godward direction. The following passages contrast righteous and wicked behaviour and Gods verdict towards them:

“Now in the eighteenth year of king Jeroboam the son of Nebat reigned Abijam over Judah. Three years reigned he in Jerusalem. And his mother’s name *was* Maachah, the daughter of Abishalom. And he walked in all the sins of his father, which he had done before him: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father. Nevertheless for David’s sake did the LORD his God give him a lamp in Jerusalem, to set up his son after him, and to establish Jerusalem: Because David did *that which was* right in the eyes of the LORD, and turned not aside from any *thing* that he commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite. And there was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all the days of his life. Now the rest of the acts of Abijam, and all that he did, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? And there was war between Abijam and Jeroboam. And Abijam slept with his fathers; and they buried him in the city of David: and Asa his son reigned in his stead. And in the twentieth year of Jeroboam king of Israel reigned Asa over Judah. And forty and one years reigned he in Jerusalem. And his mother’s name *was* Maachah, the daughter of Abishalom. And Asa did *that which was* right in the eyes of the LORD, as *did* David his father. And he took away the sodomites out of the land, and removed all the idols that his fathers had made. And also Maachah his mother, even her he removed from *being* queen, because she had made an idol in a grove; and Asa destroyed her idol, and burnt *it* by the brook Kidron. But the high places were not removed: nevertheless Asa’s heart was perfect with the LORD all his days.”

1st Kings 15 v 1–14

AND,

And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, *which were* of them that searched the land, rent their clothes: And they spake unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying, The land, which we passed through to search it, *is* an exceeding

good land. If the LORD delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey. Only rebel not ye against the LORD, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they *are* bread for us: their defence is departed from them, and the LORD *is* with us: fear them not. But all the congregation bade stone them with stones. And the glory of the LORD appeared in the tabernacle of the congregation before all the children of Israel. And the LORD said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them? I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they. And Moses said unto the LORD, Then the Egyptians shall hear *it*, (for thou broughtest up this people in thy might from among them;) And they will tell *it* to the inhabitants of this land: *for* they have heard that thou LORD *art* among this people, that thou LORD art seen face to face, and *that* thy cloud standeth over them, and *that* thou goest before them, by day time in a pillar of a cloud, and in a pillar of fire by night. Now *if* thou shalt kill *all* this people as one man, then the nations which have heard the fame of thee will speak, saying, Because the LORD was not able to bring this people into the land which he sware unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness. And now, I beseech thee, let the power of my Lord be great, according as thou hast spoken, saying, The LORD *is* longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing *the guilty*, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth *generation*. Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now. And the LORD said, I have pardoned according to thy word: But *as truly as* I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD. Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; Surely they shall not see the land which I sware unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it: But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with

him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it.”

Numbers 14 v 6–24

In the final quote, the behaviour and destiny of the unsaved is clearly outlined and starkly contrasted with the saved person. The defining characteristic of the unsaved in this particular passage is that they lived in a manner that utterly disregarded almighty God, their ultimate judge and arbiter over their actions:

“But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or *that* thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth? Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee. When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him, and hast been partaker (participates) with adulterers. Thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit. Thou sittest *and* speakest against thy brother; thou slanderest thine own mother’s son. These *things* hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether *such an one* as thyself: *but* I will reprove thee, and set *them* in order before thine eyes. Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear *you* in pieces, and *there be* none to deliver. Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth *his* conversation (conduct) *aright* will I shew the salvation of God.”

Psalm 50 v 16–23



SECTION THREE

"HAVE WE NOT PROPHESED IN THY NAME?
AND IN THY NAME CAST OUT DEVILS?
AND IN THY NAME DONE MANY
WONDERFUL WORKS?"



CHAPTER 12

WHAT IS SIN?

The testimony of the gospel may be corrupted by those who claim to promote it. Instead of didactically declaring things to be morally wrong they may only say they believe them to be wrong. This a relative morality instead of Gods absolute moral authority over us as his creatures. What God tells us is wrong, is wrong. It isn't that his voice carries more weight than other voices. He has an absolute right over us to do with us as he wills or choses. The nature of sin is shown to us in His word, the bible and through his Holy Spirit showing us the fully orbbed meaning of his words in our consciences.

In our title text many people did not recognize their sin, their lack of heart and behaviour change. What then is sin? What kind of change in behaviour is referred to in the text?

This group of people did not seem idle rather but active. They did not recognize their behaviour as sin but thought it was righteous – “didn't we do this” they said e.g. prophesying(or preaching), casting out devils or other wonderful works. How was their activity not of the right kind?

In the verse prior to our text it teaches that only those who do Gods will who will enter heaven and not those who think they do Gods will but are, in reality, following their own will.

“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven”
Matthew 7 v 21

“Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the

heavenly vision: But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet(suitable) for repentance.” Acts 26 v 19,20

So our text teaches us that people may think that they have repented of sin, are saved and are doing good when they have no real idea of what sin is. They may think sin is one thing when it is something completely different. This is indeed a terrible mistake to make:

“there is a way that seemeth right unto a man but the end thereof are the ways of death” Proverbs 16 v 25

What we will consider now is what the true meaning of sin is.

Sin is disobeying Gods law. That law is the standard, the rule which we are required by Gods authority over us to obey. God is in a different relationship to the law to those subject to it such as angels and people. He is the authority, judge and adjudicator of those subject to his law. All the goodness people and angels can have is derived from and maintained by God. The law expresses what he is in his character or his moral goodness. It is an expression of Gods will for us as creatures and our duty to do that will. The law shows us how we should behave in our thoughts, words and actions.

But what kind of behaviour is described? It is not teaching us about physical behaviours or activities relating to the physical aspect of our existence. It doesn't regard medical analysis and treatment of our constitution or comment on how we relate to scientific aspects of the material world around us for example.

It does refer to the the immaterial or spiritual world around us. It principally concerns the spirit or as we considered and termed it earlier, the heart. It is a guide about our hearts and what they produce practically. But what does this mean in practice or in our experience?

The law governs how we ought to behave towards God and others. It governs any aspect of our lives and experience that is a part of our relationship with and towards them. Its teaching includes our heart attitude as well as our actions towards them. We can know how to obey God clearly, only because he has revealed it to us in his word, as a whole, the bible.

The different particulars of the law are set out for us in ten principles in the commandments which point us in specific directions as to how we

are how we are to behave towards God and others, in the various ways we relate to them – for example Sabbath keeping, honesty, theft, chastity etc.

The general keeping of the law is to love God and others, and to disobey it general, or to sin, is to love ourselves exclusively which is essentially selfishness or self-centredness. It is a lack of love to God and others. It is exclusive, excessive love to self which results from this. In other words sin is selfishness. That is self love that doesn't include God or others but excludes them and encompasses only self. It is enmity against God. It is loving yourself instead of God and others. It is hatred of God and others.

The definition of sin or disobeying Gods law when considered in general, is to love yourself excessively and the selfish thoughts, words and actions produced as a result of this. It is selfishness in heart and life. It is selfish motives, selfish attitudes and selfish behaviour. It results in those conjoint twins-sin and misery.

There is a seething, simmering world of ill will and resentment that exists inside people instead of love to God and others. Sadly, It manifests itself in their behaviour causing utter misery for themselves and others. They have no rest or peace within and they cause disturbance to their fellow man.

“Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second *is* like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” Matthew 22 v 37–41

“And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments *is*, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this *is* the first commandment. And the second *is* like, *namely* this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these. And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he:

And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love *his* neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said

unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst(dare) ask him *any question*.” Mark 12 v 29–34

“For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if *there be* any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love *is* the fulfilling of the law.” Romans 13 v 9

“For all the law is fulfilled in one word, *even* in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” Galatians 5 v 14

The idea in the following verse is that love is the common comprehensive source for all graces and good attitudes:

“Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also *do* ye. And above all these things *put on* charity(love), which is the bond of perfectness.” Colossian 3 v 12–14

“Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and *of* a good conscience, and *of* faith unfeigned: From which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling; Desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm.” 1st Timothy 1 v 5–7

We all have some kind of relationship with God – is it one of love towards him or of hatred or ill will?

Sin is hatred of God for what he is in himself and his authority over us as sinners. It is a rebellion, not wanting to bow to his will and worship him. It s a rejection of Christ as divine as well as human:

“But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this *man* to reign over us.” Luke 19 v 14

Contrast that attitude and spirit with the opposite spirit in both old and new testament examples:

“And might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation; a generation *that* set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not steadfast with God.”
 Psalm 78 v 8

“Because the carnal(unsaved) mind *is* enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.”

Romans 8 v 7

A relationship of humility and reverence towards God and worship of him with love to him and others is what he requires from us:

“Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?”
 Micah 6 v 6–8

The saved act out of love to Christ (who is God) and for his honour and glory. Another eminent Christian writer remarks on the subject:

“Sin and self are synonymous terms, for as someone has quaintly pointed out the centre of sin is ‘I’, that is why when the church confesses ‘all we like sheep have gone astray’ she defines it by saying ‘we have turned every one to his own way.’ If sin and selfishness are synonymous then grace and unselfishness are inseparable, for when the love of God is shed abroad in the heart, there is awakened a genuine concern for the good of our fellows, and therefore will the Christian seek to refrain from what would injure them.”

A.W. Pink *The Life of David Volume 2 – his mighty men*

Christ went into more detail in his sermon on the mount in Matthew chapter five. Different types of sinful attitude are included in this general term of selfishness or selfish love such as pride, jealousy, lust etc.

Selfishness or selfish love in a person or devil essentially promotes itself and desires all others to be subjection to it, just as the devil tempted Christ to bow before him. Sin is ultimately against God even if in the first instance it is committed against others. It wants God dethroned and self put in his

place. Evil powers can cooperate to achieve their own promotion if cooperation furthers their self interest even more. Also there can be competing self interests in an unsaved person or group where incompatible objectives are desired or aimed at.

All unsaved people display this by being partial in their treatment of others. They display the party spirit. They appear good to some but not to others where there is no gain to be had or their pride prevents them. The party spirit proves not only that they don't love people outside their own party but that they don't really love anyone inside their party either. Because they don't love some people it means they don't really love anyone other than themselves. Un saved people are selfish, loving you not as a person but for what you can give them or provide them with. Sins deceit in people lies in that they are deceived into thinking they do good for others and God when in fact they are serving self interest. Some people may even claim to be religious but are in fact very deceived.

Some religious people may think they love God but their delusion is shown by their neglecting to obey Gods law in relation to other people. They think they are 'religious' and avoid lying, swearing and perform many church duties and Christian activities even.

The problem is if the last six of the ten commandments aren't kept then neither are the first four, in reality. People may attempt to do right towards God and are externally strictly religious towards Him but are unloving in their dealings with people for example.

"They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service."

John 16 v 2

"If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?"

1st john 4 v 20

"And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another. And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it."

2nd John v 5,6

The unsaved may appear to do good. The reality is that it may coincide with advancing their own interest, or, at least, it does not affect their interest or only by a negligible amount. Apparent restraint is often just competing self interest. It is recognized that their self interest would be harmed more to indulge one aspect of it rather than another e.g.

“For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put *him* in prison for Herodias’ sake, his brother Philip’s wife. For John said unto him, It is not lawful for thee to have her. And when he would have put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet.”
Matthew 14 v 3–5

In the following example the distinction is made between selfish, unloving attitudes and actions as compared with loving, self sacrificing ones. It could not be more obvious – the moral bankruptcy of the unsaved and the exemplary lives of the saved. The difference in behaviour is plain and undeniable to others who have contact with them:

“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was.

But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving,

and being deceived. But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” 2nd Timothy 3 v 1–16

This excessive love to self or selfishness has only two general objects. These are towards some aspect of ourselves – our spirit or our body e.g. our spirit – love to self being above others or pride. Examples towards bodily sensations are gluttony or lust and towards both is an excessive love of ease of both body and spirit that leads us to avoid difficulty or opposition involved in doing good – otherwise sometimes called sins of omission:

“For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.”

1st John 2 v 16

“But I keep under my body, and bring *it* into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.”

1st Corinthians 9 v 27

“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar(special) people, zealous of good works.”

Titus 2 v 11–14

Ultimately sinners all love themselves too much- often one of these aspects being predominant- an idol. People have different idols e.g. covetousness, pride, lust. An idol is loved far too much and must be given up in repentance.

“And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? none *is* good, save one, *that is*, God. Thou knowest the commandments,

Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother. And he said, All these have I kept from my youth up. Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me. And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich.” Luke 18 v 19–23

Often loving some idols too much results in other good things being lost as a result e.g. someone loving alcohol too much (in reality the bodily pleasure it gives is what they love) may lose his family. Sin promises much pleasure but ends in misery and, sometimes as a result, premature physical death. Even if it does not do so it is a merely superficial and transitory pleasure:

“For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia.” 2nd Timothy 4 v 10.

“By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.” Hebrews 11 v 24–26

Greed, or the love of money, is the root of evil. This isn’t because we regard money as of value in itself but only because it is the means we use to enrich ourselves. Adultery, for example, happens because a person loves lust too much. Murder often happens because of anger or because a person feels self has been injured too much(pride) instead of forgiving the offender. A less extreme example is criticizing a persons reputation instead of covering faults and wrongs received from them which is ultimately being proud instead of being humble. If a person is humble they are slow to mention and view others faults and quick to admit to their own faults. Keeping the Sabbath is one of the ten commandments which God commands us to follow devotedly. It means that for each week one seventh of a persons time is devoted to God in worship, performing essential activities only on that particular day(no leisure) and so less is given to self interests. Giving others their rightful place of authority – showing them their due respect instead

of arrogantly asserting selfish interest is the principle implied in the fifth commandment. Faithfulness and dutifulness in marriage is serving another person – the spouse – and also rejecting selfish adulterous attraction. Paul the apostle rebukes Christians who were going to a court of law to resolve disputes between each other telling them the Christian spirit is not self interested:

“Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather *suffer yourselves to be defrauded?*”

1st Corinthians 6 v 7

When anger is considered it is said to be righteous if a person is angry on behalf of others or God but unrighteous when it is only selfish.

In any saved sinner righteous anger very easily becomes selfish anger and pride because they still retain corruption. The prevailing attitude of their lives is not anger but meekness and gentleness.

Unsaved people especially earlier in life, may have an imaginary ideal about how good and decent they are and how they should act but when the moment comes they act selfishly. Their conscience convicts them of their sinful action and a slow realization dawns of what they really are. But they do not change and knowing what they are they ignore the voice of conscience. Sinning becomes easier and their heart becomes harder. As time goes on they find themselves more selfish and proud and callous than they ever imagined they would be. As someone once said:

“man knows the beginning of sin, but who knows the bounds of the progress of it”.

Unsaved people go much farther than they ever intended or expected to in lust, anger, resentment, jealousy, lying and many other sins. It doesn't leave a good taste in the mouth or a good impression of themselves. They discover all too readily that sin is completely out of their control and it is wreaking havoc towards themselves, their families and others. They realize it is a force within sweeping all before it. Even in the saved they learn the difficult lesson that they should not trust their own fickle hearts but to rely on the Lord alone to avoid the power of sin within. For the wicked however, sin consumes them and the peace and calm in their lives. In that perfect world, Heaven all residents love one another completely. By

way of contrast, in hell they all hate one another with a burning ‘perfect’ hatred.

Sin within us then, is an intractable spiritual problem. How helpless we are spiritually to deal with it. John Owen comments:

“By this sorry reward doth this law(the law or force of sin) keep the world in obedience to its commands; and experience shows us what power it has to influence the minds of people. It also has punishments that it threatens men with who labour to cast off its yoke. Whatever evil, trouble, or danger in the world, attends gospel obedience, — whatever hardship or violence is to be offered to the sensual part of our natures in a strict course of self denial, — sin makes use of it, as if they were punishments attending the neglect of its commands. By these it prevails on the “fearful,” who shall have no share in life eternal, Revelation 21:8. And it is hard to say by which of these, its pretended rewards or pretended punishments, it mostly prevail, in which of them its greatest strength lies. By its rewards it entices people to sins of commission, as they are called, in ways and actions tending to the satisfaction of its lusts. By its punishments it induce people to the omitting of duties; a course tending to no less a pernicious event than the former. Which of these the law of sin has its greatest success in the souls of men is not evident; because they are seldom or never separated, but equally take place on the same persons.

But what is certain, that by tenders and promises of the pleasures of sin on the one hand, by threats of the deprivation of all sensual contentments and the infliction of temporal evils on the other, it has a great power over the minds of people, often on believers themselves. Unless a people are prepared to reject the reasonings that will offer themselves from the one or other of these, there is no standing before the power of this law of sin.

The world falls before them every day. With what deceit and violence they are urged and imposed on the minds of people we shall afterward declare; as also what advantages they have to prevail on them. Look on the generality of people, and you shall find them wholly by these means at sin’s disposal. Do the profits and pleasures of sin lie before them? — nothing can withhold them from reaching after them. Do difficulties and inconveniences attend the

duties of the gospel? — they will have nothing to do with them; and so are wholly given up to the rule and dominion of this law.

And this light in general we have into the power and efficacy of indwelling sin from the general nature of a law.”

Temptation and Sin by John Owen
On indwelling sin being a ‘law’ (Romans 7 v 21)

It is God the Holy Spirit that enables through his grace a saved person to be loving. The trinity is involved in the process as it is indivisible. Comfort ensues and the saved are caught up in this glorious communion of love, joy, peace and security undergirded by divinity:

“Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works’ sake. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it. If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father’s which sent me.

These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I. And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe. Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me. But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence.

John 14 v 10–31

In the following chapter we will consider by what method that love that God the Holy Spirit produces is manifested practically in the experience of a saved person.

CHAPTER 13

COUNTERING SINFUL SELF

“For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.”

Romans 8 v 13

Obedying Gods law, his ten commandments and all they mean then, is showing our love to God and others. Sin shows love to ourselves alone. It is self worship. It involves self indulgence and self gratification. The real question is perhaps not what is the law but how do we keep it? We do so by loving God and others instead of ourselves. A saved person obeys Gods law by denying themselves in order to counter this excessive love to ourselves. Obedience to the commandments is also denying yourself in the same action, and self denial is the means by which the aim of obedience is achieved. Self denial is utter submission of our will to Gods will as Christ taught:

“And he was withdrawn from them about a stone’s cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.”

Luke 22 v 41,42

Christians are called to be living sacrifices of service to God. It is a sacrificial giving of themselves to God in imitation of their master. They are lives laid down on the altar for Jesus who laid his life down for them and this is done through self denial:

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye

present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God,
which is your reasonable service. Romans 12 v 1

Biblical self denial is not ascetic or monastic – that is withdrawing from legitimate aspects of daily living which are unbiblically considered to be corrupting e.g. contact with unsaved people, marriage, enjoyment of various foods. That philosophy of life is easier than interacting with a hostile world and suffering for Christ in front of others. People in monasteries could never be godly if they could not interact with other people, loving them. Asceticism is, in reality, deprivation of an activity for the persons own sake rather than for the sake of God or others.

Martin Luther who renounced the ascetic life was a pivotal character in Christian history. In his first four ‘theses’ in referring to repentance as resulting from justification by faith he states:

1. Our Lord and master Jesus Christ when he said “*penitentiam agite*”(do repentance) willed that the whole life of believers should be repentance.
2. This word cannot be understand to mean sacramental penance i.e. confession and satisfaction which is administered by the priests.
3. Yet it means not inward repentance; no there is no inward repentance which does not outwardly work mortifications(subduing or subjecting) of the flesh.(sinful human nature)

Note especially the fourth point:

4. The penalty of sin therefore continues so long as hatred of self continues; for this is true inward repentance, and continues until our entrance into the kingdom of heaven.

The new testament constantly exhorts denial of self. Being unselfish in this way is the great evidence of truly believing, of truly being saved. It isn’t just self restraint or doing no harm or even doing good to satisfy a guilty conscience. The great distinguishing mark of Christianity (which is truth) is love to enemies for example. A true Christian is loving and does good and is kind even to those who hurt and abuse and take advantage of them greatly even over a long period, returning good for evil and exerts themselves to try and save enemies from hell-denying himself and loving them even to that extent. Truly saved people also realize this bad treatment they may receive is only a faint shadow of the way unsaved people

treat an infinitely good God – as they also did when they were unsaved. Self denial and following Christ may even mean severe persecution from a persons own family as they singularly strive to do what is right in Gods sight:

“But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you.

And unto him that smiteth thee on the *one* cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloke forbid not *to take thy* coat also. Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask *them* not again. And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.

For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same. And if ye lend *to them* of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and *to the evil*.”

Luke 6 v 27–35

Unselfish love, then, is a self denying love. And God indicates that the way he can be followed is simply, self denial:

“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”

Matthew 6 v 33

Though it is a difficult, sometimes painful process, it is clear that those truly saved have taken steps to deny themselves:

“And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.”

Galatians 5 v 24

“So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple”

Luke 14 v 33

“Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it.”

Luke 17 v 33

“He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.” John 12 v 25

This is the nature of the strait(confined) gate and narrow way as opposed to the broad way of selfishness that leads to destruction. A person that has true faith choses the narrow difficult way of self denial even if it seems to disadvantage them as far as this world is concerned.

“For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” Mark 8 v 36

Faith produces repentance. These two aspects – love and self denial comprise repentance – a heart sorrow for sin against the God you love and the struggle to obey him. Trust in God operates by daily self denial not in a dimly remembered decision made a long time previously to commit to Him.

True faith is counterintuitive. Doing things we don’t want to do, aren’t keen on doing and are difficult to do to serve the interests of God and others is denial of ourselves. Only someone with true faith will do this. The love towards God and others, overcomes the love of self in the heart of the saved. This is that faith which ‘worketh by love’. Unbelief doesn’t accept that doing His will means things work out with the best outcome. God looks after the saveds interests. It is wrong to chose the lesser of two evils. For example it its wrong to neglect some duty with the motive of doing another good. God will take care of the the other duty or need if the immediate duty at hand is done:

“Discipleship is not limited to what you can comprehend—it must transcend all comprehension. Plunge into the deep waters beyond your own comprehension and I will help you comprehend even as I do. Bewilderment is the true comprehension. Not to know where you are going is the true knowledge. My comprehension transcends yours. Thus Abraham went forth from His father and not knowing whither he went. He trusted himself to my knowledge, and cared not for his own, and this he took the right road and came to his journeys end. Behold, that is the way of the cross. You cannot find it yourself, so you must let me lead you as though you were a blind man. Wherefore it is not you, no man, no living creature, but I myself, who instruct you by my Word and Spirit in the way you

should go. Not the work which you choose, not the suffering you devise, but the road which is clean contrary to all you choose or contrive or desire—that is the road you must take. To that I call you and in that you must be my disciple. If you do that, there is the acceptable time and there your master is come” *Martin Luther*

In the old testament one example is in the book of Malachi. God remonstrates with the Jews for their lack of dedication to Him. In the old testament it was an agrarian economy with wealth inherent in the livestock and so the sacrifices of the ceremonial law cost those who fully followed their directions. It was a self denying act that could only be done through faith and the sacrifice itself represented Christ, the only true sacrifice able to satisfy Gods justice, that a believing Jew could grasp hold of:

“And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, *is it* not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, *is it* not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the LORD of hosts.

And now, I pray you, beseech God that he will be gracious unto us: this hath been by your means: will he regard your persons? saith the LORD of hosts. Who *is there* even among you that would shut the doors *for nought*? neither do ye kindle *fire* on mine altar for nought. I have no pleasure in you, saith the LORD of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand. For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name *shall be* great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense *shall be* offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name *shall be* great among the heathen, saith the LORD of hosts. But ye have profaned it, in that ye say, The table of the LORD *is* polluted; and the fruit thereof, *even* his meat, *is* contemptible. Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness *is it!* and ye have snuffed at it, saith the LORD of hosts; and ye brought *that which was* torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering: should I accept this of your hand? saith the LORD. But cursed *be* the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth, and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing: for I *am* a great King, saith the LORD of hosts, and my name *is* dreadful among the heathen.” Malachi 1 v 8–14

“And the king said unto Araunah, Nay; but I will surely buy *it* of thee at a price: neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the LORD

my God of that which doth cost me nothing. So David bought the threshingfloor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver.”

2 Samuel 24 v 24

“By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.”

Hebrews 11 v 24–26

The only way to conquer and overcome sin is utter self denial. All other efforts will fail. This results from a wholehearted love:

“And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast *it* from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not *that* thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast *it* from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not *that* thy whole body should be cast into hell.” Matthew 5 v 29,30

Praying or doing alone are ineffective. Both are necessary. Both are parts of self denial. It is internal denying of sinful thoughts and feelings as well as external sinful behaviours. If external behaviour alone is restrained, the inner ill feeling and hatred remains. Another Christian advised concerning opposition both internal and external:

“Be a living fish swimming against the stream.”

If self is not denied in all areas of life then sin wont be resisted in any one area successfully. If sin of one kind is given in to then, in reality sin is given in to in principle, which means no kind of sin can be resisted. People who have given in one area of life will inevitably be more sinful in other areas of life even if this isn’t immediately showing itself.

Sin given in to may not be recognized. It is subtle and deceptive even in the saved. It may take time for the Christian to diagnose why they have lost their spiritual power:

“But flowers need night’s cool darkness, The moonlight and the dew;
So Christ, from one who loved it, His shining oft withdrew;

And then for cause of absence, My troubled soul I scanned—
But glory, shadeless, shineth In Immanuel's land.”

If sin is given in to then a communication of the gospel message will be ineffective and without influence or spiritual power. When the saved do bear Christ's image to others, they come alongside them, meeting them where they are in their particular circumstances and the unsaved listen because of the message of a holy life spoken in a ‘language of love’ towards them.

Different saved people may have different gifts or be in particular circumstances and may be vulnerable to loving themselves too much in a particular respect and so must deny themselves especially in that specific respect. For example, the intellectual must avoid pride, the beautiful must avoid lust and the rich must avoid greed.

Unsaved people are just not willing to comply with God's terms for salvation or faith in Christ and the life that is involved in following God – repentance, self denial.

The saved realize they must strain and strive and struggle and agonize, giving their whole self and heart to God in obedience and acknowledge their humble dependence on Him and their helplessness without His enabling power. When they give their whole heart to God and evidence this by giving their whole effort in submission to Him then God gives even more spiritual power to fight sin and the joy of the holy Ghost. Not giving all in trying to resist sin and self is termed backsliding. The issue is not being perfect or not sinning at all, but it is exertion with all their capacity and effort to do so. This is one respect in which they can be described as perfect – that of wholeness, completeness, entire or sincere in their effort and attempt to be sinless rather than actually being sinless:

“And said, Remember now, O LORD, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done *that which is* good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore.”

Isaiah 38 v 3

Though they are far from perfection their behaviour is substantially different and they sin substantially less than those with no change of heart. Only those with faith will deny themselves because they believe that doing this has real spiritual effects – that it affects their relationship with God in this and the next world also. Those who have trusted in Christ's self sacrifice as meritorious and therefore are truly motivated – this proves their faith because they love him and strive to obey him.

CHAPTER 14

OVERCOMING SIN THROUGH THE SON

The saved not only have knowledge of what is right but have love to it and greatly exerts themselves to do it. The saved persons love to God includes all three persons of the trinity but the focus of that love is on Christ, Gods Son. Christ is God but it is also true that it is through Christ alone God can be known, revealed and loved. It is through Christ alone that anyone can have a relationship with God and have intimacy with the all holy, infinite being who is inapproachable apart from through the one mediator, the God-man, Jesus.

“For *there is* one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.”
1st Timothy 2 v 5

“God, who at sundry(various) times and in divers(different) manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by *his* Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of *his* glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;”
Hebrews 1 v 1-3

“For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” 2nd Corinthians 4 v 6

The kind of love a Christian has is a love to Christ and his sovereign reign over their lives and they demonstrate this in their concern for the ordinary, every day needs of people and towards their souls which are in danger of hell. Christians are described in the bible as being united to Christ or in Christ. This may seem hard to grasp. Let us compare it to pregnancy. Just as the child is in inside, protected and provided for in the womb of their mother so the saved are in relation to the Saviour. Also the child has the image and likeness of the mother contained in them and the resemblance between the saved and Christ is very close in their moral characteristics.

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”

Galatians 2 v 20

The saved have fellowship with God in Christ. It is like a marriage relationship or friendship with God and as part of that intimate, close relationship they have communion or communication with Him experiencing love, joy and peace when they come into his near presence. God is a spirit and his presence is sensed by us in that internal or spiritual part of us, our heart, or spirit:

“Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me.”

Psalm 51 v 11

“As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so *is* my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit *was* sweet to my taste. He brought me to the banquetting house, and his banner over me *was* love. Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples: for I *am* sick of love. His left hand *is* under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me.

I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake *my* love, till he please. The voice of my beloved! behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills. My beloved is like a roe or a young hart: behold, he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at the windows, shewing himself through the lattice. My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over *and* gone; The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing *of birds* is come,

and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines *with* the tender grape give a *good* smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.

O my dove, *that art* in the clefts of the rock, in the secret *places* of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet *is* thy voice, and thy countenance *is* comely.”

Song of Solomon 2 v 3–14

“What *is* thy beloved more than *another* beloved, O thou fairest among women? what *is* thy beloved more than *another* beloved, that thou dost so charge us. My beloved *is* white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand. His head *is as* the most fine gold, his locks *are* bushy, *and* black as a raven. His eyes *are* as *the eyes* of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, *and* fitly set. His cheeks *are* as a bed of spices, *as* sweet flowers: his lips *like* lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh. His hands *are as* gold rings set with the beryl: his belly *is as* bright ivory overlaid *with* sapphires. His legs *are as* pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold: his countenance *is* as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars. His mouth *is* most sweet: yea, he *is* altogether lovely.”

Song of Solomon 5 v 9–16

“Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard *it*, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name.”

Malachi 3 v 16

“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.” Colossians 3 v 1,2

Christ is all to those he has saved. This relationship of love and fellowship has to be maintained and cultivated:

CH Spurgeon: Evening—January 24th

“Martha was cumbered about much serving.

Luke 10:40

Her fault was not that she *served*: the condition of a servant well

becomes every Christian. "I serve," should be the motto of all the princes of the royal family of heaven. Nor was it her fault that she had "*much* serving." We cannot do too much. Let us do all that we possibly can; let head, and heart, and hands, be engaged in the Master's service. It was no fault of hers that she was busy preparing a feast for the Master. Happy Martha, to have an opportunity of entertaining so blessed a guest; and happy, too, to have the spirit to throw her whole soul so heartily into the engagement. Her fault was that she grew "*cumbered* with much serving," so that she forgot *him*, and only remembered the service. She allowed service to override communion, and so presented one duty stained with the blood of another. We ought to be Martha and Mary in one: we should do much service, and have much communion at the same time. For this we need great grace. It is easier to serve than to commune. Joshua never grew weary in fighting with the Amalekites; but Moses, on the top of the mountain in prayer, needed two helpers to sustain his hands. The more spiritual the exercise, the sooner we tire in it. The choicest fruits are the hardest to rear: the most heavenly graces are the most difficult to cultivate. Beloved, while we do not neglect external things, which are good enough in themselves, we ought also to see to it that we enjoy living, personal fellowship with Jesus. See to it that sitting at the Saviour's feet is not neglected, even though it be under the specious pretext of doing him service. The first thing for our soul's health, the first thing for his glory, and the first thing for our own usefulness, is to keep ourselves in perpetual communion with the Lord Jesus, and to see that the vital spirituality of our religion is maintained over and above everything else in the world."

I come to the garden alone.
 While still the dew is still on the roses
 And the voice I hear falling on my ear
 The son of God discloses

And he walks with me, and talks with me,
 And he tells me I am his own;
 And the joy we share as we tarry there,
 None other has ever known

He speaks, and the sound of his voice,
 Is so sweet the birds hush their singing,
 And the melody that he gave to me
 Within my heart is ringing.

I'd stay in the garden with him
 Though the night around me be falling
 But he bids me go; through the voice of woe
 His voice to me is calling

O Christ, in Thee my soul hath found,
 And found in Thee alone,
 The peace, the joy I sought so long,
 The bliss till now unknown.

Now none but Christ can satisfy,
 None other name for me;
 There's love and life and lasting joy,
 Lord Jesus, found in Thee.

I sighed for rest and happiness,
 I yearned for them, not Thee;
 But, while I passed my Saviour by,
 His love laid hold on me.

I tried the broken cisterns, Lord,
 But, ah, the waters failed!
 Even as I stooped to drink they fled,
 And mocked me as I wailed.

The pleasures lost I sadly mourned,
 But never wept for Thee,
 Till grace the sightless eyes received,
 Thy loveliness to see.

and,

My life flows on in endless song;
 above earth's lamentation,
 I catch the sweet, though far-off hymn
 that hails a new creation.

No storm can shake my inmost calm
while to that Rock I'm clinging.
Since Christ is Lord of heaven and earth,
how can I keep from singing?

Through all the tumult and the strife,
I hear that music ringing.
It finds an echo in my soul.
How can I keep from singing?

What though my joys and comforts die?
I know my Saviour liveth.
What though the darkness gather round?
Songs in the night he giveth.

The peace of Christ makes fresh my heart,
a fountain ever springing!
All things are mine since I am his!
How can I keep from singing?

Christians must place self on the cross and Christ on the throne of their hearts. They are asked to follow Christ's example:

“for consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners
against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.”

Hebrews 12 v 3

“Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what
they do.”

Luke 23 v 34.

Christ loved even his enemies when they were greatly abusing him being submissive to his Father's will. The saved also display this devoted spirit of submission, self denying love and forgiveness to those who maltreat them. God loves his own holy character and is the most worthy being of receiving love. He is supremely lovely. The members of the trinity love one another perfectly. It is selfish love that is the problem which is love to self at the expense of God and others. God loves all his creatures including his enemies in a benevolent sense. But God's special love is reserved for his own saved people who were opposed to him and were his enemies before he saved them. It was self-sacrificing love. No greater act of self sacrifice has

been made by any other human being. It is infinite in its love even to the extent of suffering hells punishment for all his people. It is incomparable. The extent of sins evil against the greatness of Gods love and forgiveness shines out at the cross. Christ was forsaken by his father for a moment for the saved. What a love. What a sacrifice.

“But Jesus called them *unto him*, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.”

Matthew 20 v 25–28

The first sinners were angels. God didn't provide a substitutionary justice for them. They were left to perish. This glorifies the great condescending wisdom and love in the salvation of sinful men. Christs love is marvellously shown towards people who were Gods enemies in the way they can be saved through his atoning blood. Christs death was an offering up of himself to God. All the sacrifices in the old testament revealed Him and his work as being the reality that they only were indicative of.

“For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, *which are* the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.”

Hebrews 9 v 24–26

“By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all*. And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by

one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.
Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us”

Hebrews 10 v 10–15

The saved emulate His example of self sacrifice but there is a great contrast between their actions and the unique substitutionary atoning nature of Christ’s life and death. For example one aspect of the contrast is that their good actions are indeed on behalf of God or others but they cannot and could never remove the guilt of their own or others sins. Christ’s divinity and his humanity uniquely qualified him for his role as the mediator and representative in the covenant of grace as both the great high priest and the sacrifice to establish righteousness for the saints, expiate guilt and satisfy an infinitely holy God. Christ’s death was the culmination of his righteous offering that alone could and did meet the demands of God’s justice. No other death or action in history had the same significance or power in it.

Truly that saying is beautiful:

“For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.” Mark 10 v 45

The martyrs of the Christian church imitate his death in respect of their selfless glorifying of God’s honour rather than loving their own honour and lives. This in contrast to the suicidal Islamists who kill others and expect a reward that will satisfy their self love – namely adulterous lust.

Ordinarily a love to preserving our life is right and good as the sixth commandment informs us but not at the expense of God’s honour e.g. dying a martyr’s death for Christ. This would be too much love towards that aspect of self – the desire to retain body and spirit as they are united in life:

“And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.”
 Revelations 12 v 11

Through their consciences, the devotees of false religion may recognize in some respects the selfishness of sin but are paralysed to change it. Self denial can never be achieved by false religion which contain uninformed and often completely misguided notions of what they must deny themselves in. Christianity shows, through for example, the ten commandments or the sermon on the mount that self must be denied for God and others.

More specifically Christianity teaches submission to Gods will in Christ (not Buddha or Mohammed) changes a person. Followers of these religions may deny things that aren't actually sinful. Buddhism claims to produce self denial, but the heart and actions of the Buddhist are still filled with great corruption.

Only a power outside of ourselves can overcome sin. That power is God the Holy Spirit operating to create a relationship of love towards Christ the saviour. The great motivation is the great love of Christ who sacrificed himself, taking eternal punishment or hell for many in a finite period and dying for them. This alone stimulates true self denial and humility. It was the ultimate possible sacrifice. Mohammed or Buddha never performed anything out of love or suffered for their followers and could never have done so in this manner.

Christ, being God was enabled to bear this awesome weight of guilt and sentence for sin. It is this great self sacrificing love which was towards Christians that is the great motivation for them to love, obey, submit to, serve and imitate him. They can never repay him taking such punishment and being perfect for them. Islam and Buddhism leave people cold and without love. They only seem to their followers to provide a good example. Christ, on the other hand, is the eminent representative of sinners who need do nothing to be saved. He has met mans deepest need of guilt providing lasting forgiveness, whereas false prophets have left people guilt ridden, hopeless and empty. The saved are motivated to do good out of overflowing love to Christ and others not from a sense of self righteous pride or guilt like Muslims or Buddhists. Christs sacrifice rises to be the greatest ever possible love of all and it is why Christianity has become the greatest world religion – the one which will outlast all others. They will be exposed as a lie to all the world at the last judgement day, when the true glory of the Redeemer will be revealed.

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life”
John 3 v 16

“For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And *that* he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.”

2nd Corinthians 5 v 14,15

“Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.”

Ephesians 5 v 1,2

“How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”

Hebrews 9 v 14

The word SIN it contains ‘I’ at the centre of it. This ‘I’ is changed to an ‘O’ of praise towards the SON as the SON substituted and represented others as individuals and took their sin away. In the saved the ‘I’ of sin and self is given up to the SON, Jesus, so the saved repent and are given the ability to be sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

The right love towards ourselves then is to be unselfish and this brings its own reward and pleasure. This is what is meant by loving your neighbour as yourself practically speaking. The order of priority is Jesus, then others, then yourself (JOY) when considering what is the correct kind of actions in a particular set of circumstances. This view also assists in an understanding of how the saved are to conduct themselves in loving their neighbour or others ‘as themselves’ – in other words they are to put God and others interests before their own – in order of priority. As John the Baptist said about Christ and himself:

“He must increase, but I *must* decrease.” John 3 v 30

Another way of thinking about this has been described as the cross in the saveds experience. If we cross out the letter I (self) this makes the emblem of a cross, not doing what we selfishly want but acting in Gods and others interests.

“And he said to *them* all, If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.”

Luke 9 v 23

It is not an easy pathway-’Via Crucis’ or the way of the cross, but it leads to the way of the crown.

“If *there be* therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies,

Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, *being* of one accord, of one mind. *Let* nothing *be done* through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of *things* in heaven, and *things* in earth, and *things* under the earth; And *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of *his* good pleasure.”

Philippians 2 v 1–13

John Owen expands on the centrality of the glory Christ's person as it reveals God as a holy mirror as it were where the saved may see that perfect image reflected in order for their imitation and as the great object of their spiritual desire and worship:

“When God required of the church the first and highest act of religion, the sole foundation of all others — namely, to take him as their God, to own, believe, and trust in him alone as such, (which is wholly due to him for what he is, without any other consideration whatever,) — yet he thought it suitable to add a motive to the performance of that duty from what he had done for them, Exod. xx. 2, 3. The sense of the first command is, that we should take him alone for our God; for he is so, and there is no other. But in the prescription of this duty to the church, he reminds them of the benefits which they had received from him in bringing them out of slavery.

God, in his wisdom and grace, orders all the causes and reasons of our duty, so as that all the rational powers and faculties of our souls

may be exercised in them. Wherefore he does not only propose himself to us, nor is Christ merely proposed to us as the proper object of our affections, but he calls us also to the consideration of all those things that may satisfy our souls that it is the most just, necessary, reasonable and advantageous course for us so to fix our affections an him.

And these considerations are taken from all that he did for us, with the reasons and grounds why he did it. We love him principally and ultimately for what he is; but next and immediately for what he did. What he did for us is first proposed unto us, and it is that which our souls are first affected by. For they are originally acted in all things by a sense of the lack which they have, and a desire of the blessedness which they have not. This directs them to what he has done for sinners; but that leads immediately to the consideration of what he is in himself. And when our love is fixed on him or his person, then all those things, from a sense of our own wants and desires, we were first affected with, become motives to confirming and increasing of that love. This is the constant method of the Scripture; it first proposes to us what the Lord Christ has done for us, especially in the discharge of his sacerdotal office, in his oblation and intercession, with the benefits which we receive by it. By this it leads us to his person, and presses the consideration of all other things to engage our love to him. See Phil. ii. 5–11, with chap. iii. 8–11.”

*Motives unto the love of Christ by John Owen
The glory of Christ Chapter 14.*

“It is, therefore, evident that the life of God in us consists in conformity unto Christ; nor is the Holy Spirit, as the principal and efficient cause of it, given to us for any other end but to unite us to him, and make us like him. Wherefore, the original Gospel duty, which animates and rectifies all others, is a design for conformity to Christ in all the gracious principles and qualifications of his holy soul, in which the image of God in him consists. As he is the prototype and exemplar in the eye of God for the communication of all grace to us, so he ought to be the great example in the eye of our faith in all our obedience unto God, in our compliance with all that he requires of us.

God himself, or the divine nature in its holy perfections, is the ultimate object and idea of our transformation in the renewing of our minds. And, therefore, under the Old Testament, before the incarnation of the Son, he proposed his own holiness immediately as the pattern of the church: “Be ye holy, for the Lord your God is holy,” Lev. xi. 44; xix. 2; xx. 26. But the law made nothing perfect. For to complete this great injunction, there was yet lacking an express example of the holiness required; which is not given us but in him who is “the first-born, the image of the invisible God.”

There was a notion, even among the philosophers, that the principal endeavour of a wise man was to be like God. But in the improvement of it, the best of them fell into foolish and proud imaginations. However, the notion itself was the principal beam of our *primigenial light*, the best relic of our natural perfections; and those who are not some way under the power of a design to be like to God are every way like the devil. But those persons who had nothing but the absolute essential properties of the divine nature to contemplate on in the light of reason, failed all of them, both in the notion itself of conformity unto God, and especially in the practical improvement of it. Whatever men may fancy to the contrary, it is the design of the apostle, in various places of his writings, to prove that they did so, especially Rom. i.; 1 Cor. i.. Wherefore, it was an infinite condescension of divine wisdom and grace, gloriously to implant that image of him which we are to endeavour conformity unto in the human nature of Christ, and then so fully to represent and propose it unto us in the revelation of the Gospel.

The infinite perfections of God, considered absolutely in themselves, are accompanied with such an incomprehensible glory as it is hard to conceive how they are the object of our imitation. But the representation that is made of them in Christ, as the image of the invisible God, is so suited to the renewed faculties of our souls, so congenial unto the new creature or the gracious principle of spiritual life in us, that the mind can dwell on the contemplation of them, and be thereby transformed into the same image.

In this lies much of the life and power of Christian religion, as it resides in the souls of men. This is the prevailing design of the

minds of those that truly believe the Gospel; that they would in all things be like unto Jesus Christ. And I shall briefly show — (1.) *What* is required for this; and, (2.) What is to be done in a way of *duty* for the attaining that end.

A *spiritual light*, to discern the beauty, glory, and amiableness of grace in Christ, is required for this. We can have no real design of conformity unto him, unless we have their eyes who “beheld his glory, the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth,” John i. 14. Nor is it enough that we seem to discern the glory of his person, unless we see a beauty and excellency in every grace that is in him. “Learn of me,” saith he; “for I am meek and lowly in heart,” Matt. xi. 29. If we are not able to discern an excellency in meekness and lowliness of heart, (as they are things generally despised,) how shall we sincerely endeavour after conformity unto Christ in them? The like may be said of all his other gracious qualifications. His zeal, his patience, his self-denial, his readiness for the cross, his love unto his enemies, his benignity to all mankind, his faith and fervency in prayer, his love to God, his compassion towards the souls of men, his unweariedness in doing good, his purity, his universal holiness; — unless we have a spiritual light to discern the glory and amiableness of them all, as they were in him, we speak in vain of any design for conformity to him. And we do not have this, unless God shines into our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ. It is, I say, a foolish thing to talk of the imitation of Christ, whilst really, through the darkness of our minds, we discern not that there is an excellency in the things in which we ought to be like him.

Love unto them so discovered in a beam of heavenly light, is required for the same end. No soul can have a design of conformity unto Christ but his who so likes and loves the graces that were in him, as to esteem a participation of them in their power to be the greatest advantage, to be the most invaluable privilege, that can be attained in this world. It is the savour of his good ointments for which the virgins love him, cleave unto him, and endeavour to be like him. In what we now discourse — namely, of conformity unto him — he is the representative of the image of God unto us. And, if

we do not love and prize above all things those gracious qualifications and dispositions of mind that it consists in, whatever we may pretend of the imitation of Christ in any outward acts or duties of obedience, we have no design of conformity unto him. He who sees and admires the glory of Christ as filled with these graces — as he “was fairer than the children of men,” because “grace was poured into his lips” — unto whom nothing is so desirable as to have the same mind, the same heart, the same spirit that was in Christ Jesus — is prepared to press after conformity to him. And unto such a soul the representation of all these excellencies in the person of Christ is the great incentive, motive, and guide, in and unto all internal obedience unto God. *Lastly*, What we are to labour for, for this conformity may be reduced to two heads.

An opposition to all sin, in the root, principle, and most secret springs of it, or original cleavings to our nature. He “did no sin, neither was there any guile found in his mouth.” He “was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.” He was the “Lamb of God, without spot or blemish;” like unto us, yet without sin. Not the least tincture of sin did ever make an approach to his holy nature. He was absolutely free from every drop of that *fomes* which has invaded us in our depraved condition. Wherefore, to be freed from all sin, is the first general part of an endeavour for conformity to Christ. And although we cannot perfectly attain it in this life, as we have “not already attained, nor are already perfect,” yet he who groans not in himself after it — who does not loathe every thing that is of the remainder of sin in him and himself for it — who doth not labour after its absolute and universal extirpation — has no sincere design of conformity unto Christ, nor can so have. He who endeavours to be like him, must “purify himself, even as he is pure.” Thoughts of the purity of Christ, in his absolute freedom from the least tincture of sin, will not suffer a believer to be negligent, at any time, for the endeavouring the utter ruin of that which makes him unlike unto him. And it is a blessed advantage unto faith, in the work of mortification of sin, that we have such a pattern continually before us.

The due improvement of, and continual growth, in every grace, is the other general part of this duty. In the exercise of his own

all-fulness of grace, both in moral duties of obedience and the especial duties of his office, did the glory of Christ on the earth consist. Wherefore, to abound in the exercise of every grace — to grow in the root and thrive in the fruit of them — is to be conformed unto the image of the Son of God.

Secondly, The following the *example* of Christ in all duties towards God and men, in his whole conversation on the earth, is the second part of the instance now given concerning the use of the person of Christ in religion. The field is large which lies before us here, and filled with numberless blessed instances. I cannot enter into it here; and the mistakes that have been in a pretence to it, require that it should be handled distinctly and at large by itself; which, if God will, may be done in due time. One or two general instances wherein he was most eminently our example, shall close this discourse.

His meekness, lowliness of mind, condescension to all sorts of persons — his love and kindness unto mankind — his readiness to do good unto all, with patience and forbearance — are continually set before us in his example. I place them all under one head, as proceeding all from the same spring of divine goodness, and having effects of the same nature. With respect to them, it is required that “the same mind be in us that was in Christ Jesus,” Phil. ii. 5; and that we “walk in love, as he also loved us,” Eph. v. 2.

In these things he was the great representative of the divine goodness to us. In the acting of these graces on all occasions he declared and manifest the nature of God, from whom he came. And this was one end of his exhibition in the flesh. Sin had filled the world with a representation of the devil and his nature, in mutual hatred, strife, variance, envy, wrath, pride, fierceness, and rage, against one another; all which are of the old murderer. The instances of a cured, of a contrary frame, were obscure and weak in the best of the saints of old. But in our Lord Jesus the light of the glory of God in this first shone upon the world. In the exercise of these graces, which he most abounded in, because the sins, weaknesses and infirmities of men gave continual occasion to, did he represent the divine nature as love — as infinitely good, benign, merciful, and patient — delighting in the exercise of these its holy properties. In

them was the Lord Christ our example in an especial manner. And they only pretend to be his disciples, to be followers of him, who endeavour not to order the whole course of their lives in conformity to him in these things.

One Christian who is meek, humble, kind, patient, and useful to everyone; that condescends to the ignorance, weaknesses and infirmities of others; that passes by provocations, injuries, contempt, with patience and with silence, unless where the glory and truth of God call for a just vindication; that pities all sorts of men in their failings and shortcomings, who is free from jealousies and uncharitable judging; that loves what is good in all men, and all men even wherein they are not good, nor do good, — expresses more the virtues and excellencies of Christ than thousands can do with the most magnificent works of piety or charity, where this manner and attitude is lacking in them. For men to pretend to follow the example of Christ, and in the meantime to be proud, wrathful envious, bitterly zealous, calling for fire from heaven to destroy men, or fetching it themselves from hell, is to cry, “Hail unto him,” and to crucify him afresh unto their power.

2. Self-denial, readiness for the cross, with patience in sufferings, are the second sort of thing which he calls all his disciples to follow his example in. It is the fundamental law of his Gospel, that if any one will be his disciple, “he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow him.” These things in him, as they are all of them summarily represented, Phil. ii. 5–8, by reason of the glory of his person and the nature of his sufferings, are quite of another kind than that we are called to. But his grace in them all is our only pattern in what is required of us. “Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not,” 1 Pet. ii. 21–23. Hence are we called to look unto “Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, and despised the shame.” For we are to “consider him, who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself,” so we do not faint, Heb. xii. 3. Blessed be God for this example — for the glory of the condescension, patience, faith, and endurance, of Jesus Christ, in the

extremity of all sorts of sufferings. This hath been the pole-star of the church in all its storms; the guide, the comfort, support and encouragement of all those holy souls, who, in their several generations, have in various degrees undergone persecution for righteousness' sake; and still continues to be to them who are in the same condition.

And I must say, as I have done on other occasions in the handling of this subject, that a discourse on this one instance of the use of Christ in religion — from the consideration of the person who suffered, and set us this example; of the principle, and the end for which, he did it; of the variety of evils of all sorts he had to conflict with; of his invincible patience under them all, and immovableness of love and compassion to mankind, even his persecutors; the dolorous afflictive circumstances of his sufferings from God and men; the blessed efficacious workings of his faith and trust in God to the uttermost; with the glorious outcome of the whole, and the influence of all these considerations to the consolation and support of the church — would take up more room and time than what is allotted to the whole of what is here the least part. I shall leave the whole under the shade of that blessed promise, “If so be that we suffer with him, we may be also glorified together; for I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us,” Rom. 8 v 17, 18.

The last thing proposed concerning the person of Christ, was the use of it to believers, in the whole of their relation to God and duty towards him. And the things belonging to this may be reduced to these general heads:—

1. *Their sanctification*, which consists in these four things: (1.) The mortification of sin, (2.) The gradual renovation of our natures, (3.) Assistances in actual obedience, (4.) The same in temptations and trials.
2. *Their justification*, with its concomitants and consequent; — (1.) Adoption, (2.) Peace, (3.) Consolation and joy in life and death, (4.) Spiritual gifts, for the edification of themselves and others, (5.) A blessed resurrection, (6.) Eternal glory.

There are other things which also belong to this: — such as their guidance in the course of their conduct in this world, direction to usefulness in serving God in all of lifes states and conditions, patient waiting for the accomplishment of God’s promises to the church, the communication of federal blessings to their families, and the exercise of loving-kindness towards mankind in general, with various other concerns of the life of faith of similar importance; but they may be all reduced to the general heads proposed. What should have been spoken with reference to these things belongs to these three heads:—

First, A declaration that all these things are wrought in and communicated to believers, according to their various natures, by an *emanation of grace and power* from the person of Jesus Christ, as the head of the church — as he who is exalted and made a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and the forgiveness of sins.

Secondly, A declaration of the way and manner how believers live on Christ in the exercise of faith, by which, according to the promise and appointment of God, they derive from him the whole grace and mercy in this world they are made recipients of, and are established in the expectation of what they shall receive afterwards by his power. And that two things do ensue:

The necessity of universal evangelical obedience, seeing it is only in and by the duties of it that faith is, or can be, kept in a due exercise to the ends mentioned.

That believers do by this increase continually with the increase of God, and grow up into him who is the head, until they become the fulness of him who fills all in all.

A conviction that a real interest in, and participation in, these things cannot be obtained any other way but by the actual exercise of faith on the person of Jesus Christ.”

*The glory of Christ: Chapter 15:Of conformity unto
Christ and following his example*

This self denial in heart and life is, in essence, worship in a comprehensive sense:

“Worship is the submission of all our nature to God. It is the quickening of conscience by His holiness; the nourishment of mind with His truth; the purifying of imagination by His Beauty; the opening of the heart to His love; the surrender of will to His purpose.”

In Romans chapters 5 and 6, the sinful nature is given up and buried forever as He dealt with our sins on the cross so our sins are turned from and the reality of the saints union with Christ is displayed. The use of terms such as baptism in this passage indicate this and also that the power of the Holy Spirit is dispensed from Christ, from this union, to all saved people to assist them in giving up sin. His promises towards them in his word become precious to them. This passages summarizes Christ’s love for his those who were enemies to him, his atoning sacrifice as being the mighty reason for the love and joy that motivates them with the Holy Spirit being the powerful agent who manufactures and maintains this ability to deny themselves and do his bidding and will:

“And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement. Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. But not as the offence, so also *is* the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, *which is* by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded

unto many. And not as *it was* by one that sinned, *so is* the gift: for the judgment *was* by one to condemnation, but the free gift *is* of many offences unto justification. For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) Therefore as by the offence of one *judgment came* upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one *the free gift came* upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord. What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness of his* resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members *as* instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace."

Romans 5 v 5– chapter 6 v 14

“For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.”

Romans 8 v 13

“For all the promises of God in him *are* yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us. Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, *is* God; Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.”

2nd Corinthians 1 v 20–22

Again in the following text the idea conveyed is that spiritual vitality flows from a central source(Christ) via the channel of the Holy Spirit to Saints and the first fruits of this growth is compared to the resurrection in the New testament:

“And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.” Romans 8 v 23

“I beseech you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints,)” 1 Corinthians

Jesus uses the horticultural metaphor also on at least two other well known occasions illustrating similarly death to sin and the Holy Spirits power making alive to holiness through self denial:

“And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.” John 12 v 23–26

“I am the vine, ye *are* the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.” John 15 v 5

Considering the infinite offering Christ made and its free offer to ruined sinners with simply faith that is required to receive Him and eternal bliss the reward, it is the ultimate offence to God to reject such a deeply sacrificial offer. This is why people who rebelliously refuse to repent are damned forever.

Notice how the Jewish Messiah, Christ is the deliverer and turns away ungodliness and, this as an expression of Gods effusive mercy, is to be the motive for self denial:

“And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this *is* my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the gospel, *they are* enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, *they are* beloved for the fathers’ sakes. For the gifts and calling of God *are* without repentance. For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief: Even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy. For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all. O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable *are* his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, *are* all things: to whom *be* glory for ever. Amen. I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”

Romans 11 v 26–12 v 2

When I survey the wondrous cross
on which the Prince of Glory died;
my richest gain I count but loss,
and pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
save in the death of Christ, my God;
all the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to his blood.

See, from his head, his hands, his feet,
sorrow and love flow mingled down.
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
or thorns compose so rich a crown.

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
that were an offering far too small;
love so amazing, so divine,
demands my soul, my life, my all.

Let us consider this spiritual love as portrayed in 1st Corinthians 13:

When we consider the example provided in the chapter it may at first seem to suggest that love is not demonstrated by our moral behaviour:

“And though I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity(love), it profiteth me nothing.”

However the example does not prove that spiritual love is not shown by moral behaviour but rather that it simply informs us that certain types, including the most extreme type, of moral actions, without love, are worthless.

It is not just the motive but also the manner and the attitude in which the deeds were performed. For example someone may be suffering and in need and helped by different people. The recipient may receive the same help and relief from both but one in a self sacrificing, kind and gentle manner and the other in a self righteous slightly proud, and sometimes even grudging manner. What is described here is righteousness centred in self only, rather than a self denying love.

The passage highlights a particular trap that is fallen into by some. It is a description of a person who, performs many acts of charity towards others who are needy from a wrong heart and motive – from a strongly convicted conscience in order to sate that conscience or partly to receive praise from others to satisfy their pride. However that same person is, in their dealings with others, who are not needy (and also possibly not within

their chosen ‘audience’ or party) quite unloving or proud or unconcerned towards them. As already said limited aspects of a persons behaviour may seem or appear good but this is not the whole or a comprehensive picture of their behaviour. This is the real point of 1st Corinthians 13 and its really a warning to avoid this pitfall.

Even life itself, if given up in a loving unselfish manner, for loving motives is very different to it willingly given up for some misguided but ultimately selfish reason. It is true that Gods law is kept in our hearts, not just externally but true love to Him displays itself in a different kind of action to those who have no love to God within.

We must interpret the statement about giving up the body to be burned in its context about the other qualities that love produces in a persons behaviour. They are corroboratory evidence that love is present. If these attitudes and behaviours aren’t present then there is no love even if the person has given their life for a supposedly noble cause just as many unsaved people in history have done. It is not death in its essence that is a good thing but rather the kind of death that matters. Suicide is morally wrong and is a selfish choice, if a person is sane and of a sound mind. A soldier may die in war but be unsaved. To take the case in point, for a good man some would even dare to die – for friends or comrades, but who would die for their enemies? This is real love displayed in death and the supreme example is our Saviour Himself. It is truly a beautiful act. Christ unselfishly did this.

This is the true Christian spirit. It is the spirit of self denial across all areas of life even in the giving up off life itself. Christian martyrs also show in the gentle, non retaliatory manner of their death as well as demonstrate how one may die well with shining love to God and others.

The rest of chapter shows how with love, the actions and attitudes are altered comprehensively in all areas not appearing to be in only one small part of behaviour at the end of life. How did a person live? Love is not just a hidden reality in a persons heart but has tangible qualities:

“Charity suffereth long, *and* is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth:”

Similarly in Christ’s rebuke to the Ephesian church in Revelation they were performing lots of activities without having love. Sinful error can occur in churches or individuals such as too much emphasis placed on the

extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit or on knowledge and doctrine with a distinct absence of love in both these instances.

Oh, the bitter pain and sorrow
That a time could ever be,
When I proudly said to Jesus,
“All of self, and none of Thee.”
All of self, and none of Thee,
All of self, and none of Thee,
When I proudly said to Jesus,
“All of self, and none of Thee.”

Yet He found me; I beheld Him
Bleeding on th’ accursed tree,
And my wistful heart said faintly,
“Some of self, and some of Thee.”
Some of self, and some of Thee,
Some of self, and some of Thee,
And my wistful heart said faintly,
“Some of self, and some of Thee.”

Day by day His tender mercy,
Healing, helping, full and free,
Brought me lower while I whispered,
“Less of self, and more of Thee.”
Less of self, and more of Thee,
Less of self, and more of Thee,
Brought me lower while I whispered,
“Less of self, and more of Thee.”

Higher than the highest heaven,
Deeper than the deepest sea,
Lord, Thy love at last has conquered:
“*None* of self, and *all* of Thee.”
None of self, and *all* of Thee,
None of self, and *all* of Thee,
Lord, Thy love at last has conquered:
“*None* of self, and *all* of Thee.”

John Calvin describes the principle convincingly in his Institutes:

“Chapter 7

“Although the Law of God contains a perfect rule of conduct admirably arranged, it has seemed proper to our divine Master to train his people by a more accurate method, to the rule which is enjoined in the Law; and the leading principle in the method is, that it is the duty of believers to present their “bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is their reasonable service,” (Rom. 12:1). Hence he draws the exhortation: “Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.” The great point, then, is, that we are consecrated and dedicated to God, and, therefore, should not henceforth think, speak, design, or act, without a view to his glory. What he hath made sacred cannot, without signal insult to him, be applied to profane use. But if we are not our own, but the Lord’s, it is plain both what error is to be shunned, and to what end the actions of our lives ought to be directed. We are not our own; therefore, neither is our own reason or will to rule our acts and counsels. We are not our own; therefore, let us not make it our end to seek what may be agreeable to our sinful nature. We are not our own; therefore, as far as possible, let us forget ourselves and the things that are ours. On the other hand, we are God’s; let us, therefore, live and die to him (Rom. 14:8). We are God’s; therefore, let his wisdom and will preside over all our actions. We are God’s; to him, then, as the only legitimate end, let every part of our life be directed. O how great the proficiency of him who, taught that he is not his own, has withdrawn the rule and government of himself from his own reason that he may give them to God! For as the surerest source of destruction to men is to obey themselves, so the only haven of safety is to have no other will, no other wisdom, than to follow the Lord wherever he leads. Let this, then be the first step, to abandon ourselves, and devote the whole energy of our minds to the service of God. By service, I mean not only that which consists in verbal obedience, but that by which the mind, divested of its own sinful feelings, implicitly obeys the call of the Spirit of God.

This transformation (which Paul calls *the renewing of the mind*, Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:23), though it is the first entrance to life, was unknown to all the philosophers. They give the government of man to reason alone, thinking that he alone is to be listened to; in short, they assign to him the sole direction of the conduct. But Christian philosophy bids him give place, and yield complete submission to the Holy Spirit, so that the man himself no longer lives, but Christ lives and reigns in him (Gal. 2:20).

Hence follows the other principle, that we are not to seek our own, but the Lord's will, and act with a view to promote his glory. Great is our proficiency, when, almost forgetting ourselves, certainly postponing our own reason, we faithfully make it our study to obey God and his commandments. For when Scripture enjoins us to lay aside private regard to ourselves, it not only divests our minds of an excessive longing for wealth, or power, or human favour, but eradicates all ambition and thirst for worldly glory, and other more secret pests. The Christian ought, indeed, to be so trained and disposed as to consider, that during his whole life he has to do with God. For this reason, as he will bring all things to the disposal and estimate of God, so he will religiously direct his whole mind to him. For he who has learned to look to God in everything he does, is at the same time diverted from all vain thoughts. This is that self-denial which Christ so strongly enforces on his disciples from the very outset (Mt. 16:24), which, as soon as it takes hold of the mind, leaves no place either, first, for pride, show, and ostentation; or, secondly, for avarice, lust, luxury, effeminacy, or other vices which are engendered by self love. On the contrary, wherever it reigns not, the foulest vices are indulged in without shame; or, if there is some appearance of virtue, it is vitiated by a depraved longing for applause. Show me, if you can, an individual who, unless he has renounced himself in obedience to the Lord's command, is disposed to do good for its own sake. Those who have not so renounced themselves have followed virtue at least for the sake of praise. The philosophers who have contended most strongly that virtue is to be desired on her own account, were so inflated with arrogance as to make it apparent that they sought virtue for no other reason than as a ground for indulging in pride. So far, therefore, is God from being delighted with these hunters after popular applause with their swollen breasts, that he declares they have received their reward in this world (Mt. 6:2), and that harlots and publicans are nearer the kingdom

of heaven than they (Mt. 21:31). We have not yet sufficiently explained how great and numerous are the obstacles by which a man is impeded in the pursuit of rectitude, so long as he has not renounced himself. The old saying is true, There is a world of iniquity treasured up in the human soul. Nor can you find any other remedy for this than to deny yourself, renounce your own reason, and direct your whole mind to the pursuit of those things which the Lord requires of you, and which you are to seek only because they are pleasing to Him.

In another passage, Paul gives a brief, indeed, but more distinct account of each of the parts of a well-ordered life: “The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearance of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works,” (Tit. 2:11–14). After holding forth the grace of God to animate us, and pave the way for His true worship, he removes the two greatest obstacles which stand in the way—viz. ungodliness, to which we are by nature too prone, and worldly lusts, which are of still greater extent. Under *ungodliness*, he includes not merely superstition, but everything at variance with the true fear of God. *Worldly lusts* are equivalent to the lusts of the flesh. Thus he enjoins us, in regard to both tables of the Law, to lay aside our own mind, and renounce whatever our own reason and will dictate. Then he reduces all the actions of our lives to three branches, sobriety, righteousness, and godliness. *Sobriety* undoubtedly denotes as well chastity and temperance as the pure and frugal use of temporal goods, and patient endurance of want. *Righteousness* comprehends all the duties of equity, in every one his due. Next follows *godliness*, which separates us from the pollutions of the world, and connects us with God in true holiness. These, when connected together by an indissoluble chain, constitute complete perfection. But as nothing is more difficult than to bid adieu to the will of the flesh, subdue, nay, abjure our lusts, devote ourselves to God and our brethren, and lead an angelic life amid the pollutions of the world, Paul, to set our minds free from all entanglements, recalls us to the hope of a blessed immortality, justly urging us to contend, because as Christ has once appeared as our Redeemer, so on his final advent he will give full effect to the salvation obtained by him. And in this way he dispels all the allurements which cloud our path, and prevent us from aspiring as

we ought to heavenly glory; nay, he tells us that we must be pilgrims in the world, that we may not fail to obtain the heavenly inheritance.

Moreover, we see by these words that self-denial has respect partly to men and partly (more especially) to God (sec. 8–10). For when Scripture enjoins us, in regard to our fellow men, to prefer them in honour to ourselves, and sincerely labour to promote their advantages (Rom. 12:10; Phil. 2:3), he gives us commands which our mind is utterly incapable of obeying until its natural feelings are suppressed. For so blindly do we all rush in the direction of self-love, that every one thinks he has a good reason for exalting himself and despising all others in comparison. If God has bestowed on us something not to be repented of, trusting to it, we immediately become elated, and not only swell, but almost burst with pride. The vices with which we abound we both carefully conceal from others, and flatteringly represent to ourselves as minute and trivial, nay, sometimes hug them as virtues. When the same qualities which we admire in ourselves are seen in others, even though they should be superior, we, in order that we may not be forced to yield to them, maliciously lower and carp at them; in like manner, in the case of vices, not contented with severe and keen animadversion, we studiously exaggerate them. Hence the insolence with which each, as if exempted from the common lot, seeks to exalt himself above his neighbour, confidently and proudly despising others, or at least looking down upon them as his inferiors. The poor man yields to the rich, the plebeian to the noble, the servant to the master, the unlearned to the learned, and yet every one inwardly cherishes some idea of his own superiority. Thus each flattering himself, sets up a kind of kingdom in his breast; the arrogant, to satisfy themselves, pass censure on the minds and manners of other men, and when contention arises, the full venom is displayed. Many bear about with them some measure of mildness so long as all things go smoothly and lovingly with them, but how few are there who, when stung and irritated, preserve the same tenor of moderation? For this there is no other remedy than to pluck up by the roots those most noxious pests, self-love and love of victory. This the doctrine of Scripture does. For it teaches us to remember, that the endowments which God has bestowed upon us are not our own, but His free gifts, and that those who plume themselves upon them betray their ingratitude. “Who maketh thee to differ,” saith Paul, “and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?” (1 Cor. 4:7). Then by a diligent examination of our faults let us keep ourselves humble. Thus

while nothing will remain to swell our pride, there will be much to subdue it. Again, we are enjoined, whenever we behold the gifts of God in others, so to reverence and respect the gifts, as also to honour those in whom they reside. God having been pleased to bestow honour upon them, it would ill become us to deprive them of it. Then we are told to overlook their faults, not, indeed, to encourage by flattering them, but not because of them to insult those whom we ought to regard with honour and good will. In this way, with regard to all with we interact with, our behaviour will be not only moderate and modest, but courteous and friendly. The only way by which you can ever attain to true meekness, is to have your heart imbued with a humble opinion of yourself and respect for others.

How difficult it is to perform the duty of seeking the good of our neighbour! Unless you leave off all thought of yourself and in a manner cease to be yourself, you will never accomplish it. How can you exhibit those works of love which Paul describes unless you renounce yourself, and become wholly devoted to others? “Charity (says he, 1 Cor. 13:4) suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked,” &c. Were it the only thing required of us to seek not our own, nature would not have the least power to comply: she so inclines us to love ourselves only, that she will not easily allow us carelessly to pass by ourselves and our own interests that we may watch over the interests of others, nay, spontaneously to yield our own rights and resign it to another. But Scripture, to conduct us to this, reminds us, that whatever we obtain from the Lord is granted on the condition of our employing it for the common good of the Church, and that, therefore, the legitimate use of all our gifts is a kind and liberal communication of them with others. There cannot be a surer rule, nor a stronger exhortation to the observance of it, than when we are taught that all the endowments which we possess are divine deposits entrusted to us for the very purpose of being distributed for the good of our neighbour. But Scripture proceeds still farther when it likens these endowments to the different members of the body (1 Cor. 12:12). No member has its function for itself, or applies it for its own private use, but transfers it to its fellow-members; nor does it derive any other advantage from it than that which it receives in common with the whole body. Thus, whatever the pious man can do, he is bound to do for his brethren, not consulting his own interest in any other way than by striving earnestly for the common edification of the Church. Let this, then,

be our method of showing good-will and kindness, considering that, in regard to everything which God has bestowed upon us, and by which we can aid our neighbour, we are his stewards, and are bound to give account of our stewardship; moreover, that the only right mode of administration is that which is regulated by love. In this way, we shall not only unite the study of our neighbour's advantage with a regard to our own, but make the latter subordinate to the former. And lest we should have omitted to perceive that this is the law for duly administering every gift which we receive from God, he of old applied that law to the minutest expressions of his own kindness. He commanded the first-fruits to be offered to him as an attestation by the people that it was impious to reap any advantage from goods not previously consecrated to him (Exod. 22:29; 23:19). But if the gifts of God are not sanctified to us until we have with our own hand dedicated them to the Giver, it must be a gross abuse that does not give signs of such dedication. It is in vain to contend that you cannot enrich the Lord by your offerings. Though, as the Psalmist says "Thou art my Lord: my goodness extendeth not unto thee," yet you can extend it "to the saints that are in the earth," (Ps. 16:2, 3); and therefore a comparison is drawn between sacred oblations and alms as now corresponding to the offerings under the Law.

Moreover, that we may not weary in well-doing (as would otherwise forthwith and infallibly be the case), we must add the other quality in the Apostle's enumeration, "Charity suffereth long, and is kind, is not easily provoked," (1 Cor. 13:4). The Lord enjoins us to do good to all without exception, though the greater part, if estimated by their own merit, are most unworthy of it. But Scripture subjoins a most excellent reason, when it tells us that we are not to look to what men in themselves deserve, but to attend to the image of God, which exists in all, and to which we owe all honour and love. But in those who are of the household of faith, the same rule is to be more carefully observed, inasmuch as that image is renewed and restored in them by the Spirit of Christ. Therefore, whoever be the man that is presented to you as needing your assistance, you have no ground for declining to give it to him. Say he is a stranger. The Lord has given him a mark which ought to be familiar to you: for which reason he forbids you to despise your own flesh (Gal. 6:10). Say he is mean and of no consideration. The Lord points him out as one whom he has distinguished by the lustre of his own image (Isaiah 58:7). Say that you are bound to him by no ties of duty. The Lord has substituted him as it were into his own place, that in him you may

recognize the many great obligations under which the Lord has laid you to himself. Say that he is unworthy of your least exertion on his account; but the image of God, by which he is recommended to you, is worthy of yourself and all your exertions. But if he not only merits no good, but has provoked you by injury and mischief, still this is no good reason why you should not embrace him in love, and visit him with offices of love. He has deserved very differently from me, you will say. But what has the Lord deserved? Whatever injury he has done you, when he enjoins you to forgive him, he certainly means that it should be imputed to himself. In this way only we attain to what is not to say difficult but altogether against nature, to love those that hate us, render good for evil, and blessing for cursing, remembering that we are not to reflect on the wickedness of men, but look to the image of God in them, an image which, covering and obliterating their faults, should by its beauty and dignity allure us to love and embrace them.

We shall thus succeed in mortifying ourselves if we fulfil all the duties of love. Those duties, however, are not fulfilled by the mere discharge of them, though none be omitted, unless it is done from a pure feeling of love. For it may happen that one may perform every one of these offices, in so far as the external act is concerned, and be far from performing them aright. For you see some who would be thought very liberal, and yet accompany every thing they give with insult, by the haughtiness of their looks, or the violence of their words. And to such a calamitous condition have we come in this unhappy age, that the greater part of men never almost give alms without contumely. Such conduct ought not to have been tolerated even among the heathen; but from Christians something more is required than to carry cheerfulness in their looks, and give attractiveness to the discharge of their duties by courteous language. First, they should put themselves in the place of him whom they see in need of their assistance, and pity his misfortune as if they felt and bore it, so that a feeling of pity and humanity should incline them to assist him just as they would themselves. He who is thus minded will go and give assistance to his brethren, and not only not taint his acts with arrogance or upbraiding but will neither look down upon the brother to whom he does a kindness, as one who needed his help, or keep him in subjection as under obligation to him, just as we do not insult a diseased member when the rest of the body labours for its recovery, nor think it under special obligation to the other members, because it has required more exertion than it has returned. A communication of offices between members is not regarded as at all gratuitous, but rather as the

payment of that which being due by the law of nature it were monstrous to deny. For this reason, he who has performed one kind of duty will not think himself thereby discharged, as is usually the case when a rich man, after contributing somewhat of his substance, delegates remaining burdens to others as if he had nothing to do with them. Every one should rather consider, that however great he is, he owes himself to his neighbours, and that the only limit to his beneficence is the failure of his means. The extent of these should regulate that of his charity.

The principal part of self-denial, that which as we have said has reference to God, let us again consider more fully. Many things have already been said with regard to it which it were superfluous to repeat; and, therefore, it will be sufficient to view it as forming us to equanimity and endurance. First, then, in seeking the convenience or tranquillity of the present life, Scripture calls us to resign ourselves, and all we have, to the disposal of the Lord, to give him up the affections of our heart, that he may tame and subdue them. We have a frenzied desire, an infinite eagerness, to pursue wealth and honour, intrigue for power, accumulate riches, and collect all those frivolities which seem conducive to luxury and splendour. On the other hand, we have a remarkable dread, a remarkable hatred of poverty, mean birth, and a humble condition, and feel the strongest desire to guard against them. Hence, in regard to those who frame their life after their own counsel, we see how restless they are in mind, how many plans they try, to what fatigues they submit, in order that they may gain what avarice or ambition desires, or, on the other hand, escape poverty and meanness. To avoid similar entanglements, the course which Christian men must follow is this: first, they must not long for, or hope for, or think of any kind of prosperity apart from the blessing of God; on it they must cast themselves, and there safely and confidently recline. For, however much the carnal mind may seem sufficient for itself when in the pursuit of honour or wealth, it depends on its own industry and zeal, or is aided by the favour of men, it is certain that all this is nothing, and that neither intellect nor labour will be of the least avail, except in so far as the Lord prospers both. On the contrary, his blessing alone makes a way through all obstacles, and brings every thing to a joyful and favourable outcome. Secondly, though without this blessing we may be able to acquire some degree of fame and opulence (as we daily see wicked men loaded with honours and riches), yet since those on whom the curse of God lies do not enjoy the least particle of true happiness, whatever we obtain without his

blessing must turn out ill. But surely men ought not to desire what adds to their misery.”’

Institutes book 3rd chapter 7: John Calvin

Jesus said:

“He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.”

Matthew 10 v 39

Another Christian, martyred attempting to bring the gospel to others, summed it up:

“He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose”

CHAPTER 15

SIN IS SELFISH LOVE OR SELFISHNESS

“Charity(love) seeketh not her own”

1st Corinthians 13 v 5

BY JONATHAN EDWARDS,

“The ruin that the fall brought on the soul of man was composed very much of his losing the nobler and more benevolent principles of his nature, and falling wholly under the power and government of self-love. Before, and as God created him, he was exalted, and noble, and generous; but now he is debased, and ignoble, and selfish. Immediately the fall occurred, the mind of man shrank from its primitive greatness and expansiveness, to an extreme smallness and contraction; and as in other respects, so especially in this. Before, his soul was under the government of that noble principle of divine love, by which it was enlarged to comprehend all other creatures and their welfare. Not only that, but it was not confined within such narrow limits as the bounds of the creation, but went out in the exercise of holy love to the Creator, and abroad on the infinite ocean of good, and was, as it were, swallowed up by it, and became one with it. But as soon as he had transgressed against God, these noble principles were immediately lost, and all this excellent largeness of man’s soul was gone; and from then he himself shrank, as it were, into a little space, circumscribed and closely shut up within itself to the exclusion of all other things. Sin, like some powerful astringent, contracted his soul to the very small dimensions of selfishness; and God was forsaken, and other creatures forsaken, and man retired within himself, and became totally governed by narrow and selfish

principles and feelings. Self-love became absolute master of his soul, and the more noble and spiritual principles of his being took wings and flew away.

But God, in mercy to miserable man, entered on the work of redemption, and, by the glorious gospel of his Son, began the work of bringing the soul of man out of its confinement and contraction, and back again to those noble and divine principles by which it was animated and governed at first. And it is through the cross of Christ that he is doing this; our union with Christ gives us participation in his nature. And so Christianity restores an excellent enlargement, and extensiveness, and liberality to the soul, and again possesses it with that divine love that we read about in the text, by which again embraces its fellow creatures, and is devoted to and swallowed up in the Creator. And so love, which is the sum of the Christian spirit, so participates in the glorious fullness of the divine nature, that she “seeketh not her own,” or is *contrary to selfish spirit*.

In considering this thought, I would, first, show the nature of that selfishness which love is the opposite of; then how love is opposed to it; and then some of the evidence in support of the doctrine stated.

I would show the nature of that selfishness of which love is the opposite.

1. *Negatively, that love, or the spirit of Christian love, is not contrary to all self-love.* — It is not a thing contrary to Christianity that a person should love himself, or, what is the same thing, should love his own happiness. If Christianity did indeed tend to destroy a man’s love to himself, and to his own happiness, it would then tend to destroy the very spirit of humanity; but the very announcement of the gospel, as a system of peace on earth and goodwill toward men (Luke 2 v 14), shows that it is not only not destructive of humanity, but in the greatest degree promotes its spirit. That a person should love his own happiness, is as necessary to his nature as the faculty of the will is; and it is impossible that such a love should be destroyed in any other way than by destroying his being. The saints love their own happiness. Those that are perfect in happiness, the saints and angels in heaven, love their own happiness; otherwise that happiness God has given them would be no happiness to them; what anyone does not love he cannot enjoy any happiness in.

That to love ourselves is not unlawful, is evident also from the fact, that the law of God makes self-love a rule and measure by which our love to others should be regulated. So Christ commands (Mat. 19 v 19), “Thou

shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," which certainly supposes that we may, and must, love ourselves. It is not said *more* than yourself, but *as* yourself. But we are commanded to love our neighbour next to God; and therefore we are to love ourselves with a love next to what we should exercise toward God himself. And the same appears also from the fact, that the Scriptures, from one end of the Bible to the other, are full of motives that are set forth for the very purpose of working on the principle of self-love. Such are all the promises and threatenings of the Word of God, its calls and invitations, it advises to search for our own good, and its warnings to beware of misery. These things can have no influence on us in any other way than as they tend to work on our hopes or fears. For what purpose would it be to make any promise of happiness, or warn any threat of misery, to a person that has no love for happiness or dread of misery? Or what reason can there be in advising him to search for one, or warning him to avoid the other? So it is plain, negatively, that the spirit of Christian love, is not contrary to *all* self-love.

2. *Affirmatively, that the selfishness which love, or a Christian spirit, is contrary to, is only an excessive self-love.* — However, the question arises, what is this excessiveness composed of? This is a point that needs to be well stated and clearly settled; the refuting many scruples and doubts that people often have, depends on it. So *First*, the excessiveness of self-love *is not composed of our love of our own happiness being, absolutely considered, too great in degree.* — I do not suppose it can be said of any, that their love to their own happiness, if we consider that love absolutely and not comparatively, *can* be in too great a degree, or that it is a thing that is liable either to increase or diminution. For I comprehend that self-love, in this sense, is not a result of the fall, but is necessary, and what is part of the nature of all intelligent beings, and that God has made it the same in them all; and that saints, and sinners alike, love happiness, and have the same unalterable and instinctive inclination to desire and search for it. The change that takes place in a person, when they are converted and sanctified, is not that their love for happiness is diminished, but only that it is regulated with respect to its exercises and influence, and the practices and objects it leads to. Who will say that the happy souls in heaven do not love happiness as truly as the miserable spirits in hell? If their *love* of happiness is diminished by their being made holy, then that will diminish their *happiness* itself; because the less anyone loves happiness, the less he relishes it, and, consequently, is less happy.

When God brings a soul out of a miserable state and condition into a happy state, by conversion, he gives them happiness that they did not have before, but he does not at the same time take away any of their love of happiness. So, when a saint increases in grace, he is made still more happy than he was before; but his love of happiness, and his relish of it, do not grow less as his happiness itself increases, for that would be to increase his happiness one way, and to diminish it another. But in every case that God makes a miserable soul happy, or a happy soul still more happy, he continues the same love of happiness that existed before. So, doubtless, the saints ought to have as much of a principle of love to their own happiness, or love to themselves, which is the same thing, as the wicked have. So that, if we consider men's love of themselves or of their own happiness absolutely, it is plain that the excessiveness of self-love is not composed of its being in too great a degree, because it is the same in every creature.

Secondly, that the excessiveness of self-love, that a corrupt selfishness is composed of, lies in two things: — *in its being too great comparatively*; and *in placing our happiness in what is confined to self*. In the first place, the degree of self-love may be too great *comparatively*, and so the degree of its influence is excessive. Though the degree of men's love of their own happiness, taken absolutely, may be the same in everyone, yet the proportion that their love of self is compared to their love for others may not be the same. If we compare a person's love of himself with his love for others, it may be said that they love themselves too much — that is, in proportion too much. And though this may be owing to a defect of love to others, rather than to an excess of love to themselves, yet self-love, by this excess in its proportion, itself becomes excessive in this respect, i.e. that it becomes excessive in its influence and government of the person. Although the principle of self-love, considered in itself, is not at all greater than if there is a due proportion of love to God and to other creatures with it, yet because the proportion is greater, its influence and government of the person becomes greater; and so its influence becomes excessive by reason of the weakness or absence of other love that should restrain or regulate that influence. To illustrate this, we suppose the case of a person employed as a servant in a family, who was formerly kept in the place of a servant, and whose influence in family affairs was not excessive while his employer's influence was greater than his; and yet, if afterward the employer grows weaker and loses his influence, and the rest of the family lose their previous power, although the servant's influence is not at all increased, yet because the proportion of

his influence is increased, his influence may become excessive, and, from being in subjection and a servant, he may become master in that house. So self-love becomes excessive. Before the fall, man loved himself, or his own happiness, as much as after the fall; but then, a superior principle of divine love had the throne, and was of such strength, that it wholly regulated and directed self-love. But since the fall, the principle of divine love has lost its strength, or rather is dead; so that self-love, continuing in its previous strength, with no superior principle to regulate it, becomes excessive in its influence, and governs where it should be subject, and only a servant. Self-love, then, may become excessive in its influence by being comparatively too great, either by love to God and to other creatures being too small, as it is in the saints, who in this world have great remaining corruption, or by its being none at all, as is the case with people who have no divine love in their hearts. So the excessiveness of self-love, with respect to the degree of it, is not as it is considered absolutely, but comparatively, or with respect to the degree of its influence. In some respects wicked men do not love themselves enough — not so much as the godly do; for they do not love the true way of their own welfare and happiness; and in this sense it is sometimes said about the wicked that they hate themselves, though, in another sense, they love self too much.

It is further true, in the second place, that self-love, or a person's love to their own happiness, may be excessive, *in placing that happiness in things that are confined to themselves*. In this case, the error is not so much in the degree of their love to themselves as it is in the channel it flows in. It is not in the degree to which they love their own happiness, but in their placing their happiness where they should not, and in limiting and confining their love. Some, although they love their own happiness, do not place that happiness in their own confined good, or in that good which is limited to themselves, but more in the common good — in that which is the good of others, or in the good to be enjoyed in and by others. A person's love of their own happiness, when it runs in this last channel, is not what is called selfishness, but is the very opposite of it. But there are others who, in their love to their own happiness, place that happiness in good things that are confined or limited to themselves, to the exclusion of others. This is selfishness. This is the thing most clearly and directly intended by the self-love that the Scripture condemns. When it is said that love does not search for her own, we are to understand it of her own private good — good limited to herself. The expression, "her own," is a phrase of appropriation, and

properly carries in its meaning the idea of limitation to self. And so the similar phrase in Phil. 2 v 21, that “all seek their own,” carries the idea of confined and self-appropriated good, or the good that a person has singly and for themselves, and in which they have no communion or partnership with another, but what they have so circumscribed and limited to themselves as to exclude others. The expression is to be understood in 2 Timothy 3 v 2, “For men shall be lovers of their own selves;” this phrase is of the most confined meaning, limited to self alone, and excluding all others.

A person may love themselves as much as they can, and may be, in the exercise of a great degree of love to their own happiness, ceaselessly longing for it, and yet they may specifically direct that happiness, that, in the very act of searching for it, they may be in the high exercise of love to God: for example, when the happiness that they long for, is to enjoy God, or to view his glory, or to hold communion with him. Or a person may place their happiness in glorifying God. It may seem to them the greatest happiness that they can conceive, is to give God glory, as they may do; and they may long for this happiness. In longing for it, they love what they look on as their happiness; if they did not love what in this case they regarded as their happiness, they would not long for it; and to love their happiness is to love themselves. Yet, in the same act, they love God, because they place their happiness in God; nothing can more properly be called love to any being or thing, than to place our happiness in it. And so people may place their happiness considerably in the good of others — their neighbours, for instance — and, desiring the happiness comprised of searching for their good, they may, in searching for it, love themselves and their own happiness. Yet this is not selfishness, because it is not a confined self-love; but the individual’s self-love flows out in the kind of channel that takes in others with themselves. The self that they love is, as it were, enlarged and multiplied, so that, in the very acts that they love themselves, they love others also. And this is the Christian spirit, the excellent and noble spirit of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is the nature of that divine love, or Christian charity, that is spoken about in the text. A Christian spirit is contrary to the selfish spirit composed of the self-love that goes out after confined and limited objects — such as a man’s worldly wealth, or the honour in a man’s being set up higher in the world than others, or his own worldly ease and convenience, or his pleasing and gratifying his own bodily appetites and lusts.

How the spirit of charity, or Christian love, is contrary to such a spirit of selfishness — This may be shown by these two particulars: that the spirit of charity, or Christian love, leads us to search for not only our own things, but those of others; and also it disposes us, in many cases, to go without or part with our own things for the sake of others.

1. *The spirit of charity, or love, leads those who possess it to search for not only their own things, but the things of others.* First, this spirit attempts to *please and glorify God*. The things that are well-pleasing to God and Christ, and that tend to the divine glory, are called the things of Christ, in opposition to our own things; as where it is said (Phillipians. 2 v 21), “All seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ’s.” Christianity requires that we should make God and Christ our *raison d’être*; and all Christians, so far as they live like Christians, live so that “for them to live is Christ.” Christians are required to live so as to please God, and so as to “prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Romans. 12 v 2). We should be such servants of Christ that in everything we attempt to please our Master, like the apostle says (Ephesians. 6 v 6) — “Not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.” So we are required in everything (1 Corinthians. 10 v 31), whether we eat, or drink, or whatsoever we do, to do all to the glory of God. Surely this is a spirit that is the opposite of self-seeking.

Secondly, people that have the spirit of Christian love, have a spirit to pursue *the good of others*. So the apostle commands (Philippians. 2 v 4), “Look not every man on his own things; but every man also on the things of others.” We should pursue the spiritual good of others: if we have a Christian spirit, we will desire and search for their spiritual welfare and happiness, their salvation from hell, and that they may glorify and enjoy God forever. The same spirit will dispose us to desire and pursue the temporal prosperity of others, like the apostle says (1 Corinthians. 10 v 24), “Let no man seek his own, but every man another’s wealth.” We should search for their pleasure so much, that in doing this we can, at the same time, search for their profit, again the apostle says this (1 Corinthians. 10 v 33), “Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved;” and again (Romans. 15 v 2), “Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification.”

But more particularly a spirit of charity, or Christian love, as exercised toward others, is opposite to a selfish spirit, *because it is a sympathizing*

and merciful spirit. It disposes people to consider not only their own difficulties, but also others burdens and adversities, and the difficulties of their circumstances, and to regard as their own concern people who are in distressing situations and in need. Someone with a selfish spirit is ready to treat with great importance the adversity they themselves are experiencing, as if their privation or suffering was greater than anybody else's; and if they are not suffering, they are ready to think they are not called on to spare what they possess, for the sake of helping others. A selfish person is not apt to recognize others needs, but rather to overlook them, and can hardly be persuaded to see or feel them. But a person with a loving spirit is apt to see other adversities, and to take notice of their aggravation, and to be filled with concern for them, as much as they would be if it was they themselves experiencing the difficulties. They are ready, also, to help them, and take delight in supplying their needs, and relieving their difficulties. They rejoice to obey the injunction of the apostle (Colossians. 3 v 12), "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness;" and to cherish the spirit of "wisdom (James. 3 v 17) that is from above," which is "full of mercy;" and, like the good man spoken about by the Psalmist (Psalm. 37 v 26), to be "merciful," that is, full of mercy.

As it is a sympathizing and merciful spirit, so the spirit of love, as exercised toward others, is the opposite of a selfish, inasmuch *as it is a liberal spirit.* It not only pursues the good of others that are in adversity, but it is ready to give to others, and active to promote their good, as the opportunity occurs. To do good, and to communicate, it forgets not (Hebrews 13 v 16); but obeys the exhortation (Galatians. 6 v 10), "As we have opportunity, let us do good unto all men."

As the spirit of charity, or Christian love, is opposed to a selfish spirit, in that it is merciful and liberal so it is in this, also, that it *disposes a person to be public-spirited.* A person with a right spirit is not a person with narrow and private views, but is greatly interested and concerned for the good of the community they belong to, and particularly of the city or village where they reside, and for the true welfare of the society they are a member of. God commanded the Jews that were carried away captive to Babylon, to pursue the good of that city, though it was not their native place, but only the city of they were captive in. His command was (Jer. 29 v 7), "Seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it." And a person with a truly Christian spirit will be earnest for the good of their country, and for the place of their

residence, and will be disposed to make sacrifices for its improvement. A man was recommended to Christ by the Jews (Luke 7 v 5), as one that loved their nation and had built them a synagogue; and it is spoken about as a very provoking thing to God, compared to some in Israel (Amos 6 v 6), that they were “not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.” It is recorded, to Esther’s everlasting honour (Esther. 4 v 16), that she herself fasted and prayed, and stirred up others to fast and pray, for the welfare of her people. The apostle Paul (Romans. 9 v 1–3) expresses the deepest concern for the welfare of his countrymen. People possessed with the spirit of Christian love have an even more enlarged spirit: for they are concerned, not only for the prosperity of the community, but for the welfare of the Church of God, and for all the people of God individually. Moses had this spirit, that man of God, and therefore he earnestly interceded for God’s visible people, and declared himself ready to die so they might be spared (Exodus. 32 v 11, 32). Paul had this spirit, who was so concerned for the welfare of all, both Jews and Gentile, that he was willing to become like they were (1 Corinthians. 9 v 19–23), if possibly he might save some of them.

The spirit of Christian love will especially dispose those people in a public capacity, such as ministers, and magistrates, and all public officers, to pursue the public good. It will dispose magistrates to act like the fathers of the commonwealth, with that care and concern for the public good which the father of a family has for his family members. It will make them vigilant against public dangers, and ready to use their powers for the promotion of the public benefit; not being governed by selfish motives in their administration; not only or mainly attempting, to make themselves wealthy, or to become great, and to advance themselves by wrongfully acquiring others property, as wicked rulers very often do; but exert themselves to act for the true welfare of everyone their authority extends to. The same spirit will dispose gospel ministers not to pursue their own interests, and labour to get all they can from their people to enrich themselves and their families, but to search for the good of the flock the great Shepherd has placed them over; to feed, and watch over them, and lead them to good pastures, and defend them from wolves and wild beasts that want to devour them. So, whatever position of honour or influence we may be placed in, we should show that, in it, we are eager for the public good of, so that the world may be better for our living in it, and that, when we are gone, it may be said about us, like it was so nobly said about David (Acts 13 v 36), that we “served our generation by the will of God.”

2. *The spirit of love, also disposes us, in many cases, to do without and part with our own things, for the sake of others.* — It disposes us to part with our own private temporal interest, and totally and freely to renounce it, for the sake of the honour of God, and the advancement Christ's kingdom. This was the spirit of the apostle Paul when he exclaimed (Acts 21 v 13), "I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." The same spirit will dispose us often to go without or part with our own private interest for the good of others. It will make us ready on every occasion to aid or help them, leading us willingly to part with a lesser good of our own, for the sake of a greater good to them. The case may even be such (1 John 3 v 16), that "we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."

CHAPTER 16

CHRISTIAN LOVE, WHAT IT IS AND WHAT IT DOES

“We love him, because he first loved us. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also. Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous. For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, *even* our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?”
1st John 4 v 19– 5 v 5

“The truth of the doctrine, that the spirit of Christian love, is the opposite of a selfish spirit, will appear, if we consider the nature of love in general, the particular nature of Christian or divine love, and the nature of Christian love to God and to others in particular.

1. *The nature of love in general.* — This, so far as it is really and truly sincere, has a diffusive nature, and espouses the interests of others. It is like this with the love of natural affection, and earthly friendship. In so far as

there is any real affection or friendship, the parties it exists between not only pursue their own particular interests, but also espouse and pursue the interests of each other. They search for not only their own things, but the things of their friends. Selfishness is a principle that contracts the heart, and confines it to self, while love enlarges it, and extends it to others. By love, a person's self is so extended and enlarged, that others, so far as they are loved, do, as it were, become parts of themselves so that, where others interest is promoted, they believe their own is promoted, and where others is injured, theirs is also injured.

2. *The particular nature of Christian or divine love.* — It is particularly true about Christian love, that it is above the selfish principle. Though all real love to others pursues the good and espouses the interests of those who are loved, yet all other types of love, apart from this one, have their foundation, in one sense, in the selfish principle. So it is with the natural affection which parents feel for their children, and with the love which relatives have to one another. With the exception of the impulses of instinct, self-love is the mainspring of it. It is because people love themselves, that they love those persons and things that are their own, or that they are nearly related to, and that they look on as belonging to themselves, and which, by the design of society, have their interest and honour linked with their own. It is like this in the closest friendships that exist among people. Self-love is the origin they proceed from. Sometimes natural gratitude, for good turns that have been done them by others, or for benefits received from them, disposes men, through self-love, to a similar respect to people that have shown them kindness, or who their self-interest has been promoted by. Sometimes natural men are led into a friendship to others, from qualities they see or find in them, which they hope will lead to promotion of their own temporal good. If they see that others are disposed to be respectful to them, and to give them honour, then love to their own honour will lead them to friendship with these people; or if they see them generously disposed to them, then love to their own profit will dispose them to friendship to them because of this; or if they find in these people a great agreement with themselves in disposition and ways of behaving, self-love may dispose them to amity with them because of the enjoyment they have in their company, or because this agreement with them in their disposition and habits carries with it the approval of their own disposition and habits. And so there are many other ways in which self-love is the source

of that love and friendship that often arises between unsaved people. Most of the love that there is in the world arises from this principle, and therefore it does not go beyond nature. An unsaved nature cannot go beyond self-love, but all that unsaved people do, is in some way or other, from this origin.

But divine love, spoken about in the text, is something above self-love, as it is something supernatural, or above and beyond all that is natural. It is not a branch that springs out of the root of self-love, as natural affection, and worldly friendships, and the love that people may have to one another, as such, do. Just as self-love is the offspring of natural principles, so divine love is the product of supernatural principles. Divine love is something of a greater and nobler kind than any plant that grows naturally in the soil of the heart of man. It is a plant transplanted into the soul out of the garden of heaven, by the holy and blessed Spirit of God, and so has its life in God, and not in self. And therefore there is no other love so much above the selfish principle as Christian love is; no love that is so free and disinterested, and in its exercise God is so loved for himself and his own sake, and people are loved, not because of their relation to self, but because of their relation to God as his children, and as those who are the creatures of his power, or under the influence of his Spirit. And therefore divine love, above all love in the world, is contrary to a selfish spirit. Other, or natural love, may in some respects be contrary to selfishness, inasmuch as it may, and often does, move men to much liberality and generosity to those they love; and yet, in other respects, it agrees with a selfish spirit, because, if we follow it to its origin, it arises from the same root, i.e. a principle of self-love. But divine love has its spring where its root is — in Jesus Christ; and so it is not from this world, but from a higher world; and it tends to the place it came from. As it does not spring out of self, so neither does it tend to self. It delights in the honour and glory of God, for his own sake, and not merely for the sake of self; and it pursues and delights in others good, for their sake, and for God's sake. That divine love is, indeed, a principle far above and contrary to a selfish spirit, further appears from this, that it goes out even to enemies; and that it is its nature and tendency to go out to the unthankful and evil, and to those that wrong us and hate us — which is directly contrary to the tendency of a selfish principle, and entirely above nature — less man-like than Christ-like.

3. *From the nature of this love to God and to man in particular.*

First, from the nature of this love to *God*. If we consider what the Scriptures tell us about the nature of love to God, we find that they teach that those who truly love God, love him so as to wholly devote themselves to him and his service. This we are taught in the sum of the ten commandments, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength” (Mark 12 v 30). These words contain a description of a right love to God; and they teach us, that those who love him rightly devote themselves wholly to him. They devote all to him: all their heart, and all their soul, and all their mind, and all their strength, or all their powers and faculties. Surely a person who gives all this wholly to God, keeps nothing back, but devotes himself wholly and entirely to him, making no reserve: everyone who have true love to God have a spirit to do this. This shows how much a principle of true love to God is above the selfish principle. If self is devoted wholly to God, then there is something, above self, that overcomes it; something superior to self, that takes self, and makes an offering of it to God. A selfish principle never devotes itself to another. The nature of it is, to devote all others to self. Those that have true love to God, love him as God, and as the Supreme Good; by contrast it is the nature of selfishness to set up self in the place of God, and to make an idol of self. That being people regard supremely, they devote all to. Those who idolize self, devote all to self; but those that love God as God, devote everything to him.

That Christian love, is contrary to a selfish spirit, will further appear, if we consider what the Scriptures teach,

Secondly, about the nature of this love *to others*. There are two principal and most remarkable descriptions that the Bible gives us of a truly gracious love to others, each of which should be noticed.

The *first* of these is the requirement that we love our neighbour as ourselves. This is in the Old Testament (Lev. 19 v 18) — “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;” and this Christ cites (Mat. 22 v 39), as the summary of all the duties of the second table of the law. Now this is contrary to selfishness, because love does not have the nature that confines the heart to self, but leads it out to others as well as self, and in the same way it does to self. It disposes us to look on our others as being, as it were, one with ourselves; and not only to consider our own circumstances and interests, but to consider the needs of our others, as we do our own; not only to have

regard to our own desires, but for the desires of others, and to do to them as we would have them to do to us.

The *second* remarkable description which the Scriptures give us of Christian love, which shows how contrary it is to selfishness, is, that of loving others as Christ has loved us. “A new commandment,” says Christ (John 13 v 34), “I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.” It is called a new commandment, as contradistinguished from that old one (Leviticus. 19 v 18), “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” Not that the duty of love to others, which is the matter of the commandment, was new, for the same kind of love was required in the Old Testament, which is required now. But it is called a new commandment, in this respect, that the rule and motive attached to it, which we are now more specially to have an eye to, in these days of the gospel, are new. The rule and motive more specially set in view previously was our love to ourselves — that we should love our neighbour *as ourselves*. But the motive and rule specially set in view now, in these days of the gospel, and since the love of Christ has been so wonderfully displayed, is the love of Christ to us — that we should love our neighbour *as Christ has loved us*. It is here called a new commandment; and also in John 15 v 12, Christ calls it *his* commandment, saying emphatically, “This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.” That we should love one another as we love ourselves, is Moses’ commandment; but that we should love one another as Christ has loved us, is the commandment of God our Saviour. It is the same commandment, substantially, that was given previously, but with new light shining on it from the love of Jesus Christ, and a new enforcement attached to it, by him, beyond what Moses attached. So that this rule, of loving others as Christ has loved us, does more clearly, and to a greater degree, show us our duty and obligation with respect to loving others, than Moses statement of it.

But to return from this digression, let us consider how this description that Christ gives of Christian love to others shows it to be the contrary of selfishness, by considering in what manner Christ has expressed love to us, and how much there is in the example of his love to enforce the contrary of a selfish spirit.

First, Christ has set his love on *people who were his enemies*. There was not only no love to himself in those on whom he set his love, but they were full of enmity and of a principle of actual hatred to him. “God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners,” or, as in the next verse but one, “enemies,” “Christ died for us” (Romans. 5 v 8, 10).

Second, such was Christ's love to us, that he was pleased, *in some respects, to look on us as himself*. By his love to us, if we will only accept his love, he has so espoused us, and united his heart to us, that he is pleased to speak about us and regard us as himself. His elect people were, from all eternity, dear to him like the apple of his eye. He looked on them so much as himself, that he regarded their concerns as his, and their interests as his own; and he has even made their guilt as his, by a gracious assumption of it to himself, so it might be looked on as his own, through that divine imputation by virtue of which they are treated as innocent, while he suffers for them. His love has sought to unite them to himself, so as to make them, as it were, members of his body, so that they are his flesh and his bones, as he himself seems to say in Mat. 25 v 40, when he declares, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

Third, the love of Christ to us was such, that he did, as it were, *spend himself for our sakes*. His love did not rest in mere feeling, nor in light efforts and small sacrifices, but though we were enemies, yet he so loved us, that he had a heart to deny himself, and undertake the greatest efforts, and undergo the greatest sufferings, for our sakes. He gave up his own ease, and comfort, and interest, and honour, and wealth; and became poor, and rejected, and despised, and had nowhere to put his head down to rest, and all for us! Not only this, but he spilt his own blood for us, and offered himself a sacrifice to God's justice, that we might be forgiven, and accepted, and saved!

Fourth, Christ loved us in this way, *without any expectation of ever being repayed by us for his love*. He did not stand in need of anything we could do for him, and knew well that we would never be able to repay him for his kindness to us, or even to do anything toward it. He knew that we were poor, miserable, and empty-handed outcasts, who might receive from him, but could give back nothing to him in return. He knew that we had no money or price which to purchase anything with, and that he must freely give us all things that we needed, or else we would be eternally without them. And will not we be far from a selfish spirit, and utterly contrary to it, if we love one another after such a manner as this, or if we have the same spirit of love toward others that was in Christ toward ourselves? If this is our spirit, our love to others will not depend on their love to us, but we shall do as Christ did to us love them even though they are enemies. We will not only pursue our own things, but we will in our hearts be so

united to others, that we shall look on their things as our own. We shall endeavour to be interested in their good, as Christ was in ours; and shall be ready to do without and part with our own things, in many cases, for the things of others, as Christ did toward us. We will be willing and ready to do these things for others, without any expectation of being repaid by them, as Christ did such great things for us without any expectation of return. If this is our spirit, we will not be under the influence of a selfish spirit, but will be unselfish in principle, and heart, and life.

In the application of this subject, the great use I would make of it is, *to dissuade all from a selfish spirit and practice, and to urge all to search for that spirit and live that life which will be contrary to it.* Search that by divine love your heart may be devoted to God and to his glory, and to loving your neighbour as yourself, or rather as Christ has loved you. Do not pursue, everyone, your own things, but, everyone, also the things of others. And, that you may be motivated to do this, in addition to the motives already presented, consider three things: —

First, that you are not your own. — As you have not made yourself, so you were not made *for* yourself. You are neither the *author* nor the *end* of your own being. Nor is it you that maintain yourself in being, or that provide for yourself, or that are dependent on yourself. There is another being that has made you, and preserves you, and provides for you, and on whom you are dependent: and He has made you for himself, and for the good of others, and not only for yourself. He has placed before you higher and nobler ends than self, even the welfare of others, and of society, and the interests of his kingdom; and for these you should labour and live, not only in time, but for eternity.

And if you are Christians, as many of you claim to be, then, in a particular sense, “ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price,” even “with the precious blood of Christ” (1 Corinthians. 6 v 19, 20; 1 Pet. 1 v 19). This is urged as an argument why Christians should not pursue their own interests and glory, but the glory of God; because the apostle adds, “Therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.” By nature you were in a miserable, lost condition, a prisoner in the hands of divine justice, and a miserable slave held captive by sin and Satan. And Christ has redeemed you, and so you are his by purchase. By a most just right you belong to him, and not to yourself. And, therefore, you must not treat yourself as your own, by pursuing your own interests or pleasure only, or even mostly; for if you do so, you will be guilty of robbing Christ.

And as you are not your own, so nothing that you have is your own. Your abilities of body and mind, your possessions, your time, talents, influence, comforts — none of them are your own; nor have you any right to use them as if you had an absolute property in them, as you will be likely to do if you imagine them only for your own private benefit, and not for the honour of Christ and for the good of others. Consider,

Second, how you, by your very profession as a Christian, are united to Christ and to your fellow-Christians. — Christ and all Christians are so united together, that they all make one body; and Christ is the head or representative of this body, and Christians are the parts. “We, being many,” says the apostle, “are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another” Romans. 12 v 5); and again, “By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free” (1 Corinthians. 12 v 13). How unsuitable, then, is it in Christians to be selfish, and concerned only for their own private interests! In the natural body, the hand is ready to serve the head, and all the parts are ready to serve one another. Is what the hands do, done only for their own advantage? Are they not constantly employed as much for the other parts of the body as for themselves? Is not the work they are doing, from day to day, for the common good of the whole body? And so it may be said as to the eye, the teeth, the feet, that they are all employed, not for themselves or for their own limited and partial welfare, but for the common comfort and good of the whole body. And if the head is dishonoured, are not all the parts of the body at once employed and active to remove the dishonour, and to put honour on the head? And if any parts of the body are wounded, and weakened, and in pain, are not all the parts of the body at once engaged to protect that weak or suffering part? Are not the eyes employed in looking out for it, and the ears in attending to the directions of physicians, and the feet in going where relief is to be searched for, and the hands in applying the treatment provided? So it should be with the Christian body. All its parts should be helpers and comforts to each other, and so promote their mutual welfare and happiness, and the glory of Christ the head. Once more, consider,

Third, that, in pursuing the glory of God and the good of your fellow creatures, you take the surest way to have God pursue your interests and promote your welfare. — If you will devote yourself to God, as making a sacrifice of all your own interests to him, you will not throw yourself away. Though you seem to neglect yourself, and to deny yourself, and to overlook

self in imitating the divine benevolence, *God will take care of you*; and he will see to it that your interest is provided for, and your welfare ensured. You will be no loser by all the sacrifices you have made for him. To his glory be it said, he will not be your debtor, but will return it you a hundred times even in this life, beside the eternal rewards that he will give you after in heaven. His own declaration is, “Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name’s sake, shall receive an hundred-fold” (the other evangelist adds, “in this present time”), “and shall inherit everlasting life” (Mat. 19 v 29); and the spirit of this declaration applies to all sacrifices made for Christ, or for our others for his sake. The greatness of the reward for this life Christ expresses by a definite number; but he does not God make use of numbers, however great, to describe the reward promised them in heaven. He only says they shall receive everlasting life, because the reward is so great, and so greatly exceeds all the expense and self-denial people can do for Christ’s sake, that no numbers are sufficient to describe it.

If you are selfish, and make yourself and your own private interests your idol, God will leave you to yourself, and let you promote your own interests as well as you can. But if you do not selfishly follow your own interests, but pursue the things that are Jesus Christ’s, and the things of your fellow-beings, then God will make your interest and happiness his own concern, and he is infinitely more able to provide for and promote it than you are. The resources of the universe move at his command, and he can easily command them all to serve your welfare. So that, not to search for your own, in the selfish sense, is the best way of searching for your own in a better sense. It is the most direct course you can take to secure your highest happiness. When you are required not to be selfish, you are not required, as has been observed, not to love and search for your own happiness, but only not to pursue mainly your own private and confined interests. But if you place your happiness in God, in glorifying him, and in serving him by doing good, — in this way, above all others, will you promote your wealth, and honour, and pleasure here below, and obtain a crown of unfading glory, and pleasures forever at God’s right hand. If you attempt, in the spirit of selfishness, to grasp all as your own, you will lose all, and be driven out of the world at last, naked and forlorn, to your everlasting poverty and contempt. But if you do not pursue your own, but the things of Christ, and the good of others, God himself will be yours, and Christ yours, and the Holy Spirit yours, and all things yours. Yes, “all

things” shall be yours; “whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ’s; and Christ is God’s” (1 Cor. 3 v 21, 22).

Let these things, then, incline us all to be less selfish than we are, and to search for more of the contrary most excellent spirit. Selfishness is a principle native to us, and, indeed, all the corruption of our nature is radically composed of it; but considering the knowledge that we have of Christianity, and how numerous and powerful the motives it presents, we ought to be far less selfish than we are, and less ready to pursue our own interests and only these. How much there is of this evil spirit, and how little of that excellent, noble, diffusive spirit which has now been set before us! But whatever the cause of this, whether it arise from our having too narrow notions of Christianity, and from our not having learned Christ as we ought to have done, or from the habits of selfishness handed down to us from our family, — whatever the cause is, let us exert ourselves to overcome it, that we may grow in the grace of an unselfish spirit, and so glorify God, and do good to others.”

by Jonathan Edwards
“CHARITY AND ITS FRUITS”

CHAPTER 17

HOLINESS LOVES GOD

“Charity vaunteth (boast, show off) not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly.” 1st Corinthians 13 v 4,5

“HAVING shown the nature and tendency of Christian love, in respect to our receiving injury, and doing good to others — that it “*suffers long and is kind*,” and also with respect to the good possessed by others as compared with that possessed by ourselves — that love “*envieth not*,” the apostle now proceeds to show, that in reference to what we ourselves may be or have, love *is not proud* — that “it vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly.” As, on the one hand, it prevents us from envying what others possess, so, on the other, it keeps us from glorying in what we possess ourselves. Paul had just declared that love was contrary to a spirit of envy, and now he declares that it is equally contrary to that spirit which specially provokes men to envy others, and which they often make a pretense or apology for envying them i.e. that they are puffed up with their honours and prosperity, and boast about their possession of these things. When men have obtained prosperity, or are advanced, and others observe that they are puffed up and boast about it, this tends to stimulate envy, and make others uneasy at the sight of their prosperity. But if a man has prosperity or advancement, and yet does not boast about it or behave in an unseemly manner because of it, this tends to reconcile others to his elevated circumstances, and make them satisfied that he should enjoy his elevation. As already observed, when men envy one another, they are prone to excuse and justify themselves in doing so, by the pretense that others do not make a good advantageous use of their prosperity, but are proud of it, and are

puffed up on account of it. But the apostle shows how Christian love tends to make all behave suitably to their condition, whatever it may be: if below others, not to envy them, and if above others, not to be proud or puffed up with their prosperity.

In the words of the text, we may observe, that a spirit of Christian love is spoken about as the opposite of a *proud behaviour*, and that two degrees of such a behaviour are mentioned. The higher degree is expressed by a man's "vaunting himself," that is, by his displaying themselves as to show plainly that they glory in what he has, or is. The lower degree is expressed by his "behaving himself unseemly," that is, by his not conducting himself in a becoming and decent manner in the enjoyment of his prosperity, but so acting as to show that they think the mere fact of their being prosperous elevates them above others. And the spirit of love is spoken about as opposed not only to a proud behaviour, but to a *proud spirit*, or pride in the heart- love "is not puffed up."

THAT THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTIAN LOVE IS A HUMBLE SPIRIT

1. *I will show what humility is.* — Humility may be defined to be a habit of mind and heart corresponding to our comparative unworthiness and vileness before God, or a sense of our own comparative lowliness in his sight, with the disposition towards a suitable behaviour. It is composed partly of the understanding, or in the thought and knowledge we have of ourselves, partly of the will, partly in the sense or estimate we have of ourselves, and partly of the disposition we have to a behaviour corresponding to this sense or estimate. The first thing in humility is,

A sense of our own comparative lowliness. — I say *comparative* lowliness, because humility is a grace proper for beings that are glorious and excellent in very many respects. So the saints and angels in heaven excel in humility, and humility is proper and suitable in them, although they are pure, spotless, and glorious beings, perfect in holiness, and excelling in mind and strength. Although they are so glorious, yet they have a comparative lowliness before God that they are aware of; he is said (Psalm. 113 v 6) to humble himself to view the things that are in heaven. So the man Christ Jesus, who is the most excellent and glorious of all creatures, is still meek and lowly in heart, and excels all other beings in humility. Humility is one

of the excellencies of Christ, because he is not only God, but also man, and as a man he was humble. For humility is not, and cannot be, an attribute of the divine nature. God's nature is indeed infinitely opposite to pride, and yet humility cannot properly be predicated of him. For if it could, this would argue imperfection, which is impossible in God. God, who is infinite in excellence and glory, and infinitely above everything, cannot have any comparative lowliness, and of course cannot have any such comparative lowliness to be aware of, and therefore cannot be humble. But humility is an excellence proper in all created intelligent beings because they are all infinitely little and low before God, and most of them are in some way mean and low in comparison with others. Humility implies a compliance with that rule of the apostle (Romans. 12 v 3), that we should not consider ourselves higher than we ought to, but that we should think soberly, depending on how God has dealt with each of us a measure, not only of faith, but of other things. And this humility, as a virtue in people, implies a sense of their own comparative lowliness, both as compared with God and as compared with others.

First, humility is primarily and principally composed of *a sense of our lowliness as compared with God*, or a sense of the infinite distance there is between God and ourselves. We are little, despicable creatures, even worms of the dust, and we should feel that we are nothing, and less than nothing, in comparison with the Majesty of heaven and earth. Abraham expressed such a sense of his nothingness, when he said (Genesis. 18 v 27), "Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes." There is no true humility without something of this Spirit: however aware we may be of our lowliness as compared with some other people, we are not truly humble unless we have a sense of our nothingness as compared with God. Some have a low thought of themselves as compared with other people: from the humility of their circumstances, or from a depressive temperament which is natural to them, or from some other cause, while still they know nothing about the infinite distance there is between them and God. Though they may be ready to look on themselves as humble-spirited, yet they have no true humility. That which above all other things it should concern us to know about ourselves, is what we are in comparison with God, who is our Creator, and the one in whom we live, and move, and have our being, and who is infinitely perfect in everything. And if we are ignorant of our lowliness as compared with him, then the most essential thing, and what is indispensable in true humility, is lacking. But where this is truly felt, this produces

Secondly, a sense of our own lowliness as compared with many other people. — For man is not only a low creature in comparison with God, but he is very mean as compared with many creatures of a superior rank in the universe, and most people are low in comparison with many other people. And when a sense of this comparative lowliness rises from a just sense of our lowliness as God sees it, then it has the nature of true humility. Whoever has a right sense and estimate of themselves in comparison with God, will be likely to have his eyes open to see himself rightly in every other respect. Seeing truly how he stands with respect to the first and highest of all beings, will greatly tend to help him towards a true perception of the place he occupies among all created beings. Whoever does not know the first and greatest of beings in the right way, who is the fountain and source of all other beings, cannot truly know anything properly; in so far as he has come to a knowledge of the former, so far is he prepared for and led to the knowledge of other things, and of himself as related to others, and his position among them.

All this would apply to people considered as unfallen beings, and would have been true of our race if our first parents had not fallen, and involved their posterity in sin. But humility in *fallen* people implies a sense of being ten times more low, both before God and others. People's *natural lowliness* is comprised of their being infinitely below God in natural perfection, and in God's being infinitely above him in greatness, power, wisdom, majesty, etc. And a truly humble person is aware of the small extent of their own knowledge, and the great extent of their ignorance, and of the small extent of their understanding as compared with the understanding of God. They are aware of their weakness. How small is their strength, and how little they are able to do. They are aware of their natural distance from God: of their dependence on him, [and] of the insufficiency of their own power and wisdom, and that it is by God's power that they are supported and provided for, and that they need God's wisdom to lead and guide them, and his might to make them able to do what they ought to do for him. They are aware of their subjection to God, and that God's greatness is properly composed of his authority, by which he is the sovereign Lord and King over all. They are willing to be subject to that authority, as feeling that it is suitable for them to submit to the divine will, and yield in everything to God's authority. People had this sort of comparative littleness before the fall. They were then infinitely little and low in comparison with God. But their natural lowliness has become much greater since the fall because

the moral ruin of their nature has greatly impaired their natural faculties, though not extinguished them completely.

The truly humble person, since the fall, is also sensible of their *moral* lowliness and vileness. This is essentially his sinfulness. His *natural* lowliness is his *littleness as a created being*, [while] his *moral* meanness is his *vileness and filthiness as a sinner*. Unfallen people were infinitely distant from God in his natural qualities or attributes. Fallen people are infinitely distant from him also as sinful, and so are filthy. And a truly humble person is in some measure aware of his comparative lowliness in this relation, that they see how excessively polluted they are in front of an infinitely holy God, in whose view the heavens are not clean. They see how pure God is, and how filthy and abominable they are in front of him. Isaiah had such a sense of his comparative lowliness, when he saw God's glory, and cried out (Isaiah. 6 v 5), "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell(live) in the midst(middle) of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." A humble sense of our lowliness in this respect implies self-abhorrence, like what led Job to exclaim (Job 42 v 5, 6), "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." It implies, also, such contrition and brokenness of heart as David speaks about when he says (Psalm. 51 v 17), "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise;" and also, as Isaiah contemplated when he declared (Isaiah. 57 v 15), "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." And both the sense of our own littleness, and the sense of our moral vileness in God's presence, are implied in the poverty of spirit which the Saviour speaks about when he says (Matthew. 5 v 3), "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

For this sense of our own lowliness and unworthiness that is implied in humility, it is not only necessary that we should know God, and have a sense of his greatness, without which we cannot know ourselves, but we must have a correct sense also of his excellence and loveliness. The devils and damned spirits see a great deal of God's greatness, of his wisdom, omnipotence, etc. God makes them ware of it by what they see in his dealings, and feel in their own sufferings. However unwilling they are to know it, God makes them know how much he is above them now, and they

shall know and feel it still more, at and after the final judgment. But they have no humility, nor will they ever have, because although they see and feel God's greatness, yet they see and feel nothing of his loveliness. Without this there can be no true humility, for that cannot exist unless the creature feels his distance from God, not only in relation to his greatness, but also his loveliness. The angels among ransomed spirits in heaven see both these things: not only how much greater God is than they are, but how much more lovely he is also. So that, though they have no absolute defilement and filthiness, as fallen people have, yet, as compared with God, it says (Job 15 v 15, and 4 v 18), "The heavens are not clean in his sight," and "his angels he charged with folly." From such a sense of their comparative lowliness, persons are made aware how unworthy they are of God's mercy or gracious notice. Jacob expressed such a sense when he said (Genesis. 32 v 10), "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth which thou hast showed unto thy servant;" and David, when he exclaimed (2 Sam. 7 v 18), "Who am I, O Lord God? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?" Everyone who is truly humble towards God has this kind of sense. Humility is also composed of:

A disposition to a corresponding behaviour and conduct. — Without this there is no true humility. If it could be so that our understanding could be illuminated to see our own lowliness, and at the same time the will and disposition of the soul did not comply with and conform to what corresponds to our sense of it, but opposed it, then there would be no humility. As was said just now, the devils and damned spirits see much of their comparative littleness before God in some respects. They know that God is infinitely above them in power, and knowledge, and majesty. And yet, not knowing and feeling his loveliness and excellence, their wills and dispositions by no means comply with and conform to what is appropriate to their lowliness, and so they have no humility, but are full of pride. Without pretending to mention everything in our behaviour corresponding to a proper sense of our lowliness and vileness to which humility would dispose us — that would include the whole of our duty toward God and others — I would specify some things that are worthy of notice, both in reference to God and in reference to others.

First, some things in our behaviour towards God which humility will dispose us to. Humility disposes a person heartily and freely to acknowledge his lowliness or littleness before God. They see how fit and suitable

it is that they should do this, and they do it willingly, and even delightedly. They freely confess their own nothingness and vileness, and admit their unworthiness of any mercy deserving only misery. It is the disposition of the humble soul, to lie low in front of God, and to humble themselves in the dust in his presence. Humility also disposes a person *to be distrustful of themselves, and to depend only on God*. The proud person, who has a high opinion of their own wisdom, or strength, or righteousness, is self-confident. But the humble are not disposed to trust in themselves, but distrust their own sufficiency in spiritual matters. It is their disposition to rely on God, and delightfully to throw themselves wholly onto him as their refuge, and righteousness, and strength. The humble man is further disposed *to renounce all the glory of the good he has or does, and to give it all to God*. If there is anything that is good in him, or any good done by him, it is not his disposition to glory or boast about it in front of God, but to attribute it all to God, and in the language of the Psalmist (Psa. 115 v 1) to say, “Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy and thy truth’s sake.” It is the disposition, again, of the humble person, *wholly to subject themselves to God*. Their heart is not opposed to a full and absolute subjection to the divine will, but inclined to it. They are disposed to be subject to the commands and laws of God, because they see it is right and best that he who is so infinitely inferior to God, should be subject in this way; and that it is an honour that belongs to God, to rule over, and give laws to them. They are equally disposed to be subject to the providence and daily disposal of events God orders and controls, and to submit cheerfully to his will revealed in these events. Although God orders suffering, and low and depressed circumstances, as their condition in the world, they do not criticize, but feeling his lowliness and unworthiness, he is aware that suffering and testing disposal of events are what they deserve, and that their circumstances are better than they merit. And however dark the divine dealings, having the faith which we so often see manifested in people who are eminent in grace, they are ready to say with Job (Job 13 v 15), “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.”

Secondly, it disposes *to a behaviour toward others* appropriate to our comparative lowliness. I will show this by pointing out what kind of behaviour humility tends to prevent. It tends, in the first place, to prevent *an aspiring and ambitious behaviour* among people. The person that is under the influence of a humble spirit, is content with such a situation among people as God is pleased to give him, and is not greedy for honour,

and does not attempt to appear greatest and elevated above others. He acts on the principle of the saying of the prophet (Jeremiah. 45 v 5), "Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not;" and also of the injunction of the apostle (Romans. 12 v 16), "Mind not high things." Humility tends also *to prevent an ostentatious behaviour*. If the truly humble person has any advantage or benefit of any kind, either temporal or spiritual, above others, they will not attempt to make a show of it. If they have greater natural abilities than others, they will not be ready to parade and display them, or be careful that others will know their superiority in this way. If they have a remarkable spiritual experience, they will not be eager others should know it for the sake of the honour they may obtain by doing so; nor do they attempt to be judged by others as an eminent saint and a faithful servant of heaven: it is only a small thing what others may think of them. If they do anything well, or do their duty in any respect with difficulty and self-denial, they do not attempt to make others take notice of it, nor are they careful in case others should not observe it. They do not behave like the Pharisees, who, it is said (Mat. 23 v 5), did all their works to be seen by others; but if they have done anything in sincerity, they are content that the great Being who sees in secret views it and will approve it.

Humility tends also to prevent *an arrogant and assuming behaviour*. Whoever is under the influence of a humble spirit is not ready to take too much on them, and when they are among others, they do not conduct themselves as if they expected and insisted that a great deal of regard should be shown to them. Their behaviour does not give the impression that they are the best among those about them, and that they are the one who the most regard should be shown to, and whose judgment is most to be sought and followed. They do not conduct themselves as if they expected that everybody should bow and submit to them, and give place to them, as if no one was of as much consequence as they are. They do not put on an assuming manner in their conversation, nor in the management of their business, nor in the duties of religion. They are not ready to take on them what does not belong to them, as though they had power where indeed they do not, as if the world ought to be subject to their command, and must comply with their inclination and purposes. On the contrary, they give all due deference to the judgment and inclinations of others, and their behaviour gives the impression, that they sincerely receive and acts on the teaching of the apostle (Philippians. 2 v 3), "Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other

better than themselves.” In talking about the things of religion, they do not have the demeanour, either in speech or behaviour, of people that consider themselves one of the best saints in the whole company, but rather conduct themselves as if they thought, in the expression of the apostle (Ephesians. 3 v 8), that he was “less than the least of all saints.”

Humility tends also *to prevent a disparaging behaviour*. Treating others with derision and contempt is one of the worst and most offensive manifestations of pride towards them. But those under the influence of a humble spirit are far away from such a behaviour. They do not despise or look down on those that are below them with a haughty supercilious air, as though they were scarcely worthy to come near to them or to have any regard from them. They are aware that there is not such a vast difference between themselves and others to warrant such a behaviour. They are not found treating with derision and contempt what others say, or speaking about what they do with ridicule and sneering reflections, or sitting and relating what others may have spoken or done, only to make sport of it. On the contrary, humility disposes a person to a condescending behaviour to the meekest and lowest, and to treat inferiors with courtesy and affability, as aware of their own weakness and despicableness before God, and that it is God alone that makes him in any respect different from others, or gives him the advantage over them. The truly humble will (Romans. 12 v 16) always have the spirit to “condescend to men of low estate(position).” Even if they are great people, and in places of public trust and honour, humility will dispose them to treat their inferiors in such a manner described and not in a haughty and scornful manner, showing off their greatness.

Humility tends also *to prevent a wilful and stubborn behaviour*. People who are under the influence of a humble spirit will not be determined to have their own way regardless either in public or private affairs. They will not be stiff and inflexible, and insist that everything must be done according to what they happen to propose first, and manifest a disposition by no means to be easy, but to make all the difficulty they can, and to make others uneasy as well as themselves, and to prevent anything being done with any quietness, if it does not correspond to their own mind and will. They are not like some that the apostle Peter describes (2 Peter. 2 v 10), presumptuous and self-willed, always bent on carrying their own points, and, if this cannot be done, then bent on opposing and annoying others. On the contrary, humility disposes men to have a compliant spirit towards others, ready, for the sake of peace, and to gratify others, to comply in

many things with their inclinations, and to yield to their judgments where they are not inconsistent with truth and holiness. A truly humble person is inflexible in nothing but in the cause of his Lord and Master, which is the cause of truth and virtue. They are inflexible in this because God and conscience require it. In things of lesser weight and concern, and which do not involve his principles as a follower of Christ, and in things that only concern his own private interests, he is ready to yield to others. If they see that others are stubborn and unreasonable in their wilfulness, they do not allow that to provoke them to be stubborn and wilful in his opposition to them, but they act instead on the principles taught in such passages as Romans. 12 v 19; 1 Corinthians. 6 v 7; Matthew. 5 v 40, 41; “Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath.” “Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?” “If any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain(two).”

Humility will also tend *to prevent a levelling behaviour*. Some people are always ready to level those above them down to themselves, while they are never willing to level those below them up to their own position. But those who are under the influence of humility will avoid both these extremes. On the one hand, they will be willing that everyone should rise just so far as their diligence and worth of character entitle them to, and on the other hand, they will be willing that their superiors should be known and acknowledged in their place, and have rendered to them all the honours that are due to them. They will not desire that everyone should stand on the same level because they know it is best that there should be gradations in society: that some should be above others, and should be honoured and submitted to as such. They are willing to be content with this divine arrangement, and, agreeable to it, to conform both their spirit and behaviour to precepts like the following: “Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour” (Romans. 13 v 7); “Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work” (Titus 3 v 1).

Humility also tends *to prevent a self-justifying behaviour*. People under the influence of a humble spirit, if they have fallen into a fault, as all are liable at some time to fall, or if they have injured another in anything, or dishonoured the Christian name and character, will be willing to

acknowledge their fault, and take the shame of it to them. They will not be hard to be brought to a sense of his fault or to testify that sense by a suitable acknowledgment of his error. They will be internally humbled over it, and ready to show their humility in the manner which the apostle points out, when he says (James. 5 v 16), “Confess your faults one to another.” It is pride that makes men so excessively backward to confess their fault when they have fallen into one, and that makes them think it to be their shame what is in truth their highest honour. But humility in the behaviour makes men prompt to their duty in this respect, and if it predominates as it should, will lead them to do it with alacrity and even delight. When anyone will give such a person a Christian admonition or reprimand for any fault, humility will dispose them to take it kindly, and even thankfully. It is pride that makes people to be so uneasy when they are reprimanded by others, so that often they will not accept it, but become angry, and show great bitterness. Humility, on the contrary, will dispose them not only to tolerate such reprimands, but to value and prize them as signs of kindness and friendship. “Let the righteous smite me,” says the Psalmist (Psa. 141 v 5), “it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head.”

In the application of this subject we may see,

The excellency of a Christian spirit. — “The righteous,” it says (Proverbs. 12 v 26), “is more excellent than his neighbour.” Much of this excellence in the true Christian is composed of their meek and humble spirit, which makes them so like their Saviour. This spirit the apostle speaks about (1 Peter. 3 v 4) as the richest of all ornaments, “even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.” The subject should lead us,

To examine ourselves, and see if we have a humble spirit. — “His soul,” says the prophet (Hab. 2 v 4), “which is lifted up, is not upright in him;” and the fact that “God resisteth the proud” (Jam. 4 v 6), or, as in the original, “sets himself in battle array against him,” shows how he detests a proud spirit. It is not every show and appearance of humility that will stand the test of the gospel. There are various imitations of it that be short of the reality. Some put on a pretended humility. Others have a natural depression and anxious spirit. Others, under the convictions of conscience, by which, for the time, they are depressed, seem broken in spirit. Others

seem greatly humbled while in adversity and suffering, or have a natural melting of heart under the common illuminations of the truth. In others, there is a counterfeit kind of humility, produced by the delusions of Satan: and all of these may be mistaken for true humility. Examine yourself, then, and see what is the nature of your humility, to see it is of the superficial kind, or if it is indeed produced by the Holy Spirit in your hearts. Do not rest satisfied, till you find that the spirit and behaviour of those whom the gospel counts as humble, are yours.

3. *The subject urges people who are foreign to the grace of God, to search for that grace, that they may attain to this spirit of humility.* — If this is your character, you are now devoid of a Christian spirit, which is a spirit of grace, and so wholly devoid of humility. Your spirit is a proud spirit, and though you may not seem to conduct yourself very proudly among people, yet you are lifting yourself up against God, in refusing to submit your heart and life to him. And in doing this, you are disregarding or defying God's sovereignty, and daring to contend with your Maker, although he dreadfully threatens those who do this. You are proudly throwing contempt on God's authority, in refusing to obey it and continuing to live in disobedience, in refusing to be conformed to his will and to comply with the humbling conditions and way of salvation by Christ, and in trusting in your own strength and righteousness, instead of what Christ so freely offers. Now this spirit, consider, this is, in an special sense, the sin of devils. "Not a novice," says the apostle (1 Timothy. 3 v 6), "lest, being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil." And consider, too, how odious and abominable this spirit is to God, and how terribly he has threatened it; declaring (Proverbs. 16 v 5) that "every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord: though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished;" and again (Proverbs. 6 v 16), "These things doth the Lord hate: a proud look," etc.; and again (Proverbs. 29 v 23), that "a man's pride shall bring him low;" and (2 Samuel. 22 v 28) that the eyes of the Lord are upon the haughty, that he may bring them down; and still again (Isa. 23 v 9), that "the Lord of hosts hath purposed it, to stain the pride of all glory, and to bring into contempt all the honourable of the earth." Consider, too, how Pharaoh, and Korah, and Haman, and Belshazzar, and Herod, were awfully punished for their pride of heart and conduct. Be warned, by their example, to cherish a humble spirit, and to walk humbly with God, and towards others. Finally,

Let everyone be urged earnestly to search for a humble spirit, and to labour to be humble in all their behaviour toward God and others. — Search for a deep and continuing sense of your comparative lowliness in front of God and others. Know God. Confess your nothingness and your deserving to be punished by him. Distrust yourself. Rely only on God. Renounce all glory except from him. Yield yourself heartily to his will and service. Avoid an aspiring, ambitious, ostentatious, assuming, arrogant, contemptuous, stubborn, wilful, levelling, self-justifying behaviour; and labour for more and more of the humble spirit that Christ manifested while he was on earth. Consider the many motives to such a spirit. Humility is a most essential and distinguishing trait in all true piety. It attends every other grace, and in a particular manner tends to the purity of Christian feeling. It is the ornament of the spirit, the source of some of the sweetest exercises of Christian experience, the most acceptable sacrifice we can offer to God, the subject of the richest of his promises, [and] the spirit with which he will stay with on earth, and which he will crown with glory in heaven afterwards. Earnestly search for, then, and diligently and prayerfully cherish, a humble spirit, and God will walk with you here below, and when a few more days will have passed, he will receive you to the honours given to his people at Christ's right hand."

by Jonathan Edwards
"CHARITY AND ITS FRUITS"

CHAPTER 18

HOLINESS LOVES OTHERS

“In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.” 1st John 3 v 10

“Let us hold fast the profession of *our* faith without wavering; (for he *is* faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:” Hebrews 10 v 23,24

“And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all *men*, even as we *do* toward you: To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.” 1st Thessalonians 3 v 12,13

WHAT IS MEEKNESS?

“*Charity(love) suffereth long, and is kind.*”—

1st Corinthians 13 v 4

“THE apostle, in the previous verses, as we have seen, sets out how great and essential a thing a spirit of Christian love, is, in Christianity: that it is far more necessary and excellent than any of the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit(chapter 14); that it far exceeds all external performances and sufferings; and, in short, that it is the sum of all that is distinguishing and

saving in Christianity—the very life and soul of all religion, without which, though we give all our goods to feed the poor, and our bodies to be burned, we are nothing. And now he proceeds, as his subject naturally leads him, to show the excellent nature of charity, by describing its several amiable and excellent fruits. In the text, two of these fruits are mentioned: suffering long, which has respect to the evil or injury received from others; and being kind, which has respect to the good to be done to others. Considering, for the present, the first of these points, I would endeavour to shew,

THAT CHARITY(LOVE), OR A TRULY CHRISTIAN SPIRIT,
WILL DISPOSE US MEEKLY TO BEAR THE EVIL THAT
IS RECEIVED FROM OTHERS, OR THE INJURIES THAT
OTHERS MAY DO TO US.

Meekness is a great part of the Christian spirit. Christ, in that earnest and touching call and invitation of his that we have in the eleventh chapter of Matthew, in which he invites all that labour and are burdened to come to himself for rest, particularly mentions, that he would have them come to learn of him: he adds, “I am meek and lowly in heart.” And meekness, as it respects injuries received from others, is called longsuffering in the Scriptures, and is often mentioned as an exercise, or fruit of the Christian spirit (Galatians. 5 v 22)— “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering; and Ephesians. 5 v 1, 2)—”I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord,, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering,” &c.; and Colossians. 3 v 12, 13–11 Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved,, bowels of mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.”

I would— 1. Take notice of some of the various kinds of injuries that we may receive from others; 2. Show what is meant by meekly bearing such injuries; and, 3. How that love, which is the sum of the Christian spirit, will dispose us to do this.

Some injure others in their assets by unfairness and dishonesty in their dealings, by being fraudulent and deceitful with them, or at least by leading them to act in the dark, and taking advantage of their ignorance; or by oppressing them, taking advantage of their necessities; or by unfaithfulness towards them, not fulfilling their promises and engagements, and being

slack and slighting in any business they are employed in by others, aiming at nothing but just to meet the letter of their engagements, and not being careful to improve their time to the utmost in accomplishing what which they are engaged to do; or by asking unreasonable prices for what they do; or by withholding what is due, from others, unjustly, neglecting to pay their debts, or unnecessarily putting others to trouble and difficulty to get what is due from them. And besides these, there are many other methods by which people injure one another in their dealings, by a multiplicity of crooked and perverse ways, in which they are far from doing to others as they would have them do to themselves, and by which they provoke and irritate and injure one another.

Some injure others in their reputation, by disapproving or speaking badly about them behind their backs. No injury is more common, and no iniquity more frequent or base, than this. Other ways of injury are extensive; but the amount of injury by criticism of this kind, is beyond any account. Some injure others by making or spreading false reports about them, and so cruelly slandering them. Others, without saying what is directly false, greatly misrepresent things, picturing everything respecting others in the worst colours, exaggerating their faults, and presenting them as far greater than they really are, always speaking about them in an unfair and unjust manner. A great deal of injury is done among people by uncharitably judging one another in this way, and putting injurious and evil constructions on one another's words and actions.

Persons may greatly injure others in their thoughts, by unjustly entertaining mean thoughts, or a low estimate of them. Some are deeply and continually injurious to others, by the contempt they habitually have of them in their hearts, and by their willingness to think the worst about them. And, like the outflowing of the thoughts, a great deal is done to the injury of others by the words; for the tongue is only too ready to be the wicked instrument of expressing the evil thoughts and feelings of the soul, and so, in the Scriptures (Job 5 v 21), it is called a scourge, and is compared (Psalm 140 v 3) to the fangs of some very poisonous kinds of serpents, whose bite is supposed to cause death.

Sometimes men injure others in their treatment and actions towards them, and in the injurious deeds they do to them. If they are in authority, they sometimes carry themselves very injuriously toward those over whom their authority extends, by behaving very assumingly and magisterially and tyrannically toward them; and sometimes those who are under authority,

carry themselves very injuriously toward those who are over them by denying them that respect and honour which are due to them, and so to themselves while they occupy them. Some carry themselves very injuriously toward others by the exercise of a very selfish spirit, seeming to be all for themselves, and apparently having no regard to the good or benefit of others, but all their design is only to better their own interests. Some carry themselves injuriously in the manifestation of a very haughty and proud spirit, as though they thought they were more excellent than all others, and that nobody was at all to be regarded except themselves alone; and this appears in their air and talk and actions, and their greatly assuming behaviour in general, all of which are such, that those about them feel, and justly feel, that they are injured by them. Some carry themselves very injuriously by the exercise of a very wilful spirit, being so desperately set on having their own way, that they will, if possible, bend everything to their own will, and never will alter their course, nor yield to the wishes of others: they shut their eyes against the light or motives others may offer, and have no regard to any one's inclination but their own being always perverse and wilful in having their own way. Some carry themselves injuriously in the course they take in public affairs, acting not so much from a regard for the public good, as from the spirit of opposition to some party, or to some particular person; so that the party or person opposed is injured, and often is greatly provoked and exasperated. Some injure others by the malicious and wicked spirit they cherish against them, whether with or without cause. It is not an uncommon thing for neighbours to dislike and even hate one another; not cherishing anything like love to each other in their hearts, but whether they acknowledge it or not, in reality hating one another, having no delight in each other's honour and prosperity, but, on the contrary, being pleased when they are experiencing and are in adversity, foolishly and wickedly thinking, perhaps, that another's fall is their own elevation, which it never is. Some injure others by the spirit of envy they show toward them, cherishing ill-will toward them for no other reason than for the honour and prosperity they enjoy. Many injure others from a spirit of revenge, deliberately returning evil for evil, for real or imaginary injuries received from them; and some, as long as they live, will keep up a grudge in their hearts against others, and whenever an opportunity offers, will act it out in injury to them in the spirit of malice. And in innumerable other particular ways which might be mentioned people injure one another; though these may suffice for our present purpose.

2. I would go on to shew what is meant by meekly bearing such injuries, or how they ought meekly to be borne.— And here I would shew, first, the nature of the duty instructed; and then why it is called long-suffering, or suffering long. And,

1. I would show the nature of the duty of meekly bearing the injuries we suffer from others. And,

First, it implies that injuries offered should be borne without doing anything to revenge them.—There are many ways which people do what is revengeful; not merely by actually bringing some immediate suffering on the one that may have injured them, but by anything, either in speech or behaviour, which shews a bitterness of spirit against them for what they have done. So, if after we are offended or injured by others, we speak disapprovingly to them, or about them to others, with the intention of lowering or injuring them, so we may gratify the bitter spirit we feel in our hearts for the injury that neighbour has done us, this is revenge. Whoever exercises a Christian long-suffering toward his neighbour, will bear the injuries received from him without revenging or retaliating, either by injurious deeds or bitter words. They will bear it without doing anything against his neighbour that will manifest the spirit of resentment, without speaking to them, or about them, with revengeful words, and without allowing a revengeful spirit in their heart, or manifesting it in their behaviour. They will receive all with a calm, undisturbed demeanour, and with a soul full of meekness, quietness, and goodness; and they will manifest this in all their behaviour to the person that has injured them, whether to his face or behind his back. So it is, that this virtue is recommended in the Scriptures under the name of gentleness, or as always connected with it, as may be seen in James 3 v 17, and Galatians. 5 v 22. In the person that exercises the Christian spirit as they ought to, there will not be a passionate, rash, or hasty expression, or a bitter, exasperated expression, or an air of violence in the talk or behaviour; but, on the contrary, the expression and words and demeanour will all manifest an air of peaceableness and calmness and gentleness. They may perhaps reprimand others. This may clearly be their duty. But if they do, it will be without impoliteness, and without that severity that can tend only to exasperate; and though it may be with strength of reason and argument, and with plain and decided explanation, it will still be without angry reflections or contemptuous language. They may show a disapproval of what has been done; but it will be not with an appearance

of high resentment, but as reprimanding the offender for a sin against God, rather than as for the offence against themselves; as grieving over their distress, more than resenting his injury; as searching for his good, not his hurt; and as one that desires more to deliver the offender out of the error into which they has fallen, than to get even with him for the injury done to themselves. The duty commanded also implies,

Secondly, that injuries be borne with continuing love in the heart, and without those inward emotions and passions that tend to interrupt and destroy it.—Injuries should be borne, where we are called to suffer them, not only without manifesting an evil and revengeful spirit in our words and actions, but also without such a spirit in the heart. We should not only control our passions when we are injured, and refrain from giving vent to outward revenge, but the injury should be borne without the spirit of revenge in the heart. Not only a smooth external behaviour should be continued, but also a sincere love with it. We should not cease to love others because they have injured us. We may pity, but not hate them for it.

Thirdly, injuries should be borne without our losing the quietness and repose of our own minds and hearts.—They should not only be borne without a rough behaviour, but with continuing inward calmness and repose in our spirit. When the injuries we suffer are allowed to disturb our calmness of mind, and to excite and disturb us, then we cease to bear them in the true spirit of long-suffering. If the injury is permitted to cause loss of composure and agitation, and to break up our internal rest, we cannot enjoy ourselves, and are not in a state to engage properly in our various duties; and we especially are not in a state for religious duties—for prayer and meditation. Such a state of mind is the contrary of the spirit of long-suffering and meekly bearing of injuries that is spoken about in the text. Christians ought still to keep the calmness and serenity of their minds undisturbed, whatever injuries they may suffer. Their souls should be serene, and not like the unstable surface of the water, disturbed by every wind that blows. No matter what evils they may suffer, or what injuries may be inflicted on them, they should still act on the principle of the words of the Saviour to his disciples (Luke 21 v 19)—“In your patience possess ye your souls.” The, duty we are speaking about also implies,

Fourthly, that in many cases, when we are injured, we should be willing to suffer greatly in our interests and feelings for the sake of peace, rather than do what we have opportunity, and perhaps the right, to do

in defending ourselves.—When we suffer injuries from others, the case is often such that a Christian spirit, if we did exercise it as we ought to, would dispose us to hold back from taking the advantage we may have to vindicate and right ourselves. By doing otherwise, we may be the means of bringing very great trouble to those that have injured us; and tenderness toward him may and ought to dispose us to a great deal of tolerance, and to suffer to a degree ourselves, rather than bring so much suffering on them. Besides, such a course would probably lead to a violation of peace, and to an established hostility, whereas in this way there may be hope of gaining others, and from an enemy making them a friend. These things are manifest from what the apostle says to the Corinthians concerning going to law one with another—”Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?” (1 Cor. 6 v 7) Not that every labour of people to defend and right themselves, when they are injured by others, is censurable, or that they should suffer all the injuries that their enemies please to bring on them, rather than improve an opportunity they have to defend and vindicate themselves, even though it is to the damage of him that injures them. But in many, and probably in most cases, men ought to suffer long first, in the spirit of the long-suffering love of the text. And the case may often be such, that they may be called to suffer considerably, as love and prudence will direct, for the sake of peace, and from a sincere Christian love to the one that injures them, rather than deliver themselves in the way they may have opportunity for.

2. Why it is called long-suffering, or suffering long.—And it seems to be so called., especially for two reasons:—

First, because we ought meekly to bear not only a small injury, but also a good deal of injurious treatment from others. We should persevere and continue in a quiet frame, without ceasing still to love others, not only when they injure us a little, but when they injures us greatly, and the injuries they do to us are great. We should not only so bear a few injuries, but a great many, and although our neighbour continues his injurious treatment to us for a long time. When it is said that love suffers long, we cannot infer from this that we are to bear injuries meekly temporarily, and that after that period we may cease so to bear them. The meaning is not, that we must bear injuries for a long time, but may cease to bear them eventually; but it is, that we should meekly continue to bear them though they are

continued a long time, even to the end. The spirit of long-suffering should never cease. And it is called long-suffering,

Secondly, because in some cases we should be willing to suffer a great while in our interests, before we improve opportunities of righting ourselves.—Though we may defend ourselves at last, when we are driven, as it were, by necessity to it, yet we are not to do it out of revenge, or to injure those that have injured us, but only for needful self-defence; and even this, in many cases, is to be given up for peace, and out of a Christian spirit toward those that have injured us, in case we should do injury to them. I come now to show,

3. How that love, which is the sum of the Christian spirit, will dispose us meekly to bear such injuries.—And this may be shown both in reference to love to God and love to others.

1. Love to God and the Lord Jesus Christ has a tendency to dispose us to this.

First, love to God disposes us to imitate him, and therefore disposes us to such long-suffering as he manifests. Long-suffering is often spoken of as one of the attributes of God. In Exodus 34 v 6, it says, “And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering,” &c. And in Romans. 2 v 4, the apostle asks, “Despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long-suffering?” The long-suffering of God is very wonderfully manifest in his bearing innumerable injuries from people, and injuries that are very great and long-lasting. If we consider the wickedness that there is in the world, and then consider how God continues the world in existence, and does not destroy it, but showers on it innumerable mercies, the generosity of his daily provision and grace, causing his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sending rain both on the just and on the unjust, and offering his spiritual blessings ceaselessly and to everyone, we will realize how extensive his long-suffering is toward us. If we consider his long-suffering to some of the great and populous cities of the world, and think how constantly the gifts of his goodness are given to and consumed by them, and then consider how great the wickedness of these very cities is, it will shew us how amazingly great is his long-suffering. The same long-suffering has been manifest to very many particular persons, in all ages of the world. He is long-suffering to the sinners that he spares, and to whom he offers

his mercy, even while they are rebelling against him. He is long-suffering toward his own elect people, many of whom long lived in sin, and despised both his goodness and his wrath: and yet he bore long with them, even to the end, till they were brought to repentance, and made, through his grace, containers of mercy and glory. He showed this mercy to them even while they were enemies and rebels, as the apostle tells us was the case with himself—”And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting “(1 Timothy. 1 v 12–16). Now, it is the nature of love, at least in reference to a superior, that it always inclines and disposes to imitation of them. A child’s love to his father disposes him to imitate his father, and the love of God’s children especially disposes them to imitate their heavenly Father. Like he is long-suffering, so should they be.

Secondly, love to God will dispose us to express our gratitude for his long-suffering exercised toward us. Love not only disposes to imitate, but it works by gratitude. And people that love God will be thankful to him for the extensive long-suffering that he has exercised toward them in particular. People that love God as they ought to, will have such a sense of his wonderful long-suffering toward them under the many injuries they have offered to him, that it will seem to them only a small thing to bear with the injuries that have been offered to them by others. All the injuries they have ever received from others, in comparison with those they have offered to God, will appear less than as negligible amounts of money in comparison with a million pounds. And as they thankfully accept and admire God’s long-suffering toward themselves, so they can only testify their approval of it, and their gratitude for it, by manifesting, in so far as they are able, the same long-suffering to others— if they should refuse to exercise long-suffering toward those that have injured them, they would practically disapprove of God’s long-suffering toward themselves: what we truly approve of and delight in, we will not practically reject. Then gratitude for God’s long-suffering will also dispose us to obedience

to God in this particular, when he commands us to be long-suffering toward others.

Thirdly, love to God tends to humility, which is one main root of a meek and long-suffering spirit. Love to God, as it exalts him, tends to low thoughts and estimates of ourselves, and leads to a deep sense of our unworthiness and our deserving punishment; because people that love God are aware of the hatefulnes and vilenes of sin committed against the Being they love. Recognizing how extensive it is in themselves, they detest themselves in their own eyes, as unworthy of any good, and deserving all evil. Humility is always found connected with long-suffering, as the apostle says (Ephesians. 5 v 2)—"With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love." A humble spirit disinclines us to indulge resentment of injuries; those that are small and unworthy in their own eyes, will not think so much of an injury offered to them as people that has conceited thoughts of themselves: it is considered a greater and higher enormity to offend one that is great and high, than one that is low and inferior. It is pride or self-conceit that is very much the foundation of a high and bitter resentment, and of an unforgiving and revengeful spirit.

Fourthly, love to God disposes people to consider the hand of God in the injuries they suffer, and not only others as the means of it, and meekly to submit to Gods will in it. Love to God disposes people to see his hand in everything; to own him as the governor of the world, and the director of providence; and to acknowledge his disposal of everything that takes place. The fact that the hand of God is a great deal more concerned in everything that happens to us than the treatment of other is, should lead us, in a great measure, not to think of things as from others, but to have respect to them primarily as from God—as ordered by his love and wisdom, even when their immediate source may be the malice or inconsideration of others. If we indeed consider and feel that they are from the hand of God, then we will be disposed meekly to receive and quietly to submit to them, and to own that the greatest injuries received from others are justly and even kindly ordered by God, and so we will be far from any disquiet or disturbance in our mind because of them. It was with this view that David so meekly and quietly bore the curses of Shimei, when he came and cursed and threw stones at him (2 Samuel. 16 v 5, 10), saying that the Lord had told him do it, and therefore forbidding his followers to avenge it.

Fifthly, love to God disposes us meekly to bear injuries from others, because it sets us very much above the injuries of men. And it does so

in two respects. In the first place, it sets above the reach of injuries from others, because nothing can ever really hurt those that are the true friends of God. Their life is hid with Christ in God; and he, as their protector and friend, will carry them up high as on the wings of eagles; and all things will work together for their good (Romans. 8 v 28); and no one will be permitted really to harm them, while they are followers of what is good (1 Peter. 3 v 13). And then, in the next place, as love to God gains ascendancy, it tends to set people above human injuries, in this sense, that the more they love God, the more they will place all their happiness in him. They will look to God as their all, and search for their happiness and share in his favour, not only in the distribution of his providence; the more they love God, the less they set their hearts on their worldly interests, which are all that their enemies can touch. Men can injure God's people only with respect to worldly good. But the more a man loves God, the less is his heart set on the things of the world, and the less he feels the injuries that his enemies may inflict, because they cannot reach beyond these things. And so it is often the case, that the friends of God hardly think the injuries they receive from people are worthy of the name of injuries; and the calm and quietness of their minds are scarcely disturbed by them. And as long as they have the favour and friendship of God, they are not much concerned about the evil work and injuries of others. Love to God, and a sense of his favour, dispose them to say about the injuries of others, when they would take from them their worldly enjoyments, as Mephibosheth did about Ziba's taking the land (2 Samuel. 19 v 30), "Yea, let him take all, forasmuch as my lord the king is come again in peace unto his own house." And as love to God will, in these various respects, dispose us to long-suffering under injuries from others, so,

2. Love to others will dispose us to the same.— In this sense, love suffers long—long-suffering and patient toleration are always the fruit of love. As the apostle intimates (Ephesians. 4 v 1, 2), it is a part of our walking worthily of the Christian vocation, that we walk "with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love." Love will bear with numerous faults and offences in others, and will incline us (Prov. 10 v 12) to cover all sins. So we see by extensive observation and experience. Those that we have a great and strong affection for, we always bear a great deal more from, than from those that we dislike, or who we are indifferent to. A parent will bear many things in his own child that he would

greatly disapprove of in others children, and a friend tolerates many things in his friend that he would not in a stranger. There is no need to multiply words or reasons on this branch of the subject, it is excessively plain to everyone. All know that love is of such a nature, that it is directly contrary both to resentment and revenge; for these imply ill-will, which is the very reverse of love, and cannot exist with it.

1. It urges us all to the duty of meekly bearing the injuries that may be received from others.—Let what has been said be improved by us to suppress all wrath, revenge, and bitterness of spirit, toward those that have injured, or that may at any time injure us: whether they injure us in our material possessions or reputations, or whether they abuse us with their tongues or with their hands, and whether those that injure us are our superiors, inferiors, or equals. Let us not say in our hearts, I will do to him as he has done to me. Let us not try, as is sometimes said, “to be even with him,” by some kind of retaliation, or so much as suffer any hatred or bitterness or vindictiveness of spirit, to rise in our hearts. Let us labour, under all injuries, to preserve the calmness and quiet of our spirits, and be ready rather to suffer considerably in our just rights, than do anything that may occasion our stirring up, and living in strife and contention. To this end I would offer the following motives:—

First, Consider the example that Christ has left us.— He had a meek and quiet spirit, and a most long-suffering behaviour. In 2 Corinthians. 10 v 1, we are told by the apostle about the meekness and gentleness of Christ. He meekly bore innumerable and very great injuries from others. He was very much the object of bitter contempt and disapproval, and ignored and despised being considered as worth very little. Although he was the Lord of glory, yet he was made out to be nothing, and rejected and held in low esteem by people. He was the object of the spite and malice and bitter censure of the very ones he came to save. He endured the contradiction of sinners against himself. He was called a person greedy for food and a drunkard; and though holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, yet he was charged with being a friend of tax collectors and sinners. He was called a deceiver of the people, and often (as in John 10 v 20, and 7 v 20) he was said to be mad, and possessed with the devil. Sometimes they reprimanded him (John 8 v 48) with being a Samaritan, and having a devil; the former being considered by the Jews as the highest disapproval, and the latter as implying the most diabolical wickedness. He was sometimes

charged (John 10 v 33) with being a wicked blasphemer, and one that deserved death for that. Sometimes they charged him with working miracles by the power and aid of Beelzebub the prince of devils, and even called him (Matthew. 10 v 25) a devil himself. Such was their spite against him, that they had agreed (John 9 v 22) to excommunicate or threw out of the synagogue any one that should say that he was the Christ. They hated him with a mortal hatred, and wished he was dead, and from time to time laboured to murder him, yes, were almost always labouring to soak their hands in his blood. His very life was an annoyance to them, and they hated him so (Psalm. 41 v 5), that they could not bear that he should live. We very often read (as in John 5 v 16) about their attempts to try and kill him. And what pains did many of them take to watch him in his words, that they might have something about which to accuse him, and so be able, with the show of reason, to put him to death! And many times they combined together to take his life in this manner. They often actually took up stones to stone him, and once led him to the brow of a hill, that they might throw him down, and so dash him to pieces. And yet Christ meekly bore all these injuries without resentment or one word of criticism, and with a heavenly quietness of spirit passed through them all. And at last, when he was most ignominiously dealt with by them all, when his professed friend betrayed, and his enemies seized him, and led him away to scourging and the death of the cross, he went like a lamb to the slaughter, not uttering a word. Not one word of bitterness escaped from him. There was no interruption of the calmness of his mind under his heavy distress and sufferings, nor was there the least desire for revenge. But, on the contrary, he prayed for his murderers, that they might be forgiven, even when they were nailing him to the cross; and not only prayed for them, but pleaded on their behalf with his Father, that they did not know what they were doing. The sufferings of his life, and the agonies of his death, did not interrupt his long-suffering toward those that injured him.

Second, if we are not disposed meekly to bear injuries, we are not suited to live in the world, because in it we must expect to meet with many injuries from others. We do not live in a world of purity and innocence and love, but in one that is fallen and corrupt, and miserable and wicked, and that is very much under the rule and domination of sin. The principle of Divine love that was once in the heart of man is extinguished, and now rules in only a few people, and in them in a very imperfect degree. Those principles that tend to malice and injuriousness are the principles that the

generality of the world are under the influence of. This world is a place where the devil, who is called the god of this world, has influence and power, and where most people possess his spirit. All men, as the apostle says (2 Thessalonians. 3 v 2), have not faith; and, indeed, only few have that spirit of faith in the heart which leads to the life being governed by the rules of justice and kindness toward others. This aspect of the world is also greatly what our Saviour spoke about, when, in sending out his disciples, he said (Matt. 10 v 16), "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves." And therefore those that do not have a spirit, with meekness, and calmness, and long-suffering, and calmness of soul, to bear injuries in such a world, are miserable indeed, and are likely to be distressed at every step of their way through life. If every injury we must meet, and every critical attitude, and malicious and unjust deed, disturbs our minds and hearts, and disturbs the calm and peace we may enjoy in ourselves, then we can have no possession or enjoyment of spirit, but will be kept in constant turmoil and agitation, like the boat that is driven forward and back constantly on the stormy ocean. People that have their spirits heated and enraged, and rising in bitter resentment when they are injured, act as if they thought some strange thing had happened to them; however they are very foolish in thinking like this because it is no strange thing at all, but only what was to be expected in a world like this. They, therefore, do not act wisely, that allow their spirits to be ruffled by the injuries they suffer: a wise man expects to be more or less badly treated in the world, and is prepared for it, and, in meekness of spirit, is prepared to endure it.

Third, in this way we will be most above injuries. Whoever has established such a spirit and disposition of mind that the injuries received from others do not exasperate and provoke them, or disturb the calmness of their mind, lives, as it were, above injuries, and out of their reach. They conquer them, and ride over and above them in triumph, elevated above their power. Whoever has so much of the exercise of a Christian spirit, as to be able meekly to bear all injuries done them, is elevated to where no enemy can reach them. History tells us, that when the Persians besieged Babylon, the walls of the city were so extremely high, that the citizens used to stand on the top of them, and laugh at their enemies; and so a person whose soul is fortified with a spirit of Christian meekness, and a disposition calmly to bear all injuries, may laugh at the enemy that would injure them. If any that have such a hostile spirit against us, and are therefore disposed to do us an injury by criticizing us or otherwise, see that by so

doing they can disturb and harass us, they are gratified by this; but if they see that by all they can do they cannot interrupt the calm of our minds, nor break up our serenity of soul, then they are frustrated in their aim, and the projectile with which they would wound us falls back without doing the execution they intended: while, on the other hand, just in proportion as we allow our minds to be disturbed and embarrassed by the injuries offered by an adversary, just in the same proportion do we fall under their power.

Fourth, the spirit of Christian long-suffering, and of meekness in bearing injuries, is a mark of true greatness of soul. It shews a true and noble nature, and real greatness of spirit, to maintain the calmness of the mind in the middle of injuries and evils. It is an evidence of excellence of temper, and of internal fortitude and strength. “He that is slow to anger,” says Solomon (Prov. 16 v 32), “is better than the mighty: and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city;” that is, he shows a more noble and excellent nature, and more true greatness of spirit, than the greatest conquerors in the world. It is from littleness of mind that the soul is easily disturbed and put out of repose by the criticism and ill-treatment of others; just as little streams of water are greatly disturbed by the small unevennesses and obstacles they encounter in their physical course, and make a great deal of noise as they pass over them, compared with great and mighty streams pass over the same obstacles calmly and quietly, without a ripple on the surface to show they are disturbed. Whoever possesses his soul in such a manner that, when others harm and injure them, he can, regardless, remain in calmness and hearty good-will toward them, pitying and forgiving them from the heart, shows a greatness of spirit like Christ’s. Such a meek and quiet and long-suffering spirit shows a true greatness of soul, in that it shews great and true wisdom as the apostle James says (3 v 13)—“Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation(conduct) his works with meekness of wisdom.” And the wise Solomon, who well knew what belonged to wisdom, often speaks of the wisdom of such a spirit: declaring (Proverbs. 13 v 10) that “only by pride cometh contention; but with the well-advised is wisdom;” and again (24 v 8), that “wise men turn away wrath;” and still again (19 v 11) that “the discretion of a man deferreth his anger.” On the contrary, those that are liable to highly resent injuries, and to be greatly angered and annoyed by them, are spoken about in the Scriptures as having a little and a foolish spirit. “He that is slow to wrath,” says Solomon (Proverbs. 14 v 29), “is of great understanding; but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly;” and

again (Ecclesiastes. 7 v 8, 9), “The patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit. Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry; for anger resteth in the bosom of fools;” and still again (Prov. 14 v 16–18), “The fool rageth and is confident. He that is soon angry dealeth foolishly, and a man of wicked devices is hated. The simple inherit folly.” And, on the other hand, a meek spirit is expressly spoken about in the Scripture as an honourable spirit; as in Proverbs. 20 v 3—”It is an honour for a man to cease from strife.”

Fifth, the spirit of Christian long-suffering and meekness is commended to us by the example of the saints. The example of Christ alone might be, and is sufficient; since it is the example of our head, and Lord and master, whose followers we claim to be, and whose example we believe to be perfect. And yet some may be ready to say, with regard to the example of Christ, that he was sinless, and had no corruption in his heart, and that it cannot be expected of us that we should do everything as he did it. Now, though this is no reasonable objection, yet the example of saints, who were men of like passions to ourselves, is not without its special use, and may in some respects have a particular influence. Many of the saints have set bright examples of this long-suffering that has been commended to us. With what meekness, for instance, did David bear the injurious treatment that he received from Saul, when he was hunted by him like a partridge on the mountains, and pursued with the most unreasonable envy and malice, and with murderous designs, although he had always behaved himself dutifully towards him. And when he had the opportunity put into his hands of killing him, and immediately liberating himself from his power, others around him were ready to think it was very lawful and commendable to do so, yet as Saul was the Lord’s anointed, he chose rather to commit himself and all his interests to God, and venture his life in his hands, and allow his enemy to still live. And when, after this, he saw that his patient tolerance and goodness did not overcome Saul, but that he still pursued him, and when he also had the opportunity of destroying him, he chose rather to be like a refugee and a pariah, than to injure the one that would have destroyed him.

Another instance is that of Stephen, about who we are told (Acts 7 v 59, 60), that, when his persecutors were venting their rage towards him by stoning him to death, “he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.” This prayer is mentioned as what he prayed with his expiring breath, and as the last words that he uttered after praying the Lord Jesus to receive his spirit; and immediately after making

this prayer for his persecutors, we are told that he fell asleep, so forgiving them and commending them to God's blessing as the last act of his life on earth. Another example is that of the apostle Paul, who was the subject of numberless injuries from wicked and unreasonable men. He gives us some account of these injuries, and his manner of behaviour while receiving them, in 1 Corinthians. 4 v 11–13—"Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place; and labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day." So he manifested a meek and long-suffering spirit under all the injuries that were heaped on him. We not only have these records respecting inspired men; but we have accounts in uninspired and mere human histories, about the remarkable heroism and long-suffering of martyrs and other Christians, under the most unreasonable and wicked treatment and injuries received from people: all of which should lead us to the same meek and long-suffering spirit.

Sixth, this is the way to be rewarded with the exercise of the Divine long-suffering toward us. We are often informed in the Scriptures, that people are to be dealt with by God after death, depending on their way of dealing with others. So we are told (Psalm. 18 v 25, 26) that "with the merciful God will shew himself merciful, and with the upright man, upright; that with the pure he will shew himself pure, and with the forward(wilful) he will shew himself froward." And again (Matthew. 7 v 2), "With what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again;" and still again (6 v 14, 15), "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." By trespasses here, is meant the same as injuries done to us; so that if we do not bear with men's injuries against us, neither will our heavenly Father bear with our injuries against him; and if we do not exercise long-suffering toward others, we cannot expect that God will exercise long-suffering toward us. Let us consider how greatly we stand in need of God's long-suffering with regard to our injuries toward him. How often and how greatly are we injuriously behaving ourselves toward God, and how hostile is our treatment of him every day! And if God did not bear with us, and exercise wonderful long-suffering toward us, how miserable we would be, and what would happen to us! Let this consideration, therefore, influence

all of us to search for such an excellent spirit as has been described, and to disallow and suppress anything of the contrary spirit or practice. It would have a most happy influence on us as individuals, and on our families, and so on all our public associations and affairs, if such a spirit predominated. It would prevent contention and strife, and diffuse gentleness and kindness, and harmony and love. It would do away with bitterness and confusion, and every evil work. Our affairs would all be carried on, both in public and private, without fierceness, or edge, or bitterness of spirit; without harsh and opprobrious expressions toward others; and without any of the malignant backbiting and contemptuous speech, that so often are heard among people, and which at the same time do great injury in society, and have awful consequences for the final judgment.

But some, in their heart, may be ready to object against such a meek and quiet receiving injuries as has been described. For example:—

Objection 1. Some may be ready to say, that the injuries they receive from people are intolerable; that the one who has injured them has been so unreasonable in what they have said or done, and it is so unjust and injurious and unjustifiable, and such like, that it is more than flesh and blood can endure; that they are treated with so much injustice that it is enough to provoke a stone: or that they are treated with such contempt, that they are actually trampled on, and they cannot but resent it. In answer to this objection, I would ask a few questions:

First, do you think the injuries you have received from other people are more than you have offered to God? Has your enemy been more base, more unreasonable, more ungrateful, than you have to the High and Holy One? Have his offences been more offensive or aggravated, or more in number, than yours have been against your Creator, Benefactor, and Redeemer? Have they been more provoking and exasperating than your sinful conduct has been toward him who is the author of all our mercies, and to whom you are under the highest obligations?

Second, do you not hope that as God has previously, so he will still bear with you in all this, and that regardless, he will exercise toward you his infinite love and favour? Do you not hope that God will have mercy on you, and that Christ will embrace you in his dying love, although you have been such an injurious enemy; and that, through his grace, he will blot out your transgressions and all your offences against him, and make you eternally his child, and an heir of his kingdom?

Third, when you think of such long-suffering on God's part, that it is not only worthy and excellent, but extremely glorious? And do you not approve of it, that Christ should have died for you, and that God, through him, should offer you pardon and salvation? Or do you disapprove of this? And would you have liked God better, if he had not borne with you, but had long ago cut you off in his wrath?

Fourth, if this way of acting is excellent and worthy to be approved of in God, so why is it not in yourself? Why should you not imitate it? Is God too kind in forgiving injuries? Is it less heinous to offend the Lord of heaven and earth, than for a person to offend you? Is it well for you to be forgiven, and that you should pray to God for pardon, and yet that you should not extend it to other people that have injured you?

Fifth, would you be willing, for all the future, that God should no longer bear with the injuries you may offer him, and the offences you commit against him? Are you willing to go and ask God to deal with yourself for the future, while retaining this objection, while you think of dealing with other people?

Sixth, did Christ turn again on those who injured and insulted and trodden on him, when he was here on earth; and was he not injured far more grievously than you have ever been? And have not you more truly trodden under foot the Son of God, than you were ever trodden on by others? And is it a more provoking thing for men to tread on and injure you, than for you to tread on and injure Christ? These questions may sufficiently answer your objection.

Objection 2. But, you may say still further, that those who have injured you, persist in it, and do not at all repent, but go on doing it still. But what opportunity could there be for long-suffering, if injury were not persisted in long? If injuries are continued, it may be for the very purpose, in providence, of testing if you will exercise long-suffering and meekness, and that patient tolerance that has been spoken about. And did not God bear with you, when you persisted in offending him? When you were stubborn, and self-willed, and persevering in your injuries against him, has he ceased to exercise his long-suffering toward you?

Objection 3. But you may object again, that your enemies will be encouraged to go on with their injuries; excusing yourself by saying, that if you bear injury, you will only be injured more. But you do not know this,

because you do not have an insight into the future, nor into the hearts of others. And, besides, God will undertake for you, if you obey his commands; and he is more able to put a stop to the wrath of people than you are. He has said (Romans. 12 v 19), "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." He interposed wonderfully for David, as he has for very many of his saints; and if you only obey him, he will take sides with you against all that rise up against you. And in the observation and experience of people, it is generally found that a meek and long-suffering spirit puts an end to injuries, while a revengeful spirit only provokes them. Cherish, then, the spirit of long-suffering, meekness, and patient tolerance, and you will possess your soul in patience and happiness, and no one will be permitted to harm you more than God in wisdom and kindness may permit them to."

by Jonathan Edwards
"CHARITY AND ITS FRUITS

SECTION FOUR



CHAPTER 19

FAITH – WHAT IS IT?

“He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.” Romans 4 v 20–25

“LORD, LORD...IN THY NAME...IN THY NAME...IN THY NAME?”

We have seen the serious problem the title text informs us of, and how saved people are different to those unsaved. But what is the answer to this problem of sin? How can we be released from the punishment of sin already committed in the past?

Even if we could change ourselves not to sin ever again, after we realized what sin really is, and that we really are wicked sinners? Even if we could be perfect from that time till the end of our lives, which is impossible(saints sin daily), what about the sins committed before we realized our guilt? If we are unsaved and realize that we are sinners and our hearts aren't changed, how do we become saved?

The only way we can be justified, or made right in Gods sight, is by faith in the person and work, or merits, of Jesus Christ alone with no additions

of merit or ‘good’ works from us or any other creature. Christ takes the blame for the sins of the people who believe in him and they are forgiven by God. Christ’s death wasn’t just a selfless act but it was an atonement that procures forgiveness for our sin.

Forgiveness is a great condescending act on God’s part. He is justly angry against sinners and hates wickedness:

“The LORD *is* in his holy temple, the LORD’S throne *is* in heaven: his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men. The LORD trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth.

Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: *this shall be* the portion of their cup. For the righteous LORD loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold(see) the upright.”
Psalm 11 v 4–7

God’s hatred and anger are just in relation to all his creatures. He hates wrongdoing. The term Forgiveness is used in two ways in the bible. It can refer to an individual not bearing ill will for wrongdoing done by another towards them:

“Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.”
Matthew 18 v 21,22

It also addresses God’s just requirements to be satisfied in order for a sinner to be saved. God is the ultimate judge. He is perfectly and infinitely just, holy and good in himself and to all his creatures and so to sin against him or disobey his law or wrong him is an infinite wrong and an infinite evil and therefore it must be punished infinitely. This is why only the divine person in our human nature could bear the infinite punishment of sin due to us in a moment and the only way to be justified before God was through Christ’s infinite merit. Good works could never satisfy God’s infinite justice. A limited punishment for an infinite wrong in a ‘purgatory’ such as Roman Catholicism or Islam claims, can never meet the demands of God’s justice, so are clearly false. The way a person is made right in God’s sight is through faith alone in Jesus person and work. This is no cold heartless process but has a heart of love at its centre. God’s amazing love and mercy shews itself in forgiveness – because

of what Christ did for sinners-taking infinite punishment for them – only the God-man could do this. God didn't need to save people. He didn't save the angels that sinned. He tenderly invites sinners to be forgiven through Christ.

“Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.”

Isaiah 55 v 7

Part of this belief and acceptance of Christ's work is to trust in him as rising from the dead. Christ completed the work of salvation of sinners by rising victoriously over death, the devil and hell. The grave could not hold him prisoner. The penalty for sin, death was paid in full and eternal life purchased for the saved. This was one way God the Father demonstrated the reality of Christ's divinity and his total acceptance of the work he performed as a mediator on the cross and in rising again from the dead:

“Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; And declared *to be* the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead”

Romans 1 v 3,4

“Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.”

Acts 2 v 22–24

Great is the gospel of our glorious God,
Where mercy met the anger of God's rod;
A penalty was paid and pardon bought,
And sinners lost, at last to Him were brought:

*O let the praises of my heart be Thine,
For Christ has died that I may call Him mine,
That I may sing with those who dwell above,
Adoring, praising Jesus, King of Love.*

Great is the mystery of godliness,
Great is the work of God's own holiness,
It moves my soul, and causes me to long
For greater joys than to the earth belong:

The Spirit vindicated Christ our Lord,
And angels sang with joy and sweet accord;
The nations heard, a dark world flamed with light –
When Jesus rose in glory and in might:

Vernon Higham Hymns

Why did God the Father punish the Son and why did the Son agree to it? If there had been another way to achieve this, it would have been chosen by them. Because God the Father forsook Christ on the cross the saved will never be forsaken by God.

Saints are saved by faith in at least two ways. One is a restoration of their relationship with God, inner fellowship with Him and another is a change in their spiritual status in Gods court. His justice is satisfied, they are justified and they are delivered from sins punishment.

In Sanctification they are saved from sins power. The means used to achieve this by God include chastisement and trials to make the saved more holy and Christlike. All of lifes varied experiences are involved. All that happens to the saved is a framework for this end with other processes being secondary. All that happens to the saved has other effects within Gods overarching purpose e.g. with respect to the wicked and their condemnation, to the angels and devils even.

It is all with the purpose of teaching the saved more of God, to love, reverence and glorify Him more. It gives a restored inner experience of Him and his grace and communion with Him – to enjoy Him and he loves to know them too. Eternal life has begun below.

I hear the Saviour say,
“Thy strength indeed is small;
Child of weakness, watch and pray,
Find in Me thine all in all.”

Jesus paid it all,
All to Him I owe;

Sin had left a crimson stain,
He washed it white as snow.

For nothing good have I
Whereby Thy grace to claim;
I'll wash my garments white
In the blood of Calv'ry's Lamb.

And now complete in Him,
My robe, His righteousness,
Close sheltered 'neath His side,
I am divinely blessed

Lord, now indeed I find
Thy pow'r, and Thine alone,
Can change the leper's spots
And melt the heart of stone.

When from my dying bed
My ransomed soul shall rise,
"Jesus died my soul to save,"
Shall rend the vaulted skies.

And when before the throne
I stand in Him complete,
I'll lay my trophies down,
All down at Jesus' feet.

The people in our text thought they truly believed in Jesus Christ, calling him Lord and doing many different deeds in his name, claiming to be Christians. They did not realize that they only had a superficial knowledge of Christ and deceived themselves, calling him Lord, but not treating him as Lord. They thought they had faith in him. While Christ's work is not uncertain, a persons faith in that work may be uncertain and false. Their surprise and mistake is a monumental tragedy. Emphasizing their disbelief and shock, they repeat three times the different kinds of actions performed (as they perceived) in His name, believing they had been good servants of Christ. They desperately and hopelessly grasp at the air, trying to produce three different kinds of evidence of their supposed goodness. Christ tells them however

though they thought they were saved they were greatly mistaken, deluded and deceived:

“I never knew you.”

What true saving faith is then, is the next question to be considered.

Faith contains three elements:

These are firstly, knowledge of gospel truths, comprehending and understanding them. The second element is agreeing with them as true intellectually or in theory. This is the kind of faith those in our title text had. They assented to gospel truth only, and lacked the final element which is trust or confidence in Christ, placing full reliance on him to save us as guilty sinners. The devils believe and tremble, not being able to exercise the third element of trust. No mediator was provided for them. This trust is a practical, experimental knowledge. It reaches out its withered hand to receive Christ and is made whole. It lays its full weight on, and depends on, the person and work of Christ as revealed in the bible, through the Holy Spirit operating in a persons soul.

“Just enough of God is revealed to leave us without excuse (Romans 1 v 20) if we chose to ignore Him and enough is revealed for those who believe in Him to be fully assured of Him. By this arrangement, Gods wisdom has left room for doubt in all who prefer to doubt Him, and room enough for sure confidence in all who trust Him.”

Great God of wonders
Gods secrets – the believers comforts.
Rev. Maurice Roberts

A person must keep searching till they come to trust or have full confidence in God and his testimony. The Holy Spirit produces this in a person as they search diligently even though they may think the motivation comes only from themselves:

“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”
Hebrews 11 v 6

“One of the great dangers of modern evangelism is that the impression is often given that the sinner has the capacity for faith himself – all he has to do is decide for Jesus, or commit himself, or some such phrase. The distinct impression is given is that this is something that he can do himself. But those who are called effectually know otherwise. It was because of the call, the call coming with divine power, that the sinner came to have some knowledge of Christ, his person, his work, his love his grace, his willingness to receive the sinner. This is all brought before the soul of the sinner by the Holy Spirit, who, secretly working in the soul, draws the sinner and makes the sinner willing to come to Christ. When he’s willing to come to Christ then that is faith. Faith is the soul that’s laden with iniquities coming to Christ.”

Unsearchable Riches

Selected sermons of Reverend Donald Maclean

‘Make your calling and election sure’

Those who become saved, not only come to believe in Christ as Saviour, but submit to, accept and trust all his words and commands, and are influenced by them. Repentance is a consequence of faith (although in some peoples conscious awareness it seems to come prior to it.)

The following passages reveals a contrasted example of true and false faith. The eunuch is described as believing with his heart whereas Simon’s heart is said not to be right. Simon lacked trust. He had not repented, showing his faith was false. Peter tells him he was still in iniquity whereas Simon genuinely thought he had truly believed:

“But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one: To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God. And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries. But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done. Now when the apostles which

were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost. And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the LORD for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me. And they, when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans. And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet. Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth. And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of

some other man? Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.” Acts 8 v 9–39

“Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess *him*, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.” John 12 v 42,43

It is the greatest of all events when a sinner repents and believes, as God the Father is giving Christ the Son his people for a possession, his great sacrifice is bringing many sons to glory and Jesus is seeing the travail of his soul and being deeply satisfied:

“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became him, for whom *are* all things, and by whom *are* all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified *are* all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee. And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me.” Hebrews 2 v 9–13

The angels truly rejoice over new life created spiritually in Christ Jesus and, just like much of the vast created universe, though human beings are unaware of it, the angels glorify God constantly as they view it. Similarly, they also give God new songs of praise when a sinner repents and is born again to new spiritual life:

“Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.” Luke 15 v 10

It is the source of greatest joy to the saved and angels alike that God took the initiative to save and forgive sinners, as they were helpless and paralysed to take action, in their corrupt state:

1. Twas battered and scarred, and the auctioneer thought it scarcely worth his while to waste much time on the old violin, but held it up with a smile; “What am I bidden, good folks,” he cried, “Who’ll start the bidding for me?” “A dollar, a dollar”; then two!” “Only two? Two dollars, and who’ll make it three? Three dollars, once; three dollars twice; going for three..” But no, from the room, far back, a gray-haired man came forward and picked up the bow; Then, wiping the dust from the old violin, and tightening the loose strings, he played a melody pure and sweet as caroling angel sings.

2. The music ceased, and the auctioneer, with a voice that was quiet and low, said; “What am I bid for the old violin?” And he held it up with the bow. A thousand dollars, and who’ll make it two? Two thousand! And who’ll make it three? Three thousand, once, three thousand, twice, and going and gone,” said he. The people cheered, but some of them cried, “We do not quite understand what changed its worth.” Swift came the reply: “The touch of a master’s hand.”

3. And many a man with life out of tune, and battered and scarred with sin, is auctioned cheap to the thoughtless crowd, much like the old violin, A”mess of pottage,” a glass of wine; a game – and he travels on. “He is going” once, and “going twice, He’s going and almost gone.” But the Master comes, and the foolish crowd never can quite understand the worth of a soul and the change that’s wrought by the touch of the Master’s hand.

In the gospel account of Christ walking on the water, Peter the disciple stepped out and placed his faith in the One who had created the sea, who had whipped up the storm and who ultimately holds the whole universe in his hand. We too, must step out of that boat of self righteousness and self dependence and fix our spiritual eyes on Jesus and we will not sink eternally.

Mr Owen now comments on a number of important aspects of faith. Firstly on Faith as being the only way a person can be justified. Secondly that faith leans on the Divine person and thirdly that it takes a firm grasp of Christ in his person and work in atonement.

CHAPTER 20

WHAT IS FAITH?

By JOHN OWEN

“The means of justification on our part is faith. That we are justified by faith, is so frequently and so expressly stated in the Scripture that it cannot directly or indirectly be denied by anyone. Some begin, being partial, to claim that our justification is more frequently attributed to other things, graces or duties, than to faith. This does not merit a response. But, the explanation some others give of this general concession, that “we are justified by faith”, does equally overthrow the doctrine as much if it were rejected in other terms: it would advantage peoples understandings more if it were plainly and clearly refused, than to be led about in a maze of words and distinctions that really exclude it.

At present we may take the proposition as granted, and only inquire into the true, genuine sense and meaning of it: it may be reduced to two points: —

Its nature.

Its use in justifying us before God.

So many descriptions already exist about the nature of faith in general, the special nature of justifying faith and its distinctions from what is called faith that is not justifying that it is unnecessary to engage in a further discussion of them. However, something must be spoken about what sense we understand these things; — what is that faith which we are justified by, and what role does it play in doing so.

The distinctions that are usually made about faith I will wholly omit; not only as obvious and known, because they do not belong to our present

argument. What we are concerned about is, that in the Scripture there is plainly mention made of two kinds of faith that people believe the gospel with. There is a faith which we are justified by, so whoever has it will be certainly saved; which purifies the heart and works by love. And there is a faith or believing, which does nothing of this; whoever has that particular faith, and no more, is not justified, nor can be saved. Every type of faith people are said to believe with, is not justifying. So it is said about Simon the magician, that he “believed,” Acts 8 v 13, when he was in the “gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity;” and therefore did not believe with the faith which “purifieth the heart,” Acts 15 v 9. And also that many

“believed on the name of Jesus, when they saw the miracles that he did; but Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew what was in man,”
John 2 v 23, 24.

They did not believe on his name in the same way as those, or with that kind of faith who “receive power to become the sons of God,” John 1 v 12. And some, when they “hear the word receive it with joy, believing for a while,” but “have no root,” Luke 8 v 13. And faith, without a root in the heart, will not justify anybody; because “with the heart men believe unto righteousness,” Romans 10:10. It is the same with them who will cry, “Lord, Lord” at the last days, “we have prophesied in thy name,” while they were really always “workers of iniquity,” Matthew 7 v 22, 23. This faith is usually called historical faith. But this term is not taken from the object of it, or the historical things contained in Scripture. It describes the whole truth of the word, yes, of the promises of the gospel as well as other things. But it is called this from the nature of the assent it describes; it is the same as we give to historical things that are credibly testified to us.

And this faith has various differences or degrees, both in its grounds or reasons and also in its effects. All faith is an assent on a testimony; and divine faith is assent to a divine testimony. The degrees to which this testimony is received produces differences or degrees in this faith. Some receive it on human motives only, and bring its credibility to the judgment of reason; and their assent is a mere natural act of their understanding. This is the lowest degree of historical faith. Some have their minds inclined to it by spiritual illumination, making a discovery of the evidences of divine truth it is to be believed for; the assent they give is more firm and operative than the previous sort.

It also has its differences or degrees in its effects. With some it influences them a little, others not at all in their will, affections, or to work any change in their lives. It is like this with those who claim they believe the gospel, and yet live in all kinds of sins. In this degree, it is called by the apostle James “a dead faith,” and compared to a dead carcass, with no life or motion; and is an assent of the very nature and kind that devils are compelled to give; and this faith is common in the world. With others it works effectively on the affections, to various degrees, as represented in the several sorts of ground the seed of the word was thrown into, and produces many effects in their lives. Improving it as much as possible, both as to the evidence it proceeds from and the effects it produces, it is usually called temporary faith: it is neither permanent against all oppositions, nor will it bring anyone to eternal rest. The name is taken from that expression of our Saviour’s concerning the person who believes with this kind of faith, — Matthew 13 v 21. This faith is true in its kind, and is not merely equivocally so called. It has the general nature of faith; but it does not have not the same special nature as justifying faith.

Justifying faith is not a higher, or the highest degree of this kind of faith, but is another kind or nature. So different things can be observed about this faith, in its utmost possible improvement, for our present purpose.

People may have this faith and all the effects of it and not be justified;

It is nowhere in the bible described as being responsible for justifying sinners, yes, it is emphasized by the apostle James that noone can be justified by it.

It may produce great effects in peoples minds, affections and lives, but none of them is particular to justifying faith. Yet those whose lives these things occur in ought, in judging charitably, to be looked on as true believers.

This is that faith which is alone. We are justified by faith alone; but we are not justified by faith which is alone. Alone, in its influence to justify us, not its nature and existence. We absolutely deny that we can be justified by that faith which is alone; that is, without a principle of spiritual life and universal obedience, in operation, doing what duty requires.

I observed these things to avoid the slur and discredit that some people try to fix on the doctrine of justification by faith only, through the mediation of Christ. Those who assert that, must be Solifidians, Antinomians, and I don’t know what else; — such as oppose or deny the necessity of universal obedience, or good works. Most of them who manage it, can only

know in their own consciences that this charge is false. They allege any thing that seems to advantage the cause they plead causing great scandal to true religion. If by Solifidians, they mean those who believe that faith alone is on our part the means, instrument, or condition of our justification, all the prophets and apostles were like this, and were taught to be by Jesus Christ. If they mean that those who claim that the faith we are justified by is alone, separate, or separable, from a principle and the fruit of holy obedience they must find them out themselves, we know nothing about them.

We do not allow any faith to be of the same kind or nature that we are justified by, but what virtually and radically contains in it universal obedience, like the effect is in the cause, the fruit in the root. It acts itself in all particular duties, that are governed by rule and by the circumstances. Yes, we reject a faith to be justifying, or to be of the same kind as it, which is not itself in its own nature, a spiritually vital principle of obedience and good works.

The things the special nature of justifying faith are evidenced by may be reduced to these four points: —

The causes of it on God's part.

What in us is required prior to it.

The proper object of it.

Its proper and particular acts and effects which will be discussed in so far as is necessary for our present purpose: —

The doctrine of the causes of faith, in its origin in the divine will, and the way it is communicated to us, is so large and mixed with the way and manner grace operates effectively in conversion that I will not insist on it here. It cannot be discussed in a few words adequately, so to engage into a full handling of it would divert us from our present argument. I will say only this, from that doctrine it may be uncontrollably evidenced, that the faith we are justified by is a special kind or nature, so no other faith that justification may be separable from is of the same kind.

Secondly, what is required prior to faith in a way of duty, ; or, what is necessary to be found in us prior to our believing to the justification of life? And I say there is supposed in the people that this faith is produced in, that it is given to, whose duty it is to believe with it, the work of the law in the conviction of sin. Conviction of sin is necessary prior to justifying faith. Many people have disputed about what this is, and what effects it produces in the mind, that dispose the soul for receiving the promise of the gospel. There are different interpretations about the effects or things that

come with conviction e.g. (concern about guilt, humiliation, self-judging, sorrow for sin committed), and also about their degrees that ordinarily are required before faith and conversion to God, I will discuss them very briefly as far as they are inseparable from this conviction.

I will first consider this conviction itself, what is it essentially, and then the effects of it as well as that temporary faith mentioned before. I will do so only as they are relevant to our justification.

Firstly, the work of conviction in general, where a persons soul has a practical understanding of sin's nature, its guilt, and the punishment due to it; and is made aware of his own interest in it, both original and actual sin(with his utter disability to remove themselves from that state and condition they find themselves to be in as a result) is what we assert to be necessarily prior to justifying faith. This is true in an adult, and the word of God in the bible is the external means and instrument of them being justified. Not every one that is a convinced sinner is or must necessarily be justified. There is no inclination or preparation of the sinner by this conviction and its effects, like the kind of justification the Roman Catholics speak about, or justifying grace, which necessarily follows it in their estimation.

Nor is there any preparation in it that, by virtue of any divine agreement or promise so a person convinced in this way will be pardoned and justified. But a man may believe with any kind of faith that is not justifying, such as the kind mentioned before, without this conviction; so it is ordinarily prior and necessary to that faith which justifies someone. The motivation for it is not that a person will certainly be justified by it; but without it they cannot be in the state which receives justification through faith.

This is required in the person to be justified, in order of nature prior to that faith we are justified by; we will prove with the ensuing arguments: — Without a proper consideration of it, the true nature of faith can never be understood. Justification is God's way of saving the convinced sinner, whose mouth is shut, and who is guilty before God, — offensive to the law, and trapped in sin. So a sense of this state, and all that is involved with it is required for believing. Le Blanc, who has searched with diligence into these things, commends the definition of faith given by Mestrezat, — that it is "the fight of a penitent sinner to the mercy of God in Christ." And there is more sense and truth in it than in twenty others that seem more accurate. But without supposing the conviction mentioned, there is no understanding of this definition of faith. It is that alone which stirs the soul to fly

towards the mercy of God in Christ, to be saved from the wrath to come. Hebrews 6 v 18, “Fled for refuge.”

The order, relation, and use of the law and the gospel do uncontrollably show the necessity of this conviction prior to believing. People have to deal first with the law, in relation to their eternal condition, both naturally and by God’s institution. This is first presented to the soul with its terms of righteousness and life, and with its curse in case of failure. Without this the gospel cannot be understood, nor the grace of it duly valued. The gospel is the revelation of God’s way for relieving people’s souls from the sentence and curse of the law, Romans 1 v 17. That was the nature, that was the use and purpose of the first promise in Genesis 3, and of the whole work of God’s grace revealed in all the following promises, or in the whole gospel. The faith we treat as evangelical (which in its special nature and use, not the law but the gospel requires and has the gospel for its principle, rule, and object) is not required of us nor can we exercise it, except the work and effect of the law in the conviction of sin happens first. This conviction gives the knowledge of the law, a sense of that persons guilt, and the state of the sinner as a result. Any sort of faith without this conviction we absolutely deny to be that faith we are justified by, Galatians 3 v 22–24; Romans 10 v 4.

So those who the apostle Peter proposed the promise of the Gospel to, with the pardon of sin as the object of gospel faith, were “pricked to the heart” when convicted of their sin, and cried, “What shall we do?” Acts 2 v 37–39. Similarly this was the state of the jailer who the apostle Paul proposed salvation by Christ to, about what he was to believe for his salvation, Acts 16 v 30,31.

The state of Adam, and God’s dealing with him is the best representation of the order and method of these things. Like he was after the fall, so we are in the very same state and condition while unsaved. Really he was utterly lost by sin, and he was convinced both of the nature of his sin and of the effects of it, in that act of God using the law in his mind, which is called the “opening of his eyes.” It was nothing but the communication to his mind by his conscience of a sense of the nature, guilt, effects, and consequences of sin; which the law could then teach him but could not do so before. This fills him with shame and fear; he responded against the former with fig-leaves, and against the latter by hiding himself among the trees of the garden. Whatever people may devise and please themselves with their production, for freedom and safety from sin, they are not wiser or more

likely to have success with it. In this condition God, by immediately inquiry into the matter of fact, sharpens this conviction by the addition of his own testimony to its truth, and places Adam actually under the curse of the law, in a legal denunciation of it. In this lost, forlorn, hopeless condition, God proposes the promise of redemption by Christ to him. And this was the object of that faith he was to be justified by.

Although these things are not eminently and distinctly interpreted in this way by the minds and consciences of all who are called to believing by the gospel, yet the substance of them, and the prior place of the conviction of sin before faith are found in all who sincerely believe.

For any definition or description of faith that does not have express, or at least virtual inclusion of this is only a deceit, and in no way answers the experience of people that truly believe e.g. all those who place faith merely in an assent to divine revelation, whatever nature that assent may be, and whatever effects it may cause. Such an assent may be present without any involvement of this work of the law. I do not at all value the most accurate arguments of anyone about the nature and act of justifying faith, who never had in themselves an experience of the work of the law in conviction and condemnation for sin, with the effects of it on their consciences or those who omit consideration of their own experience, where what they truly believe is better stated than all their arguments. That faith we are justified by is, in general, the action of the soul towards God who reveals himself in the gospel, for freedom from their state and condition under the curse of the law applied to the conscience, depending on his mind, and using the ways, that God has appointed. I do not give this as any definition of faith, but only express what has a necessary influence on it, from which the nature of it may be discriminated.

The effects of this conviction, with their relation to our justification, real or pretended, may also be briefly considered. Though this conviction is a mere work of the law, it is not to be considered alone, but along with, and under the conduct of, temporary faith in the gospel as described already. These two, temporary faith and legal conviction, are the principles present in works or duties which are an attempt to justify: so we must deny they have any causality in them to produce that justification before God. But many acts and duties, both internal and external, will follow real convictions. Those that are internal may be reduced to three points: —

Discontent and sorrow that we have sinned. It is impossible that any one who is really convinced they are sinners in the way already declared,

but a dislike of sin, and of themselves for sinning and shame and sorrow over it, will follow. And it is sufficient evidence that they are not really convinced of sin whose minds are not affected in this way, whatever they may claim, Jeremiah 36 v 24.

Fear of punishment due to sin. Conviction involves not only the instructive and receptive part of the law, showing the being and nature of sin, but the sentence and curse of it as well, where it is judged and condemned, Genesis 4 v 13,14. Where fear of the punishment threatened is not produced, no person is really convinced of sin; nor has the law properly convinced them, like it does prior to the gospel being conferred. By faith we “fly from the wrath to come,” so where there is no sense and apprehension of that wrath due to us, there is no ground or reason for us to believe. When convinced of these things, a desire to escape from the state a sinner finds themselves in, is unavoidable. It is naturally the first thing that conviction works in peoples minds, in various degrees of care, fear, loneliness, and restlessness. This experience has been explained by many, in the light of Scripture, to the great benefit of the church, but derided by others. Secondly, These concerns of mind will also produce various external duties, which may be referred to in two points:

Abstinence from known sin to the utmost of a persons power.

Those who find it is an evil and a bitter thing that they have sinned against God, can only labour for a future abstinence from it. And as this discovery causes the concern mentioned, so it brings to light particularly, their climax, which is a desire to escape from the state they are in. They suppose this will be the best method of dealing with it, or at least without which they will not escape. And usually their spirits act by promising and vowing, with repeated sorrow about being surprised by sins they commit and fall into. Duties of religious worship will follow, prayer and hearing the preaching of the word, and diligent use of church ceremonies. They know that without these no freedom will be obtained. Reformation of life and conduct to various degrees is part of attending more to trying to search for and worship God, and also follows them. These things always occur where the convictions of men are real and lasting.

These are neither severally nor jointly necessary prior inclinations, preparations, or conditions, even to the highest degree, to contribute merit towards our justification. They are not conditions of justification.

A condition of a particular consequence means when the condition is fulfilled the consequence stated definitely follows it. They may be all

found where justification does not follow: there is no covenant, promise, or constitution of God, making them conditions of Justification. In their own nature, they may be subservient to what is required from us prior to justification; but they do not have a certain infallible connection with it, by virtue of any promise or covenant of God – whereas faith does have.

No other condition apart from what is constituted and made to be so by divine compact or promise, is valid; otherwise conditions might be endlessly multiplied, and anything natural as well as moral may lead to justification. So even the food we eat could then be a condition of justification. Faith and justification are as inseparable as much as the things we discuss now are not, as experience shows.

Justification may be present, where the outward attempts not to sin and religious duties mentioned, proceeding from convictions under the conduct of temporary faith, are not.

Adam was justified without them; the converts in the Acts chapter 2 were, — what is reported concerning them is all essentially included in conviction, verse 37; and similarly so with the jailer, Acts 16 v 30,31; and also many of them, it is the same with most that do believe.

They are not formal inclinations in preparation for justification; because they do not introduce any new form or inherent quality into the soul. Nor are they moral preparations for it; since they are prior to evangelical faith, no one is able to use them in any other way, but only to “seek for righteousness by the works of the law,” which is no preparation for justification. All discoveries of the righteousness of God, with the soul’s adherence to it, belong to faith alone. There is, indeed, a repentance which accompanies faith, and is included in the nature of it, at least radically. This is required for our justification. But a legal repentance which precedes gospel faith, and is not part of it, is neither a inclination towards, preparation for, nor condition of justification.

In brief, the order of these things may be observed in Gods dealings with Adam. And there are three degrees in it: —

The opening of the eyes of the sinner, to see the filth and guilt of sin in the sentence and curse of the law applied to his conscience, Romans 8 v 9,10. This effects in the mind of the sinner the things already mentioned, and motivates him to do all the duties that spring from them. For persons on their first convictions, ordinarily judge no more than that their state is evil and dangerous, it is their duty to better it; and that they can or will do so correspondingly, if they apply themselves. But all these things, as a

protection or liberation from the sentence of the law, are no better than fig-leaves and hiding as in Adams case. Ordinarily, God by his providence, or in distributing the word, gives life and power to this work of the law in a particular manner; in answer to the charge he gave to Adam after his attempt to hide himself. The “mouth of the sinner is stopped,” and he becomes, as thoroughly aware of his guilt before God, as satisfied that there is no relief to be expected from any of those ways of sorrow or duty that he has devised for himself. It is a mere act of sovereign grace, without any connection to these things prior to it, to call the sinner to believing, or faith in the promise to the justification of eternal life. This is God’s order; so what precedes a persons call to faith doesn’t produce it.”

CHAPTER 21

FAITH IN THE DIVINE BEING AND PERSON

“Again, that we are baptized into the name of Jesus Christ, and that distinctly with the Father, is a sufficient evidence of the necessity of faith in his person; for we are given up in this to universal spiritual subjection of soul to him, and dependence on him. Not to believe in him, on his name — that is, his person — when we are so given up to him, or baptized into him, is virtually to renounce him. But to put a present close to this contest: Faith in Christ is that grace the church is united to him by — incorporated into one mystical body with him. It is by this that he dwells in them, and they in him. By this alone are all supplies of grace derived from him to the whole body. Deny his person to be the proper and immediate object of this faith, and all these things are utterly overthrown — that is, the whole spiritual life and eternal salvation of the church. This faith in the person of Christ, which is the foundation of all that divine honour in sacred adoration and invocation which is assigned to him, may be considered in two ways. First, as it respects his person absolutely; Secondly, As he is considered in the discharge of the office of mediation.

In the first sense, faith is placed absolutely and ultimately on the person of Christ, even as on the person of the Father. He counts it no robbery to be equal with the Father in this. And the reason for this is, because the divine nature itself is the proper and immediate object of this faith, and all the acts of it. This being one and the same in the person of the Father and of the Son, as also of the Holy Spirit, two things do therefore follow. That

each person is equally the object of our faith, because equally participant of that nature which is the formal reason and object of it. It follows also, that in acting faith on, and ascribing with this divine honour to, any one person, the others are not excluded; yes, they are included in this. For by reason of the mutual inbeing of the Divine persons in the unity of the same nature, the object of all spiritual worship is undivided. So are those expressions of the Scriptures, “He that has seen the Son, has seen the Father; he that honoureth the Son, honoureth the Father, for he and the Father are one.” And to clear up our present design, three things may be observed from this; namely, that the divine nature, with all its essential properties, is the formal reason and only ground of divine faith. That the Lord Christ is not the absolute and ultimate object of our faith, any otherwise but under this consideration, of his being partaker of the nature of God — of his being in the form of God, and equal to him. Without this, to place our faith in him would be robbery and sacrilege; as is all the pretended faith of them who do not believe in his divine person. There is no derogation from the honour and glory of the Father — not the least diversion of any one signal act of duty from him, nor from the Holy Spirit — by the especial acting of faith on the person of Christ; for all divine honour is given solely unto the divine nature: and this being absolutely the same in each person, in the honouring of one, they are all equally honoured. He that honoureth the Son, he honoureth the Father also in this. So it appears what is that especial acting of faith on the person of Christ that we intend, and which the Scripture charges to us, as indispensably necessary to our salvation. And there are three things to be considered in it.

That his divine nature is the proper formal object of this faith, on the consideration of which it is fixed on him alone. If you ask a reason why I believe on the Son of God — if you intend what cause I have for it, what motives to it — I shall answer, It is because of what he has done for me. So does the apostle, Galatians 2:20. But if you intend, what is the formal reason, ground, and warranty on which I believe in him in this way, or place my trust and confidence in him, I say it is only this, that he is “over all, God blessed for ever;” and if he were not so, I could not believe in him. For to believe in any, is to expect from him that to be done for me which none but God can do. That the entire person of Christ, as God and man, is the immediate object of our faith in this. The divine nature is the reason of it; but his divine person is the object of it. In placing our faith on him, we consider him as God and man in one and the same person. We believe

in him because he is God; but we believe in him as he is God and man in one person. And this consideration of the person of Christ — namely, as he is God and man — in our acting of faith on him, is that which renders it particular, and limits or determines it to his person, because he only is this; — the Father is not, nor the Holy Spirit. That faith which has the person of God and man for its object, is particularly and distinctly placed on Christ.

The motives to this distinct acting of faith on his person are always to be considered as those also which render this faith particular. For the things which Christ has done for us, which are the motives of our faith in him, were particular to him alone; as in the place before quoted, Galatians 2:20. All the works of his mediation are such, with all the fruits of them, that we are made participants in. So God, in the first command, where he requires all faith, love, and obedience from the church, enforced it with the consideration of a signal benefit which it had received, and in this a symbol of all spiritual and eternal mercies, Exodus 20:2, 3. So two things are evident, which clearly state this matter.

First, that faith which we place on and the honour which we give by this to the person of Christ, is equally placed on and honour equally given by this to the other persons of the Father and the Holy Spirit, with respect to that nature which is the formal reason and cause of it. But it is particularly fixed on Christ, with respect to his person as God and man, and the motives to it, in the acts and benefits of his mediation. All of Christ is considered and glorified in this acting of faith on him; — his divine nature, as the formal cause of it; his divine entire person, God and man, as its proper object; and the benefits of his mediation, as the especial motives to it.

This faith in the person of Christ is the spring and fountain of our spiritual life. We live by the faith of the Son of God. Faith is preserved, increased, and strengthened in and by the action of it. “For he is our life,” Colossians 3:4; and all supplies of it are derived from him, by the acting of faith in him. We receive the forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them that are sanctified, “by the faith that is in him,” Acts 26:18. We abide in him by this; without which we can do nothing, John 15:5. By this our peace with God is maintained — “For he is our peace,” Ephesians 2:14; and in him we have peace, according to his promise, John 16:33. All strength for the mortification of sin, for the conquest of temptations — all our increase and growth in grace depend on the constant operation of this faith in him.

The way and method this faith operates is what we have described. A due apprehension of the love of Christ, with the effects of it in his whole mediatory work on our behalf — especially in his giving himself for us, and our redemption by his blood — is the great motive to it. Whoevers hearts are not deeply affected with this, can never believe in him in a due manner. “I live,” saith the apostle, “by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” Unless a sense of this is firmly implanted in our souls, unless we are deeply affected with it, our faith in him would be weak and wavering, or rather none at all. The due remembrance of what the blessed Lord Jesus has done for us, of the ineffable love which was the spring, cause, and fountain of what he did — thoughts of the mercy, grace, peace, and glory which he has procured thereby are the great and unconquerable motives to fix our faith, hope, trust, and confidence in him.

His divine nature is the ground and warranty for our so doing. This is that from where he is the due and proper object of all divine faith and worship. From the power and virtue thereof do we expect and receive all those things which in our believing on him we seek after; for none but God can bestow them on us, or work them in us. There is in all the action of our faith on him, the voice of the confession of Thomas, “My Lord and my God.”

His divine person, in which he is God and man, in which he has that nature which is the formal object of divine worship, and in which he wrought all those things which are the motives to it, is the object of this faith; which gives its difference and distinction from faith in God in general, and faith in the person of the Father, as the fountain of grace, love, and power.

Secondly, Faith acts on Christ under the formal notion of mediator between God and man. So it is expressed, 1 Peter 1:21, “Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.”

And this acting of faith towards Christ is not contrary to that described before, nor inconsistent with it, though it is distinct from it. To deny the person of Christ to fall under this double consideration — of a divine person absolutely, in which he is “over all, God blessed for ever,” and, as manifested in the flesh, exercising the office of mediator between God and man — is to renounce the gospel. And according to the variety of these respects, so are the various operations of faith; some on him absolutely, on the motives of his mediation; Some on him as mediator only. And how

necessary this variety is to the life, support, and comfort of believers, they all know in some measure, who are saved. Sometimes faith considers him as on the throne; sometimes as standing at the right hand of God; sometimes as the mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. Sometimes his glorious power, sometimes his infinite condescension, is their relief.

So, in the sense now intended, he is considered as the ordinance, as the servant of God, “who raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory.” So our faith respects not only his person, but all the acts of his office. It is faith in his blood, Romans 3:25. It is the will of God, that we should place our faith and trust in him and them, as the only means of our acceptance with him — of all grace and glory from him. This is the proper notion of a mediator. So is he not the ultimate object of our faith, in which it rests, but God through him. “Through him have we access by one Spirit unto the Father,” Ephesians 2:18. So he is the way by which we go to God, John 14:6; see Hebrews 10:19–22. And so this is faith in him; because he is the immediate, though not the ultimate, object of it, Acts 26:18.

This is what renders our faith in God evangelical. The especial nature of it arises from our respect to God in Christ, and through him. And in this faith principally regards Christ in the discharge of his sacerdotal(priestly) office.

For although it is also the principle of all obedience to him in his other offices, yet as to fixing our faith in God through him, it is his sacerdotal office and the effects of it that we rest on and trust to. It is through him as the high priest over the house of God, as he who has made for us a new and living way into the holy place, that we draw near to God, Hebrews 4:14–16, 10:19–22; 1 John 1:3. No one can entertain or receive comfortable, refreshing thoughts of God, warrantable or acceptable boldness in an approach and access to him, but in this exercise of faith on Christ as the mediator between God and man. And if, in the practice of religion, this regard of faith to him — this acting of faith on God through him — is not the principle that the whole is animated and guided by, Christianity is renounced, and the vain cloud of natural religion embraced instead. Not a verbal mention of Him, but the real intention of heart to come to God by him, is required from us; and all expectation of acceptance with God, as to our persons or duties, is resolved into this.

Here lies the test of faith that is truly evangelical. Its steady beholding the Sun of Righteousness proves it genuine and from above. And let them take heed who find their heart remiss or cold in this exercise of it. When

men begin to satisfy themselves with general hopes of mercy in God, without a continual respect to the interposition and mediation of Christ, where their hope and trust is resolved into, there is a decay in their faith, and proportionally in all other evangelical graces also. The mystery of Christian religion lies in this, which the world seems to be almost weary of."

From The Glory of Christ- Chapter ten:

By John Owen

CHAPTER 22

FAITH'S OBJECT OR WHAT IT BELIEVES IN

CHRISTS PERSON AND WORK IN ATONEMENT

“Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.” Romans 3 v 28

By JOHN OWEN

The next thing to be looked at is the proper object of justifying faith, in its office, work, and duty, as it relates to justification. There are two opinions which are looked on as extremes, the one an excess, and the other a defect. The first is that of the Roman church, and this is that the object of justifying faith is all divine truth, all divine revelation, whether written in the Scripture or delivered by tradition, represented to us by the authority of the church. The latter part of this description is not our present concern. What they maintain is that the whole Scripture is equally the object of faith in the discharge of its office in our justification, all the parts of it, and all the truths, of whatever sort they are, that scripture contains.

Suppose the whole Scripture, — laws, precepts, promises, threatening, stories, prophecies, and the rest, is the object of faith, and not as they contain in them good or evil things for us, but under this formal consideration as divinely revealed, they cannot assign any other possible act of the mind to be required, but assent. They are so confident that faith is no more than

an assent to divine revelation that Bellarmine, in opposition to Calvin, who placed knowledge in the description of justifying faith, claims that it is better defined by ignorance than by knowledge.

This description of justifying faith and its object has been so discussed, and on such evident grounds of Scripture and reason rejected by Protestant writers of all sorts, so it is pointless to repeat it. I will observe some things in relation to it, so we may discover what is true about what they assert and how it is defective. Not only the Roman church is relevant to this point, who require no more to faith or believing, but a bare assent of the mind to divine revelations, but also those who describe faith wholly in such a firm assent as produces obedience to all divine commands. It does both these, both these are included in it, but more is required for the true nature of saving faith. Faith that justifies a person before God is neither a mere assent, nor any such firm degree of it as should produce these effects of obedience.

All faith whatever is an act of that power of our souls, in general, where we are able to firmly assent to the truth on testimony, in things not evident to us by sense or reason. It is “the evidence of things not seen.” And all divine faith is in general an assent to the truth that is proposed to us by divine testimony. It is commonly agreed, it is distinguished from opinion and moral certainty on the one hand, and science or demonstration on the other. In justifying faith there is an assent to all divine revelation by the testimony of God, the revealer. By no other act of our mind can we be justified, where this is not included or supposed. Not because it is not justifying, but because it is not faith. This assent is included in justifying faith. And so we often find it spoken about in the Scripture relating to other things, and not restrained to the special promise of grace in Christ. In most places in Scripture that the proper object of faith as justifying is included and referred ultimately to, it is taken for granted that we believe all other divine truth with the same faith we are justified by. However sometimes it is also expressed differently by some of its relations, to show that other things are associated with it as well.

The whole nature of justifying faith is not merely an assent of the mind, however firm and steadfast it is, or whatever effects of obedience it may produce.

In its duty and office in justification, it does not equally relate to all divine revelation as such, but has a particular object in the Scripture.

This assent is an act of the understanding only, — an act of the mind in

relation to truth evidenced to it. So we believe the worst of things and the most grievous to us, as well as the best and the most useful. But believing is an act of the heart; which, in the Scriptures comprises all the faculties of the soul as one entire principle of moral and spiritual duties: "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness," Romans 10 v 10. And it is frequently described by an act of the will, though not only the will. But without an act of the will, noone can believe as he ought to. See John 5 v 40; 1 v 12; 6 v 35. We come to Christ in an act of the will: "let whosoever will, come." And to be willing is taken for believing, Psalm 110 v 3; unbelief is disobedience, Hebrews 3 v 18,19.

All divine truth is equally the object of this assent. It is not about the nature or use of any one truth, more than another; since it regards only divine revelation. If all truth were involved the fact Judas was the traitor, would have as great an influence on our justification as the fact that Christ died for our sins. But how contrary that is to Scripture, the analogy of faith, and the experience of everyone who believes, does not need declaration or confirmation.

This assent to all divine revelation may be true and sincere, where there has been no prior work of the law, or any conviction of sin. It is not found in many people who assent to the truth and it is not required in order for them to assent. But, as we have showed, it is necessary for evangelical, justifying faith; and to suppose the contrary, is to overthrow the order and use of the law and gospel, with their mutual relations to one another, in serving Gods design in the salvation of sinners.

It is not helpful in searching for relief for a convinced sinner, whose mouth has been silenced, realizing that he is guilty before God. Only these people are capable subjects to receive justification, and do or can search for it in the right way. A mere assent to divine revelation is not particularly suited to give such people relief: conviction is what brings people into the condition they will be relieved from; knowledge of sin comes from the law. But faith is a particular acting of the soul to be liberated.

Assent is no more than what the devils themselves may have, and have, the apostle James teaches us. For that instance of their believing one God, proves that they believe also whatever this one God, who is the first essential truth, reveals to be true. And it may exist with all kinds of wickedness, and without any obedience; and so make God a liar, John 5 v 10. It is no wonder if men deny us to be justified by faith, who know no other faith but this kind in people.

It clearly does not answer the descriptions given of justifying faith in the Scriptures. Particularly, it is by faith as justifying that we are said to “receive” Christ, John 1 v 12; Colossians 2 v 6; — to “receive” the promise, the word, the grace of God, the atonement, James 1 v 21; John 3 v 33; Acts 2 v 41; 11 v 1; Romans 5 v 11; Hebrews 11 v 17; to “cleave unto God,” Deuteronomy 4 v 4; Acts 11 v 23. And so, in the Old Testament it is generally expressed by trust and hope. Now, none of these things are contained in a mere assent to the truth; but they require other actions of the soul than what is particular to only the understanding.

It does not answer the experience of people that truly believe. What we aim at is only to discover what people do, who really believe to the justification of life. It is not what notions people may have that we inquire into, or how they express their conceptions, how defensible they are against objections by accuracy of expression and subtle distinction; but only what we ourselves do, if we truly believe. Although our differences about it argue the great imperfection of our present state, so those who truly believe cannot agree what they do in their believing, — which should give us mutual tenderness and patience towards each other; — yet if people would attend to their own experience in the application of their souls to God for the pardon of sin and righteousness to life, more than to notions their minds are influenced by, many differences and unnecessary disputes about the nature of justifying faith would be avoided. I deny that this general assent to the truth, however firm it is, or whatever effects in the way of duty or obedience it may produce, answers the experience of any one true believer, as containing the entire acting of his soul towards God for pardon of sin and justification. To suppose a man to have justifying faith, and not to be justified, is to suppose a contradiction. It is sufficiently evident that there is more required for justifying faith than a real assent to all divine revelations, although the faith we are justified by includes that assent as part of it. Also it is supposed by some people that the object of justifying faith is so restricted and the nature of it is such a particular acting of the mind that it does not contain all of what Scripture describes it as including. Some people have said that it is the pardon of our sins, in particular, that is the object of justifying faith: so they make to be a full persuasion of the forgiveness of our sins through the mediation of Christ; or what Christ did and suffered as our mediator, that he did it for us in particular: and a particular application of special mercy to our own souls and consciences is made the essence of faith; or to believe that our own sins are forgiven

seems to be the first and most proper act of justifying faith. So it would follow, that whoever does not believe, or does not have a firm persuasion of the forgiveness of his own sins in particular, has no saving faith and is not a true believer: this is to be rejected as false.

If any are of this opinion, I fear they neglect their own experience; or rather that they do not know how in their experience, all the other products of faith are included in that persuasion.

Faith is suited to, aims at, and ordinarily produces what they propose, in true believers, who improve it, growing as it is exercised.

Many great divines, at the first Reformation, made the mercy of God in Christ, and the resulting forgiveness of our own sins to be the proper object of justifying faith. They meant by faith's object a fiducial trust in the grace of God by Christ, declared in the promises, with unwavering application of them to ourselves. I say with some confidence people who do not attempt to attain to that, either do not understand the nature of believing or greatly neglect both the grace of God and their own peace.

What inclined those great and holy persons to express themselves in that way in this matter, and to place the essence of faith in its highest acting (yet they always included and supposed its other parts), was the state of the consciences of men they dealt with. Their contest in this doctrine with the Roman Catholic church, was about the way and means the consciences of convinced, troubled sinners might come to rest and peace with God. At that time they were instructed, that these things were to be obtained, not only by works of righteousness which people did themselves, in obedience to the commands of God, but also by the strict observance of many inventions of what was called the Church: e.g. sacrifices, sacramentals, absolutions, penances, pilgrimages, and other superstitions. So the consciences of men were bound in constant fear and slavery, exclusive of that rest, assurance, and peace with God through the blood of Christ, which the gospel proclaims and offers.

When the leaders of the people in that church had observed this, that the ways and means which they presented would never bring the souls of men to rest, nor give them the least assurance of the pardon of sins, they made it a part of their doctrine, that the belief of the pardon of our own sins, and assurance of the love of God in Christ, were false and pernicious. For what else should they do, when they knew well enough that in their way, and by their propositions, they were not to be attained? The principal controversy in this matter, which the reformed divines had with the church

of Rome was if there is, stated in, and produced by the gospel, a state of rest and assured peace with God to be attained in this life? And having all advantages imaginable to prove it e.g. the very nature, use, and end of the gospel; the grace, love, and design of God in Christ; the effectiveness of his mediation in his oblation and intercession; so they assigned these things to be the special object of justifying faith, and that faith itself to be a fiduciary trust in the special grace and mercy of God through the blood of Christ as proposed in the promises of the gospel.

They directed the souls of men to search for peace with God, the pardon of sin, and a right to the heavenly inheritance, by placing their sole trust and confidence in the mercy of God by Christ alone. But I never read any of them who claimed that every true and sincere believer was always fully sure of the special love of God in Christ for them, or the pardon of his own sins, —though the Scripture requires they ought to aim to attain this. What is aimed at is the advancement and glory of the grace of God in Christ, with conducting people's souls to rest and peace with him. Where this is aimed at, in the way of truth for the substance of it, a variety of different expressions about the same thing may be the useful for the exercise of faith and the edification of the church so it more clearly expresses and explains what faith is.

I say therefore, that the Lord Jesus Christ himself, as decreed by God, in his work of mediation for the recovery and salvation of lost sinners, and as to that end proposed in the promise of the gospel, is the adequate, proper object of justifying faith, or of saving faith in its work and duty with respect to our justification.

The reason why I state the object of justifying faith in this way is because it completely answers all the qualities Scripture gives it, and all the nature of it requires. What belongs to it as faith in general, is supposed; and what is particular to it as justifying is fully expressed.

The Lord Jesus Christ himself is asserted to be the proper object of justifying faith. So it is required in all the testimonies of Scripture where that faith is declared to be our believing in him, on his name, our receiving him, or looking to him that the promise of justification and eternal life is connected to. See John 1 v 12; 3 v 16,36; 6 v 29,47; 7 v 38; 14 v 12; Acts 10 v 43; 13 v 38,39; 16 v 31; 26 v 18; etc.

He is not proposed as the object of our faith to the justification of life absolutely, but as God decreed it, even the Father, for that purpose: so he is also the immediate object of faith that justifies. So justification is frequently

assigned to faith as particularly acted on him, John 5 v 24, “He that believeth on him that sent me, has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment; but is passed from death unto life.” This comprises that grace, love, and favour of God, which is the principal cause of our justification, Romans 3 v 23,24. Add John 6 v 29, and the object of faith is complete: “This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he has sent.”

God the Father as sending, and the Son as sent, — that is, Jesus Christ in the work of his mediation, as God decreed for the recovery and salvation of lost sinners, is the object of our faith. See 1 Peter 1 v 21.

That he may be the object of our faith, whose general nature consists in assent and is the foundation of all its other parts, so he is proposed in the promises of the gospel; this concurs with its complete object. Yet do I not consider the promises merely as particular divine revelations, in the sense that they belong to the formal object of faith; but only as they contain, propose, and exhibit Christ as the decree of God, and the benefits of his mediation, to those who believe.

There is a special assent to the promises of the gospel, that some people make the nature and essence of justifying faith. And so they make the promises of the gospel to be the proper object of it. And it must be that in justifying faith there is a particular assent to them. However, this is only an act of the mind and not the whole nature or the whole work of faith. So as far as the promises concur to the complete object of faith, they are considered to contain it also, — as they contain, propose, and exhibit Christ to believers. In that sense they are frequently confirmed in Scripture to be the object of our faith to the justification of life, Acts 2 v 39; 26 v 6; Romans 4 v 16,20; 15 v 8; Galatians 3 v 16, 18; Hebrews 4 v 1; 6 v 13; 8 v 6; 10 v 36.

The outcome that the Lord Jesus Christ in his mediation, is decreed by God for, and proposed to us in that way in gospel promises, —namely, the recovery and salvation of lost sinners – this is the object of justifying faith. So the forgiveness of sin and eternal life are stated in Scripture as things that are to be believed to justification, or as the object of our faith, Matthew 9 v 2; Acts 2 v 38,39; 5 v 31; 26 v 18; Romans 3 v 25; 4 v 7,8; Colossians 2 v 13; Titus 1 v 2;etc

The just is to live by his faith, and every one is to believe for himself and apply the things believed to his own advantage, so some people have concluded the pardon of our own sins and our own salvation to be the proper object of faith. Indeed it is part of it when we can attain to it in the way and order of God and the gospel. 1 Corinthians 15 v 3,4; Galatians 2

v 20; Ephesians 1 v 6,7. Asserting the Lord Jesus Christ, in the work of his mediation, to be the object of faith to justification, I include also the grace of God, which is the cause; the pardon of sin, which is the effect; and the promises of the gospel, which are the means, of communicating Christ and the benefits of his mediation to us.

All these things are so united, so mixed in their mutual relations and respects, so linked in the purpose of God, and the declaration made of his will in the gospel that the believing of any one of them does virtually include the belief of the rest. Whoever disbelieves any one of them frustrates and makes useless all the rest, and so faith itself.

The due consideration of these things solves all the difficulties that arise about the nature of faith, either from the Scripture or from the experience of people that believe, about its object. In the Scripture we are said to believe many things with it and by it, to justification; but two things are evident: — First, That no one of them can be asserted to be the complete, adequate object of our faith.

Secondly, That none of them are the object absolutely, but as they relate to the Lord Jesus Christ, as decreed by God for our justification and salvation.

And this answers the experience of all that do truly believe. For these things being united and made inseparable in God's arrangement and design, all of them are virtually included in every one of them.

Some fix their faith and trust principally on the grace, love, and mercy of God; especially they did so under the Old Testament, before the clear revelation of Christ and his mediation. So did the psalmist, Psalm 130 v 3,4; 33 v 18,19; and the publican, Luke 18 v 13. And these are in numerous places in Scripture, proposed as the causes of our justification. See Romans 3 v 24; Ephesians 2 v 4–8; Titus 3 v 5–7. But this they do not absolutely, but only as they relate to the “redemption that is in the blood of Christ,” Daniel 9 v 17. Nor does the Scripture anywhere propose them to us but under that consideration. See Romans 3 v 24,25; Ephesians 1 v 6–8. This redemption is the cause, way, and means of the communication of that grace, love, and mercy to us.

Some place and fix them principally on the Lord Christ, his mediation, and its benefits. The apostle Paul frequently states this to us in his own example. See Galatians 2 v 20; Philippians 3 v 8–10. But they do not do this absolutely, but in relation to the grace and love of God that gives and communicates them to us, Romans 8 v 32; John 3 v 16; Ephesians 1 v 6–8.

They are not proposed to us anywhere else in the Scripture as the object of our faith to justification.

Some particularly fix their souls, in believing on the promises. This is exemplified in the instance of Abraham, Genesis 15 v 6; Romans 4 v 20. So they are proposed in the Scripture as the object of our faith, Acts 2 v 39; Romans 4 v 16; Hebrews 4 v 1,2; 6 v 12,13. They do not do this merely as they are divine revelations, but as they contain and offer to us the Lord Christ and the benefits of his mediation, from the grace, love, and mercy of God. The apostle argues at length, in his letter to the Galatians, that if justification comes any way but by the promise, both the grace of God and the death of Christ are futile and made ineffective. And the reason is, because the promise is nothing but the way and means of communicating them to us.

Some fix their faith on the things themselves which they aim at, — namely, the pardon of sin and eternal life. These also in the Scripture are proposed to us as the object of our faith, or what we are to believe to justification, Psalm 130 v 4; Acts 26 v 18; Titus 1 v 2. This is to be done in its proper order, especially in applying them to our own souls. We are nowhere required to believe in them, or our own interest in them, but as they are effects of the grace and love of God, through Christ and his mediation, proposed in the promises of the gospel. So belief in them is included in the belief of these, and is in its order prior to them. The belief of the forgiveness of sins, and eternal life, without the right exercise of faith in the causes of them, means a person wrongly presumes salvation is theirs.

I have given the entire object of faith as justifying, in its work and duty as it relates to our justification, in agreement with the testimony of Scripture, and the experience of people that believe. Allowing the proper place to the promises, and to the effect of all in the pardon of sins and eternal life, what I further confirm is, that the Lord Christ, in the work of his mediation, as decreed by God for the recovery and salvation of lost sinners, is the proper adequate object of justifying faith. The true nature of evangelical faith is about the relation of the heart to the love, grace, and wisdom of God; with the mediation of Christ, in his obedience; with the sacrifice, satisfaction, and atonement for sin which he made by his blood. These things are impiously, opposed by some heretics as inconsistent; for the second point of the Socinian heresy is that the grace of God and satisfaction of Christ are opposite and inconsistent, so if we allow one we must deny the other. These things are so clearly stated in Scripture that without granting them both

neither can be believed. Faith finds rest in both, and in nothing else, — namely, the mediation of Christ unto the grace of God, that fixes itself on the Lord Christ and that redemption which is in his blood, — as decreed by God the father, the effect of his wisdom, grace, and love.

I do not need to labour the proof of the assertion because, it is not only abundantly declared in the Scripture, but it also contains in it a principal part of the design and substance of the gospel. The whole is expressed where the doctrine of justification is most eminently proposed to us, Romans 3 v 24, 25, “Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood; to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins.” we may add, Ephesians 1 v 6,7, “He has made us accepted in the Beloved; in whom we have redemption through his blood, according to the riches of his grace.” What we are justified by, is the special object of our faith to justification. But this is the Lord Christ in the work of his mediation: we are justified by the redemption that is in Jesus Christ; in him we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sin. Christ as a propitiation is the cause of our justification, and the object of our faith or we attain it by faith in his blood. This is so under the formal consideration, as he is decreed by God for that purpose, — appointed, given, proposed by the grace, wisdom, and love of God. God set him forth to be a propitiation. He makes us accepted in the Beloved. We have redemption in his blood, according to the riches of his grace and by this he makes us accepted in the Beloved. Here he “abounds towards us in all wisdom” Ephesians 1 v 8. This, therefore is what the gospel proposes to us, as the special object of our faith to the justification of life.

From The Doctrine of justification by faith by John Owen: Chapter One. Justifying faith; the causes and object of it declared.

CHAPTER 23

CHRIST'S WORK IN SACRIFICE

What can wash away my sin?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus;
What can make me whole again?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

Oh! precious is the flow
That makes me white as snow;
No other fount I know,
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

For my pardon, this I see,
Nothing but the blood of Jesus;
For my cleansing this my plea,
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

Nothing can for sin atone,
Nothing but the blood of Jesus;
Naught of good that I have done,
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

This is all my hope and peace,
Nothing but the blood of Jesus;
This is all my righteousness,
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

Now by this I'll overcome—
 Nothing but the blood of Jesus;
 Now by this I'll reach my home—
 Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

Glory! Glory! This I sing—
 Nothing but the blood of Jesus,
 All my praise for this I bring—
 Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

The Holy Spirit brought life into being in creation but it was only a faint shadow of the life he brings to the soul in redemption. Christ paid the penalty for sin and vanquished sin's consequences in three days. This was half the time to create the universe which is symbolic and indicates the superiority of redemption. Creation was the preparation for Redemption – it was merely the framework, the scaffolding which surrounds the substance and the building, of God's eternal purpose to save.

“God revealed this sacred truth by his institution of sacrifices. Sacrifices by blood all respect atonement, expiation, and consequently forgiveness. It is true, indeed, they could not themselves take away sin, nor make those people perfect who came to God by them, Hebrews 10:1; but yet they undeniably evince the taking away of sin, or the forgiveness of it, by what they did denote and typify. I shall, therefore, look back into their rise and intention: —

1. The original and first spring of sacrifices is not in the Scripture expressly mentioned, only the practice of the saints is recorded. But it is certain, from infallible Scripture evidences, that they were of God's immediate institution and appointment. God never allowed that the will or wisdom of man should be the spring and rule of his worship. That solemn word wherewith he fronts the command that is the rule of his worship, — “Thou shalt not make to thyself,” which is the life of the command (that which follows being an explanation and confirmation of the law itself by instances), cuts off all such pretences, and is as a flaming sword, turning every way to prevent men's arbitrary approaches to God's institutions.

God will not part with his glory of being the only lawgiver, as to the whole concern of his worship, or any part of it, to any of the sons of men.

2. Neither is the time of their institution mentioned. Some of the Roman Catholics dispute that there should have been sacrifices in paradise, if a man had not sinned. But as, in all their opinions, our first inquiry ought to be, What do they get by this or that? their whole religion being directed towards their carnal interest, so we, may in particular inquire also with this uncouth assertion, which is perfectly contradictory to the very nature and end of most sacrifices, — namely, that they should be offered where there is no sin. Why, they hope to establish hence a general rule, that there can be no true worship of God, in any state or condition, without a sacrifice. What, then, I pray? Why, then it is evident that the continual sacrifice of the mass is necessary in the church, and that without it there is no true worship of God; and so they are quickly come home to their advantage and profit, — the mass being that inexhaustible spring of revenue which feeds their pride and lust throughout the world. But there is in the church of Christ an altar still, and a sacrifice still, which they have rejected for the abominable figment of their mass, — namely, Christ himself, as the apostle informs us, Hebrews 13:10. But as the sacrifices of beasts could not have been before the entrance of sin, so it may be evidenced that they were instituted from the foundation of the world, — that is, presently after the entrance of sin. Christ is called “The Lamb of God,” John 1:29, which he was in reference unto the sacrifices of old, as 1 Peter 1:18, 19; where he is represented in the church as a “Lamb slain,” Revelation 5:6, or giving out the power of all sacrifices to his church.

Now, he is said to be a “Lamb slain from the foundation of the world,” Revelation 13:8, which could not be unless some sacrifice, prefiguring his being slain, had been then offered; for it denotes not only the effectiveness of his mediation, but also the way. Besides, the apostle tells us that “without shedding of blood there was no remission,” Hebrews 9:22, — that is, God, to demonstrate that all pardon and forgiveness related to the blood of Christ from the foundation of the world, gave out no word of pardon but by and with blood.

Now, I have showed before that he revealed pardon in the first promise; and therefore there ensued the shedding of blood and sacrifices; and by this that testament or covenant “was dedicated with blood” also, verse 18. Some think that the beasts, of whose skins God made garments for Adam, were offered in sacrifices. Nor is the conjecture empty; yes, it seems not to lack the metaphor of a gospel mystery, that their nakedness, which became their shame on their sin (from where the pollution

and shame of sin is so frequently termed as such), should be covered with the skins of their sacrifices: for in the true sacrifice there is somewhat answerable to it; and the righteousness of Him whose sacrifice takes away the guilt of our sin is called our clothing, that hides our pollution and shame.

3. That after the giving of the law, the greatest, most noble, and solemn part of the worship of God consisted in sacrifices. And this kind of worship continued, with the approval of God, in the world about four thousand years; that is, from the entrance of sin until the death of the Messiah, the true sacrifice, which put an end unto all that was typical and a shadow.

We may consider what was the mind and aim of God in the institution of this worship. One instance, and that of the most solemn of the whole kind, will resolve us in this inquiry.

Leviticus 16:5, "Two kids of the goats" are taken for "an offering for sin." Consider only how one of them was dealt with: Verses 20–22, "He shall bring the live goat: and Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness: and the goat shall bear on him all their iniquities to a land not inhabited."

Let us see to what end is all this solemnity, and what is declared by it. Why should God appoint poor sinful men to come together, to take a goat or a lamb, and to confess over his head all their sins and transgressions, and to devote him to destruction under that confession?

Had men invented this themselves, it had been a matter of no moment; but it was an institution of God, which he bound his church to the observation of on the penalty of his highest displeasure. Certainly this was a solemn declaration that there is forgiveness with him. Would that God who is infinitely good, and so will not, who is infinitely true, holy, and faithful, and so cannot deceive, call men out, whom he loved, to a solemn representation of a thing that their greatest, their eternal concern lies, and suffer them to feed on ashes? Let men pay attention that they do not mock God; for of a truth God does not mock people until he is finally rejected by him. For four thousand years together, then, did God declare by sacrifices that there is forgiveness with him, and led his people by them to make a public representation of it in the face of the world. This is a second uncontrollable

evidence of the truth asserted, which may possibly be of use to souls that come indeed deeply and seriously to deal with God; for though the practice has ceased, yet the instruction intended in them continues.”

By John Owen

CHAPTER 24

FAITH AND FORGIVENESS

Have you heard the voice of Jesus
Softly pleading with your heart?
Have you felt His presence glorious,
As He calls your soul apart,
With a love so true and loyal,
Love divine that ever flows
From a Saviour, righteous, royal,
And a cross that mercy shows?

Have you heard the voice of mercy
Granting peace and pardon pure?
Have you felt the balm of Calvary
Binding all your wounds secure?
Was there ever such salvation?
Was there ever care like this?
See the Saviour's grief and passion,
Grace and mercy's gentle kiss.

Have you heard the Saviour calling
All to leave and follow Him?
Have you felt His Person drawing
With compulsion lives to win?
Hearken to His invitation,
To the music of God's grace;
Let the peace of God's salvation
Fill your soul, and love embrace.

Will you hear the voice of Jesus
 Calling home to mansions fair?
 Will you know the promise precious,
 And the Shepherd's tender care?
 Yes, if you in life responded
 To God's grace and gospel sound:
 For they never are confounded
 Who believed and Jesus found

Vernon Higham hymns

God is merciful and devised a way so that his justice was not compromised yet he could still save guilty sinners as Christ bore the punishment on their behalf. John Owen comments on the nature of the faith that secures forgiveness from God:

“Firstly,

It is too deep and mysterious to be fathomed and reached by any thing else. Reason's line is too short to fathom the depths of the Father's love, of the blood of the Son, and the promises of the gospel built on it, where forgiveness resides. Men cannot by their rational considerations launch out into these deeps, nor draw water by them from these “wells of salvation.” Reason stands by amazed, and cries, “How can these things be true?” It can only gather cockleshells, like that person of the past, at the shore of this ocean, a few criticisms on the outward letter, and so bring an evil report on the land, as the spies did. All it can do is to hinder faith from venturing into it, crying, “Spare yourself; this attempt is pointless, these things are impossible.” It is among the things that faith puts off and lays aside when it engages the soul in this great work. This, then, that it may come to a discovery of forgiveness, causes the soul to deny itself and all its own reasonings, and to give up itself to an infinite fullness of goodness and truth. Though it cannot go to the bottom of these depths, yet it enters into them, and finds rest in them. Nothing but faith is suited to rest, to satiate, and content itself in mysterious, bottomless, unsearchable depths. Because it is a soul-emptying, a reason-denying grace, the more it meets with beyond its search and reach, the more satisfaction it finds. “This is what I looked for,” says faith, “even for what is infinite and unsearchable, when I know that there is abundantly more beyond me that I do not comprehend, than what I have attained to; for I know that nothing else will do

good to the soul." Now, this is what really puzzles and overwhelms reason, rendering it useless. What it cannot compass, it will neglect or despise. It is either amazed and confounded, and dazzled like weak eyes at too great a light; or fortifying itself by inbred pride and obstinacy, it concludes that this preaching of the cross, of forgiveness from the love of God, by the blood of Christ, is plain folly, a thing not for a wise man to take notice of or to trouble himself about: so it appeared to the wise Greeks of old, 1 Corinthians 1:23. So, when a soul is brought under the power of a real conviction of sin, such that it greatly desires to be freed from the bitter entangling of it, it is then the hardest thing in the world to persuade such a soul about this forgiveness. Any thing appears more rational to it, — any self-righteousness in this world, any purgatory hereafter. The greatest part of the world of sin convinced persons have forsaken forgiveness on this account; masses, penances, merits, have appeared more eligible. Yes, men who have no other desire but to be forgiven do choose to close with any thing rather than forgiveness. If men escape these rocks, and resolve that nothing but pardon will relieve them, yet it is impossible for them to receive it in the truth and power of it, if not enabled by faith to do so. I speak not about people that take it up by hearsay, as a common report, but about those souls who find themselves really concerned to look for it. When they know it is their sole concern, all their hope and relief; when they know that they must perish everlastingly without it; and when it is declared to them in words of truth and soberness, — yet they cannot receive it. What is the reason for it? what staves off these hungry creatures from their proper food? Why, they have nothing to lead them into the mysterious depths of eternal love, of the blood of Christ, and promises of the gospel. How may we see poor deserted souls standing every day at the side of this pool, and yet not once venture themselves into it all their days!

It is too great for any thing else to discover. Forgiveness is a thing chosen out of God from all eternity, to exalt and magnify the glory of his grace; and it will be made appear to all the world at the day of judgment to have been a great thing. When the soul comes in any measure to be made truly aware of it, it finds it so great, so excellent and astonishing, that it sinks under the thoughts of it. It has dimensions, a length, breadth, depth, and height, that no line of the rational soul can take or measure. There is "exceeding greatness" in it, Ephesians 1:19. That is a great work which we have prescribed, Ephesians 3:19, even "to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." Here, I suppose, reason will confess

itself at a stand and an issue; to know what passes knowledge is none of its work. "It cannot be known," says reason; and so ends the matter. But this is faith's proper work, even to know that which passes knowledge; to know that, in its power, virtue, sweetness, and efficacy, which cannot be thoroughly known in its nature and excellency; to have, by believing, all the ends of a full comprehension of that which cannot be fully comprehended. Hence, Hebrews 11:1, it is said to be the substance of "things not seen," their subsistence; though in themselves absent, yet faith gives them a present subsistence in the soul. So it knows things that pass knowledge; by mixing itself with them, it draws out and communicates their benefit to the soul."

"This also adds to the mysterious depths of forgiveness, and makes its discovery a great matter. The soul that looks after it in earnest must consider what it cost. How light do most people make of pardon! What an easy thing is it to be acquainted with it! and no very hard matter to obtain it! But to hold communion with God, in the blood of his Son, is a thing of another nature than is once dreamed of by many who think they know well enough what it is to be pardoned. "God be merciful," is a common saying; and as common to desire they would be so "for Christ's sake." Poor people are cast into the mould of such expressions, who know neither God, nor mercy, nor Christ, nor any thing of the mystery of the gospel.

Others look on the outside of the cross. To see into the mystery of the love of the Father, working in the Mood of the Mediator; to consider by faith the great transaction of divine wisdom, justice, and mercy in them, — how few people attain to it! To come to God by Christ for forgiveness, and there to view the law issuing all its threats and curses in his Mood, and losing its sting, putting an end to its obligation to punishment, in the cross; to see all sins gathered up in the hands of God's justice, and made to meet on the Mediator, and eternal love springing forth triumphantly from his Mood, flourishing into pardon, grace, mercy, forgiveness, — the heart of a sinner can be enlarged to this only by the Spirit of God."

AND

"[2.] It so prepares the soul, by giving it a due valuation of the grace and mercy desired. The merchant in the gospel was not prepared to enjoy the pearl himself, until it was discovered to him to be of great price; then he

knew how to purchase it, procure it, and keep it. The soul having, by this action of faith, on the discovery of forgiveness insisted on, comes to find that the pearl hid in the field is indeed precious, is both stirred up to seek after possession of it, and to give it its due. Such a soul says, "How excellent, how precious is this forgiveness that is with God! Blessed, yes, ever blessed, are those that participate in it! What a life of joy, rest, peace, and consolation do they lead! If I only had I their evidence of an interest in it, and the spiritual consolation that follows this, how would I despise the world and all the temptations of Satan, and rejoice in the Lord in every condition!" And this apprehension of grace also exceedingly prepares and fits the soul for receiving a blessed sense of it, so that God may have glory by this.

[3.] It fits the soul, by giving a right understanding of it, of its nature, its causes, and effects. At the first the soul goes no farther but to look after impunity, or freedom from punishment in any way. "What shall I do to be saved?" is the utmost it aims at. "Who shall rescue me? how shall I escape?" And it would be contented to escape in any way, — by the law, or the gospel, all is one, so it may escape. But on this discovery of forgiveness, which is made by faith adhering to God, a man plainly sees the nature of it, and that it is so excellent that it is to be desired for its own sake. Indeed, when a soul is brought under trouble for sin, it does not know well what it would have. It has an uneasiness or disturbance that it would be freed from, — a dread of some evil condition that it would avoid. But now the soul can tell what it desires, what it aims at, as well as what it would be freed from. It would have an interest in eternal love; have the gracious kindness of the heart of God turned towards itself, — a sense of the everlasting purpose of his will shed abroad in his heart; have an special interest in the precious blood of the Son of God, by which atonement is made for him; and that all these things would be testified to his conscience in a word of promise mixed with faith. These things he came for; in this way alone he would be saved, and in no other. It sees such a glory of wisdom, love, and grace in forgiveness, such an exaltation of the love of Christ in all his offices, in all his undertaking, especially in his death, sacrifice, and blood-shedding, by which he procured or made reconciliation for us, that it exceedingly longs after the participation in them.

All these things, in their several degrees, this discovery of forgiveness in God will produce, without an evidence of a especial interest in it. And these

will assuredly maintain the spiritual life of the soul, and keep it to such an obedience as shall be accepted of God in Christ. Darkness, sorrow, storms, they may meet with; but their eternal condition is secured in the covenant of God, — their souls are bound up in the bundle of life.

From what has been spoken, we may make some inferences in our passage concerning the true notion of believing; for, —

1. These effects ascribed to this faith of forgiveness in God, and always produced by it, make it evident that the most of them who pretend to it, who pretend to believe that there is forgiveness with God, do indeed believe no such thing. Although I shall, on set purpose, afterward evince this, yet I cannot here utterly pass it by. I shall, then, only demand of them who are so forward in the profession of this faith that they think it almost impossible that any one should not believe it, what effects it has produced in them, and whether they have been by it enabled to perform of the duties mentioned before? I fear with many, things on the account of their pretended faith are quite otherwise. They love sin the more for it, and God never the better. Supposing that a few barren words will issue the controversy about their sins, they become insensibly to have slight thoughts of sin and of God also. This persuasion is not of him that calls us. Poor souls, your faith is the devil's greatest engine for your ruin, — the highest contempt of God, and Christ, and forgiveness also, that you can be guilty of, — a means to let you down quietly into hell, — the Pharisees' trusted in Moses, and [yet] they will condemn you. As none is saved but by faith, so you, if it were not for your faith (as you call it), might possibly be saved. If a man's gold prove counterfeit, his jewels painted glass, his silver lead or dross, he will not only be found poor when he comes to be tested, and lack the benefit of riches, but have also a fearful aggravation of his poverty by his disappointment and surprisal. If a man's faith, which should be more precious than gold, is found rotten and corrupt, if his light is darkness, how vile is that faith, how great is that darkness! Such, it is evident, will the faith of too many be found in this business.

2. We are discussing the raising of a sin-entangled soul out of its depths; and what we have spoken about is what must give him his first relief. Commonly, when souls are in distress, what they look after is consolation. What is it that they intend by that? That they may have assurance that their sins are forgiven them, and so be freed from their present perplexities.

What is the outcome? Some of them continue complaining all their days, and never come to rest or peace, they fall so far short of consolation and joy; and some are utterly discouraged from attempting any progress in the ways of God. What is the reason for this? Is it not that they want to finish their building, when they have not laid the foundation? They have not yet made thorough work in believing forgiveness with God, and they would immediately be at assurance in themselves. Now, God does not delight in such a frame of spirit; for, —

(1.) It is selfish. The great design of faith is to “give glory to God,” Romans 4:20. The end of God’s giving out forgiveness is the “praise of his glorious grace,” Ephesians 1:6. But let a soul in this frame have peace in itself, it is very little solicitous about giving glory unto God. He cries like Rachel, “Give me children, or I die;” — “Give me peace, or I perish.” That God may be honored, and the forgiveness he seeks after be rendered glorious, it is cared for in the second place, if at all. This selfish earnestness, at first to be thrusting our hand in the side of Christ, is that which he will pardon in many, but accepts in none.

(2.) It is impatient. People conduct themselves in this way because they will not wait. They do not care for standing afar off for any period with the publican. They love not to submit their souls to lie at the foot of God, to give him the glow of his goodness, mercy, wisdom, and love, in the disposal of them and their concerns. This waiting comprises the universal subjection of the soul to God, with a resolved judgment that it is suitable and right that we, and all we desire and aim at, should be at his sovereign disposal. This gives glow to God, — a duty which the impatience of these poor souls refuse to perform.

And both these arise, —

(3.) From weakness. It is weakness in any condition, that makes people restless and weary. The state of adherence is as safe a condition as the state of assurance; only, it has more combats and wrestling attending it. It is not, then, fear of the event, but weakness and weariness of the combat, that makes men anxiously solicitous about a release from that state before they are well entered into it.

Let, then, the sin-entangled soul remember always this way, method, and order of the gospel, that we have under consideration. First, exercise faith on forgiveness in God; and when the soul is fixed in it, it will have a

ground and foundation that it may stand securely on in making application of it to itself. Drive this principle, in the first place, to a stable issue on gospel evidences, answer the objections that lie against it, and then you may proceed. In believing, the soul makes a conquest on Satan's territories. Do, then, as they do who are entering on an enemy's country, — secure the passages, fortify the strongholds as you go on, that you be not cut off in your progress. Do not be like as a ship at sea, which passes on, and is no more possessed or master of the water it has gone through than that it is not yet arrived at. But so it is with a soul that does not fix on these foundation principles: he presses forwards, and the ground crumbles away under his feet, and so he wilders away all his days in uncertainties. Would people only lay this principle well in their souls, and secure it against assaults, they might proceed, though not with so much speed as some do, yet with more safety. Some pretend at once to fall into full assurance; I wish it prove not a broad presumption in the most, It is to no purpose for them to strive to fly who cannot yet go, — to labour to come to assurance in himself who never well believed forgiveness in God.”

From John Owen on

Temptation and Sin:

Exposition of Psalm 130:Verse 4.

“Man of Sorrows!” what a name
For the Son of God, who came
Ruined sinners to reclaim.
Hallelujah! What a Saviour!

Bearing shame and scoffing rude,
In my place condemned He stood;
Sealed my pardon with His blood.
Hallelujah! What a Saviour!

Guilty, vile, and helpless we;
Spotless Lamb of God was He;
“Full atonement!” can it be?
Hallelujah! What a Saviour!

Lifted up was He to die;
 "It is finished!" was His cry;
 Now in Heav'n exalted high.
 Hallelujah! What a Saviour!

When He comes, our glorious King,
 All His ransomed home to bring,
 Then anew His song we'll sing:
 Hallelujah! What a Saviour!

AND,

The One in the middle
 Who can he be
 Laden with sorrow
 And nailed to the tree,
 Among the transgressors
 One on each side
 The One in the middle
 is the Saviour Christ.

The One in the middle
 the mysterious One
 who existed as God
 Before ages began
 in the counsels of old
 The Trinity did plan
 That the One in the middle
 Would take the form of Man

The One in the middle
 Is the Lamb that was slain
 Before the foundation
 Of creation was laid
 In the fulness of time
 To earth when he came
 The one in the middle
 in the Trinity remained

The One in the middle
Our surety was He
Born without guile
and free from all sin
the Prophet of God
to reveal us his will
The One in the middle
is a priest and a king

The One in the middle
was the one to adore
When bleeding he wore
The crown made of thorns
Their mockings and ravings
They could not forbear
The one in the middle
must be laid in the grave

The one in the middle
on the way to Emmaus
From whence came the stranger
We an answer demand
Could the one in the middle
So lovely and calm
Be the Christ now arisen
With the marks on his hands

On the One in the middle
our faith must take hold
If we are to shelter
with the sheep in his fold
the one in the middle
Between sinners and God
On the ground of His merit
is pleading their cause

The one in the middle
has promised to be
In the midst of his worship
of the two or three
whenever they gather
to honour his name
The One in the middle
is sure to be there

The one in the middle
when time is no more
And the church is triumphant
surrounding the throne
Redeemed from their sin
they hunger no more
The One in the middle
Is the Christ that arose.



SECTION FIVE

FAITH'S ACTIVITY IN THE SAVED: FAITH AND OBEDIENCE

"And then will I profess unto them,
I never knew you:" Matthew 7 v 23



CHAPTER 25

FAITH AT WORK

Spirituality refers to our hearts and implies that Gods Holy Spirit has created in them a new life towards God. He creates a different attitude within a person. Gods word is to be approached reverence and trembling. It is a searcher of our heart and is like a sword and a hammer, breaking the stony heart into pieces and condemning the evil heart of unbelief. It informs us not only of Christ being the Lamb but of the wrath of the Lamb. It warns that Christ the rock breaks in pieces and he is not to be trifled with. At the Last great day the unsaved will scream out for the rocks to fall on them to hide them from the Lambs fearful wrath. Gods word should be approached carefully, lovingly submitting to it as the absolute authority over us as we listen to the sound of his voice. He is our divine holy judge. All our hope, our only hope, rests on his testimony in the gospel. Man who lives for but a moment would like to think that his rational objective mind is the final arbiter of Gods word. However, we are never neutral or impartial once we have read it. It witnesses to us, testifying against us, judging us.

Words are the way in which we perceive what others are thinking. Language is what influences culture, not artificial national borders of countries. It is a means of communication and is why communication technology is such a powerful medium for change. At Pentecost with the ushering in of the gospel era, the problem of the tower of Babel was gloriously yet partially reversed, while in heaven among the great multitude who come from different tribes and tongues, this fluency will be fully restored. Those who are saved have a common spiritual communication through the Holy Spirit

which is not necessarily verbal. Gods word, given in the bible, is the kind of language he uses so the saved clearly interpret, understand and learn the communication of his will and good purpose for them as individuals and also in the grand scheme of history and ultimately in eternity:

“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. What shall we then say to these things? If God *be* for us, who *can be* against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” Romans 8 v 28–32

“But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,” Hebrews 12 v 22,23

The saved love to do their masters will and bidding and carefully scrutinize his instructions in the bible:

“All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished(equipped) unto all good works.” 2nd Timothy 3 v 16,17

“Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.” John 5 v 39

“Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode(residence) with him.” John 14 v 23

The saved listen to his words and obey them. Faith in one sense is the action of a saved persons soul that draws on Gods resources which gives them the capacity to obey:

“Now these *are* the generations of Terah: Terah begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran begat Lot. And Haran died before his father Terah in the land of his nativity, in Ur of the Chaldees. And Abram and Nahor took them wives: the name of Abram’s wife *was* Sarai; and the name of Nahor’s wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah, and the father of Iscah. But Sarai was barren; she *had* no child. And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son’s son, and Sarai his daughter in law, his son Abram’s wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there. And the days of Terah were two hundred and five years: and Terah died in Haran. Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram *was* seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.”

Genesis 11 v 27–12 v 4

AND,

“By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as *in* a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker *is* God. Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised. Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, *so many* as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable. These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of *them*, and embraced *them*, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare

plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that *country* from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better *country*, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.”

Hebrews 11 v 8–16

Notice how Abraham took God at his word and believed and did all that he was commanded to do, whereas Terah, Abrahams father did not. Terah went only half way to Haran and died there, not venturing all on Gods word about a promised land, Canaan. The true Christian gives up all for Christ to reach the promised land of heaven where God and Christ dwell. They totally deny themselves. The Pharisee gave up some sins but retained others, like pride and self righteousness and also mistreating others in private but not in public. Christ says about these people that they already have their reward. They go half way and die in Haran. They don't forsake all for Christ and get to heaven. Forsaking all is repentance, an acting on what is believed as in the above example. It is a turning from sin in the heart and life, a comprehensive change. Faith receives Christ in all his offices – not only as priest but as prophet and king too, obeying his will and laws and following his teaching. True faith chooses Christ the great advocate and Saviour or liberator from vile sins both in the tribunal of Gods court to become justified and in daily life in order to turn to doing good. A false faith accepts things in theory but not in practice. It remains only an idea and not something substantial, a reality.

To accept the truths of the bible in theory but not trust and rely on them is a bit like a man at the edge of a cliff with a rope. He may think and say he trusts the rope will support him if he lowers himself over the edge of the cliff with it in order to reach the bottom safely, but you and he, do not know that he trusts the rope till he puts it into practice and exposes all his weight on it as he goes over the edge.

“That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”

Ephesians 2 v 7–10

Faith is the fundamental principle that secures salvation for a person. It is only by people really knowing they are sinners that it will have any meaning to trust and place confidence in a Saviour to save from that sin. However although they must be convinced of their sin before believing this does not mean they repent before having faith. As they put their faith in Christ, truly and really, the Holy Spirit also produces repentance in them. Love and good works or, in other words, repentance are the consequence of the principle of faith. They show to the saved person themselves that they have true faith. A person with trust in God believes all his words and does them. People who don't believe may seem to do only some of Gods words, being partial in their obedience. Someone who is trusting God and confident in him obeys him implicitly. This compares with a person who doubts Gods reliability and veracity and so wont do what he says or follow him. Because God tells the truth, is totally wise and good, the repenting sinner willingly obeys him in all his directives, commands and words. So true saving faith changes a persons moral behaviour extensively and because of this it is clearly seen by those around them who witness their actions.

“For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.” Galatians 5 v 6

There is a constant relying on Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit to self deny when viewing his sacrifice by faith and his loving example which produces an imitation of it in order to please him. Faith isn't actually felt itself, but its effects are, such as love to Christ, joy in him and willingness to serve him.

Edwards comments:

“Practice is the best evidence of trusting in Christ for salvation. The proper meaning of the word trust, according to the more ordinary use of it, both in common speech and in the Holy Scriptures, is the emboldening and encouragement of a person's mind, to expose himself to difficulty and danger in practice, or in something that he does on the credit of another's sufficiency and faithfulness. And, therefore, the proper evidence of his trusting, is the venture he runs in what he does. He is not properly said to expose himself to danger, in a dependence on any thing, that does nothing on that dependence, or whose practice is no otherwise than if he had no dependence. For a man to expose himself to danger on

a dependence on another, is for him to do something from that dependence by which he seems to expose himself to adversity, and which he would not do, were it not for that dependence. And, therefore, it is in complying with the difficulties, and seeming dangers of Christian practice, in a dependence on Christ's sufficiency and faithfulness to bestow eternal life, that persons are said to venture themselves on Christ, and trust in him for happiness and life. They depend on such promises as that, Matthew. 10 v 39, "He that loseth his life for my sake, shall, find it." And so they part with all, and venture their all, in a dependence on Christ's sufficiency and truth. And this is the Scripture notion of trusting in Christ, in the exercise of a saving faith in him. Thus Abraham, the father of believers, trusted in Christ, and by faith forsook his own country, in a reliance on the covenant of grace God established with him, Hebrews. 11 v 8, 9. Thus also, "Moses, by faith refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season," Hebrews. 11 v 23, &c. So by faith, others exposed themselves to be stoned and sawn asunder, or slain with the sword; "endured the trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, bonds and imprisonments, and wandered about in sheep skins, and goat skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented." And in this sense the Apostle Paul, by faith trusted in Christ, and committed himself to him, venturing himself, and his whole interest, in a dependence on the ability and faithfulness of his Redeemer, under great persecutions, and in suffering the loss of all things: 2 Timothy. 1 v 12, "For the which cause I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded, that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

"If a man should have word brought him from the king of a distant island, that he intended to make him his heir, if, on receiving the news, he immediately leaves his native land and friends, and all that he has in the world, to go to that country, in a dependence on what he hears, then he may be said to venture himself, and all that he has in the world on it. But, if he only sits still, and hopes for the promised benefit, inwardly pleasing himself with thoughts about it; he cannot properly be said to venture himself on it; he runs no

venture in the case; he does nothing, otherwise than he would do, if he had received no such news, by which he would be exposed to any difficulty in case all should fail. So he that, on the credit of what he hears of a future world, and, in a dependence on the report of the gospel, concerning life and immortality, forsakes all, or does so at least, so far as there is occasion, making everything entirely give place to his eternal interest; he, and he only, may properly be said to expose himself to danger and difficulty on the report of the gospel. And this is the proper evidence of a true trust in Christ for salvation.”

*Religious Affections by Jonathan Edwards:
Gracious and holy affections have their
fruit in Christian practice*

And John Owen comments:

“Faith is indeed the soul’s venture for eternity. It is something to venture on as to its eternal condition. It must either adhere to itself or its own empty hopes of a righteousness of its own; or it must give over all expectation and lie down in darkness; or it must shut out all dreadful apprehensions of eternity, by the power and activity of its lusts and evil desires; or it must, whatever its discouragements are, cast itself on pardon in the blood of Jesus Christ. Now, if all the former ways are detestable and pernicious, if the best of them are a direct opposition to the gospel, what has the soul that inquires after these things to do but to adhere to the last, and to improve every encouragement, even the least, to that purpose?”

*From temptation and sin by
John Owen:Exposition of psalm 130*

CHAPTER 26

BELIEVERS INTERNAL CONFLICT WITH SIN

In our title text those who mistakenly thought they were saved actually disobeyed God and were characterized by ‘working’ or doing iniquity:

This is in contrast to those saved. The Apostle John comments in the first chapter of his first letter how the saveds behaviour is transformed and holy:

“This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” 1st John 1 v 5–7

But if the saveds behaviour is indeed changed and very different to the unsaved how can the verses following be explained:

“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.” 1st John 1 v 8–10

John responds in the subsequent verses:

“My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for *the sins of* the whole world. And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.” 1st John 2 v 1–4

So in principle both are true, the saved obey and disobey, but, though far from perfect, they behave substantially less sinfully than the unsaved. But what about practice. How do the saved differ from the unsaved?

The saved resist sin and self consistently and constantly. It is a long arduous battle with little respite. Even their obedience has sin in it. It has many flaws in it and is not as they would wish it to be. Daily imperfection is present. Though there may be much imperfection, their obedient behaviour is still noticeably and substantially different to the disobedient behaviour of the unsaved.

The unsaved sin regularly, habitually, deliberately and determinedly and are for the most part utterly blind to their wickedness, thinking they are decent and respectable. God may sometimes give momentary revelations of conscience and they may get a little glimpse of their guilt before Him and recoil at the sight of it.

True Christians fall into isolated sins daily and these isolated falls may even, on rare occasions, be scandalous such as in the case of King David. This does not give encouragement to commit such sins but rather hope to the true saint who rarely will fall similarly and also emphasizes the depth of deceit of the sin that is in even the saved heart. Sin is not to be trifled or toyed with. It is not for anyone to compare their behaviour with the sins of the unsaved or the saved for that matter. Our pattern to follow is that of the perfect Lord Jesus Himself.

David’s infamous sin was not committed under duress or pressure. His godly grief over his vile and murderous actions and also discipline for his sin is shown in these verses:

“Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife *to be* thy wife, and hast slain him

with the sword of the children of Ammon. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife. Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give *them* unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun. For thou didst *it* secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun. And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die. Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also *that is* born unto thee shall surely die.” 2nd Samuel 12 v 9–14

Lastly, there is backsliding. This occurs if opposition to sin and self is not determinedly, vigorously and persistently maintained. It is more voluntary and purposeful in contrast to a fall into sin which suggests the element of being taken by surprise. It may be more like the pattern of sinning an unsaved person sometimes displays but even when backslidden through sin the saved, do not sin to the same extent in every area of their moral responsibility – some areas are still better than the unsaved. The saints may just be sinning out of weariness during this long tough battle – i.e. giving up resistance to it – the Devil tries to wear them down.

Though true saints have faith they still have remaining unbelief in their hearts and as unbelief gains in strength so faith weakens and they do not deny themselves, trusting God in His grace in what they endeavour to do, but they are resorting to their own selfish desires and plans and so try to do things in their own strength. However, the saved always believe by the power of the Holy Spirit. This is contrasted in those who begin well but then fall away and to whom the bible or Gods words become like a myth and not be really believed as absolutely true. They do not take religion utterly seriously:

“And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine.

But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be

this known unto you, and hearken to my words: For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is *but* the third hour of the day.”

Acts 2 v 13 –15

“For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.” 2nd Peter 1 v 16

CHAPTER 27

BELIEVERS CONFLICT: STRATEGY, TACTICS, SPIRITUAL RESOURCES

“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.”
1st John 1 v 8–10

The saved struggle against sin and self constantly, but overcome it substantially and consistently:

“Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: For which things’ sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them. But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;

And have put on the new *man*, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:” Colossians 3 v 5–10

This is in stark contrast to the unsaved in whom sin dominates, their passions consume and it, to a large extent, deludes people about their spiritual state:

“And you *hath he quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.” Ephesians 2 v 1–3

“This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But ye have not so learned Christ;” Ephesians 4 v 17–20

This battle is a severe conflict, a constant war with sin requiring spiritual resources to attack against it but they do overcome:

“Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. 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.”

2nd Corinthians 6 v 17–7 v 1

Sin is the enemy within – the so called fifth column – which the Christian will battle against all the days of their lives. Sometimes the saved feel they aren't making any progress. They feel they cant go forward in the minefield of this world. They feel under assault on all sides from spiritual enemies if they venture a tentative step in any direction. Sin wars insidiously often using the method of attrition to gain ground in the soul. Wholehearted devotion, the effective weapon against sin, must be re-established often and the same difficult lessons relearnt many times. Even in the saved, sin is a deceitful powerful enemy that often takes by surprise and often deludes. It used to be termed ‘the plague of the heart’ by some and the saved learn not to trust their own heart and strength spiritually:

“He who trusts in his own heart is a fool” – the saved have evil

lurking in their hearts and will sin unless God upholds them. There must be daily dependence on the Holy Spirit crying daily for renewed repentance and looking by faith to Christ for grace. This is shown in the case of good king Hezekiah where God withdrew his upholding grace for a time and in the case of King David who sinned in numbering the Israelites:

“This same Hezekiah also stopped the upper watercourse of Gihon, and brought it straight down to the west side of the city of David. And Hezekiah prospered in all his works. Howbeit in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to enquire of the wonder that was done in the land, God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart.”

2nd Chron 32 v 30,31

“And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel.

And David said to Joab and to the rulers of the people, Go, number Israel from Beersheba even to Dan; and bring the number of them to me, that I may know it. And Joab answered, The LORD make his people an hundred times so many more as they be: but, my lord the king, are they not all my lord’s servants? why then doth my lord require this thing? why will he be a cause of trespass to Israel? Nevertheless the king’s word prevailed against Joab. Wherefore Joab departed, and went throughout all Israel, and came to Jerusalem. And Joab gave the sum of the number of the people unto David. And all they of Israel were a thousand thousand and an hundred thousand men that drew sword: and Judah was four hundred threescore and ten thousand men that drew sword. But Levi and Benjamin counted he not among them: for the king’s word was abominable to Joab. And God was displeased with this thing; therefore he smote Israel.”

1st Chron 21 v 1–7

“For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.

Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just,

and good. Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful. For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.

For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:"

Romans 7 v 9–22

“After the angels left their own standing, they envied ours, and out of envy became both by office and practice tempters, that they might draw man from that happy communion with God, unto that cursed condition with themselves. And success in this trade hath made them both skilful and diligent, especially now, their time being but short. And if neither the first or second Adam could be free from their impudent assaults, who then may look for exemption? The best must most of all look to be set upon as having most of Christ in them, whom Satan hates most, and as hoping and disheartening of them, to foil others, as great trees fall not alone; no age or rank of Christians can be free. Beginners he labours to discourage; those that have made some progress, he raises storms against; those that are more perfect he labours to undermine by spiritual pride; and above all other times, he is most busy when we are weakest, then he doubles and multiplies his forces, when he looks either to have all, or lose all.

His course is either to tempt to sin or for sin. To sin, by presenting some seeming good to draw us from the true good, to seek some excellency besides God in the creature, and to this end he labours in the first place to shake our faith in the bible; thus he dealt with Adam, and thus he deals with all his posterity. And besides immediate suggestions, he comes to us, by our dearest friends, as unto Christ by Peter; so many tempters, so many devils in that ill office, though neither they or we are often aware of it ;

1 Corinthians. 10 v 13, There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

The nearest friend of all our own flesh, is the most dangerous traitor, and there fore most dangerous because most near, more near to us than the devil himself, with which, if he had no intelligence, all his plots would come to nothing; this holding correspondence with him, lays us open to all danger; it is this inward bosom enemy that does us most mischief. When Phocas (like another Zimry) had killed his master, Mauricius the emperor, he laboured like Cain, to secure himself with building high walls, after which he heard a voice telling him, that though he built his walls never so high, yet sin within the walls would undermine all. It is true of every particular man, that if there were no tempter without, he would be a tempter to him self; it is this lust within us that hath brought us an ill report upon the creature. This is that which makes blessings to be snares unto us; all the corruption which is in the world is by lust, which lies in our bosom, 2 Peter 1 v 4, and as Ahithophel, or Judas, by familiarity betrays us, yes, often in our best affections, and actions, nature will mingle without * zeal, and privy pride will creep in, and taint our best performances with some corrupt aim. Hence it is, that our life is a continual combat. A Christian, so soon as new born, is born a soldier, and so continues until his crown be put upon him; in the mean time our comfort is, that before long, we shall be out of the reach of all temptation; ‘the God of peace will tread down Satan under our feet,’ Romans 16 v 20.

A carnal man’s life is nothing but a strengthening and feeding of his enemy, a fighting for that which fights against his soul. Since Satan has cast this seed of the serpent into our souls, there is no sin so prodigious, but some seed of it lurks in our nature; it should humble us to hear what sins are forbidden by Moses, which if the Holy Ghost had not mentioned, we might have been ashamed to hear of, they are so dishonourable to our nature; the very hearing of the monstrous outrages committed by men, given up of God, as it yields matter of thanks to God for preservation of us, so of humility, to see our common nature so abused, and so abased by sin and Satan. Nay, so catching is our nature of sin, that the mention of it, instead of stirring hatred of it, often kindles fancy to a liking of it; the discovery of devilish policies and stratagems of wit, though in some respects to good purpose, yet has no better effect in some, than to fashion their wits

to the like practices; and the innocency of many arises not from the love of that which is good, but from not knowing of that which is evil. And in nothing the sinfulness of sin appears more than in this, that it hinders all it can, the knowledge of itself, and if it once be known, it studies extenuation, and translation upon others; sin and evasion came into the world together.

In St James time, it seems that there were some that were not afraid to father their temptations to sin, upon him hates it most (God himself), whereas God is only said to try, not to tempt. Our adversaries are not far from imputing this to God, who maintain sinful desires, the mother of all abominations, to be a condition of our nature as first created, only kept in by the bridle of original righteousness, from hence, they might the better maintain those proud opinions of perfectly fulfilling Gods law, and meriting thereby. This moved St James to set down the true descent and pedigree of sin; we ourselves are both the tempter and the tempted; as tempted we might deserve some pity, if as tempters deserve not blame. In us there is both fire and matter for fire to take hold on. Satan needs but to blow, and often not that neither; for many, if sinful desires does not stir them up, they will stir up their lusts.

As the soul keeps close to God and his truth, it is safe; so long as our way lies above, we are free from the snares below. All the danger first rises from letting our hearts loose from God by infidelity, for then presently our heart is drawn away by some seeming good, whereby we seek a perverted excellency and contentment out of God, in whom it is only to be had. After we have once forsaken God, God forsakes us, leaving us in some degree to ourselves, the worst guides that can be; and thereupon, Satan joins forces with us, setting upon us as a friend, under our own colours; he can only shipwreck that has a pirate for his guide. This God allows to make us better known to ourselves; for by this means, corruption that lay hidden before, is drawn out, and the deceitfulness of sin is better known, and so we are driven to the daily practice of repentance and mortification, and driven to fly under the wings of Jesus Christ. Were it not for temptations, we should be concealed from ourselves; our graces as unexercised, would not be so bright, the power of God should not appear; so in our weakness, we would not be so pitiful and tender towards others, nor so jealous over our own hearts, nor so skilful of Satan's method and enterprises, we should not see such a necessity of standing always upon our guard; but though, by the overruling power of God, they have this good outcome, yet that which is evil itself, is not to be ventured on, for the good that comes by accident.

The important thing where one Christian differs from another is watchfulness, which though it requires most labour, yet it brings most safety; and the best is no farther safe, than watchful, and not only against sins, but temptations, which are the seeds of sin, and also occasions which let in temptations. The best, by rash adventures upon occasion, have been led into temptations, and by temptation into the sin itself; so sin and temptation come both under the same name, to show us that we can be no further secure from sin, than we be careful to shun temptations.

And in this every one should labour so well to understand themselves, as to know what they find a temptation to them. That may be a temptation to one which is not to another; Abraham might look upon the smoke of Sodom, though Lot might not; because that sight would work more upon Lot's heart than Abraham's. In these cases a wise Christian better knows what to do with himself than any can prescribe him. And because God has our hearts in his hand, and can either suspend or give way to temptations, it should move us especially to take heed of those sins, whereby, grieving the good Spirit of God, we give him cause to leave us to our own spirits; but that he may rather stir up contrary gracious desires in us, as a contrary principle. There is nothing of greater force to make us out of godly jealousy 'to fear always.' Thus daily working out our salvation, that God may delight to go along with us, and be our shield, and not to leave us naked in the hands of Satan, but second his first grace with a farther degree, as temptations shall increase. It is God that either removeth occasions, or shuts our hearts against them, and gives strength to prevail over them; which gracious promise you cannot be too thankful for.

It is a great mercy when temptations are not above the supply of strength against them. This care only takes up the heart of those who, having the life of Christ begun in them, and his nature stamped upon them, have felt how sweet communion and acquaintance with God in Christ, and how comfortable the daily walking with God, is; they are weary of anything that may draw away their hearts from God, and hinder their peace. And therefore they hate temptations to sin as sin itself, and sin as hell itself, and hell most of all, as being a state of eternal separation from all comfortable fellowship with God.

A man that is a stranger from the life of God, can not resist temptation to sin, as it is a sin, because he never knew the beauty of holiness; but from the beauty of a moral life, he may resist temptations to such times as may weaken respect, and from love of his own quiet, may abstain from those

sins that will frighten conscience. And the cause why moral men fear the less disturbance from temptations is, because they are wholly under the power of temptation, till God awaken their heart. What danger they don't see, or feel, the strong man holds his possession in them, and is too wise, by rousing them out of their sleep to give them occasion of thoughts of escape. None more under the danger of temptation, than those that don't discern it; they are Satan's stales, 'taken by him at his pleasure,' whom Satan uses to draw others into the same snare. Therefore Satan doesn't trouble them, nor himself about them; but the true Christian fears a temptation in everything. His chief care is, that in whatever condition he is, it does not prove a temptation to him.

Afflictions, indeed, are more ordinarily called temptations, than prosperity, because Satan by them breeds an impression of sorrow and fear, which affections are especially working upon us in the course of our lives, making us often to forsake God, and desert his cause. Yet snares are laid in every thing we deal with, which none can avoid but those that see them. None see, but those whose eyes God opens; and God uses the ministry of his servants for this end, to open the eyes of men, to discover the net, and then, as the wise man says, In vain is the net spread before the sight of any bird.'

This moved this godly minister, my Christian friend, to take pains in this useful argument, as appears in this treatise, which is written by him in a clear, quick, and familiar style; and for the matter and manner of handling, solid, judicious, and scholar-like; and which may commend it the more, it is written by one that, besides faithfulness and fruitfulness in his ministry, hath been a good proficient in the school of temptation him self, and therefore more suited, as a skilful watchman, to give warning and aim to others; for there are spiritual exercises of ministers more for others than for themselves. If by this he shall attain, in some measure, what he intended, God shall have the glory, you the benefit, and he the encouragement to make public some other labours.

*ON TEMPTATION from MEMOIR OF THE REV
RICHARD SIBBES*

Sins is so powerful it overcomes the best of saints and its consequences can be very painful and lifelong even in the saved.

In the following quote see this principle being elucidated. King David had, instead of leading his army in battle, had become lazy and remained at home. Prior to this, he had been so devoted to God he had been described

as the man after Gods own heart. But he had backslidden and been relying on his resources. In his serious sin committed with Bathsheba, he received trouble in his family as a chastisement including an attempt at usurping his throne by his favourite son Absalom with his subsequent death and, indeed from that point, feuding was to characterize his family:

“And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man. Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul; And I gave thee thy master’s house, and thy master’s wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things. Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife. Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun. For thou didst it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun. And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die. Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die.”

2nd Samuel 12 v 7–14

The saved then, can clearly only overcome sin through utter and total dependence on Gods grace working in them, engendering wholehearted devotion:

“But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.”

2nd Peter 1 v 9

Because of this they require constant vigilance and resistance and being reminded they depend on Gods power alone:

“Now therefore, kings, be wise; be taught, ye judges of the earth:
Serve God in fear, and see that ye join trembling with your mirth.”
Metrical Psalm 2 v 10,11

“For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things
have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him
that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.”
Isaiah 66 v 2

The means to access this strength to resist sin is through the Holy Spirit. He enables and motivates not to sin. He particularly uses the testimony of Gods word in this task.

“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. As thou hast
sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the
world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be
sanctified through the truth”
John 17 v 17–19

And in doing so his purpose is to reveal Christ. The resources drawn on, have two aspects and the heart of the saved is drawn out after Him in both his work and his person. The glorious character of God is revealed and exalted in this spiritual operation.

“For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness,
hath shined in our hearts, to *give* the light of the knowledge of the
glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” 2nd Corinthians 4 v 6

“Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not sub-
ject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye

shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.”
Romans 8 v 7–14

“And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching *was* not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, *even* the hidden *wisdom*, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known *it*, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed *them* unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.”
1st Corinthians 2 v 1–10

“But the Comforter, *which is* the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.”

John 14 v 26

“But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, *even* the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me:”
John 15 v 26

“Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, *that* shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew *it* unto you.”
John 16 v 13–15

The Spirit supremely draws from the resources of Christ in his redemptive work on the cross to enable the saved to resist sin. They overflow with joy and love to Christ and feel deeply unworthy as they contemplate and consider the great things he has done for their souls and also feel sorrowful when they realize how they still sin against Him and fail him:

“I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee.

Wherefore I abhor *myself*, and repent in dust and ashes.”

Job 42 v 5,6

“for consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.”

Hebrews 12 v 3

At the cross Gods character is revealed in his justice executed upon sin and mercy towards ruined undone sinners:

The cross is the killer of sin and the motivator to self denial. In the book of Zechariah, the saved are motivated to repentance as they consider the Lord they crucified:

“And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for *his* only *son*, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for *his* firstborn.”

Zechariah 12 v 10

This view of the cross is especially what faith grasps hold of, in order to resist and conquer the devil and self. This partly explains the kind of language used that surrounding His death and crucifixion. It is the putting to death of self for Christs sake:

“For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead:” 2nd Corinthians 5 v 14

“And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.” Galatians 5 v 24

“But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.”
Galatians 6 v 14

The following passage shows the links in this chain with the saved being ‘born again’ by the Spirit and motivated by him out of love to Christ to deny themselves and their selfish or sinful desires and actions:

“Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, *as* silver and gold, from your vain conversation *received* by tradition from your fathers;

But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God. Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, *see that ye* love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh *is* as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you. Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: If so be ye have tasted that the Lord *is* gracious.”
1st Peter 1 v 18 – 2 v 3

Here is love, vast as the ocean,
Lovingkindness as the flood,
When the Prince of Life, our Ransom,
Shed for us His precious blood.
Who His love will not remember?
Who can cease to sing His praise?
He can never be forgotten,
Throughout Heav’n’s eternal days.

On the mount of crucifixion,
 Fountains opened deep and wide;
 Through the floodgates of God's mercy
 Flowed a vast and gracious tide.
 Grace and love, like mighty rivers,
 Poured incessant from above,
 And Heav'n's peace and perfect justice
 Kissed a guilty world in love.

Let me all Thy love accepting,
 Love Thee, ever all my days;
 Let me seek Thy kingdom only
 And my life be to Thy praise;
 Thou alone shalt be my glory,
 Nothing in the world I see.
 Thou hast cleansed and sanctified me,
 Thou Thyself hast set me free.

In Thy truth Thou dost direct me
 By Thy Spirit through Thy Word;
 And Thy grace my need is meeting,
 As I trust in Thee, my Lord.
 Of Thy fullness Thou art pouring
 Thy great love and power on me,
 Without measure, full and boundless,
 Drawing out my heart to Thee.

AND,

When I survey the wondrous cross
 On which the Prince of glory died,
 My richest gain I count but loss,
 And pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
 Save in the death of Christ my God!
 All the vain things that charm me most,
 I sacrifice them to His blood.

See from His head, His hands, His feet,

Sorrow and love flow mingled down!
 Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
 Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
 That were a offering far too small;
 Love so amazing, so divine,
 Demands my soul, my life, my all.

Mr Owen re-emphasises these important principles:

“I have only, then, to add the aspects of the work of the Spirit in this business of self denial, which is so particularly ascribed to him.

In one word: This whole work, which I have described as our duty, is effected, carried on, and accomplished by the power of the Spirit, in all the arts and degrees of it; as, —

He alone *clearly and fully convinces* the heart of the evil and guilt and danger of the corruption, lust, or sin to be mortified. Without this conviction, or whilst it is so faint that the heart can wrestle with it or digest it, there will be no thorough work made. An unbelieving heart (as in part we have all such) will shift with any consideration, until it is overpowered by clear and evident convictions. Now this is the proper work of the Spirit: “He convinces of sin,” John 16:8; he alone can do it.

If men’s rational considerations, with the preaching of the letter, were able to convince them of sin, we should, it may be, see more convictions than we do. There comes by the preaching of the word an apprehension to peoples understandings that they are sinners, that such and such things are sins, that themselves are guilty of them; but this light is not powerful, nor does it lay hold on the practical principles of the soul, so as to conform the mind and will to them, to produce effects suitable to such an apprehension. And therefore it is that wise and knowing men, destitute of the Spirit, do not think those things to be sins at all that the main actions of lust consist of. It is the Spirit alone that can do, that does this work to the purpose. And this is the first thing that the Spirit does in order to the killing of any lust whatever, — he convinces the soul of all the evil of it, cuts off all its pleas, discovers all its deceits, stops all its evasions, answers its pretences, makes the soul acknowledge its abomination, and lie down under the sense of it. Unless this is done all that follows is useless.

The Spirit alone reveals to us *the fullness of Christ* for our relief; which is the consideration that keeps the heart from false ways and from despairing depression, 1 Corinthians 2:8.

The Spirit alone *establishes* the heart in expectation of relief from Christ; which is the great sovereign means of self denial, as has been discovered, 2 Corinthians 1:21.

The Spirit alone brings the *cross* of Christ into our hearts with its sin killing power; for by the Spirit are we baptized into the death of Christ.

The Spirit is the author and finisher of our *sanctification*; gives new supplies and influences of grace for holiness and sanctification, when the contrary principle is weakened and abated, Ephesians 3:16–18.

In all the soul's addresses to God in this condition, it hath *support* from the Spirit. Where does the power, life, and vigour of prayer come from? Where does its efficacy to prevail with God come from? Is it not from the Spirit? He is the "Spirit of supplications" promised to them "who look on him whom they have pierced," Zechariah 12:10, enabling them "to pray with sighs and groans that cannot be uttered," Romans 8:26. This is confessed to be the great medium or way of faith's prevailing with God. Thus Paul dealt with his temptation, whatever it were: "I besought the Lord that it might depart from me." (2 Corinthians 12:8.)

by John Owen

"Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, *but* gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men. For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, *and* hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost(Spirit);Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus

Christ our Saviour; That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.”

Titus 3 v 1–8

‘Oh the cross that lifts up my head,
I dare not ask to fly from thee
I lay in dust life’s glory dead
And from the ground there blossoms red
Life that shall endless be.’

And,

Jesus, keep me near the cross,
There a precious fountain
Free to all, a healing stream
Flows from Calvary’s mountain.

Near the cross, a trembling soul,
Love and mercy found me;
There the bright and morning star
Sheds its beams around me.

Near the cross! O Lamb of God,
Bring its scenes before me;
Help me walk from day to day,
With its shadows o’er me

In the cross, in the cross,
Be my glory ever;
Till my raptured soul shall find
Rest beyond the river.

Christ’s atoning work is undergirded by his perfect suitable person, so the saved receive a sure foundation for their salvation and they contemplate Him dearly as the object of their hearts desire. It is the great motive of reverential love to Him. The apostles words in Philippians sum it up:

“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, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.”

Philippians 3 v 7 – 11

CHAPTER 28

BELIEVERS CONFLICT: THE ADVERSARY

In Ephesians, a measure of the enemy forces the saved are arrayed against, the resources at their disposal, and the means by which they access them, through the Holy Spirit, are recounted:

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high *places*. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;”

Ephesians 6 v 10–18

The Devil is the great protagonist, the leader of those evil forces and the arch enemy of Christ and all of history is simply a manifestation of the battle raging between him and Christ and his seed, the church:

“And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

Revelations 12 v 17

The devil and his legion of demons are out to deceive the nations and drag them to hell and away from Gods kingdom and rule. They are ferocious against the saved and even use false religion to persecute them:

“And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:”

2nd Thessalonians 2 v 11

“They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.”

John 16 v 2

Satan is the saveds great adversary, who was once an angel who reigned in heaven but who rebelled against God. His great sin was that of pride. He loved himself so as to desire to rival even God Himself. He has been warring against him ever since, trying to attack God through human beings:

“And as the Lucifer was the highest of all the angels, so he was the very highest of all God’s creatures; he was the top and crown of the whole creation; he was the brightest part of the heaven of heavens, that brightest part of all the creation; he was the head of the angels, that most noble rank of all created beings; and, therefore, when spoken of under that type of him, the *Behemoth*, he is said to be “the chief of the ways of God,” Job 40 v 19. And since it is revealed that there is a certain order and government among the angels, the superior angels having some kind of authority over others that are of lower rank; and since Lucifer was the chief of them all, we may suppose that he was the head of the whole society, the captain of the whole host. He was the archangel, the prince of the angels, and all did obeisance to him.

And as the angels, as the ministers of God’s providence, have a certain superintendency and rule over the world, or at least over some

parts of it that God has committed to their care, so they are called *thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers*. Therefore, seeing Lucifer was the head, and captain, and prince of all, and the highest creature in the whole universe, we may suppose that he had, as God's chief servant, and the grand minister of his providence, and the top of the creation, in some respect committed to him power, dominion, and principality over the whole creation, and all the kingdom of providence; and as all the angels are called *the sons of God*, Lucifer was his first-born, and was the firstborn of every creature. But when it was revealed to him, high and glorious as he was, that he must be a ministering spirit to the race of mankind which he had seen newly created, which appeared so feeble, mean, and despicable, so vastly inferior, not only to him, the prince of the angels, and head of the created universe, but also to the inferior angels, and that he must be subject to one of that race that should be born after, he could not tolerate it.

This occasioned his fall; and now he, with the other angels whom he drew away with him, are fallen, and elect men are translated to supply their places, and are exalted vastly higher in heaven than they. And the Man Jesus Christ, the Chief, and Prince, and Captain of all elect men, is translated and set in the throne that Lucifer, the chief and prince of the angels, left, to be the head of the angels in his stead, the head of principality and power, that all the angels might do obeisance to him; for God said, Hebrews 1 v 6 "Let all the angels of God worship him;" and God made him his first-born instead of Lucifer, higher than all those thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers, and made him, yea, made him instead the first-born of every creature, or of the whole creation, and made him also instead the bright and morning star, and head and prince of the universe; yes, gave this honour, dignity, and power to him, in an unspeakably higher and more glorious manner than he ever had done to Lucifer, and appointed him to conquer, subdue, and execute vengeance on that great rebel.

Lucifer aspired to be "like the Most High," but God exalted one of mankind, the race that he envied, and from envy to whom he rebelled against God, to be indeed like the Most High, to a personal union with the eternal Son of God, and exalted him in this

union to proper divine honour and dignity, set him at his own right hand on his own throne, and committed to him proper divine power and authority, constituting him as God man, the supreme, absolute, and universal Lord of the universe, and Judge of every creature, the darling of the whole creation, the brightness of God's glory, and express image of his person; as, in his divine nature, he is the natural image of God. God, in his providence, was pleased thus to show the emptiness and vanity of the creature, by suffering the insufficiency of the highest and most glorious of all creatures, the head and crown of the whole creation, to appear, by his sudden fall from his glorious height into the lowest depth of hatefulfulness, deformity, and misery.

God's design was first to show the creature's emptiness in itself, and then to fill it with himself in eternal, unalterable fulness and glory. To show the emptiness of the creature, the old creation, or the old heavens and earth, were to go to ruin and perish, in some sense, or at least all was to be emptied. Great part of the old creation was actually to sink into total and eternal perdition, as fallen angels and some of fallen men; all mankind was in a sense to be totally: though some of them were to be restored, after they had sensibly been emptied of themselves. And though the highest heaven never was to be destroyed, yet, before it should have its consummate and immutable glory, the highest and most glorious part of it was to perish, and a considerable part of the glorious heavenly inhabitants; and the rest were by this to be brought to see their own emptiness and utter insufficiency, and so as it were to perish or die as to self-dependence and all self-fulness, and to be brought to an entire dependence on the sovereign grace and all-sufficiency of God, to be communicated to them by his Son as their head.

And in this way the whole old creation, both heaven and earth, as to all its natural glory and creature-fulness, was to be pulled down; and so, way was to be made for the creation of the new heavens and new earth, or the setting forth of the whole elect universe in its consummate, everlasting, immutable glory in the fulness of God, in a great, most conspicuous, immediate, and universal dependence on his power and sovereign grace, and also on the glorious and infinitely excellent nature and essence of God, as the infinite fountain

of glory and love; the beholding and enjoying of which, and union with which, being the elect creature's all in all, all its strength, all its beauty, all its life, its fruit, its honour, its blessedness."

Miscellanies: Angels
by Jonathan Edwards

Satan's usual operations in temptation of people are further commented on by Edwards:

"The imagination or fantasy seems to be where all those delusions of Satan are formed, which those are carried away with, who are under the influence of false religion, and counterfeit graces and feelings and desires. Here is the devil's grand lurking place, the very nest of foul and delusive spirits. It is very much to be doubted, whether the devil can come at the soul of man at all to affect it, or to excite any thought, or motion, or produce any effect whatsoever in it, any other way, than by the fantasy; which is that power of the soul, by which it receives, and is the subject of the species, or ideas of outward and sensible things. As to the laws and means which the Creator has established, for the intercourse and communication of unbodied spirits, we know nothing about them; we do not know by what medium they manifest their thoughts to each other, or excite thoughts in each other. But as to spirits that are united to bodies, those bodies God has united them to, are their medium of communication. They have no other medium of acting on other creatures, or being acted on by them, than the body. Therefore it is not to be supposed that Satan can excite any thought, or produce any effect in the soul of man, any otherwise, than by some motion of the emotions, or by causing some motion or alteration in some thing which relates to the body. There is this reason to think that the devil cannot produce thoughts in the soul immediately, or any other way than by the medium of the body, viz., that he cannot immediately see or know the thoughts of the soul: it is extensively declared in the Scripture, to be specific to the omniscient God to do that.

But it is not likely that the devil can immediately produce an effect, which is out of the reach of his immediate view. It seems

unreasonable to suppose, that his immediate agency should be out of his own sight, or that it should be impossible for him to see what he himself immediately does. Is it not unreasonable to suppose, that any spirit or intelligent agent, should by the act of his will, produce effects appropriate to his understanding, or agreeable to his own thoughts, and that immediately, and yet the effects produced be beyond the reach of his understanding, or where he can have no immediate perception or discriminate at all? But if this is the case, that the devil cannot produce thoughts in the soul immediately, or any other way than by the emotions, or by the body, then it follows, that he never effects anything in the soul, but by the imagination or fantasy, or by exciting external ideas.

We know that alterations in the body do immediately excite no other sort of ideas in the mind, but external ideas, or ideas of the outward senses, or ideas which are of the same outward nature. As to reflection, abstraction, reasoning, &c., and those thoughts and inward motions which are the fruits of these acts of the mind, they are not the next effects of impressions on the body. So that it must be only by the imagination, that Satan has access to the soul, to tempt and delude it, or suggest anything to it. And this seems to be the reason why persons that are under the disease of depression, are commonly so visibly and remarkably subject to the suggestions and temptations of Satan; that being a disease which particularly affects the emotions, and is attended with weakness of that part of the body which is the origin of the emotions, even the brain, which is, as it were, the seat of the fantasy.

It is by impressions made on the brain, that any ideas are excited in the mind, by the change of the emotions, or any changes made in the body. The brain being thus weakened and diseased, it is less under the command of the higher faculties of the soul, and yields the more easily to extrinsic impressions, and is overpowered by the disordered emotions; and so the devil has greater advantage to affect the mind, by working on the imagination. And thus Satan, when he casts in those horrid suggestions into the minds of many depressed persons, in which they have no hand themselves, he does it by exciting imaginary ideas, either of some dreadful words or

sentences, or other horrid outward ideas. And when he tempts other persons who are not depressed, he does it by presenting to the imagination, in a lively and alluring manner, the objects of their lusts, or by exciting ideas of words, and so by them exciting thoughts; or by promoting an imagination of outward actions, events, circumstances, &c. Innumerable are the ways by which the mind might be led on to all kind of evil thoughts, by exciting external ideas in the imagination.

If people keep no guard at these avenues of Satan, by which he has access to the soul, to tempt and delude it, they will be likely to be overcome by him. And especially, if instead of guarding against him, they lay themselves open to him, and search for and invite him, because he appears as an angel of light, and counterfeits the illuminations and graces of the Spirit of God, by inward whispers, and immediate suggestions of facts and events, pleasant voices, beautiful images, and other impressions on the imagination. There are many who are deluded by such things, and are lifted up with them, and search for them, that have a continued course of them, and can have them almost when they will; and especially when their pride and conceit has most occasion for them, to make a show of them before company. It is with them, something as it is with those who are professors of the art of telling where lost things are to be found, by impressions made on their imaginations; they laying themselves open to the devil, he is always on hand to give them the desired impression.

Before I finish what I would say on this point of imaginations, counterfeiting spiritual light, and feelings and desires arising from them, I would (to prevent misunderstanding of what has been said) desire it may be observed, that I am far from determining, that no feelings and desires are spiritual which are attended with imaginary ideas. Such is the nature of man, that he can scarcely think of anything intensely, without some kind of outward ideas. They arise and interpose themselves unavoidably, in the course of a man's thoughts; though often they are very confused, and are not what the mind regards. When the mind is much engaged, and the thoughts intense, oftentimes the imagination is more strong, and the outward idea more lively, especially in persons of some

constitutions of body. But there is a great difference between these two things viz., lively imaginations arising from strong feelings and desires, and strong feelings and desires arising from lively imaginations. The former may be, and doubtless often is, in case of truly gracious feelings and desires of people who are saved. The feelings and desires do not arise from the imagination, nor have any dependence on it; but on the contrary, the imagination is only the accidental effect, or consequent of that feeling and desire, through the infirmity of human nature. But when the latter is the case, as it often is, that the feeling and desire arises from the imagination, and is built on it, as its foundation, instead of a spiritual illumination or discovery, then the feeling and desire is, however elevated, worthless and pointless.”

*Religious Affections: Gracious affections arise from the mind being enlightened rightly and spirituality to apprehend divine things by
Jonathan Edwards*

CHAPTER 29

BELIEVERS CONFLICT: OPPOSING FACTIONS

Does the Apostle Paul contradict himself in Romans chapter seven by suggesting that Christians are not changed in their behaviour when they are saved? In Romans chapter six suggests that the saved overcome sin to a substantial extent. Also Paul, in Ephesians six states the saved will be able to quench the fiery darts of Satan i.e. resist temptation.

The bible clearly teaches that true Christians repent. True repentance is to be truly sorry for and hate sin which results in it being given up. So Christians sin but they turn from it to live godly holy lives. To say Christians do not live holy lives is to contradict the whole thrust of biblical teaching and the reason why God saved them – to make them good people. God makes them godly when they become saved and not just at some future distant point as they slowly grow better. To suggest that they give initially gave up sin just a little, then gradually more as time goes on, suggests that God doesn't really make them holy and godly but rather only produces small traces of goodness within them, leaving a huge mass of wickedness. If this were true repentance or turning substantially away from the practice of sin would mean very little and be very insignificant. The classic description of repentance clearly contradicts this idea and describes it producing substantial, revolutionary and observable effects in a person. Paul obviously personally observed or gave an account of others who had observed this change in behaviour in the people who repented:

“For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be

repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.” 2nd Corinthians 7 v 10,11

And also,

“That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.” Luke 1 v 74,75

Christians do sin every day in thought, in word and in action, but substantially less than the unsaved or wicked person. Every unsaved person is wicked. There are only two groups of people as stated in the new testament:

“And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all *men* have not faith.” 2nd Thessalonians 3 v 2

The term wicked is used frequently throughout the bible for the unsaved. An unsaved persons sin is evil in Gods sight and God is angry with them and even their simplest acts are not good in his sight. Outwith Christs atoning merit noone is accepted as good by God:

“God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry *with the wicked* every day” Psalm 7 v 11

“An high look, and a proud heart, *and* the plowing of the wicked, *is* sin.” Proverbs 21 v 4

In the book of Psalms or Proverbs for example these are the terms used for saved and unsaved people:

“1 That man hath perfect blessedness,
who walketh not astray
In counsel of ungodly men,
nor stands in sinners’ way,

Nor sitteth in the scorner’s chair:

2 But placeth his delight
Upon God's law, and meditates
on his law day and night.

3 He shall be like a tree that grows
near planted by a river,
Which in his season yields his fruit,
and his leaf fadeth never:

And all he doth shall prosper well
4 The wicked are not so;
But like they are unto the chaff,
which wind drives to and fro.

5 In judgment therefore shall not stand
such as ungodly are;
Nor in th' assembly of the just
shall wicked men appear.

6 For why? the way of godly men
unto the Lord is known:
Whereas the way of wicked men
shall quite be overthrown.

Psalm 1(Scottish metrical)

This does not mean Christians are perfect or even remotely near perfect. In fact they are very far away from perfection. Christians however do some good in their lives. Whereas the unsaved do no good at all, but only sin. The ploughing of the wicked is sin as the bible tells us even although it may seem a good action externally. Any action performed that is not done so on the basis of faith in the atoning work of Christ is sinful. This is not to say that sin is not restrained to a degree in individuals and society. It would be like a hellish scenario if it were not. This occurs through the influence of the Holy Spirit by various means using the voice of conscience and the fear of sins consequences for example. And although all sin is evil, some is more extreme evil and will be punished more severely. Anger is not murder for example. Although the Holy Spirits restraint of sin is greater in some than in others, it cannot then be described as, or equated with, good in those individuals.

If the teaching in Romans chapter seven means that saved people behave just as wickedly as unsaved people then why does God does save them from their sins?

Sin in saved people show that there is two parts, two principles in them—towards holiness and sinfulness. The pervasive inclination is towards good but that of a lesser influence is toward evil. The dominant principle produces predominantly good but sometimes the lesser one prevails to varying degrees. Satan tempts them to submit to the sinful part of themselves and so to sin against God. They do good mixed with bad to varying degrees. They sometimes do little or no good or backslide. These are real principles showing themselves in practice. They loathe and hate sin and make supreme efforts to stop practicing and indulging in it. This holy part that produces this resistance is created by the Holy Spirit. God doesn't do the good for the saved. They do it themselves but God supplies them with the ability to do it. God's power in them produces a clear witness of holiness and testimony to the truth of Christianity to the whole world. It must be remembered the numbering of the chapters is only arbitrary for ease of reading. If Romans 'seven' is interpreted in the context of chapter 'eight' there is no doubt that the saved do conquer sin in heart and practice:

“For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that *it is* good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but *how* to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin. *There is* therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not

after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded *is* death; but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace. Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ *be* in you, the body *is* dead because of sin; but the Spirit *is* life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.”

Romans 7 v 14–8 v 13

John Calvin comments on Romans 7 v 18–20

“*For I know*, etc. He says that no good by nature was in him. Then *in me*, means the same as though he had said, “So far as it regards myself.” In the first part he indeed charges himself as being wholly depraved – he confesses that no good is in him; and then he adds a modification, in case he would disregard the grace of God which was also in him, but was no part of his flesh. Here again he confirms the fact, that he did not speak of people in general, but of the faithful, who are divided into two parts — the remains of the flesh, and grace. For why was the modification made, except some part was exempt from depravity, and therefore not flesh? Under the term *flesh*, he includes all that human nature is, everything in man, except the sanctification of the Spirit. In the same manner, by the term *spirit*, which is commonly opposed to the flesh, he means that part of the soul which the Spirit of God has so re-formed, and purified from corruption, so that God’s image shines from it. Both terms, flesh as well as spirit, belong to the soul;

but the spirit to that part which is regenerated, and the flesh to that which still retains its natural character.

To will is present, etc. He does not mean that he had nothing but an ineffective desire, but his meaning is, that the work really done did not correspond to his will: the flesh hindered him from doing perfectly what he did. So understand what follows, *The evil I desire not, that I do*: for the flesh not only slows down the faithful, so that they can not run fast, but it places many obstacles in front of them that they fall at. So they do not achieve what they would like to – it does not correspond to the eagerness they have in them. This, *to will*, which he mentions, is the willingness of faith, when the Holy Spirit so prepares the godly that they are ready and do exert themselves to render obedience to God; but since their ability is not equal to what they wish, Paul says that he did not find what he desired, the achievement of the good he aimed at.

The same view is to be taken about the expression which follows next, —that he *did not do the good* which he *desired*, but, on the contrary, *the evil* which he did not *desire*: the faithful, however rightly they may be influenced, are yet so conscious of their own infirmity, that they cannot judge as blameless any work they produce. Paul does not discuss here some of the faults of the godly, but delineates in general the whole course of their life and so we conclude that their best works are always stained with some blots of sin, so that no reward can be hoped for, unless God pardons them.

He at last repeats the sentiment, — that, as far as he had celestial light, he was a true witness and subscriber to the righteousness of the law. It follows, that had the pure integrity of our nature remained, the law would not have brought death on us, and that it is not adverse to the man who is given a sound and right mind and abhors sin. But to restore our health is the work of our heavenly Physician.”

John Owen comments on Romans 7 v 23:

“But I see another law in my members (soul’s parts), warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.”

“There is a relinquishing, for a time at least, of the rule and government of the Spirit and law of grace. Where grace has the rule, it will never utterly be expelled from its throne, it will still keep its right and sovereignty. But its influences may for a while be intercepted, and its government suspended,

by the power of sin. Did the law of grace have any actual influence to rule in the heart of David, when he was provoked by Nabal and was so desperate with the desire for self-revenge that he cried, "Gird on your swords," to his supporters, and was resolved not to leave one man alive of Nabals whole house? 1 Samuel 25 v 34; or that Asa had any better spirit when he assaulted and put in prison the prophet who spake to him in the name of the Lord? Sin first throws away a present sense of the rule of Christ and the law of his grace, and then urges the soul at its pleasure.

Let us consider a little how this is achieved. The centre and residence of grace is in the whole soul. It is in the inner man; it is in the mind, the will, and the affections: the whole soul is changed by it into the image of God, Ephesians 4 v 23, 24, and the whole man is a "new creature," 2 Corinthians 5 v 17. In all these areas it exerts its power and influence. Its rule is the pursuit of its effective working in all the faculties of the soul, as one united principle of moral and spiritual operation. So, the interruption of its exercise, of its rule and power, by the law of sin, is by its contrary acting in and on the faculties and feelings and desires of the soul that grace struggles to exert its power and effectiveness in. Sin darkens the mind; partly through innumerable empty prejudices and false reasonings (as we will see when we consider its deceitfulness) and partly through the steaming of the desires, heated with harmful lusts that have seized them. So saving light in the mind is clouded and suffocated so it cannot use its transforming power to change the soul into the image of Christ shown to it before. This is its proper work, Romans 12 v 2. The habitual inclination of the will to obedience, the operation of the law of grace, is first weakened, then discarded and rendered useless, by the constant attractive charms of sin and temptation. The will first lets go its hold, and disputes whether it will give in or not, and at last gives up itself to its adversary. Commonly, the start of this evil is in the feelings and desires. They cross one another, and torture the soul with impetuous violence. In this way the rule of the law of grace is intercepted by the law of sin, by imposing on it in the whole of its government.

When this happens sin produces sad effects in the soul. The apostle warns believers to avoid it, chap. Romans 6 v 12, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof (of it)."

Do not let it gain the ascendancy or usurp the rule of grace, no, not for a moment. It will labour to intrude itself on the throne; watch against it – a deplorable state and condition will easily follow. This comes with this rage

and madness of the law of sin: — It throws away during its domination, the rule of the law of grace totally; grace speaks in the soul but is not heard; it commands the contrary but is not obeyed; it appeals loudly,

“Do not this abominable thing which the Lord hateth,” but it is not listened to,— that is, not so far as to be able to put a present stop to the rage of sin, and to regain its own rule, which God in his own time restores by the power of his Spirit residing in the saved.”

From John Owen volume 6: Temptation and sin

The saved resist and overcome sin comprehensively, consistently and perseveringly in comparison to the unsaved who sometimes try and make a piecemeal, inconsistent resistance. They are drawn away from resisting sin and before long abandon their efforts.

If we consider the two following verses they both imply that the saved is substantially changed in moral behaviour and they instead resist and sin does not reign in them as their usual way of living, lapses and backsliding excepted. Paul could never have made these statements if the saved don't live holy lives:

“Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.”

Romans 6 v 12

And,

“Follow peace with all *men*, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:”

Hebrews 12 v 14

By way of contrast, sin has free reign and runs rampant in the unsaved:

“For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.”

Romans 7 v 5

(‘Flesh’ refers to the selfish, sinful and corrupt spiritual nature in a person and ‘member’ to different parts of the soul or spirit.)

“As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open

sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes. Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.”
Romans 3 v 10–19

The unsaved are thoroughly unrighteous and have no conflict with sin. The following quotes prove the contrast between the saved and unsaved attitudes and lifestyle:

“Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence (desire), and covetousness, which is idolatry: For which things’ sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them. But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:”
Colossians 3 v 5–10

“Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.”
Galatians 5 v 19–24

In general the saved have stamina and endurance in fighting sin and they are encouraged not to give in or give up and they will be victorious:

“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the

flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.” Galatians 6 v 7–9

Each advance against sin gives greater strength to fight it:

Yield not to temptation, for yielding is sin;
Each vict’ry will help you some other to win;
Fight manfully onward, dark passions subdue;
Look ever to Jesus, He’ll carry you through.

Ask the Saviour to help you,
Comfort, strengthen, and keep you;
He is willing to aid you,
He will carry you through.

Shun evil companions, bad language disdain,
God’s name hold in rev’rence, nor take it in vain;
Be thoughtful and earnest, kindhearted and true;
Look ever to Jesus, He’ll carry you through.

To him that o’ercometh, God giveth a crown,
Through faith we will conquer, though often cast down;
He who is our Saviour, our strength will renew;
Look ever to Jesus, He’ll carry you through.

The saved rarely fall into scandalous sin e.g. King David. They must use the channels God provides them with to resist sin—prayer, bible study, preaching, fellowship with other saints. Also they are expressly told to examine themselves to search out and remove sin more and more.

“Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts. And see if *there be any* wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” Psalm 139 v 23,4

There are many clear accounts of saints especially in the old testament who do this – Psalm 73. Otherwise saints will fall into sin and backslide. It is a great exertion to struggle after holiness. It takes great and prolonged and sustained effort. The saints sometimes sin just out of weariness. They sometimes feel the struggle is like wading through mud in a bog or marsh. Sometimes sin and Satan attack in a skirmish or ‘guerrilla warfare’. At

other times they seem subject to a protracted assault and are under siege. It is a fight till their death.

“And ye shall be hated of all *men* for my name’s sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.” Mark 13 v 13

“So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure:”
2nd Thessalonians 1 v 4

“Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.”
2nd Timothy 2 v 3

“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset *us*, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin... Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed. Follow peace with all *men*, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:”

Hebrews 12 v 1–4, 12–14

Despite the warning to all believers never to let down their guard and their vigilance, sometimes however God does give the saved rest from the battle to a degree. He gives victories over sin, encourages them with him his promises and teaches them to increasingly depend, trust and have confidence in His power only with his presence by the Holy Spirit. On this rough road to heaven he gives them oases of comfort and consolation:

“Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them *that are* of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come *with* vengeance, *even* God *with* a recompence; he will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the

lame *man* leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, *shall be* grass with reeds and rushes. And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it *shall be* for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err *therein*.”
Isaiah 35 v 3–8

John Owen remarks about the main feature of the believers conflict in his commentary examining temptation and sin:

“Blessed *is* the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the lord hath promised to them that love him. Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.”
James 1 v 12–15

“Firstly,

Sin proceeds by five degrees in tempting or deceiving: we showed before that this is the nature of deceit, that it works by degrees, making progress by one step to gain another.

The first step is in pulling away or attraction: “Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust.” The second is in enticing or strongly appealing: “And is enticed.” The third is in the conception of sin: “When lust hath conceived.” When the heart is enticed, then lust is conceived in it. The fourth is the production of sin in its operation and act: “When lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin.” In all these there is a secret attraction to an adulterous deviation from marital duties, and conceiving or producing children of adultery and fornication.

The fifth is *the finishing of sin*, the completing of it, filling up the measure of it, so the end originally designed by lust is brought about: “Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death,” As lust conceiving naturally and necessarily leads to sin, so the end of sin infallibly results in eternal death.

The first of these relates to the *mind*; that is attracted by the deceit of sin. The second to the *feelings and desires*; they are enticed or tangled up. The third to the *will*, where sin is conceived; the consent of the will is the formal conception of actual sin. The fourth to the *Conduct* where sin occurs; it exerts itself in the peoples lives and behaviour. The fifth is *an intransigent practice* in sinning, that finishes, consummates, and completes the whole work of sin with death or eternal ruin resulting. The first three is where the main strength of the deceit of sin is. In believers, God is pleased, mostly, graciously to prevent the fourth instance, the production of actual sins in their behaviour; and the last always and totally, or their being intransigent in a practice of sin till its completion.

Secondly,

“If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body ye shall live;”
Romans 8 v 13

Having summarized his doctrine of justification by faith, and the blessed state of people who by grace participate in it, the apostle in verses 1–3 of this chapter now uses it to stimulate holiness in and the consolation of believers. Among his arguments and motives to holiness, the verse mentioned contains one from the opposite effects of holiness and sin: “If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die.”

In these words there is, —

Firstly, A *duty* is authorized: “Mortify the deeds of the body.” Secondly, The people who it is directed to are specified: “Ye,” —“if ye mortify.” Thirdly, a *promise* is attached to the doing the duty: “Ye shall live.” Fourthly, What makes a person capable of carrying out the duty, — the Spirit: “If ye through the Spirit etc.” Fifthly, The statement is a condition: “If ye,”

The first thing occurring in the words is that they are a condition; “But if.” This can mean one of two things —

That the thing promised *is not definite if the people told to do this duty* do it. This happens where the condition is absolutely necessary for the outcome and does not depend on any definite cause known to those told about it. So we say, “If we live, we will do such a thing.” This cannot be the intention of the expression here. It says about the same people in verse 1 of the same chapter, (Romans 8) “There is no condemnation to them.”

The other way it could be interpreted is to describe the *certainty* of the connection between the things spoken about; like we say to a sick person, “If you will take this medicine, or use this treatment, you will be healthy.” What we solely intend to express is the certainty of the connection between the medicine or treatment and health. This is the meaning of the word “if” in this verse. The certain connection that is between the *mortifying* of the deeds of the body and *living* is intimated in the conditional word, “if”.

There are many ways things connect with each other, like cause and effect, means and ends. Between mortification and life is not cause and effect properly and strictly, for “eternal life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ,” Romans 6 v 23, — but is means and end. God has appointed this means for the attaining that end that he has freely promised. To have a procuring cause in the recipient of a free gift is inconsistent. The intention of this statement as a condition is that there is a certain infallible connection and coherence between true mortification and eternal life: if you use this means, you will obtain that end; if you mortify, you will live. This is the main motivation for, and enforcement of, the duty authorized.

Thirdly,

There are the evils that believers may fall into and are not the things that define a believer. A man may as well conclude that he is a believer because he is an adulterer, because David fell into adultery, as conclude it from the evils of sin and Satan in the hearts of believers. The seventh chapter of the Romans contains the description of a regenerate man. Whoever considers what is spoken of his dark side, of his unregenerate part, of the indwelling power and violence of sin remaining in the believer, and, because he finds similar in himself and so concludes he is a regenerate man, will be deceived. It is like you should argue: A wise man may be sick and wounded and do some things foolishly; therefore, everyone who is sick and wounded and does things foolishly is a wise man. Or as if an ugly man, hearing someone speak about a beautiful person, saying that they have a small mark or a scar, should conclude that because he himself has scars, and moles, and warts, he also is beautiful. To have evidences of your being believers, it must be from the things that define people as believers. The person who has these sins in himself may safely conclude, “If I am a believer, I am a most miserable one.” If anyone is like this, they must look for other evidences if they are to have peace in their souls.

Fourthly,

“O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord” –

Romans 7 v 24, 25

This, in their worst condition, distinguishes them from unbelievers in their best. The will in unbelievers is under the power of the law of sin. The opposition they make to sin, either in the root or branches of it, is from their light and their consciences; the will and desire to sin is never taken away in them. Take away all other considerations and obstacles, and they would sin willingly always. Their weak attempts to respond to their convictions are far from a willingness to do good. They will claim that they would leave their sins if they could, and they would desire to do better than they do. But it is the working of their light and convictions, not any spiritual inclination of their wills that they really mean: where there is a willingness to do good, there is also a choice to do good for its own excellency’s sake, — because it is desirable and suitable to the soul, and so good is to be preferred to sin. This is not in any unbelievers. They do not, they cannot choose spiritual good. It is not excellent or suitable to any principle that is in them. They only have some desires to attain the end that good leads to, and to avoid that evil the neglect of it leads to.

And these also are mostly so weak and lethargic in many of them, that they do not attempt any meaningful effort to stop sinning. Witness that luxury, laziness, worldliness, and security, that the generality of men are drowned in. But in believers there is a willingness for doing good, a habitual disposition and inclination in their wills towards spiritual good; and where this is, it is accompanied by answerable effects. The will is the principle of our moral actions; and so the general course of our actions will be governed by its dominant desire. Good things will proceed from the good treasures of the heart. This inclination cannot be evidenced to be in anyone but by the fruits it produces. A willingness to do good, without doing good, is only a pretence.

Fifthly,

Romans 7 v 1, “The law hath dominion over a man whilst he liveth:” — “It lordeth it over a man.”

Where any law occurs, it has a regulation. It is appropriate for a superior

to demand obedience by way of authority. There are two aspects to this regulation, as there are contained in a law.

There is a moral authoritative regulation a person has responsibility towards, and there is a real effective regulation operating within a persons soul. The first is a characteristic of the law of God, the second of the law of sin. The law of sin does not have, in itself, a rightful moral domination or authority over anyone. But it has what is equivalent to it; so it is said, “to reign as a king,” Romans 6 v 12, and “to lord it,” or have dominion, verse 14, like a law in general is said to have, chap. 7 v 1.

But because it has lost its complete control in believers which we are presently discussing I will not make reference to it in the utmost extent of its power. But even in them it still is a law; though not a law to them, yet, it is a law in them. And though it has not a complete, a rightful control over them, yet it will dominate in some ways in them. It is still a law in them; so that all its actions are the actions of a law, — it acts with power, though it has lost its complete power to rule in them. Though it is weakened, yet its nature is not altered. It is a law still, and therefore powerful. And its particular operations, are the reason it is called the law of sin, so the term itself teaches us in general what we are to expect from it, and what efforts it will use to gain control.

Sixthly,

First, Never let us reckon that our work in contending against sin, in crucifying, mortifying, and subduing it, is finished. The place it occupies is not capable of being fully explored by us; and when we think that we have thoroughly won the battlefield, there is still some reserve remaining that we miss, that we did not know about. Many conquerors have been ruined by their carelessness after a victory, and many have been spiritually wounded after great successes against this enemy. David was: to his great surprise, he fell into sin, which occurred after a long profession, many experiences of God, and a vigilant guarding himself against his iniquity. And so, in part, it happens that the witness many Christians make declines in their old age or spiritual maturity. They have given up the work of self denial before their work was at an end. There is no way for us to pursue sin in its unexplorable occupation of the territory in our souls, but by being endless in our pursuit of it. The command of the apostle in Colossians 3 v 5, is as necessary to observe for people who are near the end of their race, as those near the beginning of it: “Mortify therefore your members which are upon

the earth;" always do it while you live in this world. It is true, great ground is gained when the work is engaged in vigorously and constantly; sin is weakened greatly, so that the soul pushes forwards towards perfection: yet the work must be endless, while we are in this world at least. If we give up, we'll quickly see this enemy exerting itself with new strength and vigour. It may be while experiencing some great adversity, it may be in some eminent enjoyment of God with sweetness of blessed communion with Christ, we have been ready to say that sin was finished, that it was dead and gone for ever. Have we not found the contrary by experience? Was it not shown that it was only retired to some unexplored recess of our heart, even though it may be greatly weakened in its power? Let us consider then there is no way to have our work done but by always doing it. He who dies fighting in this war truly dies a conqueror:"

Stand up, stand up for Jesus, ye soldiers of the cross;
Lift high His royal banner, it must not suffer loss.
From victory unto victory His army shall He lead,
Till every foe is vanquished, and Christ is Lord indeed.

Stand up, stand up for Jesus, the solemn watchword hear;
If while ye sleep He suffers, away with shame and fear;
Where'er ye meet with evil, within you or without,
Charge for the God of battles, and put the foe to rout.

Stand up, stand up for Jesus, the trumpet call obey;
Forth to the mighty conflict, in this His glorious day.
Ye that are brave now serve Him against unnumbered foes;
Let courage rise with danger, and strength to strength oppose.

Stand up, stand up for Jesus, stand in His strength alone;
The arm of flesh will fail you, ye dare not trust your own.
Put on the Gospel armour, each piece put on with prayer;
Where duty calls or danger, be never wanting there.

Stand up, stand up for Jesus, each soldier to his post,
Close up the broken column, and shout through all the host:
Make good the loss so heavy, in those that still remain,
And prove to all around you that death itself is gain.

Stand up, stand up for Jesus, the strife will not be long;

This day the noise of battle, the next the victor's song.
 To those who vanquish evil a crown of life shall be;
 They with the King of Glory shall reign eternally.

John Owen further comments and outlines specific measures for the saved to resist and overcome sin:

“This is the first thing implied in this general direction: — The daily exercise of our thoughts with an apprehension of the great danger that lies in entering into temptation, is required. Grieving the Spirit of God, disturbance of our own souls, loss of peace, hazard of eternal welfare, lies at the door. If the soul is not prevailed with to observe this direction, all that follows will be of no value. Temptation despised will conquer; and if the heart is made tender and watchful here, half the work of securing good conduct is over. And let not them go any further who haven't resolved to improve this rule in a daily and conscientious observation of it.

(2.) There is this in it also, that it is not a thing in our own power, to keep and preserve ourselves from entering into temptation. Therefore we are to pray that we may be preserved from it, because we cannot save ourselves. This is another means of preservation. As we have no strength to resist a temptation when it does come, when we enter into it, but shall fall under it, without a supply of sufficiency of grace from God; so to reckon that we have no power or wisdom to keep ourselves from entering into temptation, but must be kept by the power and wisdom of God, is a preserving principle, see 1 Peter 1:5. We are in all things “kept by the power of God.” Our Saviour instructs us in this, not only by directing us to pray that we are not led into temptation, but also by his own praying for us, that we may be kept from it: John 17:15, “I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil,” — that is, the temptations of the world to evil, to sin, — “out of the evil” that is in the world, that is temptation, which is all this is evil in the world; or from the evil one, who in the world makes use of the world for temptation. Christ prays his Father to keep us, and instructs us to pray that we are so kept. It is not, then, a thing in our own power. The ways of our entering into temptation are so many, various, and imperceptible, — the means of it so powerful, — our weakness our unwatchfulness, so unspeakable, — that we cannot in the least keep or preserve ourselves from it. We fail both in wisdom and power for this work.

Let the heart, then commune with itself and say, “I am poor and weak; Satan is subtle, cunning, powerful, watching constantly for advantages against my soul; the world earnest, pressing, and full of specious pleas, innumerable pretences, and ways of deceit; my own corruption violent and tumultuating, enticing, entangling, conceiving sin, and warring in me, against me; occasions and advantages of temptation are innumerable in all things I have done or suffer, in all businesses and persons with whom I converse; the first beginnings of temptation insensible and plausible, so that, left unto myself, I shall not know I am snared, until my chains are made strong, and sin has got ground in my heart: therefore on God alone will I rely for preservation, and I will continually look up to him on that account.” This will make the soul always commit itself to the care of God, resting itself on him, and to do nothing, undertake nothing, etc, without asking advice of him. So that a double advantage will arise from the observation of this direction, both of singular use for the soul’s preservation from the evil feared: —

[1.] The engagement of the grace and compassion of God, who has called the fatherless and helpless to rest on him; nor did the soul ever fail of supplies, who, in a sense of need, rolled itself on him, on the account of his gracious invitation.

[2.] The keeping of it in such a condition as, on various accounts, is useful for its preservation. Whoever looks to God for assistance in a due manner is both sensible of his danger, and conscientiously careful in the use of means to preserve himself: the importance of these in this case, may easily be apprehended by them who have their hearts exercised in these things.

[3.] This also is in it, — act faith on the promise of God for preservation. To believe that he will preserve us is a means of preservation; for this God will certainly do, or make a way for us to escape out of temptation, if we fall into it under such a belief. We are to pray for what God has promised. Our requests are to be regulated by his promises and commands, which are of the same extent. Faith closes with the promises, and so finds relief in this case. This James instructs us in, chap. 1:5–7.

What we want we must “ask of God;” but we must “ask in faith,” for otherwise we must not “think that we shall receive any thing of the Lord.”

This then, also, is in this direction of our Saviour, that we act faith on the promises of God for our preservation out of temptation. He has promised that he will keep us in all our ways; that we shall be directed in a way that, though we are fools, “we shall not err therein,” Isaiah 35:8; that he

will lead us, guide us, and deliver us from the evil one. Set faith on work on these promises of God, and expect a good and comfortable outcome.

[4.] Weigh these various things, and first, take prayer into consideration. To pray that we enter not into temptation is a means to preserve us from it. Glorious things are, by all men that know anything about those things, spoken about this duty; and yet the truth is, not one half of its excellency, power, and efficacy is known. It is not my business to speak of it in general; but this I say as to my present purpose, — he that would be little in temptation, let him be much in prayer. This calls in the suitable help and succour that is laid up in Christ for us, Hebrews 4:16. This changes our souls into a state of opposition to every temptation. When Paul had given instruction for the taking to ourselves “the whole armour of God,” that we may resist and stand in the time of temptation, he adds this general close of the whole, Ephesians 6:18, “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication.” Without this all the rest will be of no use for the end proposed. And therefore consider what weight he lays on it: “Praying always,” — that is, at all times and seasons, or be always ready and prepared for the discharge of that duty, Luke 18:1, Ephesians 6:18; “with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit,” — putting forth all kinds of desires to God, that are suited to our condition, according to his will, lest we diverted by any thing whatever; and that not for a little while, but “with all perseverance,” — continuance lengthened out to the utmost: so shall we stand. The soul so framed is in a sure posture; and this is one of the means without which this work will not be done. If we do not persist in prayer, we shall persist in cursed temptations. Abide in prayer, and that expressly to this purpose, that we “enter not into temptation.” Let this be one part of our daily contending with God,— that he would preserve our souls, and keep our hearts and our ways, So we are not entangled; that his good and wise providence will order our ways and affairs, that no pressing temptation overcome us; that he would give us diligence, carefulness, and watchfulness over our own ways. So we shall be kept when others are held bound by their own folly.”

Lastly let us hear the account of the great reformer, Martin Luther:

“This letter is truly the most important piece in the New Testament. It is purest Gospel. It is well worth a Christian’s while not only to memorize it word for word but also to occupy himself with it daily, as though it were

the daily bread of the soul. It is impossible to read or to meditate on this letter too much or too well. The more one deals with it, the more precious it becomes and the better it tastes. Therefore I want to carry out my service and, with this preface, provide an introduction to the letter, insofar as God gives me the ability, so that every one can gain the fullest possible understanding of it. Up to now it has been darkened by glosses [explanatory notes and comments which accompany a text] and by many a useless comment, but it is in itself a bright light, almost bright enough to illumine the entire Scripture.

To begin with, we have to become familiar with the vocabulary of the letter and know what St. Paul means by the words law, sin, grace, faith, justice, flesh, spirit, etc. Otherwise there is no use in reading it.

You must not understand the word law here in human fashion, i.e., a regulation about what sort of works must be done or must not be done. That's the way it is with human laws: you satisfy the demands of the law with works, whether your heart is in it or not. God judges what is in the depths of the heart. Therefore his law also makes demands on the depths of the heart and doesn't let the heart rest content in works; rather it punishes as hypocrisy and lies all works done apart from the depths of the heart. All human beings are called liars (Psalm 116), since none of them keeps or can keep God's law from the depths of the heart. Everyone finds inside himself an aversion to good and a craving for evil. Where there is no free desire for good, there the heart has not set itself on God's law. There also sin is surely to be found and the deserved wrath of God, whether a lot of good works and an honourable life appear outwardly or not.

Therefore in chapter 2, St. Paul adds that the Jews are all sinners and says that only the doers of the law are justified in the sight of God. What he is saying is that no one is a doer of the law by works. On the contrary, he says to them, "You teach that one should not commit adultery, and you commit adultery. You judge another in a certain matter and condemn yourselves in that same matter, because you do the very same thing that you judged in another." It is as if he were saying, "Outwardly you live quite properly in the works of the law and judge those who do not live the same way; you know how to teach everybody. You see the speck in another's eye but do not notice the beam in your own."

Outwardly you keep the law with works out of fear of punishment or love of gain. Likewise you do everything without free desire and love of the law; you act out of aversion and force. You'd rather act otherwise if

the law didn't exist. It follows, then, that you, in the depths of your heart, are an enemy of the law. What do you mean, therefore, by teaching another not to steal, when you, in the depths of your heart, are a thief and would be one outwardly too, if you dared. (Of course, outward work doesn't last long with such hypocrites.) So then, you teach others but not yourself; you don't even know what you are teaching. You've never understood the law rightly. Furthermore, the law increases sin, as St. Paul says in chapter 5. That is because a person becomes more and more an enemy of the law the more it demands of him what he can't possibly do.

In chapter 7, St. Paul says, "The law is spiritual." What does that mean? If the law were physical, then it could be satisfied by works, but since it is spiritual, no one can satisfy it unless everything he does springs from the depths of the heart. But no one can give such a heart except the Spirit of God, who makes the person be like the law, so that he actually conceives a heartfelt longing for the law and henceforward does everything, not through fear or coercion, but from a free heart. Such a law is spiritual since it can only be loved and fulfilled by such a heart and such a spirit. If the Spirit is not in the heart, then there remain sin, aversion and enmity against the law, which in itself is good, just and holy.

You must get used to the idea that it is one thing to do the works of the law and quite another to fulfill it. The works of the law are every thing that a person does or can do of his own free will and by his own powers to obey the law. But because in doing such works the heart abhors the law and yet is forced to obey it, the works are a total loss and are completely useless. That is what St. Paul means in chapter 3 when he says, "No human being is justified before God through the works of the law." From this you can see that the schoolmasters [i.e., the scholastic theologians] and sophists are seducers when they teach that you can prepare yourself for grace by means of works. How can anybody prepare himself for good by means of works if he does no good work except with aversion and constraint in his heart? How can such a work please God, if it proceeds from an averse and unwilling heart?

But to fulfill the law means to do its work eagerly, lovingly and freely, without the constraint of the law; it means to live well and in a manner pleasing to God, as though there were no law or punishment. It is the Holy Spirit, however, who puts such eagerness of unconstrained love into the heart, as Paul says in chapter 5. But the Spirit is given only in, with, and through faith in Jesus Christ, as Paul says in his introduction. So, too, faith

comes only through the word of God, the Gospel, that preaches Christ: how he is both Son of God and man, how he died and rose for our sake. Paul says all this in chapters 3, 4 and 10.

That is why faith alone makes someone just and fulfills the law; faith it is that brings the Holy Spirit through the merits of Christ. The Spirit, in turn, renders the heart glad and free, as the law demands. Then good works proceed from faith itself. That is what Paul means in chapter 3 when, after he has thrown out the works of the law, he sounds as though he wants to abolish the law by faith. No, he says, we uphold the law through faith, i.e. we fulfill it through faith.

Sin in the Scriptures means not only external works of the body but also all those movements within us which bestir themselves and move us to do the external works, namely, the depth of the heart with all its powers. Therefore the word *do* should refer to a person's completely falling into sin. No external work of sin happens, after all, unless a person commit himself to it completely, body and soul. In particular, the Scriptures see into the heart, to the root and main source of all sin: unbelief in the depth of the heart. Thus, even as faith alone makes just and brings the Spirit and the desire to do good external works, so it is only unbelief which sins and exalts the flesh and brings desire to do evil external works. That's what happened to Adam and Eve in Paradise (cf. Genesis 3).

That is why only unbelief is called sin by Christ, as he says in John, chapter 16, "The Spirit will punish the world because of sin, because it does not believe in me." Furthermore, before good or bad works happen, which are the good or bad fruits of the heart, there has to be present in the heart either faith or unbelief, the root, sap and chief power of all sin. That is why, in the Scriptures, unbelief is called the head of the serpent and of the ancient dragon which the offspring of the woman, i.e. Christ, must crush, as was promised to Adam (cf. Genesis 3). *Grace* and *gift* differ in that grace actually denotes God's kindness or favour which he has toward us and by which he is disposed to pour Christ and the Spirit with his gifts into us, as becomes clear from chapter 5, where Paul says, "Grace and gift are in Christ, etc." The gifts and the Spirit increase daily in us, yet they are not complete, since evil desires and sins remain in us which war against the Spirit, as Paul says in chapter 7, and in Galatians, chapter 5. And Genesis, chapter 3, proclaims the enmity between the offspring of the woman and that of the serpent. But grace does do this much: that we are accounted completely just before God. God's grace is not divided into bits and pieces,

as are the gifts, but grace takes us up completely into God's favour for the sake of Christ, our intercessor and mediator, so that the gifts may begin their work in us.

In this way, then, you should understand chapter 7, where St. Paul portrays himself as still a sinner, while in chapter 8 he says that, because of the incomplete gifts and because of the Spirit, there is nothing damnable in those who are in Christ. Because our flesh has not been killed, we are still sinners, but because we believe in Christ and have the beginnings of the Spirit, God so shows us his favour and mercy, that he neither notices nor judges such sins. Rather he deals with us according to our belief in Christ until sin is killed.

Faith is not that human illusion and dream that some people think it is. When they hear and talk a lot about faith and yet see that no moral improvement and no good works result from it, they fall into error and say, "Faith is not enough. You must do works if you want to be virtuous and get to heaven." The result is that, when they hear the Gospel, they stumble and make for themselves with their own powers a concept in their hearts which says, "I believe." This concept they hold to be true faith. But since it is a human fabrication and thought and not an experience of the heart, it accomplishes nothing, and there follows no improvement.

Faith is a work of God in us, which changes us and brings us to birth anew from God (cf. John 1). It kills the old Adam, makes us completely different people in heart, mind, senses, and all our powers, and brings the Holy Spirit with it. What a living, creative, active powerful thing is faith! It is impossible that faith ever stop doing good. Faith doesn't ask whether good works are to be done, but, before it is asked, it has done them. It is always active. Whoever doesn't do such works is without faith; he gropes and searches about him for faith and good works but doesn't know what faith or good works are. Even so, he chatters on with a great many words about faith and good works.

Faith is a living, unshakeable confidence in God's grace; it is so certain, that someone would die a thousand times for it. This kind of trust in and knowledge of God's grace makes a person joyful, confident, and happy with regard to God and all creatures. This is what the Holy Spirit does by faith. Through faith, a person will do good to everyone without coercion, willingly and happily; he will serve everyone, suffer everything for the love and praise of God, who has shown him such grace. It is as impossible to separate works from faith as burning and shining from fire. Therefore be

on guard against your own false ideas and against the chatterers who think they are clever enough to make judgements about faith and good works but who are in reality the biggest fools. Ask God to work faith in you; otherwise you will remain eternally without faith, no matter what you try to do or fabricate.

Now *justice* is just such a faith. It is called God's justice or that justice which is valid in God's sight, because it is God who gives it and reckons it as justice for the sake of Christ our Mediator. It influences a person to give to everyone what he owes him. Through faith a person becomes sinless and eager for God's commands. Thus he gives God the honour due him and pays him what he owes him. He serves people willingly with the means available to him. In this way he pays everyone his due. Neither nature nor free will nor our own powers can bring about such a justice, for even as no one can give himself faith, so too he cannot remove unbelief. How can he then take away even the smallest sin? Therefore everything which takes place outside faith or in unbelief is lie, hypocrisy and sin (Romans 14), no matter how smoothly it may seem to go.

You must not understand flesh here as denoting only unchastity or spirit as denoting only the inner heart. Here St. Paul calls flesh (as does Christ in John 3) everything born of flesh, i.e. the whole human being with body and soul, reason and senses, since everything in him tends toward the flesh. That is why you should know enough to call that person "fleshly" who, without grace, fabricates, teaches and chatters about high spiritual matters. You can learn the same thing from Galatians, chapter 5, where St. Paul calls heresy and hatred works of the flesh. And in Romans, chapter 8, he says that, through the flesh, the law is weakened. He says this, not of unchastity, but of all sins, most of all of unbelief, which is the most spiritual of vices.

On the other hand, you should know enough to call that person "spiritual" who is occupied with the most outward of works as was Christ, when he washed the feet of the disciples, and Peter, when he steered his boat and fished. So then, a person is "flesh" who, inwardly and outwardly, lives only to do those things which are of use to the flesh and to temporal existence. A person is "spirit" who, inwardly and outwardly, lives only to do those things which are of use to the spirit and to the life to come.

Unless you understand these words in this way, you will never understand either this letter of St. Paul or any book of the Scriptures. Be on guard, therefore against any teacher who uses these words differently, no

matter who he be, whether Jerome, Augustine, Ambrose, Origen or anyone else as great as or greater than they. Now let us turn to the letter itself.”

*Commentary on Romans:
Preface by Martin Luther*

CHAPTER 30

BELIEVERS PERCEPTION OF THEIR HOLINESS

Everyone has self awareness of their moral behaviour which allows them to make a judgement about their spiritual state. Though their own hearts may deceive them the voice of conscience cannot be totally eliminated, quietened or drowned out. Even where people have utterly rejected God, they know that they do wrong:

“And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them. Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things. But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things.”

Roman 1 v 28–2 v 2

God calls to the saved to be holy as he is holy. This again necessarily implies they must actually become holy or morally good to a substantial degree or extent. But what is their awareness of this aspect of themselves?

True saints are humble before God and others. They do not advance themselves but exalt God. They are meek and teachable even when God rebukes them. They feel and declare their unworthiness because of their great sin that God mercifully forgave, and in such a costly manner, with Christ his Son suffering eternal punishment for them.

But they are humble also because of their remaining sin. The saved sin daily doing all kinds of sin, but not in the same degree as before they repented or as other wicked people do.

Saved people contain a good part in themselves. Because of this they may view themselves as less good than they really are. This is because they increasingly see how evil their sin is. They compare themselves with perfection in the measure that they have insight into it because they know that is what Gods law demands. With this new insight they realize they commit a lesser quantity of sin, but they see more and more of the evil quality in that sin and so it may seem to themselves difficult at times not to think they are actually sinning more than before. To others around them they are doing less sin but the saved may at times wrongly judge themselves to be more sinful. God can and does show them that they are misjudging themselves and makes clear that their behaviour and attitudes are substantially better than the unsaved or wicked people even though they are still very far away from perfection. He shows through conscience and his word by his Spirit that they are less sinful than before. God doesn't let them think they are wicked when they are not, but shows they are only seeing more of the evil quality in their sin. This means Christians at the same time may realize they are getting better, more holy while getting to know more of the evil of their sin. This is an effect of becoming more holy-Gods light is illuminating the dark corners of their hearts more and more. This includes the fact that they still have a measure of unbelief, self righteousness and hypocrisy in their hearts and lives which is mixed with the good that they do. Christians do not deny the good part in them. Their conscience tells them to do so would be wrong. To call the good produced in them wickedness would be wrong, untrue, dishonest and insulting to God the Holy Spirit who is responsible for it. When they see their sin they rejoice in Christ and his righteousness which atones for it and they gladly acknowledge all the good works in them are present because of the effect of Christ's work for them on the

cross that means the Holy Spirit enters their soul and makes holy and good to a degree in this life. This is called sanctification.

This dilemma is described in Romans: “sin shall not have dominion over you” in Romans six and “the evil that I would not that I do” in Romans seven.

The apostle Paul in chapter seven greatly desires perfection but is far away from that. He is far away from doing the good he wishes(perfection) and perceives his fault and defect more, yet sins much less than he did while unsaved. This explanation concurs with the rest of Paul’s teaching. In Galatians 5 he similarly expresses a desire for perfection but states also that the Christian overcomes sin and acts very differently:

“For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told *you* in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.” Galatians 5 v 17–24

It might be argued that believers may view themselves as worse than the unsaved because they cannot see particular internal sins of the unsaved. This is a false argument because most internal sins manifest themselves in some way. Even if particular types of sins are hidden for a time, the person who is full of sin will show many other types of sin in other parts or areas of his external behaviour, showing that they are really a wicked person.

John Calvin also gives his view about the saved’s perception of their own holiness:

“They now take themselves to those passages in which believers boldly submit their righteousness to the judgment of God, and wish to be judged correspondingly; as in the following passages:

“Judge me, O Lord, according to my righteousness, and according to mine integrity that is in me.” Psalm 7 v 8

“Hear the right, O Lord;” Psalm 17 v 1

“Thou hast proved mine heart; thou hast visited me in the night; thou hast tried me, and shalt find nothing.” Psalm 17 v 3

“The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands has he recompensed me. For I have kept the ways of the Lord, and have not wickedly departed from my God.” Psalm 18 v 20,21

“I was also upright before him, and I kept myself from mine iniquity.” Psalm 18 v 23

“Judge me, O Lord; for I have walked in mine integrity;” Psalm 26 v 1

“I have not sat with vain persons; neither will I go in with dissemblers;” Psalm 26 v 4

“Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men; in whose hands is mischief, and their right hand is full of bribes. But as for me, I will walk in mine integrity.” Psalm 26 v 9

“Now therefore be content, look upon me; for *it is* evident unto you if I lie.

Return, I pray you, let it not be iniquity; yea, return again, my righteousness *is* in it. Is there iniquity in my tongue? cannot my taste discern perverse things?” Job 6 v 28–30

I have already spoken of the confidence which the saints seem to derive simply from works. The passages now quoted will not occasion difficulty, if we attend to their connection, or (as it is commonly called) special circumstances. These are of two kinds; those who use them have no wish that their whole life should be brought to trial, so that they may be acquitted or condemned depending on its character; all they wish is, that a decision should be given on the particular case; and even here the righteousness which they claim is not with reference to the divine perfection, but only by comparison to the wicked and profane.

When the question relates to justification, the thing required is not that the individual have a good ground for acquittal in regard to some particular matter, but that his whole life should be based on righteousness. But when the saints call the divine justice in vindication of their innocence, they do not present themselves as free from fault, and in every respect blameless but while placing their confidence of salvation in the divine goodness only, and trusting that he will vindicate his poor when they are afflicted contrary to justice and equity, they truly commit to him the cause in which the innocent are oppressed. And when they cite themselves with their adversaries at Gods tribunal, they do not pretend an innocence corresponding to the divine purity if inquiry were strictly made into it, but knowing that in comparison of the malice, dishonesty, craft, and iniquity of their enemies, their sincerity justice, simplicity, and purity, are ascertained and approved by God, they do not dread to call on him to judge between them.

So when David said to Saul, “The Lord render to every man his righteousness and his faithfulness,” (1 Samuel 26 v 23), he did not mean that the Lord should examine and reward every one depending on what he really deserves, but he took the Lord to witness how great his innocence was in comparison of Saul’s injustice. Paul, too, when he indulges in the boast, “Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation(conduct) in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward,” (2 Corinthians 1 v 12), he does not mean to call for the scrutiny of God, but compelled by the slanders of the wicked he appeals to his faith and probity, which he knew that God had indulgently accepted. For we see how he elsewhere says, “I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified,” (1 Corinthians 4 v 4); in other words, he was aware that the divine judgment far transcended the blind estimate of man. Therefore, however believers may, in defending their integrity against the hypocrisy of the ungodly, appeal to God as their witness and judge, still when the question is with God alone, they all with one mouth exclaim, “If thou, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?” Again, “Enter not into judgment with thy servant; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.” Distrusting their own words, they gladly exclaim, “Thy loving-kindness is better than life,” (Psalm 130 v 3; 143 v 2; 63 v 3).”

*Institutes of the Christian Religion:
volume 3 by John Calvin*

Edwards view of a believers self estimation of their sinfulness is stated in the following:

“Such is the nature of grace, and of true spiritual light, that they naturally dispose the saints in the present state, to look upon their grace and goodness little, and their spiritual deformity great. And they that have the most grace and spiritual light, of any in this world, have most of this tendency.

That grace and holiness is worthy to be called little, that is, little in comparison of what it ought to be. And so it seems to one that is truly gracious: such a person has their eye on the rule of his duty; a conformity to that is that they aim at; it is what his soul struggles and reaches after; and it is by that that they estimate and judges what they do, and what they have. To a gracious soul, and especially to one eminently gracious, that holiness appears little, which is little of what it should be; little of what they see infinite reason for, and obligation to. If his holiness appears to them to be at a vast distance from this, it naturally appears contemptible in their eyes, and not worthy to be mentioned as any beauty or amiableness in them. For the like reason as a hungry person naturally accounts what is placed in front of them, only a little food, a small matter, not worth mentioning, that is nothing in comparison to his appetite. Or as the child of a great leader, that is jealous for the honour of their father, and sees the respect men show him, naturally looks on that honour and respect very little, and not worthy to be regarded, and nothing in comparison to that which the dignity of his father requires.

But that is the nature of true grace and spiritual light, that it opens to a person's view the infinite reason there is that they should be holy to a great degree. And the more grace they have, the more this is opened to view, the greater sense they have of the infinite excellency and glory of the divine Being, and of the infinite dignity of the person of Christ, and the boundless length and breadth, and depth and height, of the love of Christ to sinners. And as grace increases, the field opens more and more to a distant view, until the soul is swallowed up with the vastness of the object, and the person is astonished to think how much they ought to love this

God, and this glorious Redeemer, that has so loved man, and how little they do love.

And so the more they realize, the more the littleness of his grace and love appears strange and wonderful: and therefore they are more ready to think that others are beyond them. For wondering at the littleness of their own grace, they can scarcely believe that such a strange thing happens to other saints: it is amazing to them, that they really are a child of God, and that they who have actually received the saving benefits of that unspeakable love of Christ, should not love more: and he is liable to consider it as a thing unique to himself, a strange and exempt instance; because he sees only the external part of other Christians, but he sees his own internal soul as well.

The reader may possibly object, that love to God is really increased in proportion as the knowledge of God is increased; and therefore how should an increase of knowledge in a saint make his love appear less, in comparison of what is known? To which I answer, that although grace and the love of God in the saints, are proportionate to the degree of knowledge or sight of God; yet it is not in proportion to the object seen and known. The soul of a saint, by having something of God opened to sight, is convinced of much more than is seen. There is something that is seen, that is wonderful; and that sight brings with it a strong conviction of something vastly beyond, that is not immediately seen. So that the soul, at the same time, is astonished at its ignorance, and that it knows so little, as well as that it loves so little. As the soul, in a spiritual view, is convinced of infinitely more in the object, yet beyond sight; so it is convinced of the capacity of the soul, of knowing vastly more, if the clouds and darkness were only removed. This causes the soul, in the enjoyment of a spiritual view, to complain greatly of spiritual ignorance, and lack of love, and to long and reach after more knowledge and more love.

And the eminent saint, having such a conviction of the great degree to which he ought to love God, this shows him, not only the littleness of his grace, but the greatness of his remaining corruption. In order to judge how much corruption or sin we have remaining in

us, we must take our measure from that height to which the rule of our duty extends: the whole of the distance we are at from that height, is sin: for failing to do that duty is sin; otherwise our duty is not our duty, and by how much more we fail in our duty, so much more sin we have. Sin is none other than disagreeableness, in a moral agent, to the law or rule of his duty. And therefore the degree of sin is to be judged by the rule: the degree of disagreeableness to the rule show the degree of sin, whether it is in defect or excess. Therefore if people, in their love to God, do not come up half way to that height which duty requires, then they have more corruption in their hearts than grace; because there is more goodness lacking, than is present: and all that is lacking is sin: it is an detestable defect; and appears so to the saints; especially those that are eminent; it appears extremely detestable to them, that Christ should be loved so little, and thanked so little for his dying love: it is in their eyes hateful ingratitude.

The increase of grace has a tendency another way, to cause the saints to think their spiritual deformity vastly more than their goodness: it not only tends to convince them that their corruption is much greater than their goodness, which is indeed the case; but it also tends to cause the deformity that there is in the least sin, or the least degree of corruption, to appear so great as vastly to outweigh all the beauty there is in their greatest holiness; this also is indeed the case. The least sin against an infinite God, has an infinite hatefulness or deformity in it, but the highest degree of holiness in a creature, has not an infinite loveliness in it: and therefore the loveliness of it is as nothing, in comparison to the deformity of the least sin.

That every sin has infinite deformity and hatefulness in it, is most demonstrably evident; because what the evil, or iniquity, or hatefulness of sin is, is violation of an obligation, or the being or doing contrary to what we should be or do, or are obliged to. And so by how much the greater the obligation is that is violated, so much the greater is the iniquity and hatefulness of the violation. But certainly our obligation to love and honour any being is in some proportion to his loveliness and conformableness, or to his worthiness to be

loved and honoured by us; which is the same thing. We are surely under greater obligation to love a more lovely being, than a less lovely; and if a Being be infinitely lovely or worthy to be loved by us, then our obligations to love him are infinitely great; and therefore, whatever is contrary to this love, has in it infinite iniquity, deformity, and unworthiness.

But on the other hand, with respect to our holiness or love to God, there is not an infinite worthiness in that. The sin of the creature against God, is in deserving and hateful in proportion to the distance there is between God and the creature: the greatness of the object, and the low position and inferiority of the subject, aggravates it. But it is the reverse with regard to the worthiness of the respect of the creature to God; it is worthless, and not worthy, in proportion to the low position of the subject. So much greater the distance between God and the creature, so much less is the creature's respect worthy of God's notice or regard. The great degree of superiority increases the obligation on the inferior to regard the superior; and so makes the lack of regard more hateful. But the great degree of inferiority diminishes the worth of the regard of the inferior; because the more he is inferior, the less he is worthy of notice; the less he is, the less is what he can offer worth; for he can offer no more than himself, in offering his best respect; and therefore as he is little, and little worth, so is his respect little worth.

And the more a person has of true grace and spiritual light, the more will it appear this way to him; the more will he appear to himself infinitely deformed by reason of sin, and the less will the goodness that is in his grace, or good experience, appear in proportion to it. For indeed it is nothing to it; it is less than a drop to the ocean; for finite bears no proportion at all to that which is infinite. But the more a person has of spiritual light, the more do things appear to him, in this respect, as they are indeed.—So it most demonstrably appears, that true grace is of that nature, that the more a person has of it, with remaining corruption, the less does his goodness and holiness appear, in proportion to his deformity; and not only to his past deformity, but to his present deformity, in the sin that now appears in his heart, and the detestable defects of his greatest and best affections, and brightest experiences.

The nature of many great and religious affections, and great discoveries (as they are called) in many people that I have been acquainted with, is to hide and cover over the corruption of their hearts, and to make it seem to them as if all their sin was gone, and to leave them without complaints of any hateful evil left in them (though it may be they make a lot of noise about their past unworthiness); a sure and certain evidence that their discoveries (as they call them) are darkness and not light. It is darkness that hides men's pollution and deformity; but light let into the heart reveals it, searches it out in its secret corners, and makes it plainly appear; especially that penetrating, all searching light of God's holiness and glory. It is true, that saving discoveries may for the present hide corruption in one sense; they restrain the positive exercises of it, such as malice, envy, covetousness, lust, complaining against God, etc., but they bring corruption to light, in terms of what is lacking, i.e., that there is no more love, no more humility, no more thankfulness. These defects appear very hateful in the eyes of people who have the most eminent exercises of grace; and are a great weight to them, and they cause the saints to cry about their deficiency, and odious pride and ingratitude. Whatever positive exercises of corruption arise at any time, and mix themselves with eminent actings of grace, grace will excessively magnify the view of them, and make their appearance far more heinous and horrible."

Religious affections: Gracious affections are attended
with evangelical humiliation by Jonathan Edwards



SECTION SIX

FAITHS ACTIVITY IN THE SAVED: FAITH AND DISOBEDIENCE



CHAPTER 31

SIN IN BELIEVERS

“Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.” Mark 9 v 24

“The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the LORD search the heart, *I* try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, *and* according to the fruit of his doings.” Jeremiah 17 v 9,10

The saved may even be occasionally tempted to atheism but though doubts and fears may assail, these are overcome. Even the courageous saint, John the Baptist succumbed for a time to doubt whilst in prison for his faith:

“And said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?” Matthew 11 v 3

Though the truly saved person makes strenuous efforts after total obedience these result in being greatly different to God's standard of perfection demanded of them. The imperfections in faith in the saved are unbelief and result in sin in them. Unbelief or lack of trust in God results in them being self-centred and selfish. In obeying God they deny themselves which may appear and seem disadvantageous to them but they trust God who always knows and does best:

“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to *his* purpose.” Romans 8 v 28

Christians fall into isolated sins daily when it takes them by surprise and their guard is down. They quickly repent of it. John Owen remarks about being taken by surprise by sin in mature Christians and the need to always be on guard against sin lurking in the heart and its incursions:

“And these very men did not fall into their great sins at the *beginning of their profession*, when they only had a little experience of the goodness of God, of the sweetness and pleasantness of obedience, of the power and craft of sin, of its attractive forces, appeals, and surprisals. They committed them after a lifetime of walking with God, and acquaintance with all these things, together with innumerable motives for vigilance. Noah, corresponding to the length of time people lived in the world then, had walked uprightly with God some hundreds of years before he was surprised in the way he was, Genesis 9. Righteous Lot seems to have been towards the end of his days before he defiled himself with the abominations recorded. David, in a short life, had as much experience of grace and sin, and as much close, spiritual communion with God, as anyone ever had, before he was pulled to the ground by this law of sin. So was it with Hezekiah in a similar degree, that was not the lowest. Now, considering these examples of saved people, so well acquainted with its power and deceit, so armed and prepared against it, that had been conquerors over it for so many years, for it to overcome them, it argues a power and efficiency too powerful for anything but the Spirit of the Almighty to withstand. Who had a greater store of inherent grace than those men had; who had more experience of God and the excellency of his ways, the sweetness of his love and of communion with him, than they had? who had either better equipment to oppose sin with, or more obligation to do so, than they did? And yet we see how fearfully they were overcome.”

The works of John Owen
Volume 6: Temptation and Sin

CHAPTER 32

BACKSLIDING OR, DECLINING FROM OBEDIENCE

The only way to follow God is to give him the whole heart. Anything else for a saved person is backsliding.

Ordinarily in a saved person, all efforts are given in commitment to God. They struggle with all their effort to obey God consistently. Their relationship to God must be maintained daily. They must stay close to Him. If they don't push forward they will slip or slide back. Backsliding can be considered in the life of the saved as negligence. It is neglecting denial of self and a definite choice on the part of the saved. The sin a saved person commits may increase for a longer period of time. This is termed backsliding by Scripture. Backsliding, is sin that cleaves to a saved person and takes longer to root out. It is less extreme sin than some of the isolated scandalous sins a saved person can commit. This is a temporary situation and they repent and turn from it. If a person who claims to be saved does not repent of their sin they prove they were never saved at all. Sanctification is clearly not constantly progressive. To suggest it is, is to say people are being made more holy when they are backsliding and sinning is clearly a contradiction. Saints may backslide for a minor part of their lives but don't spend most of their lives like this:

“Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them

which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. Nevertheless I have *somewhat* against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.”
Revelations 2 v 1–4

“Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain and are ready to die for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast and repent.”
Revelations 3 v 2,3

Does God have such a great eternal purpose for the saved and did Christ suffer so greatly for them and do they get turned from being his enemies just to be backslidden most of their lives? It is not only impossible to be the case but also impious to imply that. God saved them to be a godly, holy people to be bear the image of His dear Son:

“But ye *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar(special) people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:”
1st Peter 2 v 9

“For this is the will of God, *even* your sanctification”
1st Thessalonians 4 v 3

In addition, there is not one example in the bible of a saint backslidden for the majority of the time they lived in this world.

Backsliding shows itself initially in the lessening of private efforts of the saved in seeking Gods face and presence and blessing as they pray and meditate on their own. Distraction and a cooling of the fervency of their love to the Lord occurs. Instead of focusing on their spiritual welfare they bring worldly concerns to the forefront of their devotions:

“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”
Matthew 6 v 33

“But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.”
Luke 10 v 42

Interestingly another of the seven churches addressed at the beginning of Revelations had slid back also. Laodicea's case was worse than Ephesus.

They did not know they were in such a poor spiritual state. They had little evidence in their lives of being saved. They thought they had a lot of evidence that they were good. Sin can be very deceptive in a persons experience. Noone can be sure they are saved until they repent and give up the practice of sinning again. In the saved two principles exert opposing influences – one to good and one to evil. In backsliding sin predominates but the saved find only emptiness and unhappiness in sin and desire to know and follow Christ again. This shows that the Holy Spirit is in their hearts stimulating them to come back to himself and they pray and seek Him again.

This world's sinful pursuits prove empty and barren to the saved who sample it again:

So in the desert's dreary waste,
By magic pow'r produced in haste,
(As ancient fables say)
Castles, and groves, and music sweet,
The senses of the trav'ler meet,
And stop him in his way.

But while he listens with surprise,
The charm dissolves, the vision dies,
'Twas but enchanted ground;
Thus if the Lord our spirits touch,
The world, which promised us so much,
A wilderness is found.

In backsliding, the saved person comes to love sin or self too much. If sin is given into in one area of behaviour it means sin in general is loved too much and it will not be able to be resisted in any other area of behaviour. Often one particular sin or lust predominates. The saved repent of their idolatry and sin and return to loving God supremely.

“There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof *are* the ways of death. Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful; and the end of that mirth *is* heaviness. The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways: and a good man *shall be satisfied* from himself. The simple believeth every word: but the prudent man looketh well to his going. A wise man feareth, and departeth from evil: but the fool rageth, and is confident.”

Proverbs 14 v 12–16

“Hast thou not procured this unto thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy God, when he led thee by the way? And now what hast thou to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of Sihor? or what hast thou to do in the way of Assyria, to drink the waters of the river? Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord GOD of hosts.”
Jeremiah 2 v 17–19

Backsliding is only temporary. David, Peter and Samson all repented of their sin:

“The oath which he sware to our father Abraham that he would unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.”
Luke 1 v 73–75

The term backsliding is from the old testament. It refers to the image of a cow that is refusing to work for its master:

“Though thou, Israel, play the harlot, *yet* let not Judah offend; and come not ye unto Gilgal, neither go ye up to Bethaven, nor swear, The LORD liveth. For Israel slideth back as a backsliding heifer: now the LORD will feed them as a lamb in a large place.”
Hosea 4 v 15,16

It is digging its hooves in and it is sliding back in the loose ground as it pulls hard against the rope the farmer is pulling it with. It conveys essentially the idea of rebelling against what it doesn't want to do. Backsliding in the Christian is really a form of rebellion against Gods ways and a determined chosing sinful deeds again. If there were no tangible difference between the behaviour of a saved and unsaved person a saved person couldn't realize that they were backslidden and so know to repent from it. The longer a person continues in a sinful way of life the less likely it is they are saved. Repentance is to turn from sin and for a person to know if they are repentant they assess their behaviour as God the Holy Spirit shows them in their conscience comparing it to the standard of God's holy word and so they give up their sin.

Backsliding can occur slowly and imperceptibly and so a person does

not notice and before they realize they are far from God, deep in sin and floundering spiritually.

In the old testament, Lot left his homeland and by faith sought a heavenly country just like his uncle, Abraham. However he backslid, making a covetous choice early in his life and fell shamefully into sin near the end of his life, committing incest. However God says about him that normally goodness was present and produced in him every day of his life. Not just occasionally, but consistently, day after day, he was obedient. Lots behaviour across his life as a whole was a godly example. The new testament tells us that he was not doing unlawful deeds and was disturbed about those who did:

“And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed *his* righteous soul from day to day with *their* unlawful deeds;)”
2nd Peter 2 v 7,8

Lot showed great respect as he recognized angels as the Lord’s messengers. He warned his family and believed Gods warnings. He witnessed to the wicked people reprimanding them for their sin:

“But before they lay down, the men of the city, *even* the men of Sodom, compassed the house round, both old and young, all the people from every quarter: And they called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where *are* the men which came in to thee this night? bring them out unto us, that we may know them. And Lot went out at the door unto them, and shut the door after him, And said, I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly.”
Genesis 19 v 4–7

In offering his daughters to the mob he was probably trying to gain some time till he made his escape with the angels and never actually intended to give them up. The things he chose covetously he gave up and repented of that sin as he obeyed Gods words in the big test of his life. Even though his wife was lost, he never looked back or stopped running away from all that he had originally chosen – Sodom, his wife and his comforts. He showed what he was spiritually when the big test came and repented of his backsliding. Sodoms doom was itself only a faint shadow of the everlasting destruction of the wicked in hell.

Samson is a similar case of backsliding for a time. He is described as having judged Israel for twenty years. He fell into substantial sins but his

consistent behaviour was good. He achieved great feats for God and is mentioned as outstanding in Hebrews. Like Lot he was a holy man.

The saved may backslide or rebel for a minor part of their lives then but not for the major part of their lives. God saves people to sanctify them and not leave them in sin. The devil may try to suggest to them that they are only a hypocrite before others if they do return from backsliding. However, others are not their ultimate judge – God is.

The saved may not shine as holy to the extent they usually would on the occasion that they are battling with a persistent temptation or sin that the Devil has been allowed to trouble them with. Job may be a case in point. However this is still in contrast to having a backslidden display to the world.

The apostle Peter emphasizes that the saved confidence that they are saved is dictated by their lapses in the faith with the subsequent restoration. Having listed the godly characteristics of a saved person he reminds those who have forgotten and are blind to their state. Sin deceives these Christians for a time:

“For if these things be in you, and abound, they make *you that ye shall* neither *be* barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know *them*, and be established in the present truth. Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting *you* in remembrance; Knowing that shortly I must put off *this* my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me. Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance.”

2nd Peter 1 v 9–15

Edwards comments about backsliding and its effects on the Christian in the following passage.

“True saints may be guilty of some kinds and degrees of backsliding,

and may be defeated by particular temptations, and may fall into sin, great sins; but they never can fall away so they grow weary of religion, and the service of God, and habitually dislike it and neglect it, either on its own account, or on account of the difficulties that come with it; as is evident by Galatians 6 v 9; Romans 2 v 7; Hebrews 10 v 36; Isaiah 43 v 22; Malachi 1 v 13. They can never backslide, so they do not continue in a way of universal obedience; or that it will cease to be their practice to observe all the rules of Christianity, and do all duties required, even in the most difficult circumstances. This is abundantly demonstrated by the things that have been observed already. Nor can they ever fall away so they habitually are more engaged in other things than in the business of religion; or that it should become their way and manner to serve something else more than God; or that they stately cease to serve God, with such earnestness and diligence, that they will still be habitually devoted and given up to the business of religion; unless the words of Christ can fall to the ground, *Ye cannot serve two masters*, and those of the apostle, *He that will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God*; and unless a saint can change his God, and yet be a true saint. Nor can a true saint ever fall away that it shall come to this, that ordinarily there shall be no remarkable difference in his walk and behaviour since his conversion, from what was before. They that are truly converted are new men, new creatures; new not only within, but without; they are sanctified throughout, in spirit, soul and body; old things are passed away, all things are become new; they have new hearts, and new eyes, new ears, new tongues, new hands, new feet; i.e., a new conversation and practice; and they walk in newness of life, and continue to do so till the end of life. The people that fall away, and cease visibly to continue, signal they never were risen with Christ.

Especially when men's opinion they are converted, and so in a safe state, is the very cause of this falling away, it is a most evident sign of their hypocrisy. If their falling away is into their former sins, or into some new kind of wickedness, having the corruption of nature only turned into a new channel, instead of its being mortified. Like people that think themselves converted, though they do not return to previous profanity and lust; yet from the high opinion they have

about their experiences, graces, and privileges, they gradually settle more and more into a self-righteous and spiritually proud state of mind, and behave in the proud kind of way that follows this. When it is like this with people, however far they may seem to be from their former evil practices, this alone is enough to condemn them, and may render their last state far worse than the first. This seems to be the very case of the Jews of that generation that Christ speaks about, Matthew 12 v 43–45, who being awakened by John the Baptist’s preaching, and brought to a reformation of their previous unrestrained practices, by which the unclean Spirit was as it were turned out, and the house swept and garnished; yet, being *empty* of God and of grace, they became full of themselves, and became conceited in an excessively high opinion of their own righteousness and eminent holiness, and became habituated to an answerably self-exalting behaviour; so changing the sins of tax collectors and prostitutes, for the sins of the Pharisees; the outcome was, having seven devils, worse than the first.”

*From Religious Affections by Jonathan Edwards:
Gracious and holy affections have their exercise
and fruit in Christian practice.*

It is an unalterable truth that the old hymn states:

Trust and obey, for there’s no other way
To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.

1. When we walk with the Lord in the light of His Word,
What a glory He sheds on our way!
While we do His good will, He abides with us still,
And with all who will trust and obey.
2. Not a shadow can rise, not a cloud in the skies,
But His smile quickly drives it away;
Not a doubt or a fear, not a sigh or a tear,
Can abide while we trust and obey.
3. Not a burden we bear, not a sorrow we share,
But our toil He doth richly repay;
Not a grief or a loss, not a frown or a cross,
But is blessed if we trust and obey.

4. But we never can prove the delights of His love
Until all on the altar we lay;
For the favour He shows, for the joy He bestows,
Are for them who will trust and obey.

5. Then in fellowship sweet we will sit at His feet,
Or we'll walk by His side in the way;
What He says we will do, where He sends we will go;
Never fear, only trust and obey.

CHAPTER 33

CHASTISEMENT OR DISCIPLINE

Jesus points out some of the consequences of sinning in the new testament:

“And he that was healed wist not(didn’t know) who it was: for Jesus had conveyed himself away, a multitude being in *that* place. Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto him, Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.”

Ultimately, for the saved, it is always a blessing to be chastised by God, their father, who tenderly corrects his erring children.

“Blessed *is* the man whom thou chastenest, O LORD, and teachest him out of thy law;”
Psalm 94 v 12

“My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him. His seed also will I make *to endure* for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven. If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail.”
Psalm 89 v 28–33

“Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word;
It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes;

I know, O LORD, that thy judgments *are* right, and *that* thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.” Psalm 119 v 67,71,75

Sometimes the saved may seem to have more trouble and suffering than others. This is because there is still significant corruption in them and becoming holy is painful. In John chapter 15 the saved are said to be like plants requiring to be pruned to produce growth, or in spiritual terms, disciplined:

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every *branch* that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye *are* the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.” John 15 v 1–5

Chastisement however should make the saved realize they are suffering to an unimaginably lesser extent they would have suffered in hell and a lot less than they deserve. It ought to remind them of the cost of Calvary.

The Christian can chose not to follow God for a time but either end up chastised and come to their senses or become so unhappy away from God they realize the way of sin is empty and don't want it and so turn back to him. They realize what fools they have been, the joy they missed in God and his presence and how much they have offended the one they love:

“For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness. Such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, *being* bound in affliction and iron; Because they rebelled against the words of God, and contemned the counsel of the most High: Therefore he brought down their heart with labour; they fell down, and *there was* none to help. Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, *and* he saved them out of their distresses. He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and brake their bands in sunder. Oh that *men* would praise the LORD *for* his goodness, and *for* his wonderful works to the children of men!”

Psalm 107 v 9–15

“O LORD, correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing.”
Jeremiah 10 v 24

Old lessons are relearned again and again because of remaining corruption. The saved are urged to always be vigilant against sin and to watch and pray so they are spiritually equipped to avoid sinning. Solomon was a biblical character who was disciplined for his sin. He backslid near the end of his life but followed God closely most of his days. He repented before he died and was undoubtedly saved as confirmed by the fact that he authored three biblical books. It is written about him:

For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, *that* his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as *was* the heart of David his father.”
1st Kings 11 v 4

“And Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of David his father: only he sacrificed and burnt incense in high places.”
1 Kings 3 v 3

“Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? yet among many nations was there no king like him, who was beloved of his God, and God made him king over all Israel: nevertheless even him did outlandish women cause to sin.”
Nehemiah 13 v 26

The following verses must refer to Solomon primarily rather than Christ (who was also descended from David) because the person described is said to be able to sin and to be chastised by God. Christ did not and could not sin:

“And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took *it* from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever. According to all these

words, and according to all this vision, so did Nathan speak unto David.”
2nd Samuel 7 v 12–17

Solomon’s repentance is documented in the book of Ecclesiastes which he wrote and is shown especially in its eventual conclusion. The following text confirms the overarching purpose of God in chastisement of the saved:

“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.”
Revelation 3 v 19

Another biblical book of Ruth describes how a mature Christian looks back with some regret at the sins committed earlier in her Christian life and her discipline for them. She turned back with the chastening hand of God upon her:

“So they two went until they came to Bethlehem. And it came to pass, when they were come to Bethlehem, that all the city was moved about them, and they said, *Is this Naomi?* And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the LORD hath brought me home again empty: why *then* call ye me Naomi, seeing the LORD hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?”
Ruth 1 v 19–21

Yet she was restored and was a devoted and honourable saint. The Saviour himself was descended through the Ruth whose life she undoubtedly had a great influence upon.

The Lord may not immediately restore a sense of his presence as part of the correction process. He is sovereign as to what point he reveals his presence to his wayward children as King David witnesses to:

“Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me *with thy* free spirit.”
Psalm 51 v 11, 12

It is a beautiful picture in the Song of Solomon as the church seeks her love in Christ. Even when she is asleep she thinks of him and longs for Him:

“I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse: I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk: eat, O friends; drink,

yea, drink abundantly, O beloved. I sleep, but my heart waketh: it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night. I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them? My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him. I rose up to open to my beloved; and my hands dropped with myrrh, and my fingers with sweet smelling myrrh, upon the handles of the lock. I opened to my beloved; but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone: my soul failed when he spake: I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer.”

Song of Solomon 5 v 1–6

And also the prophet Jeremiah’s complains and humbly recollects:

“I *am* the man *that* hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath. He hath led me, and brought *me into* darkness, but not *into* light. Surely against me is he turned; he turneth his hand *against me* all the day. My flesh and my skin hath he made old; he hath broken my bones. He hath builded against me, and compassed *me* with gall and travail. He hath set me in dark places, as *they that be* dead of old. He hath hedged me about, that I cannot get out: he hath made my chain heavy. Also when I cry and shout, he shutteth out my prayer. He hath inclosed my ways with hewn stone, he hath made my paths crooked. He *was* unto me *as* a bear lying in wait, *and as* a lion in secret places. He hath turned aside my ways, and pulled me in pieces: he hath made me desolate. He hath bent his bow, and set me as a mark for the arrow. He hath caused the arrows of his quiver to enter into my reins. I was a derision to all my people; *and* their song all the day. He hath filled me with bitterness, he hath made me drunken with wormwood. He hath also broken my teeth with gravel stones, he hath covered me with ashes. And thou hast removed my soul far off from peace: I forgot prosperity. And I said, My strength and my hope is perished from the LORD: Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall. My soul hath *them* still in remembrance, and is humbled in me. This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope. *It is of* the LORD’S mercies that we are not consumed, because

his compassions fail not. *They are* new every morning: great *is* thy faithfulness. The LORD *is* my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him. The LORD *is* good unto them that wait for him, to the soul *that* seeketh him.”
Lamentations 3 v 1–25

God chastises specifically for sin in many instances. Pride could be chastised by attempts made to advance ourselves being frustrated and thwarted. For example, David sinned in his family, in relation to a wife, and was disciplined in his family and because he murdered, in respect of the death of his child, and also the rebellion and death of his dear son Absalom. Zacharias, John the Baptists Father, addressed Gods messenger, Gabriel, by speaking in an unbelieving manner and was chastised by losing the power of speech for a time. This principle applies to many, if not all, areas of life.

The Lord chastens in order to diminish sin in his people and to cause them look to their beautiful Saviour and glorious Lord. Discipline produces a clearer sight by faith of Jesus to the saints and turns them from looking to themselves and the sinful world. It gives greater spiritual sight and insight into their sinfulness and his worthiness and all glorious merit and grace:

“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily

for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.”

The saved in dying are undoubtedly made perfect in holiness and the remaining impurities removed. Although God may still chose to take them to be with himself using the circumstances of their chastisement his purposes of refinement by means of discipline will be achieved in their soul before they die:

“Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed. Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:”

Hebrews 12 v 1–12,13–14

and,

“The right hand of the LORD is exalted: the right hand of the LORD doeth valiantly. I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord. The LORD hath chastened me sore: but he hath not given me over unto death.”

Psalm 118 v 16–18

By contrast, Those who do not believe, the unsaved are spiritually blind and are not corrected but left to become worse in their sin. The prophet Isaiah describes this blindness:

“Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.”

Isaiah 53 v 1,2

In the latter half of Hebrews 12 the apostle contrasts the relation of the saved and the unsaved to the punitive consequences of their sin and the spiritual effects of this on each group:

“Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be

defiled; Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears. For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest,

And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more:

(For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart: And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:) But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel. See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven: Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire.”

Hebrew 12 v 15–29

Rarely, the saved may rebelliously refuse to give up a particular sin, an idol for example. God may bring greater trouble upon them to bring them to their senses. It confirms that saying: Truly, mans extremity is Gods opportunity. It is, regrettably, sometimes true of the saved and the unsaved that they may have to made desperate before they seek God. This is still

a blessing when compared to those unsaved who are left to themselves undisturbed and so perish eternally:

“*God is jealous.*”

Nahum 1:2

“*Your Lord is very jealous of your love*, O believer. Did he choose you? He cannot bear that you should choose another. Did he buy you with his own blood? He cannot endure that you should think that you are your own, or that you belong to this world. He loved you with such a love that he would not stop in heaven without you; he would sooner die than you should perish, and he cannot endure that anything should stand between your heart’s love and himself. *He is very jealous of your trust*. He will not permit you to trust in an arm of flesh. He cannot bear that you should hew out broken cisterns, when the overflowing fountain is always free to you. When we lean upon him, he is glad, but when we transfer our dependence to another, when we rely upon our own wisdom, or the wisdom of a friend—worst of all, when we trust in any works of our own, he is displeased, and will chasten us that he may bring us to himself. *He is also very jealous of our company*. There should be no one with whom we converse so much as with Jesus. To abide in him only, this is true love; but to commune with the world, to find sufficient solace in our carnal comforts, to prefer even the society of our fellow Christians to secret intercourse with him, this is grievous to our jealous Lord. He would fain have us abide in him, and enjoy constant fellowship with himself; and many of the trials which he sends us are for the purpose of weaning our hearts from the creature, and fixing them more closely upon himself. Let this jealousy which would keep us near to Christ *be also a comfort* to us, for if he loves us so much as to care thus about *our* love we may be sure that he will suffer nothing to harm us, and will protect us from all our enemies. Oh that we may have grace this day to keep our hearts in sacred chastity for our Beloved alone, with sacred jealousy shutting our eyes to all the fascinations of the world!”

CH Spurgeon
Morning and Evening

God warns the saved that if they stray they will be disciplined whereas if they obey it is of great benefit:

“The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward.”
 Psalm 19 v 7–11

The Lord is always tender hearted towards his children no matter how severe the correction seems at the time it is experienced by them:

“For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name *is* Holy; I dwell in the high and holy *place*, with him also *that is* of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth: for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls *which* I have made. For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart. I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners.”

Isaiah 57 v 14–18

In the following comment a godly person advises on how the saved should respond to chastening in their experience and uses a particular example to illustrate this:

“I understand by your Letter, that you have many and great trials; some external and bodily, some internal and spiritual: as the deprivation of inward comfort, the buffetings (and that in more then ordinary manner), of your soul, with Satans temptations: and (which makes all those inward and outward, the more heavy and insupportable) that you have wanted Christian society with the Saints of God, to whom you might make known your griefs, and by whom you might receive comfort from the Lord,

and encouragement in your Christian course. Now that which I earnestly desire on your behalf, and hope likewise you do in your own, is that you may draw nearer to God, and be more conformable to his command by these afflictions; for if our afflictions be not sanctified, that is, if we make not a holy use of them by purging out the old leaven of our ingenerate corruptions, they are only judgments to us, and make way for greater plagues: John 5 v. 14.

And therefore the chief end and aim of God in all the afflictions which he sends to his children in love, is, that they may be partakers of his holiness, and so their afflictions may be conducive to their spiritual advantage and profit, Hebrews 12 v 10. The Lord aims not at himself in any calamities he lays on us, (for God is so infinitely all-sufficient, that we can add nothing to him by all our doings or sufferings) but his main aim is at our Melioration and Sanctification in and by them.

And therefore our duty in every affliction and pressure, is thus to think with our selves: How shall we carry and behave our selves under this cross, that our souls may reap profit by it? This (in one word) is done by our returning and drawing nearer to the Lord, as his holy Apostle exhorts us, James 4 v 8. This in all calamities the Lord hath a special eye for, and is exceeding angry if he doesn't find it. The Prophet declares That his anger was not turned from Israel, because they turned not to him that smote them, Isaiah. 1 v. 4, 5. Now it is impossible that a man should draw nigh to God, and turn to him, if he turn not from his evil ways: for in every conversion there is *Terminus a quo*, something to be turned from, as well as *Terminus ad quod*, something to be turned to. Now, that we must turn to, is God; and that we must turn from, is sin; as being diametrically opposite to God, and that which separates between God and us.

To this purpose we must search and try our hearts and ways, and see what sins there are that keep us from God, and separate us from his gracious favour: and chiefly we must weed out our special bosom-sins. This the ancient Church of God advises each other to do in the time of their anguish and affliction, Lamentations 3 v 39, 40, Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord: for though sin make not a final divorce between God and his chosen

people, yet it may make a dangerous rupture by taking away sense of comfort, and suspending, for a period of time, the sweet influence of his favour, and the effectual operation of his grace. And therefore my earnest suit and desire is, that you would diligently peruse the book of your conscience, enter into a thorough search and examination of your heart and life; and every day before you go to bed, take a time of recollection and meditation, (as holy Isaac did in his private walks, Genesis 24 v. 63), holding a privy Session in your soul, and indicting your self for all the sins, in thought, word, or act committed, & all the good duties you have omitted. This self-examination, if it is so strict and rigid as it ought to be, will soon shew you the sins you are most inclined to (the chief cause of all your sorrows), and consequently, it will (by God's assistance) effectually instruct you to fly from those venomous and fiery serpents, which have so stung you.

And though you have (as you say) committed many grievous sins, as abusing God's gracious ordinances, and neglecting the golden opportunities of grace: the original, as you conceive of all your troubles; yet I must tell you, there is another Coloquintida in the pot, another grand enormity (though you perceive it not) and that is your separation from Gods Saints and Servants in the Acts of his public Service and worship. This you may clearly discern by the affliction itself, for God is methodical in his corrections, and does as a general rule so suit the cross to the sin committed, that you may read the kind of wrong you have done in the cross received

(For example) You confess that your main affliction, and that which made the other more bitter, is, that God took away those to whom you might make your complaint; and from whom you might receive comfort in your spiritual distress. And is not this just with God, that when you wilfully separate your self from others, he should separate others from you? Certainly, when we undervalue mercy, especially so great a one as the communion of Saints is, commonly the Lord takes it away from us, till we learn to prize it to the full value

Consider well therefore the heinousness of this sin, which that you may the better conceive, First, consider it is against Gods express

Precept, charging us not to forsake the assemblies of the Saints, Heb. x. 20, 25. Again, it is against our own greatest good and spiritual solace, for by discommunicating & excommunicating our selves from that blessed society, we deprive our selves of the benefit of their holy conference, their godly instructions, their divine consolations, brotherly admonitions, and charitable reprehensions; and what an inestimable loss is this? Neither can we partake such profit by their prayers as otherwise we might: for as the soul in the natural body conveys life and strength to every organ, as they are compacted and joined together, and not as dis-severed; so Christ conveys spiritual life and vigour to Christians, not as they are disjoined from, but as they are united to the mystical body, the Church.

But you will say it is not a true Church, and therefore you separate; adhere to the true Church. I answer, it is easily proved to be a true Church of Christ: First, because it has all the essentials, necessary to the constitution of a true Church; as sound preaching of the Gospel, right dispensation of the Sacraments, Prayer religiously performed, and evil persons justly punished (though not in that measure as some criminals and malefactors deserve:) and therefore a true Church. 2. Because it hath begot many spiritual children to the Lord, which for soundness of judgement, and holiness of life, are not inferior to any in other Churches.”

MEMOIR OF RICHARD SIBBES.

Mr Owen comments on Gods response to sin indulged in by the saints:

“1. Misdemeanours under signal enjoyments of love and kindness from God are of this sort. When God has given to anyone expressive manifestations of his love, convinced him of it, made him say in the inmost parts of his heart, “This is undeserved love and kindness;” — then for him to be negligent in his walking with God, it signals an unkindness with it that shall not be forgotten. It is a remark about the misdemeanours of Solomon, that he fell into them after God had “appeared unto him twice.” And all sins under or after especial mercies will meet, at one time or other, especial rebukes. Nothing more distresses the conscience of a sinner than the remembrance, in darkness, of abused light; in desertions, of

neglected love. This God will make them aware of. “Though I have redeemed them,” saith God, “yet they have spoken lies against me,” Hosea 7:13: so chap. 13:4–7. When God has in his providence dealt graciously with a person, — it may be delivered him from difficulties and troubles, set him in a blessed place, prevented him with many fruits and effects of his goodness, blessed him in his person, relations, and employments, dealt well with his soul, in giving him a gracious sense of his love in Christ; — for such a one to fall under sinful misdemeanours, it goes to the heart of God, and shall not be passed over. Under-valuations of love are great provocations. “Hath Nabal thus requited my kindness,” said David. “I cannot bear it.” And the clearer the convictions of any in this kind were, the more severe will their reflections be on themselves.

2. Sins under or after great afflictions are of this importance also. God does not afflict willingly, or chasten us merely for his pleasure; he does it to make us participants of his holiness. To take so little notice of his hand in it, as under it or after it not to watch against the workings and surprisals of sin, it has unkindness in it: “I smote him,” said God, “and he went on wilfully in the way of his own heart.” These provocations of his sons and daughters he cannot bear with. Has God brought you into the furnace, so that you hast melted under his hand, and in pity and compassion has given you enlargement of blessing? — if you have soon forgotten his dealings with you, is it any wonder if he remind you again by troubles in thy soul?

3. Breaking off from under strong convictions and dawnings of love before conversion, are often remembered on the conscience afterward. When the Lord by his Spirit shall mightily convince the heart of sin, and make with it some discoveries of his love and the excellencies of Christ to it, so that it begins to yield and be overpowered, being almost persuaded to be a Christian; — if, then, through the strength of lust or unbelief, it goes back to the world or self-righteousness, its folly has unkindness with it that, sometimes shall not be passed by. God can, and often does, put forth the greatness of his power for the recovery of such a soul; but yet he will deal with him about this contempt of his love

and the excellency of his Son, in the dawnings of them revealed to him.

4. Sudden forgetfulness of endearing manifestations of special love. This God cautions his people against, as knowing their proneness to it: Psalm 135:8, “God the LORD will speak peace to his people, and to his saints; but let them not turn again to folly.” Let them take heed of their aptness to forget endearing manifestations of special love. When God at any time draws near to a soul by his Spirit, in his word, with gracious words of peace and love, giving a sense of his kindness on the heart by the Holy Spirit, so that it is filled with joy unspeakable and full of glory; — for this soul, upon a temptation, a diversion, or by mere carelessness and neglect, which often happens, to suffer this sense of love to be as it were obliterated, and so to lose that influencing efficacy to obedience which it is accompanied with, this also is full of unkindness. We have an account of this, Song of Solomon 5:1–6. In the first verse the Lord Jesus draws nigh, with full provision of gospel mercies for his beloved: “I am come unto thee,” says he, “O my sister. I have brought myrrh and spice, honey and wine, with me: whatever is spiritually sweet and delightful, — mercy, grace, peace, consolation, joy, assurance,— they are all here in readiness for you.” Verse 2. The spouse, in her drowsy indisposition, takes little notice of this gracious visit; she is diverted by other matters, and does not know how to attend fully and wholly to the blessed communion offered unto her, but excuses herself as otherwise engaged. But what is the outcome? Christ withdraws, leaves her in the dark, amongst many disconsolations, and it is a long time before she obtain any recovery.

5. Great opportunities for service neglected and great gifts not improved are often the occasion of plunging the soul into great depths. Gifts are given to trade with for God. Opportunities are the market-days for that trade. To napkin up the one and to let slip the other will end in trouble and disconsolation. Disturbances and anxieties in our heart are worms that will certainly breed in the rust of unexercised gifts. God loses a revenue of glory and honour by such lazy souls; and he will make them aware of it. I know some

today because of omissions of opportunities for service are ready to sink into the grave.

6. Sins after especial warnings usually result in this. In all that variety of special warnings which God is pleased to use towards sinning saints, I shall single out one only: — When a soul is wrestling with some lust or temptation, God by his providence causes some special word, in the preaching of the gospel, or the administration of the means of grace particularly suited to the state and condition of the soul, by the ways of rebuke or persuasion, to come near and enter the inmost parts of the heart. The soul cannot but take notice that God is near to him, that he is dealing with him, and calling on him to look to him for assistance. And he seldom gives such warnings to his saints but that he is near them in an eminent manner to give them relief and help, if, in answer unto his call, they apply themselves unto him; but if his care and kindness is neglected, his following reproofs are usually more severe.

7. Sins that bring scandal seldom suffer the soul to escape depths. Even in great sins, God in chastening takes more notice often of the scandal than the sin; as 2 Samuel 12:14. Many who claim to be saved take little notice of their worldliness, their pride, their passion, their lavish tongues; but the world does, and the gospel is disadvantaged by it: and no wonder if themselves find from the hand of the Lord the bitter fruits of them in the outcome.”

From *Temptation and Sin* by John Owen

Exposition of Psalm 130 verse 4



SECTION SEVEN

FAITHS ACTIVITY IN THE SAVED: FAITH EXPERIENCED



CHAPTER 34

FAITH AND ASSURANCE

There were twelve original disciples and one was unsaved:

“Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?”
John 6 v 70

Around the table at the last supper Christ said one of the disciples would betray him. Every genuine disciple expressed doubts that they might betray Christ, except the one who actually did do so.

Faith has certainty at its core. The Holy Spirit gives the saved a conviction of the certainty of Gods testimony:

“For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.”
2nd Timothy 1 v 12

If we consider these contrasting new testament statements from Paul and John they demonstrate the certainty in faith and yet the potential uncertainty that may be entertained by the believer in their awareness and consciousness of the reality of their own act of believing – that is whether they truly believe or not:

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”
Galatians 2 v 20

And,

“And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.”
1st John 2 v 3

The saved do not doubt the truth of the divine testimony but can doubt the reality of their own trust and belief in it. What they doubt is whether they really know and perceive what the divine testimony is, truly. Satan deceives many into thinking they believe the true gospel when really they only believe in a gospel of their own making and in a God of their own imagination. Because we have corrupt hearts and minds we cannot on our own perceive the truth of the gospel. It is only if the Holy Spirit illuminates our dark minds, removing our corrupt conceptions, our prejudices and rebellion that we are able to comprehend the gospel righteously and correctly and become willing to comply with its terms:

“Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard *this*, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it? When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you? *What* and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before? It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, *they* are spirit, and *they* are life. But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him. And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father. From that *time* many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.”
John 6 v 60–66

“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”
1st Corinthians 2 v 14

People can think that they truly believe – they think they understand and agree with the propositions of the gospel and even accept some of the evidence for the truth but aren’t willing to rely on them and to accept what they really mean about themselves and for them – in other words they are not willing to believe, comprehensively and really, to trust in Christ:

Assurance, then is about the possible doubt of the saved over

whether their faith is of the right kind before God and not just in their own often flawed estimation. How can they know if it is? How can a saved person be reassured that they are saved.

Although faith is inherently certain, there are also evidences to confirm it is true. The first is an internal experience produced by the Holy Spirit in the lives of the saved. It is distinct from but closely related to the conviction present in their faith that the gospel testimony is true and divine. Faith itself is not felt or sensed in our hearts but its effects are felt, such as love and joy:

“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:” Romans 8 v 16

“For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” 2nd Corinthians 4 v 6

“All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew *it* unto you.” John 16 v 15

“Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.” 1st John 4 v 13

“And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.” 1st John 3 v 24

“Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations:

That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see *him* not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:” 1st Peter 1 v 5–8.

It is no direct revelation spelling out to them they are saved in large letters

as it were. It is no mystical revelation that is additional to and outside of scripture but is simply the same experience as the saints in the bible are described as experiencing by the Holy Spirit also. The saints see their own internal experience mirrored in scripture teaching. The Holy Spirit guides the saved over their spiritual and inner experience in accordance with and consistent with what Gods word clearly states about it. As they are enlightened by Him and as they examine Gods word, the nature of their experience confirms to them they are saved. This includes changed thoughts tending towards moral goodness instead of evil which is part of their obedience.

“Unto the pure all things *are* pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving *is* nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.”
Titus 1 v 15

The desires and loves of those who become saved are altered. For example they experience their own utter unworthiness of salvation, great love to God, utter devotion to Christ, they feel sorry over sin and they love others – especially longing for their souls salvation. These experiences are realized to be supremely fulfilling, whatever lifes circumstances obtain and aren’t only fleeting but are sustained throughout their lives:

“Thy people *shall be* willing in the day of thy power,”
Psalm 110 v 3

“And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.”
Romans 5 v 5

“Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.”
Romans 15 v 13

The other kind of evidence the saved have at their disposal to confirm their being truly saved is external experience, in their actions towards God and others. It is obedient acts which are external:

“And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso

keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.” 1st John 2 v 3–6

“We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not *his* brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. Hereby perceive we the love of *God*, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down *our* lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of *compassion* from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, *then* have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.” 1st John 3 v 14–23

The internal and the external evidences are corroboratory of each other in confirming the saints personal interest in the salvation wrought out by Jesus Christ.

A person who is truly saved receives reassurance that they are saved because they see that their behaviour is changed. They also see the way they respond to God in suffering. Job, for example, had assurance that he was saved despite his sufferings and because of witnessing his own spiritual response to the suffering he endured, including the great pain of God withholding his presence for a time:

“For I know *that* my redeemer liveth, and *that* he shall stand at the latter *day* upon the earth:” Job 19 v 25

A saint may temporarily lose some of the evidence of a sense of grace but even then they may refer to a long experience of these affections and also of their changed moral behaviour over a long period. Though they may

walk in darkness as it were for a time they can still take heart and be encouraged:

“This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope. It is of the LORD’S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him.”

Lamentations 3 v 21–24

True repentance is denying self, not only restraining self. If some hidden action is involved in committing a sin that individual alone may know they are not saved. A common mistake is to ignore evidence in their lives showing they are not saved, whatever experiences they may seem to have had. The other great danger is to think that their actions and thoughts are no different to others who are saved without really examining them carefully. Many have entered a lost eternity making the assumption that the way they behaved was no different to others when in fact it was much worse and much more wicked.

Unusually people make an enormous effort to do all the right works restraining themselves for a limited time but their heart is not changed. Fear or pride or a sense of shame may drive some people to attempt to be righteous. Demas loved this present world. His heart, his love was elsewhere even though he seemed to continue for a substantial time following Christ – similarly in the parable of the sower some received the gospel with joy but the seed had no deep root so it died away not immediately, but after a period of time:

“For *it is* impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,

If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put *him* to an open shame. For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: But that which beareth thorns and briers *is* rejected, and *is* nigh unto cursing; whose end *is* to be burned. But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you,

and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak. For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister. And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” Hebrews 6 v 4–12

A saved person may sin in one area and fear they aren't saved. Where the saved sin occasionally in respect of a particular type of sin and fear they aren't saved the devil may use this to discourage them about their state to obstruct their service to God. However it must be argued towards the Accuser of the brethren that the sin is occasional and other areas of behaviour indicate they are saved.

A saved persons doubts that they are saved result from sin and backsliding. This produces the thought in them: does a saved person sin in these ways. It is useful in leading them to stop sin as they realize they have strayed from obeying God. The only way to be sure of ones state again is to return and be obedient, committed, devoted and consecrated again. They answer Gods call to consider their ways:

“Now therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways. Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages *to put it* into a bag with holes. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways. Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the LORD.” Haggai 1 v 5–8

“And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:” Ephesians 4 v 30,31

In David's great sin he was already sinning in many areas of his life before he fell with Bathsheba. He had travelled far down the slippery slope. He was backslidden at the time of that sin. He was noted to be idle in his palace instead of showing an example and fighting with his army. His repentance

is documented in psalm 51. In that psalm it reminds us the saved's internal evidence may be removed particularly when sin intervenes in their lives:

“Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin *is* ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done *this* evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, *and* be clear when thou judgest. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden *part* thou shalt make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness; *that* the bones *which* thou hast broken may rejoice. Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me *with thy* free spirit. *Then* will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee.”

Psalm 51

People may be saved but backslidden but try to derive comfort from previous experiences of the Spirit without obeying again. Assurance proves hollow and illusory to those people. God does not answer their prayers:

“If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear *me*.”

Psalm 66 v 18

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

Isaiah 59 v 2

“The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”

James 5 v 16

The saved desire God's company. Nearness by his Spirit is what they yearn for. Life becomes empty without it. When they are backslidden they eventually miss God's presence and feel empty in not following and experiencing him. They become sad, doubting, fearing people seeing their sins

and not finding satisfaction in the world. Once they have experienced God's presence and love in their hearts nothing else compares to knowing Him. Other legitimate pleasures are empty to them. They are useless creatures, not glorifying God or helping others turn to Him. The fire of their love of spiritual concerns burns low. They doubt their spiritual state but eventually conclude they desire God and Jesus to draw near. Christ alone is what they want along with conformity to his image and will or, in other words, holiness.

“I opened to my beloved; but my beloved had withdrawn himself, *and* was gone: my soul failed when he spake: I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer. The watchmen that went about the city found me, they smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me. I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him, that I *am* sick of love.” Song of Solomon 5 v 6–8

Edwards comments in the following passage:

“Indeed people’s doubts about their good spiritual state, may in several respects *arise from* unbelief. It may be from unbelief, or because they have so little faith that they have so little *evidence* about their good state: if they had more experience of the operation of faith, and so more experience of the exercise of grace, they would have clearer evidence that their state was good; and so their doubts would be removed. Their doubting about their state may be from unbelief, though there are many things that are good evidences of a work of grace in them, yet they doubt very much whether they are really in a state of favour with God, because it is *they*, those that are so unworthy, and have done so much to provoke God to anger against them. Their doubts in that case arise from unbelief, because they arise from lack of a sufficient sense *of*, and reliance on, the infinite riches of God’s grace, and the sufficiency of Christ for the chief of sinners. They may also be from unbelief, when they doubt their state, because of the *mystery* of God’s dealings with them; they are not able to reconcile these dealings with God’s favour to them; or when they doubt whether they have any interest in the promises, because the promises from the aspect of providence appear so unlikely to be fulfilled; the difficulties that

are present are so many and great. Such doubting arises from lack of dependence upon God's almighty power, and his knowledge and wisdom, as infinitely above theirs. Yet, in these people, *unbelief*, and *doubts about their state*, are not the same thing; though one arises from the other.

Persons may be greatly to blame for doubting whether they are saved, on the grounds mentioned; and they may be to blame, that they have no more grace, and no more of the present exercises and experiences of it, to be evidence to them they are in a good state: people are doubtless to blame for being in a dead, worldly condition; but when they are in that kind of condition, and have no conscious experience of the exercises of grace, but on the contrary, are greatly under the power of lusts and an unchristian spirit, *they are not to blame for doubting their state*. It is as impossible, in the nature of things, that a holy and Christian hope will be kept alive, in its clearness and strength, in these circumstances, as it is to maintain the bright sunshine in the air, when the sun has gone down. Distant experiences, when darkened by present dominant lust and corruption, never keep alive a gracious confidence and assurance; it rather deteriorates and decays. It is not at all to be deplored, that people doubt their state under these circumstances: on the contrary, it is desirable that they should. It is agreeable to the wise and merciful design of things, God has established, that it should be like this. God has engineered and designed things, in his administration towards his own people, that when their *love* decays, and its exercises fail, or become weak, *fear* should arise; they then need *fear* to restrain them from sin, and to excite them to care for the good of their souls, and so to stimulate them to vigilance and diligence in religion: God has so ordered, that when love rises, and is in vigorous exercise, then fear should disappear, and be driven away; they then do not need it, having a higher and more excellent principle in operation, to restrain them from sin, and motivate them to their duty. There are no other principles, which human nature is under the influence of, that will ever make men conscientious, but one of these two, *fear* or *love*; and therefore, if one of these should not dominate as the other decays, God's people, when fallen into dead and worldly spirit, when love is asleep,

would be deplorably exposed so God has wisely established, that these two opposite principles of love and fear should rise and fall, like the two opposite scales of a balance; when one rises the other sinks. Just as light and darkness necessarily and unavoidably succeed each other; if light dominates, darkness ceases so much, and no more; and if light *decays*, darkness dominates so much; it is like this in the heart of a child of God: if divine *love decays* and falls asleep, and lust dominates, the light and joy of hope go out, and dark fear and doubting rises; and if, on the contrary, divine *love dominates* becoming lively exercised, this brings in the brightness of hope, and drives away black lust, and fear with it. Love is the *spirit of adoption*, or the childlike principle; if that sleeps, men fall under fear, which is the *spirit of slavery*, or the servile principle; and so on the contrary. And if that love, or the spirit of adoption, rises to a great height, it quite drives away all fear, and gives full assurance; agreeable to that stated by the apostle, 1 John 4 v 18, "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear." These two opposite principles of lust and holy love, bring hope and fear into the hearts of God's children, in proportion as they dominate; that is when left to their own natural influence, without something adventitious, or accidental intervening; such as the disorder of clinical depression, doctrinal ignorance, prejudices of education, wrong instruction, false principles, particular temptations, etc.

Fear is thrown out by the Spirit of God in no other way than by the domination of love and is it never maintained by his Spirit except when love is asleep. At that time all the saint's self-examinations, and poring over past experience, in order to establish his peace, and get assurance are futile. It is contrary to the nature of things, as God has established them, that they should have assurance at such a time.

They directly thwart God's wise and gracious design of things, who exhort others to be confident in their hope, when in a dead spirit; under a notion of *living by faith*, and *not by sight*, and *trusting God in the dark*, and *living on Christ*, and *not on experiences*; and warn them not to doubt about their good state, so they will not be guilty of the dreadful sin of unbelief. It has a direct tendency to

establish the most presumptuous hypocrites, and to prevent their ever calling their state into question, however much wickedness rages, and reigns in their hearts, and dominates in their lives; under a notion of honouring God, by *hoping against hope*, and confidently trusting in God, when things look very dark. Doubtless vast mischief has been done this way.

Persons cannot be said to forsake Christ, and live on their experiences of the exercises of grace, merely because they take them and use them as evidences of grace; there are no other evidences that they can or ought to take. But then people may be said to live on their experiences, when they make a *righteousness* of them, and instead of keeping their eye on God's glory and Christ's excellency, they turn their eyes away from these objects, on to themselves, to entertain their minds, by viewing their own attainments, and high experiences, and the great things they have encountered, and are bright and beautiful in their own eyes, and are rich and increased with goods in their own estimation, and think that God has as admiring an esteem of them, on the same account, as they have of themselves: this is living on experiences, and not on Christ; and is more abominable in the sight of God, than the gross immoralities of those who do not make pretence of religion. But this is a far different thing from a mere employing experiences as evidences of their saving interest in a glorious Redeemer."

From Religious Affections: It is no sign that affections are right, or that they are wrong, that they make persons that have them exceedingly confident that what they experience is divine, and that they are in a good state. by Jonathan Edwards

John Owen also comments on the evidence from a persons experience that confirms to them that the faith they believe with is of the right kind and that they are not deluded with a false faith.

CHAPTER 35

SUPPORT TO SIN-ENTANGLED SOULS: ASSURANCE ATTAINABLE

From Temptation and Sin

By John Owen

“It is the duty of every believer to labour after an assurance of a personal interest in forgiveness, and to be diligent in the cherishing and preservation of it when it is attained. The apostle exhorts us all to it, Hebrews 10:22, “Let us draw near in full assurance of faith;” that is, of our acceptance with God through forgiveness in the blood of Jesus. This he plainly describes; and this principle of our faith and confidence he would have us to hold fast to the end, chap. 3:14. It is no small evil in believers not to be pressing after perfection in believing and obedience.

Often some sinful indulgence to self, or the world, or laziness, is the cause of it. But yet most of our privileges, and upon the matter all our comforts, depend on this one thing. A little by the way, to encourage to this duty, I shall desire you to consider both how this assurance is produced and what it produces, — what it is the fruit of, and what fruit it bears: —

It is, in general, the product of a more plentiful communication of the Spirit than ordinary, as to a sense and participation of the choice fruits of the death of Christ, procured for those who are justified by their acceptance of the atonement. It does not flourish without his sealing, witnessing, establishing, and shedding abroad the love of God in our hearts. See Romans 5:1–5. And what believer ought not to long for and press after

the enjoyment of these things? No, to read of these things in the gospel, not experiencing them in our own hearts, and yet to sit down quietly on this side of them, without continual pressing after them, is to despise the blood of Christ, the Spirit of grace, and the whole work of God's love. If there are no such things, the gospel is not true; if there are, if we do not press after them, we are despisers of the gospel. Surely he has not the Spirit who would not have more of him, all of him that is promised by Christ. These things are the "hundredfold" that Christ hath left us in the world to counterpoise our sorrows, troubles, and losses; and shall we be so foolish as to neglect our only abiding riches and treasures, — in particular, as it is the product of an exercised, vigorous, active faith? That our faith should be such always, in every state and condition, I suppose it our duty to endeavour. Not only our comforts but our obedience also depends upon it. The more faith that is true and of the right kind, the more obedience; for all our obedience is the obedience of faith.

For its own fruit, and what it produces, they are the choicest actions of our souls towards God, — such as love, delight, rejoicing in the Lord, peace, joy, and consolation in ourselves, readiness to do or suffer, cheerfulness in so doing. If they do not grow from this root, yet their flourishing wholly depends upon it; so that surely it is the duty of every believer to break through all difficulties in pressing after this particular assurance.

In Gods ordinary dispensing to us, and dealings with us, it is mostly [by] our own negligence and laziness that we come short of this assurance. It is true it depends in a particular manner on the sovereignty of God. He is as absolute in giving peace to believers as in giving grace to sinners. This takes place and may be proposed as a relief in times of trial and distress. He creates light and causes darkness, as he pleases. But yet, considering what promises are made to us, what encouragements are given us, what love and tenderness there is in God to receive us, I cannot but conclude that ordinarily the cause of our coming short of this assurance is where I have fixed it.

It is supposed that there is or may be a saving persuasion or discovery of forgiveness in God, where there is no assurance of any particular interest in it, or that our own sins in particular are pardoned. This is what has a promise of gracious acceptance with God, and is therefore saving: Isaiah 1:10, "Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God." Here is the fear of the

Lord and obedience, with a blessed encouragement to rest in God and his all-sufficiency, yet no assurance nor light, but darkness, and that walked in or continued in for a long period; so he cannot walk in darkness, meet with nothing but darkness, without any beam or ray of light, as the words signify, who is persuaded of the love of God in the pardon of his sins. And yet the faith of such a one, and his obedience springing from it, have this gracious promise of acceptance with God. And innumerable testimonies to this purpose might be produced, and instances in great plenty. I shall only tender a little evidence, in one observation concerning the nature of faith, and one more about the proposal of the thing to be believed, or forgiveness. And, —

Faith is called, and is, a cleaving unto the Lord: Deuteronomy 4:4, “Ye that did cleave,” or adhere, “unto the LORD;” that is, who did believe. Joshua 23:8, “Cleave,” or adhere, “unto the LORD your God.” The same word is used also in the New Testament: Acts 11:23, “He exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord,” or continue steadily in believing. It is also often expressed by trusting in the Lord, rolling our burden, or casting our care on him, by committing ourselves or our ways to him. Now, all this goes no farther than the soul’s resignation of itself to God, to be dealt with by him according to the tenor of the covenant of grace, ratified in the blood of Christ. This a soul cannot do, without a discovery of forgiveness in God; but this a soul may do, without a special assurance of their own interest in it. This faith, that adheres like this to God, that cleaves to him, will carry men to conclude that it is their duty and their wisdom to give up the disposal of their souls unto God, and to cleave and adhere to him as revealed in Christ, waiting the pleasure of his will. It enables them to make Christ their choice; and will carry men to heaven safely, though it may be sometimes not very comfortably.

The revelation and discovery of forgiveness that is made in the gospel evidences the same truth. The first proposal of it or concerning it is not to any man that his sins are forgiven. No; but it is only that there is redemption and forgiveness of sins in Christ. So the apostle lays it down, Acts 13:38, 39, “Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses” All this may be believed without a man’s assurance of his own personal interest in the things mentioned. Now, where they are believed with the faith the gospel requires, that faith is saving, and

the root of gospel, acceptable obedience. The ransom, I say, the atonement by Christ, the fullness of the redemption that is in him, and so forgiveness in his blood for believers, from the good will, grace, and love of the Father, is the first gospel discovery that a sinner in a saving manner closes with. Particular assurance arises or may arise afterward.

Secondly, That which is affirmed in it is, that a discovery of forgiveness in God, without any particular assurance of personal interest in it, is a great support to a sin-entangled soul. And let no man despise the day of this small thing; small in the eyes of some, and those good men also, as if it did not deserve the name of faith. Now, as has been made to appear, this discovery of forgiveness is the soul's persuasion, on gospel grounds, that however it is with them, and whatever his state and condition is, or is likely to be, yet that God in his own nature is infinitely gracious, and that he has determined, in a sovereign act of his will from eternity, to be gracious to sinners, and that he has made way for the administration of forgiveness by the blood of his Son, according as he has abundantly manifested and declared in the promises of the gospel. "However it is with me, yet so it is with God; there is forgiveness with him." This is the first thing that a soul in its depths riseth up to; and it is a support for it, enabling it to do all present duties until consolation comes from above.

So it has been to and with the saints of old: Hosea 14:3, "Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy."

So they have a solemn renunciation of all other helps, reliefs, or assistances, civil or religious, that are not God's; a solemn resolution, in their great distress, of cleaving to God alone; — both which are great and blessed effects of faith. What is the bottom and foundation of this blessed resolution? — namely, that proposition, "In thee the fatherless findeth mercy;" that is, "There is forgiveness with thee for helpless sinners." This lifted up their hearts in their depths, and supported them in waiting for the receiving of the blessed promises of mercy, pardon, grace, and holiness, which ensue in the next verses. Until they came home to them in their efficacy and effects, they made a life on this, "In thee the fatherless findeth mercy."

(Mr Owen shows that the experience which gives a person reassurance that they are saved is produced by God the Holy Spirit which is taught in the scripture truth:)

“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:”
Romans 8 v 16

People who claim to be saved, and not experiencing the power, virtue, and efficacy of it in their hearts, are, whatever they profess, very near to atheism, or at least exposed to great temptations to it. If “they profess they know God, but in works deny him,” they are “abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate,” Titus 1:16. Let such people lay aside tradition and custom, let them give up themselves to a free and a rational consideration of things, and they will quickly find that all their claims are only a miserable self-deceiving, and that, indeed, they do not believe one word of the religion which they profess: what their religion affirms to be in themselves they do not find any thing true or real; and what reason have they, then, to believe that the things which it speaks about that are outwith them are one jot better? If they have no experience of what it affirms to be within them, what confidence can they have of the reality of what it reveals to be outwith them? John tells us that “he who saith he loves God whom he hath not seen, and doth not love his brother whom he hath seen, is a liar.” People who do not know and experience things of an equal concern to them that they may be tested in, are not to be believed in what they profess about greater things, where no trial can be had. So whoever does not experience, the power of the religion he claims and affirms to be in him, if he says that he believes other things which he can have no experience of, he is a liar.

For instance, he that professes the gospel avows that the death of Christ crucifies sin; that faith purifies the heart; that the Holy Ghost stimulates and enables the soul to duty; that God is good and gracious to all that come to him; that there is precious communion to be obtained with him by Christ; that there is great joy in believing. These things are plainly, openly, frequently insisted on in the gospel. So the apostle presses men to obedience on the account of them; and, as it were, leaves them at liberty from it if they were not so, Philippians 2:1, 2. Now, if men have lived long in the profession of these things, saying that they are so, but indeed find nothing of truth, reality, or power in them, have no experience of the effects of them in their own hearts or souls, what stable ground have they of believing any thing else in the gospel that they cannot have experience of? A man claims that the death of Christ will mortify sin and subdue corruption; why does he believe it? Because it is so affirmed in the gospel. How, then, doth

he find it to be so? has it this effect on his soul, in his own heart? Not at all; he finds no such thing in him. How, then, can this man believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God because it is affirmed in the gospel, seeing that he finds no real truth of that which it affirms to be in himself? So our Saviour argues, John 3:12, “If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how will ye believe if I tell you heavenly things?” — “If you do not believe the doctrine of regeneration, which you ought to have experience of, as a thing that is wrought in the hearts of men on the earth, how can you assent to those heavenly mysteries of the gospel which at first are to be received by a pure act of faith, without any present sense or experience?”

Of all dangers, therefore, in profession, let people who claim to be saved take care of this, — namely, of a customary, traditional, or doctrinal owning such truths as ought to have their effects and accomplishment in themselves, while they have no experience of the reality and power of them. This is plainly to have a form of godliness, and to deny the power of it. We see many of this sort of people turning atheists, mockers, and open apostates.

They find in themselves that their profession was a lie, and that in truth they had none of those things which they talked about; and to what end should they continue longer in avowing of what doesn't seem to exist? Besides, finding those things which they have claim to be within them not to be true, they think that what they have believed of the things that are without them are of no different nature; and so reject them altogether.

You will say, then, “What shall a man do who cannot find or obtain an experience in himself of what is affirmed in the word? He cannot find the death of Christ crucifying sin in him, and he cannot find the Holy Ghost sanctifying his nature, or obtain joy in believing; what shall he, then, do?

shall he not believe or profess those things to be so, because he cannot obtain a blessed experience of them?” I answer, our Saviour has perfectly given direction for this: John 7:17, “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.”

Continue in following after the things revealed in the doctrine of the gospel, and you shall have a satisfactory experience that they are true, and that they are of God. Cease not to act faith in them, and you shall find their effects; for “then shall we know, if we follow on to know the LORD,”

Hosea 6:3. Experience will ensue on permanency in faith and obedience; yes, the first act of sincere believing will be accompanied with such a taste, will give the soul so much experience, as to produce a firm adherence

to the things believed. And this is the way to “prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God,” which is revealed to us, Romans 12:2.

Where there is an inward, spiritual experience of the power, reality, and efficacy of any supernatural truth, it gives great satisfaction, stability, and assurance to the soul. It puts the soul out of danger or suspicion of being deceived, and gives it to have the testimony of God in itself. So the apostle tells us,

“He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself,”
1 John 5:10.

He had related the manifold testimony that is given in heaven by all the holy persons of the Trinity, and on earth by grace and ordinances, to the forgiveness of sin and eternal life to be obtained by Jesus Christ.

And this record is true, firm, and stable, an permanent foundation for souls to rest on, that will never deceive them. But yet all this while it is out-with us, — it is what we have no experience of in ourselves; only we rest on it because of the authority and faithfulness of them that gave it. But now he that actually believes, he has the testimony in himself; he hath by experience a real evidence and assurance of the filings testified unto, — namely, “That God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son,” verse 11. Let us, then, a little consider what this evidence consists of, and where this assurance arises from. To this end a few things must be considered; as, —

That there is a great answerableness and correspondency between the heart of a believer and the truth that he believes. As the word is in the gospel, so is grace in the heart; yes, they are the same thing variously expressed: Romans 6:17, “Ye have obeyed from the heart,” “that form of doctrine which was delivered you.” As our translation does not, so I do not know how in so few words to express what is emphatically insinuated here by the Holy Ghost.

The meaning is, that the doctrine of the gospel produces the form, figure, image, or likeness of itself in the hearts of those that believe, so they are cast into the mould of it. As is the one, so is the other. The principle of grace in the heart and that in the word are as children of the same parent, completely resembling and representing one another. Grace is a living word, and the word is figured, limned grace. As regeneration is, so is a regenerate heart; as the doctrine of faith is, so is a believer. And this gives great evidence to and assurance of the things that are believed: “As we

have heard, so we have seen and found it.” Such a soul can produce the duplicate of the word, and so adjust all things by it.

That the first original expression of divine truth is not in the word, no, not as given out from the infinite abyss of divine wisdom and veracity, but it is first hid, laid up, and expressed in the person of Christ. He is the first pattern of truth, from him which is expressed in the word, and from and by the word impressed in the hearts of believers: so that as it has pleased God that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge should be in him, dwell in him, have their principal residence in him, Colossians 2:3; so the whole word is but a revelation of the truth in Christ, or an expression of his image and likeness to the sons of men. So we are said to learn “the truth as it is in Jesus,” Ephesians 4:21. It is in Jesus originally and really; and from him it is communicated to us by the word. We are taught by it and learn it, for by this, as the apostle proceeds, “we are renewed in the spirit of our mind, and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness,” verses 23, 24. First, the truth is in Jesus, then it is expressed in the word; this word learned and believed becomes grace in the heart, every way answering to the Lord Christ his image, from whom this transforming truth did in this way proceed. No, this is carried by the apostle even higher, namely, to God the Father himself, whose image Christ is, and believers his through the word: 2 Corinthians 3:18, “We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord;” also 2 Corinthians 4:6, “God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”

The first pattern or example of all truth and holiness is God himself; “Christ is the image,” verse 4. Christ is the image of God, “The brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person,” Hebrews 1:8; “The image of the invisible God,” Colossians 1:15. So we are said to “see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ;” because he being his image, the love, grace, and truth of the Father are represented and made conspicuous in him: for we are said to “behold it in his face,” because of the open and illustrious manifestation of the glory of God in him. And how do we view this glory? In a mirror, — “As in a glass;” that is, in the gospel, which has the image and likeness of Christ, who is the image of God, reflected on it and communicated to it. So have we traced truth and grace from the person of the Father to the Son as a mediator, and from there transfused into

the word. In the Father it is essentially; in Jesus Christ originally and exemplarily; and in the word as in a transcript or copy. But does it remain there? No; God by the word of the gospel “shines in our hearts,” 2 Corinthians 4:6. He irradiates our minds with a saving light into it and apprehension of it. And what follows this? The soul of a believer is “changed into the same image” by the effective working of the Holy Ghost, 2 Corinthians 3:18; that is, the likeness of Christ implanted on the word is impressed on the soul itself, by which it is renewed into the image of God, that it was at first created for. This brings all into a perfect harmony. There is not only, where gospel truth is effectively received and experienced in the soul, a consonancy merely between the soul and the word, but between the soul and Christ by the word, and the soul and God by Christ. And this gives assured establishment to the soul in the things that it believes. Divine truth so conveyed to us is firm, stable, and immovable; and we can say about it in a spiritual sense, “‘That which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life,’ we know to be true.” Yea, a believer is a testimony to the certainty of truth in what he is, much beyond what he is in all that he says. Words may be pretended; real effects have their testimony inseparably joined to them.

So it appears that there must necessarily be great assurance of those truths which are thus received and believed in this way; for by this are “the senses exercised to discern both good and evil,” Hebrews 5:14. Where there is a spiritual sense of truth, of the good and evil that is in doctrines, from an inward experience of what is so good, and from this a dislike to the contrary, and this obtained, by reason of a habit or a habitual frame of heart, there is strength, there is steadiness and assurance. This is the teaching of the Holy Spirit, which will not, which cannot, deceive. So many in the past and of late that could not dispute yet could die for the truth. He that came to another person, and tried to prove by sophistic reasonings that there was no such thing as motion, had only this return from him, who either was not able to answer his false arguments or unwilling to put himself to trouble about it, — he arose, and, walking up and down, gave him a real confutation of his sophistry. It is so in this case. When a soul has a real experience of the grace of God, of the pardon of sins, of the virtue and efficacy of the death of Christ, of justification by his blood, and peace with God by believing; let men, or devils, or angels from heaven, oppose these things, if it cannot answer their sophisms, yet he can rise up and

walk, — he can, with all holy confidence and assurance, oppose his own satisfying experience against all their arguings and suggestions. A man will not be disputed out of what he sees and feels; and a believer will adhere as firmly by his spiritual sense as any man can by his natural.

This is the meaning of that prayer of the apostle, Colossians 2:2, “That your hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ.”

They had understanding in the mysteries of the gospel; but he prays that, by a farther experience of it, they might come to the “assurance of understanding.” To be true, is the property of the doctrine itself; to be certain or assured, is the property of our minds. Now, this experience doth so unite the mind and truth, that we say, “Such a truth is most certain;” whereas certainty is indeed the property of our minds or their knowledge, and not of the truth known. It is certain to us; that is, we have an assured knowledge of it by the experience we have of it. This is the assurance of understanding here mentioned. And he farther prays that we may come to the “riches” of this assurance, — that is, to an abundant, plentiful assurance; “to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God,” owning it from a sense and experience of its excellency and worth.

And this is in the nature of all gospel truths, — they are fitted and suited to be experienced by a believing soul. There is nothing in them so sublime and high, nothing so mysterious, nothing so seemingly low and outwardly contemptible, but that a gracious soul has experience of an excellency, reality, power, and efficacy in it all. For instance, look on what concerns the order and worship of the gospel. This seems to many to be a mere external thing, that a soul can have no inward sense or relish.

There are many notions about it, and endless contentions, but what more?

Why, let a gracious soul, in simplicity and sincerity of spirit, give up himself to walk with Christ according to his appointment, and he shall quickly find such a taste and relish in the fellowship of the gospel, in the communion of saints, and of Christ amongst them, as that he shall come up to such riches of assurance in the understanding and acknowledgment of the ways of the Lord, as others by their disputing can never attain to.

What is so high, glorious, and mysterious as the doctrine of the everblessed Trinity? Some wise men have thought meet to keep it covered over from ordinary Christians, and some have delivered it in such terms

as that they can understand nothing by them. But take a believer who has tasted how gracious the Lord is, in the eternal love of the Father, the great undertaking of the Son in the work of mediation and redemption, with the almighty work of the Spirit creating grace and comfort in the soul; and has had an experience of the love, holiness, and power of God in them all; and he will with more firm confidence adhere to this mysterious truth, being led into it and confirmed in it by some few plain testimonies of the word, than a thousand disputers shall do who only have the notion of it in their minds.

Let a real trial come, and this will appear. Few will be found to sacrifice their lives on bare speculations. Experience will give assurance and stability.

We have thus cleared the credit of the testimony now to be improved. It is evident, on these grounds, that there is a great certainty in those truths that believers have experience of. Where they communicate their power to the heart, they give an unquestionable assurance of their truth; and when that is once realized in the soul, all disputes about it are put to silence.

These things being so, let us inquire into the faith and experience of the saints on the earth as to what they know of the truth proposed for confirmation, namely, that there is forgiveness with God. Let us go to some poor soul that now walks comfortably under the light of God's countenance, and say to him, "Did we not know you some while ago to be full of sadness and great anxiety of spirit; yea, sorrowful almost to death, and bitter in soul?" —

"Yes," he says, "so it was, indeed. My days were consumed with mourning, and my life with sorrow; and I walked heavily, in fear and bitterness of spirit, all the day long."

"Why, what was the matter with you, seeing as to outward things you were in peace?" —

"The law of God had laid hold upon me and slain me. I found myself by it a woeful sinner, yes, overwhelmed with the guilt of sin.

Every moment I expected tribulation and wrath from the hand of God; my sore ran in the night and did not cease, and my soul refused comfort." "How is it, then, that you are thus delivered, that you are no more sad?

Where have you found ease and peace? Have you been by any means delivered, or did your trouble wear off and depart of its own accord?" —

"Alas, no! had I not met with an effective remedy, I had sunk and everlastingly perished. "

"What did you do?" —

"I went to Him by Jesus Christ against whom I have sinned, and have

found him better to me than I could expect or ever should have believed, had not he overpowered my heart by his Spirit. Instead of wrath, which I feared, and that justly, because I had deserved it, he said to me in Christ, 'Fury is not in me.' For a long time I thought it impossible that there should be mercy and pardon for me, or such a one as I. But he still supported me, sometimes by one means, sometimes by another; until, taking my soul near to himself, he caused me to see the foolishness of my unbelieving heart, and the vileness of the hard thoughts I had of him, and that, indeed, there is with him forgiveness and plenteous redemption. This has taken away all my sorrows, and given me quietness, with rest and assurance."

"But are you sure, now, that this is so? May you not possibly be deceived?" —

Says the soul, "I have not the least suspicion of any such matter; and if at any time anything arises to that purpose, it is quickly overcome."

"But how are you confirmed in this persuasion?" —

"That sense of it which I have in my heart; that sweetness and rest which I have experience of; that influence it has on my soul; that obligation I find laid on me by it to all thankful obedience; that relief, support, and consolation that it has afforded me in trials and troubles, in the mouth of the grave and entrances of eternity,

— all answering what is declared concerning these things in the word,

— will not suffer me to be deceived. I could not, indeed, receive it until

God was pleased to speak it to me; but now let Satan do his utmost, I shall never cease to bear this testimony, that there is mercy and forgiveness with him."

How many thousands may we find of these people in the world, who have had such a seal of this truth in their hearts, as they can not only securely lay down their lives in the confirmation of it, if called to that, but also do cheerfully and triumphantly venture their eternal concerns on it! yes, this is the product of all that peace, serenity of mind, and strong consolation, which in this world they are made participants in.

Now this is to me, on the principles laid down already, a great and important evidence. God has not manifested this truth to the saints, thus copied it out of his word, and exemplified it in their souls, to leave them under any possibility of being deceived."

*From Temptation and Sin by John Owen
Exposition of Psalm 130 verse 4:
Further evidences of forgiveness with God.*

CHAPTER 36

FAITHS ACTIVITY IN THE SAVED: FAITH AND TESTING

“The Lord trieth the righteous”

Psalm 11 v 5

Unlike those mentioned in our title text, people truly saved have a living friendship and fellowship with God. They know him in their hearts as the real person of Jesus by the Holy Spirit and don't just know about him as a fact or idea. They not only have a form of godliness, but the power of it too:

“Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.”

2nd Timothy 3 v 5

But what is this living, loving saved relationship like? How does God relate to His own dear people? What is their experience of Him like?

The saved get to know God more as he teaches them by their experience and draws them closer in love and worship. Faith isn't just part of the initial transaction to become saved but also maintains the relationship in the soul by the activity of the Holy Spirit

“For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.”

2 Corinthians 1 v 5

It is a relationship of trust and confidence in God compared with distrust of him and belief in ourselves in spiritual matters. As our faith in God increases it decreases in ourselves. It draws on Gods power and strength to

resist sin and Satan and comfort of the Holy spirit to be sustained in trial. Faith operates to produce a closer relationship with more confidence and trust in God drawing away from sin and self and time which is transitory and towards eternity and the reality of heaven:

“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, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but *this* one thing *I do*, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

Philippians 3 v 8–14

Everyone makes connections between natural forces and laws and the physical changes in their lives. Many do not consider the Divine influence changing events in our lives. He influences and guides ordinary everyday experiences to achieve his spiritual purposes in our lives. This ought to make people search what the spiritual reason is for things happening to them in particular ways. This is the ultimate purpose for all our experiences. The world around us is just a skeleton, a framework for the reality which is spiritual that underlies it and all material things exist to subserve this end. All our ordinary varied immediate experiences are simply the scaffolding for a continuous test to varying degrees of our moral character. All physical changes and those in time are only a means to this end, changing us spiritually either resulting in the wicked becoming more restrained or more rebellious or the saved more submissive towards God in repentance. He teaches spiritual lessons through events in the lives of the saved to show their spiritual state or particular sin that must be given up or to show

them other truths about his character or overarching purpose, for example. Even trivial experiences are included in this great test of life. When not much seems to be happening for example, this may test our humble waiting and patience – frustrated sinful murmuring against Gods management of affairs may be the reaction. Our sinful or righteous character is revealed during this probationary period and, as indicated in our title text, will be used as evidence by the judge at the great judgement day to confirm our spiritual state before Him and the whole world.

“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil.”
Proverbs 3 v 5–7

In the true way leading to heaven there are for the saved great stresses, strains, exertions, pains and struggles. But in the experience of those saved, faith takes another time and place into account or the next world in eternity and keeps present difficulty in its proper perspective:

“For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward *man* is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen *are* temporal; but the things which are not seen *are* eternal.”
2nd Corinthians 4 v 16–18

God tests, tries or proves faith of the saved to show what sort it is to different people: to the saved themselves, their close contacts (e.g. relations), other people and even future generations if a record of their lives is preserved like the biblical saints. He does so to show others the integrity of the saved. God tests faith to improve the quality of it too in many ways. Like human muscles faith strengthens the more it is exercised.

“Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every *branch* that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.”
John 15 v 2

In particular, as God deals with the saved in adversity they gain increasing love towards him and confidence in him as they find him tender, reliable

and faithful in his dealings and in his communications to them. He often, but not always, as in Job's case, reveals his presence to them in trial except if they are being chastened.

“Behold, I go forward, but he *is* not *there*; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: On the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold *him*: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see *him*: But he knoweth the way that I take: *when* he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold. My foot hath held his steps, his way have I kept, and not declined. Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary *food*.”
Job 23 v 10.

When aboard an aircraft and all seems dark and dismal on the ground while taking off, but as the plane ascends through the clouds it reveals brilliant sunshine. The clouds of difficulty in the Christian life always have the silver lining of the rays of the Son of righteousness who is behind them for their good and so they appreciate his bright glory after the darkness:

“But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.”
Malachi 4 v 2

“I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, *and* the bright and morning star.”
Revelations 22 v 16

He supports saints in their tests and temptations though they still occur. He doesn't relieve all their problems, but He knows their limits allowing testing and hardship for a good ultimate purpose and not allowing more than they can cope with. The difficulties are limited in time and quality so they do not overwhelm them. He always provides them with adequate resources before it becomes too much for their weak bodies and spirits. The following verses in Isaiah may provide prophetic reference to the fiery furnace the three saints in Daniel endured where Christ Jesus was a comfort and protection for his tried people:

“But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called *thee* by thy name; thou *art* mine. When thou passest

through the waters, I *will be* with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I *am* the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt *for* thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee. Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life.”

Isaiah 43 v 1–4

If saints are persecuted and die for the faith they are supported through this and given great comfort and consolation as they die as witnessed to by the following words of a martyr:

“He has strengthened me to brave man and face death, and I am now longing for the hour of my dissolution, and there is nothing in the world I am sorry to leave but you; but I go to better company, and so I must take my leave of you all. Farewell, beloved sufferers, and followers of the Lamb; farewell, Christian intimates; farewell, Christian and comfortable mothers and sisters; farewell, sweet societies; farewell, desirable general meetings; farewell, night wanderings, cold and weariness for Christ; farewell, sweet Bible and preaching of the Gospel; farewell, sun, moon and stars, and all sublunary things; farewell, conflicts with a body of sin and death. Welcome, scaffold for precious Christ; welcome, heavenly Jerusalem; welcome, innumerable company of angels; welcome, crown of glory, white robes and song of Moses and the Lamb; and, above all, Welcome, O Thou blessed Trinity and one God! O eternal One! I commit my soul into Thy eternal rest.”

Jock Purves, *Fair Sunshine:*

Character studies of the Scottish Covenanters, p.115

“Many *are* the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all. He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken. Evil shall slay the wicked: and they that hate the righteous shall be desolate. The LORD redeemeth the soul of his servants: and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate.”

Psalm 34 v 19–22

“And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine

them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, *It is my people*: and they shall say, The LORD *is my God*.”

Zechariah 13 v 9

“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God *is faithful*, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear *it*.”

1st Corinthians 10 v 13

“These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”

John 16 v 33

“Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see *him* not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, *even* the salvation of *your* souls.”

1st Peter 1 v 6–9

In dark and difficult experiences God gives crumbs of encouragement to nourish and sustain his children spiritually, small signs and evidences that he is still with them such as in the case of Job or Elijah:

“But he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I *am* not better than my fathers. And as he lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold, then an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise *and* eat. And he looked, and, behold, *there was* a cake baked on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again.”

1st Kings 19 v 4–6

Trials, tests or adversity show a person in their true light as they react to them. The trials or tests a person experiences reveals to a greater extent their spiritual state – not only big trials but lesser tests which are experienced

by every person on a daily basis. These frequent minor experiences reveal a persons spiritual state as to whether they deny themselves for God and others or not. In fact every thing that happens in our lives is a test to a lesser or greater extent which, in every instance, reveals a response from us, either, to commit sin, or, to act righteously, and as such, our character will be revealed on the judgement day:

“And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds. And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities. And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds. And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities.

And another came, saying, Lord, behold, *here is* thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin: For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow. And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, *thou* wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow:

Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury?(interest) And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give *it* to him that hath ten pounds. (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.)For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him.” Luke 9 v 15–26

Trials or tests as scripture mentions them may imply hardship or difficulty but may simply refer to tests or temptation to sin of any kind. Those who are unsaved are not improved by suffering, but are rather worsened and grow more rebellious and wicked. We are all on probation in our lives:

“God is glorified in this manner, because in this way he places all mankind under a life-long test as to whether we shall trust him or

not. The nature of all Gods dealings therefore in this life is to place us always in a situation in which we are required to take him on trust. We are on trial in this life in all that we do. Every decision we make is a test of our moral character and indicates, more or less, what we think about God.”

Great God of wonders
Reverend Maurice Roberts
Gods secrets – the Believers Comforts.

“By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.”
Hebrews 11 v 24–26

“Every true Christian perseveres in this way of universal obedience, and diligent and earnest service of God, through all the various kinds of trials that he encounters, to the end of life. That all true saints, everyone that obtains eternal life, persevere in the practice of religion, and the service of God, is a doctrine so abundantly taught in Scripture, that to rehearse all the texts which imply it would be endless.

But that perseverance in obedience, which is chiefly asserted in Scripture, as a special note of the truth of grace, is the continuing of people who claim to be Christian in the practice of their duty, and being dedicated in a holy walk, through the various *trials* or *tests* they meet with.

By *trials* here, I mean those things that occur, and that a person claiming to be a Christian encounters in the journey, that especially render their continuing to do their duty and being faithful to God, difficult to nature. These things are from time to time called in Scripture by the name of *trials*, or *temptations* (which are words of the same significance). They are of various kinds: there are many things that render persons’ continuing to do their duty difficult, by their tendency to cherish and foment, or to stir up and incite their lusts and corruptions. Many things make it hard to continue in

the way of their duty, because of their adhering nature, and having a tendency to attract people to sin, or by their tendency to remove restraints, making them bold in committing iniquity. Other things are trials of the soundness and dedication of people claiming Christianity, by their tendency to make their duty appear terrible to them, and so to frighten and drive them away from it; such as the sufferings which their duty will expose them to; pain, hostility, contempt, and disapproval, or loss of material possessions and comforts. If persons, after they have made a profession of religion, live any considerable time in this world, which is so full of changes, and so full of evil, it cannot be otherwise than that they should meet many tests of their sincerity and dedication. Also it is God's manner, in his providence, to bring trials to his professing friends and servants on purpose, that he may demonstrate to them, and may exhibit sufficient matter of conviction of the spiritual state they are in, to their own consciences, and often to the world; as appears in innumerable Scriptures.

Jonathan Edwards
Religious Affections.

Any temptation is a test then, to see if a person will self deny or self indulge. God looks for people to do this and His Spirit aids them more as they yield themselves to Him. For example, whoever are doing saved people grievous or small wrongs, they are to do good and love them in return, whoever they may be, even if their family they treat them in that way. Those who do this are no longer rebelling and following their own will but submitting to Christ's will. They are exercising faith and confidence in God, his word and his commands (love of enemies) and so are able to believe, though it appears not to their advantage, God will take care of things for them. The following verses point out the contrast between the saved who self deny and the unsaved who do not:

“The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished: But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous *are they*, selfwilled, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities.” 2nd Peter 2 v 9,10

Christians are in a relationship with God as children to a father. They are adopted into his kingdom. Children may want something but not see all the implications of receiving it. Similarly Christians may want rid of suffering or to obtain prosperity, but God as their father knows what is best for them. The saved trust their eternal welfare to God so why not their lives circumstances too? In prosperity people often tend to wander from God and he may use trouble to drive them back to himself. Like the dove leaving the ark found no rest the saved find no rest in worldly pleasure and sin but only in the ark which is Christ:

“Confirming the souls of the disciples, *and* exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.”
Acts 14 v 22

Suffering makes the saved appreciate the mercies they have when they are free from trial. It gives us a hint of what they have been rescued from in hell by Christ as he took their eternal suffering. It will make heaven all the sweeter when life’s experience is over. Suffering in the saved experience can be viewed in two ways. As either non disciplining or disciplining in nature. The non disciplining type is not intentionally or actually chastising but is used to display Gods honour to others and to make the saved more holy and their good actions less mixed with sin. Discipline occurs to correct their sinful actions to doing good ones and teaches the saved to obey and submit to God again. Suffering in the saved of any kind procures holiness and the saint presses on in the right way, to continue resisting in the conflict with sin and overcoming it by the power of the Holy Spirit. Job is the case of this kind of affliction that was not discipline:

“But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.”
Job 23 v 10

“*Doth Job fear God for nought?*”
Job 1 v 9

“This was the wicked question of Satan concerning that upright man of old, but there are many in the present day concerning whom it might be asked with justice, for they love God after a fashion because he prospers them; but if things went ill with them, they would give up all their boasted faith in God. If they can clearly see that since the time of their supposed conversion

the world has gone prosperously with them, then they will love God in their poor carnal way; but if they endure adversity, they rebel against the Lord. Their love is the love of the table, not of the host; a love to the cupboard, not to the master of the house. As for the true Christian, he expects to have his reward in the next life, and to endure hardness in this. The promise of the old covenant was prosperity, but the promise of the new covenant is adversity. Remember Christ's words—"Every branch in me that beareth not fruit"—What? "*He purgeth it, that it may bring forth fruit.*" If you bring forth fruit, you will have to endure affliction. "Alas!" you say, "that is a terrible prospect." But this affliction works out such precious results, that the Christian who is the subject of it must learn to rejoice in tribulations, because as his tribulations abound, so his consolations abound by Christ Jesus. Rest assured, if you are a child of God, you will be no stranger to the rod. Sooner or later every bar of gold must pass through the fire. Fear not, but rather rejoice that such fruitful times are in store for you, for in them you will be weaned from earth and made meet for heaven; you will be delivered from clinging to the present, and made to long for those eternal things which are so soon to be revealed to you. When you feel that as regards the present you do serve God for nought, you will then rejoice in the infinite reward of the future."

Spurgeons Morning and Evening—January 22nd

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed (dispersed) abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." Romans 5 v 1–5

"Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of *this* life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.”

2nd Timothy 2 v 1–4

“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset *us*, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.”

Hebrews 12 v 1–4

God may use the suffering of the saint to show to others the faith the saved have in Him and also that Christians only need God for them to be happy whatever else they may be experiencing. This can also happen when a Christian is dying:

“And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten *them*, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.”

Acts 5 v 40,41

“And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast *them* into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely: Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks. And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.”

Acts 16 v 23–25

“Now these *be* the last words of David. David the son of Jesse said, and the man *who was* raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said, The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word *was* in my tongue. The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men *must be* just, ruling in the fear of God. And *he shall be* as the

light of the morning, *when* the sun riseth, *even* a morning without clouds; *as* the tender grass *springing* out of the earth by clear shining after rain. Although my house *be* not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all *things*, and sure: for *this is* all my salvation, and all *my* desire, although he make *it* not to grow.” 2nd Samuel 23 v 1–5

Christians suffer not only generally, but for being a Christian as they are persecuted, especially if they are living holy lives which condemn those of the wicked:

“Only let your conversation(conduct) be as it becometh(suitable for) the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God. For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;” Philippians 1 v 27–29

Persecution then, is another instance of suffering which is non disciplining which saved people experience:

“Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” 2nd Timothy 3 v 12.

The suffering of the saved may increase rebellion in the heart of the unsaved against God instead of humbling them when they consider that holy people are going through these things. They spitefully accuse God of being unloving.

The saved can be tempted to compare their suffering to the unsaveds lack of it. God, as has been pointed out, may be using it to refine their character. It is however nothing compared to the endless suffering of the unsaved in the next world:

“Behold, these *are* the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase *in* riches. Verily I have cleansed my heart *in* vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning. If I say, I will speak thus; behold, I should offend *against* the generation of thy children.

When I thought to know this, it *was* too painful for me; Until I went into the sanctuary of God; *then* understood I their end. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they *brought* into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when *one* awaketh; *so*, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image. Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins. So foolish *was* I, and ignorant: I was *as* a beast before thee.”

Psalm 73

The saved follow Christ in his footsteps in a similar path of obedience and suffering and their dear Saviour walks with them in their suffering and feels their pain keenly:

“In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old.” Isaiah 63 v 9

Christ however suffered to a much greater extent than anything a Christian may suffer, as stated in the prophets:

“As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men: So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for *that* which had not been told them shall they see; and *that* which they had not heard shall they consider. Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, *there is* no beauty that we should desire him.

He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were *our* faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

But he *was* wounded for our transgressions, *he was* bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace *was* upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray;

we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither *was any* deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put *him* to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see *his* seed, he shall prolong *his* days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, *and* shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him *a portion* with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.”

Isaiah 52,53

Suffering was involved in his rendering full obedience as the Son to satisfy the law in his role as the mediator of the covenant with his Father.

“Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;”

Hebrews 5 v 8

When they consider just how much he suffered on their behalf it greatly motivates the saved to serve Christ and persevere when they are suffering or being maltreated and abused.

As in other activities in life once a person has learnt how to do them, they may relax too much, become complacent and can then become overconfident and make mistakes. Similarly a mature Christian can think they know well their own heart and Satan’s mechanisms of undermining the saved and be overconfident and fall into old sins. Satan has many alternative cunning methods that he employs to surprise the saved. It is a result of a lack of confidence or faith in God and too much in themselves in respect of resisting sin, doing things in their own strength, rather than Gods:

“And in my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved. LORD, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong: thou didst hide thy face, *and* I was troubled.”
Psalm 30 v 6,7

“Howbeit in *the business of* the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to enquire of the wonder that was *done* in the land, God left him, to try him, that he might know all *that was* in his heart.”
2nd Chronicles 32 v 31

“I am the vine, ye *are* the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing”
John 15 v 5

The other aspect to the saved performing things in their own strength is not following the way of self denial and trying to achieve things using their own wisdom and the seemingly easier way rather than trusting in God to supply with grace within and the needed resources. It is submitting to Gods way and will whatever the physical state such as fatigue or depression of spirit. This can only be achieved by his grace and through faith but He undertakes for the saved and the result is better than they could ever have attained on their own. It is made obvious as they go Gods way in that he has influenced and directed events outwith their control to bring a better outcome. It may be a painful way. The saved may not see it is so much better till they reach heaven. They must seek Gods grace to do this through prayer where he teaches them that only by this means can they succeed in the Christian way.

Faith receives testing and the human wisdom must be rejected even though apparently no way through can be immediately visualized. God is able.

Sometimes the saved must come to accept difficulty and serve God where he has placed even though the trial doesn't seem to abate despite their tears and prayers:

“For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.”
Psalm 84 v 11

The kind of good referred to in the Psalm may sometimes be purely spiritual rather than physical or material and so the saved may suffer here receiving relief when they reach heaven.

“*Afterward.*”

Hebrews 12:11

“How happy are tried Christians, *afterwards*. No calm more deep than that which succeeds a storm. Who has not rejoiced in clear shinings after rain? Victorious banquets are for well-exercised soldiers. After killing the lion we eat the honey; after climbing the Hill Difficulty, we sit down in the arbour to rest; after traversing the Valley of Humiliation, after fighting with Apollyon, the shining one appears, with the healing branch from the tree of life. Our sorrows, like the passing keels of the vessels upon the sea, leave a silver line of holy light behind them “*afterwards.*” It is peace, sweet, deep peace, which follows the horrible turmoil which once reigned in our tormented, guilty souls. See, then, the happy estate of a Christian! He has his best things last, and he therefore in this world receives his worst things first. But even his worst things are “*afterward*” good things, harsh ploughings yielding joyful harvests. Even now he grows rich by his losses, he rises by his falls, he lives by dying, and becomes full by being emptied; if, then, his grievous afflictions yield him so much peaceable fruit in this life, what shall be the full vintage of joy “*afterwards*” in heaven? If his dark nights are as bright as the world’s days, what shall his days be? If even his starlight is more splendid than the sun, what must his sunlight be? If he can sing in a dungeon, how sweetly will he sing in heaven! If he can praise the Lord in the fires, how will he extol him before the eternal throne! If evil be good to him *now*, what will the overflowing goodness of God be to him *then*? Oh, blessed “*afterward!*” Who would not be a Christian? Who would not bear the present cross for the crown which cometh afterwards? But herein is work for patience, for the rest is not for today, nor the triumph for the present, but “*afterward.*” Wait, O soul, and let patience have her perfect work.”

CH Spurgeon

Morning and Evening

The apostle Paul was given a difficulty to keep him humble before God. Like a child he thought he would be better off without the trouble but his heavenly father knew better:

“I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God

knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;)How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities. For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but *now* I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me *to be*, or *that* he heareth of me. And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.”

2nd Corinthians 12 v 2–10

God will give the strength to bear the suffering if he is looked to in faith. As Jesus said:

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke *is* easy, and my burden is light.”

Matthew 11 v 29,30

Sometimes God removes all the props that the saved lean on in order that they are weaned from their reliance on anything or anyone but himself and to make them realize the fickleness of people, that they must follow him with an undivided heart, disregarding what anyone else is doing. We must become totally emptied of ourselves and lean wholly on him by faith. The saints must relearn to cast themselves on his sovereign mercy alone without which there is no hope. He has the right to dispense mercy to whom and when he pleases:

“What shall we say then? *Is there* unrighteousness with God? God forbid.

For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have

mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then *it is* not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.” Romans 9 v 14–16

These principles are succinctly expressed in the Westminster Confession of Faith in its section regarding providence:

“The most wise, righteous, and gracious God does oftentimes leave, for a season, His own children to manifold temptations, and the corruption of their own hearts, to chastise them for their former sins, or to discover unto them the hidden strength of corruption and deceitfulness of their hearts, that they may be humbled; and, to raise them to a more close and constant dependence for their support upon Himself, and to make them more watchful against all future occasions of sin, and for sundry(various) other just and holy ends.

As for those wicked and ungodly men whom God, as a righteous Judge, for former sins, does blind and harden, from them He not only withhold His grace whereby they might have been enlightened in their understandings, and wrought upon in their hearts; but sometimes also withdraws the gifts which they had, and exposes them to such objects as their corruption makes occasion of sin; and, withal, gives them over to their own lusts, the temptations of the world, and the power of Satan, whereby it comes to pass that they harden themselves, even under those means which God uses for the softening of others.”

CHAPTER 37

FAITH AND DEPENDENCE

“The LORD recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust.”
Ruth 2 v 12

“The happy man was born in the city of Regeneration in the parish of Repentance unto life. He was educated at the school of Obedience. He has a large estate in the county of Christian Contentment, and many times does jobs of Self-denial, wears the garment of Humility, and has another suit to put on when he goes to Court, called the Robe of Christ’s Righteousness. He often walks in the valley of Self-Abasement, and sometimes climbs the mountains of Heavenly-mindedness. He breakfasts every morning on Spiritual Prayer, and sups every evening on the same. He has meat to eat that the world knows not of, and his drink is the sincere milk of the Word of God. Thus happy he lives, and happy he dies. Happy is he who has Gospel submission in his will, due order in his affections, sound peace in his conscience, real Divinity in his breast, the Redeemer’s yoke on his neck, a vain world under his feet, and a crown of glory over his head. Happy is the life of that man who believes firmly, prays fervently, walks patiently, works abundantly, lives holy, dies daily, watches his heart, guides his senses, redeems his time, loves Christ, and longs for glory. He is necessitated to take the world on his way to heaven, but he walks through it as fast as he can, and all his business by the way is to make himself

and others happy. Take him all in all, in two words, he is a Man and a Christian.”

The Happy Man – The Abiding Witness of Lachlan Mackenzie.

Faith trusts God that he will do the best for the saved when they deny themselves and follow him. It teaches the saved to trust in his mercy, goodness and power in salvation and sanctification and also his providential provision:

“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose.”

Romans 8 v 28

“Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

1st Peter 1 v 5

“Trust in the LORD, and do good; *so* shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.”

Psalms 37 v 3

Faith waits for God or learns dependence on him. It teaches patience and humility and greater confidence (what is faith but confidence?) when the saved see the outcome of his way of doing things and that his will was better for them than what they thought was best. This makes them prize the mercy given even more. They see he takes care of them even when they want to escape from a difficult situation and he allows it to continue and so they develop patience with his management of events and their effects on the relationship with Himself:

“And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers: they shall bow down to thee with *their* face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet; and thou shalt know that I *am* the LORD: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me.”

Isaiah 49 v 23

“And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, *thou* Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of

Israel. Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me. But he answered and said, It is not meet (proper) to take the children's bread, and to cast *it* to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great *is* thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour." Matthew 15 v 22–28

Waiting is faith operating in a saved persons attitudes and conduct that makes them patient, humble, in readiness and more willing to serve God whatever the circumstances or cost. The saved are helpless corrupt sinners, dependent on him in all these ways, and so faith engenders a closer relationship of dependence with love and gratitude, causing them to express this by praying to and also praising him:

Through many dangers, toils and snares...
we have already come.
T'was Grace that brought us safe thus far...
and Grace will lead us home.

"Who *is* like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who *is* like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful *in* praises, doing wonders?"

Exodus 15 v 11

"Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Sion: and unto thee shall the vow be performed. O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come. Iniquities prevail against me: *as for* our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away. Blessed *is the man whom* thou chooseth, and causeth to approach *unto thee, that* he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, *even* of thy holy temple. By terrible things in righteousness wilt thou answer us, O God of our salvation; *who art* the confidence of all the ends of the earth, and of them that are afar off *upon* the sea:"

Psalm 65 v 1–5

"The LORD *is* my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him. The LORD *is* good unto them that wait for him, to the soul *that* seeketh him. *It is* good that *a man* should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD."

Lamentations 3 v 24–26

“My kinsfolk have failed, and my familiar friends have forgotten me. They that dwell in mine house, and my maids, count me for a stranger: I am an alien in their sight. I called my servant, and he gave *me* no answer; I intreated him with my mouth. My breath is strange to my wife, though I intreated for the children’s *sake* of mine own body. Yea, young children despised me; I arose, and they spake against me. All my inward friends abhorred me: and they whom I loved are turned against me. My bone cleaveth to my skin and to my flesh, and I am escaped with the skin of my teeth. Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends; for the hand of God hath touched me. Why do ye persecute me as God, and are not satisfied with my flesh? Oh that my words were now written! oh that they were printed in a book! That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever! For 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:”
Job 19 v 14–26

“And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever.”
Exodus 14 v 13

“To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David. I waited patiently for the LORD; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, *and* established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, *even* praise unto our God: many shall see *it*, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD. Blessed *is* that man that maketh the LORD his trust, and respecteth not the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies. Many, O LORD my God, *are* thy wonderful works *which* thou hast done, and thy thoughts *which are* to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: *if* I would declare and speak *of them*, they are more than can be numbered.”
Psalm 40 v 1–5

“Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass(happen).”
Psalm 37 v 7

“And therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the LORD *is* a God of judgment: blessed *are* all they that wait for him.”
Isaiah 30 v 18

“And he spake a parable unto them *to this end*, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;”
Luke 18 v 1

“Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle *you*.”
1st Peter 5 v 6–10

Prayer is acknowledgement of total weakness and dependence. It is the means appointed to obtain power from the infinitely powerful God. The Holy Spirit produces true prayer:

“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what *is* the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to *the will of God*.”
Romans 8 v 26,7

Effort in discipline to pray is part of unreserved devotion to God. The saved constantly seek resources from the Holy Spirit in prayer to resist sin.

To neglect it is a sin and sin given into in one area weakens other areas too. This is especially true of this kind of obedience. It is a channel for grace or power to resist sin and glorify God. Prayer promotes a vital union where the soul derives strength to resist temptation and persist in the Christian way. If it is neglected, falling into sin and backsliding will follow:

“Pray without ceasing.”
1st Thessalonians 5 v 17

“I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil”
John 17 v 15

God answers the prayers of the righteous person who is obedient to him:

“If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear *me*.”

Psalm 66 v 18

“Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms. Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. Confess *your* faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.”

James 5 v 13–18

So prayer is a dependence on God and an expression of confidence in Him with self denial. This was noted about the apostle Paul when he first was saved as being characteristic of his conversion:

“And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth,”

Acts 9 v 11

It pays God honour and prepares us to receive the mercies he gives us and through His Spirit we see our lack of deserving to receive them. The saved come to realize how gracious and merciful God is, given his greatness and holiness, and their great sinfulness. The particular channels of grace God has set up are specifically focused in the hands of the Holy Spirit to be the appropriate means to teach, sanctify and build up the saved. Reading of the bible, fellowship with other believers, public worship and preaching are such channels and have widespread benefits spiritually.

Prayer must be within his will and his word tells us what that is.

“And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:”

1st John 5 v 14

Prayer teaches to depend on him and trust his promises as we see him

keeping them, and our spiritual and practical needs are met. It builds love and strengthens faith in God:

“Now on whom dost thou trust?”

Isaiah 36:5

“Reader, this is an important question. Listen to the Christian’s answer, and see if it is yours. “On whom dost thou trust?” “I trust,” says the Christian, “in a triune God. I trust *the Father*, believing that he has chosen me from before the foundations of the world; I trust him to provide for me in providence, to teach me, to guide me, to correct me if need be, and to bring me home to his own house where the many mansions are. I trust *the Son*. Very God of very God is he—the man Christ Jesus. I trust in him to take away all my sins by his own sacrifice, and to adorn me with his perfect righteousness. I trust him to be my Intercessor, to present my prayers and desires before his Father’s throne, and I trust him to be my Advocate at the last great day, to plead my cause, and to justify me. I trust him for what he is, for what he has done, and for what he has promised yet to do. And I trust *the Holy Spirit*—he has begun to save me from my inbred sins; I trust him to drive them all out; I trust him to curb my temper, to subdue my will, to enlighten my understanding, to check my passions, to comfort my despondency, to help my weakness, to illuminate my darkness; I trust him to dwell in me as my life, to reign in me as my King, to sanctify me wholly, spirit, soul, and body, and then to take me up to dwell with the saints in light forever.”

Oh, blessed trust! To trust him whose power will never be exhausted, whose love will never wane, whose kindness will never change, whose faithfulness will never fail, whose wisdom will never be nonplussed, and whose perfect goodness can never know a diminution! Happy art thou, reader, if this trust is thine! So trusting, thou shalt enjoy sweet peace now, and glory hereafter, and the foundation of thy trust shall never be removed.”

CH Spurgeon

Morning and Evening

Prayer is a vital exercise, the neglect of which causes decline and ‘muscle atrophy’ spiritually. In prayer often God must be diligently sought to find

his presence for Him to reveal himself to the saved. Answers to hard fought prayer increase confidence in God:

“And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob’s thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him. And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. And he said unto him, What *is* thy name? And he said, Jacob. And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed (conquered, the victory).”

Genesis 32 v 24–28

“I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.”

Psalms 34 v 4

God often answers when Christians cry out to him and their prayers become more desperate, importunate and over a longer period of time. The answer is valued more when it comes and the saved, often impatient for an answer, in their waiting are taught the grace of patience and submission:

“Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O LORD. Lord, hear my voice: let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. If thou, LORD, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But *there is* forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared. I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope. My soul *waiteth* for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: *I say, more than* they that watch for the morning. Let Israel hope in the LORD: for with the LORD *there is* mercy, and with him *is* plenteous redemption. And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.”

Psalms 130

“And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?”

Luke 18 v 7

“And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.”

Matthew 15:27

“This woman gained comfort in her misery by thinking GREAT THOUGHTS OF CHRIST. The Master had talked about the children’s bread: “Now,” argued she, “since thou art the Master of the table of grace, I know that thou art a generous housekeeper, and there is sure to be abundance of bread on thy table; there will be such an abundance for the children that there will be crumbs to throw on the floor for the dogs, and the children will fare none the worse because the dogs are fed.” She thought him one who kept so good a table that all that she needed would only be a crumb in comparison; yet remember, what she wanted was to have the devil cast out of her daughter. It was a very great thing to her, but she had such a high esteem of Christ, that she said, “It is nothing to him, it is but a crumb for Christ to give.” This is the royal road to comfort. Great thoughts of your sin alone will drive you to despair; but great thoughts of Christ will pilot you into the haven of peace. “My sins are many, but oh! it is nothing to Jesus to take them all away. The weight of my guilt presses me down as a giant’s foot would crush a worm, but it is no more than a grain of dust to him, because he has already borne its curse in his own body on the tree. It will be but a small thing for him to give me full remission, although it will be an infinite blessing for me to receive it.” The woman opens her soul’s mouth very wide, expecting great things of Jesus, and he fills it with his love. Dear reader, do the same. She confessed what Christ laid at her door, but she laid fast hold upon him, and drew arguments even out of his hard words; she believed great things of him, and she thus overcame him. SHE WON THE VICTORY BY BELIEVING IN HIM. Her case is an instance of prevailing faith; and if we would conquer like her, we must imitate her tactics.”

CH Spurgeon Evening March 27th

The saved become more confident when they see the way it benefits them spiritually and glorifies him most, in the particular way and time he has chosen to answer, especially if that is a long period of time. In this way spiritual stamina or endurance is developed. It may be in privation or suffering in personal circumstances when he does what is best and will relieve them perhaps after some delay. In this case He may give internal support with the joy and love of Christ’s presence by means of his Holy Spirit.

As the Christian gains more experience of God he may receive more difficult trials. They endure greater tests. As another person said that Christian experience is sometimes like when a person is climbing a mountain ridge and they come towards the top thinking it will be the summit, only to find there is a higher mountain to climb in the distance, and it was not the summit after all.

“Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, *and* he delivered them out of their distresses.”
 Psalm 107 v 5,6

God also makes the saved wait for an answer, even sometimes very long to display his sovereignty, or prolongs affliction to reduce hidden reserves of pride or other sins. They are purified and must learn that it must be Gods way and will that reigns, not theirs.

God often brings Christians to an end of their own resources giving them difficulties they cant solve, so they have to call him for help and so he receives the glory ultimately. Their great shepherd and Saviour loves to hear the forlorn cry of his dear sheep:

There is no problem too big
 God cannot solve it
 there is no mountain too tall
 he cannot move it
 there is no storm too dark
 God cannot calm it
 there is no sorrow too deep
 he cannot soothe it.

Christ is glorified because the saved are accepted in him and their prayers are heard by God because he is their priest. Prayer makes the saved realize their indebtedness to him, their love is stimulated and they realize his great suffering is the reason why their prayers are accepted by God the father. Christ prays and intercedes for the saved in his role as the mediator as He presents their prayers before God.

“For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received *them*, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me. I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast

given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we *are*. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled. And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”

John 17 v 8–17

John Calvin makes comment:

“The pious mind must ascend still higher, namely, whither Christ calls his disciples when he says, that every one of them must “take up his cross,” (Mt. 16:24). Those whom the Lord has chosen and honoured with his intercourse must prepare for a hard, laborious, troubled life, a life full of many and various kinds of evils; it being the will of our heavenly Father to exercise his people in this way while putting them to the proof. Having begun this course with Christ the first-born, he continues it towards all his children. For though that Son was dear to him above others, the Son in whom he was “well pleased,” yet we see, that far from being treated gently and indulgently, we may say, that not only was he subjected to a perpetual cross while he dwelt on earth, but his whole life was nothing else than a kind of perpetual cross. The Apostle assigns the reason, “Though he was a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered,” (Heb. 5:8). Why then should we exempt ourselves from that condition to which Christ our Head behaved to submit; especially since he submitted on our account, that he might in his own person exhibit a model of patience? Wherefore, the Apostle declares, that all the children of God are destined to be conformed to him. Hence it affords us great consolation in hard

and difficult circumstances, which men deem evil and adverse, to think that we are holding fellowship with the sufferings of Christ; that as he passed to celestial glory through a labyrinth of many woes, so we too are conducted thither through various tribulations. For, in another passage, Paul himself thus speaks, “we must through much tribulation enter the kingdom of God,” (Acts 14:22); and again, “that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death,” (Rom 8:29). How powerfully should it soften the bitterness of the cross, to think that the more we are afflicted with adversity, the surer we are made of our fellowship with Christ; by communion with whom our sufferings are not only blessed to us, but tend greatly to the furtherance of our salvation.

2. We may add, that the only thing which made it necessary for our Lord to undertake to bear the cross, was to testify and prove his obedience to the Father; whereas there are many reasons which make it necessary for us to live constantly under the cross. Feeble as we are by nature, and prone to ascribe all perfection to our flesh, unless we receive as it were ocular demonstration of our weakness, we readily estimate our virtue above its proper worth, and doubt not that, whatever happens, it will stand unimpaired and invincible against all difficulties. Hence we indulge a stupid and empty confidence in the flesh, and then trusting to it wax proud against the Lord himself; as if our own faculties were sufficient without his grace. This arrogance cannot be better repressed than when He proves to us by experience, not only how great our weakness, but also our frailty is. Therefore, he visits us with disgrace, or poverty, or bereavement, or disease, or other afflictions. Feeling altogether unable to support them, we forthwith, in so far as regards ourselves, give way, and thus humbled learn to invoke his strength, which alone can enable us to bear up under a weight of affliction. Nay, even the holiest of men, however well aware that they stand not in their own strength, but by the grace of God, would feel too secure in their own fortitude and constancy, were they not brought to a more thorough knowledge of themselves by the trial of the cross. This feeling gained even upon David, “In my prosperity I Said, I shall never be moved. Lord, by thy favour thou hast made

my mountain to stand strong: thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled,” (Ps. 30:6, 7). He confesses that in prosperity his feelings were dulled and blunted, so that, neglecting the grace of God, on which alone he ought to have depended, he leant to himself, and promised himself perpetuity. If it so happened to this great prophet, who of us should not fear and study caution? Though in tranquillity they flatter themselves with the idea of greater constancy and patience, yet, humbled by adversity, they learn the deception. Believers, I say, warned by such proofs of their diseases, make progress in humility, and, divesting themselves of a depraved confidence in the flesh, betake themselves to the grace of God, and, when they have so betaken themselves, experience the presence of the divine power, in which is ample protection.

3. This Paul teaches when he says that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience. God having promised that he will be with believers in tribulation, they feel the truth of the promise; while supported by his hand, they endure patiently. This they could never do by their own strength. Patience, therefore, gives the saints an experimental proof that God in reality furnishes the aid which he has promised whenever there is need. Hence also their faith is confirmed, for it were very ungrateful not to expect that in future the truth of God will be, as they have already found it, firm and constant. We now see how many advantages are at once produced by the cross. Overturning the overweening opinion we form of our own virtue, and detecting the hypocrisy in which we delight, it removes our pernicious carnal confidence, teaching us, when thus humbled, to recline on God alone, so that we neither are oppressed nor despond. Then victory is followed by hope, inasmuch as the Lord, by performing what he has promised, establishes his truth in regard to the future. Were these the only reasons, it is surely plain how necessary it is for us to bear the cross. It is of no little importance to be rid of your self-love, and made fully conscious of your weakness; so impressed with a sense of your weakness as to learn to distrust yourself—to distrust yourself so as to transfer your confidence to God, reclining on him with such heartfelt confidence as to trust in his aid, and continue invincible to the end, standing by his grace so as to perceive that he is true to his promises,

and so assured of the certainty of his promises as to be strong in hope.

4. Another end which the Lord has in afflicting his people is to try their patience, and train them to obedience—not that they can yield obedience to him except in so far as he enables them; but he is pleased thus to attest and display striking proofs of the graces which he has conferred upon his saints, lest they should remain within unseen and unemployed. Accordingly, by bringing forward openly the strength and constancy of endurance with which he has provided his servants, he is said to try their patience. Hence the expressions that God tempted Abraham (Gen. 21:1, 12), and made proof of his piety by not declining to sacrifice his only son. Hence, too, Peter tells us that our faith is proved by tribulation, just as gold is tried in a furnace of fire. But who will say it is not expedient that the most excellent gift of patience which the believer has received from his God should be applied to uses by being made sure and manifest? Otherwise men would never value it according to its worth. But if God himself, to prevent the virtues which he has conferred upon believers from lurking in obscurity, nay, lying useless and perishing, does aright in supplying materials for calling them forth, there is the best reason for the afflictions of the saints, since without them their patience could not exist. I say, that by the cross they are also trained to obedience, because they are thus taught to live not according to their own wish, but at the disposal of God. Indeed, did all things proceed as they wish, they would not know what it is to follow God. Seneca mentions (*De Vit. Beata*, cap. 15) that there was an old proverb when any one was exhorted to endure adversity, “*Follow God;*” thereby intimating, that men truly submitted to the yoke of God only when they gave their back and hand to his rod. But if it is most right that we should in all things prove our obedience to our heavenly Father, certainly we ought not to decline any method by which he trains us to obedience.

5. Still, however, we see not how necessary that obedience is, unless we at the same time consider how prone our carnal nature is to shake off the yoke of God whenever it has been treated with some degree of gentleness and indulgence. It just happens to it as with

refractory horses, which, if kept idle for a few days at hack and manger, become ungovernable, and no longer recognize the rider, whose command before they implicitly obeyed. And we invariably become what God complains of in the people of Israel—waxing gross and fat, we kick against him who reared and nursed us (Deut. 32:15). The kindness of God should allure us to ponder and love his goodness; but since such is our malignity, that we are invariably corrupted by his indulgence, it is more than necessary for us to be restrained by discipline from breaking forth into such petulance. Thus, lest we become emboldened by an over-abundance of wealth; lest elated with honour, we grow proud; lest inflated with other advantages of body, or mind, or fortune, we grow insolent, the Lord himself interferes as he sees to be expedient by means of the cross, subduing and curbing the arrogance of our flesh, and that in various ways, as the advantage of each requires. For as we do not all equally labour under the same disease, so we do not all need the same difficult cure. Hence we see that all are not exercised with the same kind of cross. While the heavenly Physician treats some more gently, in the case of others he employs harsher remedies, his purpose being to provide a cure for all. Still none is left free and untouched, because he knows that all, without a single exception, are diseased.

6. We may add, that our most merciful Father requires not only to prevent our weakness, but often to correct our past faults, that he may keep us in due obedience. Therefore, whenever we are afflicted we ought immediately to call to mind our past life. In this way we will find that the faults which we have committed are deserving of such castigation. And yet the exhortation to patience is not to be founded chiefly on the acknowledgment of sin. For Scripture supplies a far better consideration when it says, that in adversity “we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world,” (1 Cor. 11:32). Therefore, in the very bitterness of tribulation we ought to recognise the kindness and mercy of our Father, since even then he ceases not to further our salvation. For he afflicts, not that he may ruin or destroy but rather that he may deliver us from the condemnation of the world. Let this thought lead us to what Scripture elsewhere teaches: “My son, despise not

the chastening of the Lord; neither be weary of his correction: For whom the Lord loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth," (Prov. 3:11, 12). When we perceive our Father's rod, is it not our part to behave as obedient docile sons rather than rebelliously imitate desperate men, who are hardened in wickedness? God dooms us to destruction, if he does not, by correction, call us back when we have fallen off from him, so that it is truly said, "If ye be without chastisement," "then are ye bastards, and not sons," (Heb. 12:8). We are most perverse then if we cannot bear him while he is manifesting his good-will to us, and the care which he takes of our salvation. Scripture states the difference between believers and unbelievers to be, that the latter, as the slaves of inveterate and deep-seated iniquity, only become worse and more obstinate under the lash; whereas the former, like free-born sons turn to repentance. Now, therefore, choose your class. But as I have already spoken of this subject, it is sufficient to have here briefly adverted to it.

7. There is singular consolation, moreover, when we are persecuted for righteousness' sake. For our thought should then be, How high the honour which God bestows upon us in distinguishing us by the special badge of his soldiers. By suffering persecution for righteousness' sake, I mean not only striving for the defence of the Gospel, but for the defence of righteousness in any way. Whether, therefore, in maintaining the truth of God against the lies of Satan, or defending the good and innocent against the injuries of the bad, we are obliged to incur the offence and hatred of the world, so as to endanger life, fortune, or honour, let us not grieve or decline so far to spend ourselves for God; let us not think ourselves wretched in those things in which he with his own lips has pronounced us blessed (Mt. 5:10). Poverty, indeed considered in itself, is misery; so are exile, contempt, imprisonment, ignominy: in fine, death itself is the last of all calamities. But when the favour of God breathes upon us, there is none of these things which may not turn out to our happiness. Let us then be contented with the testimony of Christ rather than with the false estimate of the flesh, and then, after the example of the Apostles, we will rejoice in being "counted worthy to suffer shame for his name," (Acts 5:41). For why? If, while

conscious of our innocence, we are deprived of our substance by the wickedness of man, we are, no doubt, humanly speaking, reduced to poverty; but in truth our riches in heaven are increased: if driven from our homes we have a more welcome reception into the family of God; if vexed and despised, we are more firmly rooted in Christ; if stigmatised by disgrace and ignominy, we have a higher place in the kingdom of God; and if we are slain, entrance is thereby given us to eternal life. The Lord having set such a price upon us, let us be ashamed to estimate ourselves at less than the shadowy and evanescent allurements of the present life.

8. Since by these, and similar considerations, Scripture abundantly solaces us for the ignominy or calamities which we endure in defence of righteousness, we are very ungrateful if we do not willingly and cheerfully receive them at the hand of the Lord, especially since this form of the cross is the most appropriate to believers, being that by which Christ desires to be glorified in us, as Peter also declares (1 Pet. 4:11, 14). But as to ingenuous natures, it is more bitter to suffer disgrace than a hundred deaths, Paul expressly reminds us that not only persecution, but also disgrace awaits us, “because we trust in the living God,” (1 Tim. 4:10). So in another passage he bids us, after his example, walk “by evil report and good report,” (2 Cor. 6:8). The cheerfulness required, however, does not imply a total insensibility to pain. The saints could show no patience under the cross if they were not both tortured with pain and grievously molested. Were there no hardship in poverty, no pain in disease, no sting in ignominy, no fear in death, where would be the fortitude and moderation in enduring them? But while every one of these, by its inherent bitterness, naturally vexes the mind, the believer in this displays his fortitude, that though fully sensible of the bitterness and labouring grievously, he still withstands and struggles boldly; in this displays his patience, that though sharply stung, he is however curbed by the fear of God from breaking forth into any excess; in this displays his alacrity, that though pressed with sorrow and sadness, he rests satisfied with spiritual consolation from God.

9. This conflict which believers maintain against the natural feeling of pain, while they study moderation and patience, Paul elegantly

describes in these words: "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed," (2 Cor. 4:8, 9). You see that to bear the cross patiently is not to have your feelings altogether blunted, and to be absolutely insensible to pain, according to the absurd description which the Stoics of old gave of their hero as one who, divested of humanity, was affected in the same way by adversity and prosperity, grief and joy; or rather, like a stone, was not affected by anything. And what did they gain by that sublime wisdom? they exhibited a shadow of patience, which never did, and never can, exist among men. Nay, rather by aiming at a too exact and rigid patience, they banished it altogether from human life. Now also we have among Christians a new kind of Stoics, who hold it vicious not only to groan and weep, but even to be sad and anxious. These paradoxes are usually started by indolent men who, employing themselves more in speculation than in action, can do nothing else for us than beget such paradoxes. But we have nothing to do with that iron philosophy which our Lord and Master condemned—not only in word, but also by his own example. For he both grieved and shed tears for his own and others' woes. Nor did he teach his disciples differently: "Ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice," (John 16:20). And lest any one should regard this as vicious, he expressly declares, "Blessed are they that mourn," (Mt. 5:4). And no wonder. If all tears are condemned, what shall we think of our Lord himself, whose "sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground?" (Luke 22:44; Mt. 26:38). If every kind of fear is a mark of unbelief, what place shall we assign to the dread which, it is said, in no slight degree amazed him; if all sadness is condemned, how shall we justify him when he confesses, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death?"

10. I wished to make these observations to keep pious minds from despair, lest, from feeling it impossible to divest themselves of the natural feeling of grief, they might altogether abandon the study of patience. This must necessarily be the result with those who convert patience into stupor, and a brave and firm man into a block. Scripture gives saints the praise of endurance when, though

afflicted by the hardships they endure, they are not crushed; though they feel bitterly, they are at the same time filled with spiritual joy; though pressed with anxiety, breathe exhilarated by the consolation of God. Still there is a certain degree of repugnance in their hearts, because natural sense shuns and dreads what is adverse to it, while pious affection, even through these difficulties, tries to obey the divine will. This repugnance the Lord expressed when he thus addressed Peter: “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself and walkedst whither thou wouldst; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee; and carry thee whither thou wouldest not,” (John 21:18). It is not probable, indeed, that when it became necessary to glorify God by death he was driven to it unwilling and resisting; had it been so, little praise would have been due to his martyrdom. But though he obeyed the divine ordination with the greatest alacrity of heart, yet, as he had not divested himself of humanity, he was distracted by a double will. When he thought of the bloody death which he was to die, struck with horror, he would willingly have avoided it: on the other hand, when he considered that it was God who called him to it, his fear was vanquished and suppressed, and he met death cheerfully. It must therefore be our study, if we would be disciples of Christ, to imbue our minds with such reverence and obedience to God as may tame and subjugate all affections contrary to his appointment. In this way, whatever be the kind of cross to which we are subjected, we shall in the greatest straits firmly maintain our patience. Adversity will have its bitterness, and sting us. When afflicted with disease, we shall groan and be disquieted, and long for health; pressed with poverty, we shall feel the stings of anxiety and sadness, feel the pain of ignominy, contempt, and injury, and pay the tears due to nature at the death of our friends: but our conclusion will always be, The Lord so willed it, therefore let us follow his will. Nay, amid the pungency of grief, among groans and tears this thought will necessarily suggest itself and incline us cheerfully to endure the things for which we are so afflicted.

11. But since the chief reason for enduring the cross has been derived from a consideration of the divine will, we must in few

words explain wherein lies the difference between philosophical and Christian patience. Indeed, very few of the philosophers advanced so far as to perceive that the hand of God tries us by means of affliction, and that we ought in this matter to obey God. The only reason which they adduce is, that *so it must be*. But is not this just to say, that we must yield to God, because it is in vain to contend against him? For if we obey God only because it is necessary, provided we can escape, we shall cease to obey him. But what Scripture calls us to consider in the will of God is very different, namely, first justice and equity, and then a regard to our own salvation. Hence Christian exhortations to patience are of this nature, Whether poverty, or exile, or imprisonment, or contumely, or disease, or bereavement, or any such evil affects us, we must think that none of them happens except by the will and providence of God; moreover, that every thing he does is in the most perfect order. What! do not our numberless daily faults deserve to be chastised, more severely, and with a heavier rod than his mercy lays upon us? Is it not most right that our flesh should be subdued, and be, as it were, accustomed to the yoke, so as not to rage and wanton as it lists? Are not the justice and the truth of God worthy of our suffering on their account? But if the equity of God is undoubtedly displayed in affliction, we cannot murmur or struggle against them without iniquity. We no longer hear the frigid cant, Yield, because it is necessary; but a living and energetic precept, Obey, because it is unlawful to resist; bear patiently, because impatience is rebellion against the justice of God. Then as that only seems to us attractive which we perceive to be for our own safety and advantage, here also our heavenly Father consoles us, by the assurance, that in the very cross with which he afflicts us he provides for our salvation. But if it is clear that tribulations are salutary to us, why should we not receive them with calm and grateful minds? In bearing them patiently we are not submitting to necessity but resting satisfied with our own good. The effect of these thoughts is, that to whatever extent our minds are contracted by the bitterness which we naturally feel under the cross, to the same extent will they be expanded with spiritual joy. Hence arises thanksgiving, which cannot exist unless joy be felt. But if the praise of the Lord and thanksgiving can emanate only from a cheerful and gladdened

breasts and there is nothing which ought to interrupt these feelings in us, it is clear how necessary it is to temper the bitterness of the cross with spiritual joy”.

Calvin’s further comment reminds the saved that a better world is their final destination and that God’s aim is to wean them off from loving and becoming too comfortable in this present evil world just like the Israelites travelling through the wilderness in the Old Testament.

“Whatever be the kind of tribulation with which we are afflicted, we should always consider the end of it to be, that we may be trained to despise the present, and thereby stimulated to aspire to the future life. For since God well knows how strongly we are inclined by nature to a slavish love of this world, in order to prevent us from clinging too strongly to it, he employs the fittest reason for calling us back, and shaking off our lethargy. Every one of us, indeed, would be thought to aspire and aim at heavenly immortality during the whole course of his life. For we would be ashamed in no respect to excel the lower animals; whose condition would not be at all inferior to ours, had we not a hope of immortality beyond the grave. But when you attend to the plans, wishes, and actions of each, you see nothing in them but the earth. Hence our stupidity; our minds being dazzled with the glare of wealth, power, and honours, that they can see no farther. The heart also, engrossed with avarice, ambition, and lust, is weighed down and cannot rise above them. In short, the whole soul, ensnared by the allurements of the flesh, seeks its happiness on the earth. To meet this disease, the Lord makes his people sensible of the vanity of the present life, by a constant proof of its miseries. Thus, that they may not promise themselves deep and lasting peace in it, he often allows them to be assailed by war, tumult, or rapine, or to be disturbed by other injuries. That they may not long with too much eagerness after fleeting and fading riches, or rest in those which they already possess, he reduces them to want, or, at least, restricts them to a moderate allowance, at one time by exile, at another by sterility, at another by fire, or by other means. That they may not indulge too complacently in the advantages of married life, he either vexes them by the misconduct of their partners, or humbles them by

the wickedness of their children, or afflicts them by bereavement. But if in all these he is indulgent to them, lest they should either swell with vain-glory, or be elated with confidence, by diseases and dangers he sets palpably before them how unstable and evanescent are all the advantages competent to mortals. We duly profit by the discipline of the cross, when we learn that this life, estimated in itself, is restless, troubled, in numberless ways wretched, and plainly in no respect happy; that what are estimated its blessings are uncertain, fleeting, vain, and vitiated by a great admixture of evil. From this we conclude, that all we have to seek or hope for here is contest; that when we think of the crown we must raise our eyes to heaven. For we must hold, that our mind never rises seriously to desire and aspire after the future, until it has learned to despise the present life.

2. For there is no medium between the two things: the earth must either be worthless in our estimation, or keep us enslaved by an intemperate love of it. Therefore, if we have any regard to eternity, we must carefully strive to disencumber ourselves of these fetters. Moreover, since the present life has many enticements to allure us, and great semblance of delight, grace, and sweetness to soothe us, it is of great consequence to us to be now and then called off from its fascinations. For what, pray, would happen, if we here enjoyed an uninterrupted course of honour and felicity, when even the constant stimulus of affliction cannot arouse us to a due sense of our misery? That human life is like smoke or a shadow, is not only known to the learned; there is not a more trite proverb among the vulgar. Considering it a fact most useful to be known, they have recommended it in many well-known expressions. Still there is no fact which we ponder less carefully, or less frequently remember. For we form all our plans just as if we had fixed our immortality on the earth. If we see a funeral, or walk among graves, as the image of death is then present to the eye, I admit we philosophise admirably on the vanity of life. We do not indeed always do so, for those things often have no effect upon us at all. But, at the best, our philosophy is momentary. It vanishes as soon as we turn our back, and leaves not the vestige of remembrance behind; in short, it passes away, just like the applause of a theatre at some

pleasant spectacle. Forgetful not only of death, but also of mortality itself, as if no rumour of it had ever reached us, we indulge in supine security as expecting a terrestrial immortality. Meanwhile, if any one breaks in with the proverb, that man is the creature of a day, we indeed acknowledge its truth, but, so far from giving heed to it, the thought of perpetuity still keeps hold of our minds. Who then can deny that it is of the highest importance to us all, I say not, to be admonished by words, but convinced by all possible experience of the miserable condition of our earthly life; since even when convinced we scarcely cease to gaze upon it with vicious, stupid admiration, as if it contained within itself the sum of all that is good? But if God finds it necessary so to train us, it must be our duty to listen to him when he calls, and shakes us from our torpor, that we may hasten to despise the world, and aspire with our whole heart to the future life.

3. Still the contempt which believers should train themselves to feel for the present life, must not be of a kind to beget hatred of it or ingratitude to God. This life, though abounding in all kinds of wretchedness, is justly classed among divine blessings which are not to be despised. Wherefore, if we do not recognize the kindness of God in it, we are chargeable with no little ingratitude towards him. To believers, especially, it ought to be a proof of divine benevolence, since it is wholly destined to promote their salvation. Before openly exhibiting the inheritance of eternal glory, God is pleased to manifest himself to us as a Father by minor proofs—viz. the blessings which he daily bestows upon us. Therefore, while this life serves to acquaint us with the goodness of God, shall we disdain it as if it did not contain one particle of good? We ought, therefore, to feel and be affected towards it in such a manner as to place it among those gifts of the divine benignity which are by no means to be despised. Were there no proofs in Scripture (they are most numerous and clear), yet nature herself exhorts us to return thanks to God for having brought us forth into light, granted us the use of it, and bestowed upon us all the means necessary for its preservation. And there is a much higher reason when we reflect that here we are in a manner prepared for the glory of the heavenly kingdom. For the Lord hath ordained, that those who are ultimately

to be crowned in heaven must maintain a previous warfare on the earth, that they may not triumph before they have overcome the difficulties of war, and obtained the victory. Another reason is, that we here begin to experience in various ways a foretaste of the divine benignity, in order that our hope and desire may be whetted for its full manifestation. When once we have concluded that our earthly life is a gift of the divine mercy, of which, agreeably to our obligation, it behoves us to have a grateful remembrance, we shall then properly descend to consider its most wretched condition, and thus escape from that excessive fondness for it, to which, as I have said, we are naturally prone.

4. In proportion as this improper love diminishes, our desire of a better life should increase. I confess, indeed, that a most accurate opinion was formed by those who thought, that the best thing was not to be born, the next best to die early. For, being destitute of the light of God and of true religion, what could they see in it that was not of dire and evil omen? Nor was it unreasonable for those who felt sorrow and shed tears at the birth of their kindred, to keep holiday at their deaths. But this they did without profit; because, devoid of the true doctrine of faith, they saw not how that which in itself is neither happy nor desirable turns to the advantage of the righteous: and hence their opinion issued in despair. Let believers, then, in forming an estimate of this mortal life, and perceiving that in itself it is nothing but misery, make it their aim to exert themselves with greater alacrity, and less hindrance, in aspiring to the future and eternal life. When we contrast the two, the former may not only be securely neglected, but, in comparison of the latter, be disdained and contemned. If heaven is our country, what can the earth be but a place of exile? If departure from the world is entrance into life, what is the world but a sepulchre, and what is residence in it but immersion in death? If to be freed from the body is to gain full possession of freedom, what is the body but a prison? If it is the very summit of happiness to enjoy the presence of God, is it not miserable to want it? But “whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord,” (2 Cor. 5:6). Thus when the earthly is compared with the heavenly life, it may undoubtedly be despised and trampled under foot. We ought never, indeed, to

regard it with hatred, except in so far as it keeps us subject to sin; and even this hatred ought not to be directed against life itself. At all events, we must stand so affected towards it in regard to weariness or hatred as, while longing for its termination, to be ready at the Lord's will to continue in it, keeping far from everything like murmuring and impatience. For it is as if the Lord had assigned us a post, which we must maintain till he recalls us. Paul, indeed, laments his condition, in being still bound with the fetters of the body, and sighs earnestly for redemption (Rom. 7:24); nevertheless, he declared that, in obedience to the command of Gods he was prepared for both courses, because he acknowledges it as his duty to God to glorify his name whether by life or by death, while it belongs to God to determine what is most conducive to His glory (Phil. 1:20–24). Wherefore, if it becomes us to live and die to the Lord, let us leave the period of our life and death at his disposal. Still let us ardently long for death, and constantly meditate upon it, and in comparison with future immortality, let us despise life, and, on account of the bondage of sin, long to renounce it whenever it shall so please the Lord.

5. But, most strange to say, many who boast of being Christians, instead of thus longing for death, are so afraid of it that they tremble at the very mention of it as a thing ominous and dreadful. We cannot wonder, indeed, that our natural feelings should be somewhat shocked at the mention of our dissolution. But it is altogether intolerable that the light of piety should not be so powerful in a Christian breast as with greater consolation to overcome and suppress that fear. For if we reflect that this our tabernacle, unstable, defective, corruptible, fading, pining, and putrid, is dissolved, in order that it may forthwith be renewed in sure, perfect, incorruptible, in fine, in heavenly glory, will not faith compel us eagerly to desire what nature dreads? If we reflect that by death we are recalled from exile to inhabit our native country, a heavenly country, shall this give us no comfort? But everything longs for permanent existence. I admit this, and therefore contend that we ought to look to future immortality, where we may obtain that fixed condition which nowhere appears on the earth. For Paul admirably enjoins believers to hasten cheerfully to death, not

because they “would be unclothed, but clothed upon,” (2 Cor. 5:2). Shall the lower animals, and inanimate creatures themselves even wood and stone, as conscious of their present vanity, long for the final resurrection, that they may with the sons of God be delivered from vanity (Rom. 8:19); and shall we, endued with the light of intellect, and more than intellect, enlightened by the Spirit of God, when our essence is in question, rise no higher than the corruption of this earth? But it is not my purpose, nor is this the place, to plead against this great perverseness. At the outset, I declared that I had no wish to engage in a diffuse discussion of common-places. My advice to those whose minds are thus timid is to read the short treatise of Cyprian De Mortalitate, unless it be more accordant with their deserts to send them to the philosophers, that by inspecting what they say on the contempt of death, they may begin to blush. This, however let us hold as fixed, that no man has made much progress in the school of Christ who does not look forward with joy to the day of death and final resurrection (2 Tim. 4:18; Tit. 2:13) for Paul distinguishes all believers by this mark; and the usual course of Scripture is to direct us thither whenever it would furnish us with an argument for substantial joy. “Look up,” says our Lord, “and lift up your heads: for your redemption draweth nigh,” (Luke 21:28). Is it reasonable, I ask, that what he intended to have a powerful effect in stirring us up to alacrity and exultation should produce nothing but sadness and consternation? If it is so, why do we still glory in him as our Master? Therefore, let us come to a sounder mind, and how repugnant so ever the blind and stupid longing of the flesh may be, let us doubt not to desire the advent of the Lord not in wish only, but with earnest sighs, as the most propitious of all events. He will come as a Redeemer to deliver us from an immense abyss of evil and misery, and lead us to the blessed inheritance of his life and glory.

6. Thus, indeed, it is; the whole body of the faithful, so long as they live on the earth, must be like sheep for the slaughter, in order that they may be conformed to Christ their head (Rom. 8:36). Most deplorable, therefore, would their situation be did they not, by raising their mind to heaven, become superior to all that is in the world, and rise above the present aspect of affairs (1 Cor. 15:19).

On the other hand, when once they have raised their head above all earthly objects, though they see the wicked flourishing in wealth and honour, and enjoying profound peace, indulging in luxury and splendour, and revelling in all kinds of delights, though they should moreover be wickedly assailed by them, suffer insult from their pride, be robbed by their avarice, or assailed by any other passion, they will have no difficulty in bearing up under these evils. They will turn their eye to that day (Isaiah 25:8; Rev. 7:17), on which the Lord will receive his faithful servants, wipe away all tears from their eyes, clothe them in a robe of glory and joy, feed them with the ineffable sweetness of his pleasures, exalt them to share with him in his greatness; in fine, admit them to a participation in his happiness. But the wicked who may have flourished on the earth, he will cast forth in extreme ignominy, will change their delights into torments, their laughter and joy into wailing and gnashing of teeth, their peace into the gnawing of conscience, and punish their luxury with unquenchable fire. He will also place their necks under the feet of the godly, whose patience they abused. For, as Paul declares, “it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven,” (2 Thess. 1:6, 7). This, indeed, is our only consolation; deprived of it, we must either give way to despondency, or resort to our destruction to the vain solace of the world. The Psalmist confesses, “My feet were almost gone: my steps had well nigh slipt: for I was envious at the foolish when I saw the prosperity of the wicked,” (Psalm 73:3, 4); and he found no resting-place until he entered the sanctuary, and considered the latter end of the righteous and the wicked. To conclude in one word, the cross of Christ then only triumphs in the breasts of believers over the devil and the flesh, sin and sinners, when their eyes are directed to the power of his resurrection.”

Book 3rd Chapter 8,9:
The Institutes by John Calvin

SECTION EIGHT

FAITH COLLECTIVELY



CHAPTER 38

THE CHURCH

Those in our text thought they were saved and professed in Christ's name that they were:

“Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?”
Matthew 7 v 22

Those in the text raised their having taught others alluding to their membership of the church-‘have *we* not prophesied...?’ These people thought they were part of the church. The true church, who will come from many races and nations and many different churches and denominations, are those who are truly saved by grace.

God tells us in his word that public declaration of Christian identity is to be made within the order and structure called the church. The people referred to in our text claimed publicly in the church that they were saved. There are people who do so and are unsaved. Consider the parable of the tares and the wheat which illustrates this truth:

“Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto

them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.

Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field. He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked *one*; The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.”

Matthew 13

When Christ uttered the words of our title text it was to Jews who were the established church at that time. Prior to his first coming the nation of Israel was the visible church on earth. God dealt with them primarily but not exclusively. God issued the nation rules of three different kind – civil, ceremonial and moral.

The first set of regulations were civil, teaching a practical way of living as a nation and they were part of Gods governing these people as a group. They cannot be applied to individuals. This is a very important distinction in the bible over which many mistakes have occurred. An example of this is trying wrongly to justify slavery in new testament times – it is never condoned in the new testament(post Israel times.) Biblical slavery in the old testament was an agreement between two parties on an equal footing for such things as paying of a debt for example. This arrangement was entered into voluntarily by the slave. This was not heathen slavery that meant acquiring another human being by means of buying and so ‘owning’ them.

God instructed the nation of Israel in the old testament to destroy wicked people or nations because they acted as a group towards those people. It

wasn't an Israelites individual morality but the collective national mandate that was involved – the nation being used as a means to execute Gods judgement towards very wicked people who God often gave a long time to repent and whose wickedness may include cruelty, barbarity e.g. human sacrifice for example and crimes against children. Children too were capable of wickedness and punished for it. However very young children unable to distinguish between right and wrong were not, and are not, punished in this way by God. Men may in their evil acts harm such children. Similarly in present times the principle is accepted. For example, the nation is authorized by God to enact laws to punish evil people which are implemented on behalf of that group or nations sanctioning the killing of others in times of war in order to defend their freedom or to relieve great cruelty and oppression.

Comments of imprecation in the scripture (e.g. psalms, prophets) reflect the just righteous anger against wicked forces working to destroy his honour and people. Because the physical nation of Israel was the church and represented Gods honour it is a special case. These conditions are never repeated in history and so destruction of other nations and imprecation are ceased in new testament times. The comments are only ever spoken as Gods mouthpiece only and never personal opinion or individual morality. The wicked forces spoken and fought against only ever brought temporal and eternal misery to poor souls. This example revealed Gods righteous anger and judgement against sin. In gospel times in the New testament these matters were (and are now) left to Gods overriding justice and his mercy comes more to light:

“Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works:”
2nd Timothy 4 v 14

God acts as judge towards any sin and punishes it correctly and proportionately. Any sin is ultimately committed against his own character and being. Christs disciples on occasion in the new testament had a very wrong spirit of anger instead of compassion when judgement ought to have been left to God:

“And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw *this*, they

said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save *them*.”
 Luke 9 v 52–56

God then, deals with people as groups, whether as families, nations or indeed the whole race. When the saved come together as a group to worship God this is called the church:

John Owen comments:

“What is the end of all church-order, assemblies, and worship? What is a church? Is it not a company of sinners gathered together, according to God's appointment, to give glory and praise to him for pardoning grace, for the forgiveness of sins, and to yield him that obedience which he requires from us on the account of his having so dealt with us? This is the nature, this is the aim of a church. Whoever doesn't understand it, whoever does not use it to that end, only abuses that great institution. The world is full of such abuse. Some endeavour to make their own secular advantages by the pretense of the church; some discharge the duty required in it with some secret hopes that it shall be their righteousness before God; some answer only their light and convictions in empty claims. This alone is the true purpose, the true use for it — We assemble ourselves to learn that there is forgiveness with God through Christ; to pray that we may be made recipients of it; to bless and praise God for our interest in it; to engage ourselves in that obedience which he requires on the account of it. And were this constantly on our minds and in our designs, we might be more established in the faith of it than, it may be, the most of us are.”

*From The works of John Owen volume 6:
 Temptation and sin: Psalm 130*

“When I remember these *things*, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday.”
 Psalm 42 v 4

This true church is a group of Gods people dealt with Him by way of covenant.

CHAPTER 39

FAITH COLLECTIVELY: FAITH AND COVENANT

Many people were deceived according to our text. Many of them simply had stirrings of conscience which spurred them on to self righteousness by trying to do good deeds to gain favour with God. This is the basis of all false religion in the world whether they are nominal Christians or any other type of false religion. They try and do good things themselves to be saved. It can never be achieved:

“Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, *of* the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. 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, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:”
Philippians 3 v 4–8

The idea of covenant is central to the bible with mans attempt to gain favour with God by his own deeds, failing and God substituting his own

Son to keep the Laws commands which brought glory to himself alone. These good deeds were perfectly performed before God and so were acceptable and were done on behalf of a group of other people. The new covenant was superior because the old failed in its attempts to please God. Its main superiority lay in the fact that it displayed Gods grace and mercy by means of the availability of the forgiveness of sins(the covenant of grace). This is the message of the bible – the contrast between the old and new covenants from mans fall, until Gods teaching of that contrast in the ceremonial law, to the expansion of the New covenant to the inhabitants of the whole world in new testament times.

A covenant is a particular type of agreement between two parties with a condition and promise attached to meeting those conditions. Adam originally represented the human race before God and in order to obtain union with God in terms of fellowship and favour with him he was required to obey his command. Adam chose to disobey and God in his plan to save the race from spiritual ruin made a covenant with a particular group or number of people whom Christ represented before God(as mediator) between the two parties in that agreement. This is in contrast to the angels who were dealt with only as individuals and had no representative mediator to be a substitute for their sin.

Hark the herald angels sing
 “Glory to the newborn King!
 Peace on earth and mercy mild
 God and sinners reconciled”
 Joyful, all ye nations rise
 Join the triumph of the skies
 With the angelic host proclaim:
 “Christ is born in Bethlehem”
 Hark! The herald angels sing
 “Glory to the newborn King!”

Christ by highest heav’n adored
 Christ the everlasting Lord!
 Late in time behold Him come
 Offspring of a Virgin’s womb
 Veiled in flesh the Godhead see
 Hail the incarnate Deity

Pleased as man with man to dwell
 Jesus, our Emmanuel
 Hark! The herald angels sing
 “Glory to the newborn King!”

Hail the heav’n-born Prince of Peace!
 Hail the Son of Righteousness!
 Light and life to all He brings
 Ris’n with healing in His wings
 Mild He lays His glory by
 Born that man no more may die
 Born to raise the sons of earth
 Born to give them second birth
 Hark! The herald angels sing
 “Glory to the newborn King!”

Charles Wesley

“For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions *that were* under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a testament *is*, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament *is* of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth.

Whereupon neither the first *testament* was dedicated without blood.

For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people,

Saying, This *is* the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you. Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle,

and all the vessels of the ministry. And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission. *It was* therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, *which are* the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.”

Hebrews 9

A.W. Pink comments on 2nd Samuel chapter 23:

“As the believer nears the end of his course, he not only meditates upon the lowliness of his original estate and then the elevated position to which sovereign grace has lifted him, but he also reviews his follies, bemoans his failures, and sorrows over the wretched returns he has made unto Gods goodness. This is the common experience of the pious: as they journey through this wilderness they are sorely tried and exercised, pass through deep waters, experience many sharp conflicts and are often at a loss to maintain their faith.

Favour'd saints of God,
His messengers sand sears,
Thy narrow path have trod,
Mid sins, and doubts, and fears.

And at the end they generally have to mourn over the graceless condition of some of the nearest and dearest to them, and exclaim, ‘Although my house be not so with God.’

‘Yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure.’ Blessed antithesis. The opening ‘yet’ is placed over against the ‘although’ at the beginning of the previous clause;

it is the faithfulness of God set in delightful contrast from David's failures. It illustrates most solemnly the awe-inspiring sovereignty of God: Divine justice had been meted out to his foes, divine grace had dealt with himself. At least one of his children had evidenced himself to be among the reprobate, but God had entered into an eternal compact of peace with the father. Here indeed was sweet consolation for his poor heart. The allusion is to that of the covenant of grace which God made with all his people in Christ before the foundation of the world. That covenant is from everlasting in its contrivance, and to everlasting in its consequences.

The covenant is so ordered as to promote the glory of God, the honour of the mediator, and the holiness and blessings of His people. it is sure because its promises those of Him who cannot lie, because full provision is made in it for all the failures of believers, and because its administration is in the hands of Christ. 'For this is all my salvation.' David rightly traced his salvation back to the everlasting covenant: so many today are ignorant of this inexhaustible well of comfort. It is not enough that we go back to the hour we first believed, nor even to the Cross where the Saviour paid the price of our redemption; to the everlasting covenant we must look, and see there God graciously planning to give Christ to die for His people and impart the Spirit to them for quickening and the communicating of faith. This is 'all our salvation' for it entirely suffices, containing as it does a draft of all the salvation – acts of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

In consequence of the nature, fullness and sufficiency of the everlasting covenant, it must 'be all my desire'; that is obtaining by the Spirits help a personal interest in its grand promises."

*From The Life of David:
volume 2 page 291–3*

This idea of covenant signifies union and communion with God in both the Old and New 'testament' or 'covenant'. (A covenant becomes an testament when the party to the agreement dies and what they promised comes into effect e.g. 'last will and testament')

The whole person, both soul and body, become united to God. The means of union with God is faith in the Person and sacrificial work of

Christ, so the New covenant was the framework which created the opportunity for individuals to come to the representative and mediator, Christ, to be united to God through him through that faith and so receive salvation through forgiveness and be saved eternally:

“Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup *is* the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.” Luke 22 v 20

“For this *is* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:” Hebrews 8 v 10

“*There is* therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” Romans 8 v 1

Christ represented His people before God and continues to do so as the great high priest before his father at Gods ‘right hand’ of authority:

“By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament. And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: But this *man*, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. For such an high priest became us, *who is* holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people’s: for this he did once, when he offered up himself. For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, *maketh* the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.” Hebrews 7 v 22–28

Although the collection of writings are called the old and new testaments, once the human race rejected the covenant of works in the fall of Adam, the new covenant (of grace) was offered to them during old testament times. The full extent of its implications and benefits were available but not so easily perceived in old testament times. Gods purposes to save a people by grace in order to glorify himself and reveal his character through Christ

and his work is central to the teaching present in the old testament. In it the mediator had not yet come and death of the ‘testator’ had not yet occurred so it was not so clearly defined. The old Testament is dominated by the lesson of mans inability to keep that first or old covenant of works or deed and so Christ is exalted in being the answer to the age old repeated failure:

“For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. But he *who was* of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman *was* by promise. Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. For it is written, Rejoice, *thou* barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband. Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him *that was born* after the Spirit, even so *it is* now.

Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free. Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing.

For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace. For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.”

Galatians 4 v 22–5 v 6

“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:

(For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. But not as the offence, so also *is* the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, *which is* by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as *it was* by one that sinned, *so is* the gift: for the judgment *was* by one to condemnation, but the free gift *is* of many offences unto justification. For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.)

Therefore as by the offence of one *judgment came* upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one *the free gift came* upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Romans 5 v 12–21

The covenant serves to prove the doctrine of election. God the Father both chose and commissioned his Son to be the mediator, giving him a people for himself and also, out of love, chose this group of people to become part of his family – commonly known as the election of grace(a reference to the covenant of grace).

‘It pleased God, in his eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus, his only-begotten Son, to be the Mediator between God and men, the prophet, priest, and king; the head and Saviour of the Church, the heir or all things, and judge of the world; unto whom he did, from all eternity, give a people to be his seed, and to be by him in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified.’

*Westminster Confession of Faith Chapter Eight:
Of Christ the mediator*

Notice how in Romans five, Christ's work was for the 'many' but not all sinners. In John chapter six, the mediator represented a group of people before the Father:

"No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day." John 6 v 44.

Christ went to the lengths of sacrificing himself to save sinners. Is he going to leave it to fickle sinners to make sure it is complete. What would Christ's sacrifice have meant if noone had chosen salvation? This is not the biblical emphases leaving it up to a persons choice alone. No, rather they are persuaded, made willing by his power, compelled to come in to Gods kingdom:

"Thy people *shall be* willing in the day of thy power"

Psalm 110 v 3

"And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed *is* he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God. Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many:

And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one *consent* began to make excuse... So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel *them* to come in, that my house may be filled." Luke 14 v 15–18,21–23

"Why was I made to hear Thy voice,
And enter while there's room,
When thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come?"

'Twas the same grace that spread the feast
That gently forced me in;

Else I had still refused to taste,
And perished in my sin.”

In gospel preaching a compelling call is sounded out and sinner gets hemmed in by the gospel imperative. There is a great prize and a fearful consequence for refusal. The preacher is Gods instrument and the preaching of the Gospel (in the hands of the Spirit) is the motive force to persuade people, the channel, the means by which they are compelled and drawn into the kingdom.

The covenant of grace was organized and regulated differently prior to the Saviours arrival. It had a different form and expression and practices associated with it before Christ came in to this world. This is the second group of regulations God set up in Israel.

In the old testament it was a system called the ceremonial law which governed the sinners approach to, and worship of, God during that particular period. It had various rites and symbols such as circumcision as part of it, whereas in New testament times these representations were dispensed with as the realities had in many respects arrived. Some spiritual symbols still remain partly because what they represent is not tangible and because they are associated with the same covenant of grace, e.g.- The Lords supper. The central spiritual truth represented is this-in the covenant of grace, union with God was achieved by removal of a persons defilement through faith in Christ. This is symbolized by circumcision in the Old testament and baptism in the New with the Passover and the Lords supper referring specifically to the object of that faith which is Christ’s person and atoning sacrifice as the means of forgiveness with God.

“Then verily the first *covenant* had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary. For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein *was* the candlestick, and the table, and the shewbread; which is called the sanctuary. And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all; Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein *was* the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron’s rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant;

And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercyseat; of which we cannot now speak particularly. Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first

tabernacle, accomplishing the service *of God*. But into the second *went* the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and *for* the errors of the people: The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing: Which *was* a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; *Which stood* only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed *on them* until the time of reformation. But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption *for us*.

For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" Hebrews 9 v 1–14

The purpose of ceremonial laws, then, was to teach spiritual principles and truth to old testament saints using physical representations. The tabernacle and temple objects and practice teach truths about the three persons of the Trinity, their relations to each other and their roles in the covenant of grace and its practical effects and operation in the work of salvation. For example the application of salvation by the Holy Spirit. But the primary focus of them was on Christ and his work and intercession in order to engender and stimulate faith in those who considered them. Substitutionary atonement through sacrifice producing forgiveness is essential to it. But not only with respect to the laws given to Israel but in the Old Testament generally it is rich with imagery teaching important truth displayed in the New testament.

For example the production of physical life at creation compared with the ‘new creation’ of spiritual life in the soul when it is first saved by grace. Or to chose another comparison, Daniel in Lions den as compared with Christ going through death, the lions being the ‘devils’ compassing Him about and the stone being rolled away

from the den or the grave as he emerges victorious over his enemies (with the angels playing their part in this also- Psalm 68)

In the Old testament this principle of truth is more metaphorical and its full brightness displayed through the prism of the light of the New testament teaching. This demonstrates that all of Scripture is designed to be interpreted by itself in other parts and for the good of the church and to the glory of His name. Not one word of it is superfluous. In the book of Judges, Samson declared a riddle in which he was a figure to be compared to the Saviour. Samson had slaughtered the lion and subsequently in its now being destroyed it became a source of sweetness, strength and nourishment to Gods people – in that case himself and his family:

“Then went Samson down, and his father and his mother, to Timnath, and came to the vineyards of Timnath: and, behold, a young lion roared against him. And the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and he rent him as he would have rent a kid, and he had nothing in his hand: but he told not his father or his mother what he had done. And he had nothing in his hand; not a staff to keep it off, nor a spear, sword, or knife to stab it with: in this Samson was a type of Christ, who has destroyed our adversary the devil, compared to a roaring lion, to a lion for his strength, cruelty, and voraciousness; to a roaring lion, making a hideous noise and stir when the Gospel was carried unto the Gentiles, and they were about to be called and espoused to Christ; from among whom he was cast out, and by no other weapon than the ministration of the Gospel, accompanied with the power of Christ, and his Spirit and, behold, [there was] a swarm of bees and honey in the carcass of the lion. This may be an emblem of those sweet blessings of grace, which come to the people of Christ through his having destroyed Satan the roaring lion, and all his works; particularly which came to the poor Gentiles, when the devil was cast out from them, and his empire there demolished.”

John Gills commentary on the Bible: Judges 14

The third and final set of regulations were the most important proscribed. The moral laws framed in the ten commandments, which were a statement of the standards required in our behaviour towards himself and others are

not just for the Nation of Israel but are universally and eternally applicable. The moral law defines for us the particulars of what sin is.

Many other practical issues are touched on in the old testament especially in the first five books, with references relevant to things such as marriage, baptism and the Lords supper.

Throughout the old testament there are accounts of the lives of the saved and unsaved as they interacted with and were regulated by God till their ultimate destiny. As alluded to with Daniel another biblical principle is that many of the characters of the saved and the events in their lives are representative of the great salvation themes with characters having many parallels with Christ in his person and work. Two other examples are:

Joseph being rejected by his own people and ultimately being exalted to a glorious position after his faithfulness to Gods calling,

Esther interceding for her endangered people before Xerxes the great judge, pleading their cause and securing their salvation.

The prophecies relate many events in history that outline the future experience of Gods people. In the later old testament they are related to events about Gods people then and also Christ's kingdom to come. There is a succession of earthly empires displayed in world history which Israel's history intertwined with also.

In the old testament nations that came into contact with Israel came into contact with their religion, their God and the gospel to some extent. So nations such as ancient Egypt, Babylon, Assyria are included. Individuals witnessed the gospel to those they came into contact with e.g. Noah, Abraham. The queen of Sheba came to Solomon and there are many other examples of heathen nations having contact with the church in the old testament. The accounts of Gods purposes and dealings with his people in these super powers in history is given in Old Testament scriptures. Each succeeding empire was greater than the previous one. However they were all transient and Christ came to set up his kingdom which was greater and more widespread than them all, would out last them all and indeed all earthly empires. When Christianity was spreading in the Roman empire and sweeping their traditional religion before it, it was acknowledged on his death bed by the emperor Julian the apostate, (so called because of his extreme attempts to stamp out Christianity by persecution) "Galilean

you have conquered.” Christ builds his kingdom and church and none can stand before it and the gates of hell itself cannot prevail over it:

“Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner *stone*; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.”
Ephesians 2 v 19–21

The old testament comments on the end of history in pictures in the same way as Revelation does. In Ezekiel and Daniel, Satan’s use of worldly means to war against Christ and the Church, which is Christ’s body and possession, is described.

Also the eternal reward and rest of the saved is gloriously described in many old testament references. Similarly to the new testament they have God revealed in Christ, being the centre of worship.

“And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.”, “And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.”
Revelation 21 v 22 and 22 v 1.

In these verses are represented justice and authority by the throne and atonement through sacrifice i.e. mercy by the figure of the lamb.

“For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”
2nd Corinthians 4 v 6

Christ came to set up a new order and then the church spread across the whole world. In all of the activities a church engages in it ought to be giving honour and glory to God rather than men so that:

“no flesh should glory in his presence”
1st Corinthians 1 v 29

In new testament times there are people in the church who are visible members but may not be saved as our text suggests. Even preachers may themselves be deceived as to their spiritual state:

“Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name...?”
Matthew 7 v 22

The bible in various passages warns against false brethren or teachers who lead others astray:

“Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.

For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.”
Romans 16 v 17,18

“But what I do, that I will do, that I may cut off occasion from them which desire occasion; that wherein they glory, they may be found even as we.

For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.”

2nd Corinthians 11 v 12–15

I wrote unto the church: but Diotrophes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth *them* out of the church. Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God. Demetrius hath good report of all *men*, and of the truth itself: yea, and we *also* bear record; and ye know that our record is true.”
3rd John v 9–12

In his epistle Jude warn of the catastrophic danger of false teachers and their serious effects and gives advice as to how to detect and counteract them:

These people may be who are looking for some personal gain e.g. monetary or they themselves may be unaware that they are unsaved and do not

have the Holy Spirit. Similarly to Paul in Romans, Jude in his account also states that these people do not have the Holy Spirit. If a person does not have the Holy Spirit not matter how well they know the doctrines of the gospel they will inevitably go astray and will have no objection to what is in reality evil, but, may be in a subtle form, masquerading as good. These are people who may be seen to tolerate and be indifferent to obvious sin in the practice of church members. It does not in the first instance refer to matters of doctrine and belief, although these are inevitably compromised as the corrupt influence spreads:

“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort *you* that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ. I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not.

And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. Likewise also these *filthy* dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities. Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.

But these speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves.

Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core. These are spots in your feasts of charity, when

they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds *they are* without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever. And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints,

To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard *speeches* which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.

These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling *words*, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage. But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts. These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit. But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost," Jude verse 3– 20

This then, is what being spiritual means, it is having the Holy Spirit within us. It is not only a reference to our own spirits primarily:

“For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to

the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.”
Romans 8 v 6–14

People can seem to be very religious and talk in a most holy manner. However they may know nothing of the Holy Spirit in their souls or godliness in their lives. Given these solemn truths, it is vital to know the defining features of a true church.

CHAPTER 40

CHARACTERISTICS OF A TRUE CHURCH (1)

Prior to consideration of the true church by way of contrast, a false church, that which has cast true religion away is considered. It creates a spiritual vacuum into which subsequently organized false religion enters such as Roman Catholicism or Islam or even total irreligion and atheism:

In false churches, congregations are lulled to sleep and sent to hell. Mentioning hell in preaching doesn't mean very much if the prospect is smoothed over in order to convince people they won't end up there. Here also there is no real sense of the extreme evil of sin and personal sinfulness, utter depravity and the hell deservedness of sinners. There is no solemnity in the presence of Holy one, on the way to eternity with a realization the devil is trying to deceive and attack God ferociously and its all out spiritual warfare and not a lazy, easy spiritual existence. Their concentration is on man and not who God is and what he has done. The temporal needs of people are important in the life of any church, but worship and glory to God is much more important. This is the great purpose of the church assembly. Spiritual life is bred from this and it makes a person truly godly and truly practical in good actions in their lives.

In the false church, there is no conception of God's dealings in a saved relationship e.g. chastisement, conflict with remaining sin and the devil and a love to God and his cause and a concern for and grief over it when it is being dishonoured in this world. They are simply an empty shell of religion.

Where collective Christianity is in decline at a particular time or location, there are usually three groups reflected in the mix of people who will

make up those involved in that kind of Church. This may be the case where in a previous generation in the particular place it has been strong and there has been great spiritual blessing and revival.

The first group is those who pay only lip service to religion and they adhere to external performances of religion only such as attending church but outwith this they are wholly given up to this world. They have no conception of spiritual matters, interest in them or love for them. Their heart is far from God.

The second group of people is a smaller group who, having had their consciences stirred and convicted of sin, may adhere quite strongly to doctrinal truth and have a kind of respect for and awe of God. They may have had thoughts of their latter end, of death and hell and, at times, been afraid. Their religion is for them in essence not a departure from the love of the world but a fire escape from everlasting burnings in hell. They may lead lives where an attempt is made to restrain themselves, at least publicly, from certain sins.

Included in this second group may be people who are the children of saved people who are not saved themselves. They believe they possessed what a previous godly generation had. However they have no real sense of sin or real experience of Christ's love in their hearts. They compromise with the world in their allegiances and views of truth and may even be given positions of authority in a church and lead churches astray:

“There is a conspiracy of her prophets in the midst thereof, like a roaring lion ravening the prey; they have devoured souls; they have taken the treasure and precious things; they have made her many widows in the midst thereof. Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned mine holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they shewed difference between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from my Sabbaths, and I am profaned among them.

Her princes in the midst thereof are like wolves ravening the prey, to shed blood, and to destroy souls, to get dishonest gain. And her prophets have daubed them with untempered mortar, seeing vanity, and divining lies unto them, saying, Thus saith the Lord GOD, when the LORD hath not spoken.”

Ezekiel 22 v 25–28

“Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to *our* father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.”
Matthew 3 v 8,9

The last group is much smaller and is that of the truly saved. In spite of opposition they follow God fully. Their love for and interest in is the gospel, salvation and the great truths of Gods word. They live them out in their lives and live for worshipping and witnessing for their Beloved Master, Jesus. To them this world is insipid and empty and they find it difficult to find much in common with the other groups.

They realize that under these spiritual circumstances, where true Christianity was once strong, but is now weak, their role is to cleave to the old time religion of their fathers even although they may be isolated and opposed and shunned both within and outwith the church:

“Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.”
Jer 6 v 16

The first and second group can and do wreak havoc in the church because they do not have Gods Holy Spirit residing in them.

But it is also the case that the truly saved themselves can slide as a church from being a glowing light of Christ to following the Egypt of this world and embracing it.

God chastises the Israelites for returning to worldly Egypt at different times in the Old Testament:

“And now what hast thou to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of Sihor?”
Jeremiah 2:18

“By sundry miracles, by divers mercies, by strange deliverances Jehovah had proved Himself to be worthy of Israel’s trust. Yet they broke down the hedges with which God had enclosed them as a sacred garden; they forsook their own true and living God, and followed after false gods. Constantly did the Lord reprove them for this infatuation, and our text contains one instance of God’s expostulating with them, “What hast thou to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of the muddy river?” – for so it may be translated. “Why dost thou wander afar and leave thine own cool stream from

Lebanon? Why dost thou forsake Jerusalem to turn aside to Noph and to Tahapanes? Why art thou so strangely set on mischief, that thou canst not be content with the good and healthful, but wouldst follow after that which is evil and deceitful?”

Is there not here a word of expostulation and warning to the Christian? O true believer, called by grace and washed in the precious blood of Jesus, thou hast tasted of better drink than the muddy river of this world's pleasure can give thee; thou hast had fellowship with Christ; thou hast obtained the joy of seeing Jesus, and leaning thine head upon His bosom. Do the trifles, the songs, the honours, the merriment of this earth content thee after that? Hast thou eaten the bread of angels, and canst thou live on husks? Good Rutherford once said, “I have tasted of Christ's own manna, and it hath put my mouth out of taste for the brown bread of this world's joys.” Methinks it should be so with thee.

If thou art wandering after the waters of Egypt, O return quickly to the one living fountain: the waters of Sihor may be sweet to the Egyptians, but they will prove only bitterness to thee. What hast thou to do with them? Jesus asks thee this question this evening – what wilt thou answer Him?”

Morning and Evening
CH Spurgeon

God convicts the church, the Spiritual Israel of their folly, chastises them and they regain their distinctive Christ like beauty once more. What are those characteristics of this true church then?

In the new testament times fellowship with God is expressed through worship containing the elements of preaching, baptism and the Lords supper.

Preaching had a central place in the old and new testaments and also those who convey Gods words ought to be held in the highest esteem:

“And moreover, because the preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he gave good heed, and sought out, *and set* in order many proverbs.” Ecclesiastes 12 v 9

“How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?” Romans 10 v 14

“And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth *person*, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly;”
2nd Peter 2 v 5

Preaching is integral to public worship as the pattern displayed in the new testament – a giving praise to God and a public commanding and inviting sinners to come to Christ. The bible only sanctions men to preach:

“For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things *pertaining* to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins:

Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity. And by reason hereof he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins. And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as *was* Aaron.” Hebrews 5 v 1–4

The emphasis in preaching is very important. The doctrinal basis of the sermon must be biblical and a personal application to people must be present. This includes not just conveying doctrine to peoples intellect and reason as in teaching but applying the gospel to the whole person. It is showing its effects on our hearts and behaviour, and not just the mind, with urgency and persuasion and passion, the implication being eternal life for a person. Eternal life is not just a quantity but a quality of life which commences in time.

The moral law in the old and new testaments is used by God in preaching and reading to convince us we really are sinners. It is essential it is preached then in order that sinners may be made aware of their state in God’s judgement. Christ is not in opposition to the law. If people don’t recognize their sin they wont know their need to be saved from sin by a Saviour:

“The law of the LORD *is* perfect, converting the soul:”
Psalm 19 v 7

“Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster *to bring us* unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.” Galatians 3 v 24

If it is preached in detail then fewer people end up deceived about their spiritual state and whether they have truly repented. This kind of preaching

produces self examination about their spiritual state and destiny. This kind of preaching produces more reverence in worship because the evil of sin before a most holy God is appreciated and the need to be humble is realized also. It isn't Gods natural distance as divine e.g. his omnipotence but his moral distance as holy and the judge that causes changing attitudes in public worship. It makes people realize they have no right to be given any good thing from God but are unworthy of his mercy and deserving of hell.

The gospel can be dumbed down – the enormity of the evil of sin and that the unsaved are wholly sinful, the focus on the Saviour as revealed in the person and work of Christ, the necessity of faith and repentance. It must be preached with passion and overflowing with love to God and sinners. A sermon should be preached with total authority as a message and command coming from Almighty God and not spoken as if apologizing for the truths declared. It should be persuasive using logical argument, humble, pleading, winsome and attractive showing the beauty and glory of the wonderful, lovely Saviour, drawing and wooing poor sinners towards Him as they despair, when they consider the depth of their own sins. It ought to be preached in the manner of a deep love for Christ and sinners, as Christ himself wept over Jerusalem, as the preacher himself is aware of his 'scarcely being saved'. Preaching that is without deep passion and love for the gospel and for perishing sinners is false and fraudulent. Gospel preaching is also not for psychological but rather deep spiritual ills and not a cure to make people feel better about themselves:

“Why sit we here until we die?”

2 Kings 7 v 3

“Dear reader, this little book was mainly intended for the edification of believers, but if you are yet unsaved, our heart yearns over you: and we would fain say a word which may be blessed to you. Open your Bible, and read the story of the lepers, and mark their position, which was much the same as yours. If you remain where you are you must perish; if you go to Jesus you can but die. “Nothing venture, nothing gained,” is the old proverb, and in your case the venture is no great one. If you sit still in sullen despair, no one can pity you when your ruin comes; but if you die with mercy sought, if such a thing were possible, you would be the object of universal sympathy. None escape who refuse to look to Jesus; but you know that, at any rate, some are saved who believe in him, for

certain of your own acquaintances have received mercy: then why not you? The Ninevites said, "Who can tell?" Act upon the same hope, and try the Lord's mercy. To perish is so awful, that if there were but a straw to catch at, the instinct of self-preservation should lead you to stretch out your hand. We have been talking to you in this way on your own unbelieving ground, we would now assure you, as from the Lord, that if you seek him he will be found by you. Jesus casts out none who come to him. You shall not perish if you trust him; on the contrary, you shall find treasure far richer than the poor lepers gathered in Syria's deserted camp. May the Holy Spirit embolden you to go at once, and you shall not believe in vain. When you are saved yourself, publish the good news to others. Hold not your peace; tell the King's household first, and unite with them in fellowship; let the porter of the city, the minister, be informed of your discovery, and then proclaim the good news in every place. The Lord save you before the sun goes down today."

C.H. Spurgeon (Baptist Preacher) daily readings – March 13th

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
 "Come unto me and rest;
 lay down, thou weary one, lay down
 thy head upon my breast."
 I came to Jesus as I was,
 so weary, worn, and sad;
 I found in him a resting place,
 and he has made me glad.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
 "Behold, I freely give
 the living water; thirsty one,
 stoop down and drink, and live."
 I came to Jesus, and I drank
 of that life-giving stream;
 my thirst was quenched, my soul revived,
 and now I live in him.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
 "I am this dark world's light;

look unto me, thy morn shall rise,
 and all thy day be bright.”
 I looked to Jesus, and I found
 in him my Star, my Sun;
 and in that light of life I’ll walk
 till travelling days are done.

1. Rescue the perishing, care for the dying,
 Snatch them in pity from sin and the grave;
 Weep o’er the erring one, lift up the fallen,
 Tell them of Jesus, the mighty to save.
2. Though they are slighting Him, still He is waiting,
 Waiting the penitent child to receive;
 Plead with them earnestly, plead with them gently;
 He will forgive if they only believe.
3. Down in the human heart, crushed by the tempter,
 Feelings lie buried that grace can restore;
 Touched by a loving heart, wakened by kindness,
 Chords that were broken will vibrate once more.
4. Rescue the perishing, duty demands it;
 Strength for thy labour the Lord will provide;
 Back to the narrow way patiently win them;
 Tell the poor wand’rer a Saviour has died.

The issues in preaching are serious then:

“And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.”

Acts 24 v 25

A gospel service ought not to be flippant when eternal destinies are the subject matter and an audience is in the presence of the Divine being. Hell is a sobering thought. There is no more important issue in our lives for consideration. In this world it is a spiritual battle. Unsaved people are prisoners of this conflict. The devil is attempting to divert poor souls away from getting saved especially when the gospel is being preached to them. Notice the use of the word ‘instructing’ as it is used in the following passage:

“And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all *men*, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And *that* they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.”
2 Timothy 2 v 24–26

If we genuinely think people are headed for disaster don't we warn them of their seriousness of it. They must be condemned in a loving manner, as the bible says, speaking the truth in love. The true servant of the Lord does not spare to condemn but at the same time conveys that it is only out of love, their wickedness and terrible destiny is being shown to them. They must be told that there is no real happiness without God, only misery. Given this kind of message how can the impression be created that preaching and worship are, in any sense flippant or entertaining?

“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. *Seeing* then *that* all these things shall be dissolved, what manner *of persons* ought ye to be in *all* holy conversation(conduct) and godliness,”
2nd Peter 3 v 9–11

Worship ought to be only solemn and serious. Any regard and discussion of godly things must be reverential. When considering the Saviours solemn suffering and deep sorrow on the cross a frivolous atmosphere is wholly inappropriate:

“Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, where-with the LORD hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger.”
Lamentations 1 v 12

In worship services there is no contradiction between being serious and joyful. The gospel is good news and the joy lies in sins being forgiven and the wonder of Gods love.

“Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, *the same* loveth little.”
 Luke 7 v 47

The saved gladly acknowledge and submit to God’s absolute authority over them and as they see their sinfulness and unworthiness they feel humbled greatly. They realize and desire the only right attitude is reverential worship to him who is their creator, judge and daily sustainer with their breath in his hand and their time predetermined by him. He is infinite in power, majesty and glorious in holiness and purity:

“Who *is* like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who *is* like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful *in* praises, doing wonders?”
 Exodus 15 v 11

“That thou keep *this* commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ:

Which in his times he shall shew, *who is* the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom *be* honour and power everlasting. Amen.”
 1st Timothy 6 v 14–16

The saved worship not because they are sinners (though they ought to be more humble towards him for that reason) but because God is divine. They aren’t interested then in being entertained by smooth words or other methods. Their joy comes from being filled with the Holy Spirit not in being made to laugh. They want contact with their God who they approach with awe, confidence and love. The deepest joy is accompanied by the deepest awareness of reverence and unworthiness:

“That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see *him* not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:”
 1st peter 1 v 7,8

“Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth.

Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish *from* the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed *are* all they that put their trust in him.”
 Psalm 2 v 10–12

Formal events such as for example a graduation ceremony are serious affairs. They are not frivolous, flippant or a comedy but they are still joyous occasions. Or to use a commoner comparison a wedding ceremony is a serious yet joyful time – not entertainment. The holy created beings called angels cover their faces when they come into the presence of the three times holy almighty Divine creator. How much more corrupt sinners ought to display reverence. Heaven will be all holy joy and love and not only respect towards God, but indeed worship of Him. There will be no empty entertainment there. Is that not the pattern to be followed? Consider King David’s attitude in the psalms:

“My soul is poured out in me, when this I think upon; Because that with the multitude I heretofore had gone: With them into God’s house I went, with voice of joy and praise; Yea, with the multitude that kept the solemn holy days.”
 Psalm 42 v 4

“Great fear in meeting of the saints
 is due unto the Lord;
 And he of all about him should
 with rev’rence be adored.” Psalm 89 v 7 Scottish Psalter

“And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.”
 Isaiah 6 v 3–7

“I *am* the LORD, and *there is* none else, *there is* no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me: That they may

know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that *there is* none beside me. I *am* the LORD, and *there is* none else. I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these *things*. Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together; I the LORD have created it. Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! *Let* the potsherd *strive* with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands?" Isaiah 45 v 5-9

"O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth." Psalm 96 v 9

"What shall I say? he hath both spoken unto me, and himself hath done *it*: I shall go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul." Isaiah 38 v 15

"For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name *is* Holy; I dwell in the high and holy *place*, with him also *that is* of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." Isaiah 57 v 15

"For all those *things* hath mine hand made, and all those *things* have been, saith the LORD: but to this *man* will I look, *even* to *him that is* poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." Isaiah 66 v 2

"Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter *any* thing before God: for God *is* in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few." Ecclesiastes 5 v 2

"Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire." Hebrews 12 v 28,9

And Jesus rebuked in the New testament for disrespect shown to Gods place of worship where people only ought to have reverence and humility:

"And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that

sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves, And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.” Matthew 21 v 12,13

Records of preaching and worship services in the bible had no entertainment in them. Christ and the apostles never made jokes during their gospel sermons neither did any of the old testament saints in their approach to God. The biblical recorded comparisons contains only reverence and godly fear displayed:

“And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live. And the LORD said, Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock: And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a clift of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by: And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen.” Exodus 33 v 20–23

The apostle Paul’s attitude to preaching sums it up:

“Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men;”
2nd Corinthians 5 v 11

In all that we do we must give the glory to God and not to man, but more especially in the divinely appointed and regulated services of worship.

Sin causes much suffering sorrow and misery to people in this world and the next. It is no light matter. It is an infinite offence against an infinitely holy God. How can a gospel service make it a less serious issue?

“And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.” Acts 12 v 23

When God is revered and worshipped as he ought to be he reveals his great glory to his beloved children. The saved desire to know God in Christ, to meet him and to glorify Him. He is their whole reason for living, their joy and their fulfillment. They long for a glimpse of his incomparable glory to be revealed to them and for their hearts to be aflame with his love. Another expressed it so well:

“And yet, I shall not live till I see God and when I have seen Him I shall never die”
John Donne

CHAPTER 41

CHARACTERISTICS OF A TRUE CHURCH (2): FELLOWSHIP OF THE SAINTS AND CHURCH DISCIPLINE

The Saved have knowledge (theology) and experience of God. They have spiritual relations with other believers (the church) and experience of them, whilst towards unsaved people collectively (the world) they relate to them by both holy witness and in spiritual conflict. The church on earth is described in this last respect as being ‘militant’ displaying unity in its collective conflict with the world. They are ‘brothers in arms.’ When they enter heavens glory they are termed ‘triumphant’ in their victory over their foes, both external and their residual sin also.

The saved also have union with Christ and his ‘body’ or the church having fellowship with other believers:

“To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:”

and,

“For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.”

Colossians 1 v 27, 3 v 3

“I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness

and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. *There is* one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism,

One God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all. But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.

(Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we *henceforth* be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, *and* cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love. This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart:”

Ephesians 4 v 1–18

1. The church's one foundation
is Jesus Christ her Lord;
she is his new creation
by water and the Word.
From heaven he came and sought her
to be his holy bride;

with his own blood he bought her,
and for her life he died.

2. Elect from every nation,
yet one o'er all the earth;
her charter of salvation,
one Lord, one faith, one birth;
one holy name she blesses,
partakes one holy food,
and to one hope she presses,
with every grace endued.
3. Though with a scornful wonder
we see her sore oppressed,
by schisms rent asunder,
by heresies distressed,
yet saints their watch are keeping;
their cry goes up, "How long?"
And soon the night of weeping
shall be the morn of song.
4. Mid toil and tribulation,
and tumult of her war,
she waits the consummation
of peace forevermore;
till, with the vision glorious,
her longing eyes are blest,
and the great church victorious
shall be the church at rest.
5. Yet she on earth hath union
with God the Three in One,
and mystic sweet communion
with those whose rest is won.
O happy ones and holy!
Lord, give us grace that we
like them, the meek and lowly,
on high may dwell with thee.

Those in the church are interdependent on, and supportive of, one another.

The saved are mindful of what the true church means to God – his great love for his people in a covenant relationship with Christ’s great sacrificial labour for his people. God, from all eternity loving the church or saved people is the origin of the gospel offer of salvation from sin through Christ and the opportunity to have a relationship with Him. As the apostle states:

“We love him, because he first loved us.” 1st John 4 v 19

“The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, *saying*, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.” Jeremiah 31 v 3

The interaction of the saved with others in the church and the effects if backslidden is highlighted in the following quote:

“If the individual is indifferent to the sanctification of others and does not seek to promote their growth in grace, love, faith, knowledge, obedience and holiness, this interferes with his own sanctification in at least two respects. (1)His lack of concern others is itself a vice that gnaws at the root of spiritual growth. If we are not concerned with, or vigilant in respect of the fruit of the Spirit in others, then it is because we do not burn with holy zeal for the honour of Christ himself. All shortcoming and sin in us dishonours Christ, and a believer betrays the coldness of his love to Christ when he fails to bemoan the defects of those who are members of Christ body. (2)His indifference to the interests of others means the absence of the ministry he should have afforded others. This absence results in the impoverishment of these others to the extent of his failure, and this impoverishment reacts upon himself, because these others are not able to minister to him the full extent of the support, encouragement, instruction, edification and exhortation they owe him.”

*Systematic Theology by John Murray:
progressive sanctification*

Their love to other Christians then, is an evidence that they are saved and this love between Christians manifests itself in particular attitudes and behaviour of mutual love and respect:

“We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.”
1 John 3 v 14

Christians desire fellowship with one another. They love each other as being members of Gods family. They love the doctrines of the Bible having not only knowledge of the truths but have experience of these great realities both individually and collectively in fellowship with one another. They know the effect of these truths and their realities as the Holy Spirit works it within their souls.

They seek and desire for the company of kindred spirits who love and speak only in reverence of their beloved Saviour. They love to contemplate and discuss subjects dear to their heart and have a spiritual understanding of them and long to shut out the unspiritual things of this world. Salvation from its inception in the counsels of eternity within the trinity. Christ’s person and work, the gospel witness and the advance of his influence in this world, the covenant God made and their own experience of God and how he uses them in relation to other people. The saints see Christ’s loveliness, worship him together in unity and have sweet communion with each other in Him. As the bible says the Holy Spirit causes the spirits of believers to bear witness with one another of Christs dwelling in each other. In this way they increase their knowledge of Christ and give glory to God more and more. They become closer to him and more united to one another:

“Behold, how good and how pleasant *it is* for brethren to dwell together in unity! *It is* like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, *even* Aaron’s beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; As the dew of Hermon, *and as the dew* that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, *even* life for evermore.”

Psalm 133

“Did not our heart burn within us while he(Christ) talked with us by the way?”
Luke 24 v 32

This is the great end of fellowship – to meet with God in Christ and to come into His presence and for his glory to be revealed to their souls. It is all consuming and results in true collective worship of Him:

“And it came to pass, as Moses entered into the tabernacle, the cloudy pillar descended, and stood at the door of the tabernacle,

and the LORD talked with Moses. And all the people saw the cloudy pillar stand at the tabernacle door: and all the people rose up and worshipped, every man in his tent door. And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend. And he turned again into the camp: but his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, departed not out of the tabernacle. And Moses said unto the LORD, See, thou sayest unto me, Bring up this people: and thou hast not let me know whom thou wilt send with me. Yet thou hast said, I know thee by name, and thou hast also found grace in my sight. Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight: and consider that this nation is thy people. And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.

And he said unto him, If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence. For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? is it not in that thou goest with us? so shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth. And the LORD said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name. And he said, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory.” Exodus 33 v 9–18

The Saints mutually improve each other spiritually, encouraging one another and bearing each others spiritual burdens. They relate each others Christian experience of Gods dealings with them in providence and grace in their lives with their own personal experience of witnessing Christ to the unsaved. As they meet together they discuss and they bemoan the sinful states of their hearts and their lack of progress in the Christian way and how much they let their dear master down and bring Him shame. They feel they are only unprofitable servants and are humble towards one another, esteeming one another ahead of themselves. They are truly unworthy and have no merit in themselves. Though they cannot assess their service well, Christ sees it and loves them dearly:

“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.” 2nd Corinthians 4 v 7

“Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.”

Revelations 3 v 4,5

“Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.”

Philippians 2 v 2,3

“They have dealt treacherously against the Lord.” **Hosea 5:7**

“Believer, here is a sorrowful truth! Thou art the beloved of the Lord, redeemed by blood, called by grace, preserved in Christ Jesus, accepted in the Beloved, on thy way to heaven, and yet, “thou hast dealt treacherously” with God, thy best friend; treacherously with Jesus, whose thou art; treacherously with the Holy Spirit, by whom thou hast been quickened unto life eternal! How treacherous you have been in the matter of vows and promises. Do you remember the love of your espousals, that happy time—the springtime of your spiritual life? Oh, how closely did you cling to your Master then! saying, “He shall never charge me with indifference; my feet shall never grow slow in the way of his service; I will not suffer my heart to wander after other loves; in him is every store of sweetness ineffable. I give all up for my Lord Jesus’ sake.” Has it been so? Alas! if conscience speak, it will say, “He who promised so well has performed most ill. Prayer has oftentimes been slurred—it has been short, but not sweet; brief, but not fervent. Communion with Christ has been forgotten. Instead of a heavenly mind, there have been carnal cares, worldly vanities and thoughts of evil. Instead of service, there has been disobedience; instead of fervency, lukewarmness; instead of patience, petulance; instead of faith, confidence in an arm of flesh; and as a soldier of the cross there has been cowardice, disobedience, and desertion, to a very shameful degree.” “Thou hast dealt treacherously.” Treachery to Jesus! what words shall be used in denouncing it? Words little avail: let our penitent thoughts execrate the sin which is so surely in us. Treacherous to thy wounds, O Jesus!

Forgive us, and let us not sin again! How shameful to be treacherous to him who never forgets us, but who this day stands with our names engraven on his breastplate before the eternal throne.”

CH Spurgeon December 12 Evening

They see mirrored in each other that their consciences are sensitive to sinning against God and they are jealous for his glory. They have a hatred of sin in their souls as it against the one they love so much. They grieve over the dishonour heaped on God and his name:

“Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law.”
psalm 119 v 136

They also relate their concern for and experience of the progress and advance of Gods church and his honour in the world in respect of both soul winning and edifying Christians in the most holy faith. They are encouraged also to continue serving God, doing good and standing for him as they view the good example of their brethren. They praise Him when they hear of souls being set free by this wonderful gospel of redeeming grace.

They have a unique bond and heart involvement in the suffering and persecution of their brothers and sisters taking this warfare gravely and seriously discussing spiritual strategy. They lovingly and caringly support and sympathize with them whilst possessing a spiritual awareness of their common enemy and the heart issues at play in this battle. The false church know nothing about this common motivation and comradeship and common spiritual identity- the prayer support or the joy in suffering for the Saviour despite the pain and unworthily acknowledging if one suffers, all suffer and the joint exposure of the saints to the strategies and attacks of the enemies of the church. They praise God knowing his protection in this desperate war and in the heat of battle:

“The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy them. Israel then shall dwell in safety alone: the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine; also his heavens shall drop down dew. Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the LORD, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places.”
Deuteronomy 33 v 27–29

They humbly acknowledge his especial care of his children in this position and that they receive much less than their sins would have deserved and that Christs suffering was infinitely more. Above all they love their Saviours honour and reputation and desire that he is exalted above all striving that the enemy is not victorious to leave this tarnished:

“And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word. Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me. I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled. And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.”

John 17 v 5–15

They anticipate heaven where they will be caught up in a spirit of eternal praise and glory to God, to that world where they will be free from the chains of sin and will be able to serve him perfectly. They will be with Christ which is far better:

“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we

know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.”
1st John 3 v 1–3

In their concern for one another, the saved also rebuke one another with a view to each others spiritual health and welfare. The true church both respects Gods appointed roles in the church and implements discipline according to Gods directions.

“Rebuke not an elder, but intreat *him* as a father; *and* the younger men as brethren; Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer *is* worthy of his reward. Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses.”
1st timothy 5 v 1,17–19

Self denial in this respect involves bearing wrongs against oneself, but not against others or God, especially if in a position of responsibility for others in the church:

“Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.”
Matthew 5 v 23,4

Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.”
Matthew 18 v 15

On behalf of Gods honour or for others good others it is sometimes necessary to rebuke, reprimand or discipline, legitimately. That is if unquestionably, there would be overriding harm to Gods’ honour or others or even the offender themselves, if they were not rebuked. A substantial harm must be clearly present in order to do so.

“Let the righteous smite me; *it shall be* a kindness: and let him reprove me; *it shall be* an excellent oil, *which* shall not break my head:”
Psalm 141 v 5

Faults should be covered over and not raised and gossiped about and people

must be given the benefit of the doubt. Rebuking where church witness or reputation matters are concerned takes different issues into account to those concerning private personal affairs. It must usually be done gently and often in private and according to the severity or persistence of the offence but in certain circumstances more firmly and in public, if no progress is being made, the need is very pressing or the wrong was very committed very publicly and the offence was very dishonouring to God or affected many people. Included in this manner of doing things are roles involving delegated authority from God such as the legal office of a judge or that of an ordained preacher for example. People may be opposed unwaveringly in a loving manner if they are obstructing good and the consequences of their sinful actions are made clear. It is for the offenders good if they see their sin and repent. The unsaved may be deceived and think they are defending right and truth when they are in fact under the sway of the Devil. They only have a wicked heart and actions and don't have Gods or others souls interests at heart. They will attempt to corrupt others while appearing loving towards them. There may even be a dear family relative who this could be true of and may need to be opposed while being loved dutifully also which may result in persecution. It may even be husband or wife who is opposed to uphold Gods interests. This is not contrary to romantic love:

“Blessed *are* they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 5 v 10

Rebuke is sometimes necessary to correct wrongs in the church who are the stewards of Gods truth, honour and responsible for the care of His children in the world. God sometimes purges the church or churches to ensure his honour and name is exalted:

“As I live, saith the Lord GOD, surely because my flock became a prey, and my flock became meat to every beast of the field, because *there was* no shepherd, neither did my shepherds search for my flock, but the shepherds fed themselves, and fed not my flock; Therefore, O ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD; Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I *am* against the shepherds; and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them.” Ezekiel 34 v 8–10

“But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face,
because he was to be blamed.” Galatians 2 v 11

In the following verse Paul the apostle refers to this subject again evidencing that a persons moral behaviour is on display and a judgement about it must be made

“Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us. For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you” 2nd Thessalonians 3 v 6,7

The saved are however, it must be remembered, spiritually weak, and liable to fall and it is only by God s grace they do not fall away from Him completely:

“For the time *is come* that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if *it first begin* at us, what shall the end *be* of them that obey not the gospel of God?” 1st Peter 4 v 17

Lastly, a true church administers the two sacraments instituted by their Lord in a spiritual, reverent and holy way: both baptism and the Lords supper or communion – both command s to be followed – one an admission to the visible church and the other a declaration of admission to saving union with Christs body, the invisible church. Both are means to spiritually strengthen the church and bring blessing upon it and bring it into a closer fellowship with its saviour:

The bible has at its beginning and end a garden. As pointed out by another theologian the Devil said to Adam in the garden of Eden to take and eat from the tree of knowledge but Christ suffered on another tree to restore to us the right to take the tree of life. The garden of Gethsemane was of the essence of Christ’s suffering where he sweated great drops of blood as the awful load of our sin bore down upon Him. Saints are commanded to take and eat in the Lords supper to remind them of that cruel tree, the cross with its suffering and cost.

“It is the spring time. The plants and trees and flowers are slowly wakening from their winter sleep. Christ said “consider the lilies”, and they have many lessons to teach us. The wonder of creation in all its riches and beauty speaks volumes about the Creator. Every blade of grass is a miracle,

if we look inside it with a microscope there is a world of organization and planning. This should give us a sense of wonder and awe about the greatness of our God.

Gardens

There are many references to gardens in the Bible. Man was placed in the Garden of Eden and given the task of nurturing it and enjoying it. Sadly Adam failed by disobeying God. From then on he was put out of the garden and the ground would produce thorns and thistles.

God's Garden in the world

This is His people. Each believer is planted there by God and He prepares the ground, protects and supplies His people with all that they need. There are also weeds in this garden planted by Gods enemy (Mt.13:28). Some are very like the true plants. Some weeds are removed though the Gardener leaves some to be dealt with later so that He will not damage the plant. Some plants have to be pruned to make them more healthy. The means God uses are His providence, His word and Spirit.

There are many pests in this garden attacking the spiritual growth – the world and its allure, the flesh with all its discouragements, distractions and weaknesses, the devil with all his hosts trying to sow unbelief and false ideas. But God has planted a principle of life in His own plants which none of the enemies can take away. Sometimes God transplants some of His young and tender plants to His garden above. Others He leaves to mature before He transplants them. Some of the weeds He removes early but others He leaves for a time, but in the end He gathers them to be burnt (Mt.13:30).

God's garden in the heart

When a person comes to know Christ, God plants a seed of life in the heart and the first shoots of that planting are faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and a love for Him. The seed is placed in very unpromising soil full of weeds and many enemies. The ground is prepared by Gods Spirit and the seed of grace is nourished by the person and work of our Lord. Growth may be feeble at first, but in spite of Satan's attempts to

extinguish the spark of grace, it only grows stronger through the fertilizer of the Spirit. There are many deep rooted weeds in this garden such as unbelief, selfishness, etc., and much painful pruning is required. Who is the gardener? It is God by His Son and Spirit. Unlike the first gardener in Eden He never fails and never will. He never sleeps and no wild beasts can damage this garden. He loves to walk about in it and savour the beauty of His flowers.

Life out of death

Ever since sin came into the first garden, death and decay has been the inevitable consequence. The beautiful flowers which we see today will soon wither and die. Even trees which live for hundreds of years will eventually die. But there is another principle at work. It is wonderful how new life appears where everything seems so dead. Trees lose their leaves to make way for the buds of the next year. The colour red often appears on these buds. It seems to be a pointer to a greater resurrection. Christ said “Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone” (Jn.12:24) This is even more wonderful that through the death of Christ, new life comes to a dead world and this is a life that will never end. From this death comes life and abundant provision for His people – His own flowers that He has planted. And for His people in this world death is the gateway to a more glorious life. May we then – each one that reads these words – seek the source of life, for He said “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out” (Mt.12:24).

Donald Mackay-Consider the Lilies.

“And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, *was there* the tree of life, which bare twelve *manner of* fruits, *and* yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree *were* for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: And they shall see his face; and his name *shall be* in their foreheads.”

Revelations 22 v 1–4

CHAPTER 42

PURSUING TO THE END

“Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end;”

Hebrews 3 v 12–14

We wish to apply the truths considered to our journey from this world to the next.

“Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do *it* with thy might; for *there is* no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.”

Ecclesiastes 9 v 10

“Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret *sins* in the light of thy countenance. For all our days are passed away in thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale *that is told*. The days of our years *are* threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength *they be* fourscore years, yet *is* their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away. Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, *so is* thy wrath. So teach *us* to number our days, that we may apply *our* hearts unto wisdom.”

Psalm 90 v 8–12

“Depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”

Matthew 7 v 23

Christ's final word to the unsaved at the last day is very solemn for us all. It should spur us on to ensure our running towards heaven is not in vain and that we enter there at the end of the race.

In the final part of the book I use an old writers piece to motivate and stimulate you to action. Life is full of meeting and partings. At last the final meeting and parting will come. Those who come to Christ in this world are not told to depart at the judgement. They come to Him and keep on coming. They pursue God till the end. Our text refers to Christ's second coming to our world. He says "I will come again." When it comes the unsaved depart – for them it is the ultimate departure – a one way journey, with no turning back into an everlasting night like Judas before them:

"And he went out and it was night"

In the anticipation of his coming the saved say "even so, come Lord Jesus." He welcomes them to be near Him forever.

We may die at any moment and are not promised another day alive but even if we reach old age we will certainly die and face the judgement. We may try and push it out of our mind but all of lifes experience will come to an end one day:

"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:"
Hebrews 9 v 27

May the saved then, struggle on to push hard for, and strain every muscle in, that race for heaven, so you will not disappoint your wonderful master, so you will be a shining light to poor darkened, blinded sinners around you, and you will reach heaven dying, not in fear but confidence and hope. Lastly, to those who are discouraged, apathetic and slowing down and falling behind and beginning to indulge in this empty sinful world once more I say to you:

"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset *us*, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction

of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.”

Hebrews 12 v 1–4

The Son of righteousness shines through the raindrops of Gods judgement revealing the rainbow of Gods full character with his mercy, longsuffering and patience which is limited towards sinners in time. For Noah, he listened to this message and proclaimed it and by faith he entered the Ark of Christ and was saved. In worship and gratitude he made an altar, signalling Gods forgiving mercy as his only hope and encouragement.

Let us listen carefully to Dr Owens advice to us:

“Constancy also flows from intensity. Such a soul will not give over until it obtain what it aims at and looks for; as we shall see in our process in opening this psalm. And this is in general the behaviour of a gracious soul in the condition here represented to us. As poor creatures love their peace, as they love their souls, as they tender the glory of God, they should not neglect this duty. What is the reason that controversies hang so long between God and your souls, that it may be you scarce see a good day all your lives? Is it not, for the most part, from your laziness and depression of spirit? You will not gird up the loins of your minds, in dealing with God, to put them to a speedy outcome in the blood of Christ. You go on and off, begin and cease, try and give over; and, for the most part, though your case is extraordinary, content yourselves with ordinary and customary applications unto God. This makes you wither, become useless, and pine away in and under your perplexities. David did not do so; but after many a breach made by sin, yet, through the quick, vigorous, restless acts of faith, all was repaired, so that he lived peaceably, and died triumphantly. Up, then, and be doing; let not your “wounds corrupt because of your folly.” Make thorough work of what lies before you; be it long, or difficult, it is all one, it must be done, and is attended with safety.”

Volume 6 Temptation and sin:
Earnestness in applying to God.

Whatever error people are in really it amounts to not giving their whole heart to God as mentioned already. They do not self deny utterly. They are not utterly unselfloving but selfish. In our text particularly many of

those referred to withheld some reserve of themselves and so deceived themselves. Their love of many waxed cold as Matthew phrases it. They were convinced they really were saved but were blinded by this lie and will ultimately be overtaken with profound disbelief and shock when the day of assizes comes, that day of scrutiny and examination of trial and testing, comparison and measurement with the sentence as its outcome and climax.

“Tell us, when shall these things be? and what *shall be* the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all *these things* must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers(different) places. All these *are* the beginning of sorrows. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name’s sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.”
Matthew 24 v 3–13

Christ elsewhere elaborates on the judgement day words:

“Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:”
Matthew 25 v 41

God actively prepared somewhere ready to receive the devils. What a preparation that was! What was implied in it? In the burning fires of hell the devils receive unimaginable torments. Wicked men will go to the place prepared for devils because they are as evil as the devils themselves. In fact even the devils do not have the ultimate sin of rejecting the offer of salvation through Gods own Son that wicked people did whilst alive. Their sin, though it will be constantly punished will never receive its just dessert even though they are punished forever. It has been committed against an infinitely holy God.

God himself sustains the devils throughout the endless ages of eternity as they torment poor people and also the tormented so they can receive their punishment adequately.

Yet people like you and I arrive in that same place. It was prepared primarily for demons and yet poor souls blaze a trail for themselves into a place prepared for the most evil of creatures. How evil and serious the course they take must be, if they end up in and deserve such a place.

In hell it is ‘a death that is always living and a life that is always dying.’
In contrast heaven or eternal life is the opposite:

“Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:”

John 11 v 25

Truly” the way of transgressors is hard”. They suffer for their sin in this life and the next. They will realize when they arrive in hell they never knew any true fulfilment or happiness in their lives in this world, but only emptiness that sinful pleasures could never fill. The fate of the unsaved may actually be sealed prior to the their death.

To the unsaved then, I urge you to become saved and avoid eternal hellfire and damnation and everlasting destruction:

I’ve wrestled on for good times with a fair wind by my side
But now alone and empty I seek but cannot find
Amid the shades of evening while sinks lifes’ lingering sand
I cringe from what awaits me in Diabolus’ land

Oh I am Lucifer’s prisoner he claims me for his own
He drags me ever downward to his eternal home
He who promised me good times how mocks me to my face
As we fly swiftly downward to that doomed darkest place

My eyes not on companions or those my paths who crossed
My mind is on the warnings and on the chances lost
I fear the king of glory who’ll cast me from his hand
His offers I’ve rejected and I’m forever damned

Dark pubs oh how I hate you who held me in your grip
Oh that to Christ I’d flown in time and from your clutches slipped

Oh if one drinking partner meet me in that dark place
 Our fire will burn the hotter when we meet there face to face

Oh I have got no fountain, I've got no well of love
 My human friends try comfort but my dread they will not remove
 There in a lake that's burning my judgement will expand
 In darkness ever onward in Diabolus land

With laughter and with carelessness my web of time I've spun
 I've mocked at my creator but now my race is run
 I'll curse the careless laughter, I'll curse my mocking hand
 When chained in darkest hatred in Diabolus land.

by Rev M.A.N Macleod.

We do not know how long we have to live. As the old poems reminds us,
 Time is short:

Life at best is very brief,
 Like the falling of a leaf,
 Like the binding of a sheaf,
 Be in time!
 Fleeting days are telling fast
 That the die will soon be cast,
 And the fatal line be passed,
 Be in time!

Be in time! Be in time!
 While the voice of Jesus calls you,
 Be in time!
 If in sin you longer wait,
 You may find no open gate,
 And your cry be just too late:
 Be in time!

Fairest flowers soon decay,
 Youth and beauty pass away;
 O you have not long to stay,
 Be in time!

While God's Spirit bids you come,
Sinner, do not longer roam,
Lest you seal your hopeless doom,
 Be in time!

Time is gliding swiftly by,
Death and judgment draweth nigh,
To the arms of Jesus fly,
 Be in time!

O I pray you count the cost!
Ere the fatal line be crossed,
And your soul in hell be lost,
 Be in time!

Sinner, heed the warning voice,
Make the Lord your final choice,
Then all heaven will rejoice,
 Be in time!

Come from darkness into light;
Come, let Jesus make you right;
Come, receive His life tonight,
 Be in time!

The clock of life is wound but once
And no man has the power
To tell just where the hands will stop,
At late or early hour.

To lose one's wealth is sad indeed,
To lose one's health is more.
To lose one's soul is such a loss
As no man can restore.

The present only is our own.
Live, love, toil with a will.
Place no faith in 'tomorrow'
For the clock may then be still.

AND,

When as a child I laughed and wept,

Time crept.

When as a youth I waxed more bold,

Time strolled.

When I became a full-grown man,

Time ran.

When older still I daily grew,

Time flew.

Soon I shall find, in passing on,

Time gone.

O Christ! wilt Thou have saved me then?

Amen.

O poor sinner don't be almost persuaded:

“Almost persuaded” now to believe;

“Almost persuaded” Christ to receive;

Seems now some soul to say,

“Go, Spirit, go Thy way,

Some more convenient day

on Thee I'll call.”

“Almost persuaded,” come, come today;

“Almost persuaded,” turn not away;

Jesus invites you here,

Angels are ling'ring near,

Prayers rise from hearts so dear;

O wand'rer, come!

Oh, be persuaded! Christ never fails—

Oh, be persuaded! His blood avails—

Can save from every sin,

Cleanse you without, within—

Will you not let Him in?

Open the door!

“Almost persuaded,” harvest is past!

“Almost persuaded,” doom comes at last;
 “Almost” cannot avail;
 “Almost” is but to fail!
 Sad, sad that bitter wail—
 “Almost—but lost!”

Be now persuaded, oh, sinner, hear!
 Be now persuaded, Jesus is near;
 His voice is pleading still,
 Turn now with heart and will,
 Peace will your spirit fill—
 Oh, turn today!

and,

So near to the kingdom! yet what do you lack?
 So near to the kingdom! what keeps you back?
 Renounce every idol, tho’ dear it may be,
 And come to the Saviour now pleading with you

So near that you hear the songs that resound
 From those who, believing, a pardon have found!
 So near, yet unwilling to give up your sin,
 When Jesus is waiting to welcome you in!

O come; soon your season of grace may be past,
 The door may be closed, and this call be your last;
 O where would you turn if the light should depart
 That comes from the Spirit, and shines on your heart?

To die with no hope! have you counted the cost?
 To die out of Christ, and your soul to be lost!
 So near to the kingdom! O come, we implore,
 While Jesus is pleading, come enter the Door.

THE HEAVENLY FOOTMANBy JOHN BUNYAN:

“Friends,

Solomon says, that “the desire of the slothful killeth him;” and if so, what will laziness itself do to those that entertain it? The proverb is, “He that sleepeth in harvest is a son that causeth shame:” and this I dare be bold to say, no greater shame can happen to someone, than to see that he has fooled away his soul, and sinned away eternal life. And I am sure this is the next way to do it; namely, to be lazy; sluggish, I say, in the work of salvation. The vineyard of the lazy man, in reference to the things of this life, is not more full of briars, nettles, and stinking weeds, than he that is lazy for heaven, has his heart full of heart-choking and soul-damning sin.

Laziness has these two evils: first, to neglect the time in which it should be getting heaven; and by that means does, in the second place, bring in untimely repentance. I will warrant you, that he who should lose his soul in this world through laziness, will have no cause to be glad, when he comes to hell. Laziness is usually accompanied with carelessness; and carelessness is for the most part produced by senselessness; and senselessness does again put fresh strength into laziness; and by this means the soul is left remediless. Laziness shuts out Christ; Laziness shames the soul.

Laziness is condemned even by the feeblest of all the creatures. “Go to the ant, thou sluggard, consider her ways and be wise.” “The sluggard will not plough, by reason of the cold;” that is, he will not break up the fallow ground of his heart, because there must be some pains taken by him that will do it; “therefore he shall beg in harvest;” that is, when the saints of God shall have their glorious heaven and happiness given to them; but the lazy person “shall have nothing;” that is, be never the better off for his crying for mercy; corresponding to that in Matthew 25 v 10–12.

If you would know a lazy person in the things of heaven, compare him with one that is lazy in the things of this world. As 1. Whoever is lazy is loath to set about the work he should follow; so is he that is lazy for heaven. 2. Whoever is lazy, is one that is willing to make delays: similarly whoever is lazy for heaven. 3. He that is a lazy person, any small matter that comes in between, he will make it a sufficient excuse to keep him off from plying his work; so it is also with him that is lazy for heaven. 4. Whoever is lazy does his work by halves: and so it is with him that is lazy

for heaven. He may almost, but he will never altogether, obtain perfect deliverance from hell; he may almost, but he will never altogether become a saint. 5. Whoever is lazy usually lose the season in which things are to be done: and it is also with them that are lazy for heaven; they miss the seasons of grace. And therefore, 6. Those that are lazy have seldom, or never, good fruit; so also it will be with the soul-sluggard. 7. Those that are lazy, are rebuked for the same: so also Christ will deal with those that are not active for him. "Thou wicked and slothful servant! out of thine own mouth will I judge thee. Thou saidst I was thus, and thus; wherefore then gavest thou not my money to the bank? &c. Take the unprofitable servant, and cast him into utter darkness, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

What shall I say? 1. Time runs; and will you be lazy? 2. Much of your lives are past; and will you be lazy? 3. Your souls are worth a thousand worlds; and will you be lazy? 4. The day of death and judgment is at the door; and will you be lazy? 5. The curse of God hangs over your heads; and will you be lazy? 6. Besides, the devils are earnest, laborious, and attempt by all means every day, by every sin, to keep you out of heaven, and obstruct you obtaining salvation; and will you be lazy? 7. Also, your neighbours are diligent for things that will perish; and will you be lazy for things that will endure for ever? 8. Would you be willing to be damned for laziness? 9. Would you be willing the angels of God should neglect to fetch your souls away to heaven, when you lie dying, and the devils stand by ready to scramble for them? 10. Was Christ lazy in the work of your redemption? 11. Are his ministers lazy in tendering this to you? 12. And lastly, If all this will not move, I tell you God will not be lazy or negligent to damn you, (their damnation slumbereth not, 2 Pet. ii. 3;) nor will the devils neglect to fetch you, nor hell neglect to shut its mouth on you.

Sluggish person! are you asleep still? Are you resolved to sleep the sleep of death? Will neither news from heaven nor hell awake you? Will you say still, yet a little sleep, a little slumber, and a little folding of the arms to sleep? Will you yet turn yourself in your laziness, as the door is turned upon the hinges? O that I was one that was skilful in mourning, and had but a yearning heart towards you, how would I pity you! O that I could with Jeremiah let my eyes run down with rivers of water for you! Poor soul, lost soul, dying soul, what a hard heart have I that I cannot mourn for you! If you should lose but a limb, a child, or a friend, it would not be so much; but poor man, it is YOUR SOUL! If it was to lie in hell but for

a day, but for a year, no, ten thousand years, it would (in comparison) be nothing; but O it is FOR EVER! What a soul-amazing word will that be, which says, “Depart from me, ye cursed, into EVERLASTING FIRE!” &c.

Objection. ‘But if I should set in, and run as you would have me, then I must run from all my friends; for none of them are running that way.’

Answer. And if you do, you will run into the bosom of Christ, and of God; and then what harm will that do you?

Objection. ‘But if I run this way, then I must run from all my sins.’

Answer. That is true indeed; yet if you do not, you will run into hell fire.

Objection. ‘But if I run this way, then I shall be hated, and lose the love of my friends and relations, and of those that I expect benefit from, or have reliance on, and I shall be mocked by all my neighbours.’

Answer. And if you do not, you are sure to lose the love and favour of God and Christ, the benefits of heaven and glory, and be mocked by God for your folly. “I will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh.” If you would not be hated and mocked then, take heed you by your folly do not procure the displeasure and mockings of the great God; for his mocks and hatred will be terrible, because they will fall on you in terrible times, even when tribulation and anguish take hold on you; which will be when death and judgment come, when all the men in the earth, and all the angels in heaven cannot help you.

Objection. ‘But surely I may begin this time enough, a year or two from now; may I not?’

Answer. First, Have you any lease of your life? Did ever God tell you, you shall live half a year, or two months longer? No, it may be, you may not live so long. And therefore, Secondly, Will you be so stupid and unwise, as to risk your soul on a little uncertain time? Thirdly, Do you know whether the day of grace will last a week longer or not? For the day of grace is past with some before their life is ended; and if it should be so with you, would you not say, ‘O that I had begun to run before the day of grace had been past, and the gates of heaven shut against me!’ But, Fourthly, If you should see any of your neighbours neglect making sure of either house or land for themselves, if they had it offered to them, saying, ‘Time enough

hereafter;—when the time is uncertain; and besides, they do not know whether ever it will be offered to them again, or not: I say, would you not call them fools? And if so, then do you think that you are a wise man to let your immortal soul hang over hell by a thread of uncertain time, which may soon be cut in two by death?

But to speak plainly, all these are the words of a lazy spirit. Arise, man! don't be lazy any longer: set foot, and heart, and all, into the way of God, and run. The crown is at the end of the race.

Farewell. I wish our souls may meet with comfort at the journey's end.

JOHN BUNYAN.

HEAVEN MUST BE RUN FOR.

“SO RUN, THAT YE MAY OBTAIN”.—1st Corinthians 9 v 24.

APPLICATION OF THE POINT

So you see I have said something, though only a little. Now I come to make some use of what has been said, and conclude.

THE FIRST USE.—You see that he that wishes to go to heaven must *run* for it; yes, and not only run, but “so run;” as I have said, run earnestly, run continually, take off every thing that slackens his pace in his race with the rest. Well then, you must run like that.

1. Now let us examine it a little. Have you got into the right way? Are you in Christ's righteousness? Do not say, “Yes,” in your heart, when, in truth, there is no such reality. It is a dangerous thing, you know, for a man to think he is in the right way, when he is in the wrong way. Next to that is for him to lose his way; and not only that, but if he runs for heaven, as you say you do, to lose that too. Oh! this is the misery of most men, to persuade themselves that they run in the right way, when they have never one foot in the way! The Lord give you understanding here, or else you are ruined for ever.

Search when was it you turned away from your sins and righteousness, into the righteousness of Jesus Christ. I say, do you see yourself in him? and is he more precious to you than the whole world? Is your mind always considering him? and also walking with him? Do you count his company more precious than the whole world? Do you count all things poor, lifeless,

empty, worthless things, without communion with him? Does his company sweeten everything; and his absence make everything else bitter? Soul, I beg you be serious, and take it to heart, and do not dismiss things of such great concern like the salvation or damnation of your soul, without good grounds.

2. Have you unloaded the things of this world, like pride, pleasures, gains, lusts, empty concerns? What! Do you think you will run fast enough, with the world, your sins, and lusts, in your heart? I tell you, soul, those that have given all up, every weight, every sin, and are most nimble, they find it is hard work enough running; to run enough to hold out till the end of the race.

To run through all that opposition, all the jostling, all the antagonism, over all the obstacles, over all the traps, from all the nets that the devil, sin, the world, and their own hearts, place in front of them; I tell you, if you are going heavenward, you will find it is no small or easy matter. Have you therefore discharged and unloaded these things? Never talk of going to heaven if you have not. It is feared you will be found among the many that “will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.”

THE SECOND USE.—If so, then, What will become of them that grow weary before they have got half way there? Why, man, it is he that holds out to the end that must be saved; it is he who overcomes that will inherit all things; it is not every one that begins. Agrippa took a step suddenly: he stepped almost into Christ in less than half an hour. “you,” he says to Paul, “have almost persuaded me to be a Christian.” Ah! but it was *almost*; and so it was as good as never; yet he stopped short; he was enthusiastic while he was at it, but he was quickly out of breath. O this “almost!” I tell you this “almost,” lost him his soul.

I think I have seen sometimes how these poor wretches that get almost to heaven, how fearfully their “almost,” will torment them in hell; when they shall cry out in bitterness of soul, saying, “Almost a Christian! I almost got into the kingdom, almost out of the hands of the devil, almost out of my sins, almost away from the curse of God; almost, and that was all; almost, but not altogether. Oh! that I was almost in heaven, and did not quite get there!” Friend, it is a sad thing to sit down before we are in heaven, and to grow weary before we come to the place of rest; and if it should be your case, I am sure you are not running so that you will obtain. But again,

THE THIRD USE.—In the next place, What then will become of those that some time since were running at great speed to heaven, (so that they seemed to overtake many,) but now are running as fast back again? Do you think they will ever get there? What! to run back again, back again to sin, to the world, to the devil, back again to the lusts of the flesh? Oh! “It had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn”, “from the holy commandment.” Those men will not only be damned for sin, but for saying to all the world that sin is better than Christ. For the man that runs back again, says, ‘I have tried Christ, and I have tried sin, and I do not find so much profit in Christ as in sin.’ I say, this man declares by his running back again. Oh, sad! What ruin and destruction they will have, who were almost at heaven-gates, and then ran back again! “If any draw back,” saith Christ, “my soul shall have no pleasure in him.” Again, “No man having put his hand to the plough,” (that is, go forward in ways of God,) “and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of heaven.” And if not fit for the kingdom of heaven, then for certain he must be suitable for the fire of hell. And therefore, says the apostle, those that produce these apostatising fruits, like briars and thorns, are rejected, are cursed; whose end is to be burned.

Oh! there is never another Christ to save *them*, by bleeding and dying for them! And if they shall not escape that neglect, then how shall they escape, that reject and turn their back upon so great a salvation? And if the righteous, those who run for it, will find enough work to get to heaven, then where will the ungodly sinner appear? Oh! if Judas the traitor, or Francis Spira the apostate, were but now alive in the world, to whisper a little in the ears of these men, and tell them what it has cost their souls for giving up, surely it would stick with them, and make them afraid of running back again, so long as they had one day to live in this world!

THE FOURTH USE.—So again, fourthly, How like those men’s sufferings will those be, that have all this time sat still, and have not so much as set one foot forward to the kingdom of heaven! Surely whoever goes back, and whoever sits still in sin, are both of one mind; the one will not stir, because he loves his sins, and the things of this world; the other runs back again, because he loves his sins, and the things of this world. Is it not one and the same thing? They are all one, and shall not one and the same hell hold them after the die? He is ungodly who never longed for Christ, and he is an ungodly that did once look for him, and then ran back again: and

therefore that word will certainly come out of the mouth of Christ against them both, “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.”

THE FIFTH USE.—Again, you may see, that if those that will have heaven, must run for it; then this calls aloud to those who began some time ago, I say, for them to quicken their pace if they intend to win. You know that they which come behind, need to run fastest. Friend, I tell you, that, there are those that have run ten years to your one, no, twenty to five, and yet if you talk with them, sometimes they will say, they doubt they may come too late. How then will it be with you? Watch therefore that you do not delay, no, not an hour’s time, but part quickly with all, with every thing that is a hindrance to you in your journey, and run; yes, and run so that you may obtain!

THE SIXTH USE.— You that are old church members, be careful that the young followers of Jesus, that began to run recently, do not outrun you, so that to have that scripture fulfilled, “The first shall be last, and the last first:” which will be a shame to you, and a credit for them. What! for a young soldier to be more courageous than he who has been used to wars! To you that are at the back of the race, I say, struggle to outrun them that are in front of you; and to you that are ahead, I say, hold your ground, and stay in front of them in faith and love, if possible. Indeed, that is the right running, for one to contend to run past the others; even for the stragglers to struggle to overtake the front; and those in front should make sure he keeps his position, straining to the very utmost. But then,

THE SEVENTH USE.— What a degrading way to behave, how unlikely they are to win, that think it is enough to keep company with those at the rear of the race! There are some men that claim to run for heaven as well as any; yet if there be any lazy, cold, half-hearted people who say they are saved in the country, they will be sure to take example from them. They think, if they can only keep pace with them they will do well; but they do not consider that those at the rear lose the prize. As you may know it, it cost the foolish virgins dear for their coming too late. “They that were ready, went in with him: and the door was shut. Afterward,” mark “afterward came the other (the foolish) virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Depart, I know you not.” ‘Depart, lazy church members!’

Oh! I think the word of God is so plain regarding the overthrow of lazy church members, that it is a wonder men do not take more notice of it. How was Lot's wife dealt with for running lazily, and for giving but one look behind her, after the things she left in Sodom? How was Esau punished for waiting too long before he came for the blessing? And how were they treated that are mentioned in the 13th of Luke, for waiting till the door was shut? Also the foolish virgins. They will give a heavy groan that have waited too long! It turned Lot's wife into a pillar of salt; it made Esau weep with an extremely loud and bitter cry; it made Judas hang himself: yes, and it will make you curse the day in that you were born, if you miss Gods kingdom, as you will certainly do, if this is the route you take. But,

THE EIGHTH USE.—How, and if you by your lazy running should not only destroy yourself, but also by it be the cause of the damnation of some others? For you, claiming to be a Christian, you must realize that others will take notice of you; and because you are but a poor, cold, lazy runner, and one that attempts to pull the world and pleasure along with you; why, others will think of doing so too. “No,” they say, “why may we not, just as well as he does? He is a church member, and yet he searches for pleasures, riches, profits; he loves worldly company, and he is so and so, and claims that he is going for heaven; yes, and he says also that he does not fear but he will have all the entertainment he wants; let us therefore keep up with him, we will fare no worse than he does!” O how fearful it will be, if you will be instrumental in the ruin of others by your stuttering in the way of righteousness! Watch, you will have little enough strength to appear before God, to give an account for the loss of your own soul; you do not need to have to give an account for others, why you stopped them from entering in. How will you answer that charge, “You would not enter in yourselves, and those that would, you hampered?” They will be eminently found guilty of that charge that through their own idleness they keep themselves out of heaven, and by the same example, others as well.

THE NINTH USE.—I speak a word to both of you, and so I will conclude.

1. I beg you, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that none of you will run so lazily in the way to heaven as to hinder either yourselves or others. I know that even the laziest runner, if they see a man running for his physical life, that would neglect his own well-being in this world, when he is running for his life, to pick up, here and there, a piece of string that hangs by

the side, or to step, now and then, out of the way to pick up a bit of refuse or garbage; I say, if he did this when he is running for his life, you would condemn him. And do you not condemn yourself that does the very same in effect? no worse; that loiters in your race, knowing your soul, heaven, glory, and all is at stake? Be careful, very careful, poor wretched sinner; Watch out!

2. If yet there are any that, despite this advice, will still be flagging and loitering in the way to the kingdom of glory, be wise and do not take an example from them. Learn from no man farther than he follows Christ. But look unto Jesus, who is not only the author and finisher of faith, but who did, for the joy that was set before him, endure the cross, despise the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of God. I say, look to no man to learn of him, any farther than he follows Christ. "Be ye followers of me," saith Paul, "even as I am of Christ." Though *he* was an eminent man, yet his exhortation was, that none should follow him any farther than he followed Christ.

MOTIVATION.—Now that you may be motivated to run with the front-runners, take notice of this. When Lot and his wife were running from cursed Sodom to the mountains, to save their lives, it is said, that his wife looked back behind her, and she became a pillar of salt. And yet you see that neither her practice, nor the judgment of God that fell upon her for the same, would cause Lot to look behind him. I have sometimes wondered at Lot in this particular. His wife looked behind her and died immediately; but let anything happen to her, Lot would not so much as look behind him to see her. We do not read that he did so much as once look where she was, or what was happened. His heart was indeed on his journey, and well it might be. There was the mountain in front, and the fire and brimstone behind him! His life was at stake, and he would lose it if he looked behind. Run like this!: and in your race remember Lot's wife, and remember her doom; and remember why her doom overtook her; and remember that God made her an example for all lazy runners, to the end of the world; and be careful you do not follow the same example! But if this will not spur you,

Consider this, 1. your soul, is your own soul, that is either to be saved or lost. you will not lose my soul by your laziness; it is your own soul, your own ease, your own peace, your own advantage or disadvantage. If it were my own that you are invited to be good to, I think reason should move you

somewhat to pity it. But sadly! it is your own; your own soul! “What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” God’s people wish well to the soul of others, and will you not wish well to your own? And if this will not stimulate you, then,

Think again, 2. If thou lose your soul, it is you also that must bear the blame.

It made Cain stark mad to consider that he had not looked to his brother Abel’s soul. How much more will it perplex you, to think, that you had not a care for your own? And if this will not stir you to exert yourself,

Think again, 3. That if you will not run, the people of God are resolved to deal with you even as Lot dealt with his wife; that is, leave you behind them. It may be you have a father, mother, brother, &c, racing to heaven. Would you be willing to be left behind by them? Surely not.

Again, 4. Will it not be a dishonour to you to see the very boys and girls in the country, to have more wit than yourself? It may be the employees of some men, are more looking after heaven than their employers. I think sometimes, that more employees than employers, that more poor than rich, will inherit the kingdom of heaven. But is not this a shame for those that are rich? I am persuaded you would have contempt if those less fortunate than you should say they were wiser than you in the things of the world; and yet I am bold to say, that many of them are wiser than you in the things of the world to come, which are of greater concern.

Lastly a preachers plea.—Well then, sinner, what do you have left to say? Where is your heart? Will you run? Are you resolved to fly for your life? Or are you not? Think quickly, man! There can be no dallying in this matter. Confer not with flesh and blood. Look up to heaven, and see how you like it; also to hell, how unthinkably terrible it is and correspondingly devote yourself to winning the race. If you do not know the way, inquire in the word of God, the bible; if you want company, cry for God’s Spirit; if you want encouragement, entertain the promises. But be sure you begin soon; get into the way, run quickly, and keep going till the end; and may the Lord give you a prosperous journey!”

Heaven is a wonderful place for the saved with eternal joy, rest and peace in Christ. It is a long difficult journey to enter it as Mr Bunyan informs us:

“They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; These see the works of the LORD, and his wonders in the deep. For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which

lifteth up the waves thereof. They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths: their soul is melted because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits' end. Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses. He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven. Oh that *men* would praise the LORD *for* his goodness, and *for* his wonderful works to the children of men!" Psalm 107

"And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

Isaiah 35 v 10

Another Christian said about heaven - 'the best is yet to come':

Oh! well it is for ever, Oh! well for evermore,
My nest hung in no forest of all this death-doom'd shore
Yea, let the vain world vanish, As from the ship the strand,
While glory—glory dwelleth In Immanuel's land.

"The troubles that afflict the just
in number many be;
But yet at length out of them all
the Lord doth set him free."

Psalm 34 v 19(Scottish Metrical)

At the end of life the Christian is delivered from the oppression and tyranny of sin and suffering and gains the victory over the angel of death through the blood of the Passover lamb, Jesus Christ. He leaves the Egypt of this world and, as he enters Canaan, the promised land of heaven he cries out in triumph: 'free at last, free at last, I thank God Almighty, free at last.....'

"And he passed over, and the trumpet sounded for him on the other side:"

Mr Bunyan demands an answer from you to the one great question: Are you willing not only to run, but also to win, that race?



CONCLUSION

The main implications of our title text- that obedience to God is also love to God and others, performed by a keeping of ourselves or self denial, that the obedience is seen and known by others, that obedience or good works are evidence of true faith or being saved by which we can gain assurance and confidence we are truly saved, are all summarized in 1st John chapter 5:

“By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God. We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not. *And* we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.”

1st john 5 vv 2,3 13,18, 19





