

Monergism

**HEAVEN  
AND HELL**

EPITOMISED

**George Swinnock**

Monergism

**HEAVEN  
AND HELL**

EPITOMISED

**George Swinnock**

# Heaven and Hell Epitomised

by George Swinnock

## Table of Contents

THE EPISTLE DEDICATORY

TOTHE READER

PREFACE

I. The division of the chapter, and interpretation of the text

II. The doctrine, That such as have Christ for their life, gain by death, with the explication of the phrase, 'To me to live is Christ'

III. What privative gain the Christian hath by death

IV. What positive gain a Christian hath by death

V. The difference betwixt a sinner and a saint at death

VI. The sinner's privative misery at death

VII. The positive part of a sinner's misery at death

VIII. A second use of trial, with motives to enforce it

IX. The marks of a true Christian from the text

X. Other marks of saints

XI. The third use—viz., Exhortation to mind spiritual life

XII. The life in Christ must be minded speedily, with the grounds of it

XIII. This life in Christ must be minded diligently, with some motions to it

XIV. The first direction for the attaining a spiritual life, Illumination

XV. The second help to a spiritual life, Humiliation

XVI. The third help to a spiritual life, Application of, or affiance on, Jesus Christ

XVII. The fourth help, Dedication to God

XVIII. Two other helps, The word and prayer

XIX. Motives to mind this spiritual life: It is the most honourable, most comfortable, most profitable life

XX. Comfort to true Christians

XXI. Comfort against the world's fury, and Satan's rage

XXII. Comfort against our own corruptions, our own or other believers' dissolution

XXIII. The excellency of heaven

XXIV. The certainty that saints shall obtain heaven

XXV. The eternity of the saints' happiness in heaven

## THE EPISTLE DEDICATORY

To the Worshipful, and my esteemed friend, RICHARD BERESFORD, Esq., Clerk of the Pleas to His Majesty's Court of Exchequer.

IT was the unhappiness of judicious Calvin, either through his own mistake, or the misreport of others, to retract his first Dedication of his Comment on the First Epistle to the Corinthians in another edition, and to prefix a new name before it, viz., the noble Galeacius Caricciolus, Marquis of Vico, wishing that either he had not known at all, or had known more fully, the person whose name he was forced to blot out. I bless God I have not the least cause for the like course. But this small treatise (part whereof was formerly preached in your ears at the funeral of your dear mother) presenteth itself this second time to your eyes, not for your protection, (divine truths desire none from men, and human errors deserve none from any,) but for your direction. It containeth that in it which is able to make you wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

You have a double right to the dedication of this book: partly in regard of the occasion of it; partly in regard of the author's obligation unto you, which is great, for your liberality; but far greater for your encouraging of, and exemplariness in, the truth and life of Christianity.

I did not think myself a little bound to that providence which gave you relation to that parish whereof I was once minister, and I suppose not without cause, when the power of godliness hath few such considerable patrons. Men of your rank, though sometimes, to stop the mouth of conscience, or for their credit, they take up a form and profession, yet do usually neglect, if not cursedly deride, the strictness and power of religion. They are too often, like the moon,

furthest from, and in direct opposition unto, the Sun of righteousness, when they are at the full of outward plenty, and receive most light of divine bounty from him; their carnal hearts, as the sea, turn the showers of mercy from heaven, and fresh streams from the earth, into the salt waters of corruption. In our natural bodies, the more fat there is, the less blood in the veins, and, by consequence, the fewer spirits. Greatness and goodness are beautiful and happy, but rare conjunctions.<sup>2</sup> You know who hath said, 'Not many such are called,' 1 Cor. 1:26; and experience teacheth us, that they are like stars of the first magnitude, thinly scattered in the firmament of a country. How much therefore are you engaged to that distinguishing love, which enableth you to look after the things of a better life!

I shall take the liberty, which I know you will give, to speak a few words to you by way of advice.

First, My counsel will be, that you would more and more ensure your effectual calling. We say, where men intend to live long, they build strong. I am confident all that you are worth, for your endless condition in the other world, dependeth, under Christ, upon your inward change. And if ever any wires had need to be firm and strong, then questionless they upon which such heavy weights hang as your eternal, unchangeable estate.

You have a large room in the hearts of many that are holy. But, alas, sir, the best man's confidence of me would prove but a bad evidence for heaven! He is not approved whom man commendeth, but whom the Lord commendeth.

The great affection which you bear to the souls of the people amongst whom ye were born, is worthy of imitation; and so is your care and cost in scattering some practical and home treatises in several families, whereby souls may be converted, and wherein you may have comfort at the day of Christ; for soul-charity is the soul of charity. But the best charity begins at home, though it never ends

there; your main business lieth within your own doors, to make sure that good work within you which shall be perfected hereafter.

The ordinary security which most men trust to, will not serve when they come in the other life to lay their claims, and shew their deeds for the inheritance of the saints in light. Many flaws will then be found in their evidences, which now, through their wilful blindness, they neither see nor fear. He had need to have armour of proof, that would enter the list with his enemy death, and not be foiled. The heart not ballasted with renewing grace, may hold out in the calm of life, and shallows of time; but when it meets with the storm of death, and launcheth into the ocean of eternity, it suffereth a desperate and everlasting shipwreck. The want of this is the leak which sinketh many a precious vessel (soul I mean) in the gulf of perdition.

There is as much difference between a nominal and a real Christian, as between a lifeless picture and a living person. True Christianity, which consisteth in the soul's humble, unfeigned acceptation of, and hearty resolved dedication unto Christ, as Saviour and sovereign, is a paradox to most. There are many Christians, as Salvian complained in his time, without Christ; but they which know experimentally what the sanctification of the Holy Ghost meaneth, are few indeed. The moralist in his best dress of civility, the formalist in his gaudy attire of ceremonies, and the hypocrite in all his royalty, is not arrayed like one of these. I do not write these things as in the least suspecting your sincerity, but to quicken you to a godly jealousy over your own soul. If the apostles and disciples needed such rousing cautions: 'Take heed lest that day come upon you unawares,' Luke 21:34; 'Take heed lest any man fail of the grace of God,' Heb. 12:15; then much more you and I, who are more drowsy and prone to slumber, do require awakening considerations.

Secondly, That you would walk exemplarily. Man is a creature which is led more by the eye than the ear, by patterns than by precepts. Great men therefore, which are copies after which many write, had need to be exact. You are the looking-glasses by which others dress

themselves; the heads of the people, Deut. 1:15; now the whole body will go along with the head.

You are like beacons upon a hill, visible to all. The sun may as soon go unseen as you unobserved. A small star may be darkened, and none take notice of it; but if the great luminaries are eclipsed or obscured, a thousand eyes will be gazing on them. A little spot in silk or scarlet is more looked on than a great one in russet or sackcloth. A crack in a pebble is nothing so eyed or prejudicial as a small flaw in a jewel. *Corruptio optimi pessima*. Satan doth therefore plant his strongest batteries against the royal forts of magistracy and ministry, (whoever are spared, David and Peter shall be sifted,) knowing that he gaineth a double advantage by their miscarriage, example, and scandal; by which two wings it will soar higher, and fly much further. An ordinary tradesman may prove bankrupt without much noise; but if an alderman or merchant, that had a name for a great estate, breaks, the city and country ring of it. The honour of God and credit of the gospel are much engaged in the carriage of a gentleman that is a professor. The many eyes that look upon you, the many feet that follow after you, and the glory of the blessed God which is concerned in you, do all call aloud to you, to have your eyes in your head, (as the wise man's phrase is, Eccles. 2:14,) to make straight paths for your feet, and to walk nobly, exactly, worthy of the Lord, even unto all well-pleasing.

Besides, honour is apt to be a snare and temptation, and therefore requireth the greater care and circumspection. Places of honour are like strong meats, which, being well concocted, yield much good nourishment, bring much glory to God, and good to souls; but they are of very hard digestion. He must have a strong brain that will bear much wine, and he much grace that will walk humbly and closely with God in a high condition.

In a word, your time is little, your work is great; your talents are many, your account will be weighty; your Saviour observeth every moment how tender you are of his honour, that was so tender of your

eternal welfare; how you testify your thankfulness to him for all the bitter agony and ignominy which he suffered for you. You shall shortly never more have the least opportunity (though you would give a thousand worlds for it) to do anything in, for God's glory, your own and others' good. Work therefore the work of him that sent you into the world, while it is the day of your life, for the night of death is hastening on you, wherein you cannot work. Up and be doing, and the Lord be with you.

Sir, I have no more to speak to you, but that the hearer of prayers may hear often from you, that I may take heed to the ministry which I have received of the Lord, and fulfil it, and to assure you that my prayers at the throne of grace shall be, that you and your religious consort may continue to dwell together as fellow-heirs of the grace of life; and your hopeful children may be planted with, and grow up in, grace, till they shall be transplanted into the true paradise, the kingdom of glory. This, through the help of heaven, shall be the petition of

Your real servant in the ever blessed Saviour,

GEORGE SWINNOCK.

## **TO THE READER**

CHRISTIAN READER,—There are two things which should be of highest regard with us, a serviceable life, and a comfortable death; and they are both so inseparably conjoined, that in vain do we hope for the one without the other. Which of these is to be preferred, was a doubt which put the apostle to an anxious disquisition. On the one

side there was service, on the other side there was gain. If he lived, he should preach Christ, if he died, he should enjoy Christ, and remain with him for ever; therefore Paul was at a stand, and knew not what to determine. Surely he had a holy heart that could thus set duty against enjoyment, and think his service worthy to come into competition with his spiritual and eternal interests! That which made Paul so indifferent and incurious as to the means, was the resolved fixing of his scope—his end and scope was Christ's glory. Now, it was all one to him how God would use him to such a purpose; as a man that is resolved upon a journey, taketh the way as he findeth it, fair or foul; it is enough that it leadeth him to his journey's end; so Christ might be glorified, either by his ministry, or by martyrdom, Paul was indifferent; it was enough that Christ should be glorified. None have such an unfeigned respect to Christ's glory but those that live in the communion of his life. Men's tendency is according to the principle by which they are acted; carnal men, that act by their own life, and live upon their own root, bring forth fruit to themselves. Water riseth no higher than its fountain; but those that have life from Christ, use it for him; to them to live is Christ; as they live in him, and by him, so they live for him, and to him. We need then to take all occasions to press men to get into Christ, that they may live in the communion of his life, and in the strength and influence of it be carried out to his glory. This is that which will make life serviceable, and death sweet; and to this we need to be pressed by all kind of arguments both those which are taken from God's relation to us, as also those which are taken from our expectations from him, Rom. 14:8. We are all the Lord's by every kind of right and title, and therefore owe all manner of service to him, even though nothing should come of it; but they that do the Lord's work will not want his wages; though he might require our service out of mere sovereignty, yet he condescendeth to propound a reward, and that so full and ample, that it should ravish our hearts every time we think of it. These considerations, which I have here loosely discoursed of, are notably improved in the ensuing treatise, which being communicated to me by a friend of the author, I could not but return it with this character, that it is a discourse grave and judicious, and yet

quicken'd with such warmth and vigour of illustration, as that it may be of great use to awaken men unto more seriousness in the great concernments of their souls, among which nothing can be more momentous than our living in Christ, that we may live to him, and then with him for evermore. This being signified, I leave thee to the work itself, which I cannot but judge to proceed from one both of a good head and heart, and profess myself

Thine in the service of the gospel,

THO. MANTON.

## **THE PREFACE AND EPISTLE TO THE READER**

ESPECIALLY OF THE PARISH OF RICKMERSWORTH IN  
HERTFORDSHIRE, AND BORDEN IN KENT: AS ALSO THE  
OCCASION OF THIS TREATISE.

I HAVE sometimes considered with myself, (not without some remorse and grief of spirit,) the multitudes of men and women, that even in those places where the word of God is plainly and powerfully taught, run headlong in the broad way which leadeth to destruction. And, indeed, if my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night, (though every tear were a tear of blood,) I could never sufficiently bewail the slain of the daughter of my people, of that parish to which the providence of God hath called me.

That the lying vanities of this world should by most be so greedily pursued, and the real mercies relating to a better world so wretchedly despised; that a brutish flesh, which must shortly be food for worms, should be so highly prized and constantly gratified, and an angelical spirit, the soul, which must live for ever, be so basely slighted and unworthily neglected; that every soul-damning lust should be so heartily embraced, and the soul-saving Lord but coldly and complimentally entertained; that the road to hell should be so exceedingly filled, and the way to heaven almost wholly unoccupied;—surely this ought to be for a bitter lamentation; and oh, what sea of blood is enough to bemoan this horrid wickedness!

It hath seemed to me, therefore, a matter worthy of diligent inquiry, what special malefactors should be indicted for these many soul-mischiefs, and soul-murders. which are committed amongst us. And truly, by that acquaintance which I have with the word of God, and experience of the soul-affairs of men, I find, though many accessories might be named, that ignorance ought to be arraigned and condemned as one of the principals: 'The people perish for want of knowledge,' Hosea 4:6. Inner darkness is the beaten path to utter darkness, to the blackness of darkness for ever. Men in this mist of ignorance, like ships, run upon those rocks which split them eternally. As the Indians prefer every toy and trifle before their mines of gold; so they every sensual, sinful pleasure, every foolish, perishing creature, before the beautiful image of God, the unsearchable riches in Christ, the endless happiness in heaven; because they know not the vanity and emptiness of the former, the excellency and preciousness of the latter. *Ignoti nulla cupido*. Did men know the gift of God, and who it is that speaketh to them, and what he offereth, they would ask of him, and he would give them living waters, John 4:10.

What is the reason that so many make a mock of sin, and dance merrily over the infernal pit, and play with the unquenchable fire, but ignorance? The child doth not know that the fire will burn him. As the horse, they rush into the battle—fighting against God and

their souls—not knowing it will be to their destruction, to their damnation. These Balaams run greedily after the wages of unrighteousness, not seeing the angel that standeth in the way with a drawn sword in his hand ready to kill them. Did they know what they do, when they wilfully break God's law, they would sooner leap into a furnace of scalding lead, than provoke so jealous a God. But sin goeth in a disguise, and thence is welcome; like Judas, it kisseth and kills; like Joab, it salutes and slays. The foolish sinner seeth the pleasant streams of Jordan, but not the Dead Sea, into which they will certainly empty themselves to his ruin.

What is the reason that the devil carrieth so many captive at his will, leadeth them whither he pleaseth, but ignorance? They are ignorant of his wiles, of his devices; they know not, as drunken Lot of his daughters, when he cometh, nor when he goeth. The prince of darkness takes up his throne in dark understandings: 'The god of this world blindeth their minds,' 2 Cor. 4:4, 'lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine upon them.' How easy is it for him to lead blind men out of the way, and then to destroy them! As Pliny saith the eagle deals with the hart, she lights upon his horns, and there flutters up and down, filling his eyes with dust, borne in her feathers, that at last he may cast himself from the rock, and so be made a prey unto her; so the wicked one bindeth a muffler before men's eyes, and then turneth them off the ladder, and executes them.

What is the cause of men's scandalous practices, but ignorance? 'The dark corners of the earth are full of the habitation of cruelty,' Ps. 74:20; the flood-gates of wickedness are open, when the door of knowledge is shut. The cause why there was no mercy nor truth in the land, but swearing, and lying, and stealing, committing adultery, and blood touching blood, was ignorance, Hosea 4:1, 2. This is the root of bitterness on which those cursed fruits grow; this is the blind captain which, like Zilpah, hath a Gad—a troop of enormities following him. Paul thanks ignorance for his blasphemy and persecuting the church, 1 Tim. 1:13. The reason why the heathen did not call on God, was because they did not know him, Ps. 79:6. The

most ugly and monstrous wickedness which ever was hatched or brought forth, calleth ignorance mother. 'Had they known, they would never have crucified the Lord of glory,' 1 Cor. 2:8; Acts 3:15, 17. What Augustine saith of original sin, is, in some respects, true of ignorance; it is peccatum, poena peccati, et causa peccati; it is a sin as contrary to the law of God, which requireth men to know him, 1 Chron. 28:9; Lev. 5:15, 18. It is the punishment of sin, as the fruit of our apostasy from God; it is the cause of sin, as toads and serpents grow in dark cellars; as blind ale-houses are sinks and sources of all villanies, so are dark and blind hearts. They are 'strangers to the life of God through the ignorance that is in them,' Eph. 4:18.

What is the cause of men's erroneous principles, but ignorance? They err, not knowing the Scriptures, Mat. 22:29. Impostors, like cozening tradesmen, when they have men in a dark shop, put what rotten, deceitful ware they please into their hands; they lead captive silly women, that are ever learning, and never coming to the knowledge of the truth, 2 Tim. 3:6, 7. Heretics, like nurses, may put meat or poison into their mouths who are babes in understanding; they that are children in knowledge will be tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine. The blind man eats many a fly, and the ignorant man swallows many an error. Men will easily be brought to deny the truths which they understand not, and to 'speak evil of the things which they know not,' Jude 10. Simul ac desinunt ignorare, desinunt odisse, saith Tertullian (in Apolog.) of them that condemned the Christian religion.

What is the reason that men put God off, either with no service or worship at all, or else with a few cold, superficial, lazy duties, without either heat or life, but their ignorance? They know not the majesty, purity, jealousy, and severity of God; they worship they know not whom, and therefore they worship him they care not how. Their altars are of any slight form or fashion, because, like the Athenians, they are dedicated to the unknown God; they that know not their master's will cannot obey it. Some cry up their good meanings to excuse their ignorance; but ignorant devotion is like feet without

eyes, which the farther they carry men, the greater is their wandering and woe.

What is the reason that men take up short of Christ, and renewing grace; that they please themselves with the shadow instead of the substance of religion; that they cry peace, peace to their souls, only upon some outward privileges, or a few inward good meanings, as they call them, when they are in a most damnable condition, and sudden destruction is ready to seize on them, as travail on a woman with child, which they cannot escape. Surely it is ignorance of the nature of Christianity and sanctification; they know not what regeneration is, and what faith and repentance are, which are the conditions upon which salvation may be had. Therefore they rest in forms, which will fade, when their hearts and lives deny the power of godliness. This, this is, not as papists would persuade their deluded votaries, the mother of devotion, but the monster which causeth such hideous births of corruption; this is the epidemical disease that reigneth all the year long, and killeth, I fear, more souls than any of our new distempers doth bodies: 'For the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: which shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power,' 2 Thes. 1:7–9. This, this is the source of men's sins on earth, and eternal sufferings in hell.

But one would think such truths as these might be seasonable in Turkey or India, or in Spain and Italy, where the tree of knowledge is forbidden fruit, where they may not read their Father's mind in their mother tongue; but is it possible that in England, where the will and word of God is more powerfully preached, more practically applied, more clearly discovered, than in any nation of the world, there should be any ignorant persons? Alas, alas! we find by woeful experience that there are many, very many, Indians and heathen, for ignorance, in England; men and women that know as little of God and holiness, of Christ, his natures, offices, of true faith and

repentance, as if they had been born and bred up all their time in Turkey or India. I am ashamed to write what I know of the sottish, stupid, hellish ignorance of many, and some that are aged too, that are going to die, and yet never knew what it was to live, either to God or their souls. The good Lord affect my heart more with the danger and dreadfulness of their eternal conditions!

Oh how sad is it that so many precious souls should lie lazing on their beds of security and idleness, and though the sun shine brightly in upon them, they will not draw their curtains and open their eyes to behold it! That in a valley of vision, a Goshen, a land of light, thousands should live and die in worse than Egyptian darkness; that the Bible should be a sealed book to them, and almost every one have the dark side of that glorious pillar towards him!

Reader, to cure this soul-murdering distemper, I have endeavoured, according to the trust committed to me, and the grace bestowed on me, to discover in this treatise the life in Christ, or true Christianity, with the matchless, endless felicity that accompanieth it; as also the nature and danger of unregeneracy, with the means to come out of it, by which thou mayest see that many cozen their souls with counterfeit coin (false evidences for heaven) instead of true, which will not abide the touchstone of Scripture; and so, like Uriah, they carry those letters about them, though they know it not, which will at last cost them their lives, and cause their eternal deaths. That there is no fool like the sinner who selleth his soul for a song; his Saviour, his eternal happiness, the unspeakable pleasures at God's right hand for evermore, for the perishing, empty profits, and base, brutish pleasures of sin, which are but for a season. That, though sin be delightful in the act, to carnal wretches, yet it will be bitterness in the end. It will be a bittersweet to all its lovers, when for their momentary pleasure they shall be recompensed with eternity of intolerable, unconceivable pain; that it is not for nothing that ministers call so loudly and earnestly to thee to kill those lusts which would kill thee, and to 'follow after holiness, without which no man shall ever see the Lord,' Heb. 12:14. It will teach thee that God and

Christ, heaven and hell, thy soul and eternity, death and judgment, are not things to be dallied with; believe it, thou wilt one day find that it is bad jesting with such edged tools. Surely the greatest seriousness that is imaginable is too too little for them. Oh hadst thou but the thousandth part of that seriousness about them which they deserve and call for at thy hands, thou wouldst have other manner of thoughts of them, and carriage towards them, than now thou hast. Well, I have four special things at present from the living God to commend to thee, and leave with thee, in order to thine eternal good, (I know not how soon I may be taken from thee.) If thou lovest thy soul, practise them faithfully; if not, answer the contrary when thou and I shall meet in the other world, at the great and terrible day of the Lord Jesus.

First, Do thou labour for the knowledge of God and his Son, thyself, and the duty which thou owest to thy Maker and Redeemer. Hast thou not read the doleful consequence of ignorance? and doth it not nearly concern thee to get out of that damnable condition?

Without this thou canst never be religious, notwithstanding all thy pretences that thou meanest well, and hast as good a heart as the best: 'If thou knowest not the God of thy fathers, thou canst never serve him with a perfect heart,' 1 Chron. 28:9. All thy worship will be but wild, and wandering from God; all thy services but the sacrifice of a fool. The foundation of obedience must be laid in knowledge, Mal. 1:8; till then thou offerest up to the Lord, the lame and blind, which he will not accept. God expecteth reasonable services, Rom. 12:1; such for which thou canst give a good reason out of his word, which must be the warrant of thy worship. Be not therefore in shape a man, a reasonable creature, and, as Nebuchadnezzar, in heart a beast; be not as the horse and mule, which hath no understanding, Ps. 32:9.

Without knowledge thou canst not be saved: 'If the gospel be hid, it is hid to them that perish,' 2 Cor. 4:3. Wilful ignorance is a sad sign that thou art in God's black bill. If God will ever have thee to be

saved, he will bring thee to the knowledge of this truth, 1 Tim. 2:4. When Haman's face was covered, his execution was near. Do not delude and destroy thy soul by presuming that thy ignorance will not damn thee; for if thou art without knowledge, he that made thee will not save thee, and he that formed thee will shew thee no mercy, Isa. 27:11. Mark, reader, but this one place, Ps. 95:10, 11, where the God of truth confirmeth it by an oath, that they which do not know his ways shall not enter into his rest. One would think that a prisoner should be both earnest and diligent to learn his neck verse, who knoweth he must be hanged if he cannot read; and dost not thou read in broad characters, in the word of God, that thou must be an eternal monument of divine fury in hell, if thou dost not learn to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent? Doth it not then behove thee to be diligent for knowledge?

1. How shouldst thou wait on the word of God, which enliveneth the mind, and maketh wise the simple! Ps. 19:7, 8. David had more understanding than the ancients, because God's word was his meditation, Ps. 119:98, 99. Watch at wisdom's gate, with a humble, hungry soul, and God may fill thee with good things. God maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by his ministers in every place, 2 Cor. 2:14. If thou wouldst see, go where the sun shineth.

2. Ply the throne of grace with incessant prayers, that God would enlighten thy mind in the knowledge of his will. If any man lack wisdom or knowledge, let him ask it of God, who giveth liberally, and upbraideth not, James 1:5. Entreat him to open thine eyes, that thou mayest see the wonderful things contained in his law, Ps. 119:18. 'If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasure; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord giveth wisdom; out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding,' Prov. 2:3-6.

3. Take heed of sinning against those commands which thou knowest. Hold not the truth in unrighteousness. Do not wanton away

the light, lest God give thee up to judiciary darkness. Thou knowest thou shouldst pray with thy family, and in secret; make conscience of the Lord's day, instruct thy children, forbear drunkenness, swearing, lying, uncleanness, and the like. Be sure thou do not shut up this knowledge in thy conscience, and deny it in thy conversation, lest, as a candle pent up in a dark lantern, it swail out quickly: 'If any man will do my will, he shall know my doctrine whether it be of God or no,' John 7:17. To practise what you know is the way to know what to practise. Knowledge is the mother of obedience, it breeds it; and obedience is the nurse of knowledge, it feedeth and nurtureth it. If thou improvest thy little stock well, doubt not but God will add to it and increase it; leave no means untried for the obtaining this purchase. I have offered to instruct thee to my power in the mysteries of Christ, appointed also days for that end; it may be thou art one of those many that art too old to learn, that scorn to be taught. I would ask thee one question, and think of it, Art thou not too old to be saved? Dost thou not scorn to go to heaven? Surely thou dost; by contemning the way, thou scornest the end. Well, take heed thou dost not die without knowledge; for if thou dost, all the world cannot keep thee one quarter of an hour out of hell, and then thou wilt have time enough to befool thyself for refusing a good offer, and wilfully rejecting, through thy pride, those things which concerned thine eternal peace. I shall conclude this head with the words of that eminent and pious writer:

How long, saith he, may a poor minister sit in his study before any of the ignorant sort will come upon that errand—i.e., to learn the knowledge of God and themselves? Lawyers have their clients, and physicians their patients; these are sought after, and called up at midnight for counsel; but, alas! the soul, which is more worth than raiment and body too, that is neglected, and the minister seldom thought on till both these be sent away. Perhaps, when the physician gives them over for dead, then we must come and close up their eyes with comfort, which were never opened to see Christ in his truth, or else be counted cruel because we will not sprinkle them with this holy water, and anoint them for the kingdom of heaven, though they

know not a step of the way that leads to it. Ah, poor wretches, what comfort would you have us speak to those to whom God himself speaks terror! Is heaven ours to give to whom we please? or is it in our power to alter the laws of the Most High, and save those whom he condemns? Do you remember the curse that is to fall upon his head that maketh the blind to wander out of the way? Deut. 27:18; what curse then would be to our portion if we should confirm such blind souls as are quite out of the way to heaven—encouraging them to go on, and expect to reach heaven at last, when, God knows, their feet stand in those paths that lead to eternal death? No, it is written, we cannot. God will not reverse it; you may read your very names among those damned souls which Christ comes in flaming fire to take vengeance on, 2 Thes. 1:8. And therefore, in the fear of God, let this provoke you, of what age or sex, rank or condition soever you be, to labour for the saving knowledge of God in Christ, whom to know is life eternal, John 17:3.

Secondly, Do not rest in bare knowledge, but endeavour to get thy will, affections and heart renewed. A clear head must be accompanied with a clean heart; saving knowledge is ever a sanctifying knowledge. Content not thyself with anything short of regeneration and the power of godliness. Mr Robert Bolton, when dying, told his children that he verily believed none of them durst think to meet him at the great tribunal in an unregenerate estate; so I am confident that none of you can with any comfort, nay, without unspeakable horror and sorrow, meet me at the bar of Christ in your natural estates. Oh how sad will it be for thee that art now asleep in sin, to awake, like the jailer, at the midnight of death, and to find this inward change, this new creation, this life in Christ missing! what a heartquake will possess thee! how pale and trembling wilt thou spring into the presence of Christ in the other world for thy particular judgment! Consider, thy profession will not serve turn; the storm of death will wash out all colours of profession that are not laid in the oil of renewing grace, Mat. 25:8.

Thy privileges will not do it; circumcision is nothing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature, Gal. 6:15. Thou mayest enjoy Scripture, and Sabbaths, and sacraments, and many seasons of grace, and hell at last; nay the higher thy exaltation, in regard of these privileges, if thou diest unconverted, the greater thy condemnation will be. None go to such chambers of utter darkness as they that are lightened thither with the torches of ordinances. Heathen will keep holiday in hell in comparison of those that are now lifted up to heaven and perish. If the sweetest wine make such sharp vinegar, and the cold lead when melted be so hot and scalding, how pure and weighty will that wrath be which shall be extracted out of abused love and mercy! Grace is the sweetest friend, but the bitterest enemy. If thou waste the riches of grace, God will recover out of thee riches of glory. Thy performances also can be no infallible evidence of thy good estate. The pharisees prayed, fasted, did, many of them, abound in outward acts of charity, righteousness, and holiness (which are commanded by God, and must be minded by all that will be saved); and yet Christ telleth us expressly, that except our righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, we shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven, Mat. 5:20. There was in them, as in the young man, one thing wanting, and that was the regeneration of their natures, the actual predominancy of the interest of God and Christ in their hearts, above all interest of the flesh and world. I beseech thee, therefore, make sure of the new birth, without which it is impossible for thee to escape the second death. I have in the third use of this treatise endeavoured to awaken thee to, and to direct thee about, this great work, as in the first use I have discovered the unspeakable endless misery of them that die before it be done. Those which had the sudor Anglicus, or sweating sickness, died assuredly if suffered to sleep; those were their best friends that kept them waking, though they possibly had little thank for it. It may be thou mayest think I am too sharp; but, truly, the wound is deep, dangerous, yea, deadly, and therefore, though I put thee to pain by lancing it, I am forced to it, otherwise thou wilt not be cured. Sin, and hell, and holiness, and sanctification are other manner of things than the sleepy world dreameth of.

The Lord give thee a heart to obey his counsel in order to thy conversion, and then I am sure thou wilt have cause to give him thanks that I would not let thee sleep quietly on a bed that was in a flame, nor in a condition that was next door to infinite misery and eternal desperation.

Thirdly, Exalt godliness in thy family. If once Christ be chief in thy heart, I am confident he will, to thy utmost power, be so in thy house—that thou art really, which thou art relatively. Labour that thy children and servants may know and serve God: 'Dwell with thy wife as a man of knowledge, as heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers be not hindered,' 1 Peter 3:7. 'Bring up thy children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,' Eph. 6:4. Teach thy servants their duty to God and their own souls. Consider, these are the laws of the righteous God; and ere long, when thou shalt leave all the dying and lying vanities of this world, thou must give an account in the other world how thou hast obeyed them. God hath committed a great trust to thee, even the charge of the souls of all in thy family; and doth not thine heart tremble to think of soul-blood, of soul-murder! I assure thee thou mayest be as truly and really guilty of their deaths and damnations by starving them, as by poisoning them. I mean by not instructing, catechising, and principing them in the things of God; by not praying with them, and overseeing that they mind the worship of God, as in making them drunk, and teaching them to steal and swear.

For thy children, dost thou not know that they are born children of wrath, and heirs of hell? and canst thou be quiet till thou seest in them some signs and hopes of regeneration, an interest in Christ, and thereby a right to heaven? When thou readest of Herod, how he murdered poor children, thou condemnest him; thou thinkest, Ah, hard-hearted Herod! but dost not thou do ten thousand times worse, in murdering the souls and bodies of thy dear children for ever? Ah, hard-hearted, ah bloody father! Herod was a man of bowels, a merciful man to thee. Is it any wonder to hear, saith one, of that ship sunk, or dashed upon a rock, that was put to sea without card or

compass? nor is it a wonder to hear children sinking in perdition, who are thrust into the world, which is a sea of temptations, without any knowledge of God and their duty. One would think, every time thou readest and hearest of the extremity and eternity of hell's torments, of the multitudes that must undergo them, of the few even of those within the visible church that shall be saved, and of the difficulty of obtaining salvation, that thy loins should tremble, and thy joints smite together; that thy head, yea, heart, should ache, for fear any of thy dear children should be among those many that must drink that cup of the Lord's pure wrath; and that thou shouldst be restless night and day in wrestling with God, and instructing them in using all means to prevent their endless ruin; surely, if thou hadst a spark of true love to thy children, thus it would be with thee.

And for thy servants, unless thou art careful that they serve the Lord, they are but little beholden to thee for thy service. Thou givest them, possibly, food and outward things convenient, but dost thou not do as much for thy cattle? And is it, thinkest thou, enough to do no more for those souls which must live in unspeakable pain or pleasure for ever, than for thy beasts? If he that provideth not for the bodies of his family, be worse than an infidel, 1 Tim. 5:8, surely he that provideth not for their souls is kin to a devil. Say not, They are stubborn and will not be taught. Hast not thou power in thy hands either to teach them, or turn them out of doors? Let none serve thee that will not serve God. Thou wilt not keep a servant that knoweth not how to do thy work, at least, if he will not learn, and then follow it with diligence. Now, let thy conscience be judge: Is not God's work, the pleasing and glorifying his infinite Majesty, of far greater concernment than thy greatest and weightiest work? and darest thou keep one that neither knoweth how to do it, nor will learn? Follow the man after God's own heart: Ps. 101:2, 7, 'I will walk within my house with a perfect heart. Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful in the land, that they may dwell with me. He that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me.' It is said of Constantine, that in this he was truly great, that he would have his whole court gathered together, and

cause the Scriptures to be read to them, and instruction to be given them from the word of God.

Besides, if thou didst but regard thy own temporal good, thou wouldst instruct thy servants and children in spiritual things; for they that are unfaithful to their Master and Father in heaven, will be unfaithful to their master and father on earth. They that make no conscience of their duty to God, but rob him of his service and worship, will never make conscience of their duty to thee, but if they have opportunity, will rob thee of thy time, service, and goods.

Be sure that thou perform family duties, as praying, reading, and the like, morning and evening. Do not serve the flesh and the world all day, and then put off God with a few sleepy petitions at night: the command is 'Pray continually,' 1 Thes. 5:17. Daniel was at it three times a day, Dan. 6:10; David seven times a day, Ps. 119:164. God's mercies are renewed on thee every morning, and should not thy prayers and praises be renewed every morning? Doth not the preservation of thy family every night deserve family acknowledgment in the morn? Wearisome nights are appointed to others; the beds of others prove their graves; thou and thine might have awoken in hell; doth this distinguishing mercy deserve no thanks? Is not thy family every day liable to many dangers, both bodily and spiritual? Doth it not need pitying, sanctifying, pardoning, directing, preventing mercy every day, nay, every moment? and is not all this worth a prayer? Upon no account neglect the offering up of these morning and evening sacrifices. Let thy prayers, and of the rest in the family, come up before the Lord in the morning like incense, and the lifting up of thine hands at night as an evening sacrifice.

Do not say, as sometimes I have heard of thee, that thou canst not spare time for these duties; thy family is great, and thou canst not get them altogether; thy business is great, and a little time spent this way may wrong thee; I answer thee,

1. Canst thou get all thy family together twice a day to set meals for their bodies, and canst not thou get them together twice a day for set meals, family duties, for their souls?

2. What greater or weightier business canst thou have, than the working out the salvation of thy own, and the souls committed to thy charge? Are not the most important affairs thou canst possibly deal about but toys and trifles to this?

3. Was not David's family greater than thine, and his occasions weightier? and yet he could find time, though a king, for family duties, Ps. 119:164. He and his queen did both instruct their child in the things of God, 1 Chron. 28:9; Prov. 4:3–10, and 31. If thou art poor, and sayest thou art to provide for thy family, see an answer to that in this book, though God will give you both another manner of answer to your foolish pretences, when ye appear at the judgment-seat of Christ.

Have a special care also of the sanctification of the Lord's-day in thy family. Remember the living God commandeth thee that thou, thy son, thy daughter, thy man-servant, and thy maid-servant, and all within thy gate keep that day holy. Do not make the sins of others thine by thy pattern or permission; let not that queen of days be deflowered or profaned by idleness, earthly thoughts, words, or actions. Spend the whole time which thou sparest from the public ordinances in secret and private duties, as praying, reading, singing, catechising, taking an account of thy children and servants, what they know of the mysteries of Christ, and particularly what they have learned that day. Esteem it a special privilege, a great mercy, that thou and thine may upon that day sequester yourselves wholly from worldly employments, and enjoy communion with the blessed God in the means of grace. This I shall be bold to tell thee, that religion, and the service of the most high God in thy family, dependeth much, yea, very much, upon thy observation of the Lord's-day. Thou mayest expect its increase or decrease according to the sanctification or profanation of it. In the primitive times, when the question was,

Servasti Dominicum? The answer was, Christianus sum, omittere non possum. Thou pretendest to be a Christian, make conscience of every minute of that day of Christ. Be sure that thou, and as many of thy family as can possibly be spared, attend with all diligence and reverence at the public place of worship. There God receiveth greatest praises, and there he bestoweth the choicest mercies: 'Oh blessed are they that dwell in his house; blessed are they that wait at wisdom's gates; that watch at the posts of her doors,' Prov. 8. In all things shew thyself a pattern to them that are under thy care and charge; the people committed to thy government will sooner imitate thy doings than obey thy sayings. Sin cometh in at first by propagation, but is increased exceedingly by imitation. Thou that hast thy children and servants following thee, either to heaven or to hell, hast need choose a right path, even the narrow way that leadeth to life. Weigh thy words, considering that they will learn thy language. Avoid those sinful expressions of faith and truth—let your yea be yea, and your nay nay, for whatsoever is more is evil—of repeating others' oaths, of speaking irreverently of the great God and his word, of wishing evil to any man; for the command is, 'Bless them that curse,' Mat. 5:44. Let no evil communication proceed out of thy lips, but let thy speech be seasoned with grace, that it may administer good, and be exemplary to the hearers. Look well to thy works, that they may be agreeable to the word of God.

In thy religious performances especially manifest all reverence, fervency, and seriousness, that thy children and servants may see that thou art in earnest about soul affairs, about eternity concernments. Thou little knowest how profitable such a pattern may be unto them. Do thy utmost, use all means commanded thee to save thyself and those that dwell with thee.

Be confident that shortly Christ will say to thee, as Eliab to David, 'With whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness?' What is become of the children and servants which I entrusted thee with? Will it be enough, thinkest thou, for thee then to answer, Lord, for my children, I brought them up without any charge to the parish; or,

Lord, I bred them gentlemen; or, I put them out to trades; or, I left them competent estates; and for my servants, I paid them their wages, gave them their meat and drink, according to my agreement with them? When Christ shall reply, Man, what is become of their souls, which I created capable of the immediate fruition of myself, which I redeemed with my precious blood? What shame will then cover thy face, and what horror fill thy heart, when the blood of their souls shall be required of thee! Oh therefore let Joshua's practice and resolution be thine, that 'thou and thy house will serve the Lord,' Joshua 24:15.

Fourthly, Make religion, and the worshipping and glorifying the great God, the great business of thy whole life. Improve all thy time, power, estate, interest, and talents whatsoever to the utmost, for the honour of God and thine own everlasting good. Look on thyself as created, preserved, supplied with nightly, daily, hourly mercies—not for the service of the flesh, no, that end were mean and low, but that thou mightst be enabled unto and encouraged in the service of the glorious God. Surely, saith that noble Lord du Plessis, if all the world were made for man, then man was made for more than the world. All the favours thou enjoyest are but baits laid by God to catch thy soul; as they come all from him, so let them be improved all for him. It is godliness alone that will hold out when thou comest to the greatest hardships at the day of affliction and the hour of thy dissolution. The good man and his godliness are like Saul and Jonathan, lovely in their lives, and in their deaths they are not divided; therefore exercise thyself unto godliness. It may be thou art one to whom God has given much in the world; I must tell thee that much will be required of thee. The greater thy receipts are, the greater thy returns must be, and the larger thy disbursements for God: 'Make to thyself friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when that faileth thou mayest be received into the celestial habitation.' The way to get that which thou canst not part with, is by charity to part with that which thou canst not keep. Thou canst not carry thy bags to heaven; it is good to take bills of exchange from the poor, whereby thou mayest receive there what thou couldst not carry thither. Laudent te

esurientium viscera, non ructantium opulenta convivia, saith Jerome. It is storied of Alexander, that having given away almost all he had, one of his friends asked him where his treasure was, he answered, pointing to the poor, In scriniis, in his chest. He asked what he had left for himself, Alexander answers, Spem majorem. Let thy charity especially relate to the souls of people. What were it for thee to maintain four or six poor children at school, whereby they may come to read, and learn to know the way to life? Doth it not grieve thee to understand the gross ignorance of many? And what do they tell us, when we reprove them for it? that they are not book learned, they could never read! What were it for thee, that hast possibly several hundreds per annum, to give twenty pounds a year this way? I tell thee that God expecteth more than this for his service; and I am confident thou mayest have more comfort in such acts of soul-charity than in ten times the value bestowed on the world and the flesh. I am sure God keeps an exact account how thou employest thy revenues; and think of it again and again, what thou wilt do in such an hour, when thou shalt stand naked at the judgment-seat of Christ, and all thy receipts and disbursements shall be declared and mentioned before the Lord, angels, and men.

When, imprimis, pride cometh with her tailor's long bill of so many thousands for new fashions, foolish fancies, or gaudy attire for thee or thine, when the poor members of Christ were ready to perish with nakedness; item, gluttony, or drunkenness, or luxury, so many thousands; item, so many hundreds for hawks, or hounds, or gaming; item, so many hundreds for idle, needless expenses; item, for propagating the gospel, relieving the poor, exalting the interest of Christ, so many pounds, or only some few scraps, which the knight, or esquire, or gentleman could spare, after he had made full provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof. Believe it, thou wilt wish then thou hadst done more for God and his interest, and less for the flesh. It was a wise speech of Lycon the philosopher, when a wealthy merchant bragged to him of the multitudes of his ships and furniture for sea, how he was able to trade into all parts, I esteem not that to be felicity which hangs upon ropes and cables. Sure I am thy

wealth hath wings, and will within a few days take an eternal flight from thee. The way to make the best of it is not to lay it up, but to lay it out as may be most for the glory of God.

Whoever thou art, whether poor or rich, make an absolute dedication of thyself and thy all unto Christ, if thou wouldst attain salvation by Christ. He that cannot live of himself, must not live to himself; for if he doth, he dieth eternally, he loseth himself for ever. If heaven might be had upon men's cursed terms of liberty for their lusts, Christ would have customers enough; but he that bought the purchase is fittest to set the price.

Reader, I set before thee in this treatise life and death, heaven and hell; if thou art a true Isaac, and hast a spiritual appetite, I dare promise thee such savoury meat as thy soul loveth; but if, Gallio-like, thou carest for none of these things, or, as the two tribes and a half, desirest thy portion on this side the land of Canaan; if, as Spira, thou wilt put thy relations and possessions, honour and pleasure, and outward good things, in one scale, and God, and Christ, and heaven in the other, and then choose the former, and refuse the latter, I hope I shall never envy thy happiness, nor desire to eat of thy dainties, or drink of thy cup, but pray that the Lord would have mercy on thee, and change thy heart; only let me tell thee, if thou wouldst avoid the inconceivable endless misery of the damned; if thou wouldst attain the eternal matchless felicity of the saved; if thou wouldst have all thy former rebellions blotted out through the blood of the Son; if thou wouldst have thy person reconciled to the Father; if thou wouldst have God in Christ to stand by thee when none of thy friends or comforts shall own thee; if thou wouldst appear at the dreadful bar of Christ with comfort, when thousands and millions shall weep and wail; if thou wouldst not have me nor this book to be a witness against thee before the Lord, angels, and men, then turn from sin speedily, cleave to thy Saviour unfeignedly, give up thyself to all the commands of Christ unreservedly. 'To-day if thou wilt hear his voice, harden not thy heart, lest he swear in his wrath that thou shalt never enter into his rest,' Heb. 3.

Reader, I shall detain thee but a little longer in the porch, only to give thee a brief account of this ensuing tractate; though I confess I never liked large apologies for any publications; for if men's books are like to be serviceable to the honour of the infinite God, and the welfare of the souls of men, a small apology will serve; if they are not, why do they trouble the world with them? It is not all the image and superscription, which their excuses can stamp on them, shall ever make them current coin with me. I was called to preach a sermon at Borden, in Kent, October 17, 1658, at the funeral of a grave, religious gentlewoman, (one that, as I am informed, was a tender mother of her children, and a dutiful daughter to the Father of spirits,) Mrs Beresford, widow of Mr Michael Beresford, a learned, painful, godly minister of the Lord Jesus Christ, who had a good report of all men that feared God and knew him, and of the truth itself. He was minister of the abovenamed parish above twenty years.

I was, after the preaching of it, requested to publish it, and promised that a considerable number should be freely scattered in several families, whereby, through the blessing of God, some poor souls might be turned from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God. Before I had prepared the sermon for the press, I was entreated to enlarge it into a treatise. All which desires I was willing to satisfy, partly out of the great respect I did bear to one especially that earnestly begged it, but chiefly out of the weak desire I had to be instrumental for the conversion of the souls of them to whom the sermon was preached, and of the parish which the Lord had committed to my charge. I considered with myself, that by reason of my sickly and infirm body I was not likely to continue long with that people to which the providence of God did at first join me, and from which far greater things could never divorce me; and therefore it might not be needless to leave to them some testimony of my unfeigned desires of their eternal welfares. Who knoweth what this mean piece may do, if the divine power please to accompany it? Possibly out of the seed that is here sown, when the husbandman is dead, a harvest may be reaped of glory to God and good to souls.

Reader, if thou gain any spiritual profit by it, let God have the praise;  
and let him be remembered in thy prayers who is

Thy servant for Christ's sake,

GEORGE SWINNOCK.

## CHAPTER I

The division of the chapter, and interpretation of the text

For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.—PHIL. 1:12.

IT is a memorable observation of that Christian heathen, as he hath been sometimes called, that the two great lessons which every man hath to learn in the whole time of his life, are, how to live, and how to die; how to live virtuously, and how to die valiantly. These two weighty questions are clearly and fully answered in this text. It declareth and delivereth such directions about life as could never be learned in the school of nature, improved to the utmost. It prepareth and provideth such a cordial against death as could never be extracted out of all the creatures distilled together. And indeed herein the excellency of the Christian religion appeareth above all religions in the world. None enjoineth such pious precepts, none subjoineth such precious promises, none sets the soul about so noble a work, none satisfieth it with such an ample reward.

The scope of the apostle in this epistle is, first, To confirm the Philippians in the faith of Christ, against the scandal of the cross; and, secondly, To exhort them to such godliness as might be answerable to the gospel.

In this first chapter, Paul encourageth them greatly to be constant in Christianity.

1. From the nature of God, who never doth his work by halves, but performeth what he promiseth, and perfecteth what he beginneth, ver. 6.

2. From his own prayer, which was for their increase and perseverance in grace, and that inoffensively to God's glory, ver. 9, 10.

3. From the happy fruits of his sufferings for the faith. The rod wherewith he was scourged, like Aaron's rod, blossomed. First, The gospel was the more propagated, ver. 12. The more the husbandmen were dispersed, the more the seed of the word was scattered; and the deeper the ground was ploughed, it took the better root, and brought forth the greater fruit. Secondly, The ministers of the gospel were the more emboldened, ver. 14. True zeal, like the fire, burns hottest in the coldest season; and sincerity, like the stars, though it may be hid in a warm day, yet it will be sure to shew itself in a frosty night. Thirdly, Paul himself should be much advantaged, ver. 19, which latter he amplifieth by acquainting them with the reason of that hope—namely, the assistance of the Spirit of Christ, ver. 19, and the assurance God had wrought in him, from his experience of what God had done for him, that his Saviour should be honoured, and his salvation furthered, both by his life and death, ver. 20, 21.

The text, considered relatively, contains the ground why the Philippians should not be troubled so much at Paul's trials: 'For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain,' i.e., If I be a gainer in all conditions, why should you be discouraged by my afflictions? If sufferings advantage the pastor, why should they dishearten the people? The children may well enjoy a calm in their spirits, when their spiritual father is safe, nay, a gainer in the greatest storm.

Take the words absolutely, and they include, first, the character of a Christian while he liveth,—'To me to live is Christ;' and secondly, The comfort of a Christian when he dieth,—'and to die is gain.' Or you

may take notice of the piety of a saint in life: 'To me to live is Christ;' and his profit by death, 'To die is gain.'

For the meaning of the words.

'To me,' ἐμοὶ. To me who am the mark at which hell and the world shoot their arrows of persecution; to me whose life hath been a ring of miseries ever since my conversion; to me who am set to undergo both men's and devils' opposition; yet to me there are spiritual and inward consolations. 'For to me to live is Christ.'

'To me to live is Christ,' τὸ ζῆν Χρῖστος To me who am in Christ, 'to me to live is Christ.' I live not only the life of nature, but I live also the life of grace. I have not only a being from Christ as a man, but likewise a well-being in Christ as a Christian; as I did receive my life from Christ, so I do improve my life for Christ; his honour is my utmost desire, and my greatest endeavour.

'And to die is gain,' τὸ ἀποθανεῖν κερδος, i.e., I have had no other object, no employment but Christ and his service in my life, shall certainly have an eternal advancement at my death. Or Christ is my life here by grace, and hereafter by glory. He is both the author and the end of my life. I live for him, I live to him, I live in him, I live by him; and if I be put to death, that shall no way endamage me, but rather bring me great advantage, in regard that thereby I shall gain heaven for earth, and happy, eternal life for this miserable mortal life; so our larger annotations sense it. Some, indeed, read the words, Christ is my gain both in life and death, and therefore the apostle was little troubled at, but rather indifferent to, all conditions.<sup>3</sup> There is a certain truth in this exposition, though Piscator will by no means grant it to be the mind of the Spirit in this place.

In the words you may see the sign of a saint, to him to live is Christ; and his solace, to him to die is gain; his holy description in the former, his happy condition in the latter.

The text being thus explained affordeth this truth, taking both parts of it together.

## CHAPTER II

The doctrine, That such as have Christ for their life, gain by death, with the explication of the phrase, 'To me to live is Christ.'

That such as have Christ for their life, shall have gain by their death.

He that liveth in Christ on earth, shall live with Christ in heaven.

Where the soul hath the seed of holiness, it shall reap a harvest of happiness.

The apostle, when he summeth up the estate of a believer, counteth death as a part of his riches: 'Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death; all are yours,' 1 Cor. 3:22, 'and ye are Christ's.' He that can say, I am Christ's, may as truly say, Death is mine. If thou canst say, I am Christ's servant, I am Christ's subject, thou mayest say, Death will be my preferment, death will be my advancement.

For the explication of this doctrine, I shall shew, first, What is meant by that phrase, 'to me to live is Christ;' and, secondly, Wherein it will appear that death to such a man is gain.

For the former, 'To me to live is Christ,' may imply these four things:

First, Christ is the principle of my life. All living creatures have an inward principle by which they live, and according to which they act. Plants have a principle of vegetation, and beasts have a principle of sense; men have a principle of reason, and their lives are different, answerable to their different principles. But a Christian hath a higher principle—that is, Christ dwelling in his heart by faith, Eph. 3:17—and thence it is that he lives a higher life. As the body liveth by its

union with the soul, so the Christian liveth by his union with Jesus Christ. Christ is the fountain and spring of life, the soul of his soul, and the life of his life. 'I live,' saith the apostle, Gal. 2:20; '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.'

As the branches they live, but it is by the root; they derive sap from it, and so live by it. So the believer, he liveth spiritually; but it is by Christ; he deriveth the sap of grace from this true vine, and so liveth by him.

The water in the rivers doth not more depend upon the ocean, nor the light in the air upon the sun, than the life of a Christian dependeth on Jesus Christ. And therefore the Holy Ghost telleth us, 'He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son hath not life,' 1 John 5:12.

I have sometime read that the lioness bringeth forth her whelps dead, till after some time the lion roareth aloud, and then they live. This is certain, every man and woman is born dead; dead to God, dead in sins and trespasses, till this Lion of the tribe of Judah uttereth his voice, then they arise from the dead, and Christ giveth them life. When the soul, like the body of Lazarus, hath been dead so long that it stinketh and is unsavoury, when it hath been many days, nay, many years, rotting in the grave of corruption, then if Jesus Christ calleth effectually, 'Lazarus, come forth,' sinner, come forth of thy carnal, unregenerate estate; then, and not till then, the soul heareth the voice of the Son of God and liveth.

Grace is of a divine birth, John 3:3; it is the seed of God, 1 John 3:9; an unction from the holy one, 1 John 2:27; called dew, which is of a celestial extraction, Ps. 110:3; and light, 1 John 1:7. The fountain of water is in the earth, but the fountain of light is in the heavens.

The web of godliness was never spun out of man's own bowels. As none can see the sun but by its own light, so none can with an eye of

faith see the Sun of righteousness, but by the light of grace derived from him.

'We are his workmanship,' saith the apostle, Eph. 2:10, 'created in Christ Jesus unto good works.' His workmanship, not only in our natural capacity as men; as creatures; and in our civil capacity as rich or poor, high or low; but also in our spiritual capacity as Christians, as new creatures.

Secondly, 'To me to live is Christ,' i.e., Christ is the pattern of my life; my life is not only from him, but according to him. Christ is the rule according to which I walk, the copy after which I write. As sin and disobedience is a resemblance of the first, so grace and holiness is a resemblance of the second Adam.

True Christianity consisteth in nothing but our conformity to, and imitation of, Jesus Christ. And, indeed, as the child in generation receiveth from the parent member for member, part for part; and the paper from the press, word for word, letter for letter; and the wax from the seal, figure for figure; so in regeneration Christ is formed in the soul, and it receiveth, according to its proportion, grace for grace.

One end of Christ's incarnation and life in the flesh was to set an exact pattern for our lives in the Spirit: 'He left us an example, that we should follow his steps,' 1 Peter 2:21. All the actions of Christ are instructions to a Christian. His actions were either moral or mediatory; in both the Christian imitates him. In the former, doing as he did, exercising the same graces, performing the same duties, resisting the same temptations, forbearing the same corruptions; in the latter, by similitude, dying to sin, as he died for sin, rising to a spiritual life, as he rose again to a natural life. None indeed can parallel the life of Christ, but every new creature imitateth Christ in his life; 'he walketh as Christ walked,' 1 John 2:6. The same mind is in all the saints, so far as they are regenerated, that was in Christ; the same will, the same affections; they love what he loveth; they loathe what he loatheth; what pleaseth him, pleaseth them; what grieveth

his spirit, grieveth their spirits. As the wicked are like their father the devil, unholy as he is unholy; so the children of Christ are like their everlasting Father, holy as he is holy; only with this difference, in Christ there is a fulness, in them a measure—in Christ pureness, in them a mixture.

Thirdly, 'To me to live is Christ,' i.e., Christ is the comfort of my life. Though I have many crosses, yet I have Christ for my comfort. He is the comfort of my life, and the life of all my comforts. All my joys come in at this door, all my contentments come swimming in this stream.

Piscator observeth that 'the consolation of Israel' is the periphrasis of Jesus Christ, Luke 2:25; because all the consolation of a true Israelite, as Jacob's in Benjamin, is bound up in Christ. If he be gone, the soul goeth down to the grave with sorrow. As all the candles in a country cannot make a day-no, it must be the rising of the sun that must do it; so all the health, wealth, honours, pleasures, relations, possessions, nay, the greatest confluence of comforts that the whole creation affordeth, cannot make a day of light and gladness in the heart of a believer; no, it must be the rising of this Sun of righteousness. The light of his countenance causeth more joy than all the corn, and wine, and oil of this world can. He saith, as Luther, Christ liveth, or otherwise I would not desire to live one moment. Or, as that noble Marquis of Vico, Their money perish with them that think all the wealth in the world worth one hour's communion with Jesus Christ.

His comfort ebbeth and floweth as Christ manifesteth himself to him, or withdraweth himself from him. Like the marigold, he openeth and shutteth with the rising and setting of this sun. When the bridegroom is taken away, the children of the bride-chamber mourn. The voice of the true dove is ever doleful in the absence of her mate. Many a long look hath this gracious soul after its absented Saviour. Many a time doth it sigh out, for lovers' hours are full of eternity, Why is his chariot so long a-coming? why tarry the wheels of his chariot? Make

haste, my beloved, and be thou like the hart and roe upon the mountain of spices. It, like Zaccheus, climbs up into the sycamore tree of the ordinances, that it may have a sight of its beloved; for it heareth that he useth to pass that way; and when it spieth him afar off, for love is quick-sighted, coming towards it, hearken how the soul calleth aloud to faith to lift up the gates, to lift open the everlasting doors, that the king of glory may enter in. Desire, like Joseph, makes ready its chariot to go forth to meet this God of Jacob; and when he draweth nigh, it cometh down hastily, and receiveth him joyfully. It crieth out, with the martyr, in a flame of love, He is come, he is come. Now, like Mary, it closeth with him, cleaveth to him, clingeth and claspeth about him, and thinketh it can never have enough of him, or be near enough to him. Who can express the welcome which this pious soul giveth him; what warm affection it hath to him; what complacency and delight it hath in him; what enlarged egress of spirit it hath after him? If the wise men were so glad when they saw the star that led to him, how glad is this soul in seeing this Sun! If the babe in the womb of Elisabeth sprang for joy when the mother of the Lord came to her, how doth the heart of this Christian spring with joy when the Lord of that mother comes to it! And out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh, Dearest Jesus, why camest thou no sooner? why tarriest thou no longer? Sweetest Saviour, why should this meeting ever, ever part? Be thou like a bundle of myrrh, lodging all night betwixt my breasts; yet be not like a wayfaring man, to tarry with me but for a night, but do thou abide in me, and dwell with me for ever. Good Lord, how good is it to be here! Oh, how blessed are they that dwell in thy house! They ever, and not without infinite cause, praise thee. Lord, grant me this happiness, whatever thou deniest me, that my heart may be thine everlasting home. Ah, what a holy emulation hath this saint at the spirits above, that they should have so much and he so little; that they should drink full draughts out of the rivers of pleasures, and he can only taste God to be gracious. Ah, what a heavenly vexation hath he at the necessities of his body and family here below, that they must call him away, and hinder his communion with his beloved! Oh, how willingly would this soul be separated from its dearest wife,

that it might more nearly be conjoined to its dearer husband! Surely such a soul would with cheerfulness die in these embraces of Christ, breathing out, with Augustine, Lord, since no man can see thee and live, oh let me die that I may see thee.

This, indeed, is the foretaste of the saints' future happiness, their morning of glory, the suburbs of the new Jerusalem, the first-fruits of their great and eternal harvest, the joy that strangers intermeddle not with, Prov. 14:10. It may better be conceived and felt, than described or expressed; and therefore is most fitly by the apostle called joy unspeakable and glorious, 1 Pet. 1:8. Thus Christ is the comfort of a Christian.

Fourthly, 'To me to live is Christ,' that is, Christ is the end of my life. Christ is both the author and the end of my life; as my life is from Christ, so my life is for Christ. The great care of the apostle was to magnify Christ, both by his life and death, Phil 1:20. All the gain I aim at, both in life and death, is Christ, namely, to glorify him by my service.

According to the principles of a man, such are his end. He that acteth from self, acteth for self. That obedience which ariseth from the creature, will be terminated in the creature. Solomon saith, Eccles. 1:7, 'All the rivers run into the sea;' unto the place from whence the rivers came, thither they return again; so the life of a Christian coming from Christ, must necessarily tend to Christ. A sincere saint doth not, like the hypocrite, look asquint at selfapplause, self-profit, and such beggarly ends, but his eyes look straight on at the glory of Jesus Christ. If Christ be glorified, though he be disgraced, he is satisfied. When Christ hath honoured the soul by giving it grace, the soul honoureth Christ by giving him glory. Grace is the most curious work, and therefore no wonder if it be for the credit of the workman. Trees bear fruit for the owner, Cant. 4:16. Of him and through him are all things, therefore to him be glory for ever and ever, Rom. 11:36.

It is confessed the flesh will propound other ends, but the spirit carrieth the vote. As some write of the heavenly orbs, that they have a proper motion of their own, different from the motion of the primum mobile, yet in obedience to this first mover, they follow its motion; thus it is with the unregenerate part of a man; it hath proper ends of its own, pride, and flesh-pleasing, and the like, contrary to the ends of the spirit; but in obedience to the regenerate part, the Christian leaveth the former ends, and follows the ends of the latter.

The honour of Christ is exceeding dear to a true Christian. It is dearer than his name. Lord, saith a father, use me for thy shield, to keep off those wounds of dishonour which would fall on thy Majesty. Let the reproaches wherewith they would reproach thee fall upon me. And Luther is called a devil, saith Luther, in an epistle to Spalatinus; but be it so. So long as Christ is magnified I am well apaid.<sup>2</sup> Nay, the honour of Christ is dearer than life to a believer. Paul, as one saith of him, stood a-tiptoe to see which way he might glorify Christ most, whether by life or death. 'Neither count I my life dear unto me, so I may finish the ministry I have received of the Lord Jesus,' Acts 20:24.

## CHAPTER III

What privative gain the Christian hath by death

I come now to the second thing promised, and that is, to manifest wherein the Christian that hath Christ for the principle, pattern, comfort, and end of his life, shall be a gainer by death. And truly, reader, in speaking of this gain, I shall acknowledge myself at an unspeakable loss. When I have spoken my utmost, I must entreat the reader, as once Cicero did his, when he spake of Socrates and Lucius Crassus, *Ut magis quiddam de iis quam quæ scripta sunt suspicarentur*: That they should imagine some far greater matter than they find written. Though my tongue were as the pen of a ready writer, it could never express it, and if my pen were as the tongue of a

ready speaker, it could never describe it. The land of Canaan, notwithstanding all the helps we have, is still for the most part terra incognita, an unknown land. The sights there are light, inaccessible as to mortal eyes, 1 Tim. 6:16; and the sounds there are words not audible as to mortal ears, 2 Cor. 12:4; words which may not, or cannot be uttered, or both.

One being asked what God was, answered that he must be God himself before he could know God fully. I am sure it is requisite that that Christian should be in heaven first who would know heaven fully. Fame, which in other things is too free and prodigal, in this is too sparing and penurious, and that in so great a degree that, reader, after thou hast heard it set forth by the holiest, heavenliest man alive, though of the greatest capacity and oratory, yet if ever thou gettest thither, thou wilt find cause to speak, as the queen of Sheba did in another case, 1 Kings 10:6, 7, 'It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy glory and thine excellency. Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it; and, behold, the half was not told me: the delight and happiness exceedeth the fame which I heard.' There it is indeed that God doth more for the believer than he is able to ask or think. As the loss of the damned will be beyond the most melancholy man's fear, so the gain of the saved will be above the strongest Christian's faith. The eye of a man may see much good, the ear of a man may hear more, the heart of a man may conceive most of all; but yet neither hath 'eye seen, nor ear heard, nor can it enter into the heart of man to conceive, what God hath prepared for them that love him,' 1 Cor. 2:9. They which have written most of this subject, might have added at the end of their books, as in other treatises some have done, *Desiderantur nonnulla, or plurima desunt*; More is desired, or more is wanting. It is as easy, saith one, to compass the heavens with a span, to contain the ocean in a nutshell, as to relate heaven's happiness.

Reader, I shall speak to this subject but briefly. Set the Holy Land before thee, as it is in a map, in a little room, yet by what I shall speak in this place, and in the last use, as the spies by the clusters of

grapes, thou mayest gather, the land is good, it floweth with milk and honey, and this is some of the fruit of it, Num. 13:27.

The Christian's gain by death will appear in these two particulars: He shall gain a freedom from all evil, the fruition of all good; and is not this man a gainer?

First, He shall by death be freed from all evil. The immediate and full presence of the chiefest good which the believer shall enjoy after death will cause the absence of all evil. The influences of that sun will scatter every mist, and disperse all clouds which now darken the conditions of pious souls. The day of a Christian's dissolution will be the day of his redemption, Luke 21:28. This may be the reason why the apostle placeth redemption last, saith an expositor: 1 Cor. 1:30, Now we have Christ made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, but then redemption. When the saint is passed through the red sea of death, and landed at the true Canaan, he shall then see all his bodily and spiritual enemies dead on the shore. In the middle region there are storms and tempests, and so here below; but above, all is calm and quiet. While the Christian is upon earth, evils, like Job's messengers, follow him, one upon the heels of another; but when he leaveth the earth, every evil will take its eternal leave of him.

There are two evils, which are indeed the only evils, though the first is by much the worst: the evil of sin, or defilement, and the evil of suffering, or chastisement. Now a believer by death should be freed from both these.

First, From the evil of sin; and in this take notice, that death will deliver the Christian both from the commission of it, and from all suggestions tending to it.

First, Death will free the saint from the commission of sin. In hell there is nothing but wickedness, in heaven there is nothing but holiness. The unregenerate man is never so wicked as after death: now sin is in its minority, then it will be in its maturity; now it is but

the sinner's evening, but then it will be a perfect night of blackness, of darkness. The godly man is never so holy as after death: grace is now in its infancy, then it will attain to its full age; now it is as the morning light, then it will attain to its noonday brightness. Sin is now by a spiritual life mortified, that it doth not reign; but then by death it shall be nullified, that it shall not so much as remain in a believer.

The ungodly after death shall be perfectly like the devil, (the Indians, some write, have a conceit that death will transform them into the ugly shape of the devil; and therefore in their language they have the same word for a dead man and a devil,) and the godly after death shall be perfectly like God.

They are now partakers of the divine nature, and so like him, yet how much unlike him! but when they shall see him in heaven, then they shall be like him indeed, 1 John 3:2. Vision causeth an assimilation in nature, Gen. 30:37, 38; in grace, 2 Cor. 3:18; so here in glory.

The schoolmen put the question, how the angels and souls of men in heaven come to be impeccable, or without sin? and answer that it is by the beatifical vision. The apostle seemeth to intimate as much in the fore-quoted place: 'When he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.' As the pearl, by the often beating of the sunbeams upon it, becomes radiant; so the Christian, being ever beheld by the Lord, and always beholding the face of his Father in heaven, shall be more like him than ever child was to father on earth. Then that profession of Christ will be abundantly verified, 'Behold, thou art fair my love; behold, thou art fair. Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee,' Cant. 4:1, 7. Then the end of Christ's passion shall be fully attained, when he shall present to himself a glorious church, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, Eph. 5:27; not only in regard of imputed righteousness, or justification, but also in regard of imparted righteousness, or sanctification.

Here the heart of a Christian is like Rebekah's womb—it hath twins struggling in it; the appearance of the church is, as it were, the company of two armies, Cant. 6:13; the old man and the new man, flesh and spirit, the law in the members warring against the law of the mind. As there was war betwixt Asa and Baasha all their days, so there is betwixt the regenerate and unregenerate part all the time of this life; but this gracious conflict shall then end in a glorious conquest, when the death of the body shall quite destroy this body of death. Sin in the heart is like the leprosy in the house, which would not out till the house was pulled down, Lev. 14:44, 45. But when soul and body shall be parted for a time, sin and the soul shall be separated to eternity.

And as the heart, so the life of a Christian is like a book which hath many errata in it; and therefore Legendus cum venia. The whitest swan hath her black feet; the best gold must have its grains of allowance: 'There is no man that liveth upon earth, and sinneth not,' Eccles. 7:20. All of us offend in many things, and many of us in all things, James 3:2. 'Our righteousness is as a filthy rag,' Isa. 64:6. Our graces not without their defects: 'Lord, I believe; help mine unbelief,' Mark 9:24. Our duties not without their defaults: 'When I would do good, evil is present with me,' Rom. 7:21. The purest fire hath some smoke, the richest wine some dregs, but death will turn sin out of all its holds, and leave it not so much as a being in the Christian. The bodies of men have usually a mighty shoot at death; but oh what a shoot will the soul of a saint have, when it shall be carried by angels to the place where the spirits of just men are made perfect! Heb. 12:23.

Secondly, The soul alive in Christ, shall be freed at death from all temptations to sin. Then a Christian shall be above the reach of all Satan's batteries; then that promise will be performed, that the God of peace will tread Satan under the saints' feet, Rom. 16:20. Now Peter is winnowed, Paul is buffeted, David is stirred by the wicked one to number the people; if Joshua be ministering unto the Lord, Satan will be at his right hand to resist him, Zech. 3:1. It is no small

unhappiness to a saint, that he is here followed with unwearied assaults, that the prince of darkness is restless in casting in his fire-balls, to put the soul into a hellish flame; though he should never be conquered, yet for the Christian to have his quarters beaten up night and day, must needs disquiet him. To have blasphemous thoughts of a God infinitely great and gracious, to have mean and vile apprehensions of a Saviour incomparably precious, cast into him, though he close not with them, cannot but wound him to the heart; as for a chaste matron that loatheth the thoughts of dishonesty, to be continually solicited to folly, is a sore vexation. The temptations of our Lord Jesus were a sad part of his humiliation.

But death will ease the soul of this trouble: as in heaven there shall be no tinder of a corrupt heart to take, so no devil like steel and flint to strike fire. The crooked serpent could wind himself into the terrestrial, but shall never creep into the celestial paradise. His circuit is to go to and fro in the earth, he cannot enter the confines of heaven; when he fell from his state of integrity, he left that place of felicity, and cannot possibly recover it again. The saints on earth indeed are militant, fighting with him, but the saints in heaven are all triumphant, wholly above him: 'More than conquerors, through him that loveth them,' Rom. 8:37. There the children of God are gathered together, and no Satan among them; there the Son of David delivereth his true Israelites from all their fears of this uncircumcised Philistine. When the heavenly Mordecai comes to be a chief favourite in that high and holy court, he shall be freed from all his frights about this enemy and adversary, this wicked Haman.

The ark and Dagon could not stand together in one house, much less can light and darkness, Michael and the dragon, God and the devil, dwell together in one heaven.

If Ireland, as some write, be so pure a soil, that it will not nourish any venomous creature, I am sure heaven is so pure, that into it can in no wise enter anything that defileth, Rev. 21:27; it will not harbour those poisonous serpents.

Heaven once, saith an author, spued them out, and it will not return to its vomit, or lick them up again; no such dirty dog shall ever trample on that golden pavement. There is such a cursed irreconcilable contrariety in their natures, to the blessed company and exercises in heaven, that certainly they cannot desire, much less delight in that place; if the presence of Christ were such a torment to them in his estate of humiliation, what a torment would it be in his estate of exaltation! It is observable they left their own habitation, Jude 6; the word seemeth to imply, that when they lost their primitive purity, they willingly lost that habitation of spiritual pleasures. But whether he will or no, he shall be banished those coasts; though he now dog the saint at, and disturb him in, every duty, he shall do it no more: 'The accuser of the brethren shall be cast down, neither shall his place be found any more in heaven,' Rev. 12:8, 9.

Secondly, A Christian by death shall not only be freed from the evil of sin and defilement, but also from the evil of suffering and chastisement: the cause being taken away, the effects will cease. Sin is that great-bellied mother, or rather monster, which conceiveth and bringeth forth all those losses, crosses, diseases, disgraces, sorrows, and sufferings whatsoever, that befall the children of men. Though man may be the butt, yet sin is the mark at which the arrows of divine displeasure are shot; man weaves a spider's web of sin out of his own bowels, and then is entangled in it. Wickedness alone is the original cause of all woe, Lam. 3:39; Rom. 6:23. But now, at the death of a saint, the fountain of sin will be dried up, and therefore the streams of sufferings must be dried up also. The fuel being taken away, the fire will go out of itself; sin and sorrow were born, do live, and shall die together.

As sin is the original cause of all, so it is the final cause of most, afflictions. Sometimes they are for probation—as we shoot at good armour that we may prove it, and that we praise it—but most commonly they are for purgation, to amend something that is amiss: the fathers of the flesh chastise for their pleasure, but the Father of

spirits for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness, Heb. 12:6. The quiet fruits of righteousness blossom from the correcting rod; bitter aloes purge the worms; winds and thunder clear the air; frosts and showers whiten cloth; the husbandman useth the flail to separate the chaff, and the refiner the fire to consume the dross. But when the wheat shall be clean, there will be no need of the flail; when the gold pure, no use of the fire. 'Now,' saith the apostle, 'if need be, ye are in heaviness,' 1 Pet. 1:6. Mark, now, if need be; now men have hard knots, and therefore need sharp wedges; now men have strong corruptions, and therefore need strong corrections; now the rod is as necessary as our daily bread. Chastisements are to teach men in God's law, Ps. 94:12; to search and heal their spiritual sores. But now at death the scholar in Christ's school will have perfectly learned his lesson, and therefore there will be no need of a rod: then the wounds of the soul will be perfectly cured, and these plasters will fall off of themselves. Death will make him whole that he can sin no more; and so no worse or so bad thing shall come to him.

There are three evils of affliction which I shall mention:

The first on the name.

The second on the body.

The third on the soul.

From all which a believer shall be freed by death.

First, Death will free the saint from ignominy on his name. Here, if the world cannot make the Christian wound his conscience, they will be sure to wound his credit. Elijah is counted the troubler of Israel; Nehemiah a rebel against the king; David the song of the drunkards and the scorn of the gluttons, Ps. 69:12, and 35:16; Isaiah and his children for signs and wonders, Isa. 8:18; Jeremiah is a man of contention, Jer. 15:10; the Son of man a wine-bibber and a glutton; Paul a pestilent fellow and a mover of sedition, Acts 24:5. The uprightest saint is marked for a hypocrite in the world's calendar. If

they cannot smite him with their hands—their arms are not long enough always—they will not fail to smite him with their tongues. What a precise fool, say they, is such a fellow; he dares not take up his cups as we do; but could we see his heart, it is as bad as the worst of ours. He will do as bad or worse when nobody seeth him; he will not swear, but he will lie, I'll warrant you. He spendeth his time in nothing but going to sermons and meetings, and is as arrant a dissembler as liveth. Such a one of the same society was guilty of such a sin, and they are all alike: these are your professors! Thus the corruption of their hearts break out at their lips, and they most wretchedly wound even Christ through the sides of the Christian.

But heaven will not only wipe away all tears from the Christian's eyes, but also all blots off from his name. Upright Hezekiah in heaven is above the sound of cursed Rabshakeh's tongue, which was set on fire of hell. Now holy David is got up that heavenly hill, that mount Zion, he heareth not the railings and revilings of sinful Shimei. The most spiteful scorner of them all cannot throw that dirt so high with which he bespatters the saints' reputation here below.

Secondly, As death will free the Christian from ignominy in his name, so likewise from infirmities in his body. Diseases cause death, but death will cure all diseases! In this life Job had his botches, Hezekiah his boil, David his wounds and sores, the poor widow her issue of blood; one man wasteth away with a consumption, like a candle, till all the matter is spent; another laboureth under a continual ache, that, like the importunate widow, will give him no rest day nor night; this man spends his days in pain, that man hath wearisome nights appointed to him. In some the bridle is taken off the fire, and they burn with a fever; in others the flood-gate is taken up from the water, and they are like to be drowned with a dropsy. The patient man complaineth, 'My breath is corrupt, my days are extinct, the grave is ready for me,' Job 17:1. The upright man crieth out, 'My wounds stink and are corrupt; my loins are filled with a loathsome disease.' In one, the keepers of the house tremble with a palsy or lameness; in a second, the sound of grinders is low through

weakness; in a third, those that look out of the windows are darkened through blindness; in a fourth, the daughters of music are brought down with deafness. Oh what an army, not only of moral, but natural adversaries, hath every man in his own bowels, constantly set in array against him, marching up, sometimes one, sometimes another, as the Lord of hosts giveth the word of command. Physicians tell us that two thousand diseases annoy man's body, whereof two hundred affect the eyes; so that indeed man's body is a spital, or an hospital, for diseases. But death will help all this. As the blind man told the lame, when they met at the stake, Brother, you may cast away your staff, death will cure us both. The physician of souls will by death heal all the diseases of the saints' bodies. There are some diseases which are called opprobria medici, because they cannot cure them; but none are opprobria Christi—he healeth all whom he undertaketh. If the higher a house standeth on earth, it be esteemed the healthier, surely then the highest heavens must be a pure air and all health, Rev. 21:4: there shall be no more death, nor any more pain, for the former things are passed away. So that every Christian that dieth in the faith, how diseased soever he were before, shall then immediately, as in the Gospel, be made every whit whole, John 7:23.

Thirdly, As death will free the believer from diseases in his body, so also from sorrows in his soul. The Christian liveth upon earth as in a valley of tears, and often minglith his drink with weeping. As he is a man, he is born to sorrows as the sparks fly upward: he cometh into the world crying, and goeth out groaning; and his whole life from the womb to the tomb is in some regard a living death, or a dying life. But as he is a Christian, he drinketh deepest of this cup of sorrows. The world is a tender mother to her children, but a stepmother to strangers. Sometimes the afflictions of the good cause high water in the saint's heart: by the rivers of Babylon he sits down and weepeth when he remembereth Zion, Ps. 137:1. He cannot but sympathise with the miseries of his fellow-members, as being himself in the body. He is not as a wooden leg, senseless of the other members' sufferings. Sometimes the transgressions of the bad clothe him with mourning: like Cræsus' son, though dumb before, yet he crieth out

when his father is wounded. 'As with a sword they pierce his bones, when they blasphemously say unto him, Where is thy God?' Ps. 42:10. 'Rivers of tears run down his eyes, because the wicked forsake God's law,' Ps. 119:136. Sometimes his own corruptions, like so many daggers, stab him to the heart, that he should abuse such an ocean of unspeakable love by so unsuitable a heart and so unanswerable a life. He confesseth his iniquities, and is sorry for his sins, Ps. 38:18. Sometimes divine desertions darken and cloud all his comforts: 'When God hides his face, he is troubled,' Ps. 30:7. As there are no joys like to those joys wherewith God reviveth him in the day of his favour, so there is no sorrow like to those sorrows wherewith God depressed him in the day of his anger. Thus his life is a circle of sorrows; but death will be the funeral of his sorrows and resurrection of his joys: now he soweth in tears, but then he shall reap in joy. The day of death is a saint's marriage-day. Samson's wife indeed wept on her wedding-day, Judges 14:16; but when the soul, which in this life is contracted, shall at death be solemnly espoused, and more nearly conjoined unto Jesus Christ, 'all tears shall be wiped from its eyes; there shall be no more sorrow,' Rev. 21:4. At that marriage-day Christ will turn all water into wine, all mourning into mirth, all sighing into singing, and cause the bones which he hath broken to rejoice. Now the saints' sorrows are not perfect sorrows, non dantur puræ tenebræ to the believer—it shineth and showereth at the same time. He sorroweth not as they which have no hope; but his joy at death shall be perfect joy, fulness of joy, Ps. 16:11, and permanent joy; when they shall see Christ at death, their hearts shall rejoice, and their joy shall no man take from them, John 16:22. 'Then 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,' Isa. 35:10.

So much for the privative gain of a Christian by death, or his freedom from evil.

## CHAPTER IV

## What positive gain a Christian hath by death

There is a second thing, which is positive; and that is the fruition of all good, which a believer shall gain by death, and in this head I shall observe these three gradations:

First, A believer, by death, shall gain the company of perfect Christians. Death will exempt him from all commerce with sinners, and teach him fully the meaning of that article, the communion of saints. In the field of this world the tares and the wheat grow together, but in that heavenly garner they are parted asunder. There is no treacherous Judas among the apostles; no covetous Demas among the disciples; no Amorites to be pricks in the eyes and thorns in the sides of the Israelite; no bestial Sodomite to vex righteous Lot with their unclean conversation; no flattering Doeg sets his foot in that heavenly sanctuary. David doth not there complain, 'Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar! my soul hath long dwelt with him that hateth peace,' Ps. 120:4, 5; nor Isaiah, that he dwelleth among a people of unclean lips, Isa. 6:5; nor Elijah, that he is left alone. Hell holdeth none but sinners, and heaven hath only saints. He that dieth in the Lord goeth to the congregation of the first-born, 'to the spirits of just men made perfect,' Heb. 12:23. And questionless the sweet company will be part of our felicity. If Platinus the philosopher could say, Let us make haste to our country, there are our parents, there are all our friends; and if Cicero the orator could say, Oh what a brave day will that be when I shall go to the counsel and company of happy souls, to my Cato, and other Roman worthies! How much better will it be with the Christian, when he shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven; when he shall leave the rout and rabble of wicked ones, and be admitted into the society of all that died in the faith, and be joyfully welcomed by the melodious choir of angels, and be heartily embraced by the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, yea, all the saints! Surely if ever that proverb were true, it is here, The more the merrier. The fair streams there will never be drawn dry, though it be divided into many channels; the music there is not the less harmonious,

because many hear it; nor the light of the Sun of righteousness the less pleasant, because many see it; and oh what a gain will this be, to enjoy the company of them that are holy! If Aaron, when he met Moses on earth, was glad at his heart, certainly there was greater joy at their meeting in heaven. If David placed all his delight, Ps. 16:3, in the saints here below, when they shined a little, with the light of purity, like the moon, and had their spots in them, what delight doth he take in them above, now they have perfect purity, and shine like the sun in the firmament of their Father! Mat. 13:43. If it were so lovely a sight to see Solomon in his rags of mortality, that the queen of Sheba came so far to behold it, what will it be to see him in his robes of glory!

I remember I have sometimes heard an able holy minister, now with Christ, say, that that sight of five hundred saints, and Jesus Christ among them, 1 Cor. 15:6, was one of the bravest, goodliest sights that ever eyes beheld on earth. Sure I am they that are in heaven see a far better, beholding Jesus Christ in the midst of many thousands.

Secondly, A Christian shall gain by death the nearest communion with the Lord Jesus Christ; and oh what happiness is included in this head! The presence of Christ on earth can make a mean cottage a most delightful court: to the three children it turned the fiery furnace into a delectable palace; what will it do then in heaven? Bernard saith he had rather be in his chimney-corner with Christ, than in heaven without Christ. Luther saith he had rather be in hell with Christ, than in heaven without Christ. Communion with Christ can sweeten the bitterest condition. Christ alone is the salt which seasons all the saint's comforts, without which nothing is savoury to the spiritual taste. A duty without Christ is like a body without a soul, which hath neither loveliness nor life in it. Communion with Christ is one great motive which enticeth the saint to, and encourageth him in, the ordinances of God. He attendeth on Scriptures because they are they that testify of Christ; the pearl of price is hid in that field; in them the lips of Christ, like lilies, drop sweet-smelling myrrh, Cant. 5:13; and oh how his heart burneth within him with love to Christ,

whilst Christ is opening to him the Scriptures! He frequenteth prayer, because therein Christ and his soul converse together; in that ordinance he enjoyeth much of Christ's quickening presence; he speaketh to Christ by holy supplications, and Christ to him by heavenly consolations: he mindeth fasting, because therein his soul may with Jesus Christ have a spiritual feast; or the greatest cause of his weeping is, with Mary, 'They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.' The means of grace are therefore so desirable and delightful, because they are the galleries wherein he walketh, talketh, feedeth, and feasteth with the Lord of glory.

The highest duty without Christ, is as a dish without meat, from which he goeth as empty and unsatisfied as he came to it. It is to him as Tully's Hortensius to Augustine, of little worth if the name of Jesus be not there.

If he love the saints with a love of complacency, it is because they are Christ's seed; if he love the sinner with a love of pity, it is for Christ's sake. His affections are contracted or enlarged towards anything, as it hath less or more relation to Christ; and nothing is of true value or worth in his esteem which hath not aliquid Christi, something of Christ in it.

Now consider, reader, if the presence of Christ be so precious, so pleasant to the Christian here, when he can see so little of his excellent beauty, and receive so little of his infinite bounty, what will it be when he shall appear to the soul in all his royalty, and fill the water-pots of the soul up to the brim with the riches of grace and glory.

Demarathus of Corinth saith, they lost the chief part of their life's happiness that did not see Alexander sit on the throne of Darius. If that were such a happy sight, what a sight shall the saints have to see Christ on his Father's throne! Oh how much is included in these few words, 'to be with Christ,' which is the description of the saint's gain

by death! Phil. 1:23. This was the great legacy and portion which Christ bequeathed his in his last will and testament: John 17:24, 'Father, I will that those which thou hast given me be with me where I am.' This was the great promise and sweetmeats which the tender Father provided to comfort his fainting children with at his own funeral: John 16:22, 'I will see you again, and your hearts shall rejoice.' This was the great prayer which Paul maketh for his beloved Timothy: 2 Tim. 4:22, 'The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit.' This was the enlivening cordial which the good physician administered to the dying patient: Luke 23:43, 'This day thou shalt be with me in paradise.' This is the great reason for which the godly long for death: Phil. 1:23, 'I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ.' I desire death, saith Melanchthon, that I may enjoy the desirable sight of Christ. And oh when will that blessed hour come! when shall I be dissolved? when shall I be with Christ? said holy Mr Robert Bolton on his deathbed. Surely, then, this gain is great which the saint shall have by death. He that hath Christ with him by grace, may say with Peter, 'Master, it is good to be here;' but he that is with Christ in glory, may say with Paul, 'To be with Christ is far better;' without doubt best of all. They were blessed which saw him in his estate of debasement, Luke 10:23, but much more blessed will they be that shall see him in his estate of advancement.

Thirdly, The saint by death, shall gain the full and immediate fruition of God. The former were excellent; but this, as the sun among the planets, surpasseth them all. The other were as rivers, this is the ocean. They were as branches bearing goodly fruit, but this is the root upon which they grow. They all as lines meet in this centre; this is the top-stone of the celestial building, this is the highest stair, the apex of the saints' happiness. This is the greatest gift which the creature can possibly ask, or the infinite God bestow. The boundless God cannot give a greater mercy than this. Is anything, yea, are all things in heaven and earth equal to God? God alone is the highest object of faith, 1 Pet. 1:21, and therefore the greatest ground of joy and satisfaction to the soul, Ps. 17:15. The vision of God is the beatifical vision, 1 John 3:3, and therefore the fruition of God will

cause perfection in the soul. The enjoyment of God is the great desire and delight of the saints on earth, Ps. 42:1, 2; nay, it is the happiness of the human nature of the Lord Jesus, Ps. 16:5, 6. Without question then it will be the heaven of heavens. That excellent description of heaven mentioned by the apostle, 1 Thes. 4:17, is a being ever with the Lord. This is all. The most fluent tongue must be here silent, and the most capacious understanding will be soon at a stand, in the consideration of the felicity which floweth from the fruition of God. *Loquimur de Deo non quantum debemus, sed quantum possumus.* In speaking of God we speak not what we ought, but what we are able, said Gratianus the emperor in his epistle to Ambrose.

The presence of this King will make the court indeed. For the Lord to be with us is our chiefest security: 'Though I walk in the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me,' Ps. 23:4. But for us to be with the Lord, will be our chiefest felicity: 'In his presence is fulness of joy; at his right hand are pleasures for evermore,' Ps. 16:11. God is not wealth, or honour, or comfort, or friends, or earth, or heaven, but something infinitely beyond all these. God is an immense ocean of all excellencies and perfections, without either banks or bottom. God is virtually, eminently everything, all things. As in the wars between Charles the Fifth and Francis the First, king of France, when the emperor's herald had bid defiance to the king, from Charles, emperor of Germany, king of Castile, Leon, Arragon, and Naples, archduke of Austria, with the rest of his titles, the king commanded the heralds to return the challenge from Francis, king of France, commanding them to repeat France as many times as the other had petty earldoms in his style, intimating that one France was worth them all;<sup>2</sup> so truly one God answereth all things. He is health and strength, riches and relations, joy and pleasures, light and life, and much more, all the excellencies scattered and shadowed in the creature, are united and realised in the Creator, who is blessed for ever. One God is worth more than all his creatures can sum up in millions of ages.

This is the gain of a saint by death, he shall gain the fruition of God. He who hath lost God, hath nothing more to lose—he hath lost all; the loss of God is hell, 2 Thes. 1:9. But he that hath gained God, hath nothing more to gain—he hath got all; the gain of God is heaven.

It is worthy our observation, that Job, speaking of God, Job 13:16, saith, 'He shall be my salvation.' An expositor observeth on that text, Job doth not say, He shall give me salvation, but 'He shall be my salvation.' It more pleaseth a saint that he enjoyeth God than that he enjoyeth salvation. As nothing that a godly man giveth God will content him, unless he give God himself, so nothing which God giveth a godly man will satisfy him, unless God giveth himself to him.<sup>2</sup> His voice is Non tua, sed te, Domine; Lord, not thine, but thee. He is better pleased that God is his salvation, than that he saved him. Whom have I in heaven but thee, saith he. There are saints, angels, archangels, saith Musculus, but in the presence of this glorious sun those stars must vanish and disappear. What are saints, what are angels without God? And it is true of things as well as persons: What is the glory, what the pleasures, what the joys of heaven without God? What is all the robes and riches, what is all the crowns and comforts, what is all the delights, the delicacies, the diadems of heaven, without the God of heaven, but as the funeral banquet for some eminent prince, where is large provision and great cost, but no cheer? No, it is God alone that is the centre to which the saint moveth, and in which he resteth.

Oh what happiness shall the holy man have at death, to be ever with God! If that queen could say of Solomon's attendants, 'Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and hear thy wisdom,' 1 Kings 10:8. How happy are they that dwell in God's mansion-house, ever beholding his face, and hearing his voice! It is reported of Eudoxius, that he was so extremely desirous to be near the natural sun, that he might see it, and know its nature, that he professed, so he might obtain his desire, though but for one hour, he would willingly be burnt up by it the next hour. How much worth then is the sight and knowledge of this Sun of

righteousness; and what gainers are they by death, that come thereby to see him as he is, and to know him, as they are known of him, 1 John 3:2; 1 Cor. 13:12.

But the Christian shall not barely enjoy God after death, for that he doth in this life, but he shall enjoy God fully. Now the saints enjoy a little of God, and oh how refreshing is it to his weary soul! But then he shall have as much of God as his heart can wish or hold. In this life there is a communication of God, answerable to the capacities of men; and the fault is in us, not in God, that we receive no more of him on earth. The ground is not in the sun, but in the narrowness of our windows, that we partake no more of its light; the cause is in the smallness of our vessels, not in the well, that we carry away no more of its water. If our mouths were never so wide opened, God would fill them now. But then the windows of the soul shall be widened, and the vessels of the heart enlarged, and so fitted for, and filled with, a greater participation of God. There is not the least complaint of want; all the patriarchs' sacks are there filled with corn. There David's cup runneth over indeed; there the holy Ephesians are filled with all the fulness of God. In that Father's house there is bread enough, and to spare, for all his children. There is given to all good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, Luke 6:38.

We say there is no fishing like to the sea, because the sea hath the greatest plenty, and the vastest capacity; there are fish enough to fill all our nets, and lade all our ships. I may more truly say, there is no fruition like to the fruition of God. He hath enough not only to supply all our indigencies, and to satisfy all our necessities and desires, but he can do abundantly for us, above what we are able to ask or think, Eph. 3:20. God hath enough to fill himself, as boundless a being as he is; surely then he hath enough to fill the limited soul of man. That which can fill the ocean, may well fill a spoon.

Now a Christian is described by his hungering and thirsting, his panting and breathing after a perfect conformity to God, that thereby

he may be prepared for perfect communion with God; but blessed are they which now thus hunger and thirst, for then they shall be filled, Mat. 5:6. Well filled, as beasts are after a good bait, as the word used by our Saviour signifies. He that drinketh of that water which God shall there give him shall thirst no more. That God, who filleth the bellies of his enemies on earth with the hidden treasures of common bounty, will surely fill the souls of his children in heaven with the precious treasures of special mercy. The soul, that now sippeth of the water of life, shall then drink a full draught out of the rivers of God's pleasures. The Christian, who can now only taste God to be gracious, shall then have a full meal, when he shall eat bread in the kingdom of God. 'They are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters,' Rev. 7:15–17.

Observe, reader, I say a Christian shall gain by death a full immediate fruition of God. Now the saint drinketh the waters of life, and they are pleasant, though through the conduits and cisterns of ordinances; but with what joy will he draw water immediately out of the well of salvation. We read in Joshua 5:12, when Israel came to Canaan manna ceased, and they did eat of the fruits of the land. While the saint is in the wilderness of this world, he needeth, and feedeth on the manna of the word, sacraments, prayer, and the like; but when death shall land him at that place, of which Canaan was but a type, the manna of ordinances shall cease, he shall eat the fruits of that land. Ordinances are necessary for, and suitable to, our state of imperfection. Jacob drove his flocks as they were able to go, so doth Christ his sheep.

Here we are in a state of uncleanness, and therefore want water in baptism to wash us, saith an eminent divine; in a state of darkness, and therefore want the light of the word to direct us; in a state of weariness, and therefore want a Lord's-day of rest to refresh us; in a

state of weakness, and therefore want bread in the supper to strengthen us; in a state of sorrow, and therefore want wine to comfort us; in a state of beggary, and therefore want prayer to fetch some spiritual alms from the beautiful gate of God's temple.

Whilst the saint is as a child, he thinks as a child, speaks as a child, understands as a child; but when he shall come to be a perfect man, he shall put away these childish things. When every earthly member shall be mortified, and the body of death wholly destroyed, when the faculties of the soul shall be enlarged, and the sanctification of the inner man perfected, when the rags of mortality shall be put off, and grace swallowed up in glory, the sun shall be no more thy light by day, nor the moon thy light by night, but the Lord thy God, thine everlasting light, and thy God thy glory, Isa. 60:19.

Apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, are for the perfecting of the saints, for the edifying of the body of Christ, no longer than 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, Eph. 4:11–13. When God shall be all in all, then, and not till then, ordinances will be nothing at all. When the saint comes to his journey's end, he may throw away his staff. Now, how much will this add to the former, that the Christian shall without ordinances enjoy God! How lovely is the face of God, though it be but in the glass of the gospel! 2 Cor. 3:18. This was the one thing which David begged, that he might dwell in the house of the Lord, to see the beauty of his face, Ps. 27:4. Ah how lovely will he be, when the Christian shall see him face to face! 1 Cor. 13:12.

If it be so good to draw near to God on earth, Ps. 73:28, and if they are blessed that watch at wisdom's gates, and wait at the posts of her doors, Prov. 8:34, how good will it be to draw near to God in heaven; and how blessed are they that wait not at the door, but dwell in that house!

How pleasant will it be for the soul, when its eyes shall be strengthened to see God as he is, without the spectacles of ordinances. We esteem that honey sweetest that is sucked immediately out of the comb, though honey out of a dish is sweet; and we do with more delight eat that fruit which we gather ourselves from the tree, than we do that which is brought to us through other hands. The enjoyment of God is so sweet in the dish of a duty, that a Christian would sooner lose the best friend he hath than it. But oh how sweet will it be in the comb of immediate communion! This fruit is very delightful and pleasant as it is conveyed through the hands of ministers, (though the liquor will scent of the cask,) but oh with what delight, (Christian, canst thou read it and thy heart not warm with joy?) with what pleasure wilt thou with thine own hands gather this fruit from the tree of life, that standeth in the midst of paradise! Rev. 22:2.

Thus I have given thee a little of that great gain which a saint hath by death; death will free him from all evil, both of sin and suffering; it will give him the fruition of all good, in the enjoyment of perfect saints, and the blessed Saviour, and in full immediate communion with the infinite God, who is blessed, and blessing his for ever. This is the heritage of a righteous man from God, and this is the portion of his cup: thus shall it be done to the man whom the King of Heaven delights to honour. There is but one thing more required to make the Christian perfectly happy, and that is the eternity of all this; but I shall speak to that in the last use. I now proceed to the application of the point.

## **CHAPTER V**

The difference betwixt a sinner and a saint at death

The first use which I shall make of this doctrine shall be by way of information. If such as have Christ for their life shall have gain by their death, it informeth us of the difference betwixt the death of the

sinner and the saint: the one is an unspeakable gainer, the other an inconceivable loser by death. Death to the good is the gate through which they go into the kingdom of heaven; death to the bad is the trap-door through which they fall into hell. The godly dieth as well as the wicked; but the wicked man dieth not so well as the godly. The metal and the dross go both into the fire; but the metal is refined, and the dross consumed. As the cloud in the wilderness had a light side to the Israelite, but a dark side to the Egyptian: so death hath nothing but light and comfort for the Israel of God; nothing but darkness and sorrow for the sinful Egyptians. Death to every one is a messenger sent from the Lord of life; it cometh to the regenerate, as the young prophet to Jehu, 'I have an errand to thee, O captain.' And what was his errand? He poured the oil on his head, saying, 'Thus saith the Lord, I have anointed thee king over Israel,' 2 Kings 9:5, 6. It is a messenger from God, to call the Christian to a kingdom which cannot be shaken. But it cometh to the unregenerate, as Ehud to Eglon: 'And Ehud said, I have a message from God unto thee.' And what was his message? Judges 3:20, 21, 'And Ehud put forth his left hand, and took the dagger from his right thigh, and thrust it into Eglon's belly,' It is a messenger from God, with a mortal, wounding, killing, stabbing message to a sinner. The pale white horse of death rides before, and the red fiery horse of hell follows after.

The people of God pass safely through the red sea of death, which his enemies assaying to do are drowned—are damned.

There is a great disagreement in the lives of the holy and unholy; but oh what a vast difference is there in their deaths! they are like two parallel lines; how far soever they go together, they never touch in a point. Their ways differ, and therefore their ends must necessarily differ. Every man's end is virtually in his way; their ways differ as much as light and darkness, and therefore their ends must differ as far as heaven and hell. The one walketh in his own ways, Prov. 14:14; in the ways of his own heart, Eccles. 11:9; in the broad way of the flesh and the world, Mat. 7:13; and so his end is damnation, Phil. 3:19; his latter end is, that he shall be destroyed for ever, Num.

24:20. The other walketh in the way of the Lord, Ps. 119:1; in the way of his testimonies, ver. 14; in the narrow way of self-denial, mortification, and crucifying the flesh, Mat. 7:14; and so his end is peace, Ps. 37:37. Such as the seed is sown, such is the crop which is reaped. The unregenerate man soweth to the flesh, and of the flesh reapeth corruption; the sanctified soul soweth to the spirit, and of the spirit reapeth life everlasting, Gal. 6:6, 7.

The blind world, indeed, as it seeth not their difference in life, (the life of a saint is a hidden life; Col. 3:3, 'Our life is hid with Christ in God,' The king's daughter is all glorious, but it is within, Ps. 45:13; the jewels of her graces are laid up in that privy drawer, the hidden man of the heart,) so it beholdeth not the difference in their death. As dieth the wise man, so dieth the fool, to the eye of sense, and they want the eye of faith, Eccles. 2:16. We see no difference, say they, betwixt the death of them you call profane, and your precise ones; they die both alike to our judgments.

But this conceit, reader, if thou art such an atheist, proceedeth from thy blindness and unbelief. Thou art probably in the chamber when a drunkard, a swearer, or a civil, moral, yet unsanctified neighbour departeth this life; thou seest his body trembling, panting, groaning, dying; but thou dost not see the ten thousand times worse condition his poor soul is in. Thou seest his kindred or relations weeping; but thou dost not see the infernal spirits rejoicing; thou dost not see the greedy devils that waited by the bedside, like so many roaring lions, for their desired and deserved prey; thou dost not see when the soul left the body how it was immediately seized on by those frightful hell-hounds in a most hideous, horrible manner, and hauled to the place of intolerable and eternal torments; thou dost not see the shoutings of those legions in hell, at the coming in of a new prisoner, to bear a part in the undergoing of divine fury, in their blasphemies against heaven's majesty, and in their estate of hopelessness and desperation.

Men, saith a modern writer, like silly fishes, see one another caught, and jerked out of the pond of life; but they see not, alas! the fire and pain into which they are cast who die in their sins. Oh, it had been better surely for such if they had never been born, as Christ said of Judas, than to be brought forth to the murderer (that old man-slayer) to be hurled into hell, there to suffer such things as they shall never be able to avoid, or abide.

On the other side, thou standest by a scorned, persecuted saint, when he is bidding adieu to a sinful world; thou seest the strugglings and droopings of his outward man, but thou seest not the reviving cordial the physician of souls is preparing for his inward man; thou dost not see those glorious angels which watch and wait upon this heaven-born soul.

That waggon or chariot, which the son of Joseph sendeth to fetch his relation to a true Goshen, the inheritance of the saints in light, is as invisible to thee, as those chariots of fire on the mountain were to the servant of the prophet. Never Roman emperor rode in such a chariot of triumph, as the saint doth to heaven. When the soul biddeth the body good-night, till the morning of the resurrection, thou dost not see those ministering spirits, sent down for the good of this heir of salvation, presently solacing and saluting it. Thou dost not see how stately it is attended, how safely conducted, how gladly received into the bosom of Abraham, into the father's house, into that city, whose builder and maker is God. Thou dost not see the soul putting off, with the clothing of the body, all sin and misery, and putting on the white linen of the saints, even perfect purity, matchless joy, and eternal felicity. When thou canst see these things with the eye of faith, thou wilt easily grant a vast difference between the death of the gracious and graceless.

Reader, if thou art dead in thy sins, and unacquainted with this spiritual life, which I have before described, nothing of that endless gain which the godly shall enjoy at death belongs to thee; none of that fulness of joy, of those rivers of pleasures, of that eternal weight

of glory, shalt thou partake of. I may say to thee, as Simon Peter to Simon Magus, 'Thou hast no part nor lot in this matter, for thine heart is not right in the sight of God.' Thou mayest, like the madman at Athens, lay claim to all the vessels that come into the haven; but the vessels of the promises, richly laden with the treasures of grace and love, do not at all appertain to thee. If, like a dog, thou snatchest at the children's bread, thou art more bold than welcome, and wilt one day be well beaten for thy presumption. If thou art unregenerate, and so diest, look to thyself, for thy lot must fall on this side the promised land.

Thou mayest, like a surveyor of land, take a view of another's manor, and bring a return, how stately the house is, how pleasant the gardens, how delightful the walks, how fruitful the pastures, how finely it is seated, how fully it is wooded, how sweetly it is watered, how fitly it is every way accommodated; but as long as the pronoun is wanting, it can be but little comfort, it is none of thine.

So thou mayest read and hear much of that comfort, joy, and richness of that incomparable kingdom, which the holy shall immediately upon their deaths enter into; but what is all this to thee, when thou must be without it for ever? Thou mayest see Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom, but between him and thee there will be a great gulf.

As a stranger, thou mayest hear the last will and testament of Christ read, and therein the fair, rich, and large portions which he hath bequeathed to his children, John 17:24; Luke 12:32, but not the least mention made of any good for thee. Look from the beginning of Genesis, to the end of the Revelation, and see if there be one good word spoken to thee, whilst thou art in thy natural estate. Moses-like, thou mayest, by the prospective of scripture, have a Pisgah sight of Palestine, of that good land flowing with milk and honey; but, as God is true, if thou diest in unregeneracy, thou shalt never enjoy one foot of it.

The worst of a saint is past when he dieth, but thy worst, O sinner, is to come. There are some dregs in the bottom which thou art yet to drink down. Thou hast thy good things here, and he his evil things; but at death he is comforted, and thou art tormented. He hath all his hell upon earth, his heaven is to come; thou hast all thy heaven on earth, and thy hell is to come when thou passest into another world. The hell of a saint is an easy hell; but ah, how hot is that hell in hell, how fiery is that furnace, how terrible those torments! I may conceive somewhat, the damned feel most, but no tongue can express them.

But it may be, friend, thou art one that thrivest in this world, and therefore dost not trouble thy head, much less thy heart, with the things of another world. Thou art unwilling to put a spoonful of those thoughts into thy sauce, lest it should make thy meat unsavoury: it would mar thy mirth and spoil thy sports. As Sigismund the emperor did not love the pronounciation of the Greek Zeta, because it represented the gnashing teeth of a dying man; so thou art resolved to banish such enemies, as thou thinkest, out of thy coasts, and, like a bear, to go down that steep hill of death backward.

But know thou, O man, that whether thou wilt consider of thy death beforehand or no, it is hastening upon thee. Though thou puttest it far from thee, whether thou wilt or no, it draweth nigh to thee. The ship moveth not so fast in the waters, nor the sun in the heavens, as thou art hastening towards thy long, thine everlasting home, and then death will bring thee up a reckoning for all thy sweet morsels, merry-meetings, time and talents whatsoever. Believe it, then, thou wilt have sour sauce for all thy sweetmeats; thy presumption will prove but like Haman's banquet before execution.

What advantage, then, will thy sunshiny morning of common mercies bring thee, when, as on Sodom, it will be followed with flakes of fire and brimstone before night? Dost thou not know, that when the wicked flourish, it is that they may be destroyed for ever? Ps. 92:7. The higher thou ascendest on this ladder, the greater thy fall

when death turneth thee off. Thou art but ripening for ruin, and fattening on earth to fry in hell, all the while thou art flourishing in a course of sinning; nay, thou mayest be much nearer hell than thou art aware of.

The metal, when it shineth brightest in the fire, is nearest melting. Thou, like a candle, mayest give a blaze when thou art going out of the world, into blackness of darkness for ever. The hawk flieth high, and is as highly prized, being set upon a perch, and set out with the jingling bells of encouragement, and carried on his master's fist; but being once dead, and pitched over the perch, is cast upon the dunghill as good for nothing. The hen scrapes in the dust, nothing rewarded while she liveth, but being dead, is brought as a choice dish to her master's table. Thus wicked men in this life are set in high places, godly men lie grovelling with their mouths in the dust; but being dead, the former is cast into hell, the latter brought to heaven's table.

But that I may awaken thy conscience, O secure sinner, and make thee look about thee, whilst there is time and hope, if the gracious and powerful God please to assist, I shall give thee an estimate of the sinner's losses by death, by which thou mayest see what a difference there is between the death of the titular and the real Christian.

And here, reader, thou mayest help me with thy conceptions, for I shall come infinitely short in my expressions. As none can endure it, so none can declare it; for who knoweth the power of God's wrath? Ps. 90:11.

The orator, when he would describe the violent death of the cross, doth it by an aposiopesis: What, saith he, shall I say of the death of the cross? Much more cause have I to speak so of this death, What shall I say of this eternal death?

## **CHAPTER VI**

## The sinner's privative misery at death

By death thou shalt lose all thy earthly delights and carnal contentments. The table of thy life possibly is richly spread with variety of outward enjoyments, riches, relations, honours, pleasures, beauty, and bravery; but death will come in with a voider, and take all away. It is called an unclothing, 2 Cor. 5:4, and indeed it will strip thee naked of all such garments and ornaments. Thine eye shall no more see good, Job 7:7; i.e., the good things of this life, they will all die with thee, as to thy use and comfort. It is a doleful expression of Abraham to Dives, Thou hadst, or thou receivedst, thy good things in thy lifetime, Luke 16:25. Oh what a cutting word was that to his heart, when he was passed into another world, Remember there was a time when thou and they were joined together, but now ye are parted for ever. To have been happy was no small aggravation of his misery. It is with thee, while in this world, as it was with the Jews, in the vineyards and fields of their neighbours, pluck and eat they might, while there, but pocket up, and carry away, they might not, Deut. 23:24, 25.

Death is the great thief which will rob thee of thy riches. The wealthiest emperor, the next moment after death, hath no more than the poorest beggar. As thou camest forth of thy mother's womb, naked thou shalt return, to go as thou earnest, and shalt take nothing in thy hand of all thy labour, Eccles. 5:15. That gold which thou lovest, and trustest more than God, these pebbles which thou valuest above the pearl of price, that treasure on earth, which thy heart is set upon more than on the true treasure in heaven, will all leave thee when death findeth thee. Mr Rogers, in his Treatise of Love, tells us of one, that being nigh death, clapped a twenty shilling piece in his mouth, saying, Some wiser than some, I will take this with me, however; but alas! poor fool he could not be so good as his word. The Holy Ghost excellently termeth rich men, rich in this world, because riches will not make men rich in another world, 1 Tim. 6:17.

Death will seal a lease of ejection, and turn thee out of all thy possessions; and death will give thee a bill of divorce, and separate thee from all thy relations. The relations of husband and wife, parents and children, are calculated only for the meridian of this world, and shall not outlive this life. Thy dear husband, or thy loving wife, and thy most dutiful children, will all serve thee as Orpah did Ruth, chap. 1:14, follow thee while thou art full, but forsake thee when thou art empty; cleave to thee in thy health and life, but leave thee in thy greatest danger at death. And thy birth and breeding, honour and respect, will serve thee in the like kind; they are but a shadow, which will not be seen when the sun of thy life is set. The great distinctions in the other world will be holy or unholy, not noble or ignoble.

'Be not afraid when one is made rich, when the glory of his house is increased; for when he dieth he shall carry nothing away; his glory shall not descend after him,' Ps. 49:16, 17. Death is the great leveller, making princes and peasants equal.

All thy sinful pleasures will also be lost. The sweet taste thou foundest in thy mouth will be gone, though they will rise in thy stomach, and after in thy belly be more bitter than gall. Thy merry meetings, jovial companions, witty jests, sporting, recreations, pictures for thine eyes, music for thine ears, dainties for thy taste, thine eating and drinking, and all these delights on earth, which thou solacest thy sensual soul with, desiring no other heaven, will all, like leaves in the autumn of thy death, fall off from thee. Though in the short summer of thy life thou art richly laden with them, yet in thy long, thine everlasting winter, thou shalt be stripped naked of them.

Thou mayest say to all the forementioned delights of riches, relations, honours, and pleasures, and whatever it is which thou foolishly rejoicest in, as Charles the Fifth, emperor of Germany, whom the world counted most happy, did to his trophies, treasures, and things of the like nature, Abite hinc, abite longe, Be gone, get you far out of my sight. Be assured, that as a false harlot leaves her lovers

when they are arrested for debt, and followeth other customers, so this painted strumpet, the deceitful world, that now layeth open her fair breasts, to allure thee to go a-whoring after her, and commit spiritual fornication with her, when death shall arrest thee by a writ from heaven, will wholly forsake thee, and follow them that survive. Now, what a loss will this be!

But it may be thou comfortest thyself against this, that all, even good as well as bad, will join with thee in this loss. But, reader, dost thou not consider, that they who enjoy the stars all night, and come in the morning instead thereof to enjoy the glorious sun, are no losers; the sun hath all the light of the stars, and far more. Neither can the godly be properly called losers of these comforts, because they enjoy them all, and infinitely more, in the blessed God: 'As money answereth all things,' Eccles. 10:19. Money is equivalently sheep, oxen, corn, meat, drink, cloth; whatsoever you want in this life is virtually in money. So God to a gracious soul after death will answer all things; he will be eminently and virtually father, mother, wife, child, wealth, honour, pleasure, and all things; though he loseth them here, he will find them there, and much more; but when thou, O sinner, lovest them in this world, they shall never be made up to thee in another world. Thou lovest not only the streams, but the fountain; not only the beams, but the sun; and therefore thy portion will be scorching drought and dismal darkness. Besides, these things are not the portion, the all, of a good man; they are not his estate or inheritance, they are but an additional overplus, cast in over and above. So much the words of Christ imply, Mat. 6:33, 'And all other things shall be added to you.' As when a father giveth his son a thousand pounds worth of ware, he casteth in paper and pack-thread; or one thousand yards of cloth, he doth not stand upon the breadth of the thumb which is to be allowed in measuring. So God, having given himself and his Son to his saints out of his vast bounty, casteth in the creatures as an overplus; they are not their estate, or portion, or all. No; when a godly man, at the great and terrible day of the Lord Jesus, shall see his house, and land, and outward good things in that

common flame which shall burn up the earth, he may then behold it with comfort, and say with the philosopher, I have my all still.

But, sinner, thy loss of them will be a loss indeed; for these things are thy all—they are all thy God, and all thy Christ, and all thy happiness, and all thy heaven; they are all the fulness of joy, and all the rivers of pleasures, and all the weight of glory which thou shalt enjoy; they are all thy riches, all thine inheritance, all thy consolation, all thy reward, all thy portion, and all thou shalt be worth for ever. Look Luke 16:24. They have received their consolation, (cold comfort, indeed,) ye have your reward, Mat. 6:2. It is one of the saddest speeches in the book of God, 'whose portion is in this life,' Ps. 17:14. Ah! poor portion. Thou hast no other paradise but thy garden, no other mansion but thy beautiful building, no other inheritance but thy land, no other kindred but thy wife and children, no other honour but the stinking breath of thy flattering neighbours, no other God but thy gold, no other heaven but the earth; all thy estate is in dust, rubbish, and lumber; surely, then, it will be a loss with a witness to lose all that in a moment, and that for ever, wherein all thy happiness consisteth. Will it not be a sad sight for thee to stand, as it were, upon the shore, and to see the vessel in which is embarked all thy treasures, all thy near and dear relations, all thy respect and esteem, all thy joy and delights, sinking before thine eyes, and lost for ever? or to see that house, in which is thy plate and jewels, thy wife and children, and all that ever thou art to be worth, in a flame, and nothing possible to be recovered; would not thine eyes affect thine heart with unspeakable horror? Now this, O reader, will be thy case if thou art unsanctified at death. When thou liest upon thy death-bed, and art going out of the world, thou mayest take thy leave of thy friends, estate, honour, and delights in such language as this: Farewell, my dear wife, children, and all my friends; farewell for ever. I am going where lovers and friends will be put far from me; I must never, never have any friend more, but shall remain friendless to all eternity. Farewell my house and land, my silver and gold; farewell for ever. I shall from henceforth and for ever be a beggar, and though I beg but for one drop of water to cool my tongue, when this whole body shall be in

unquenchable flames, I must everlastingly be denied. Farewell my honours and delights; farewell for ever. I shall never more be respected or comforted; confusion of face and easeless pains are to be my endless and unchangeable portion. Thus, man, thou wilt most miserably even outlive thy felicity, and when thou comest to live indeed, i.e., in the other world, want all thy comforts and joys.

Thou shalt lose by death all thy spiritual preferment. It is now no mean mercy to thee, hadst thou a heart to prize and improve it, that thou enjoyest the ordinances of God, the means of grace, many golden seasons for the good of thy soul; that thou mayest sit at God's feet, and hear his voice out of Scripture, fall down on thy knees and seek his face by prayer; but know to thy sorrow, death will rob thee of all these jewels. Now thou hast the tenders of mercy, the entreaties of the minister, the motions of the Spirit, the invitations of Christ, liberty to cast thyself down at the footstool of heaven's Majesty, and to be as fervent and instant as thou wilt for mercy, but then the gate will be shut, and there will be no praying, or hearing, or preaching, in the place whither thou art going: Ps. 88:11, 'Shall thy loving-kindness be declared in the grave? or thy faithfulness in destruction?' The interrogation is a strong negation. There is no preaching of God's clemency or fidelity either in the grave or hell. All the lectures read in the former are by worms, of man's mortality; and all the sermons heard in the latter are of man's misery and God's severity. Reader, I assure thee from the living God, that though in this life thou art now and then bungling about a duty, and giving God thy stinking breath, a few cold, lazy petitions, which proceed from thy corrupt lungs, thy cursed heart, thou shalt do so no more after death. As the saints shall be above this mediate enjoyment of God, so thou shalt be below it. And truly, hadst thou ever had communion with God in a duty, this loss would go near thee. How amiable is the worshipping of God to a gracious soul! he prizeth ordinances, because they are the means of it in this world, above his estate, and food, or whatever is dear to him, Ps. 119:14, 72, 111; Job 23:12; Ps. 84:1-3. And this privilege he shall have by death, to be employed still about the same work of pleasing,

glorifying, worshipping, and enjoying God; only he shall do it in a more excellent and more delightful way.

He continueth, as it were, in the same school; death only removes him to a higher form, or, if you will, death sends him from the school, in which he was fitted and prepared, to the university of heaven. But, O sinner, thou must be deprived of this happiness; indeed, now thou esteemest the ordinances of God a burden; as precious as they are to others, they are tedious to thee. The church is thy jail, the Sabbath is thy ague-day, the commands of Christ are bonds and fetters to thee, Ps. 72:3. The voice of thy carnal heart is, When will the glass be out? when will the duty be done? when will the Sabbath be over, that thou mayest follow the world? Amos 8:5. Thou thinkest the prayer is too long, the sermon is too long, the Sabbath is too long, the duties are all too long; well, be patient but a little, a short time, and thou shalt never be troubled with these long duties more. The night is coming when there is no working, John 9:4. There is no enjoying Sabbath, or sacraments, or seasons of grace; no wisdom, knowledge, or device, in the grave to which thou art hastening, Eccles. 9:10.

Now the minister exhorteth thee to cast away thy sins, and come to thy Saviour, to reject thy soul-damning lusts, and accept of a soul-saving Lord. The Father commandeth thee by his sovereignty over thee, and propriety in thee as thy Creator. The Son entreateth thee by presenting his bloody sweat and sufferings unto thee, as he is thy Redeemer. The Spirit stirreth thee to pity thy precious soul, and to mind thine unchangeable estate; to consider seriously in this day of God's patience the things which concern thy eternal peace. The gospel is a treasure of inestimable value, freely offered thee, upon condition thou wilt but heartily embrace it and the easy yoke of Christ together. The word of God chargeth, inviteth allureth, beseecheth, promiseth, threateneth; all these, like so many trumpets, do loudly sound a retreat, to call thee off from thy slavery to the world and flesh unto the glorious liberty of the sons of God; but thou art as deaf as the adder, and will not hear the voice of these heavenly

charms; as hard as the rock—the waves of threatenings which dash unweariedly against thee stir thee not; the showers and dews of promises which fall on thee continually make no impression; neither mercies nor judgments, neither men nor God, can prevail with thee. Well, sinner, think of it again and again—and thy heart is hardened with a witness if it do not tremble to think of it—the hour is approaching when thou shalt never have these tenders, these invitations, these means, these motions more; though thou shalt earnestly and incessantly desire them, and willingly accept of them if they could be granted thee, after thou hast fried as many millions of years in hell as there are stars in the heavens, piles of grass on the earth, and sands on the sea-shore, yet thy entreaty upon such a hard condition shall be denied. Then thou wilt befool thyself to purpose for staying till the day after the fair, for not accepting when thou wast well offered; then mercy will be mercy indeed, then grace will be grace indeed, then the gospel will be glad tidings indeed, when by the want of them thou shalt fully know the worth of them.

Now God holdeth the candle of his word to thee, and instead of working, thou playest. Instead of working out thy own salvation, instead of working the works of him that sent thee into the world, thou playest the fool, the drunkard, the beast, the hypocrite, the atheist; well, thou shalt go into utter darkness, where those lights which thou now enjoyest will never shine.

Plutarch observeth of Hannibal, He might once have taken Rome, and would not; afterwards he would, and could not. Now God offereth thee heaven, thou chooseth earth; and notwithstanding he assureth thee that now is the only acceptable time, now is the only day of salvation, yet thou wilt not hear when he calleth. I tell thee the day is near when thou wouldst, but God will not; when thou shalt call, but he will not hear; and then thou shalt find no place for repentance, though, Esau-like, thou seek it carefully with tears. When once thy particular judgment is passed, it will be in vain to beg a psalm of mercy, Heb. 9:27.

Thou shalt at death lose the society of all the godly, even of those excellent ones, in whom is the delight of Christ, Prov. 8:31, and all the delight of Christians, Ps. 16:3. It is a blessing to thee upon earth, did the Lord but sanctify it to thee, that thy lot is cast in a land, in a parish, in a family, where those holy ones are, that thou mayest hear their gracious prayers, see their pious patterns, and enjoy their precious precepts. A saint is, as the proverb is in Africa, A man whose coming is prosperous. This churlish Laban could confess, Gen. 30:27, and the heathenish Egyptian found by experience, Gen. 39:2. All the country fareth the better for a good and rich Christian; he eateth not his morsels alone, but keepeth open house for all comers.

He both desireth and endeavoureth that others might be not almost, but altogether as he is. None are more spiritually covetous to make proselytes than the true Israelites. As the wall which receiveth heat from the sun reflecteth it on the passengers, so he wisheth so well to the worst, that they were made partakers of the same grace, that they may have fellowship with the Father, and Jesus Christ his Son, 1 John 1:3. Like the bee, he goeth to this and that flower, to this and that ordinance, and sucketh some sweetness, some spiritual good, and carrieth all home to his house, to his hive. As sin is diffusive,—'a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump,' 1 Cor. 5:6. Some say, they that have the plague are very desirous to infect others;—so is grace, like oil spreading, the gracious desire to go to an innumerable company of angels with a numerous company of saints.

Their examples are amiable, and sometimes instrumental for the conversion of others, 1 Peter 3:1; 1 Cor. 7:16. Justin Martyr confesseth of himself, that beholding the saints' piety in life, and patience at death, he gathered their doctrine to be the truth, and was converted. Their prayers are desirable, and that in the esteem of profane and ungodly men, Exod. 8:28, and 9:28; Acts 8:24.

In a word, the saints are clouds which water the earth, Heb. 12; the salt which keepeth the world from putrefaction, Mat. 6. That place, Prov. 10:25, 'But the righteous is an everlasting foundation,' the

Hebrews expound, the righteous are the foundation of the world, which but for their sakes would soon shatter and fall to ruin. 'I bear up the pillars thereof,' saith David, Ps. 75:3. It is for the sake of the good that the bad are spared, Acts 27:24. All that sailed with Paul were saved for his sake. How many a time have they stood in the gap, and diverted a flood of wrath from breaking in! Ps. 106:30; Num. 14:20. How many a mercy hath come flying to the world upon the wings of their prayers!

But, O sinners, herein will be a part of thy misery, that thou shalt for ever be banished their company. Now possibly thou thinkest the parish the worse for such strict inhabitants, thy dwelling the worse for such precise neighbours, thy family the worse for such a humble, zealous wife, child, or servant. Now thou dost not know what thou gainest when thou hast their society, but thou shalt know what thou lovest when thou hast lost them to eternity.

If Cicero did so bewail his banishment from the Roman moralists, that though the countries through which he travelled did him much honour, yet he would often look towards Italy with sighs and tears; and if the disciples wept so much for the loss of Paul—they fell about his neck, and kissed him, and wept, sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more in this world, Acts 20:37, 38—how wilt thou sigh and sob, weep and wail, when thou shalt be parted from them in the other world!

Did the devout men make such great lamentation for the loss of one good man for a little time, Acts 8:2, what lamentation shalt thou make for the loss of all good men to eternity! Surely, as in Ramah, there will be a voice heard, lamentation, weeping, and mourning, for the loss of these children of God.

When thou diest, thou shalt lose all thy hope, or presumption rather. Thy dead hope, for saints only have a lively hope, 1 Peter 1:3, will fail thee at death. As thou hast no true holiness, so thou canst have no true hope; but something it is likely thou hast, upon which thou

reliest as to thy future estate. It may be thou hast the good things of this life, and thence concludest thy right to a better life; as if because the great housekeeper of the world throweth some bones to the dogs, therefore he must love them with a paternal love. Thou dost not consider, their houses may be full of gold whose hearts are empty of grace, and whose souls shall assuredly come short of glory, Job 22:17, 18; Ps. 17:13, 14.

It may be it is thy profession of religion that holds thee up by the chin, and keepeth thee from sinking; as if, because a stageplayer is dressed in the robes, and for a quarter of an hour acteth the part of a king, he must therefore have a real right to the dignity, dominions, and revenues of the regal office, not believing that these colours of the form which are not laid in oil, in the power of godliness, will be washed off at death, Mat. 25:8. Or it is likely thou enjoyest the privileges of the gospel; Sabbaths, sacraments, and the seasons of grace are the bladders, with the help of which, without an inward change, thou thinkest to swim to heaven. Dost thou not know that many go to hell-fire with font-water on their faces, and from the table to the tormentor? Mat. 22:13; that Esau, a castaway, and Ishmael, an outcast, had both Abraham to their father? And so had they whom truth itself assureth, that they were of their father the devil, John 8:44. 'Circumcision availeth nothing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature,' Gal. 6:15. All such things are but lying words, where an internal work of grace is wanting, Jer. 7:4–6.

Or possibly thou art a man of many performances; thou mindest secret, family, relation duties, which too too many neglect, praying, reading, hearing, Christian communion. Like the spider, thou weavest a curious web out of thine own bowels, and therewith makest thee a house in which thou restest quietly; but, O friend, God hath a besom of death which will sweep this down, Job 8:14, 15. This, and all the rest, as nigh as they seem to be to heaven, will prove but a castle in the air. Whether any, or all these, or something else, be the pillars by which thy hope is upheld in life, they will fail thee at death; and then the rotten props being taken away, the house of thy hope

will fall. These are all but a sandy foundation, and therefore when that great storm comes, they will down to the ground, Mat. 7:26, 27.

It is possible thou mayest hope all the time thou livest, but thy life and hope will depart together. Like thy neighbours, thou mayest be full of hope even when thou art going into the pit of despair, and die in peace, though thou art going unto the place of eternal war; but the next moment after death, thy hopes will take wings and fly away: Prov. 11:7, 'When a wicked man dieth, his expectation shall perish; and the hope of unjust men perisheth.' He died perhaps with his head full of hopes and expectations, as those seemed to have done that came bouncing at heaven's gate with, 'Lord, Lord, open to us;' but soon were their hearts filled with desperation when they heard, 'Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity, I know you not.' Etiam spes valentissima perit, as some read that forecited place: his great hope shall be little worth. A false heart and false hope can never hold out in such a real hardship: Job 27:8, 'What is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God shall take away his soul?' An expositor glosseth on it thus: The anchor of a wicked man's hope entereth not within the veil, as a godly man's doth, closing with God himself in Christ, Heb. 6:19, which anchor in all storms is sure and steadfast, but is cast upon false and loose ground, and therefore, when the storm comes, his anchor drives, and is unsteadfast; and so his hope and heart fail together. The stoutest unregenerate man alive will droop at last when God cometh to take away his soul; then his crest falls, and his plumes flag: 'The wicked is driven away in his wickedness,' Prov. 14:32.

He being arrested by death as a cruel serjeant, in the devil's name, is hurried away, and hurried into hell. As syrens are said to sing curiously while they live, but to roar horribly when they die; so thou that art high in hope on earth, wilt be the lower in grief in hell, when thou shalt see all thy hopes, like Absalom's mule, to fail thee in thy greatest extremity.

We say, If it were not for hope the heart would break; what wilt thou do then, when thy hope shall depart, and thy heart continue?

How sad will thy condition be, when thou shalt fall from the high pinnacle of thy presumption into the bottomless gulf of desperation! Surely thy raised expectation disappointed will prove a sore vexation. How extremely wilt thou be perplexed, when thou shalt fall as low as hell, whose hopes were raised as high as heaven! If hope deferred make the heart sick, Prov. 13:12, then hope of such happiness wholly frustrated will kill it with a thousand deaths.

When a gracious man dieth, his hope is perfected in the fruition of all, and ten thousand times more, than he hoped for. When a graceless man dieth, his hope perisheth in an utter disappointment of all that he, though with little reason, so much expected.

Thou shalt lose by death thy precious soul. This will be a loss indeed. The price of this pearl is not known to thee on earth, but it will be fully known in hell. This one head, reader, didst thou but understand what is included in it, would stab thee to the heart, and the thought of this one loss would be enough to embitter the comforts of thy whole life. The soul of man is called the man, Job 4:19—though not in a natural, yet in a moral, consideration, saith one upon that place, it being the most noble, the most excellent part of man; and it is usual to denominate the whole from the better part. The body is but a house of clay, its foundation is in the earth; but the soul, the inhabitant of this house, is of an angelical, spiritual nature. The generation of this was from heaven, Zech. 12:1.

The operations of this are most noble; the redemption of this cost the blood of God, Ps. 31:5; Acts 20:28. This is that part of man which is capable of the image of his Maker, Col. 3:10; Eph. 4:24. The working out the salvation of this is the whole of a saint's care and labour, Phil. 2:14. It is upon the welfare of this that the body dependeth for its unchangeable estate. What a loss then will the loss of this be!

A heathen can tell us that it is an easy matter to bear the loss of an earthly house for our bodies when we die; but certainly it will be hard to bear the want of a heavenly habitation for thy soul. Let him that bought this ware speak to its worth and thy loss: 'What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?' Mat. 16:26. Behold what an incomparable, what an irreparable, loss is here! It is such a loss there is none like it. The gain of the whole world cannot balance the loss of one soul. If a temporal life be more worth than meat, and the body than raiment, what is an immortal, eternal soul worth? Couldst thou set thy soul to sale for all the world, yet for that thou wouldst be a loser, nay, as the rich man, a beggar. This is an irrecoverable loss. If thou lovest one eye, thou hast another; if thou lovest one limb, thou hast more; if thou lovest thy estate, thou mayest recover it again; if thou lovest thy life, thou mayest be a gainer by it, thou mayest find it again, Mat. 16:25; but if thou lovest thy soul at death, thou hast no more; there is no second throw to be cast, no after-game to be played; thou art gone, thou art undone for ever. Here is a loss, man, that may make thy hair stand an-end; thy head, yea, thy heart, to ache when thou readest or thinkest of it. Do not thine ears tingle and thy loins tremble to hear of it?

When God would smite the rich fool under the fifth rib, as it were, and strike him so home as that there need not a second thrust, he doth it in those words, 'Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee,' Luke 12:20. Ah sad sentence! wherein every word speaketh woe, every syllable sorrow and sighs. Had it been, Thou wise man, the message might have been welcome, and death desirable as a passage to eternal life; but it is 'Thou fool.' Had it been this year, or this month, nay, had it been this week, the man might have been forewarned and forearmed; but it is, 'This night thy soul shall be required of thee.' Had it been, This night thy riches shall be required of thee, how harsh would it have sounded in his ears, who had no other god but his gold; who, like a mole, lived in the earth as his element! Oh how hard would it be to part this covetous muck-worm and his mammon of unrighteousness; but it is not thy silver,

but thy soul shall be required of thee. Had it been, This night thy relations shall be required of thee, thy wife and children, and all thy kindred, shall be required of thee, what heavy tidings would it have been to his heart, that had no kindred in heaven! with what wringing of hands, and watering of cheeks, and sighs and sobs, would such news have been entertained! Many an eye would a tender husband and father have cast upon his loving wife and lovely babes, and oh how would his eye have affected his heart with grief and sorrow, to consider that these thriving, hopeful plants must be removed into another soil, that this near conjugal knot must be untied, and he and his dear relations, who had so often and so much rejoiced together, so suddenly be separated, and that for ever! But it is not thy wife that is one flesh with thee, but thy spouse that is a spirit within thee: 'Thy soul shall be required of thee.' Had it been, This night all the means of grace shall be required of thee, it had been worse than the loss of a limb to him that had any spiritual life. The ordinances of God to a soul, are as the sun to the world, without which, notwithstanding all his earthly delights, it would be but a place of darkness and of the shadow of death, Mat. 4:16; but it is thy soul. The former might have spoken the man's condition very dangerous, but this speaks it altogether desperate, 'Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee.' The former, although sad, are yet nothing to this, not so much as the noise of a pop-gun to the noise of a cannon. This is the great ordnance which includes, and yet drowns, those smaller pieces.

Couldst thou, saith one, upon the forecited text, purchase a monopoly of all the world, hadst thou the gold of the west, the treasures of the east, the spices of the south, the pearls of the north, all is nothing to this incarnate angel, this invaluable soul. O wretched worldling, what hast thou done thus to undo thy soul! Was it a wedge of gold, a heap of earth, a hoard of silver, to which thou trustest? see, they are gone, and thy soul is required. Alas, poor soul! whither must it go? To heaven? No; there is another place for wandering sinners: 'Go ye into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.' Thither must it go, with heaviness of heart, into a kingdom of

darkness, a lake of fire, a prison of horrible confusion and terrible tortures.

Reader, if thou art not new-born, put this case to thyself, and ask thy soul what it will do in such an hour, when the grave shall come with an habeas corpus for thy body, and the devil with an habeas animam for the soul; when thy soul shall leave this dwelling of thy body, and pass, naked of all its comforts, into a far country, where devils and damned spirits are the inhabitants, where screeching, yelling, and howling is the language, where fire and brimstone is the meat, and a cup of pure wrath, without the least mixture, is the drink; where weeping and wailing is their calling, where a killing death is all their life. Assure thyself, if thou diest unsanctified, thou wilt find far more and worse than all this.

O my soul, saith Bernard, what a terrible day shall that be, when thou shalt leave this mansion, and enter into an unknown region! Who can deliver thee from those ramping lions? who shall defend thee from those hellish monsters?

Now thou most unworthily undervaluest thy precious soul, little caring what flaws by sin thou causest in this diamond. Like the cock on the dunghill, thou knowest not the worth of this jewel, but preferrest thy barleycorns before it. I have read that there was a time when the Romans wore jewels on their shoes. Thou dost worse; thou tramplest this matchless jewel under thy feet. Whilst thy dying body is clothed and pampered, thy everlasting soul is naked and starved. Some write of Herod, (I suppose because of that infant massacre,) it was better be his swine than his son; for when his superstition hindered him from slaying his hogs, his ambition helped him to kill his child. I say, it were better to be thy beast than thy soul. Thou canst, every morning and evening, whatever happen, take care that thy beasts be watered and foddered, and many times in the day look abroad after them, to see what they ail, and accordingly take order for their supply; and yet, O man, or rather O brute, thou canst let thy soul go a whole day, and never feed it with the set meals of prayer,

Scripture, and meditation; yea, and in a whole day (nay, it may be a whole week) not ask thy soul in good earnest how it doth, what it wanteth, what sins it hath to be mortified, what grace it hath to be bestowed or increased, what spiritual necessities to be supplied.

Reader, is it not so? Let conscience speak; and canst thou read these lines without blushing and heart-breaking, that thou shouldst spend more time and strength upon thy beasts than upon that soul, which truth itself saith is more worth than a world? Mat. 16:26; which is created capable of such a high work as pleasing, glorifying, and enjoying God, and of such a happy reward as the immediate and eternal fruition of, and communion with, his infinite Majesty in heaven. Well, this soul thus despised, when lost, though then too late, will be esteemed. Hell will read thee such a lecture of thy soul's worth, that it will make thee understand it, and believe it, whether thou wilt or no, and then thou shalt have time enough (in that eternity in which thy soul shall be lost) to befool thyself for thy desperate madness in gratifying thy brutish flesh, and thus basely neglecting thy soul, that heaven-born spirit.

Thou shalt by death lose the infinitely blessed God. This is the loss of losses, the misery of miseries, the very hell of hell, such a loss as there was never the like before, nor ever shall be again after it; such a loss as no tongue can express, as no heart can conceive, yet such a loss as thou shalt know fully, when experimentally. The four first losses might have been borne with comfort and delight by the person that had but gained this good, and the fifth could not have been without this. The eternal death of the soul consisteth in its farthest separation from that God whose favour is far better than life. This is the lowest round in that ladder by which thou shalt descend into the bottomless pit. This is the foot of this black, bloody account, the head of that arrow which pierceth the heart of the damned.

This is the worst effect and fruit of sin, that it is privative of our union with, and fruition of, God. 'Depart from me' is as terrible a word as 'everlasting fire.' Ah, whither do they go that go from him,

when he alone hath the power of eternal life? How dismal, how dark must that dungeon be where this sun will not shine in the least degree with the light of his countenance! Well may it be called 'blackness of darkness for ever,' Jude 13. The hell of the hypocrites, which will be hottest of all, is set out by this: Job 13:16, 'The hypocrite shall not come before God.' Couldst thou have all the mercies that the world can give, yet in this want of God thou wouldst be completely miserable. Ten thousand words cannot speak a soul more unhappy than those two words, without God, Eph. 2:12. Thou mayest be without riches, without friends, without health, without liberty, nay, without all outward blessings, and yet blessed; but if without God, thou art cursed with a curse. When God would couch all arguments in one to persuade to duty, this is instead of all, 'Obey my voice, and I will be your God,' Jer. 7:23; when he would dissuade and drive them from iniquity, this is the stinging whip, 'Be instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee,' Jer. 6:8; when he would strike Israel dead with a blow, this is it, 'Woe unto them when I depart from them,' Hosea 9:12. How sad a saying is that of Saul, 'I am sore distressed,' (and well he might;) 'the Philistines are upon me, and God is departed from me,' 1 Sam. 28:15.

If a partial eclipse of the sun cause such a drooping in the whole creation, what will a total eclipse of this Sun cause? How mournfully doth Micah bemoan the loss of his dunghill deity! 'Ye have taken away my gods, and what have I more? and what is this ye say unto me, What aileth thee?' Judges 18:24. Surely the damned, as they will have infinitely more cause, so they will with more horror and anguish bewail the loss of the true God, though all the tears in hell are not sufficient to bewail the loss of this heaven. If the body from which the soul is parted be such a deformed, sad spectacle, what shall the condition of that soul be from which God is parted for ever?

How unable are the children of God to bear the absence of God in this life, though it be but in part, and for a short time! Take Heman, Ps. 88:14, 15, 'Lord, why castest thou off my soul? why hidest thou thy face from me? I am afflicted, and ready to die; while I suffer thy

terrors, I am distracted.' Observe, the good man is at death's door, and no wonder, whenas to his apprehension the life of his soul had left him; for though no man can see the essential face of God and live, yet no saint can live unless he see the providential face of God. Consider Job, a man of courage, one that had entered the list against Satan, and foiled him. The Sabeans and Chaldeans were too hard for his servants, and captivated his cattle; but Job was too hard for them; he conquered them. The wind that blew down the house on his children could not blow down the tower of his confidence, his hold on Christ; yet when this valiant warrior comes to encounter with the withdrawings of God, how exceedingly is his courage withdrawn: Job 13:24, 'Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and holdest me for thine enemy?' Why, Lord, are all the appearances from heaven so black and lowering? Why is it that I see not the former smiles of thy face? Oh, what is the cloud that hindereth the light of thy countenance from shining on me? What sin is the mist which is gathered about the true Sun, impeding my sight of thee? 'Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and countest me for thine enemy?'

Behold our Lord Jesus himself, that could bear the spiteful buffetings of some, the bloody scourgings of others, the scorn and derisions of many; that could suffer the treason of one apostle, the denial of another, and the unkindness of them all, without complaining; yet when the deity did but withdraw itself for a time, that the humanity might suffer for our sins, how mournfully doth he sigh out that expression, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' Mat. 27:46. It was not his torturing from men, nor the terrors of devils, not the presence of all the powers of darkness, that Christ complained so much of, as the absence of God: 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'

Now meditate, O sinner, if the departure of God, though partial and temporal, were so terrible to his saints, to his Son, how intolerable will the loss of God be to thee, when it shall be total and eternal! Do they mourn so bitterly when for a small moment he forsaketh them, though with great mercies he gathereth them; when in a little wrath

he hides his face from them, though with everlasting kindness he hath mercy on them? Isa. 54:7, 8.

How bitterly wilt thou complain when he shall forsake thee to eternity, when he shall hide his face from thee for ever, and not bestow on thee the least mercy, or smallest kindness! This will be a woe with a witness. Suffering may be the portion of saints, but separation from God the punishment of devils. As the face and comfortable presence of God is the greatest felicity of the saved, so the full withdrawals or absence of God will be the greatest misery of the damned.

Now thou dost not value the enjoyment of God; thou thinkest often that he is too near thee; the coming of God to thee is as to the devils, a torment, Mat. 8:29. If he draw nigh to thee sometime in a sermon, in a private instruction, in a motion of his Spirit, or in a conviction of thy conscience, thou wishest him farther off with his precise laws, that thou mightest have more liberty for thy fleshly lusts. The voice of thine hellish heart unto God is, 'Depart from me, I desire not the knowledge of thy ways,' Job 21:14. Well, thy petition shall be granted to thy destruction, and God will take thee at thy word, and give thee thy wish to thy woe, when thy doom shall be to depart from him, Luke 13:27; Mat. 25:41, and then thou shalt know the incomparable worth of him. Thy understanding shall be cleared, though not changed, that thy knowledge may increase thy sorrow. Thou art now wilfully ignorant of him and his will, (some never look up to the sun but in an eclipse,) but then thou shalt know so much of him to grind thee with tormenting grief for thy loss of him.

As a prisoner through the grates may see the costly apparel, the precious liberty, the pleasant and plentiful provision which others enjoy, whilst he is vexed with hunger, nakedness, cold, and bondage, so thou shalt see bread enough in the Father's house, and the children sitting round about his table eating and feasting in the kingdom of heaven, whilst thou art perishing with hunger. Thou shalt see those rivers of pleasures wherein the godly bathe their

souls, those soul-ravishing delights which they enjoy in God, the fountain of all good, whilst thou art sentenced to an eternal separation from him.

## CHAPTER VII

### The positive part of a sinner's misery at death

Now, tell me whether the sinful wretch be not a loser by death, when he shall lose all his wealth, friends, and opportunities of grace, the company of all the saints, all his false hopes of heaven, his precious soul, and the ever blessed God; and tell me whether sin, how sweet soever it be in the commission, will not be bitter in the conclusion; whether, in such an hour, the devil will not pay thee thy full wages for all thy wicked works; whether it be worth the while to continue in thine unregenerate estate, though thou couldst gain never so much, when it will certainly end in such inestimable loss. In a word, answer me whether the greatest pleasure thou canst gain for thy flesh, the greatest addition thou canst gain to thy estate, by a sinful, irreligious life, can countervail the everlasting loss of God and thy soul?

But this is not all, sinner; I have not done with thee yet. I have told thee a little of thy loss; for the whole of it no tongue can tell, no pen can write. I will now tell thee thy gain by death, and then do thou cast up thy account, and tell me whether thy wickedness will not end in woe.

First, By death thou shalt gain a cursed ripeness, perfection of sin, if it may be called perfection. Upon earth the most notorious sinner is a lion chained up, and kept in; but in hell he will be let loose, and then his ravenous nature, and cruel disposition, will appear to purpose.

Thou yet standest in a soil, saith that accurate writer, not so proper for the ripening of sin, which will not come to its fulness till

transplanted unto hell. Thou who art here so maidenly and modest, as to blush at some sins out of shame, and forbear the actings of others out of fear, when there thou shalt see thy case as desperate as the devil doth his; then thou wilt spit out thy blasphemies, with which thy nature is stuffed, with the same malice that he doth.

The vilest man in this world is like a swine in a fair meadow; but in the other world, there will be the wallowing in the mire. Thy heart now is like the sea, which cannot rest, but is ever casting up mire and dirt of sin, foaming out thy own shame, yet still it is shut up with bars and doors of restraining grace: 'Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed.' But then the doors will be opened, the banks broken down, and the flood-gates taken up; and oh what a deluge, what an overflow of sin will be there!

Here if God should not put a bridle into the mouth of these unruly beasts, and hold them in, there would be no living for a saint among them; but then, when the good shall be parted from them, the reins shall be laid, in some respect, on their own necks, and then they will run to the same excess of riot and sin with the very devils.

All the weeping in hell will not wash thee a whit the cleaner, and all the fire there will not consume the least of thy dross. He that is filthy at death, will be filthy still; and he that is unjust then, shall be unjust for ever, Rev. 22:11.

Hell may fitly be called Pompey's theatre, the glory of old Rome, a sty of filthiness. Every bottle of wickedness will be there filled with those bitter waters; thou that now makest a match with mischief, shalt then have thy bellyful. Here sin is thy sin and defilement, but there it will be thy hell, thy punishment. Here thou sportest with it, but there thou shalt smart for it. Now it is thy pleasure, but then it will be thine everlasting pain.

Sin is ugly to a saint on earth, notwithstanding all her gaudy attire, and painted face; but oh what a deformed monster she will be in hell,

when she shall be stripped of all her ornaments of pleasure and profit, and when all her paint shall be washed off with rivers of brimstone! I thus preach, and thus think, saith Chrysostom, that it is more bitter to sin against Christ than to suffer the torments of hell. And holy Anselm saith, that if the evil of sin were proffered to him, and the torments of hell, he had rather choose hell than sin. Thus odious sin is to a godly man in this world, and surely it will not be amiable to a wicked man in the other world; but they who now glory in their shame, will then be ashamed of their glory, and find their lusts more burdensome to them, how lightly soever now they go with them, than ever prisoners did their chains and fetters.

If thy soul be so unhealthy in so pure an air as this, comparatively, is among the saints of God, how diseased will it be in that misty region of darkness, in that pest-house, among devils and infectious spirits!

Secondly, Thou shalt gain by death a fulness of sorrow. When thy sins come to their highest degree, then will thy sorrows likewise, both in regard of intension and duration.

1. In regard of intension; and how great this will be I am not able to tell thee. When one was desired to paint the Spanish inquisition, he took a table and besmeared it with blood, implying the torments were so cruel and bloody that his pencil could not delineate them. Sure I am Phalaris's bull, Low-Country racks, and all outlandish tortures whatsoever, are but plays and bugbears to the sufferings of the damned. There are no sorrows like to their sorrows, wherewith the Lord afflicteth them in the day of his fierce wrath. If the wrath of God be kindled but a little, and a spark thereof light into the conscience of a saint, what a work doth it make. There is no rest in his flesh, nor quiet in his bones. When the arrows of the Almighty stick within him, the poison thereof soon drinks up his spirits, Ps. 38:3; Job 6:4. What will their condition then be, against whom God shall stir up all his wrath! Ps. 78:39. Hell is said to be prepared for the devil and his angels, Mat. 25:41; as if the almighty and infinite

God had sat down and studied the most exquisite torments that could be to inflict on them.

As when he would glorify the riches of his mercy, on them that love him and keep his commands, he provideth fulness of joy, and greater pleasures than the heart of man can possibly conceive; so when he would glorify his justice, in the highest degree, on them that hate him, and wilfully break his laws, he prepareth fulness of sorrow, and greater pain than any, yea, than all the men in the world can possibly comprehend. A melancholy man may fancy, saith one, vast and terrible fears, fire, sword, tempests, racks, furnaces, scalding lead, boiling pitch, running bell-metal, and, being kept alive in all these, to feel their torments; but these come far short of the wrath of God.

For (1.) There are bounds set to the hurting power of the creature. The fire can burn, but it cannot drown; the serpent can sting, but not tear in pieces.

(2.) The fears of the heart are bounded within those narrow apprehensions which itself can frame of the hurts which may be done. But the wrath of God proceeds from an infinite justice, and is executed by an omnipotent and unbounded power, comprising all the terror of all the creatures, as the sun doth all other light, eminently and excessively in it. It burns, and drowns, and tears, and stings, and can make nature feel much more than reason is able to comprehend.

'A wounded spirit who can bear?' Prov. 18:14. The wise man gives a challenge to the whole creation, to find out a person that is strong enough to undergo such a burden, and certainly none ever dared to accept the challenge. How intolerable hath such a weight been to them that are lions for strength and courage! This caused David's broken bones and watered couch. This made Heman at his wits' end, Ps. 88:15. This made Spira, that seven years' monument of God's justice, as Mr Shepherd, in his Sincere Convert, calls him, to roar so horribly out of anguish of spirit. This made Daniel choose rather to

be cast to the cruel lions, than to carry about with him such a ravenous lion in his conscience. This made some of the martyrs to feel a very hell in their consciences after their recantation. No wolf in the breast, no worm in the bowels, no frenzy so outrageous as a gnawing, corroding conscience.

If the wrath of a king be as the roaring of a lion, oh what is the wrath of God! And if his wrath be so terrible in this world, where there is ever some mixture of mercy with it, what will it be in the other world, when the soul shall have a cup of pure wrath to drink, when God shall shew the unconceivableness of his strength, in tormenting the creature, and preserving it to feel those torments? 'Who knoweth the power of his anger?' Ps. 90:11. There will be tribulation and anguish, indignation and wrath, on the soul of every man that doeth evil, Rom. 2:8, 9. There is fire to burn, and brimstone to choke, Mat. 12:40, and chains to bind, and serpents to sting, and worms to gnaw, Mark 9:44; Jude 12, and darkness to affright; there is variety, universality, and extremity of torments.

Augustine admires it, and saith, that for vehemency of heat it exceeds our fire, as much as ours doth fire painted on the wall. But the sufferings of thy soul, will be the soul of thy sufferings; the worm that never dieth, will be the killing death. When thou shalt remember all thy former sinful pleasures, of which nothing remaineth but thy present shame and pain; when thou shalt reflect upon the former offers thou hast had, of all the dainties which others feed on in heaven, and despair now of ever obtaining the least crumb that falleth from the master's table; when thou shalt foresee the great and terrible day of the Lord Jesus, the reuniting of thy body to thy soul, the easeless and endless torments which soul and body must endure together; thy sins past will horribly perplex thee, thy present shame will lamentably confound thee, thy future tortures will unspeakably affright thee.<sup>3</sup>

Oh it will be a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God! Heb. 12:29. One touch of it made a man at arms to cry out sadly,

'Have pity upon me, my friends, have pity upon me, for the hand of God hath touched me,' Job 19:21. One blow of it broke the backs of the angels, Jude 6. Alas! sinner, what wilt thou do under the whole weight of it? how will thy heart endure, or thy hands be strong, in this day that the Lord shall thus deal with thee? The Lord hath spoken it, and he will do it, Ezek. 22:14.

Now thou canst hear, and read, and talk of hell, and be no more troubled than physicians are at the many diseases which affect their patients; nay, it may be thou dost jeer, when thou shouldst fear; like leviathan, laugh at the shaking of the spear. If a minister come to thee, as Lot to his sons-in-law, and warn thee to leave the Sodom of thy sinful, sensual life, and tell thee that otherwise the Lord will destroy thee, that fire and brimstone will be thy portion; he seemeth to thee (as Lot to them, Gen. 19:14) as one that mocketh; thou thinkest that he is in jest, but they feel what they would not fear. Now they are suffering the vengeance of eternal fire, Jude 7; and so wilt thou, if God prevent not by renewing thy heart, and reforming thy life. And though now thou art so senseless, that the seat thou sittest in, and the pillar thou leanest on, are as much affected with the threatenings and denunciation of the judgments of God as thou art, yet then thou wilt be sensible enough; and thine eyes, so dry now, will weep enough when they come to that place, where is nothing but weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, Mat. 24:51. As the love of God is a known unknown love, Eph. 3:18, 19; none know it fully, but they that enjoy it in glory; so the anger of God is a known unknown anger, Ps. 90:11; none can know it perfectly, but they that shall feel it eternally.

2. It will be full in regard of duration: all thy sad losses, and all thy sorrowful gains, will be for ever. There was nothing else wanting to make thee completely miserable, but the everlasting duration of them; and, lo, here it is. The positive part of thy punishment will be permanent; there the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched, Mark 9:44; and the privative part also shall be perpetual—thou shalt

suffer everlasting perdition from the presence of the Lord, 2 Thes. 1:9.

Whatsoever relateth to the torments of the carnal is eternal. God, who damneth them, is eternal: 1 Tim. 1:17, 'Now, to the King eternal, immortal, the only wise God,' &c. The fire which tormenteth them is eternal—Jude 7, 'suffering the vengeance of the eternal fire;' the chains which bind them, the worm which gnaws them, the judgment given against them, are all eternal, Jude 7; Heb. 6:2. Thou sinnest in thy eternity, and God will make thee suffer in his eternity.

Thou sinnest against an infinite God, and therefore thy punishment must be infinite; which, because it cannot be in regard of intension, thy back being not strong enough to bear an infinite stroke, therefore it must be in duration. Infinite power cannot inflict greater or longer pains than infinite justice doth call for. The debt thou owest to the righteousness of God will be ever paying and never paid, and therefore thou shalt not escape out of that prison, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing, Mat. 5:23.

The command of Caius Caligula to the executioner, after he had condemned a malefactor, was so to strike that they might feel themselves dying, and endure the pains of an enduring death. Such will be the everlasting death of the damned: they will be ever, ever dying, and never dead; they shall seek death, but not find it; follow after it, but it will flee from them, Rev. 9:6.

The same author reporteth of one that requested of Tiberius Cæsar death rather than long imprisonment, how he was answered by the emperor, You and I are not yet friends. The truth is, the punishment there must needs be long, yea, eternal, because God and the sinner shall never be friends. In this life God treateth with the soul by his ambassadors upon terms of peace; nay, he beseecheth the sinner to be reconciled, 2 Cor. 5:20; the carnal man still continueth in his enmity against God, walking contrary to him, and fighting against him. God continueth many a day, to some many a year, offering

peace, desiring there may be a league made; only it must be offensive and defensive. It must be a holy peace and league against the devil, the world, and the flesh. Upon this the sinner breaks off; he will not be an enemy to his old cursed friends. Now at death this treaty dieth; and the breach then continuing, it is irrecoverable for ever. Then the King of kings causeth his terrors to set themselves in array against the sinner, and proclaimeth open and eternal war.

Reader, for thy soul's sake let me beseech thee to ponder this but one half quarter of an hour every morning, that the pain which sin bringeth will be eternal. Oh how may it take off the edge of thy love to thy most pleasing lusts! Endless misery must needs be easeless; no condition so intolerable as a miserable condition that is unalterable. It is a comfort to a woman in travail, in the midst of her sharp throes and bitter pangs, to think these will have an end; the hope of that doth much help her to hold out; but, woe and alas! they whose end is damnation, shall have damnation which hath no end.

It doth much support the saints under the anger of God, that, though it be sharp, it will be but short; his anger endureth but for a moment, Ps. 30:5. But then, will not the heart of the sinner be rent in pieces with rage and despair, to know that the wrath of God must abide on him? John 3:36.

The Egyptians' three days darkness was esteemed a sore plague; but what will thy punishment, O sinner, be, when thou shalt suffer utter darkness, blackness of darkness? Jude 13. Ah, wounding word, Ever, Ever! the most cutting word in comparison of this is healing; the bitterest word in respect of this is sweet. Despair will be the cutting off of all hope; to have hope, the anchor of the soul, cut off, will be the deepest cut in the world; then the vessel of thy soul will be liable to all storms and tempests imaginable.

Suppose that one of thy hands were to continue burning in one of our fires as many millions of years as there hath been minutes since the creation, couldst thou undergo it with any patience? What thinkest

thou of it? Alas! this were a mercy, a heaven to the misery of men in hell. What wilt thou do when thy whole man shall suffer the vengeance of eternal fire? Jude 7. 'Who can dwell with the devouring fire? Who can dwell with everlasting burning?' Isa. 33:14.

It is storied of one Roger, Bishop of Salisbury, that being in prison extremely tortured, live he would not, and die he could not. Truly such will the case be of rebellious ones: they shall long for death, but it will not come; and dig for it more than for hid treasures. Oh how would they rejoice and be glad if they could find a grave! But a being must be given to them that are in misery, and life to the bitter in soul. It is called death indeed, because life is neither desired there, nor can it properly be said to be enjoyed: it is a living death, or a dying life; such a death as shall never taste of life, and such a life as shall never taste of death. After the murderer of his soul hath continued in that lake of fire as many thousand years as there are fish in the mighty ocean, and as there are creatures great and small upon the whole earth, and as there are stars in the heavens, and after this as many millions of ages as there are hours in all the forementioned time, yet, after all this, his torment will not be one moment nearer to an end. Oh eternity, eternity, eternity, what art thou? to what shall I liken thee, or with what comparison shall I compare thee? Thou art like a vast ocean which hath no banks, like an outrageous fire which knoweth no bounds, like the grave that is never satisfied, like the barren womb that never saith, It is enough; in respect of God, thou art like Melchisedec, without father, without mother, having neither beginning of days nor end of life. In respect of the good, like a day which had a morning, but shall never have an evening; in respect of the bad, like a night which had an evening, but shall never have a morning. In thee it is that the justice and severity of God, the sinfulness and malignity of sin, the deceitfulness and vanity of the world, the madness and desperate folly of sinners, will sufficiently be demonstrated. In time men are whipped, but in thee it is that they are executed. In thee it is that men must suffer long for all their abuse of the long-suffering of God. In thee it is that the swearer shall have enough of wounds, and oaths, and blasphemies, when he shall

have devils wounding his soul with their fiery darts, and when he shall blaspheme the name of God through extremity of torments. In thee it is that the adulterer will have enough of lust and lasciviousness, when he shall embrace deformed devils, and lie down in a bed of fire instead of feathers, surrounded with curtains of frightful fiends. In thee it is that the drunkard will have enough of his cups, when a cup of the pure wrath of an infinitely incensed God shall be presented to him, and be forced to drink it all up, though there be eternity to the bottom. In thee it is that the Sabbath-breaker shall have enough of disturbing God's rest, when he shall be tormented, and have no rest day nor night for ever and ever, Rev. 20:10. In thee it is that the atheist in his family shall have enough of his prayerlessness and regardlessness of God, when he shall be ever, ever praying with his whole heart for a drop of water to cool his tongue, and God shall never, never shew the least regard towards him. In thee it is that the hypocrite will have enough of putting off God with a painted holiness, when he shall find a real hell. In thee, lastly, it is that the covetous worldling, that, like Korah, is swallowed up of earth alive, and yet hath never enough, shall have fire enough, pain enough, and wrath enough in hell.

Consider this, ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, when there is none to deliver you, Ps. 50:22. Good God! whither is man fallen? what desperate hardness hath seized on his heart, that he should be every moment liable to such a boundless, bottomless sea of scalding wrath, and yet as insensible of it as if it did no whit concern him. Ah, did but the seduced world believe thy word, they would mind other works than now they do.

But, reader, what is that judgment? is not the mirth of every sinner that maketh a mock of sin worse than madness? Should not the sting in sin's tail deter thee more than the false beauty of its face allure thee? Shalt thou look henceforward upon the most delightful sin, as any better than Claudius did mushroom, pleasant, and poison! Well, whoever thou art that readest this use, be confident all this, and ten thousand times more, is thy birthright; thou art by nature an heir to

this estate, that lieth in the valley of Hinnom. All this is the wages due to thee for thy service to sin; sin payeth all that die its servants in such black money; and shouldst thou go out of this world before thou art new-born, thou shalt as certainly find and feel more than all this in the other world, as there is a God in heaven, and as thou art a living creature on earth. The God of truth hath spoken it, and who shall disannul it? Mat. 18:3, and 5:10; John 3:3. Though thou art not actually under it, yet thou art every moment liable to it; this cloud of blood hangs night and day over thy head, and thou knowest not how soon it may break, and shower down upon thee. The decree and sentence is already passed in heaven, that thou who turnest not in time, shalt burn to eternity; and thou canst not tell how soon God may seal the warrant for thy execution.

Bellarmino is of opinion, that one glimpse of hell-fire were enough to make a man turn, not only Christian, but monk, and to live after the strictest order. Drexelius tells us of a young man given to his lust, that he could not endure to lie awake in the dark; and on a time, being sick, he could not sleep all night; and then he had these thoughts, What! is it so tedious to lie awake one night—to lie a few hours in the dark? what is it then to lie in everlasting chains of darkness? I am here in my house, on a soft bed, kept from sleep one night; oh to lie in flames, and in darkness everlasting, how dreadful will that be! This was the means of his conversion.

Oh that, reader, what I have written might work such an effect upon thy soul! how abundantly should I be satisfied for all my pains! how heartily should I bless that God, who by his providence called me to this task! Shall I entreat thee, as thou hast the least spark of true love to thy dying body, to thy immortal soul, to thine eternal peace, to break off thy sins by repentance, and fly all ungodliness as hell; for dost thou not perceive out of the word of the living and true God, that though thy lust may be sweet in the act, 'yet her end is as bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps take hold on hell,' Prov. 5:4, 5.

And in order hereunto, I desire thee to observe faithfully those directions I shall give thee in the third use; for I would not only open the sore, and shew its danger, but also, by the help of the physician of souls, prepare a plaster. The Lord enable thee to apply it for thy cure!

Take a man that is most addicted to his pleasures, and bring him to the mouth of a furnace red hot and flaming, and ask him, How much pleasure wouldst thou take to continue burning in this furnace for one day? he would answer undoubtedly, I would not be tormented in it one day, to gain the whole world, and all the pleasures of it. Ask him a second time, What reward would you take to endure this fire half a day? Propound what reward you will, there is nothing so precious which he would buy at so dear a rate as those torments; and yet how comes it to pass, O God, that for a little gain, and that vile; for a little honour, and that fugitive; for a little pleasure, and that fading, men so little regard hell-fire, which is eternal.

By this time I hope it is day in thine understanding, and thou seest clearly that there is a difference between the death of the righteous and the wicked; that as the same perfume, which is mortal to the ravenous vulture, is refreshing to the true dove; that as the same herb which cureth men stung with serpents, killeth beasts; so the same mortal disease which cureth the godly of all their spiritual and bodily distempers, killeth the wicked; they are killed with death, Rev. 6.

Heaviness to a saint may endure for the night of this life, but joy will come in the morning of death; whereas the freshest streams of sinful delights will end in a salt sea of sorrows and tears. The most prosperous sinner is but like a thief that goeth through a pleasant meadow to the gallows.

## **CHAPTER VIII**

A second use of trial, with motives to enforce it

I come now to a second use, and that will be by way of examination.

If it be so, that they who have Christ for their life shall have gain by their death, then examine whether you are one of them, to whom to die will be gain. Like a merchant, cast up the accounts between God and thy soul, and see how much thou art worth for another world. It is good husbandry to know the state of thy flock, Prov. 27:23; but there is a greater necessity of knowing the state of thy soul, of communing with thy own heart, Ps. 4:4. Many a man may say of himself, as the epigrammatist of his unneighbourly neighbour, *In urbe tota nemo tam prope tam proculque nobis*. Is it not a thousand pities to live known to others, and to die unknown to thyself? to speak so much, and so often, to others, and yet, in the many years that thou hast lived, never to have spent one hour in serious discourse with thyself about thine eternal condition, what shall become of thee for ever?

Friend, it may be thou hast been very solicitous to know what shall befall thee whilst thou livest; is there not more cause for thee to be inquisitive what shall befall thee when thou diest? I think it concerneth thee to be faithful and diligent about this work of examining thy soul, whether Jesus Christ be thy life, when all thy happiness hangs on this hinge, even thine estate for eternity. Trivial matters may be passed over slightly, but things of weight must be minded seriously.

Reader, hadst thou ever a matter of greater or equal concernment to thine unchangeable and eternal estate? Are not thy following thy trade, thy providing for thy family, thy eating, drinking, sleeping, and the most necessary things thou canst imagine about thy outward man, but rattles and babies, but toys and trifles, in comparison of this?

Suppose the title I am speaking of did but concern an estate in land of one hundred pound per annum, which thou wert buying, wouldst thou not consult with this and that man, whether the title were good

or no? Wouldst thou think two or three days ill spent in searching and advising, to prevent the cozenage of thee and thy children? And doth not thy soul, thine eternal estate, deserve more care, more time, more pains, more consulting, searching, and questioning, for fear of an everlasting miscarriage? Let thy reason be judge. Had not those wires need to be strong, that have such a weight as thy eternal welfare hanging on them? should not that anchor be cast sure, which is intrusted with a vessel so richly laden as with thy soul, that jewel of inestimable value, more worth than a world? Can that foundation be too firmly laid, that hath such a building as eternity of happiness depending on it? Without question, those deeds and evidences, if ever any, had need to be unquestionable, that convey the inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, reserved in heaven.

And the rather shouldst thou try thy soul thoroughly, because, shouldst thou content thyself with a counterfeit title to heaven, as most men and women amongst us do, by virtue only of some deeds which the devil and thy carnal heart have forged, and wouldst so die, thou wouldst assuredly be dealt with as a cheat, and cast into the prison of hell, and then thy condition will be most lamentable, because it will be irrecoverable.

If thou missest at all when thou diest, thou missest for ever and for ever. An error then can never be mended; there can be no second throw cast, no second edition can come forth to correct the errors of the former; but the great work for which thou wert born not being done, thou art undone to eternity; and then, as godly men befool themselves in this world, while they live, Ps. 73:2, for their corruption, so thou wilt befool thyself in the other world, when thou diest, for thy presumption, Jer. 17:11, that thou shouldst think the rotten props of a little profession, of a few outward privileges, and inward good meanings, as thou callest them, could bear the weight of thy soul, and thine endless state, that thou should build so slightly for a dwelling of perpetuity. 'Set thy heart therefore to all the words that I speak unto thee; for it is not a vain thing, but it is for thy life,' Deut. 32:46, 47.

Well, friend, the great question which I shall put to thee will be this: Canst thou say, to thee to live is Christ? Thy gain by death dependeth on this. Examine thyself thoroughly, prove thyself whether thou art in the faith or no, 2 Cor. 13:5. The eagle trieth her young ones by the sun whether they be of the right brood or no, as some affirm. Do thou try thyself by this Sun of righteousness, by this life in Christ, by thine ingrafting into Christ. Ask thy soul whether it be acquainted with the new birth, the new creation, the divine nature, the renewing in the spirit of thy mind, the sanctification of the Spirit, the walking after the Spirit, the image of God, the writing of his laws in thy heart, the law of the spirit of life in Christ, effectual calling; unless thou hast that one thing signified by all these things, thou hast nothing; then, and not till then, thou hast crossed the line, shot the gulf, art safely landed in Christ, and hast attained that which ever accompanieth salvation.

But because this self-trial, though it be a necessary duty, yet is a work of much difficulty—it is easier for a man to speak to the stateliest king in the world, than to himself as he ought to speak—and because, naturally, men's sores and corruptions make them so unwilling to be searched for fear of pain, I shall annex two or three quickening motives to persuade thee to this much-neglected duty.

#### The first motive

Consider how easy and ordinary it is to be deceived, though it be in a work of such infinite weight; now where the business is weighty, and the mistake ordinary and easy, it requireth thee to search thoroughly. It is one of the most ordinary and easy things in the world for a child of disobedience to live and die asleep in sin, and never dream of hell, till he come to awake in the other world in a bed of fire. Thy deceitful heart will be night and day inclining thee to sleep, and the devil will be sure to keep the cradle rocking.

Alas! how very few are there that will be persuaded to cast up their spiritual accounts; but, like men that we say are worse than naught,

loathe the thoughts of looking into or summing up their estates; or like some women, when they come to be old, turn the back side of their looking-glasses toward them, as unwilling to see their own wrinkles and deformity.

And of those that do sometimes examine themselves, how many are there that do it slightly and superficially, contenting themselves with false marks, quickly believing what they would have, even all to be well, till they are sent to be undeceived in hell.

Maude, mother to King Henry the Second, being besieged at Oxford, she got away with white apparel in the snow, undiscovered. So do many hypocrites, with their profession of snow-like purity, pass among men; but God knows the heart.

All is not gold that glitters, nor is all grace that makes a fair show in the flesh. There is much counterfeit coin in the world, that goeth current among men, as if it were as good as the best; so there is a great deal of counterfeit holiness in the world, a great deal of civility, of morality, of common grace, which is taken (or rather mistaken) by men for true saving grace; much fancy is taken for faith, presumption for hope, self-love for saint-love, and worldly sighs for godly sorrow.

What can the saint do, but as, to the outward appearance, the sinner may do the same? As the devil is God's ape, so is the self-deluding soul not seldom the saint's ape.

Doth the saint abstain from gross sins? so doth he whose religion consisted so much in negatives, Luke 18:11. Doth the saint pray? so do the pharisees, and make long prayers too, Mat. 23:14. Do the saints fast? Neh. 1:4; Dan. 9.; so do they, Mat. 6:16, and 9:14; and it may be twice in one week, Luke 18:12. Do the saints give alms? Acts 10.; so do they, Mat. 6:1, 2. Do the saints confess sin? the sinner can do it in the very same words, 1 Sam. 15:24. Doth Ephraim repent? Jer 31:18; so doth Judas, Mat. 27:3. Doth Abraham believe? Rom. 4.; so doth Simon Magus, Acts 8:13. Doth Hezekiah humble himself? 2

Chron. 32:26; so doth Ahab, and walk softly into the bargain, 1 Kings 22:15. Doth the man after God's own heart fulfil all God's will? Acts 13:22; you shall hear that a Jehu shall do very much, and that by a testimony from God's own mouth: 2 Kings 10:30, 'Thou hast done well in executing that which was right in mine eyes; thou hast done unto the house of Ahab according to all that was in mine heart.' What a great resemblance is there in all these outwardly, but a vast difference inwardly! The ungodly sometimes do attain to the outward actions, but never to the inward sanctified affections of the godly; as the painter may paint fire, but he cannot paint heat—that is beyond his skill. Many titular Christians are like the onyx-stone, of which naturalists write, that it is clear and bright in the superficies, but dark and muddy at the centre: men of civil conversation, but not of sanctified actions. Now all this calleth aloud to thee, to try thyself whether thou goest beyond them, that do all before-mentioned, and yet come short of heaven.

Besides, it is not seldom that a true Christian, for want of a prudent trial, judgeth himself unsound. As the face of Moses, so his heart shines with grace, and he knoweth it not; Christ is in him, as he was with the two disciples, and he, as they, is ignorant of it. Many Christians, like Hagar, weep and mourn that they must die for thirst, when the water of life is by them, yea, within them.

There is that maketh himself rich, full of peace and joy from assurance of God's favour and his salvation, yet hath nothing—not one jot of grace or true ground of joy; there is that maketh himself poor—persuadeth himself to be in a most wretched estate—and yet hath great riches, Prov. 13:7, is highly in God's favour, and hath great store of saving grace.

But most commonly the error is on the other side. How doth every swaggering, or, at best, civilised sinner, presume that he is a saint! How often hath he blear-eyed Leah lying by him all night, and he thinketh it is beautiful Rachel, till the light of the morning discover the contrary! How many have the devil and the world lodging in their

arms and embraces, and think it is Christ, the fairest of ten thousand, till upon examination it be found otherwise!

Reader, take heed this be not thy case; that thou, like Uriah, carriest letters about thee, importing thy own execution, and yet thou not know of it. It is ordinary for men to think they are spiritually rich, and increased with goods, and to have need of nothing, and not to know that they are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, Rev 3:17. They cry, like Agag, 'Surely the bitterness of death is past;' there is no fear of death, of wrath, of hell, or damnation, when they are liable every moment to be hewn in pieces before the Lord, to be torn in pieces by the roaring lion. Oh, how many a precious vessel (soul I mean) hath been split upon this rock of presumption! Doth it not therefore concern thee to be serious and faithful in searching thy heart, lest thou shouldst, as the most, deceive thyself about a business of such unspeakable consequence?

#### The second motive

Consider the fewness of them that have Christ for their life, or that live this spiritual life. Every one almost that liveth within the visible church is ready to say that heaven is his inheritance, and he shall escape the wrath to come, when the word of God and the works of men do clearly and fully speak the contrary.

The devil hath his droves: all the earth wander after the beast, Rev. 17:8. 'The whole world lieth in wickedness,' 1 John 5:19. 'The enemies of God cover the earth like grasshoppers for multitude,' Judges 7:12. They fill the country, when the Israelites are like two little flocks of kids, 1 Kings 20:27. The good and the true shepherd calleth his flock a little flock, Luke 12:32, nay, a little, little flock, there being in the original two diminutives, to shew their fewness. When four, if not five cities were destroyed, one righteous Lot with his small family is delivered, Gen. 19:15. When a whole world is drowned, a few, that is, eight souls, are saved, 1 Pet. 3:20. Therefore the children of God are called a remnant, Micah 7:18—two or three yards remaining of forty

or fifty; and compared to the gleanings after the vintage, Isa. 17:6—one or two bunches may be left under some thick or utmost bough; but what are they to the many basketfuls that were gathered before? The saints are jewels: now, how few are there of such pearls, in comparison of pebble? Mal. 3:17; and strangers, Ps. 119:19, how small is their number to natives, which are the world's own, John 15:19. The church of Sardis hath a few names only that have not defiled their garments, Rev. 3:4.

Some have divided the world into thirty parts, and have affirmed nineteen of those to be without Christ, in whose name alone is salvation; and six of the remaining eleven to be papists, which certainly are in no safe way to heaven; and five parts of thirty only to be protestants, amongst whom they that read of their way of worship beyond the seas will find many of these to be but mongrel protestants. But, to waive this, and to come to England, where it is generally by godly men believed that God hath as numerous an issue of new-born children as in any such quantity of ground in the world, and, reader, take the public congregation thou dost join with in the solemn worship of the ever-blessed God upon his own day; and suppose one should come and sweep out of it, in the first place, all notorious sinners—drunkards, swearers, adulterers, extortioners, liars, railers, scoffers at godliness, Sabbath-breakers, and the like, upon whom, whosoever looketh with Scripture spectacles may see the devil's mark on their foreheads, hell written on them in great letters, they continuing impenitent—would not such a besom sweep away much dust, even a great part of the people of the parish where thou livest? But suppose one should come, in the second place, and purge out your civil and moral, yet unsanctified men and women—such, I mean, as are fair and just in their carriage and dealings; you cannot say, black is their eye; they pay to every man his due; these are good second-table men and women; their religion consisteth altogether in their righteousness towards men; they will not for a world wrong their neighbour of a farthing, but they make no conscience of robbing God of the great fear, chief love, choice delight, strong trust, which are due to his Majesty; they know not what it is to

know him and his will, to acknowledge him by religious performances of prayer, reading, and the like, in their families and closets; they can scarce tell you what God is, or what Christ is, or what the Lord Jesus hath suffered or purchased for sinners. As old as many of them are, they are more ignorant of the natures, offices, states of Christ, of regeneration, justification, and sanctification, than little children; and yet they are too old to learn. The minister cannot persuade them to come to him, and be instructed by him in the principles of the oracles of God; nay, and they will not believe that ignorance is a damning sin, though God hath spoken so peremptorily, that Christ shall come 'in flaming fire to render vengeance on them that know not God,' 2 Thes. 1:8, and he hath told them expressly, that men perish for want of knowledge, Hosea 4:6; Prov. 1:22, 29.

Suppose, I say, one should purge out all these civil, righteous, yet ignorant and irreligious persons—questionless he would purge out two parts of three of the remaining ill-humours—how very many would that blind captain, ignorance, lead out of a congregation!

But suppose one came, in the third place, again, and take away them that are righteous in their dealings with men, and seem religious in their duties, towards God; that pray, and hear, and read, and fast, and instruct their families, and call upon God in secret, and yet are only so good to the eye of man, being, like some fruit, fair in the outside, but rotten at core, having self-ends and carnal principles in all they do, Mat. 23 and 6.

After three such sweepings, how few, thinkest thou, would be left in a congregation, or in a parish. If Christ should come with his whip of cords, and scourge all these out of his temple—whom the word of God clearly condemneth—would not Jesus be left almost quite alone, as he was in John 8:9?

Besides all those forementioned, how many are there whose religion consisteth merely in opinions, or heresies, or schism, and separation

from the people of God and public worship, and from the good old way of faith and repentance, that mind neither Sabbath, nor sacraments, nor family duties, and trust for salvation to the light within them, even till they come to utter darkness, 2 Pet. 2:1, 2; Jude 11, 12; 1 John 2:19. Oh, how few are there that shall be saved! If Ulpian complained there were few true philosophers, have not we more cause to complain there are few true believers? for 'who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?' Isa. 53:1.

The terms of denying a man's self, or crucifying the flesh with the affections and lusts thereof, or cutting off right hands, and plucking out right eyes; of hating father, mother, wife, child, name, house, and lands—without which Christ will not save the soul—are so irksome, and contrary to the sensual, brutish man, that rather than admit them, they will take their leave of both Saviour and salvation. 'Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth to life, and few there be that find it,' Mat. 16:24; Gal. 5:24; Mark 9:43; Luke 14:26; Mat. 7:14.

Reader, I take not delight to number the people of God, much less to lessen their number. The Lord knoweth I have not written this head without some sorrow of heart; my prayer is like that of Joab's, The Lord add unto his people an hundredfold, and grant that his sons may come from far, and his daughters from the ends of the earth, that the dominions of his Son may be from sea to sea, and from one end of the land unto the other, 2 Sam. 24. But, without all controversy, they are comparatively very few; and why doth the word of God mention it so much but to make thee more diligent and violent for the kingdom of heaven, Mat. 7:13, 14. If there were but few damned, and many saved, out of the places where we live, I think it would behove thee to try upon what ground thou standest, lest thou shouldst be one of those few that must suffer the vengeance of eternal fire; but when so many, when such multitudes, go in the broad way that leadeth to destruction, when the love of many waxeth cold, and it is but an he almost that shall endure to the end, and be

saved, Mat. 24:12, how much, how much doth it concern thee to look about thee that all things are right within betwixt God and thy soul.

### The third motive

Thirdly, Consider the profitableness of a serious faithful examination of thy estate; if thou hast this spiritual life, thy comfort dependeth upon the knowledge of it. He that hath true grace, shall go to heaven certainly; but he only that knoweth it, shall go to heaven comfortably. What the lawyers say of civil things, I may say of spiritual: Things that appear not, are all one as if they were not at all in being. What comfort hath he that is heir to a vast estate, till he know of it, more than he that hath nothing to do with it? What comfort is it to thee that thou art a child of God, a member of Christ, an heir of heaven, unless thou knowest it upon Scripture grounds? If twenty or thirty are condemned, and one be pardoned, this man torments himself with fears and terrors as much as the rest, till he knoweth of his pardon. Doth not many a Christian, like Jacob, go down to the grave with sorrow, and refuse to be comforted, only upon a false supposition, that the Joseph of their soul is dead, when indeed he is alive, and in favour in the heavenly court, as they upon a true search and inquiry will find? The saints have known their good estate. I do not put thee upon the labour in vain, Gal. 2:20; 2 Cor. 5:1; and the profit will answer thy pains. And how contented wilt thou be in all conditions, when thou hast once attained the knowledge of the good estate God-ward. Thou wilt bid every messenger welcome for his sake that sendeth him; thou needest not fear any servant can night or day knock at thy door with ill news. How willing wilt thou go to duty, and with what alacrity perform them, knowing the God whom thou drawest nigh to is thy loving Father; the Christ, in whose name thou approachest, is thy lovely Saviour; nay, how joyfully mayest thou think of death, as the portal through which thou shalt go into thy Master's joy and endless life. Believe it, thy life will be a heaven upon earth. And shouldst thou find thy estate lost, will it not be an infinite mercy to thee, that thou didst know it before it was too late? How will it awaken thee out of

thy security, and affrighten thee upon the apprehension of thy misery! how will it quicken thee to mind thy duty, in loathing thyself, in leaving thy sins, and in flying to thy Saviour! Sound conversion begins at self-examination: first we 'search and try our ways, and then turn to the Lord,' Lam. 3:40. The way to have our sores cured, is first to have them thoroughly searched: 'I considered my ways, and turned my feet to thy testimonies,' Ps. 119:59. If thou wouldst have thy face clean, look into the glass of the law, and view thy spots. He that knoweth not that he is in a wrong path, will not turn back, though the farther he goeth, the greater is his deviation and danger. Jer. 31:19, 'After I was instructed,' or after I was made known to myself, 'I repented.' As Abigail said to David, 'If thou hearken to thy servant, it will be no grief of mind hereafter to my lord, that thou art kept from shedding of blood.' So say I to thee, If thou wilt faithfully examine thyself, it will be no cause of sorrow hereafter to thee, that thou wert thereby kept from a further shedding the blood of thy soul. I will conclude this motive with the meditation of the learned and holy bishop, now with Christ.

"That which is said of the elephant, that being guilty of his deformity, he cannot abide to look on his face in the water, but seeks for troubled and muddy channels, we see in well moralised men of evil conscience, who know their souls are so filthy, that they dare not so much as view them, but shift off all checks of their former iniquity, with the excuses of good fellowship. Whence it is that every small reprehension galls them, because it calls the eye of the soul home to itself, and makes them see a glimpse of what they would not. So have I seen a foolish and timorous patient, which knowing his wound very deep, would not endure the chirurgeon to search it; whereon what can ensue, but a festering of the part, and a danger of the whole body. So have I seen many prodigal wasters run so far in books, that they cannot abide to hear of a reckoning. It hath been an old and true proverb, Oft and even reckonings make long friends. I will oft sum my estate with God, that I may know what I have to expect and answer for; neither shall my score run on so long with God, that I shall not know my debts, or fear an audit, or despair of pardon."

## CHAPTER IX

### The marks of a true Christian from the text

I come to the touchstone, by which thou must be tried, whether thou art true gold or counterfeit. It is likely thou presumest thy estate is good; well, art thou willing the word of God—that must, whether thou wilt or no, judge thee for thy eternal life or death at the last day—should try thee at this day? If thy wares be right and good, thou wilt not be afraid to bring them out of thy dark shop into the light. If thy title be sound and good, I know thou wilt be ready for a fair trial at law, even at the law of God.

I shall try thee two ways, though both will lead to the same place. I must first entreat thee to put those four particulars to thy soul, which in the beginning I told thee were included in that expression, 'To me to live is Christ.'

### The first mark

Ask thy soul what is the principle of thy religious performances, what is the spring of thy obedience. Men indeed judge of others' principles by their practices, because they cannot discern the heart, whether it be right in a duty or no; but God judgeth of men's practices by their principles, as we may see by his speech of Paul, 'Behold he prayeth,' Acts 9:11. Paul was a pharisee, one of the strictest of them, and they were much in prayer. But God, who knew his heart was wrong in former duties, takes not any notice of them. Now behold he prayeth; he might say a prayer before, but he never prayed a prayer till now. When he had a right principle, being regenerated by the Holy Ghost, then, and not till then, he made a right prayer. Till the tree be good, the fruit can never be good, Mat. 7:16. Now friend, what is the principle of thy duties? is it fear of men, hope of honour, desire of gain, or merely the stopping the mouth of conscience, or custom? are these the weights that make thy clock to go? and if these were taken off, would thy devotion stand still? then thy heart is not right in the

sight of God; entreat him, for the Lord's sake, that the thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee. Or do thy pious actions flow from a renewed will, and renewed affections? Doth the outward correspondency of thy life to the law of God, proceed from an inward conformity in thy heart to the nature and law of God, from the law written within? If it be thus, thy condition is safe; for the deeper the spring is from whence the water comes, the sweeter the water is, and thy services the more acceptable to God.

Speak thyself, whether thou prayest, readest, hearest, singest from the divine nature within, from love to the infinitely amiable God, from the delight thou takest in communion with him in duties. Oh how sweet is that honey, that drops of its own accord from the comb! and how pure is that wine which floweth freely from the grape! So grateful and acceptable is that sacrifice to God, which is seasoned with sincere love: 'Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, and delighteth greatly in his commandments,' Ps. 128:1.

Or dost thou worship God from the same principle the Sadducees do, who deny the resurrection—only from a desire it may go well with thee in this life? or from the same principle from which the Persians do the devil—only from fear lest he should do thee hurt? Surely that service will be sour, which like verjuice is squeezed out of the crabs. To serve God with a filial fear is commendable, but to serve him from a servile fear is unacceptable.

The upright Christian worketh from an inward principle, the new creation within; and thence it is that spiritual things are so natural and delightful to his regenerate part; as we see in David, 'I delight to do thy will, O my God.' How cometh this to pass, but from an inward principle? 'Thy law is within my heart,' Ps. 40:8; or as it is in Hebrew, Thy law is in the midst of my bowels. But now, a hypocrite usually acteth from some outward principle, as the pharisees did, Mat. 23:14, 27, and 6:1, 5. The wind from without makes their mill to go; some goads, or whips, force them forward; hence it is that, like

tired jades, they are presently weary, and desire nothing more than to rest, and cease from such unpleasant labour.

### The second mark

Ask thy soul what is the pattern of the life; whom dost thou labour to imitate? is it Christ or thy neighbour? Dost thou set thy watch by the town clock, or by the dial of Scripture, because that never faileth of going according to the Sun of righteousness? A man dead spiritually, like dead fish, ever swimmeth down with the stream of the times; will follow a multitude to do evil, cannot endure to be singular. Like the planet Mercury, at best, if in conjunction with good, he is good; if with bad, he is bad; or, like water, taketh the figure of the vessel, whatever it be, into which it is put. But now a living Christian doth not dress himself by the glass of the times; whilst he is in the wilderness of this world, he may follow the cloud of faithful witnesses, but it must be no farther than they follow Christ, 1 Cor. 11:1. Christ is the great standard by which he measureth and trieth, and which he endeavoureth to imitate in his thoughts, words, and actions. He doth *uti verbis et nummis præsentibus, et vivere moribus præteritis*, use such words and money as is current at present, but lives after that example which was in times past. The patterns of godly men bear much sway with him; but he knoweth there are some things in their lives, which are sea-marks to be avoided, and not land-marks to direct us. Therefore, like the eagle, he looketh most at the sun, Christ himself. Now, Christian, examine thyself, whom dost thou look upon for thy pattern; is it thy desire and care to regulate thy family and life, as such a knight, or esquire, or gentleman in the parish where thou livest ordereth his, or as the profane, irreligious neighbours do theirs? or dost thou look upon, and labour to resemble Jesus Christ, to govern thy house and heart as he did his, praying with his apostles, instructing them in the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, and the like? Mat. 6. 'Walking humbly, inoffensively, and worthy of the Lord, even unto all well-pleasing,' Heb. 7:26; 1 Peter 1:19.

It is reported of Jerome, that having read the religious life and death of Hilarion, he cried out, holding up the book, Well, Hilarion shall be the champion whom I will follow. So when thou readest in the Scripture of the heavenly pious life, and holy patient death of the Redeemer, how he did all things well, and none could convince him of sin; is thy soul so ravished with the beauty and lustre of those many graces, which shined so eminently in him, that it breatheth out, Oh that I were like him! oh that I could be as meek and lowly as Christ, that I could deny myself, and despise the world, and glorify God as much as Christ did, that the same mind were in me that was in Christ Jesus! And though to thy hearty sorrow, thou seest how far short thou comest of a perfect conformity to him, yet thou resolvest to use all means appointed, that thou mayest be more like him, and concludest, Well, Christ shall be the only champion whom I will follow. Answer thy conscience within thee, whether it be thus or no; for if thou art a living member, thou wilt resemble thy head: 'Those whom God did foreknow, he did predestinate to be conformable to the image of his Son,' Rom. 8:29. As the image in the glass resembleth the face, in figure, feature, and favour, so doth the true Christian after his proportion resemble Jesus Christ.

### The third mark

Is Christ the comfort of thy life? When trouble, like frosty weather, overtaketh thee, which is the fire at which thou warmest thy heart? Is it this friend, or that place of preferment, or any outward comfort whatsoever? or is it thy relation to Christ, and his affection to thee? When damps arise out of the earth, is it the joy of thy soul that light springs down from heaven; or dost thou trust to the candle of the creature, which will burn blue and go out? Is Christ, man, or the world the door through which thy joys come in, the dish on which thou feedest with most delight? If Christ should give thee the long life of Methuselah, the strength of Samson, the beauty of Absalom, the wisdom, wealth, and renown of Solomon, and deny himself to thee, canst thou contentedly bear his absence, or wouldst thou say, as Haman in another case, and Absalom; 2 Sam. 14:24, 'All this availeth

me nothing, so long as I may not see the king's face.' As Artabazus, when Cyrus gave him a cup of gold, and kissed Chrysantas, told the king, The cup thou gavest to me, was not half so good gold as the kiss thou gavest Chrysantas; so saith the living saint, when Christ blesseth him outwardly, and withdraweth himself from the soul: Lord, the cups, the wife and children, the food and raiment, the pleasures and treasures, all the earthly mercies thou givest to me, are not a quarter so good gold as the kiss of thy love which thou givest unto thy favourites. 'O kiss me with the kisses of thy mouth, for thy love is better than wine,' Cant. 1. 'Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that thou bearest unto thy children: O visit me with thy salvation; that I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance,' Ps. 106:4, 5. 'Look thou upon me, and be merciful unto me, as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name,' Ps. 119:132. These are the holy petitions of a gracious soul for a child's portion. Common mercies will never content them that have special grace, nor satisfy them that are sanctified indeed.

As the needle touched with the loadstone is restless, till it points toward the north, so the saint that is touched effectually by the Spirit of God, is unquiet till he turn unto, and have fellowship with, Jesus Christ. He may flutter up and down, like the dove, over the waters of this world, but can find no rest for the soles of his feet, till he return to Christ, the true ark—till Christ put forth his hand and take him in, Gen. 8:9. Then, and not till then, he crieth out, with the psalmist, 'Return to thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.'

Now, reader, what sayest thou? how is it with thee? Do thy affections, as the water of Jordan, overflow their banks at the time of thine earthly harvests? Joshua 3:13; or, like the bird, dost thou then sing most merrily when thou art mounting up to heaven? Art thou willing to be served as the children of Abraham's concubines, put off with ordinary gifts? or must thou, like Isaac, have all, even Jesus Christ, or else thou esteemest thyself to have nothing? Gen 25:5, 6.

## The fourth mark

Is Christ the end of thy life? Is it thy main scope to live to him that died for thee? Doth the compass of thy soul without trepidation stand right to this pole, the glory of Jesus Christ? 'For none of us liveth to himself,' saith the apostle, 'and no man dieth to himself. But whether we live, we live unto the Lord, and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live therefore or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of dead and living,' Rom. 14:7–9. A sincere Christian dedicates his body, soul, name, estate, relations, interests, and his all to the glory of Christ, and wisheth he had something better to consecrate to him. As the Grecian told the emperor, If I had more, more would I give thee. So the saint desireth that he may believe more, and repent more, and hate sin more, and for this end, that he may exalt Christ more. The philosopher telleth us that means move by the goodness of their ends; not by any absolute goodness of their own, but by their relative goodness, the goodness of their ends. As we take physic, not for physic's sake, but for health's sake; so duties and ordinances move a Christian to mind them, not so much for their own sake, as for their end's sake. He prayeth, fasteth, readeth, meditateth, that he may thereby and therein please, glorify, and enjoy the Lord Jesus Christ.

But now, a professor without the power of godliness hath another end. He goeth to church, but it is as the cut-purse, not to seek God, but his prey. He performeth duties, but either for self-credit, Mat. 6:2—as Pliny observeth of the nightingale, that she will sing much longer and louder when men are by, than when they are not;—or else for self-profit, Mat. 23:14. As that emperor who commanded all golden idols to be pulled down out of churches, not out of hatred to the idols, but out of love to the gold; and like him in the comedy, that cried out, O heavens, but pointed to the earth. Religion is either this man's stirrup, by which he hopes to get into the saddle above his neighbours, or else it is his stalking horse, which he contentedly followeth all day, because it may bring him in some gain at night.

Like Satan, he may assume the shape of Samuel, but it is only upon some particular errand, and for his own ends. This man is not holy, but crafty, and doth not serve God, but himself of God. Reader, search whether thou art one of these: Thou art but an empty vine, if thou bringest forth fruit to thyself, Hosea 10:1. Oh how many a work, materially good, being flyblown with self, proves formally bad, and so becomes stinking and unsavoury in the nostrils of God! Self is the pirate which too too often intercepteth the golden fleet of religious performances, that they cannot return freighted with blessings. It concerneth thee therefore to observe thy ends; what are thy ends in thy eating and drinking, and all thy natural and civil actions? Is thy end to please and gratify the flesh, or is it that thou mayest get health and strength, and thereby be the more serviceable to thy Maker and Redeemer? What is thy end in thy spiritual undertakings? is duty the end of duty, or is obedience to the honour of, and communion with, Christ the end of thy performances? Make a pause! before thou readest farther, and answer the Lord, who commandeth thee to examine and know the state of thy soul.

# CHAPTER X

## Other marks of saints

But because I would willingly find thee out, whoever thou art, and have thee fully acquainted with thy spiritual condition, I shall desire thee to try thy spiritual condition by the efficient cause of it, and that is the Spirit of God. The Holy Ghost is called the Spirit of life, Rom. 8:2, and indeed he only hath this spiritual life that hath this Spirit of life. As all the members of the natural body are actuated and enlivened by the same human spirit from the head; so all the members of the mystical body are quickened and actuated by the same divine Spirit from their head, the Lord Jesus Christ. Mark, therefore, that one place in Rom. 8:9, how full it is to this purpose; for upon that place the weight of all I have to speak further about this use of trial will depend. The words are these: 'But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be the Spirit of God dwell in you.' Mark, 'Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.' Observe, I beseech thee, 'If any man,' let him pretend never so much, let his privileges be never so many, let his profession be never so great, and his performances never so numerous, yet if he have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his; so that if the Spirit of Christ have not its habitation in thee, thou hast no spiritual relation to Jesus Christ.

Now I shall teach thee to know whether the Spirit be in thee or no, by two of its effects or properties; the first will be more general, the second more special.

### The first mark

The Spirit of God, if it be in thee, will purify thee, for it is a purifying Spirit. Sanctification is the proper work of the Spirit of Christ. It is called the Holy Ghost; and it is holy, not only subjectively, but

effectively; it worketh holiness, and makes men holy, 1 Cor. 6:11. It infuseth holy habits and principles into the soul, whereby it is enabled to fight with, and by degrees to foil, its corruptions; it changeth the understanding by illumination, the will by renovation, and the affections by sanctification; it doth not infuse new faculties into the soul, but it doth renew the old; it turneth the same waters into another channel—they ran before after the world and the flesh, but now after God and his ways; it is, as it were, the same viol, only it is new tuned; before it could make no music in praying or singing, but now it is so melodious that it delighteth the heart, and ravisheth the ear of God himself. The old moon and the new moon are the same, only the new hath a new endowment of light from the sun which it had not before; so it is here, the purified person is the same man he was before, only he hath a new endowment of the light of holiness which he had not before.

Now thus the Spirit ever worketh where it dwelleth; it is therefore called a river of living waters, John 7:38, not a pond of dead, but a river of living, waters. A pond will suffer dirt and mud to continue in it without opposition; but a river of living waters purgeth out, and casteth up, its mire and dirt, its foam and scum, Isa. 57:20. So the spirit of the world and flesh will let atheism, pride, and unbelief to lodge and lurk in the soul without resistance, unless it be a little from a natural conscience; but the Spirit of God worketh out these gradually, as generous wine worketh out lees and dregs. The Spirit is also called fire, Acts 2.; Mat. 3:11; for as fire fighteth with the cold water that is over it, and by degrees conquereth it, and reduceth the water to its own likeness of heat, in some measure; so the Spirit lusteth and fighteth against the flesh, and by degrees overcometh the interest of it, captivateth the soul to the obedience of Christ, and conformeth the whole man, in some measure, to the image of God.

Examine thy soul by this; doth the Spirit within thee combat with and conquer thy corruptions? Doth it enable thee to cast them away with shame and detestation? Hath it turned the bent of thy heart and stream of thy affections after spiritual and heavenly things? The

waters of the sea, as some write, though by their natural course they follow the centre, yet in obedience to the moon are subject to her motion, and so turn and return, ebb and flow. So though thou by nature didst follow the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life, yet in obedience to the Spirit dost thou now follow its motions? Hath the interest of the Spirit an actual predominancy in thy soul above the interest of the flesh? Canst thou say that the interest of the Spirit and the interest of the flesh do often meet together on a narrow bridge, where both cannot go forward together, and usually thou sufferest the Spirit to go forward, and the flesh to go back? When two masters walk together, and a servant followeth after, it is not easy to know to which of the two the servant belongs; but when the masters part, the servant is discovered whose he is. When religion and the world have their interests together, thou mayest be hid; but when thy credit and Christ, thy pleasure and the Spirit, come in competition, as they will very often, thou mayest discover thyself clearly whose servant thou art. Speak, friend, and let thy conscience witness whether it be thus or no. Thou mayest deceive, and thereby undo thyself, but thou canst not deceive God; for if the Spirit do not sanctify thee, the Son will never save thee. Pharaoh's court admitted of frogs and lice, and Noah's ark received unclean beasts into it; but no such vermin can crawl into the heavenly court: 'Into it can in no wise enter' (observe, reader, in no wise) 'anything that is defiled or unclean,' Rev. 21:27. These are the words of the true and living God. Canst thou think that thou hast the Spirit of God, and shalt be a gainer by death, who art a servant of unrighteousness, who hast vainglory, covetousness, hypocrisy, carnal-mindedness within thee, and never mournest under them, as one heavy laden with them, nor lonigest after, nor usest diligently the means for deliverance from them? Dost thou live a spiritual life, that, instead of being dead to sin, art dead in sin? and shalt thou arrive at heaven, who walkest in the road to hell? I assure thee, a king will sooner admit dunghill-rakers and privy-cleaners, in their nastiest, filthiest pickle, into his bed, than God will take thee, if thou be such a one, into heaven. No; heaven is for the holy, and for them only.

## The second mark

The Spirit of God is a praying spirit: it is called the spirit of grace and supplication, Zech. 12:10; the spirit of adoption, Rom. 8:15; and of his Son, whereby they that have it cry, Abba, Father, Gal. 4:6.

As Christ in heaven makes intercession for them without them, Heb. 7:25, so the Spirit of Christ on earth maketh intercession for them within them. God never had any still-born children. The fathers after the flesh sometimes have dumb children, but the Father of spirits never had any such. Man's invocation of God presently followeth upon God's effectual vocation of him. One of the first signs of spiritual life in Paul was spiritual breathing: 'Behold he prayeth,' Acts 9:11; and it is observable that prayer is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending almost of all his epistles. And David was three times a day, Ps. 55:17, nay, seven times a day, at this blessed duty, Ps. 119:164; yea, he was so wholly employed in it, that he speaketh as if he were altogether made up of it, Ps. 109:4. But I [give myself unto] prayer, as it is read in our translations, is added for explanation, as the different character sheweth, as if prayer had been his essential constitutive part.

Some write of Latimer, that he would pray so many hours, that he was not able to rise. Nazianzen saith of his sister Gorgonia, that she prayed so much, that her knees seemed to be grown to the very ground. Paul the hermit was found dead kneeling upon his knees, holding up his hands, and lifting up his eyes. Constantine the emperor would not have his effigies set up as other princes had, in his armour, leaning, but in a posture of prayer, kneeling. Thus all the children of God are frequent at asking their heavenly Father's blessing. It is the character of the worst of sinners they call not on God, Ps. 14:4; a man once speechless is nigh unto death.

Now ask thy soul, Doth the Spirit of God bring thee often upon thy knees? Art thou one of the generation of seekers? Ps. 24:6. Art thou one of God's suppliants? Zeph. 3:10. Dost thou know what it is to be

poor in spirit, to be a beggar, and to live altogether upon the alms-basket of heaven's bounty? Is there a constant trade driven betwixt God and thy soul—God sending down mercies, and thou sending up prayers? This is the daily exchange. Canst thou better live without thy daily bread than this daily duty? When thy heart is big with grief, whither dost thou go? Is this thy great ease, that thou mayest empty thy soul into God's ears?

Are thy prayers fervent prayers? Is this holy fire put to thy daily sacrifices? Is thy prayer made without ceasing, or instantly? Acts 26:7, ἐν ἔκτενείᾳ, stretched out upon the tenters, as the word signifieth; not so much in the length of the petitions, as in the acting of holy affections.

Dost thou labour in prayer? Col. 4:12, i.e., wrestle with God, as the word imports, bending and straining every joint of the new man in the soul, that they may all help to prevail with God. Are all the heavenly forces within thee united when thou prayest, that, if possible, thou mayest take the kingdom of heaven by storm, by violence? Mat. 11:12.

What sayest thou, reader? Dost thou, like the importunate widow, take no denial, but use a humble impudency, as the word of Christ includeth, when thou art entreating the divine Majesty for spirituals? Or dost thou pray, but it is as if thou prayedst not—so dully and coldly, that thou canst hardly hear thyself? only, as it were, between sleeping and waking, thou mumblest over a few petitions, either out of custom, or to stop the mouth of conscience, never regarding whether God answer thy requests or no.

Didst thou but consider the dreadful majesty of that God to whom thou prayest, the invaluable worth of the soul, and endless state for which thou prayest, and the poor pittance of time, upon which thy eternity dependeth, that thou hast to pray in, it might rouse thee out of thy security.

Common beggary, as it is the poorest, so it is the easiest trade. A whispering devotion is seldom answered with a loud echo from heaven, (Dr Arrow., Sermon on 1 Sam. vii:12, p. 15;) but this special, as it is the richest, so it is the hardest. The fervent prayer is the prevalent prayer, James 5:16. The bullet will fly no farther than the force of the powder will carry it. That arrow of prayer that would hit the mark must be drawn with full strength. He that in prayer for grace, through a humble dependence on Christ, will not be denied, shall not be denied.

Lip labour doth no more than a windy instrument, makes a loud noise, and that is all. Prayer without the travail of the soul is but the cold carcase of a duty, and no wonder if it be unsavoury in God's nostrils. How many among us are there that pray every day for pardon and holiness, and yet shall die without them, and perish eternally for want of them, and all because they never begged them in good earnest, but were always indifferent whether God heard them or no. I would have such know that the blessed God valueth his special ware at a higher rate than to bestow it on such as will not esteem it something answerable to its worth.

It were easy to instance how fierce and fervent the children of God, in whom was this Spirit of God, (which is compared to fire,) have been in their supplications. Look Gen. 32:24, 25; Ps. 5., 77., and 88. Jacob wrestled with God, and would not let him go unless he blessed him. Christ seemed willing to shake him off: 'Let me go,' saith Christ; 'I will not let thee go unless thou bless me,' saith Jacob.

My limbs may go, my life may go, but no going for thee without a pawn, without a blessing. Thus, indeed, doth the seed of Jacob seek the face of their God, and thence are called Israelites; for, as princes, they have power with God, and prevail, Gen. 32:26, 27.

No day passed wherein Luther spent not three hours in prayer. Once it fell out that I heard him, saith Vitus Theodorus of him. Good God, what a spirit, what a confidence was in his very expressions! with

such reverence he prayed as to a God, with such assurance as to a father or friend. The child hath escaped many a stripe by his loud cry. Heartless motions do but bespeak a denial, whereas fervent suits offer a sacred violence both to earth and heaven.

And this is the difference betwixt the prayer of a living and a dead Christian: the prayer of the former is instant and fervent, not discouraged, but rather increasing, by opposition, as lime, by water cast upon it, burneth the hotter; see Mat. 15:22, and 25:27: the latter is flat and indifferent, easily put off, though it be with a crumb instead of a crown, with a bubble, a butterfly, instead of the everlasting fruition of God.

Any temporal good is satisfying to them that have no true spiritual good in them, Ps. 4:5; and the reason is clear. The breath of a pair of bellows is cold, because it doth not proceed from a living principle within; but the breath of a man is warm, because it cometh from a principle of life within. So the prayer, the breath, of a hypocrite is cold, because it doth not flow from the Spirit of God, the only inward principle of spiritual life; but the prayer, the breath, of a sincere saint is warm, is fervent, because it proceeds from this living principle, the Spirit of Christ within.

Indeed the Christian knoweth not how to pray as he ought, but the Spirit helpeth his infirmities with sighs and groanings which cannot be uttered, Rom. 8:26.

Dost thou pray constantly? That duty which is done out of conscience will be done with perseverance. A godly man will seek God's face evermore, Ps. 105:4, and 116:2; he calleth upon God as long as he liveth. Breathing heavenward in prayer is the beginning and ending of his spiritual life upon earth, as we see in Paul, Acts 9:6; and Stephen, Acts 7:60. Paul begins his life with prayer, and Stephen ends his with it.

He never taketh his leave of prayer till he is entering into the place of praise. Prayer is his element; he cannot live without it, and communion with God in it. Prayer is the vessel by which he is continually trading into the holy land; he sendeth it out fraught with precious graces,—faith, hope, desire, love, godly sorrow, and the like; and it cometh home many times richly laden with peace, joy, and increase of faith.

But now a hypocrite, Job saith, will not pray always; he will not always call upon God, Job 27:10. Possibly he may sometimes cry out, as a scholar under the rod, or a malefactor upon the rack, for deliverance out of some affliction; but when God openeth his hand, and bestoweth the mercy, his mouth is shut, and his heart too, that you shall hear but little more of this duty.

If he pray on his sick-bed, and God raise him up, he leaves his prayers sick a-bed behind him. His prayer was but a messenger sent about some particular errand; when that is done, the messenger returneth.

As that story of the friar speaketh, how, when he was a poor friar, he went ever sadly casting his eyes upon the ground; but being abbot, he went merrily, looking upward. One of his companions asked him the reason of that alteration: he answered, that when he was a common friar, he went dejected by looking downward for the keys of the abbey, which now he had found, and therefore left that posture.

So when a hypocrite hath the temporal good thing he desireth—for that usually is most desired by him—he hath his ends, and his prayer an end too.

Or if God do not hear him presently, he will not submit patiently, but often flingeth away in a rage, with that wicked king, Why should he wait upon the Lord any longer?

If there come not in present profit, he will give over his trade as Tully said to his brother, that he would pray to the gods, but that they have

given over to hear. Whereas a godly man will cry in the day, and not be silent in the night; he will direct his prayer to God, and look up, Ps. 5:3. He will pray and wait, wait and pray, as you see beggars in some places; they will beg and knit, knit and beg, and continue still begging and knitting. So a right beggar at God's door, he will pray and work, work and pray; he will believe and pray, hope and pray, read and pray, wait and pray; he knoweth that it is not good to limit the Holy One of Israel; but it is good that a soul should hope, and quietly wait for the salvation of God, Lam. 3:26.

A divine giveth me this simile, which doth excellently illustrate our present subject: Take some draught-horse, and he will draw when the load is coming; but if he feel it not coming, he will trample, and not draw; but take a horse of a right breed, and put his traces to a tree or a post, he will strain and strain, and die upon the place, before he will give over, though nothing comes.<sup>2</sup> So a rotten Christian, if he find no present gain coming, he gives over duty, fearing all is lost; but a right Christian will pray continually, 1 Thes. 5:17, whether God hear him presently or no; he knoweth that both the command of God and his own wants call upon him never to give over.

Besides, this spirit of prayer abides in him for ever, John 14:14, 16.

Examine thy heart by these marks faithfully, and do not, by flattery or self-love, or rather self-hatred, deceive thy soul—no deceit like soul-deceit—but pass sentence upon thyself impartially, and if thou findest thy condition good, bless God, keep close to Jesus Christ, and labour that thou mayest walk worthy of the Lord, even unto all well-pleasing, Col. 1:10. The great and extraordinary privileges bestowed on thee do call aloud for gracious and extraordinary practices from thee.

How exemplary shouldst thou live among them, who art to live eternally with God! What singular things wilt thou do for that God, for that Saviour, that hath done such singular things for thy soul!

Can any love be too much; can any labour be too great; can any honour be too high; can any service be too holy, for that God to whom thou art by millions of eternal obligations thus infinitely infinitely bound?

Oh, let the fruitfulness of thy heart and life in holiness proclaim thine abundant thankfulness for such mercies, as for weight and worth exceed the very thoughts of men and angels. How abundant shouldst thou be in the work of the Lord, when thou knowest that thy labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.

When thou art confessing thy sins, meditate on the choosing, calling love of that God against whom thy sins are committed, and try whether the heat of that burning love will not thaw thy heart, and dissolve it into tears when it is most hard and icy. When thou art backward to a duty that hath some difficulty in it, consider Jesus Christ was not backward to his bitter, bloody sufferings for thy sins.

As the soldier told Augustus when he denied his petition, I did not serve you so at the battle of Actium; so say to thy soul, Jesus Christ did not serve thee so when he was to drink the cup of his Father's fierce wrath for thee; and see whether such melting persuasions will not prevail with thee to subject thyself to the hardest precept.

When thou art departing away from God by any sinister course, or insincere carriage, remember who thou art—one that art called not to sin, but sanctity; not to uncleanness, but holiness.

As Antigonus, being invited to a place that might probably prove a temptation to sin, asked counsel of Menedemus what he should do; he bade him only remember he was a king's son. So do thou remember thine high and heavenly calling, and do nothing unworthy of the God that hath enrolled thy name in the book of life, that hath ransomed thy soul with the precious blood of his Son, and hath sanctified thee by the effectual operations of his Spirit, but walk

worthy of the vocation wherewith, and whereunto, thou art called, Eph. 4:1.

It is an excellent meditation of Eusebius Emisenus: Though the devil, saith he, should be damned for many sins, and I but for one, yet mine would exceed the devils' impiety. They never sinned against a God that became an angel for them; they never sinned against a Mediator that was crucified for them; but miserable and wretched I—and it is wonderful that my heart melteth not when it thinketh on it—I have sinned against a God that became a man for me, against a God that died an ignominious death for me; against a God that hath left me an example of love and holiness. I am more unworthy than the devils.

Consider it, friend: no sins admit of higher aggravation, nor are matter of deeper provocation, than the sins of those that are interested in God's special distinguishing affection. In a word—for I had not thought to have told thee so much; it was for the sake of others principally that I append this piece—since it shall be thy reward to be like an angel in happiness, ever to behold the face of the Father, let it be thy work and endeavour to be like an angel in holiness, to do the will of God on earth as it is in heaven, readily, heartily, and universally.

But if thou find, upon a thorough search, that thou art a stranger to this spiritual life, if conscience, sent to inquire, bring in this verdict, that this purifying, praying Spirit dwelleth not in thy soul, let me beseech thee, in the fear of the Lord, to bethink thyself what is like to become of thee for ever.

One of the martyrs put his finger into the candle, to try how he could endure the fire in which he was afterwards to be burnt. Do thou but read over again the former use of information, and consider whether thou art able to undergo that loss, and that terrible intolerable, eternal wrath of an omnipotent God, which is therein declared, and

by Scripture proved, to be the portion of all that live and die in thy condition.

Suppose thou shouldst hear a voice this hour, as that wicked pope did, Come, thou wretch, unto thy particular and eternal judgment, what wouldst thou do? where wouldst thou appear? and where wouldst thou leave thy glory? Isa. 10:3. I would not for a world take thy turn. How is it possible that thou canst eat, or drink, or sleep with any quietness of mind; that in the day thy meat is sauced with sorrow, and thy drink mingled with weeping; that in the night thou art not scared with dreams, and terrified with visions, when thy whole eternity dependeth upon that little thread of life, which is in danger every moment to be cut asunder, and thou to drop into hell?

Art thou a man that hast reason, and canst thou be contented one hour in such a condition? Art thou a Christian, that believest the word of God to be truth, and canst thou continue one moment longer in that Sodom of thy natural estate, which will be punished with fire and brimstone?

I tell thee, didst thou and the rest of thy carnal neighbours but give credit to Scripture, thou and they too would sooner sleep in a chamber where all the walls round, the ceiling above, and floor below, were in a burning-light flame, than rest quietly one moment in thine estate of sin and wrath. But for thy sake, thy condition yet not being desperate, though very dangerous, that thou mightst avoid the easeless misery of the sinner, and attain the endless felicity of the saint, I have purposely written the next use, which I request thee, as thou lovest thy life, thy soul, thine unchangeable good, nay, I charge thee, as thou wilt answer the contrary at the great and dreadful day of the Lord Jesus, that thou read carefully, and that thou practise faithfully, the means and directions therein propounded out of the word of God.

## CHAPTER XI

The third use—viz., Exhortation to mind spiritual life

Thirdly, My third use shall be of exhortation to those that are dead in sins to labour for this spiritual life. Whoever thou art that wouldst have gain by thy death, then get Christ to be thy life. Hast thou read of that fulness of joy, of those rivers of pleasures, of that exceeding and eternal weight of glory, of that kingdom that cannot be shaken, of that enjoyment of Christ, of that full immediate fruition of God, and in him of all good, of that perfect freedom from all evil which they, and only they, shall be partakers of who have this spiritual life? And is not thy heart inflamed with love to it? thy soul enlarged in desire after it? thy will resolved to venture all, and undertake anything, for it? Surely, if thou art a man, and hast reason, thy will and affections will be carried out after things that are good; but if thou hast but a spark of Christianity, thou canst not but be exceedingly ravished with things so eminently, so superlatively, so infinitely good. The historian observeth that the riches of Cyprus invited the Romans to hazard dangerous fights for the conquering it. How many storms doth the merchant sail through for corruptible treasures! How often doth the soldier venture his limbs, nay, his life, for a little perishing plunder! Reader, I am persuading thee to mind the true treasure, durable riches, even those which will swim out with thee in the shipwreck of death.

Stephen Gardiner said of justification by faith only, that it was a good supper doctrine, though not so good a breakfast one. So the power of godliness, this spiritual life, though it be not so pleasant to live in as to the flesh, yet it is most comfortable to die with.

When Moses had heard a little of the earthly Canaan, how earnestly doth he beg that he might see it: Deut. 3:25, 'I pray thee, let me go over, and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon.' Thou hast read a little of the heavenly

Canaan, and hast thou not ten thousand times more cause to desire it?

Plato saith, If moral philosophy could be seen with mortal eyes, it would draw all men's hearts after it. May not I more truly say, If the gain of a saint at death could be seen with spiritual eyes, with the eye of faith, it would make all men in love with it, and eager after it. Balaam, as bad as he was, did desire to die the death of the righteous; and surely they that dislike their way, cannot but desire their end. But God hath joined them both together, and it is not in the power of any man to put them asunder; therefore, if thou wouldst die their deaths, thou must live their spiritual lives. Holiness is the seed out of which that harvest groweth. If thou wouldst be safe when thou shalt launch into the vast ocean of eternity, if thou wouldst be received into the celestial habitation, when thou shalt be turned out of thy house of clay, make sure of this life in Christ, Isa. 2:12. If a heathen prince would not admit virgins to his bed before they were purified, canst thou think the King of kings will take thee into his nearest and dearest embraces before thou art sanctified? Believe it, heaven must be in thee before thou shalt be in heaven. Unless the Spirit of God adorn thy soul, as Abraham's servant did Rebecca, with the jewels of grace, thou art no fit spouse for the true Isaac, the Lord of glory.

The brutish worldling, indeed, would willingly live profanely, and yet die comfortably; dance with the devil all day, and sup with Christ at night; have his portion in this world with the rich man, in the other world with Lazarus. As the young swaggerer told his graceless companion, when they had been with Ambrose, and seen him on his death-bed, nothing affrighted at the approach of the king of terrors, but triumphing over it, Oh that I might live with thee, and die with Ambrose! But this cannot be. A happy death is the conclusion of a holy life. The God who giveth heaven hath in great letters written in his word upon what terms, and no other, it may be had: 'He chooseth to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth,' 2 Thes. 2:13.

It is as possible for thee to enjoy the benefit of the Son's passion, without the Father's creation, as without the Spirit's sanctification. Believe the word of truth: John 3:3, 'Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God;' and Heb. 12:14, 'Follow holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.' Consider, friends, this is the word of the true and living God; and this law, this standing law of heaven, is like the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be altered; not one jot or tittle of it can possibly go unfulfilled, Mat. 5:18. Darest thou think that the God of truth will be found a liar for thy sake, as he must be if he save thee in thy sinful, unconverted state? I tell thee, the God of holiness and justice will send millions of such carnal wretches as thou art to hell, there to suffer the vengeance of the unquenchable fire, before he will stain his honour in the least. No, he is more tender of his glory than so. Though thou carest not how much thou trample his honour in the dust by the wilful breach of his commands, yet he is exceeding jealous of his great name; and when his very being is engaged for the accomplishment of his word, he will not ungod himself to glorify thee in an unsanctified condition; and therefore do not delude thy soul in presuming that he that made thee will not damn thee; for he saith himself, that unless thou art new made, and hast that true understanding to fear his majesty, and depart from iniquity, he that made thee will not save thee, and he that formed thee will shew thee no mercy, Isa. 27:11. I hope, therefore, thou art fully convinced that it highly concerneth thee to be night and day, with the greatest diligence imaginable, labouring for this spiritual life, when thine everlasting comfort in the other world, thine eternal life, dependeth so much upon it.

Art thou rich? hearken to this word of counsel from God, look after these durable riches, Prov. 8:18. Thy earthly riches are not for ever, Prov. 27:24. Though thy heart possibly is more set upon thy houses and hoards than upon heaven, yet thou must take thine everlasting leave of them ere long; when these unsearchable riches in Christ, which I am persuading thee to mind, outlive the days of heaven, run parallel with the life of God and line of eternity, Prov. 8:18; nay, till

thou livest this spiritual life, all thy wealth is want, all thy glory is ignominy, all thy comforts are crosses, yea, curses to thee, Prov. 1:32; Ps. 69:22.

All thy outward comforts, like the rainbow, shew themselves in all their dainty colours, and then vanish away; or, if they stay with thee till death, then they die with thee. Oh how hath the moon of great men's plenty often been eclipsed at the full, and the sun of their pomp gone down at noon!

Through the corruption of thy heart they prove but fuel for thy lusts on earth; and if thou shouldst die, having only this world's goods, they will feed the eternal fire in hell. It is storied of Heliogabalus that he had silken halters to hang himself with, ponds of sweet water to drown himself in, and gilded poison to poison himself. Truly more hurtful are the world's trinity, riches, honours, and pleasures, to them that have great estates in the world, but no estate in the covenant. Poison worketh more furiously in wine than in water, and so doth corruption many times bewray itself more in plenty than, in poverty. It is sad that thou shouldst not be led to God by that which came from God. But oh how lamentable is it that thou shouldst, Jehu-like, fight against thy Master with his own soldiers; like the dunghill, the more the sun shineth on it, it sends forth the more stinking savour; that thou shouldst, by the riches which his Majesty hath given thee, only have this cursed advantage, to be the greater rebel. Many good works hath Christ done for thee; for which dost thou stone him? John 10:32; for which of them dost thou stone him out of thy house? By oaths, or drunkenness, or gaming, or by atheism and irreligion, or at least by putting him off with a few short, cold, formal prayers, and that but now and then neither. Many good works hath he done for thee; for which of them dost thou stone him out of thy heart? By letting the world, and the things of the world, have the highest seat there, the throne thy chiefest esteem, warmest love, and strongest trust? What sayest thou? is it not thus? And is this to be led by his goodness to repentance? Oh consider thy body's mercies are holy baits laid by God to catch thy soul. He trieth the vessel with

water, to see whether it will hold wine. Do not, like the foolish fly, burn thyself in this flame of love; turn not his grace into wantonness, but let the kindness of God be salvation unto thee. Thou shouldst, by those cords of love, be drawn nearer unto him, and by those bands of mercies be tied closer to his commands. How shouldst thou gather; if the streams of creatures be so sweet, what sweetness is there in God, who is the fountain. If he be so good in temporals, surely he is better in spirituals, and best of all in eternal. How unsatisfied shouldst thou be with all these outward gifts, which may consist with his everlasting hatred, and resolve, with Luther, not to be put off with the blessings of his left hand, of his footstool. Thou hast the more cause to look about thee, because few of thy rank are truly religious. A little godliness will go a great way with great men, though of all men they have most obligations from God. See James 2:5, God 'chooseth the poor of the world rich in faith, and heirs of his kingdom;' and Christ telleth us, '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 heaven,' Mat. 19:24. Our Saviour, indeed, doth not speak of an impossibility, but of the difficulty of it, and the rareness of it. Job unfolded the riddle, and got through the needle's eye with three thousand camels. But it is hard to be wealthy, and not wanton; too too often are riches, like bird-lime, hindering the soul in its flight towards heaven. A load of earth hath sunk many a soul to hell; and the enriching of the outward occasioned the impoverishment of the inward man. A rich man is a rare dish at heaven's table. Blessed be God there are some, but surely few rich of those very few that shall be saved, 1 Cor. 1:26. The weighty burden in a vessel, though it consisted of the most precious commodities, hath not seldom caused its miscarriage, when otherwise it had arrived safely at its desired haven. As the moon, when she is at the full, is farthest from, and in most direct opposition to, the sun, so it is the temper of most in thy condition to be farthest from, and most opposite to, Christ, when they receive the most light of prosperity from him, and are fullest of the blessings of his goodness. Take heed thou be not like the horse and mule, Ps. 32:9, to drink plentifully of the streams, and never look to the fountain; but let thine eyes, as the church's, be doves' eyes.

When the dove hath pecked her corn, she turneth her eyes heaven ward; she looketh up, Cant. 1:15.

It is reported of the Spartans, that they use to choose their king every year, during which year he liveth in all abundance, but is, after the year be expired, banished into some remote place for ever. One king, knowing this, being called to be king, did not, as others, prodigally spend his revenues, but heaped up all the treasure he could get together, and sent it before to that place whither he should be banished; and so, in the year of his government, made a comfortable provision for his whole life. So wise are they that lay up a treasure in heaven against the time of their departure out of this world.

Art thou poor? Labour for this spiritual life; it will make thee rich indeed. Thou hast little on earth, but thou mayest have a treasure in heaven. God offereth thee grace, Christ, and life, as freely as others; take heed thou neglect them not, and think, as they in Sweden, that it is only for gentlemen to keep the Sabbath; that it is only for gentlemen to mind religion. Thou hast a soul to save, an endless estate to provide for, a hell to escape, a heaven to attain, a dreadful day of judgment to prepare for, as well as they. It is a great mercy, that though God difference thee from others in temporals, yet not in spirituals. Among the Israelites, the price for their ransom was equal, half a shekel; and the rich shall not give more, nor the poor less, Exod. 30:12, 15, 16, thereby signifying, that the same price was paid by Christ for the redemption of all, poor as well as rich, and that the virtue and merits of Christ's passion belong equally to all. Thy outward condition doth not exclude thee from an interest in Christ's death and intercession. Poor Lazarus may lie in the bosom of rich Abraham. The poor may be gospelised, as that Mat. 11:5 is sometimes read; not only have the gospel preached to them, but be changed by it. God accepted the lamb and dove in sacrifice, when he rejected the lion and eagle. But thou must be one of God's poor, not of the devil's ragged regiment. Will it not be sad for thee to have two hells; one on earth, in cold, hunger, thirst, and wants, and another in hell, in heat and unspeakable woe? How many of thy condition serve the devil

and the world all their days in drudgery and slavery, and are turned into hell as a sumpter horse at the night of death, after all his hard travel, with his back full of galls and bruises.

A low man, if his eye be clear, may look as high as the tallest; the least pigmy may from the lowest valley see the sun as fully as a giant upon the highest mountain. Christ is now in heaven; it is not the smallness of our person, nor the meanness of our condition, that can let us from beholding him. The soul hath no stature, neither is heaven to be had with reaching. If God clear the eyes of our faith, we shall be high enough to behold him.

Do not say, thou art to provide for thy wife and children, and hast no time to regard thy soul in a solemn, serious performance of duties. Remember the same God that commandeth thee to follow thy particular calling as a man, enjoineth thee likewise to follow thy general calling as a Christian; and that, in the first place, 'Seek first the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof, and all other things shall be added to you,' Mat. 6:33; and also with the greatest labour: John 6:27, Phil. 2:12, 'Labour not for the food that perisheth, but for the food that endureth to everlasting life.'

Where our Saviour doth not indeed absolutely forbid labour for the body, but comparatively; labour for the food that perisheth is not prohibited, but labour for the meat which endureth to everlasting life is preferred. Thy labour for thy soul should be so much, so great, that thy labour for thy body should be no labour at all, not deserve the name of labour in comparison of it. Now consider what answer thou wilt make to the great God when he shall plead with thee for the breach of these commands; besides, hast not thou many spare hours in many evenings, and on wet days, wherein thou mightst go to God in secret, and with thy family, and humble thy soul in a mournful confession of thy sins, and sensible apprehension of the wrath which is due to thee, and wherein thou mightst be importunate for pardon and grace, without which thou art lost for ever? Nay, the Lord knoweth how many Lord's days thou hast enjoyed, which days he

hath set apart, as well out of mercy as out of sovereignty, not only for the glory of his name, but also for the good of thy soul, wherein thou mightst both publicly, privately, and secretly, have furthered thy spiritual and eternal good. But how dost thou squander away those precious hours, sometime in corporal labour, always in spiritual idleness, in sleeping, or sitting at thy door, or talking with thy neighbours, and yet thou hast no time for thy soul.

But, lastly, Tell me, hast thou time to eat, and drink, and work, and sleep, and no time to work out thy salvation, to fit thy soul for death, for judgment, for eternity? If thy house were in a flame, thou wouldst not let it burn, and say, I have no time to quench it. If thy neighbour call thee to sit, or talk, or dine, or, it may be, to go to the alehouse with him, thou dost not answer him, I must provide for my family, I have no time; but when thy Maker and preserver, the blessed God, calleth upon thee, by his Spirit and word, to be diligent for the making thy calling and election sure, 2 Pet. 1:10, thou must provide for thy family, thou hast no time for this. Foolish worm, leave off thy vain and cursed pretences, and set upon the business for which thou wast sent into the world, even the glorifying and obeying the Lord, or thou shalt have another manner of answer to thy simple excuses from the judge of quick and dead, when, for thy want of time to serve him in, he shall give thee an eternity to suffer in.

Reader, I have two things to desire of thee, before I deliver thee the directions which I have received of the Lord for thee; and indeed unless thou grant me, or rather God and thy soul, these two requests, all that I have to say will be to no purpose at all. My requests are, that thou wouldst follow the counsel of God, in order to the recovery of thy soul out of its bottomless misery with all speed and with all diligence. Now, because they are of such exceeding importance, that, if thou art once persuaded to them, my work will be half effected; and because delays and laziness are the two great gulfs in which such multitudes of souls are drowned and perish, I shall speak the more to them.

## CHAPTER XII

The life in Christ must be minded speedily, with the grounds of it

My first request to thee is, that thou wouldst presently set about the affairs of thy soul. We say of things that must be done, there needeth not any deliberation about them. Is not this the one thing necessary, to prepare for the last hour, to make sure of thine everlasting welfare? If thou believest the word of God, thou wilt not give the flesh so much breath as to debate it, much less wilt thou, as Felix did, put off the thoughts of righteousness and judgment to come, till thou art at better leisure, till thou hast a more convenient season.<sup>2</sup> What more weighty work hast thou to do, than to work out thy own salvation? Is the following thy calling, hoarding up a heap of earth, feeding, clothing that flesh which shall shortly be food for worms; is any of these half so necessary as thy provision for eternity?

If thou art old, it is high time to begin to prepare for thy latter end. Thou hast the feet of thy body almost already in the earth, in the grave; and hadst thou not need have the feet of thy soul, thy affections, in heaven? Thou hast but a little time to converse with men; doth it not behove thee to be much in communion with God? Death often, possibly, knocketh at thy door by the hand of sickness, and warneth thee to look after another habitation, for thou art to be turned out of thy house of clay. Dost thou take warning? what wilt thou do if thou shouldst die before thou didst ever begin to live—if the sun of thy life should set before the sun of righteousness hath arisen on thee? All the while thou livest thou art dead, and thou livest long to add to thy torments, as others have died soon to hasten them. Thou art but like stubble, laid out a-drying to burn the better in hell, all the while thou continuest a stranger to the new birth.

Thou hast every day been treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath, Rom. 2:5; been gathering, as it were, more wood to increase those flames in which thou, if thou thus diest, shalt live for ever.

'Because judgment against an evil work is not speedily executed, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. Though a sinner do evil a hundred times, and his days be prolonged, it shall not go well with the wicked,' Eccles. 8:11, 12, 13. 'The sinner an hundred years old shall be accursed,' Isa. 65:20.

I have read of the Circassians, a kind of mongrel Christians, that they divide their time betwixt the devil and God, dedicating their youth to robbery, and their old age to repentance. How much time hast thou spent in the service of sin! how little time hast thou lost for the service of God and thy soul! Is it not high time for thee to number thy days, and to apply thy heart unto wisdom speedily?

Old sinner, dost thou not tremble to think that there is but a step betwixt thee and death! nay, betwixt thee and hell. Oh the time, and talents, and opportunities which thou hast to reckon for more than others! Happy, happy had it been for thee to have been turned out of the womb into hell, rather than to die an old man, and not a babe in Christ. If thou hast a spark of love to thyself, mind thine inward change presently, lest thy change come, even death, and send thee to unchangeable misery.

If thou art young, mind the gathering the manna of godliness in the morning of thine age; present the first-fruits of thy life to that God who desireth the first ripe fruits, Exod. 22:29. The firstlings are his darlings, Gen. 4:4; and that cloth will keep colour best that is dyed in the wool; the vessel will scent longest of that liquor with which it is first seasoned. Let thy soul, like Gideon's fleece, drink up betimes the dews of grace. As young as thou art, thy life is every moment at the mercy of the Lord. There is a saying, that in Golgotha there are skulls of all sizes. In the churchyard thou mayest see graves of all sorts, and some of thy very length; thou art concerned, therefore, to remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth. Aquinas telleth us, the young man hath death at his back, the old man before his eyes, and that is the more dangerous enemy that pursueth thee, than that which marcheth up towards thy face. This calleth for the greater care and

watchfulness. In the Isle of Man the maids spin their winding-sheets the first thing they spin; do thou in youth and health ponder and prepare for thy death, lest, as young and strong as thou art, death trip up thy heels and throw thee, and it prove thine everlasting overthrow.

Besides, canst thou imagine that such a sinner deserveth favour, who cometh in to serve God at last, when he can serve his lust no longer? Is it equal (be thy own judge) to give the flower of thine age, the spring of thy life, the best of thy time, thine health and strength, to the devil and thy brutish flesh, and to give the dregs, the snuff, the bottom of all this, to the infinitely glorious God, whose creature thou art, at whose cost and charge thou livest every day and night, and who calleth upon thee for thy service, not for the need he hath of thee, but because of the need thou standest in of him, all whose happiness doth consist in the pleasing and enjoying his majesty?

Whoever thou art, of what age soever, either set speedily about thy soul work, or answer these few questions the Lord shall put to thee, or be speechless and without excuse at the day of Christ.

First, Hath not God waited upon thee long enough already? Wouldst have him, whom the heavens and heaven of heavens cannot contain, who hath millions of glorious angels waiting on his majesty, to wait on thee, miserable worm, always?

I tell thee, all the while thou art sinning his eyes behold thee, his heart is incensed against thee, and his hand can reach thee and avenge him on thee every moment, How many hath he sent into hell that never tasted of his patience, as thou hast done. The angels sinned, and were not waited upon one hour for their repentance; yet how many years hath he endured thee with much long-suffering, and still waiteth upon thee, that he may be gracious unto thee! Isa. 30:18. The last oath thou didst swear, he could have cursed and rotted thy tongue. The last time that thou wentest prayerless to thy rest, he could have sent thee to little ease, to the place where there is no rest

day or night. The last time thou didst quench the motions of his Spirit, and stifle the convictions of thy conscience, he could have taught thee by experience what is the meaning of the worm that never dieth, and the fire that goeth not out; and yet he spareth thee, stretching out his hands all the day long to a rebellious child, Isa. 65:2. Should not his long patience quicken thee to speedy repentance? Answer God whether he hath not waited enough, been long-suffering enough already; and if he have not, continue in thy ungodly course, and see who shall suffer longest at last, he or thou. It is one thing to forbear a debt, another thing to forgive the debtor. The longer God is in fetching his hand about, the heavier his blow will be when he striketh. The threatening is like a child, the longer it is kept in the womb the bigger it groweth, and it will put thee to the more pain when it cometh to the birth of its execution; therefore, bethink thyself before the decree bring forth, before the day pass as the chaff, before the fierce anger of the Lord come upon thee, Zeph. 2:2.

Dost thou not see in the Scriptures many examples of God's severity upon the abuse of his patience? What became of Sodom and Gomorrah, when God waited in the days of Lot? Are they not suffering the vengeance of eternal fire? Jude 7. What became of the Jews, upon whom Christ waited, calling upon them, and crying to them to return and reform? is not wrath come upon them to the utmost? 1 Thes. 2:16. Are not these like the mast of a ship sunk in the sands, standing up to warn thee to avoid their course, lest thou sink eternally? Have not these the same inscription on them with Sennacherib's tomb, Look on me, and learn to be godly? Do not the Sodomites seem to say, Look on us, and learn to be godly? Do not thy atheistical neighbours in hell, that thought they had had time enough before them, and futured their repentance, cry, Oh look on us and learn to be godly, and that with speed! Friend, take example by others, lest thou be made an example to others. To-day, after so long a time, if thou wilt hear his voice, harden not thy heart, Heb. 4:7.

My second question which I desire thee to answer is, Hast thou not served the world and the flesh long enough already? Is it not yet time to serve God? hath not lust had too much of thy heart, and the flesh of thy life, already? may not the time past of thy life suffice thee to have wrought the will of the flesh? 1 Peter 4:3. Canst thou have the face to say, with the sluggard, a little more slumber, a little more sleep, a little more drunkenness, a little more swearing, a little more wickedness? Is not the debt which thou owest to divine justice great enough? Is not the heap of wrath and fury which thou hast provided for thyself against death and judgment big enough? Dost thou think that thou mayest serve the flesh too little, and the Lord too much? It may be thou hast served the devil twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, or seventy years, and knowest not whether thou shalt have so many hours to serve God in, and is it not yet time to begin? Answer me, Hast thou not wallowed long enough in the mire of atheism, worldliness, and sensuality? 'Wilt thou not yet be made clean? ah, when shall it once be?' Jer. 13:27.

3. If one should offer thee a house and land, or a bag of money, wouldst thou not presently accept it? wouldst thou say, I am not yet at leisure, hereafter will be time enough? And is there not infinitely more reason why thou shouldst presently close with Christ, and leave thy sins, and seek the kingdom of heaven? Is not heaven more worth than earth? are not the fruits of Christ better than silver, and his revenues than choice gold? Prov. 3:15.

When gold is offered thee, saith Ambrose, thou dost not say, I will come again to-morrow and take it, but art glad of present possession; but salvation being proffered to our souls, few men haste to embrace it.

Is it not a sordid slighting of Jesus Christ the Lord of glory, for thee to be more ready and hasty to take a little perishing wealth, than his most precious blood?

Canst thou read the story of Pope Gregory the Seventh, how he made the emperor Henry the Fourth, with his wife and child, to stand bare-foot and bare-legged three days and three nights in a cold frosty season, before he would admit them into the house, and thy heart not rise against the pope's pride and wickedness? And why doth it not rise against thy own obstinacy and vileness, that hast suffered the King of kings to stand knocking at the door of thy heart till his head hath been wet with the dew, and his locks with the drops of the night? and though he hath waited thus many years, yet thou hast denied him entrance, and art not to this hour resolved to give him speedy acceptance.

4. Dost thou not find by experience that the longer thou delayest, the farther thou wanderest from God and holiness, and the more unfit thou art for, and the more unwilling unto, the work of conversion? Is it not time therefore to turn with speed, when continuance in sin insensibly hardeneth thy heart, and gradually indisposeth it more to the work of repentance? As the ground, so is thy heart; the longer it lieth fallow, not ploughed up, the harder it will be. Wilt thou go one step farther from God, when thou must certainly come back every step, and that by Weeping-cross all the way, or be damned for ever? The purchase of heaven is like buying the sibyl's prophecies, the longer thou holdest off, the dearer. A stain which hath been long in clothes is not easily washed out; a house that hath long run to ruin will require the more cost and labour for its reparation; diseases that have been long in the body are cured, if at all, yet with much difficulty. The devil which had possessed the man from his infancy was hardly cast out, and not without much renting and raging, Mark 9:21, 26. Satan thinks his evidence as good as eleven points at law, now he hath once got possession; and the longer he continueth commander-in-chief in the royal fort of thy heart, the more he fortieth it against God, and strengtheneth himself against the Almighty. All the while thou delayest, God is more provoked, the wicked one more encouraged, thy heart more hardened, thy debts more increased, thy soul more endangered, and all the difficulties of

conversion daily more and more multiplied upon thee, having a day more to repent of, and a day less to repent in.

5. Canst thou promise thyself the next hour to repent in, and darest thou defer it to another hour? Thou sayest thou wilt mind these things when thou art old; but what if thou diest while thou art young? thou deferrest it till to-morrow, but suppose thou die to-day, and God say to thee, as to the rich fool, 'This night thy soul shall be required of thee?' 'Boast not thyself of to-morrow; thou knowest not what a day may bring forth,' Prov. 27:1.

It is a good saying of Aquinas, That though God promise forgiveness to repenting sinners, yet God promiseth not to-morrow to repent in. Think how many hundred casualties thou art liable to, how many others die suddenly, and take the counsel of Michal to David, Save thyself to-night, to-morrow thou mayest be slain. Save thy soul to-day, to-morrow thou mayest be damned.

6. Art thou sure that God will accept thee hereafter, if thou shouldst now delay and dally with his Majesty? It is good seeking the Lord while he may be found, and calling upon him while he is near, Isa. 55:6. There is a time when men shall call, but God will not hear; cry, but he will not answer; and that because when God called they would not hear, but did set at nought his counsel, Prov. 1:24, 29. Whilst thine eyes are open, the things which concern thy peace may be hid from them, Luke 19:42. Thou mayest live to have thy soul buried long before thy body, Ezek. 24:13, 14. God would purge thee now, and thou wilt not; take heed he clap not the same curse upon thee, which he did on some others, that thou shalt never be purged till thou diest. The Spirit of God probably now stirreth thee to turn presently, and offereth thee its help; if thou lovest thy soul, do not now deny it, lest the Spirit serve thee as Samuel did Saul; Saul disobeyed him, and Samuel came no more to Saul to the day of his death, 1 Sam. 15:35, i.e., never. So take heed of quenching this motion of the Holy Ghost, lest it depart in a distaste, taking its everlasting leave of thee, and thou never feel it more to the day of thy

death: 'Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation,' 2 Cor. 6:2. 'This day if thou wilt hear his voice, harden not thy heart, lest he swear in his wrath that thou shalt never enter into his rest,' Ps. 95:7–11.

## CHAPTER XIII

This life in Christ must be minded diligently, with some motions to it

My second request is, that thou wouldst make the attaining this spiritual life the whole business of thy natural life, that thou wouldst esteem it as the great end of thy creation, preservation, and of all the mercies and means of grace which God bestoweth on thee, as the great end why God is so patient towards thee, so provident over thee, so bountiful unto thee, that thou mightst repent and return unto him from whom thou hast gone astray.

Shall I entreat thee, for the sake of thy poor soul, to let thy greatest labour be for thine eternal welfare! Is not this a business of the greatest necessity, of the greatest excellency, and of the greatest commodity and profit that thou didst ever undertake? To be everlastingly in heaven or in hell, to enjoy endless and matchless pain or pleasure, are other manner of things than men dream of. Good Lord! that men did but believe what it is to be happy or miserable for ever, how then would they fly from the wrath to come, and strive to enter in at the strait gate! Mat. 7:14. Surely things of the greatest weight call for the strongest work; matters that concern thine unchangeable felicity, require the greatest industry.

The philosopher would not buy repentance at too dear a rate; sure I am thou canst never buy this inheritance too dear, though thou spendest all thy time, and strength, and sellest all thou hast to purchase it. Friend, if ever thou art saved, thou must work out thy own salvation, Phil. 2:12. God giveth the earth to the meek and patient, but heaven to the strong and violent, Mat. 5:5, and 11:12. It is

a saying of Lombard, God condemns none before he sins, nor crowns any before he overcomes. The blind, carnal world thinks that a man may go to heaven without so much ado. As Judas said of the ointment, so they of diligence in duties, 'To what purpose is this waste?' Mat. 26:8. They tell us it is waste time to pray so frequently, and it is waste strength to pray so fervently: 'To what purpose is this waste?' They presume that godly men might spare a great deal of their pains heavenward. As Seneca told the Jews that they lost a seventh part of their time by their sanctification of the Sabbath; so the earthly-minded man will tell us that such and such men spend all their time almost in reading, or hearing, or praying, or instructing their families, or neighbours, and they count it but lost time. These men, if you will believe them, have found out an easier and a nearer way to heaven than ever Jesus Christ did; they are the right brood of wicked Jeroboam, that told the people, 1 Kings 12:28, it was too much to go up to Jerusalem to worship; he had found out a cheaper and an easier way of worship. The calves at Dan and Bethel would save them much labour, and, in his conceit, serve to as much purpose. Thus they delude themselves that their lazy, cold trading God-ward, their slight indifferent prayers, will bring them in as much gain as the most zealous performances of the saints. But, reader, I hope thou wilt obey the voice of God, and not of men, in this: consider his promise is to the laborious, 'They that seek him early, shall find him,' Prov. 8:17.

'He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him,' Heb. 11:6; so Prov. 2:3, 4. His precept is for labour. 'Strive to enter in at the strait gate,' Mat. 7:13. 'Be diligent to make your calling and election sure,' 2 Pet. 1:10; so John 6:27. Nay, he curseth them that put him off with their lame sacrifices: 'For I am a great king, saith the Lord of hosts, and my name is dreadful,' Mal. 1:14. Further, he is peremptory that the slothful shall be for utter darkness, Mat. 25:26. The Egyptian king would have men of activity and industry to be his servants; and will God, thinkest thou, who is a pure act, accept of those that are not active? Canst thou imagine that he should ever bestow pardon of sin, eternal life, the sanctification of the Spirit, the precious contents of

his own promise, the invaluable fruits of Christ's purchase, upon those that do not judge them worthy of all their strength and time, and hearts and pains, and ten thousand times more? Besides, for what reason dost thou suppose God to have given thee these things? Surely thou canst not be so brutish as to think that the great God made thee, and serveth thee daily with such variety of mercies, health, strength, food, raiment, influences of heaven, and fruits of the earth, only, or chiefly, that thou shouldest eat and drink, and follow thy calling, and provide for thy family. Were such low ends the ground of his kindness? Or is it not that thou mightst ravish that pure and virgin inheritance, by a holy and heavenly violence, that thou mightst employ them and improve them to the utmost about his service and thy own salvation?

Reader, I must desire thee to consider and grant me these two or three suppositions, in prosecution of this my second request to thee.

1. Suppose thou hadst seen the Son of man, who now sitteth at his Father's right hand, rising from his place, and attended with the thousand thousands that are before him, and with the ten thousand times ten thousand that minister to him, coming and sparkling so gloriously through the firmament, that he dazzleth the very eyes of the sun, and makes him to hide his head for shame, and sitting down in the clouds, with the glory of his Father, 'a fire devouring before him, and behind him a flame burning.'

Conceive now with me, that thou hearest him call to the archangel, Sound the last trump, that the dead may arise and come to judgment. Hark to the sound of the trump!—how it rendeth rocks, melteth mountains, breaks in pieces the bands of death, and bursts asunder the gates of hell; how it pierceth the ocean, and fetcheth from the bottom of the sea the dust of Adam's seed; how it descendeth into the belly of the earth, and forceth it to vomit up all the bodies which it had ever taken down; how it openeth the marble tombs of princes and potentates, and makes their highness and majesty stoop as low as the meanest to the King of glory.

Dost thou not see the bodies of the saints? Look how they fly upon the wings of the wind to their souls, and both to the bosom of their beloved Saviour. See how the spirits of unregenerate ones leave for a little while the dark vault of hell, and enter, though most unwillingly, into the stinking carrion of their bodies, and both hauled by angels to the judgment-seat of Christ.

When the court is thus set, conceive the commission read, wherein Jesus Christ is authorised, in his human nature, by his divine power, to be judge of the quick and dead. The law is produced, both of nature and Scripture. The books are opened, both of God's omniscience and man's conscience, by which all men are to be tried for their everlasting lives and deaths.

The holy ones are now called; their persons, through the righteousness of Christ, acquitted by public proclamation, before God, angels, and men; their performances, duties, graces, services, sufferings, punctually related to their glory, and infinitely rewarded in their perfect freedom from all evil, and eternal fruition of the chiefest good.

Behold, how the unholy are with violence dragged to the bar, examined strictly by the covenant of works, have all their sins, secret, open, personal, relative, of nature, and practice, in thoughts, words, and deeds, revealed publicly, and aggravated fully with all their crimson-dyed, bloody circumstances. Hark how pitifully they plead what poor evidences they had for salvation, what sorry excuses for atheism and abominations; their conscience, instead of a thousand witnesses, accuseth them, the law casteth them, the judge pronounceth against them a most severe sentence of condemnation, the devils seize on them for its speedy execution. Now what confusion and shame of face, what lamentation and sorrow of heart, possesseth them! What doleful screechings! What bitter yellings are heard among them! Here is the body cursing the soul for being so ungodly a guide, and the soul cursing the body for being so unready an instrument; and both cursing the time that ever they met

together, and wishing, though in vain, that they might for ever be parted asunder.

Now the worldling curseth his flocks and his farm, his gold and his silver, that had more of his heart, and of care and time, than his precious soul. Now the lazy Christian curseth his madness and folly, that he should think a little formal preparation were sufficient for such a strict examination. A bloody husband hast thou been to me, saith the wife; thou mindest provision for me for a little time, and never regardedst my instruction about the things of eternity. A cruel father hast thou been to me, saith the child, for generating me a child of wrath and heir of hell, and never endeavouring my regeneration, whereby I might have been a child of God and an heir of heaven: and thus cursing, crying, roaring, raging, they are sent to the place where is mourning without mirth, sorrow without solace, darkness without light, death without life, pure wrath without mixture, perfect pain without measure, nothing but weeping and wailing, sighing, sobbing, and gnashing of teeth, for ever, ever, ever.

Suppose, I say, that thou hadst heard and seen all this, and God should after it try thee in this world forty years, wouldst thou not night and day be struggling and striving with God by prayer, watching over thy own heart, waiting upon thy Saviour? With what earnestness wouldst thou pray! With what seriousness wouldst thou read and hear! With what exactness and exemplariness wouldst thou live! How diligent and laborious wouldst thou be in a faithful improvement of all thy time, talents, and opportunities, that thou mightst find mercy at such a day, even the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life! Wouldst thou after such a sight think any time too much, or any pains too great, for thy eternal good? Couldst thou give the world and the flesh the choicest place in thy heart, and the chiefest part of thy life, as now thou dost? Shouldst thou dare to be nibbling again at the devil's baits, or to be playing with the eternal fire, or to put off God with a few cold, formal prayers, and that by fits, instead of hearty, fiery, continual supplication? Or to put off Jesus Christ with a compliment, that thou wearest his livery, and

professest thyself a Christian, instead of a sincere, resolved dedication of heart and life to his word and law? What sayest thou, man, and why wilt thou not be diligent and as holy now? Thou mayest in the glass of Scripture see all that I have spoken, (for the substance of it at least,) if thou hast but an eye of faith; and, without question, the sight of faith is as sure and true as a sight of sense. What reason canst thou have why thou shouldst not work as industriously to escape hell and obtain heaven as if thou hadst known these things experimentally, when the word of the living and true God speaketh them so expressly? Look 2 Cor. 5:10; Acts 17:13; Eccles. 12:14.

2. Suppose thou wert sure to die this day come month, and take possession of thine eternal estate, to do that which thou never didst before, nor shalt ever do again, even to throw thy last cast for eternity, wouldst thou not then lay aside all other matters, and make it thy only business to ensure an interest in Christ, and to make sure of a regenerated, sanctified nature? wouldst thou not then think, Well now, there is no daubing, no dallying any longer. I am now going to my long, long, everlasting home: if I now deceive myself with anything instead of the power of godliness, and mistake at death, I shall miscarry for ever; if I be not then right, I shall be wrong for ever. Now or never, now and ever.

Wouldst thou not highly prize every week of that month, every day of those weeks, every hour of those days, yea, and every minute of those hours, and say, Ah, desperate folly to leave a work of such infinite weight, for which my whole life was little little enough, to so short a space; and yet, oh infinite mercy, that I have any seasons of grace left, wherein I may yet work out my salvation with fear and trembling? How wouldst thou labour as for life in this duty, and that ordinance, hanging on those breasts, and tugging hard for some spiritual good! Wouldst thou not, with Jacob, wrestle with God, weep, and make supplication? wouldst thou not, with the Ninevites, cry mightily unto God for mercy? How would thy prayers proceed from the very bottom of thy heart! and with what force would they

pierce the very heavens! How wouldst thou, with the Bereans, search the Scriptures, and see upon what terms Christ and heaven may be had! Wouldst thou not strive to break thy heart with the hammer of the law, and to melt it with the sunshine of the gospel, that thou mightst repent? Would thou not encourage thy soul, from the freeness of God's mercy, and fulness of Christ's merit, to believe? Oh, what sad thoughts wouldst thou now have of thy soul and thy sins! what serious thoughts wouldst thou have of God and Christ, of hell and heaven, of death and judgment! Surely other manner of thoughts than now thou hast.

Thus, friend, it will be with thee if thou wert to leave this world within a month, or thou wert worse than a madman. And why shall it not be thus with thee now, when thou art so far from insuring thy life for a month, that thou canst not promise thyself the next hour? Dost thou not believe that thy foundation is in the dust? Job 4:19; that man at his best estate is altogether vanity? Ps. 39:5; that one dieth in his full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet, his breasts being full of milk, and his bones moistened with marrow? Job 21:23, 24. Thou art not a tenant at thy own will whilst thou dwellest in thy house of clay. Thou cuttest large thongs of God's time if thou assurest thyself another week. But look, reader, dost thou not see that eternity is at the very threshold of thy house, that there is but a step, a thin paper wall of life, between thee and eternity! Is there not much more reason that thou shouldst be more industrious for thy soul and salvation, when thou art not sure to live a day, than if thou wert sure to live a month?

There is a bird peculiar to Ireland, called the cock of the wood, remarkable for its fine flesh and folly; all the difficulty to kill them is to find them. They fly in woods in flocks; and if one be shot, the rest remove not but to the next tree, and there stand staring at the shooter till the whole covey be destroyed; yet, as foolish as this bird is, it may be the emblem of most wise men in point of mortality; death sweeps away one and one, and one and another, and all the

rest remain no whit moved, till at last they are destroyed, and then their folly is, though too late, bewailed.

3. Suppose thou couldst speak with thy carnal, unregenerate neighbours or friends that are now under endless remorse, frying in those unquenchable flames, and shouldst ask them what caused them to miscarry for ever, and how they came to that place of torment; and they should tell thee, O friend, I thought heaven might have been had without so much ado, that there had been no need of that seriousness and laboriousness which a few precise ones practised, and which ministers so much pressed. I thought I might do well enough with a formal, lazy, outside serving of God, because my neighbours did no better. I presumed, that because God was merciful, and Christ meritorious, and I enjoyed the outward privileges of the gospel, and gave God some of the time I could spare from the world and the flesh in a little heartless devotion, that I should be saved; never looking at that inward renovation and outward reformation which, I see now to my sorrow, are required in all to whom the special mercy of God and merit of Christ shall be extended, and now we, and, alas! I, am tormented in these flames.

After such a hearing from hell, wouldst thou not be diligent to prevent thy damnation? Wouldst thou not take heed of those knives of negligence, idleness, and formality, resting in a few good means, which did cut the throat of others' souls? Wouldst thou, after this, jest at heaven and hell, or trifle about regeneration or the new birth? Wouldst thou again mock God, or cozen thyself with a form, a shell, a carcase of religion? Would not the word thou hadst lately heard be always sounding in thine ears, and piercing thy heart, and quickening thee to be sedulous and industrious about thy soul affairs? And why wilt not thou do as much now, when I can assure thee from the mighty possessor of heaven and earth, that this is as true—namely, that many souls are eternally sunk by reason of those quicksands—as if thou hadst heard it from the mouth of hell; nay, it is possible a damned wretch may deceive thee, but it is impossible

that the blessed God—who speaketh as much with his own mouth—should deceive thee. Look 1 Thes. 5:3; Mat. 7:21–23 and 5:20.

4. Suppose thou hadst, with Moses, had a sight of the back parts of the infinite God—about whose service I am persuading thee to be diligent—or, with Isaiah, hadst seen some extraordinary manifestation of his glory; or hadst been with the disciples at the transfiguration of Christ. Or suppose thou hadst been in heaven, and seen the royalty and majesty of God in those glorious angels and saints which continually wait upon him, and in the glorified Saviour who sitteth at his right hand, and representeth him as lively and fully as is possible to the eyes of men. Suppose thou hadst taken strict notice of the number—how many millions!—and order of God's servants there, how high and noble their work is; how holy and pure their worship, and hadst known the infinite power, holiness, wisdom, and justice of God as they do, and God should turn thee again into this world, wouldst thou slubber over thy duties, and play with his ordinances, as now thou dost? Wouldst thou pray to this God as if thou prayedst not? or hear from his Majesty as if thou heardest not? or attend on him carelessly, as if thou didst not attend on him at all? or wouldst thou not rather think, I can never be too serious in the service of such a God; I can never wait on him with humility enough, and with watchfulness enough, with uprightness enough, and with care and diligence enough?

Shouldst thou not be laborious in the service of such a good God? Give me leave to urge this thought a little farther, and to give thee a scripture or two which, through the free grace of God, have sometimes helped me against deadness and dulness in duties. The one is 2 Chron. 2:5, where Solomon telleth us, The house I am to build must be great—mark the reason—for great is our God above all gods. If God be so great a God, how greatly is he to be revered! Canst thou do too much service for him, or give too much glory to him? Can thy love to him be too great, or can thy fear of him be too great, or can thy labour for him be too great, when this God is so great, that he measureth the ocean in the hollow of his hand, and

meteth out the heavens with a span, and comprehendeth the dust of the earth in a measure, and weigheth the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? Behold, the nations are as a drop of the bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt-offering. All nations before him are as nothing, and they are counted to him as less than nothing, and vanity, Isa. 40:12, 15–17. God is a great God, and therefore greatly to be feared, Ps. 89:7. God is a great God, and therefore greatly to be praised; for his greatness is unsearchable, Ps. 145:3.

If he be a great God, he may well require a great house to be his material temple; and if he be a great God, may he not justly call for a great part of, yea, all thy heart, to be his spiritual temple? It is likely the son Solomon learned this of his father David, who giveth us this as the reason why he danced before the ark of the covenant of the Lord of the whole earth with all his might, 2 Sam. 6:14, 21. It was, he saith, before the Lord; as if he had said, Had it been before men only, or in their service, I might have been cold and careless, slothful and sluggish; but it was before the Lord, the infinite, incomprehensible, and holy God, to whom I am unspeakably obliged for his distinguishing mercy in choosing me before thy father's house; and therefore all my might and all my strength was little enough for such a God. I might mind thee further, that thou hast wrought hard in thy slavery to the world and thy flesh, in thy drudgery to the devil and thy lusts, whose reward and wages is nothing but disappointment and vexation, hell and damnation; and shouldst thou not be fervent, fiery—ζέοντες, seething hot, as the word signifieth—in spirit when thou art serving the Lord, Rom. 12:11. I might also ask thee to whom thou owest thy whole strength and thy whole heart, if not to God? Art thou so much indebted to the world and thy flesh, those enemies of thy salvation, as thou art to the blessed God? and who will at last pay thee best for thy strength and time, God or the world, Christ or the flesh? But I may speak more to this in another place.

Well, reader, have I yet, or rather the Lord by me, persuaded thee to set about this great business, upon which thy eternal felicity dependeth, timely, that is, presently, and throughly, that is, with all thy strength, as the main, chief, and only work thou hast to do? Art thou resolved to do thine utmost endeavour, and through the strength of Christ faithfully to follow the directions which I shall commend to thee from the Lord, in order to thy recovery out of that bottomless misery into which thou hast plunged thyself? Is there not abundant reason in what thou hast read? Are they the words of a sinful dying man, or of the jealous, ever-living God? Is it I only that call upon thee to mind this spiritual life, or do not the daily and nightly mercies which thou, unworthy wretch, enjoyest? Do not the dreadful judgments which others feel, and thou hast too much cause to fear? Do not thy sweet babes, thy dear children, cry often and aloud in thine ears, 'O that there were a heart in our father, in our mother, to fear the Lord, and keep all his commandments always, that it might go well with them and with their children for ever'? Deut. 5:29. Nay, doth not the almighty God, who observeth all thy wickedness, in whose hands thou art every hour, who can with a word speak thee into that place of woe, where the worth of grace and holiness is better known, and where the weight of sin and ungodliness is more felt? Well, in hope that thou wilt not be such an enemy to the God that made thee, that thou wilt not do that despite to the Spirit that moveth thee, that thou wilt not be such a wilful murderer of thy precious soul as to neglect them, I shall set them down; the Lord set them home to thy heart!

Come along with me, and I will shew thee the bride, the lamb's wife, how she must be trimmed and adorned for the marriage.

## **CHAPTER XIV**

The first direction for the attaining a spiritual life, illumination

First, Get thine understanding enlightened in the knowledge of thy sins and misery. The knowledge of thy disease and danger must precede thy recovery and cure. Oh how many thousand souls have miscarried in the dark of ignorance! Did men know, surely they would not daily by their sins crucify the Lord of glory. Did they know their misery, they would not be so merry as they are in ways of iniquity; they rush into sin as the horse rusheth into the battle, not knowing it will be to their death, to their destruction. I have sometimes read a story of a king that was ever pensive, and never seen to smile, and being asked by his brother the cause of it, he put him off till the next day for an answer; and in the meantime caused a deep pit to be made, commanding his servants to fill it half full with fiery coals, and then causeth an old rotten board to be laid over it, and over the board to hang a two-edged sword by a small slender thread, with the point downwards, and close by the pit to set a table full of all manner of delicacies. His brother coming next day for an answer, was placed at the board, and four men with drawn swords about him, and with all the best music that could be had to play before him. Then the king called to him, saying, Rejoice and be merry, brother; eat, drink, and laugh, for here is pleasant being. But he replied, O my lord and king, how can I be merry, being in such danger on every side? Then said the king, Look how it is now with thee, so it is always with me; for if I look above me, I see the great and dreadful judge, to whom I must give an account of all my thoughts, words, and deeds; if I look under me, I see the endless torments of hell, whereinto I shall be cast if I die in my sins; if I look behind me, I see all the sins which I have committed, and the time which I have spent unprofitably; if I look before me, I see death every day drawing nearer and nearer unto me; if I look on my right hand, I see my conscience accusing me of all the evil I have done, and good I have left undone in this world; and if I look on my left hand, I see the creatures on their Maker's behalf, crying out for vengeance against me a rebel. Now, then, cease hereafter to wonder why I cannot rejoice in the things of this world.

This is the condition of every unsanctified man and woman, and did they but know it, they would see but little cause to spend their days in pastimes and pleasure; but what the eye seeth not, the heart grieves not. Had Haman known he had been so nigh his funeral, he would hardly have boasted so much to his friends; but it is the policy of the God of this world to blind men's eyes, lest they should see and avoid damnation. As when a malefactor is for some capital crime cast at the assize, he is then carried into a dark dungeon, and thence to execution. So the devil, knowing that all the sons and daughters of Adam are cast by the law of God, the law shutting them all up under sin and wrath, endeavoureth to keep them in the dungeon of ignorance till the day of their execution. When Nebuchadnezzar had conquered Zedekiah, 2 Kings 25:7, he put out his eyes, bound him in fetters, and then carried him away to Babylon. Thus Satan, as soon as he entereth into the soul, laboureth to put out the eyes of the understanding, and so to lead them hoodwinked to hell. Did men know what they had done against God, and how they had undone themselves, they would be restless till they attained a remedy; did the sinner but know the purity, jealousy, power, and justice of that God, whom he daily provoketh; did he but know the love and kindness, the blood and bowels of that Saviour, whom he undervalueth; did he but know the pleasures, and joy, and happiness in heaven, which he neglecteth; did he but know the beauty and amiableness, the delights and comforts of grace and holiness, which he despiseth; did he but know the emptiness and vanity of this deceitful world, which he so heartily embraceth; did he but know where sin is in the premises, sorrow and hell, without faith and sanctification, must be in the conclusion; did men, I say, but know these things, how quickly would they turn from sin unto God, giving a bill of divorce to their most beloved lusts, and entering into a most solemn covenant with the Lord! But having their understandings darkened, they are alienated from the life of God, that is, a life of holiness, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts, Eph. 4:18. Observe how expressly the Spirit of God speaketh ignorance to be the reason why men are such strangers to the power of religion.

Reader, thou mayest by all this see the necessity of knowledge, if ever thou wouldst be converted and saved. The devil, as I said before, carrieth men hoodwinked to hell; but God will never carry thee blindfold to heaven: 'The end of a saint is the inheritance in light,' Col. 1:12; and the way thither is a way of light: 'The path of the just is as a shining light,' Prov. 4:18; and surely in respect of knowledge as well as in other respects. Do not please thyself, that though thou art not book-learned, yet thou hast as good a heart as others, as thy foolish, ignorant neighbours will prate, for when thou thus speakest, thou speakest beside thy book; for the book of God telleth us otherwise.

The soul without knowledge is not good, Prov. 19:2. There may be a clear head without a clean heart, the light of knowledge without the heat of grace; but a gracious heart in a grown person not distracted, was ever accompanied with a competency of knowledge in the head. And indeed knowledge is so near akin to grace, that it is often in the word of God put for it: John 17:3, 'It is life eternal to know thee to be the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent,' So 1 Cor. 2:2; Phil. 3:8; Isa. 53:11.

If thou would be sanctified and saved, get knowledge: 'Seek knowledge as silver, and search for it as for hid treasure,' Prov. 2:3, 4. This is the first thing to be done; it is first in the minister's commission. 'I send thee,' saith God to Paul, 'to open the eyes of the blind, and to turn men from darkness unto light,' Acts 26:18. And this is first in the Spirit's operation on the soul. It convinceth the man of his sins, John 16:10, 11. It presenteth to the understanding a catalogue of its many and bloody provocations. Imprimis, Thus guilty in Adam of high treason against heaven's Majesty, and thereby of want of original righteousness, and of a deep deadly pollution in the whole nature: Item, So many hundred ungodly actions, so many thousand unholy and idle expressions, so many millions of evil thoughts and suggestions: Item, So many omissions and so many commissions: Item, So much precious time mis-spent, a moment of which cannot be recalled or purchased with the revenues of the

world: Item, So many talents of health, strength, food, raiment, esteem, riches, and the like misemployed: Item, So many sacraments, sabbaths, seasons of grace misimproved: Item, So much uncorrigibleness under afflictions, so much unprofitableness under mercies. Thus the Spirit enlighteneth the sinner's mind to see his sins with their circumstances, and black aggravations; as also what is like to be the fruit and effect of sin, even nothing less than suffering everlasting perdition from the presence of the Lord. It may be the Spirit may cause him, as it were, to see the smoke that ascendeth from the bottomless pit, to smell the scent of that infernal brimstone and fire, to hear the roarings and howling of the damned; nay, possibly, to feel a very hell in his own conscience. The Spirit indeed is a free agent, and worketh in what manner and measure he pleaseth. But this is certain, he convinceth all of their sins and miseries; conviction doth go before conversion. The physician of souls will heal none but such as know both their distemper and their danger, and thereby how infinitely they are obliged to him for their cure. As in the first creation one of the first things God made was light; so, in the forming the new creature, illumination is before sanctification. Every one is able to say in Christ as he in the Gospel, 'This I know, whereas I was blind, now I see,' John 9:25.

This is absolutely necessary in order to the second direction I have to commend to thee, which is the sincere humiliation of thy soul. There must be a daybreak of light in the understanding, before there can be a heartbreak of sorrow in the affections; till sin and wrath be discerned by knowledge in the mind, they will be no burden to the conscience, nor grief to the spirit. As no good wrapt up in darkness excites desire, so no evil swathed up in ignorance striketh terror. We may observe this by the holy apostle's expression, 'I was alive without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died,' Rom. 7:9, i.e., the time was that I was ignorant both of the law's strictness and my own sinfulness, and then I thought myself to be very safe; my conscience was very quiet, and my heart full of hope, or more properly, presumption, about my future eternal happiness; thus I was alive without the law. But when my eyes were enlightened,

to see how exceeding broad the commandments of God were, and that once I compared my crooked race with that straight rule, and took notice how far short I came of that obedience which the law required, I was then dead, a lost man: I quickly pulled in my plumes, and took down my sails, with which I was hastening in my conceit to heaven; for I found that I was in very deed in the road to hell. When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. There was then life enough in my lusts to wound me unto death, for I died.

Reader, if thou art convinced so far of the absolute necessity of conversion, as to desire it unfeignedly, let me request thee, for the sake of thy poor soul, to set some considerable time apart; thy body hath had many years, surely thy soul deserveth one day, and that speedily, to be serious in about its endless estate, and to compare thy wicked life with the pure law of God, and observe how exceedingly thou hast swerved from the precepts therein commanded. Consider not only its outward and literal, but likewise its inward and spiritual meaning, and thou mayest presently discern that thy whole conversation for so many years as thou hast lived, hath been a continued aberration and wandering from the Lord and his laws. If thou lookest aright in that glass, it will discover all the spots, all the dirt, that hath been in the face of thy heart and life, James 1:23. 'By the law is the knowledge of sin,' Rom. 3:20.

Consider also, that thy breach of the law makes thee liable to the curse of the law, which is the infinite eternal wrath of the lawgiver: 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them,' Gal. 3:10.

The law must be satisfied; since not in its accomplishment, it will in thy punishment.

If God cast the glorious angels out of heaven, and reserved them in chains of darkness to the judgment of the great day for one sin, and that, as some think, in thought, into what a hell may he cast thee, whose iniquities for weight are like the sand of the sea, and for

number like the sparks of a furnace, and the stars in the firmament! Think of it with all possible seriousness; thou hangest over the mouth of hell every moment by a small thread of life, and if that should be cut asunder, the whole world cannot save thee from dropping into it.

## CHAPTER XV

The second help to a spiritual life, humiliation

II. In the next place, labour to get thy heart deeply and thoroughly affected with thy sins and misery. Humiliation must follow illumination. It is not enough for this knowledge of the transgressions thou hast committed, and the wrath thou hast deserved, to swim in thy head—it may be there as fire in the flint, to no profit—but it must sink down into thy heart, and be beaten out into an application of, and lamentation for, thy guilt and wickedness.

Man is so sinfully subtle, that he can bear the historical knowledge of these things in his understanding; he can hear the name of sin and hell, and be no more troubled than at a painted devil, or a tale of purgatory; but when God brings down sin from being a notion to be an obligation, and entereth an action against the soul within itself, then it will begin to melt and mourn under the sense of its sins and sufferings. Thus, after the Spirit of God hath been a spirit of conviction, it becometh a spirit of bondage: that eye which was before enlightened to see the lewdness of his heart and life, cometh now to affect his heart with grief and sorrow. This we find in those converts, Acts 2:37, when they had heard of their sin and guilt they began to recant and repent: 'When they heard those things, they were pricked to the heart.' The nails which had pierced Christ's hands now pierce their hearts. It was with them, saith one, as if the sharp points of daggers had been stuck or fastened in their hearts. They wounded themselves with sorrow, that ever they had wounded the Lord Jesus with their sins.

The whole life indeed of a true Christian is, in some respects, a life of repentance. He is often grieving God's Spirit, and therefore he is often grieved in his own spirit. As long as the ship leaketh, the pump must go. Though the Christian doth not paddle or wallow in the mire of sin every day, as graceless ones do, yet he findeth that daily his hands contract dirt and his soul guilt, therefore he must daily wash with faith and repentance.

Some report of Mary Magdalene that she spent thirty years in Galba in weeping for her sins; and Tertullian saith of himself that he was born for repentance. Anselm telleth us, that with grief he considered the whole course of his life. I found, writeth he, the infancy of sin in the sins of my infancy, the youth and growth of sin in the sins of my youth and growth, and the ripeness of all sin in the sins of my ripe and perfect age; and then he breaks out into this pathological expression, What remaineth for thee, wretched man, but that thou spend thy whole life in bewailing thy whole life?

But especially at the time of a Christian's conversion he is to mind contrition: when the vessel is newly tapped, then it runneth most freely and plentifully. None might approach the king of Persia's court in sackcloth and mourning, Esther 4:2; but no wandering sinner may draw near to the King of heaven without it. 'Except ye repent, ye shall perish.' God is resolved to break the sinner's heart on earth, or his back in hell. He will have the wound searched and the pains of it felt before it be bound up and cured. The wicked prodigal must come to his Father with compunction in his soul, as well as confession in his mouth.

Look, therefore, O sinner, into the book of thy conscience, and read over the black lines that still are in thy cursed heart, and the bloody leaves of thy wicked life, how long thou hast lived to little purpose, yea, to the killing of thy soul for ever; how far thou hast been from accomplishing the end for which thou wast born, and the errand for which thou wast sent into the world. Keep a petty assize in thy heart; prefer a large bill of indictment against thyself; accuse and condemn

thyself, not only verbally, but cordially, if ever thou wouldst have Christ to acquit thee. Thou hast spent many years in sinning, and shouldst thou not spend some hours in sorrowing? Thou didst make the soul of Jesus Christ sorrowful unto death; shall not therefore thy soul be sorrowful when thy sorrow may be unto life? Did the rocks rend when he died for sin, and shall not thy rocky heart that thou hast lived in sin? He bled for thee, and wilt not thou weep for thyself? Thou hast filled God's bag with thy sins, and hast thou no tears for his bottle?<sup>4</sup> Hast thou so long broken the holy commandments of God, and shall not thy heart now at last be broken? The damned feel sin; it lieth heavy on their souls: could thou lay thy ear to the mouth of that bottomless pit, thou mightst perceive by their yellings and howlings that sin is sin in hell, how lightly soever it is regarded by men upon earth. The Lord Jesus felt sin: hadst thou been in the garden, and seen his blessed body all over in a gore blood, beheld those drops, yea, clods of blood that trickled down his face, surely thou wouldst have believed that it was some heavy weight indeed which caused such a bloody sweat in a cold winter night.

And art not thou yet weary and heavy-laden? Do I speak to a man or a beast? to a living creature, or to a rock that will never be moved? If thou hast a disease in thy body thou canst grieve and complain, and why not for the diseases of thy soul? Are not they far more deadly, more dangerous? If thou lovest a child, oh what crying and roaring, what wringing of hands and watering of cheeks! Nay, if thou lovest a place of profit, a house, or a beast, thou canst mourn, and think of it often with sorrow; and doth it not grieve thee that thou hast lost, not thy child or cattle, but thy Christ, thy Saviour, thy soul, thy God, to eternity? If thou missest a good bargain that was offered thee, whereby thou mightst increase thy estate, or if thou buyest or hirest at too dear a rate, how dost thou beshrew and befool thyself for it! Hast thou not ten thousand times more cause to be really and highly displeased with thyself, and to abhor thyself in dust and ashes, that thou shouldst have all the riches, and glory, and pleasures of the eternal kingdom tendered to thee with many entreaties, and yet thou hast refused them for the lying vanities of this world, and for the

pleasures of sin, which are but for a season? Thou hast denied heaven's happiness for a bubble, a butterfly; all things for nothing. Did ever any fool buy so dear, and sell so cheap? Like Saul, busy himself in seeking asses when a kingdom sought him; like Shimei, seek his servant, and thereby lose himself? No fool like the sinner, that embraceth a shadow which will certainly flee from him, and neglecteth the substance which endureth to eternity.

Honorius the emperor, hearing that Rome was lost, cried, Alas, alas! very mournfully, fearing it had been his hen so called, which he exceedingly loved; but hearing it was the famous city of Rome that was become a prey to his cruel enemies, he made a tush at it. Thus too too many can grieve sufficiently for the loss of vanities, for toys and trifles, but not at all for the loss of God, and Christ, and enduring felicities.

Well, friend, repent timely and truly of this thy folly; for I must tell thee, shortly it will be too late. If repentance be hid from thy heart now, repentance will be hid from God's eye then, by whose law thou art now a condemned man already. If thy heart be hardened now in sinning, the heart of God will ere long be hardened in sentencing thee to an eternity of suffering.

It is an infinite mercy that God yet alloweth thee liberty for second thoughts; that notwithstanding thou hast shipwrecked thy soul, yet thou mayest swim out safe upon the plank of repentance. Oh therefore think no pains too great to break thy stony heart; it is worth the while, when free grace hath promised a vast reward to that heaven-born work. Hadst thou once offered up to God the sacrifice of a spirit truly sorrowful, out of love to God, and self-loathing because of sin, I could tell thee as good, as joyful news, as ever thine ears heard. The Father of mercies and God of comforts would be reconciled to thee in the Lord Jesus. Thy prayers for pardon and life would pierce God's ears, and find acceptance, if they proceed from a broken heart, from sincere repentance. A penitent tear is a messenger that never went away without a satisfactory answer.

Prayers with such tears are prevalent; yea, in Luther's phrase, omnipotent. Music upon the waters sounds most pleasantly. Thou hast heard the voice of my weeping, saith David, Ps. 6:8.

Augustus Cæsar having promised a great reward to any that could bring him the head of a famous pirate, did yet, when the pirate heard of it, and brought it himself and laid it at his feet, not only pardon, but reward him for his confidence in his mercy. The God of bowels and compassion would do more for thee upon thy sincere submission.

As Antipater was answered by Alexander, Thou hast written a long letter against my mother; but dost thou not know that one tear of hers will wash out all her faults? When the returning sinner weeps, the tender-hearted Father smiles. As he rejoiceth and laugheth at obstinate sinners' destruction and ruin, Prov. 1:26, so he rejoiceth and smileth at the penitent sinner's conversion. He will do something for a hypocritical humiliation, to assure us that he will do anything upon a sincere humiliation. Seest thou, saith God, how Ahab humbleth himself? This judgment shall not be in his days, but in his son's days, 1 Kings 21:29. A pitiful humiliation it was, God knew; he looked sadly, like a fox in a trap, merely to get out; yet God takes notice of it, and deferreth the judgment upon it. If God set such a price upon counterfeit, what will he upon true gold? Fierce Esau relenteth towards submitting Jacob, though he came against him ready and resolved to destroy him. Surely, then, the God of compassions—to whose pity and mercy the bowels of all the creatures are but as a drop to the ocean—who calleth those that go from him, will not cast away those that come to him.

Reader, little dost thou think how much he longeth for thy conversion and humiliation. Little dost thou know what kisses and embraces, what robes and rings, what mercies and merits, what a heaven and happiness, what a God, and Christ, and grace, and glory, are all ready for thee, and wait only for thy readiness and

preparedness for them, by thy humiliation for, and an aversion from, thy deceitful corruptions.

Alexander's Macedonians having offended him, laid by their arms, put on mourning apparel, came running in troops to his tent, where for almost three days together they remained with loud cries and tears to testify their remorse for offending him; and wilt not thou do as much for offending God?

As thou therefore lovest the life of thy soul, endeavour to get thy heart thoroughly humbled for thy sins; take a view of thy sins in the word of God, in the glass of his law, how in its nature it is contrary to his blessed nature and perfect law, and for its effects it maketh thee obnoxious to all the threatenings of the word, to all the vials of God's wrath, to all the miseries of this life, and to all the torments of hell for ever.

Consider, while thou livest in thy estate of impenitency, thou art a cursed sinner, and if thou diest in it, thou art a damned creature: the hand of God, which is lifted up in the commination and threatening, will fall down in execution. If the wrath of a king be as a messenger of death, oh what then will the wrath of a God be! As that Christian king of Hungary told his brother, that sprang into his presence pale and trembling, because of the executioner and death's—man, that had sounded his trumpet at his chamber door in the dead time of the night to call him away to execution, O brother, thou hast loved me, and never offended me, and is the sight of my executioner so dreadful to thee? How then should I, a grievous sinner, fear to be brought to judgment before Jesus Christ! Consider the day of the Lord's wrath is coming, and who shall abide it? This terrible fire is kindled, this horrible tempest is gathered, and ready to fall on thy head every moment. Do not put these things far off, as many do, who thereby deprive themselves of the happy effects which these thoughts might produce. A cannon afar off, though never so great, doth no execution; men will not tremble and fall down for fear of it, when once they apprehend it many miles off. Things afar off, though very

big, will seem very small; a star that is bigger than the whole earth, seems no bigger than a torch, being many miles from us. Look therefore on all that misery that is treated of in the first use as thy portion, and as nigh to thee, even at the very door; like a serjeant, it waiteth continually to arrest thee, and hale thee to the prison of hell. There is not a night in which thou liest down to sleep, but this roaring lion of the wrath of God lieth down before thee, and is ready, when thou art asleep, little dreaming of it, to rend thee asunder, and tear thy soul in pieces. In the morning when thou risest it waiteth upon thee, dogging thee all the day long, whatsoever thou dost, and following thee like a bloodhound wheresoever thou goest; thou mayest as soon fly from thyself as from it, till thou art effectually humbled for thy sins, the cause of it. And be not insensible of it, because it is invisible to thee. The influences of the sun are hottest among the minerals in the bowels of the earth, where it is not at all visible, nor they sensible: so the fire of divine fury is hottest where it is not visible, nor the person sensible. Though thou mayest see it as plainly in the Scripture as the sun at noon-day: 'God is angry with the wicked every day,' Ps. 7:11. There is wrath prepared for the workers of iniquity, and it will assuredly and speedily be inflicted, if thou art not timely and truly humbled and converted.

I would also desire thee to ponder much the free grace of God, which is discovered in the gospel. What bowels of compassion in the Father to give his Son! what infinite affection in the Son to give himself for the reconciliation and salvation of his enemies! It is probable the heat of this unknown love may melt thy frozen spirit; the flint itself is broken with the hard hammer and the soft pillow: this is the most ingenuous sorrow that is never to be sorrowed for, which springeth from the consideration that thou hast sinned against so good, so pure, so perfect a God, in conformity to whom, and communion with whom, all thy happiness consisteth. The law indeed is of excellent use to open the sore, to search the wound, to make the patient feel his need of, and set a price upon, his physician; thus it is a schoolmaster to drive the soul to Christ; but winter fruits are more harsh and sour, when summer fruits are sweet and pleasant. God

taketh most delight in those tears and sorrow which are the fruits of hot love to his blessed Majesty. And could I see them once in thee, I durst joy thee of the babe of grace, the new creation. They are at least the kindly bearing throes of one in travail, very near her hour of delivery, as also often the after-pains. A stroke from guilt, from wrath, broke Judas' heart into despair; a look from love, from Christ, broke Peter's into tears. That sap and moisture which in frost and snow lieth hid and buried in the earth, sheweth itself pleasantly in the fruits of the trees, when it is called forth by the warmth of the sun.

Even Saul himself will lift up his voice and weep, when he seeth a clear testimony of the love and undeserved kindness of David.

Hast thou never beheld a condemned prisoner dissolved into tears, upon the unexpected and unmerited receipt of a pardon, who all the time before was as hard as a flint? The hammer of the law may break the icy heart of man with terrors and horror, and yet it may remain ice still, unchanged; but when the fire of love kindly thaweth its ice, it is changed and dissolved into water—it is no longer ice, but of another nature. Where the sun is most predominant, there are the sweetest spices, the richest mines, and the costliest jewels. Do thou therefore meditate much on the love of God and Christ to thy unworthy soul: think what love is it that still spareth thee, notwithstanding all thy God-daring and soul-damning provocations, and that when others, probably better than thyself, are every day and night sent to that place, where God hath large interest for his long patience. What love is it, not only to forbear thee, but also to do thee good! Thou his enemy art hungry, he feedeth thee; thou art thirsty, he giveth thee drink. 'If a man find his enemy, will he let him go?' 1 Sam. 24:19. But lo, God findeth thee every moment. As all thy sins are within the reach of his eye, so thou thyself art continually within the reach of his arm; he can as easily turn thee into hell, as tell thee of hell: and yet he letteth thee go, and more than that, doeth thee good. Thou spendest every hour upon the stock of mercy. God is at great charge and much cost in continuing meat and drink, and health

and strength, and time which thou dost ravel out, and wanton away unprofitably.

What love was that in the Father which sent his own Son to die, that thou mightst live! Well might the beloved disciple say, 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life,' John 3:16. In this the bowels of divine love are naked, as in an anatomy: in other things the love of God is as the beams of the sun scattered, which are warm and comfortable; but in this it is as the beams of the sun united in a burning glass, hot, fiery, burning love. God so loved the world, so dearly, so entirely, so incomparably, so infinitely: it is a sic without a sicut, as one observeth—a pattern which can never be paralleled. 'In this God commended his love towards us, in that when we were sinners Christ died for us,' Rom. 5:8. When God sent his Son into the world, he did, as it were, say to him, My dear Son, thou Son of my chiefest love and choicest delight, go to the wicked, unworthy world, commend me to them, and tell them, that in thee I have sent them such a love-token, such an unquestionable testimony of my favour and good-will towards them, that hereafter they shall never have the least colour of reason to suspect my love, or to say, 'Wherein hast thou loved us?' Mal. 1:2.

What love was that in the Son of God, which moved him to become the Son of man, that thou mightst become the son of God! What love was that which made him so willingly undergo the scorns, and flouts, and derisions of wretched men, the rage, and malice, and assaults of ravenous devils, the wrath and fury of a righteous God; such pangs and tortures in his body as no mouth can express, such sorrows and horror in his soul as no mind can conceive; and all that thou mightst escape such misery, and obtain everlasting mercy!

'Greater love than this hath no man, that a man lay down his life for his friend,' John 15:13. The passion of Christ was the greatest evidence of his affection. The laying down of life did abundantly proclaim his love. His love before was like wine in a cask, hardly

seen; but oh how did it sparkle and cast its colour in the glass of his sufferings! This diamond, before hid in the shell, doth shine radiantly in the ring of his death. If his tears did so much speak his love to Lazarus, that the Jews who saw him weeping, cried out, 'Lo, how he loved him!' surely his heart-blood doth far more demonstrate his love to his members. They that beheld him bleeding in the garden, had far more reason to say, Look, lo how he loved his!

What love is that which did all this for such a worm as thou art—such a sinner, such a rebel? what would God lose if thou wert eternally lost? the least tittle of his happiness would not be diminished. This sun is no loser when men shut their eyes, and will not behold its light; what gaineth God, if he gain thee to himself, to his service? thou canst not add the least cubit to the stature of his perfections. The refreshment is to men, not to the spring, when the weary passengers drink of it. He doth not command thee to repent from any need he hath of thee, but from the pity he hath to thee. He entreateth thee to return, not that he may be blessed and happy, but that he may be bountiful and liberal in bestowing on thee those blessings which accompany salvation. Methinks the apprehension of God's great love and goodness should have such an impression on thee as to make thee little and low in thine own thoughts. Is it not a wonder that God should vouchsafe a gracious look upon such a clod of earth, a piece of clay, as thou art? but what admiration can answer this love and condescension, that God should wait and entreat to lift thee up, who would cast him down?—that an emperor should sue to a traitor; that majesty should thus stoop to misery; that the Lord of life and glory should prepare for thee exceeding rich and precious promises, a crown of life, a purchased possession, and beseech thee to accept of them! Were thy heart never such hard metal, one would think that such a hot fire of burning love should melt it. I have in two or three authors read of five men that met together, and asked each other what means they used to abstain from sin? The first said, the thoughts of the certainty of death, and uncertainty of the time, moved him to live every day as if it were his last day. The second said, he meditated of the day of judgment, and the torments of hell,

and they frightened him from meddling with his dangerous enemy, sin. The third considered of the deformity of sin, and beauty of holiness. The fourth, of the abundant happiness provided in heaven for holy ones. The last continually thought of the Lord Jesus Christ and his love, and this made him ashamed to sin against God.

Reader, if thou hast but any ingenuity, the abuse of such love and kindness should work upon thee. Some say, the blood of a goat will soften an adamant; shall not then the blood of this true goat dissolve thy adamantine heart? Beasts themselves have been won by kindness, and wilt thou be worse than a beast, that such philanthropy and kindness of God shall no whit stir thee or humble thee?

There is a twofold necessity of a deep, serious humiliation, for which cause I have been the more large upon it, though indeed I have added very much more than I first intended, in order to the two next directions which I shall prescribe thee.

First, In order to thy hearty acceptation of Jesus Christ. Humiliation is like John Baptist, to prepare the way of Christ before him. Christ will not be a Saviour to them that do not set a high valuation upon him; now an unhumbled sinner is a man conceitedly whole, seeing no need of, and therefore setting little price upon, the physician of souls. Till men see that they are cast by the law of God, and condemned men, they will never heartily desire and value a psalm of mercy. According to a man's sense of misery, such is his estimation of mercy. When Paul saw himself the chiefest of sinners, then that saying, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, was worthy of all acceptation, 1 Tim. 1:15. This sharp sauce of repentance doth commend Christ exceedingly unto the spiritual palate. The more bitter and irksome sin is, the more sweet and welcome Jesus Christ will be to the soul. When the sinner seeth that he is lost in himself, then, and not till then, will he truly request to be found in Christ; the prodigal did not prize the bread in his father's house till he was ready to perish for hunger. Ministers preach much of the

infinite excellencies that are in Christ, of the unspeakable misery of sinners without Christ, of the absolute necessity that men and women stand in of Christ, and yet preach to little purpose. Most prize their shops and their lands, their relations, yea, and their sensual lusts, above the Lord Jesus, notwithstanding all their pretences to the contrary; they see no such need of him, nor such worth in him, as the preachers and Scriptures speak of. What is the reason of it? truly this, they were never sensible of the stings of the fiery serpents; if they had, they would look up to the brazen serpent with an eye of greater respect. They were never pricked to the heart, and therefore cry not out, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do to be saved?' But when God discovereth his wrath to the soul, and shutteth the soul up under it; when he commandeth conscience in his name to arrest the soul for all its debts which it oweth to divine justice; and when, in pursuance thereof, conscience doth, in the name of the dreadful God, charge on the sinner the guilt of all his sins, and hales him to the judgment-seat of God, where he seeth nothing but frowns and fury, fire and brimstone, and feeleth nothing but tribulation and anguish, indignation and wrath; now the sinner crieth out in bitterness of spirit, O wretched, miserable man, alas, alas! I am undone! What desperate madness possessed my soul, thus to provoke the almighty God by my sins? Into what a sea of misery have I brought myself by mine iniquities! The God whom I see is angry; the wrath which I feel is heavy; the torments which I fear are infinite; the law which sheweth no mercy is violated; the God who will have full satisfaction for the breach of his law is incensed; conscience, which is his jailer, is commissioned to wound and terrify me, and whither shall I go? There is wrath above me, wrath below me, wrath without me, wrath within me, wrath round about me. A world, mark now, for a surety to discharge me of these debts; a thousand worlds for that balm which can heal this wounded conscience; ten thousand thousand worlds for a Jesus that can deliver from the wrath to come. When sin comes to be sin indeed, then, and not till then, a Saviour will be a Saviour indeed.

Secondly, Humiliation is necessary in order to the soul's hearty resignation of itself to every law and command of Christ. According to a man's humiliation, such will his subjection to Christ be. Humiliation is, in some sense, the foundation of a Christian's obedience, and the strength of the building dependeth upon the strength of the foundation. The reason why the religious buildings of hundreds of professors in our days, though they have been very fair and beautiful to the eye, have miscarried, is this, the want of this foundation, their hearts were never thoroughly humbled. The reason why the stony ground did not bring forth good fruit, was this, the plough had not gone deep enough, it did not take deep root, Mat. 13:20, 21.

Men would never dally with God as they do, or halt, as the Israelites, between two opinions—be sometimes for God, and sometimes for the world; holy by fits and girts—if they had ever felt the weight of sin. Christ, when he cometh into the soul as a Saviour, will come also as a sovereign to command and govern the whole man. He is the true Sun, and he will have the whole heaven, the whole heart, to himself; he will allow no writ of partition; his law forbiddeth inmates as well as man's. Now, against this, the natural carnal man riseth and rebelleth exceedingly; he hath ever at this time some lust or other which he valueth as his limbs, some right hand that he desireth may not be cut off, some right eye which he would not have plucked out, some Herodias that must not be meddled with, some Absalom that the sinner entreateth Christ to spare, and deal gently with for his sake. Therefore, before the Lord of hosts can make an absolute conquest, before he can persuade the besieged soul to surrender itself wholly and altogether to his government, he is forced, by the grenadoes and thundering cannons of the law's curse, and God's wrath, to fire and fright it out of all its sinful holds. Then it will come up to those excellent terms of the Lord, which are most honourable for the Saviour, and most profitable for the soul. Now he seeth most certainly such a sting in sin's tail, that he dares plead no longer for the beauty of its face; now he feeleth it as a dart in his liver, as an arrow sticking in his heart, as a coal of fire in his hand; he is heartily

willing, yea, thinks himself much beholden to that Redeemer that will pluck out this dart, this arrow. Oh how readily doth he throw away this coal of fire, fearing to be burnt by it any more! We have two famous instances of this in Scripture. The one is in Paul, Acts 9:6; when Paul, that was posting in the road to hell, comes to be knocked down, and to feel those tremblings and terrors in his spirit, he crieth out, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' He had probably heard much before of God, but he regarded it not, till now he receiveth a word and a blow—a word from without, and a wound within to set it home; now it is, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' Before it was, What will the high priest, the scribes and pharisees, have me to do? and what will the vain imaginations and high thoughts which exalted themselves against God and Christ have me to do? But now it is, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' Before, his heart was like hard wax, it would take no impression from God; but now it is softened by this fire of inward humiliation, it is ready for any stamp. God may imprint what he pleaseth; 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' The other instance is in the cruel, rough, hard-hearted jailer. After the earthquake and the heartquake which God had caused, he springs trembling in, and fell down before Paul and Silas, crying out, 'Sirs, what shall I do to be saved?' Acts 16:29, 30. Observe, now, the man is heartsick indeed, he is willing to take the most bitter pills; as if he had said, Sirs, do but tell me what I must do for salvation; though the terms be never so hard, the conditions never so unpleasant, the price never so much, the pains never so great, yet I will submit to anything, to all things, for salvation. 'What must I do to be saved?'

When the Israelite first sets out towards Canaan there is a mixed multitude, as when they marched out of Egypt, of carnal affections, which desire and endeavour to bear him company; now, because God knoweth that the land is too good for such evil inhabitants, and, besides, that they will cause many mutinies in the way, he brings therefore the Israelite into the wilderness, to humble him and to cut them off.

Before the soul be thoroughly humbled it dodgeth with Christ, it plays fast and loose, off and on; this it liketh, and that it disliketh; this part of the yoke is uneasy, this burden is too heavy, and such and such commandments are grievous; fain it would have Christ and his precious promises, but loath it is to forego its old friends, its beloved lusts; but when God is pleased to take the sinner by the throat, and to shake him out of his security, by shewing him sin and wrath in their colours, making him sensible of the one, and terrifying him with a fearful expectation of the other, laying him at the pit's brink, within the smoke of hell, within the smell of that brimstone, within the scorplings of that eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels, now the sinner seeth that God is in earnest, and therefore dareth not halt or halve it any longer; now he is in a boisterous storm, and casteth all those goods, his darling sins, into the sea, perceiving that he must perish if he do not.

God is necessitated to lance men's wounds, and put them to pain, because otherwise they cannot be cured. When the metal is thus melted, God may cast it into what mould he pleaseth. Oh thrice happy is that heart which hath been deeply and truly humbled! it shall hold out in those tempests wherein many others shall make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience.

## **CHAPTER XVI**

The third help to a spiritual life, Application of, or affiancing on, Jesus Christ

Thirdly, If thou hast been faithful in following my former advice, to get thy mind enlightened to see, and thy heart thoroughly humbled for thy sin and misery, thy next work is to rest and rely upon the Lord Jesus Christ for pardon, grace, and salvation; to look upon him as one appointed by the Father, given by himself, sanctified by the Spirit, and revealed in the word of truth, the gospel, to be the only and all-sufficient Saviour of lost souls. It is now the proper time for

thee to cast thy soul, thy sins, thine eternal estate, upon the infinite meritoriousness of the blessed Redeemer. Experience sheweth, that it is very easy for an unbroken sinner to presume, but surely it is very hard for a humbled sinner that hath had all his vileness and unworthiness displayed before his eye, and the infinite wrath of God, like a mountain of lead, oppressing his conscience, to believe, and therefore I have prepared some choice cordials for such fainting spirits, which I shall give thee anon. But my work now is to beseech thee, broken heart, that thou take heed of thinking to lick thyself whole. I know the devil and thy heart will be both busy and diligent to get thee to make a Christ of thy contrition, and a Saviour of thy humiliation. Oh how unwilling is man, when he hath shipwrecked his soul, to commit himself naked to the sea of Christ's blood! how earnest is he to have the chains and jewels of his earthly affections along with him, and to swim out upon the rotten boards of his own works!

Reader, now therefore especially, if thy soul be in a flame, be careful out of what well thou drawest the water to quench it. This is one of the chiefest, nay, the chiefest of all, fundamentals in religion, and therefore it behoveth thee to be very tender. Now thou art nigh drowning, near sinking in the ocean of divine fury, thou hadst need to make sure that the bough or stake, or whatever it be by which thou holdest, be strong enough, and able to bear thy weight. It is likely, nay it is certain, if thou art humbled as aforesaid, thou prayest, thou mournest, thou sighest, thou loathest thyself for thy wickedness, thou admirest God for his forbearance, thou longest after help and deliverance. Be sure that thou do not look on these as so much money wherewith thou mayest purchase thy pardon, and buy off thy guilt; for believe it, if thou dost, as white as thy silver is, it will draw black lines; instead of wiping off thy old score, thou wilt thereby run further into debt. Evangelical humiliation is required, not so much to make thee acceptable to Christ, as to make Christ acceptable to thee. It is a good evidence of the beginnings of sanctification, but it is a bad advocate for thy justification. It is as truly dangerous to appear

before God in the rags of thy own righteousness as in thy sinful nakedness.

If ever thou receive the blessing of pardon and love from thy heavenly Father, it must be by appearing in the garments of thine elder brother. He maketh his accepted, but it is in Christ the beloved, Eph. 1:6. Nothing but perfect righteousness will pacify God's anger, or satisfy his justice, please those eyes which are purer than to behold the least iniquity. And this righteousness is only in Christ, who was made sin for thee, that thou mightst become the righteousness of God in him, 2 Cor. 5:21.

Do not therefore, when thou ceasest to be an atheist, begin to be a papist, in relying upon thy good works; for though God will not save thee without them, yet he will never save thee for them.

Canst thou, saith an eminent minister now with Christ, make thyself a Christ for thyself? Canst thou bear, and come from under an infinite wrath? Canst thou bring in perfect righteousness into the presence of God? This Christ must do, else he could not satisfy and redeem. And if thou canst not do this, and hast no Christ, desire and pray till heaven and earth shake, till thou hast worn thy tongue to the stumps; endeavour as much as thou canst, and others commend thee for a diligent Christian; mourn in some wilderness till doomsday; dig thy nails, weep buckets full of hourly tears, till thou canst weep no more; fast and pray, till thy skin and bones cleave together; promise and purpose, with full resolution to be better; nay, reform thy head, heart, life, and tongue; and some, nay, all sins; live like an angel, shine like a sun, walk up and down the world like a distressed pilgrim going to another country, so that all Christians commend and admire thee; die ten thousand deaths, lie at the fire-back in hell so many millions of years as there be piles of grass upon the earth, or sands upon the sea-shore, or stars in the firmament, or motes in the sun. I tell thee, not one spark of the wrath of God against thy sin shall be, can be quenched by all these duties, nor by any of these sorrows, for these are not the blood of Christ.

It is both unacceptable and unprofitable for thee to approach God, either in himself or in thyself. I dare not meddle with an absolute God, saith Luther. God in himself is a consuming fire, but in his Son a loving Father. Do thou, therefore, now thou knowest thyself and sin, labour to know Jesus Christ, and him crucified, 1 Cor. 2:2, and count all things dung and dross for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus thy Lord, Phil. 3:8. Read, and pray, and weep, and pant, and thirst, that thou mayest be found in him: 'Not having thy own righteousness, which is according to the law; but that which is through the faith of him, the righteousness which is of God by faith,' Phil. 3:9. Take a view of him in the gospel, where he is crucified before thine eyes, and behold him displayed in both his natures, and all his offices, and therein his suitableness unto, and sufficiency for all the wants and necessities of thy dying soul. Dost thou see a cloud of judgments gathering apace, and ready to pour down on thy head? Run to him for shelter; he is both a shadow from the heat, and a shelter from the storm, Isa. 25:4. Is thy conscience wounded with thy sins? Hasten to the wounds of the Saviour: by his stripes thou mayest be healed, Isa. 53. Do the murdering pieces of the law's curses threaten to destroy thee? Fly like the distressed dove to the clefts of the Rock of ages, the bored hands and feet, the pierced side of thy blessed Redeemer; there thy soul may be sure of safety. He is the only ark wherein thou mayest be saved, when the whole world that lieth in wickedness shall be drowned, shall be damned. He is the little Zoar whither thou mayest retire, and thy soul shall live, when fire and brimstone, yea, hell, shall be rained from heaven on ungodly ones. He is the true city of refuge, wherein thou mayest assuredly escape the wrath of God, which, like the avenger of blood, pursueth thee. A hearty, thankful acceptation of Jesus Christ, as he is tendered in the gospel, will at the day of judgment be a plea as acceptable unto God, and profitable unto thee, as perfect subjection to all the commands of the law.

Consider how full his merits are; he is a horn of salvation, Luke 1:69, i.e., strong to save, the strength of the noble beasts lying in their horns. There is no sinner so black but the blood of this Saviour can

make white, Rev. 7:14. There are some diseases which other physicians cannot cure, but he healeth all diseases. All are dangerously, but none desperately sick whom he undertaketh. Thou owest a vast debt to justice, but the Lord Jesus is an able surety: 'He is able to save to the uttermost those that come unto God by him,' Heb. 7:25.

Oh what is it that thou wantest, which perfect righteousness and infinite meritoriousness cannot procure? Dost thou want remission? God forgiveth sin for Christ's sake, Eph. 4:32; 'the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth from all sin,' 1 John 1:7. He was a great sinner, as Luther observeth, by imputation, that thou mightst be innocent through condonation and pardon. Dost thou want reconciliation with God? He maketh peace through the blood of his cross, Col. 1:20. God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself, 2 Cor. 5:20. He endured his Father's frowns and fury, that thou mightst enjoy his smiles and favour. Dost thou want sanctification? His blood is sanctifying as well as justifying, Heb. 9:14. He did not only buy off thy score of guilt, but also purchased a new stock of grace for his bankrupt creature to set up with again.

The oil of grace was abundantly poured on the church's head, that it might fall down on the skirts and members. Of his fulness thou mayest receive grace for grace, John 1:16. Dost thou want salvation? He hath the power and gift of eternal life, John 10:28, and 17:24. He is the author of eternal salvation, Heb. 5:9. Thou mayest have boldness, through the blood of Jesus, to enter into the Holy of holies, Heb. 10:19, 20. He paid an infinite sum to purchase the Father's house for thine everlasting home. Whatever thy need be, he is able to supply it, for he is a universal treasure which can never be spent, a spring that can never be drawn dry: 'In him dwelleth the fulness of the Godhead bodily,' Col. 2:9.

Consider also how free his mercy is, as well as his merits full. Thou mayest 'drink of the water of life freely,' Rev. 22:17. If thou wilt buy his benefits, thou must leave thy money behind thee; his wine and

milk is to be had without money and without price, Isa. 55:1. Do not hold off, thinking to carry worthiness to Christ, but believe on him, and thou mayest fetch worthiness from Christ. The same free grace which gave Christ for thee without thy prayer, will, at thy desire, give Christ to thee. Do not always lie poring upon thy unworthiness, but if thou art sensible of it, and sorrowful for it, believe it thou art worthy enough to divine acceptation, though not to divine satisfaction. As his omnipotency answereth thy weakness, and his fulness thy wants, so doth his free grace all thy unworthiness. The natural sun doth not enlighten more freely, than this Sun of righteousness doth enliven all that come under the shadow of his wings.

Ponder how universal his offers of grace are. Jesus Christ, with all his merits, are tendered to all. The proposals of divine mercy and love are general and universal. 'Go preach the gospel,' observe, 'to every creature. He that believeth shall be saved.' 'Ho every one that thirsteth,' Isa. 55:1. 'If any man,' let him be poor or rich, high or low, 'thirst, let him come to me and drink,' John 7:37.

It is a great encouragement that, in the offers of pardon and life, none are excluded; why, then, shouldst thou exclude thyself. 'Come to me all ye that are weary and heavy-laden,' Mat. 11:28. Mark, poor sinner, 'all ye.' Art not thou one of that all? Is not thy wickedness thy weight, and thy corruption thy burden? Then thou art called particularly as well as generally. Jesus Christ taketh thee aside from the crowd, and whispereth thee in the ear, O poor sinner, that art weary of the work, and heavy-laden with the weight of sin, be entreated to come to me; I will give thee rest. Why doth thy heart suggest that he doth not intend thee in that call? Doth he not, by that qualification, as good as name thee? Ah, it is an unworthy, a base jealousy, to mistrust a loving Christ without the least cause.

Once more, meditate how willing he is to heal thy wounded spirit, and be not faithless, but believing. He is willing to accept of thee, if thou art willing to accept him. What mean his affectionate invitations? He seeketh to draw thee with cords of love, cords that

are woven and spun out of his heart and bowels: Cant. 4:8, 'Come away from Lebanon, my sister, my spouse; from the lions' den, from the mountains of leopards.' Christ's love is hot and burning; he thinketh thou tarriest too long from his embraces: 'Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled,' Cant. 5:2. Christ stands begging for entrance: Lost man, do but suffer me to save thee; poor sinner, suffer me to love thee. These are the charms of gospel rhetoric. None singeth so sweetly as the bird of paradise, the turtle that chirpeth upon the church's hedges, that he may cluck sinners to himself. What mean his pathetic expostulations, 'Why will ye die?' Ezek. 33:11. What reason hast thou thus to run upon thy death and ruin? 'What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me?' Jer. 2:5; what harm have I ever done them? what evil do they know by me, that they walk so contrary to me? But one place for all: Micah 6:3, 4, 'O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me. For I brought thee out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants.' O my people, remember now what bowels of love are here sounding in every line; what fiery affection is there in such sweet expostulations! Oh admirable condescension!

What meaneth his sorrow for them that refuse him for their Saviour? 'He is grieved because of the hardness of men's hearts,' Mark 3:5.

He shed tears for them that shed his blood. When he came nigh that city, which was the slaughter-house of the prophets of the Lord, and of the Lord of the prophets, he wept, Luke 19:41: 'If thou hadst known, even thou, in this thy day.' The brokenness of his speech sheweth the brokenness of his spirit. He is pitiful towards their souls that are so cruel to themselves, and weepeth for them that go laughing to hell.

What meaneth his joy at the birthday of the new creature, when he is received with welcome into the sinner's heart? The mother is as much pleased that her full breasts are drawn as the child can be. The day of thy cordial acceptation of him will be the day of the gladness

of his heart. At such an hour he rejoiced in spirit, saith the evangelist, Luke 10:21. He wept twice, and he bled, as some affirm, seven times; but we never read of his rejoicing, if I mistake not, but in this place. And surely it was something that did extraordinarily take the heart of Christ, which could, in the time of his humiliation, tune his spirit into a merry note, and cause this man of sorrows to rejoice. Ah, sinner, believe it, he would never so willingly have died such a cursed, painful death, if he had not been willing that sinners should live a spiritual and eternal life.

What mean, I say, his invitations, exhortations, grief upon refusal, joy upon acceptance, his commands, entreaties, promises, threatenings; his wooing thee by the ministers of his word, by the motions of his Spirit, by his daily, nightly, hourly mercies, by his gracious providence, by his unwearied patience, but to assure thee that he is heartily willing to accept thee for his servant, for his son, if thou art heartily willing to accept him for thy Saviour and for thy sovereign? He would never present thee with such costly gifts, if his offer of marriage were not in earnest. Besides, broken-hearted sinner, for it is to thee that all this while I have been speaking how darest thou any longer entertain such a traitor against the King of saints in thy breast, as a thought that the Lord Jesus can be guilty in any of the forementioned particulars of the least in sincerity?

Do not, therefore, like the silly hart, go ever up and down moaning and bleeding with the arrow in thy side, thy sins sticking in thy heart, but desire his helping hand to pluck them out, and without question thou shalt have it. He had a special command and commission from his Father to remember and redeem thee: Isa. 61:1–3, 'To bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captive, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound, to comfort them that mourn;' and dost thou think it possible for him to be unfaithful in his office or to his Father? No certainly; he keepeth all his Father's commandments, and continueth in his love, John 15:10, 11.

When he was upon earth, like a physician, he was in his element when among sick and diseased persons, so much did he love to heal and cure. And now he is in heaven, though he be free from passion, yet not from compassion; his heart pitieth thee most tenderly, and his hand will help thee effectually. Cheer up at last, O drooping soul, and look up with an eye of faith to this Lord of life, to this brazen serpent. I may say to thee, as Martha to Mary, 'The Master is come, and he calleth for thee.' Hark how loudly he proclaimeth his general tender of grace: 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come to the waters,' Isa. 55:1; how lovingly he beseecheth: 'As though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God,' 2 Cor. 5:20. See how cheerfully he looks, out of hope that thou wilt by believing receive him into thy heart: 'His countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars. His mouth is most sweet; yea, he is altogether lovely,' Cant. 5:15, 16. How hastily he runs to meet thee more than half-way! love's pace is very swift: 'Behold, he cometh leaping over the mountains, skipping upon the hills!' Cant. 2:8. Observe how bountifully he provideth for thy entertainment: 'A feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined,' Isa. 25:6. 'Behold he standeth at the door and knocketh; if thou hear his voice, and open to him, he will come in and sup with thee, and thou with him,' Rev. 3:20.

## CHAPTER XVII

### The fourth help, Dedication to God

Fourthly, Dedicate thyself, soul and body, and all thou hast, unto the service and glory of Jesus Christ. If thou hast been unfeigned in the practice of the former directions, I doubt not in the least thy willingness to this. If thy sorrow for sin hath been sincere, like a burnt child thou wilt dread that fire. The sense of former unkindness to Christ is fresh in thy heart; and a very glutton, in pain under a

distemper, dares not but forbear such meats as will feed it. If thy marriage to Christ hath been hearty, thou hast given a universal bill of divorce to other lovers, and hast accepted him for thy head and husband, to govern and command thee, as well as to protect and provide for thee, and instate heaven as a jointure upon thee. If thou expectest an immortal life from him, thou must consecrate thy mortal life to him. I hope then thou art contented to take Jesus Christ, for better, for worse; with his shameful cross, as well as his crown of glory; with his trials, as well as his triumphs; with his gracious precepts, as well as his gracious promises: nay, I hope thou seest so much equity in his commands, so much beauty in his ways and worship, so much of thy soul's felicity wrapt up in holiness, in order to its perfection and happiness, that thou wouldst much rather choose the easy yoke, the light burden of Christ, than the drudgery of the world, or the bondage of corruption. Truly thus it must be with thee, if ever thou art saved; and thus I thought to have found thee by this time, at least to leave thee.

One excellently compareth holiness and happiness to those two sisters, Leah and Rachel. Salvation or happiness, like Rachel, seems the fairer—even the carnal heart may fall in love with that; but sanctification or holiness, like Leah, is the elder, and beautiful also, though in this life it appears with some disadvantage, her eyes being bleared with tears of repentance, and her face furrowed with the works of mortification. But this is the law of that heavenly country, that the younger sister must not be bestowed before the elder. We cannot enjoy fair Rachel, heaven and happiness, except first we embrace tender-eyed Leah, holiness, mortification, self-denial, and all those severe duties which the church's lawgiver enjoineth.

Friend, sit down and consider what it may cost thee to be a Christian. It must cost thee the absolute denial of thy sinful, carnal self, of the body of death and its earthly members, which are expressly forbidden in the word of God; and thy main work must be every day to crucify and mortify them. Sin must die, though it may be never so dear to thee, or thy soul cannot live. If thou lettest any sin go, since

every one is appointed by God to destruction, thy life must go for its life, as the prophet told Ahab, 1 Kings 20:42. When Christ came in the flesh, sin crucified him; but when Christ comes in the spirit, he will crucify it. As Samson, an eminent type of Christ, pulled down the house upon the heads of the lords of the Philistines, that he might slay them, and so be avenged on them for his two eyes; so Jesus Christ, if he be thy Saviour, is resolved to pull the house in which sin harbours itself down about its ears, and by its slaughter, to be revenged on it for his two eyes, for all the ignominy and shame, agony and pain, which sin put him to. He will teach thee better than to beg the life of those Barabbases, those foul murderers and robbers of God of his glory. And surely ingenuity will learn thee otherwise than to expect such infinite favours from this King, and yet to entertain in thy heart any that are rebels against his Majesty.

Thus it will cost thee the absolute denial of thy sinful self. It must cost thee the conditional denial of thy natural self, and all that is outwardly dear unto thee. Nay, it may cost thee the actual loss of relations, possessions, honour, pleasure, liberty, limbs, life, and all these for Jesus Christ. Thou must resolve, whenever they come in opposition unto, or competition with Christ, his glory, kingdom, and command, to let them go. As when Levi's relations came in competition with the glory of God, he did not know his father, nor would he acknowledge his brethren, Deut. 33:9. When Moses' glory and pleasures came in competition with a precept of God, he chooseth 'to suffer affliction with the people of God, rather than to enjoy the pleasures of the court,' Heb. 11:25. When Paul's liberty and life come in competition with the kingdom of Christ, he is ready, not only to be bound, but to die for the name of the Lord Jesus, Acts 20:24. They all willingly left their own comforts to obey God's call and commands. In conversion, as one well observeth, the use and the property of all we have is altered. All our vessels, all our merchandise must be superscribed with a new title: 'Holiness to the Lord,' Isa. 23:18; Zech. 14:20, 21. Then men's chief care will be to honour the Lord with their substance, Prov. 3:9: to bring their sons, their silver, their gold, to the name of the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, Isa. 60:9.

All we are, or have, we have it on this condition: to use it, to leave it, to lay it out, to lay it down, unto the honour of our Master, from whose bounty we received it.

It was a notable saying of a noble lord of this land, that that person may be deceived, who thinks to save anything by his religion more than his soul; and surely he that saveth his soul, saveth all that is worth saving. He meant that his religion might cost him the loss of all other things. There is certainly, if thou wilt be a Christian indeed, a necessity of laying thy health, strength, time, estate, name, friends, interests in the world, thy calling and comforts whatsoever, at the feet of Christ, to be employed wholly in his service, and improved altogether for his glory, and to be denied or enjoyed, in whole or in part, according to his call and command. This may seem a hard saying to carnal minds, that rather than break, and leave off all show of trading with God, to which their stirred consciences will by no means yield, would willingly compound and give Christ a part, and the world and flesh the other part; but as Christ is worthy of, so he will have, all acceptation. The gods of the heathen are good fellows, and share their honour among themselves; but this Lord over all, who is God blessed for ever, will not give his glory to others; he will not suffer that superlative esteem, trust, and love of the soul, to be bestowed on any but himself, or to be divided betwixt himself and any other. He will allow no superior, nay, no equal. As Alexander answered Darius, when Darius sent to him about peace, because there were empires enough in the world to satisfy them both, The whole world could endure but one sun, but one Alexander. So the heart of man must have but one general, but one commander-in-chief, and that must be Jesus Christ.

Truly, reader, I hope that these things will not discourage thee from the ways of God. Do but rationally consider them; is it not most just and equal, that since all these things come freely from him, that they should be laid out purely for him? Thou givest thy servant a little meat, and drink, and money, or rather God by thee, and what service dost thou require of him? Thou art instrumental, under God, to the

birth and breeding of thy children, and what duty dost thou expect from them? Art not thou ten thousand times more engaged to Jesus Christ, for every bit of bread and breath of air, for every night's sleep and day's supply, for every mercy that thine enjoy, for every moment's abode on this side hell, for every soul-favour, and body-kindness.

In him thou livest, movest, and hast thy being; the light doth not so much depend on the sun, as thy life and all thy comforts depends on Christ. Now, be thy own judge, what service, what obedience, may the Lord Jesus look for at thy hands? If the world or the flesh could do half so much for thee, thou wert more excusable, than now thou art in doing so much for them.

Again, when the question ariseth, whether Christ or the flesh, Christ or the world, should have thy greatest esteem, or love, or trust, or the most of thy time, and strength, and talents. One would think thou shouldst be ashamed to put such a question, or, at least, that the very mention of it would be a sufficient answer to it. Alas! what are all the honours and pleasures, riches and relations, delicates and diadems, of the whole world to Jesus Christ, but as pebbles to pearls, dirt to diamonds, dross to gold, nothing to all things? there surely is no comparison. The whole world of heaven and earth doth not so far excel a feather, as Jesus Christ doth the whole world.

Besides, this request of mine should rather encourage thee, in regard this absolute resignation of thyself to Christ tendeth to the perfection and happiness of thy soul. Thy misery by thy fall is chiefly in this, that thou hast thereby lost the image of God. Thy want of conformity to him, is the cause why thou hast not communion with him. Beasts do not converse with men, nor trees with beasts, because they do not live the life of each other. Sense must fit trees to converse with beasts, and reason must fit beasts to converse with men, and grace and holiness must fit thee to converse with God. When thou once livest the life of God, as this unreserved soul-resignation or

sanctification is called, Eph. 4:18, thou mayest then bathe thy soul in his love.

Now this is the way to it. The life of Christianity consisteth in a hearty dedication of thyself and all thou hast to Christ. When thou hast done this, thou art a Christian indeed.

The excellency of everything standeth in two things: first, The perfection of beauty in which it was made, and the perfection of use for which it was made. Now the beauty of man consisteth in this, that he was made like unto God, Gen. 1:26; and his end and use is this, that he was made for God; first to serve him, and after to enjoy him, for the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself; therefore to recover the image of God, which consisteth in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, to work to the service and glory of God, to aspire to the possession and fruition of God, must needs be man's greatest good.

By what hath been largely spoken before in this use, thou mayest perceive that there is no going to heaven per saltum, by leaping out of a dirty and stinking jakes into the presence of the glorious God. There is a being made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, Col. 1:12, which is by sanctification. As clothes are by lighter colours fitted to receive a deep scarlet dye, so thou must, by this spiritual life of holiness, be fitted for the eternal life of glory. Observe, 2 Cor. 5:5, the apostle tells us, He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing (i.e., heaven) is God. Man is a rugged piece of timber, an unhewn stone; now the stone must be polished, and the timber squared, before it can be fit for the heavenly building wrought for it.

Joseph, when he was sent for to Pharaoh out of prison, changed his raiment, and trimmed himself, and then appeared before the king.

And as there must be regeneration, or the beginning of grace, so there must be a proficiency or growth in grace, to prepare the soul

for the weight of glory. There is a double right which every child of God hath to heaven. 1. Jus hæreditarium, a hereditary right, and that is at regeneration, when he is put into Christ, and made a co-heir with him of his inheritance, having grace begun in him, which shall be perfected in glory, and was given as a principle ordained to such a perfection. 2. Jus aptitudinarium, and that is a right of fitness, whereby we are qualified to receive such a mercy; and that as an heir hath a right of inheritance in his non-age, but he hath not a right of fitness till he come to years, and be able to manage his estate when he hath received it. Reader, in both these respects there is a necessity that thou presently make a deed of gift of thyself and thy all unto Jesus Christ; and that thou never more look upon thyself, or anything thou hast, as thine own, but as a servant entrusted with them for thy Master's use and advantage.

Well, reader, I suppose thou dost ere this fully understand the conditions upon which thy soul may be contracted unto Christ. My work is to treat with thee about this marriage. I am commanded by the Lord, as Abraham's steward by his lord, Gen. 24, to provide a wife for my Master's Son. I do here, in the presence of the living God, by commission from his Majesty, tender thee the most honourable, profitable, delightful match that was ever offered to mortals. It is the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of life and glory, the only-begotten of the Father, the fairest of ten thousands, to be thy head and husband: hereby thou shalt have the King of kings, the Lord of heaven and earth, for thy Father; a queen, the church, for thy mother; the saints, those truly excellent, noble, illustrious ones, higher than the kings of the earth, for thy brethren and sisters: the covenant of grace, in comparison of which all the gold of the Indies is but dirt and dung, for thy treasure; glorious angels for thy servants, the flesh of the Son of God for thy meat, and his precious blood for thy drink; perfect righteousness, which is more beautiful than the unspotted innocency of Adam or angels, for thy raiment; a palace of pleasures, a place of glory, a building of God, a house not made with hands, but eternal in the heavens, for thy habitation. And all this only upon these terms, that thou wilt be a loving, faithful, and obedient wife, which the

poorest beggar in the country expects from his wife; that thou wilt heartily give up thyself and all thou hast to his service and glory; and this he desireth also for thy good and benefit, that he may make thee a more excellent creature, and render thee more acceptable to God, and more capable of his dearest love and eternal embraces. As the rain is sent up from the earth in thick and foggy vapours, but the heavens return it in pure and silver showers, so though thou givest an unbelieving, hard, earthly heart unto Christ, he will return it unto thee again, believing, tender, heavenly, such a heart as shall be more pleasing both to God and thyself; and for this he is pleased—though ten thousand suns united into one are but darkness to him, so great is his glory—to condescend to become a suitor to thee, to beseech thee to accept of him, who knoweth thy portion to be misery and beggary, who seeth thy person to be full of ugliness and deformity, who gaineth no addition to his happiness by thine acceptance of his love, nor suffereth the least diminution by thy refusal. Well, what sayest thou to this match? Art thou heartily willing to take Jesus Christ for thy wedded husband, to protect and direct thee, to purify and pardon thee, to sanctify and save thee, to guide thee by his counsel, and afterwards to receive thee to glory? And wilt thou here, in the presence of the Lord, and before thy conscience, which is as ten thousand witnesses, promise and covenant to obey him universally, to love him unfeignedly, to resign up thyself and all thou hast to his disposal unreservedly? What sayest thou? Art thou willing or no? Take heed of dallying in a match that is so unquestionably and infinitely for thy advantage. Believe it, thou shalt not have such offers every day. Do not stick at any of his precepts, for he can require nothing but what is equal, excellent, and honourable. Do not trifle or defer it, if thou lovest thy soul, for this may be the very last time of asking. If thou wilt deal kindly and truly with my Master, tell me; or, if not, tell me, that I may return an answer to him that sent me, Gen. 24:49.

These four directions which I have laid down already are without question the whole of Christianity; and that soul shall be certainly saved by whom they are uprightly practised: yet there are two special

means which God hath appointed for the enabling the soul to perform them, which I shall speak briefly to, and for method sake join them altogether.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### Two other helps, the word and prayer

Fifthly, If thou wouldst attain this spiritual life, be much conversant with the word of God; be often reading it, meditating on it, but especially frequent it in public where it is preached; by losing one sermon, for aught thou knowest, thou mayest lose one soul.

Death at first entered into the world by the ear, Gen. 3., and so doth life. Faith comes by hearing, Rom. 10:17. Thou seest in the gospel that faith and repentance are this spiritual life, Mark 16:16; Gal. 2:20; and thou mayest see as clearly that they are both the fruits of the ministry of the word; for faith, that forequoted place, Rom. 10:17, is full; and for repentance, that of Acts 2:37 speaketh home, 'When they heard these things, they were pricked to the heart:' mark, 'When they heard these things.' The word of God is a hammer with which God is pleased to break the stony heart, and a fire wherewith he melteth the hard metal, Jer. 23:29. In this respect it is that the minister is called the father of some converts, namely, those whom he begetteth through the gospel, 1 Cor. 4:15.

There is a resurrection of souls at this day, when ministers lift up their voice like a trumpet, Isa. 58:1; Acts 2:37, as well as there shall be a resurrection of bodies at the last day by the trump of the archangel. This is the net which God is pleased to cast into the sea of the world, and wherewith he hath caught many a soul, three thousand at one draught, Acts 2:41. Spiritual life is the gift of God, as well as eternal: the gift of all grace is of grace; but ordinarily of his own will he begetteth souls by the word of truth, James 1:18. If thou

wilt have wisdom's dole, thou must wait at wisdom's gate, for there it is given, Prov. 8:34.

Grace is the law written in the heart, and usually the ministry of the word is the pen wherewith the Spirit of God writes it.

That is the bed wherein the children of God are begotten, Cant. 1:16; that is the school wherein the disciples are taught of God, and learn the truth as it is in Jesus. The minister's commission doth abundantly evince this: I send thee, saith God to Paul, to open the eyes of the blind, and to turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to the living God.

God indeed is a most free agent, and can work when and how he pleaseth; but it hath pleased him to make the gospel of Christ his own power unto salvation, Rom. 1:16; and it pleaseth him by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe, 1 Cor. 1:21. Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, to the eye of sense may seem better than all the waters of Israel; but Jordan can cleanse and heal when those cannot, because it hath a divine precept and promise annexed to it. Nay, observe how God is pleased to dignify his word, and to honour his own ordinance. When he hath begun the work of conversion himself immediately, he will not perfect it without the ministry of his word. He sendeth Paul to Ananias, Acts 9:15, to learn what he should do; and biddeth Cornelius by an angel—for an angel must not do that work—to send for Peter, and from him to hear words whereby he and his house should be saved, Acts 10:5, 6. David, who was wiser than the ancients, than his enemies, than his teachers, lieth many months asleep on the bed of security, in a most filtry pickle, till a prophet is sent to call him up and awake him; then, and not till then, he mindeth cleansing, as appeareth plainly by the title and body of the 51st Psalm. So David's heart smote him for numbering the people: but mark the means of it. For, saith the text, when David was up in the morning, the word of the Lord came to Gad, and commanded him to go to David, 2 Sam. 24:10–12.

Yea, the very honour of saving souls, the Most High ascribeth to the ministry of his word, 1 Tim. 4:16. Timothy is spoken of as saving himself and them that hear him, i.e., instrumentally; thus highly God doth magnify his ordinances, though many men vilify them. Do not thou therefore forsake the assemblies of the saints, as the manner of some is, Heb. 10:25, but lie constantly at the pool, praying and waiting for the troubling of the waters of the sanctuary; the angel of the covenant may move there, and thy diseased soul thereby be healed. Some that have come to church to sleep, as Mr Latimer saith, have been taken napping. As thou wouldst learn that lesson whereby thou mayest be wise to salvation, do not play the truant, but frequent that school where the prophet of the church teacheth. As thou wouldst not quench the Spirit, despise not prophesying, 1 Thes. 5:19, 20. They that came to catch the preacher, have been caught by the sermon, as Augustine by Ambrose. And they that come to see fashions, as Moses came to the bush, may be called as he was. The soldiers or officers that went to apprehend Christ were probably apprehended by Christ, John 7:46. When Henry Zatphen was preacher at Breme, the papists sent their chaplains to hear, that they might entrap him, but God converted by his ministry many of them. —Slead. Comment.

If thou wouldst have thy heart thoroughly humbled, make use of the word; you may read of a bad, hard, cursed heart indeed humbled by this, 2 Chron. 33:12, 19. Manasseh in his affliction humbled himself greatly; for God sent unto him prophets and seers, that spake unto him in the name of the Lord; so 2 Sam. 24:10–12.

Wouldst thou rest upon Jesus Christ for salvation? Mind the word: 'Every one that hath heard and learned of the Father cometh unto me,' John 6:45.

Wouldst thou have thine inward man renewed and changed? This may be done by the blessing of God accompanying his word; therefore it is called the ingrafted word, James 1:21. To teach us that, as the scion of a good apple grafted into a crab tree stock, hath virtue

to change the nature of it; so hath the word preached,—for of that he speaketh, as is manifest, ver. 19–23,—virtue to change the heart of man.

Reader, let me persuade thee to have a reverent esteem of, and to be very familiar with, the word of God, reading it constantly, and hearing it frequently, as the Lord shall give thee opportunities; but take heed how thou hearest, Luke 8:18, how thou readest. Attend on the word, having first laid aside all superfluity of naughtiness; weeds must be rooted up before the ground of man's heart is fit to receive the seed of the word. 1. With meekness of spirit, James 1:21. The humble sinner is fittest to be Christ's scholar. 'The meek he will teach his way; the meek he will guide in judgment,' Ps. 25:8, 9. When the heart is tender, it is most teachable; it is like white paper for any inscription, like soft wax for any impression. A proud person is too good, in his own conceit, to be taught; he quarrelleth and rageth, either at the person that preacheth, or at the plainness of the sermon, but to his own ruin. He rejecteth the counsel of God, but it is against himself, to his own hurt, Luke 7:30. The weak corn, which yields to the wind, receiveth no damage by it, but the proud, sturdy oak, which resisteth it, is often broken in pieces.

2. Attend on the word, with a resolution to obey whatever the Lord shall in his word command thee. Oh it is excellent to sit at God's feet, hearing his voice purposely that thou mightst do his will; like a servant, to go to thy master and know his mind, that thou mayest fulfil it; when thou canst say, I am here present before the Lord, to hear and do the things that are commanded me of God, Acts 10:33; like the Romans, to deliver up thyself wholly to that form of doctrine, εἰς τύπον διδαχῆς, which God hath delivered down unto thee, as metal for any stamp and mould, Rom. 6:17.

3. With self-application. Do not think this concerneth such a man, and now the minister hitteth such a one; but consider, now God speaketh to my soul, and this truth doth nearly concern me. If the word be not mixed with faith, it will not be profitable to them that

hear it, Heb. 4:2. Whilst truths rest in generals, little good will be done, but when they come to be particularly applied, and to sink down into the heart, then they work effectually for the soul's salvation. Truths generally received are like the charging a piece, but the particular application of them dischargeth it, and doth the execution upon sin.

4. With supplication before and after reading or hearing. Begin with God: 'Lord, open mine eyes, that I may see the wonderful things of thy law,' Ps. 119:18. Begin duty with duty: 'The preparation of the heart in man is from the Lord,' Prov. 16:1. And after thou hast heard or read, pray, as the disciples after they had heard, Lord, open to us this parable, Mat. 15:15. This scripture, 'Write thy law in my heart, and thy truth in mine inward parts; teach me thy way, lead me in thy righteousness. Give me under standing, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart,' Ps. 119:33, 34.

Urge thy soul with the necessity of this duty, that thou must be converted or condemned; and it is the law of the Lord that is perfect, converting the soul, Ps. 19:7. That thou must know thy misery, or feel it eternally; and it is the precept of the Lord that is pure, enlightening the mind, Ps. 19:8. That thou must repent or be ruined; and it is by hearing that men come to be pricked at the heart, Acts 2:37. That thou must believe or perish; and how shalt thou believe on him of whom thou hast not heard? Rom. 10. As ships will ride a long time in a roadstead, when they might be in the haven, for this end, that they may be in the wind's way to take the first opportunity that shall be offered for their intended voyage; so do thou ride in the road of God's ordinances, waiting for the gales of the Spirit. Thou knowest not how soon that wind may blow on the waters of the sanctuary, and drive the vessel of thy soul swiftly, and land it safely at the haven of happiness, of heaven.

Sixthly, If thou wouldst attain this spiritual life, be frequent and fervent at the throne of grace, that the God of all grace would infuse grace into thee, and breathe into thy soul the breath of this spiritual

life. As Abraham pleaded for Ishmael, Gen. 17:18, 'Oh that Ishmael might live before thee!' so do thou for thy soul, Oh that my soul might live before thee! And as the ruler for his son, Lord, come down quickly ere my soul die, yea, ere it die eternally.

Go to God with a sense of thy own unworthiness and iniquities, that though thou comest to his Majesty for the greatest favours, yet thou art less than the least of all his mercies, acknowledging that thou hast sinned heinously against heaven, and before him, and art unworthy to be called his son. Confess thy original, actual, heart, life sins, with their bloody aggravations, and entreat him to pardon and purify thee. Oh with what humility, reverence, and self-abhorreny should such a guilty prisoner approach the judge of the whole earth! Arraign, accuse, and condemn thyself and thy sins, if ever thou wouldst have God to acquit thee.

Pray also with a sense of thy own impotency and weakness. That though there be a necessity of humiliation, if ever thou wouldst escape damnation, yet thou canst as soon fetch water out of a rock, as tears from thine eyes, or sorrow from thine heart, for thy sins; till the wind of the Spirit bloweth, those waters will never flow. It is God that must give to thee, a poor Gentile, repentance unto life, Acts 11:18. That thou must believe, or thou canst not be saved; yet thou canst as easily cause iron to swim, as thy soul to believe in the Son of God. Faith is the gift of God, Phil. 1:29; Zeph. 3. It is as hard a work to believe the gospel, as to keep the law perfectly. Nothing less than omnipotency can enable the soul to either. As thy first birth and generation, so is thy second birth and regeneration, from the Lord. Men and means may be instrumental and subservient, but their efficacy and success dependeth on God.

When thou hast, through the strength of Christ, wrought thy heart to some sense of thy weakness and unworthiness, then look into the Scriptures, and fetch arguments from God's own mouth, weapons from his own armoury, whereby thou mayest prevail with him, and overcome him. Beseech him to consult his glorious name and

gracious nature; mind him that he is the Lord, the Lord God, gracious, merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, Exod. 34:6. Tell him that he delighteth not in the death of sinners; that he taketh more pleasure in unbloody conquests, in the cheerful services, than in the painful sufferings of his creatures; that he had much rather have trees for fruit than for the fire. Say, 'Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness; and after the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out mine offences,' Ps. 51:1. O thou that art rich in mercy, for the great love wherewith thou lovest souls, quicken me in Christ, that by grace I may be sanctified and saved. Since thou delightest in mercy, be pleased, Lord, to delight both thyself and thy servant, by extending thine hand of mercy to pluck me out of this bottomless depth of misery. Entreat God to consult his own honour, as well as his gracious nature. Mind him, that if he condescend to convert and save thee, he shall have the glory of his patience, in waiting thus long to be gracious; the glory of his providence, in causing all things to work together for thy good; the glory of mercy, in pitying and pardoning such a grievous sinner; the glory of his justice, in that noble satisfaction it shall have from the death of his Son; the glory of his power, in bringing such a rebellious heart into subjection unto Jesus Christ. Entreat his Majesty to consider, that he may pardon and cleanse thee, through Christ, without the least diminution to his glory; nay, that far more revenues will come to his crown from thy salvation, than from thy damnation; that the forced confessions of them that perish, as of malefactors upon the rack, do not sound forth his praises so much, nor so well, as the joyful hearty acclamations of his saved ones. Say, Lord, if thou suffer me to continue in my filth and pollution, and never wash me by the blood and Spirit of thy Son, and suffer me to perish eternally, thou art righteous; but, Lord, if I perish I shall not praise thee; thy glory will rather be forced out of me with blows, as fire out of a flint. Thou delightest to see poor creatures volunteers in thy service; the damned do not celebrate thy praise, they that go into the infernal pit give thee no thanks, Ps. 30:9. The living, the living, they shall praise thee—they that live spiritually, and they that live with thee eternally, Ps.

88:10, 11; Isa. 38:19. Oh what hosannas and hallelujahs! What honour, and glory, and blessing, and praise do they give to the Lord, and to the Lamb that sitteth upon the throne for ever! Oh let my soul live, and it shall praise thee. Thine is the kingdom and power, do thou work within me by thy grace, and thine shall be the glory.

Desire God to consider his own promise as well as his praise. Urge his own word, that they that ask shall receive, that seek shall find, that knock shall have heaven opened; that if men know how to give good gifts to them that ask, how much more will the Father in heaven give his holy Spirit to them that ask; that he will circumcise the hearts of men and women to love him, Deut. 30:6; that he will put his fear into their hearts, and they shall never depart away from him, Jer. 32:40; that he will write his law in their hearts, Jer. 31:33. Go in to him when thou art full of heaviness, as Bathsheba did to David, 1 Kings 1:17, 18, and say, Did not my Lord promise thus and thus, and is it thy mind that thy word should go unfulfilled? Lord, are not these thy own words, thine own handwriting? Whose staff and bracelet is this? If thou hadst not promised, I should not have found in my heart to pray; and if thou shouldst not perform, where would be the glory of thy truth? 'Thy mercy, O Lord, is great unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds,' Ps. 57:10. 'My soul cleaveth unto the dust, quicken thou me according to thy word,' Ps. 119:25. 'Remember thy word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope,' Ps. 119:49.

Beseech him to consider thy mercy. Like a beggar, uncover thy nakedness, shew thy sores and wounds to move him to pity. Tell him, that in regard of thy spiritual condition thou art at present wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked, Rev. 3:17; without God, without Christ, without hope, an alien from the commonwealth of Israel, and a stranger from the covenants of promise; and that thine eternal state is like to be the worm that never dieth, the fire that never goeth out, amongst devils and damned ones, in blackness of darkness for ever. Say, Lord, open thine eyes, and see thy poor creature weltering, wallowing, polluted in his own soul-blood; and now I am in my

blood, open thy mouth and say unto me, Live; yea, now I am in my blood, say unto me, Live, Ezek. 16:6. Since no eye pitieth me to do any good unto me, open thine heart, and let thy bowels yearn towards me. Let this time be thy time of love; spread thy skirt over me, and cover all my nakedness. Enter into a covenant with me, and enable me to become thine for ever. Since thou beholdest all the wants and necessities of my poor soul, open thine hand and supply all my spiritual need. There is bread enough, and to spare, in the Father's house, oh let not my dying soul perish for hunger. Open thine ears and hear the prayers and supplications which thy servant poureth out before thee night and day. Thou hast the key of David, and openest, and no man shutteth; open the iron gate of my heart, which will never open of its own accord, that the King of glory may enter in. Thou didst open the rock, and cause it to send forth water. Bow the heavens and come down; break open this rocky heart and come in, and take an effectual, universal, eternal possession of my soul. Consider thy bottomless mercy, Christ's infinite merits, my unspeakable misery, and let thine heart be opened in pity, and thine hand in bounty, that my lips may be opened, and my mouth may everlastingly shew forth thy praise.

Only in thy prayers be instant, constant, and look up to Jesus Christ. Beg hard, though humbly, when thou art begging for heaven.

Hast thou never heard a malefactor, condemned to be hanged, begging for a reprieve or pardon? With what tears and prayers, what bended knees, watered cheeks, strained joints, he entreateth for his mortal life! Thou hast much more cause to be earnest when thou art begging for spiritual life. Think of it; thy soul, thy eternal condition, are engaged and at stake in thy prayer. Oh how should all the parts and faculties of thy body and soul work and unite in prayers that are of such concernment! What fervency shouldst thou use, considering that, if thou art denied, thou art undone! If thy prayers be lost, thy God is lost, thy soul is lost, thy happiness is lost for ever.

Pray constantly; resolve to give God no rest day nor night, till he give thee rest in his Son. Besides set times every day, (for which thou canst not offer so little as two hours a day, it being soul-work, God-work, eternity-work, and in which I would desire thee to be as serious and solemn as is possible;) thou mayest often in the shop, or in the field, in thy journeying, on thy bed, thou mayest turn up thy heart to heaven, in some ejaculations (it is thy great privilege, wherever thou art, thou mayest find God out) such as these, 'O when wilt thou come unto me?' Ps. 101:2. Hear me speedily, O my God, make no tarrying, Ps. 40:17. Shall I never be made clean? good Lord, when shall it once be? 'Save me, Master, or I perish.'

But be sure, in all thy addresses to God, thou look up to Jesus Christ as thine advocate with the Father, as the only master of requests, to present and perfume all thy prayers, and thereby make them prevalent. Through him we have access with confidence unto the Father, Eph. 2:18. It is possible thou mayest have seen a child going to be scourged for its faults by a stern mother, the tender father sitting by; and how the child, seeing the rod taken down and the mother in earnest, casteth a pitiful, lamentable look upon its father, both longing and expecting to be saved by his mediation. Go thou and do likewise; and know, for thy encouragement, that if David heard Joab, whom he loved but little, for rebellious Absalom, and if Herod heard Blastus, a servant, for those of Tyre and Sidon who had offended him, then, without doubt, God will hear the Son of his infinite love for thee. And if thou art but sensible of thy soul-sickness, thou mayest be confident that thy spiritual physician, who is authorised by his Father to practise, and delighteth exceedingly in the employment, will come and heal thee. Thy sickness shall not be unto death, but for the glory of God, and thine eternal good.

## **CHAPTER XIX**

Motives to mind this spiritual life: It is the most honourable, most comfortable, most profitable life

I shall, in the next place, only annex three properties of this spiritual life, as motives to encourage thee to a laborious endeavouring after it, and then leave both thee and this exhortation to the blessing of God.

First, This spiritual life is the most honourable life. No life hath so much excellency in it as the life of godliness. If I had my wish, saith Luther, I would choose the homely work of a rustical Christian before all the victories of Alexander the Great and Julius Cæsar. The excellency and dignity of every life dependeth upon the form which is its principle, and its specificating difference. Therefore the life of a man is more noble than the life of a beast, because it hath a more noble form, a rational soul, which distinguisheth it specifically from, and enableth it to act more nobly and highly than a beast. And truly, therefore, the life of a Christian is more honourable and excellent than the life of any other man, because he hath a more noble form—which is the principle of it, and differenceth it specifically from the life of graceless men—Jesus Christ, the Lord of life and glory, dwelling in his heart by his Spirit, as the principle of his spiritual life. If there be an excellency in that body which is united to a soul, what excellency is there in that soul which is united to a Saviour! It is called the life of God, Eph. 4:18. Surely no life can be more honourable than the life of God; yet in their measure the sanctified ones live the very same life that the glorious God, the fountain of all true honour, liveth. David, though a king, thought himself honoured by being God's subject; and therefore as others, before their works, mention those titles which belong to them, and speak their honour, David styleth himself, before the six and thirtieth Psalm, a servant of God, as his most honourable title—'A Psalm of David, a servant of the Lord.' If it be such an honour to serve an earl, a king, what is it to serve the King of kings and Lord of lords!

Godliness is called a walking with God, Gen. 5:24; a conversing or having fellowship with the Father, and Jesus Christ his Son, 1 John 1:3. For God to walk and converse with us is his greatest humiliation; but for us to walk or converse with God is our highest exaltation.

The righteous, saith the wise man—who had judgment to set a due price upon persons—is more excellent than his neighbour, Prov. 12:26. Let him live by never so rich or great men, yet if they want grace, they are not comparable to him.

The godly man hath the most honourable birth—he is born of God, John 1:13; the most honourable breeding—he is brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; the most honourable tutor and teacher, the good Spirit of God, John 14:16; the most honourable attendants, the glorious angels; the most honourable employment—his main work is to wait upon and worship the most high God.

The most honourable relations: a king for his father, 2 Cor. 6:18; a queen for his mother, Gal. 4:26; the excellent of the earth, Ps. 16:3; lords in all lands, Ps. 45:16; higher than the kings of the earth, Ps. 89:27; those worthies, of whom the world is not worthy, for his brethren and sisters.

Numa, second king in Rome, though a heathen, could say that he held it a higher honour to serve God than to rule over men.

The Jews say that those seventy souls which went down into Egypt were more worth than all the seventy nations of the world beside. If the glorious angels in heaven are more honourable than the devils, sure I am it is holiness that maketh the difference.

The most gaudy and goodly fruits of morality, springing from the soil of nature, manured and improved to the utmost; the heavens bespangled with those glittering stars, and adorned with that illustrious sun, are nothing glorious in comparison of the heart of a poor Christian that is embroidered with grace. It is godliness alone that addeth worth and value to all our civil and natural things; as the diamond to the ring. Nothing doth really debase and degrade a man but sin; and nothing doth truly advance or ennoble the soul but holiness. Job scraping himself on the dunghill, and Jeremiah sinking in the mire, were more honourable and glorious than Ahab and Ahaz

on their thrones with their crowns. If the respect we have from others makes us honourable, then they that are most precious in God's sight are most honourable, Isa. 43:4. If it be some internal excellency that makes men honourable, then they that have the image of God must be most honourable.

It is worthy our observation that sin is so ignoble and base, that those wicked ones who love it most, are ashamed to own it openly; but because of the excellency of holiness, will set that forth for their colours, their banners, though indeed they fight Satan's battles. That forlorn hope for hell, 2 Tim. 3:5, of covenant-breakers, blasphemers, men without natural affection, yet they will have a form of godliness; though they do sin's drudgery, yet they are ashamed of their base master, and therefore wear the saints' livery, having a form of godliness. Nay, the devil himself will appear in Samuel's mantle, and transform himself into an angel of light.

But holiness is so excellent that God is pleased to esteem it as his own beauty and glory. How often is he called the Holy One of Israel! The angels ascribe holiness to him by way of eminency: 'Holy, holy, holy,' Isa. 6:3. We read not in Scripture of any of God's other attributes thrice repeated, to shew that the dignity of God consisteth in this. And so do the saints in heaven praise him for it as his excellency, Rev. 6:10, and the saints on earth, Exod. 15:11. Holiness is the character of Jesus Christ; the image of the infinitely glorious God; nay, it is called the divine nature. Surely, then, they that have most of it are most honourable; and they which want it, how full soever they are of all other excellencies, are base and contemptible.

Secondly, As this spiritual life is most honourable, so it is most comfortable. There is no life so pleasant and delightful as the life of a saint. The merry grigs and jolly gallants of the world, whose sinful mirth is worse than madness, will needs tell us, that godliness makes men moppish and melancholy; that when once we salute religion, we take our leave of all delight and consolation; whereas, indeed, there never was true peace born, but it had purity for its parent; all other is

spurious and illegitimate. But the world, like the primitive persecutors, put Christians into the skins of bears and bulls, and then bait them, as if they were really such. And the hand of the devil is in all this, who, like the Indians, maketh great fires to fright mariners from landing at such coasts as would be most for their comfort and contentment. Believe, reader, the true and faithful witness, 'His ways are ways of pleasantness, and all his paths are peace,' Prov. 3:17. It is not sanctity, but their want of it, or mistake about it, which maketh them sorrowful.

It is confessed saints may be sad; they do not cease to be men, when they begin to be Christians. It was in thy company, it may be, O sinner. No wonder. Fish cannot sport themselves when they are out of their element. Birds do not sing on the ground, but when they are mounting on high towards heaven. And probably their hearts were heavy out of compassion to thee, whom they observed to be hastening to hell, and dancing merrily over the very pit of destruction and easeless misery. Thou seest their sorrows sometimes, thine eyes may behold their tears; but thou dost not see their joys, thy heart cannot conceive them.

St Augustine relateth concerning a heathen that shewed the father his idol gods, saying, Here is my god, where is thine? and then pointing up to the sun, he said, Here is my god, but where is thine? I shewed him not my God, saith Augustine, not because I had none to shew, but because he had no eyes to see him. Thus the joys of a saint are invisible to the wicked, because they are inward spiritual joys, though they are joys unspeakable and glorious.

They have such joy as thou art not to intermeddle with, Prov. 14:10; they have meat to eat which thou knowest not of. Their life is a hidden life, Col. 3:3, and their comforts are hidden comforts. Their secret meals fatten their souls, and their bread eaten in secret, how pleasant is it!

The kingdom of God, which is this spiritual life, consisteth not in meats and drink, but in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, Rom. 14:17; and besides, it cometh not with observation, Luke 17:20; the world taketh no notice of it. It doth not consist in the laughter of the face, in the smiles of the brow, but in the tranquillity of the mind, solid contentment in the breast.

Christ takes his spouse apart from the crowd of the world, and then gives her the sweetest kisses, the dearest embraces, yea, her very fill of love. Many a loving visit hath the saint from the Saviour; when Christ came in at the back door, the neighbours neither saw when he came, nor when he went away. A true Christian hath the most heart-cheering wine, though he hangs out no bush, maketh no show of it in the world; the wealthy merchant, that is worth thousands, doth not cry his commodities up and down the city.

The parlour, wherein the Spirit of Christ entertains the Christian, is an inner room, not next the street, for every one that goeth by to smell the feast: 'The stranger doth not meddle with his joy,' Prov. 14:10. Christ and the soul may sit at supper within, and thou not see one dish go in, nor hear the music that sounds so sweetly in the Christian's ears. Perhaps thou thinkest he wants peace, because he doth not hang out a sign in his countenance of that peace and joy within. Alas, poor wretch! may not the saint have a peaceful conscience, with a solemn, yea, sad countenance, as well as thou and thy companions have a sorrowful heart, when there is nothing but fair weather in your faces?

Whether they have the greatest comfort or no, do thou judge. Sure I am, there are none in this world that have so much ground to be comfortable as they have. They have the most delightful company; they walk with God, they sup with Christ; their fellowship is with the Father, and Jesus Christ his Son, which is the only good fellowship, 1 John 1:3. They have the most delightful food; they eat of the bread that came down from heaven, and drink of that love which is better than wine. They are abundantly satisfied with the fatness of God's

house, and made to drink of the rivers of his own pleasures, Ps. 36:8, and are bidden welcome with, Eat, O friends, drink abundantly, O beloved! These are exceedings indeed; but, if it be not their own fault, they have them often, besides their every hour's fare of a good conscience, which is a continual feast. They have the most delightful music, they hear the joyful sound of the gospel of peace, the glad tidings of pardon, adoption, salvation, and so may rejoice in hope of glory; many a time surely their hearts are warmed, and their ears ravished, at the hearing of the affection which Christ beareth to them, and the benefits he hath bought for them. They have the most delightful lodging; they lie all night between Christ's arms, in the chamber of the great King. They have the richest mercies, the special love of the Father, the precious blood of the Son, and the divine graces of the Spirit, when others have only the blessings of the footstool, of the left hand, such giftless gifts, as one calleth them, as may consist with an eternal separation from God. They have the mercies of the throne, of the right hand, the blessings of his own children, and such as do accompany salvation. No wonder that they sit under Christ's shadow with great delight, and his fruit is sweet unto their taste, Cant. 2:3.

The child of God, by virtue of a good conscience, in the midst of the waves of affliction, is as secure as that child which in a shipwreck was upon a plank with his mother, till she awaked him then securely sleeping, and then, with his pretty countenance sweetly smiling, and by and by sportingly asking a stroke to beat the naughty waves. At last, when they continued boisterous for all that, sharply chiding them as if they had been his playfellows. Oh the innocency, oh the comfort, of peace of conscience!

It is likely, indeed, that when they wander from Christ, they may come home by Weeping-cross, as outlying deer are full of fear, and therefore, it is observed, seldom fat, but they run the ways of God's commandments with enlarged hearts. And whatever be the cause of their sorrow, whether their own sins, or thine, or others', or the

afflictions of the church, whatever it be, their mourning is better than thy carnal mirth.

And this I dare undertake for them, that in their most disconsolate condition, they shall not change with the most prosperous prince in the world that is out of Christ. Alas! the comfort of a sinner, as it is but short, like the crackling of thorns under a pot, so it is but shallow, skin-deep at most, like a sudden storm of rain which wetteth the surface of the earth, but never sinketh to the root. Their joy may smooth the brow, but cannot warm the breast; their looks may be sometimes lively, but their hearts are always heavy: 'For there is no peace to the wicked, saith my God,' Isa. 57:21. Their mirth is like some juicy plums, which have stones with a bitter kernel. It is not the great cage that maketh the bird sing, nor the great estate that bringeth real comfort. The stateliest and best accommodated houses of unsanctified men, are but like the nests of wasps, where there may be curious combs, but no honey, many outward mercies, but no true inward mirth, no sweetness. When the voice of joy and salvation is in the tabernacle of the righteous, Ps. 118:15, they only have the strong consolations, Heb. 6:18, the joy unspeakable and glorious, 1 Peter 1:8, the peace of God which passeth all understanding, to garrison their hearts and minds through Christ Jesus, Phil. 4:7.

As they have more afflictions than others—the disciple of Christ must take up his cross—so they have more consolations than others; and their soul comforts are not seldom the sweetest, when their bodily crosses are greatest, (as the sweetest roses grow nearest the most stinking weeds,) although the blind world see them not. As a man standing, saith a divine, upon the sea-shore, seeth a great heap of waters, one wave riding upon the neck of another, and heareth the loud roarings thereof, but though he seeth the waters, yet he doth not see the wealth, the infinite riches, that lie buried in them; so wicked men see the waters, the afflictions, the conflicts, but not the wealth, the comforts, the inward joy of the children of God.

Thirdly, As this spiritual life is the most honourable and comfortable, so it is the most profitable life. No calling bringeth in such advantage as Christianity: 'Godliness is profitable unto all things,' 1 Tim. 4:8. There is a universal gainfulness in real godliness. Plutarch telleth us that the Babylonians make above three hundred several commodities of the palm-tree; but there are many thousand benefits which godliness bringeth. No merchant ever had his vessels returned so richly laden, as he that tradeth heavenward.

Observe, reader, after the apostle's affirmation, his full confirmation of it: 'Godliness (saith he) is profitable unto all things; it hath the promise of this life, and that to come,'—i.e., It hath heaven and earth entailed on it, and therefore it must needs be profitable. It giveth the Christian much in possession—the promise of this life; but infinitely more in reversion—the life that is to come.

The promises of God are exceeding great for their quantity, and precious for their quality, and they all belong to a godly man; he is called an heir of the promises, Heb. 6:17. Whensoever the tree of the Scripture is shaken, whatsoever fruit of those precious promises falleth down, it falleth into the lap of a godly man. If at any time that box of costly ointment be broken, and sendeth forth its fragrant scent and virtue, it is to the refreshment only of the saints.

Godliness is profitable to thyself: 'If thou art wise, thou art wise for thyself; and if a scorner, thou alone shalt bear it,' Prov. 9:12. The sinner is nobody's foe so much as his own; the murdering pieces of sin which he dischargeth against God miss their mark, but do constantly recoil and wound himself. The saint is nobody's friend so much as his own; others fare the better for his great stock of grace, but the propriety in all, the comfort of all, and the profit by all, is his own. It enables him to give away the more at his door, but how rich a table doth he thereby keep for himself and his own family!

Godliness is profitable for thy children: 'The just man walketh in his integrity, and his children are blessed after him,' Prov. 20:7. Personal

piety is profitable to posterity, yet not of merit, but mercy. Though grace come not by generation, but donation, and though God hath mercy on whom he will, yet the seed of the saints are visibly nearer the quickening influences of the Spirit, than the children of others. When God saith he will be a God to the godly man and his children, I believe he intendeth more in that promise for the comfort of godly parents than most of them think of, Acts 2:36, Gen. 17:7. The children of believers are heirs-apparent to the covenant of grace in their parents' right. Godliness is profitable in prosperity; it giveth a spiritual right to temporal good things. A gracious man holdeth his mercies in capite, in Christ, (that is his tenure,) as Christ is a joint-heir of all things, he being married to him by this spiritual life is a joint-heir with him. He enjoyeth earthly things by a heavenly title; and one penny enjoyed by special promise is far more worth than millions which ungodly men enjoy by a general providence, as the beasts of the field do their provender. It is godliness that causeth a sanctified improvement of mercies. Grace alone, like Christ, turneth water into wine, corporal mercies into spiritual advantages. The more God oils the wheels, the more cheerfully and swiftly he moveth in the way to heaven. The more showers of heaven fall down upon him, the more fruitful and abundant he is in the work of the Lord, as we see in that gracious king Jehoshaphat: 2 Chron. 17:5, 6, 'The Lord established the kingdom in his hand; and all Judah brought presents unto him, and he had riches and honour in abundance. And his heart was lift up in the ways of God.' Mark, the more God's hand was enlarged in bounty, the more his heart was enlarged in duty. The more highly God thinks of David, the more lowly he thought of himself, 2 Sam. 7:18. Outward mercies to a believer are a ladder by which he mounteth up nearer to heaven. Thus godliness, like the philosopher's stone, turneth iron and everything into gold; but the want of this spiritual life causeth a cursed, hellish use of mercies. Ungodly men, like the spider, suck poison out of those flowers out of which the bees, the saints, suck honey. Their mercies are like cordials to a foul stomach, which do but increase the peccant humour. He feedeth on such plenty, that he surfeits himself because of their abundance, Job 21:7-14, 'Therefore they say unto the Almighty,

Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.' Like the Israelites, they make of the jewels which God giveth, a golden calf, and worship that instead of God.

Godliness is profitable in adversity; it maketh a Christian, like a rabbit, to thrive the better in frosty weather. The child of God learneth the better for the rod: 'Before he was afflicted he went astray, but now he keepeth God's word,' Ps. 119:67. Well may grace be called the divine nature, for it can bring not only light out of light, spiritual comfort and good out of outward good things, but also light out of darkness, good out of evil, gain out of losses, life out of death. It will, like Samson, fetch meat out of the eater; like the ostrich, digest stones; like Mithridates, fetch nourishment out of poison; when wicked men, like Ahaz, in their distress sin more against the Lord. As fire, the more it is kept in in an oven, the more it rageth, so doth corruption; but godly men, far otherwise, are by the fire of affliction the more refined and purified for their Master's use.

Godliness is profitable to thee while thou livest. In doubts it will direct thee, as a light to thy feet, and a lantern to thy paths; in dangers it will protect thee, by setting thee on high, and giving thee for a place of defence the munition of rocks; in wants it will supply thee, by affording thee bread in the word, when thou hast none on the board; and money in the promise, 1 Tim. 4:8, which is by thousands the better, when thou hast none in thy purse; in thy pain it will ease thee; in disgrace it will honour thee; in sorrows it will comfort thee; in sickness it will strengthen, by causing thee to count the crosses of this life as nothing, and unworthy to be compared to the pleasures and glory which shall be revealed; in all distresses it will support thee, and make thee more than a conqueror over all, through him that loveth us, Rom. 8:37.

Lastly, Godliness will be profitable to thee when thou diest. Death, which is the terrible of terribles to others, will be the comfortable of comfortables to thee. Thou needest never fear ill news in thine ears,

having Christ and grace in thy heart; others shall not be such unspeakable losers by death, but thou shalt be as great a gainer.

When thou liest on thy death-bed, where all thy friends, and riches, and earthly comforts will fail thee, this spiritual life is the good part which shall never be taken from thee. Thou mayest look upward, and see, as it were, God smiling on thee in the face of Christ, and hear him call to his angels to go and fetch thee, his child, who hast been all this while at nurse, home to the Father's house. Thou mayest look downward on thy relations, and with much faith and cheerfulness commit thy fatherless children to God, and bid thy weeping widow trust in him, who will be infinitely better to them than ten thousand of the richest, tenderest fathers and husbands in the world. Thou mayest look without thee into Scripture, and behold it as a garden full of sweet flowers, comforting cordials, refreshing, heart-reviving promises; and though it be an enclosure to others, it is open and free to thee. Thou mayest pick and choose, cull and gather, where thou pleasest, and needest not fear to be children. In the multitude of those perplexing thoughts which at that time may be within thee, thou mayest find choice comforts there to refresh thy spirit. If thou look within thee, thou shalt not have thy conscience, like an unquiet wife, frowning on thee, and scolding at thee; but thou shalt hear a little bird singing merrily and sweetly in thy breast, 'Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.'

How joyfully mayest thou leave thy dearest wife, to go to thine infinitely dearer husband! How willingly mayest thou forsake thy lovely children, to go to thy loving God and Father! How freely mayest thou part with all thy friends, honours, and pleasures, to go to the congregation of the first-born, those rivers of pleasures, and eternal weight of glory! How cheerfully mayest thou bid adieu to nothing for all things, to stars and streams at best, for a full, immediate, eternal enjoyment of the Sun himself, and an immense ocean of happiness! With what a lively colour in thy face, and true comfort in thy heart, mayest thou behold that pale-faced messenger

death, the thought of whom, though afar off, is death to others, entering into thy chamber, and coming up to thy bedside! How heartily welcome mayest thou bid him, as knowing that he cometh purposely to give thee actual possession of fulness of joy, unspeakable delights, a kingdom of glory that is eternal in the heaven! Oh the gain of godliness, the profit of piety! surely the price of this pearl is scarce known in this world!

A merchant will in the morning gain five hundred pounds by a bargain, whereas poor people work hard a whole day for a shilling. Such a rich trade driveth the godly man. Godliness brings in thousands and millions at a clap, when the moral and civil, yet unsanctified man, may work hard, and yet earn but some poor business, some outward blessing God may give them, and his eternal wrath at last.

Now, reader, consider if here be not abundant encouragement for thee presently and diligently to labour for this spiritual life. Is it not the gainfullest calling that ever was followed, the richest trade ever was driven? 'Why dost thou spend thy strength for what is not bread? and thy labour for that which will not satisfy? hearken to me, and eat thou that which is good, and let thy soul delight itself in fatness.'

As Saul said to his servants, 'Hear now, ye Benjamites; will the son of Jesse give you fields and vineyards, and make you all captains of thousands, and captains of hundreds?' 1 Sam. 22:7. So say I to thee, Harken, O friend; will a sensual, fleshly life give thee such honour as to be the son of the infinite God, such comfort as to drink of the pure rivers of God's own pleasures, and will it make thee bold at death, and confident at judgment, an heir of heaven, and so happy in every condition? Can it do this? Can it give thee, as godliness can, so much in hand, and infinitely more in hope? If it can, I will give up my cause, and leave thee to thy choice; but if it cannot, as doubtless thou art convinced, so, unless thou art a heathen amongst Christians, why dost thou labour so much and so eagerly for the pampering and

pleasing thy flesh, for the food that perisheth, and so little and so lazily for this food, which will endure unto everlasting life?

It was an excellent answer of one of the martyrs, when he was offered riches and honours if he would recant, Do but offer me somewhat that is better than my Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall see what I will say to you.

Reader, could the world, or the flesh, shew thee anything that were better, nay, equal, nay, that were but ten thousand degrees inferior to Christ and godliness, thou mightst have some colour for thy gratifying the flesh, and unwillingness to walk after the Spirit; but when the disproportion is so vast, that the one is not worthy in the least to be compared with the other—when the difference is as great as between a sea of honey and a spoonful of gall; a whole world of pearl, and a little heap of dirt; a heaven of happiness and a hell of horror—is it not unconceivable madness, and inexcusable folly, to choose that life which is after the flesh, and refuse that which is after the Spirit?

Reader, if thou wouldst be truly honourable in the esteem of God himself, who is the fountain of all honour; if thou wouldst have those spiritual consolations, which can warm the heart in the coldest night of affliction; if thou wouldst be profitable to thy dear children, to thy own soul, be a real gainer in prosperity, in adversity, while thou livest, when thou diest; if thou wouldst, when thy wealth, and friends, and flesh, and heart shall fail thee, have God in Christ to be the strength of thy heart, and thy portion for ever; if thou wouldst, in thy greatest extremity, when thy soul shall be turned, naked of all earthly delights, out of thy body, escape the fury of roaring devils, and unquenchable burnings; if thou wouldst in that hour of thy misery find mercy, and be received into the place of endless bliss, then get this spiritual life, this true wisdom, to fear God and depart from evil. Get wisdom, get understanding; forget it not; above all thy gettings get wisdom. 'Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. For the merchandise of it is better

than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared to her. Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to all that lay hold upon her; and happy is every one that retaineth her,' Prov. 3:13–18.

And now, reader, I have done this large use of exhortation, which is of such infinite concernment to thy precious soul; but what thou wilt do, or what use thou wilt make of it, I know not. Could I have told what other holy bait to have laid, which had been more likely to have caught thy soul, it is probable I should have laid it. I appeal to thy conscience, whether there be not unspeakable weight, and unquestionable truth, in the particulars which are laid down. Well, what sayest thou to them, and what effect have they wrought upon thee? Art thou resolved, through the help of heaven, speedily and diligently to practise the directions which I have from the almighty God enjoined thee? Is it not a thousand thousand pities that such endless, matchless happiness should be so graciously offered by God, and so unworthily neglected by men? that an empty, perishing world should be so eagerly pursued, and heartily embraced, when the unsearchable riches in Christ, the image of the blessed God, the eternal weight of glory, are basely undervalued, and wretchedly despised? Good Lord, what tears of blood are sufficient to bewail this monstrous unthankfulness? Friend, if thou art truly resolved to obey the counsel of God, thou wilt have cause to bless that providence which called me to this task; and I may rejoice in thee, and thou in me, at the day of Christ. But if thou either delayest the work till thou art more at leisure, or dalliest about it, doing it as if thou didst it not, I am sure the greatest wrong will be to thyself; for, behold, thou sinnest against the Lord, and be confident, thy sins will sooner or later find thee out.

## **CHAPTER XX**

## Comfort to true Christians

I come, in the next place, to my last use, which will be of consolation. If they who have Christ for their life, shall have gain by their death, what comfort is here to the new-born creature! Here is wine indeed to make glad the heart of every one that is holy. Reader, art thou sanctified and alive in Christ? then thou art freed from all the misery which is mentioned in the first use, as the portion of the ungodly. I may say to thee, as Gryneus, when he had been reprovng and threatening sinners, would, turning to the saint, say, Bone vir, hoc nihil ad te; Good man, all this is nothing to thee. Though they are losers, thou shalt be a gainer by death. Come but with the mouth of faith, and thou mayest suck much honey from this comb, thou mayest draw much milk of consolation from this breast; to thee to die shall be gain. Surely here is enough to ballast thy soul, and keep it steady, in the most tempestuous condition, and to balance and weigh down the greatest, the heaviest affliction.

Jerome comforted the hermit that was in a wilderness sad and pensive, *Meditare cœlum et tamdiu non eris in eremo.*

If thou hadst hope only in this life, thou wert of all men most miserable; but because thou hast hope beyond this life, thou mayest be of all men most comfortable.

'Should such a man as I fly?' Neh. 6:11. Should such a man as thou fear, that art heir to a crown, to a kingdom? Luke 12:32, 'Fear not, little flock; it is your Father's pleasure to give you a kingdom.' In thy greatest losses this may support thee, that death will be thy gain, by giving thee possession of a life which will make amends for all. If a heathen could say, it is unbecoming a Roman spirit to cry out, I am undone, while Cæsar was safe, sure it is more uncomely for a Christian to complain, as if he were undone, when his soul is safe, his eternal estate is secure.

For thy help, I shall digest this use into this method briefly.

First, To shew thee against what it is comfortable. Secondly, Wherein it is comfortable.

## CHAPTER XXI

Comfort against the world's fury, and Satan's rage

For the first, it is comfortable, first, Against the opposition of the world: 'The world will hate thee, because thou art not of the world,' John 15:19. She is a paradise to her children and lovers, but a purgatory to aliens and strangers. Whilst thou art in the stormy sea of this world, thou art a ship bound for the straits. He that goeth towards the sun, shall have his shadow following him; but he that goeth from it, shall have it fly before. He that goeth towards the Sun of righteousness, shall be sure to have these shadows, these afflictions, at his heels.

Infinite wisdom seeth fit to imbitter the breasts of the creatures to wean thee from them. Trouble upon earth is one legacy which thy Saviour hath left thee: 'In the world ye shall have trouble,' John 16:33. The soldiers were to have his garments; Joseph was to have his body; his Father was to have his soul; he had his cross left, and that he bequeaths to his disciples. But be of good cheer, he did not only leave thee his cross, but hath also made thee heir to a crown: 'I give to them eternal life.'

He never looked over the threshold of heaven, that cannot more rejoice that he shall be glorious, than mourn in present that he is miserable.

Oppose thy future felicity to thy present misery, thy happiness at death to the hardships thou meetest with in life; this will be the way to counterpoise the temptation, and to keep thee from fainting in tribulation, whilst thou lookest not at the things which are seen,

which are temporal, but at the things which are not seen, which are eternal, 2 Cor. 4.

I have read of one Giacompo Senzaro, an Italian, who having been long in love, and much crossed about his match, filled a pot full of black stones, only one white stone among them, and being asked the reason, answered, There will come one white day (meaning his marriage day) which will make amends for all my black days. So whatsoever poverty, nakedness, hunger, cold, pain, shame, losses, thou undergoest here in this world, how many soever thy black days are of trials and troubles, of persecutions and opposition, thou mayest say, There is one white day of death, one long day of eternity coming, which will make amends for all.

It was a brave speech of Luther, when he was demanded where he would be when the emperor should with all his forces fall upon the elector of Saxony, who was the chief protector of Protestants; he answered, *Autin cœlo, aut sub cœlo*; Either in heaven, or under heaven.

Why shouldst thou be discouraged at any loss, considering thou hast a treasure in heaven, a more enduring substance? at any disgrace, considering thou art heir to a crown of glory? at any pain or sorrow, when thou art entitled to fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore.

No storm should disquiet thee, that shall shortly enjoy an everlasting calm. What a pitiful thing that was, that Alexander, that was lord almost of the world, should be troubled that ivy would not grow in his garden at Babylon; and is it not a poor thing for thee, that art a child of God, the spouse of Christ, the temple of the Spirit, an heir of the most glorious, rich, and delightful kingdom that ever was, to lie whining and pining if thy head do but ache, or thy estate decrease, or thy friend forsake thee? For shame; remember who thou art, and to what thou art called, and say, as the martyr, Hold out faith and patience, your work is almost at end. Thou shalt ere long leave this world, and all its evils, and go where there is neither sorrow nor sin,

and indeed there can be no affliction there, because there will be no corruption there, which is the original of all miseries. As there cannot be any thunder or lightning in the upper region, because the vapours which are the materials of it cannot ascend so high; so, because no unclean thing can be there, therefore no sorrow, no suffering, can be there.

How may this comfort thee! Basil tells us how the martyrs, that were cast out naked in a winter's night, being to be burned the next day, solaced their souls with these words: Sharp is the cold, but sweet is paradise; troublesome is the way, but pleasant shall be the end of our journey. Let us endure cold a little, and the patriarch's bosom shall soon warm us; let our feet burn a while, that we may dance for ever with angels.

2. It is a comfort against the temptations of the devil. Whilst thou livest in this world, thou art liable to his wiles. If thou wilt go to heaven, so boundless is his malice that he raiseth all the powers of hell against thee, and forceth thee to fight every foot of the way. He is the strong man that hath full possession of carnal, unregenerate ones, and therefore all is at peace with them, Mat. 12. What need a captain bend his forces against a town which hath delivered up itself into his hands? What need he plant his cannons and batteries against these gates which are already set open to him? This jailer doth not trouble himself much about those prisoners which are fast in his dungeon, with his irons on their legs, and are led captive by him at his will, 2 Tim. 2:26; but for thee, who hast by the help of Christ broken prison, and in part got out of his power, he raiseth all the country with hue-and-cry to bring thee back to thy old place of bondage. But be comforted, Christ hath conquered him already in his own person as thy head; is daily conquering him in thee, his member, by his Spirit; and will shortly crush him fully under thy feet, Rom. 16:20. Some refer that shortly to the day of judgment, which will come shortly, and wherein Satan shall be utterly crushed under all the saints' feet for ever. And it is as true of the day of death, in reference to every particular saint. As when a man dieth, all those

vexatious lawsuits, with which he was before molested, do cease; so when the believer dieth, all those false actions which Satan had commenced against him in the court of his conscience, and all that inward trouble which did arise thereupon, do all cease.

It is no sign now, O Christian, if thou resistest, that thou art assaulted by the wicked one. A thief will not break into a house that is empty. A pirate will not fight but for some considerable prize. A father will not seek to destroy his own children. Temptation is no sign of God's hatred, but of the devil's. But let this be thy solace, that within a few days thou shalt be at rest, not only from thy own labours, but also from Satan's snares and suggestions. God doth thee much good by them now; the noise of those guns causeth the conies to hasten to their burrows, and the birds to their places of refuge. The more the tops of sound trees are shaken with the wind, the more deeply their roots are fixed in the earth; the more eagerly Satan followeth thee, the faster thou fliest, and the closer thou clingest to Jesus Christ. But God will do thee the greatest good without them; and when that shall be, thou shalt be wholly freed from them. Since the devils were cast out of heaven, we read of their being sometimes in the sea, Mat. 8:33; sometimes in the earth, Job 1:7; and sometimes in the air, Eph. 2:3; and they are called principalities and spiritual wickednesses in high places, Eph. 6:12, but never in heaven. They aspire to get as high as they can, but they can get no further than the air; Satan and his angels find no more place in heaven, Rev. 12:8.

Now what comfort is this, O Christian, that thou shalt serve the Lord without distraction, without temptations!

## **CHAPTER XXII**

Comfort against our own corruptions, our own or other believers'  
dissolution

3. It is comfortable against the corruptions of thine own heart. What is it now that is thy greatest sorrow? Is it not thy sin? These are the weights which hang on the clock of thy heart, and will not suffer it to rest day or night. Well, rejoice in hope; at death all these Achans, which are the troublers of thy peace, shall be stoned to death; all these Jonahs, which cause such storms in thy soul, shall be cast overboard; all these Hamans, which seek the ruin of thee and thy people, shall be executed.

Now it is thy great care in every ordinance to kill thy sins. Dost thou not, like Joab, set the Uriah of thy beloved lust in the forefront of every duty, and retire from it, out of pious policy, that it may be slain? And when at any time it pleaseth the captain of thy salvation to send the supplies of his Spirit, and wound mortally thy corruption, that it lieth gasping and dying before thee, dost thou not look up to Christ and say, as Cushy to David concerning dead Absalom, 'Would to God that all the enemies of my lord the king, and all that rise against thee to do thee hurt, were as that young man is.' Lord, that all my sins might drink of the same cup, and be served the same sauce? Blessed be the Lord my God, which hath avenged me this day of mine enemy. If God should thrust the knife of mortification up to the haft in the very hearts of all thy sins, that thou couldst see thy pride, distrust, unthankfulness, hardness of heart, and every corruption in a gore-blood, fetching their last breath, would it not be a lovely sight to thee? Wouldst thou not look upon it with as much content as Hannibal did upon a pitful of the blood of men, when he cried out, *O formosum spectaculum!* O beautiful sight! Or as that queen, that cried out, when she saw her subjects lie dead before her eyes, the goodliest tapestry that ever she beheld! At death all this shall be done for thee. One touch of Jesus Christ at death will quite dry up that issue of corruption. Death will give thee a writ of ease from all those weights and sins which do so easily beset thee. Thou shalt be without fault before the throne of God, Rev. 14:5.

Will it not indeed be a brave world with thee in the other world, when thou shalt have as much holiness as thy heart can wish or hold?

If God should grant thee such a request upon earth, that thou shouldst have as much of his image and of his Spirit as thou couldst desire, wouldst thou not think thyself the happiest man alive? I am confident thou wouldst; and also that nothing less than perfect purity would be thy prayer. Well, death will help thee to this: 'When I awake, I shall be satisfied with thy likeness,' Ps. 17:15.

Now thou hast enough to stay thy stomach, but then thou shalt have a full meal. When the Israelites went out of Egypt towards Canaan, there was not one feeble person among them. When the Christian entereth into the true Canaan, he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David, nay, as the angel of the Lord before him.

When thy frame of nature shall be ruined, thy frame of grace shall be perfected and raised to the height of glory.

4. It is comfortable against thy dissolution. To thee to die is gain; death will be thy passage into eternal life. Thou needest not fear death as a foe; it will be one of thy best friends. How did this hope of happiness at death hold up the martyrs' heads above water, and carry them through those boisterous waves of violent and cruel deaths, with the greatest serenity and alacrity of spirit.

Agesilaus, king of Sparta, used to say, that they which live virtuously are not yet blessed persons, but they had attained true felicity who died virtuously.

What is there in death, that thou art so afraid of it? Wilt thou fear a bee without a sting? Dost thou not know it had but one sting for Christ and Christians, and that was left in Christ the head; whereby now, though it may buzz and make a noise about their ears, yet it can never sting or hurt the members. The waters of Jordan, though tempestuous before, yet were calm, and stood still, when the ark was to pass over.

If thou hadst been banished many years from thy dear relations, whom thou lovedst as thy own soul, and from thy rich possessions

and comforts, which might have made thy life pleasant and delightful, into a place of bondage, a valley of tears, a prison where thy feet were fettered with irons, and thy face furrowed with weeping; wouldst thou be afraid of a messenger that came to knock off thy shackles, and fetch thee out of prison, and carry thee to those friends and comforts? And why art thou afraid of death, which cometh to free thee from thy bondage to Satan, sin, and sorrow, and to give thee present possession of the glorious liberty of the sons of God? Art thou afraid to be rid of thy corruptions? of Satan's temptations? of the world's persecutions? Art thou afraid to go to saints, where are no sinners, to Christ without his cross, to the full, immediate, eternal fruition of the blessed God? Then why art thou afraid to die, and dost not rather desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ, knowing that while thou art present in the body, thou art absent from the Lord? 2 Cor. 5:6. Well, the best of it is, thou art more afraid than hurt.

It is well observed by a judicious expositor, that the periphrasis of death, mentioned John 13:1, where it is called a departing out of the world, and a going to the Father, doth belong to all the children of God; it is to them but a going out of the world to their dear and loving Father. And questionless this was that which made the saints so desirous of death. Basil, when the emperor's lieutenant threatened to kill him, said, I would he would, for then he would quickly send me to my Father, to whom I now live, and to whom I desire to hasten. Calvin, in his painful sickness, was never heard to complain, but often lifting up his eyes to heaven, to cry out, 'How long, Lord! how long, Lord!'

It is reported of a heathen, Epaminondas, that when he was wounded with a dart at Mantinea, in a battle against the Lacedæmonians, and told by the chirurgeons that when the dart was drawn out of his body he must needs die, he called for his squire, and asked him whether he had not lost his shield? He told him no; whereupon he bade them pull out the dart, and so died. Surely, Christian, thou hast more cause

to die with courage, when thou hast not lost thy God, nor thy soul, nor anything that was worth the keeping.<sup>4</sup>

5. It is comfortable against the death of thy friends and relations which die in the Lord: 'To die is gain.' If it be their gain, why should it be thy grief? Nature will teach thee to mourn, but grace must moderate that mourning. We may water our plants, but must not drown them. We may sorrow, but not as they which have no hope, lest we sin.

When Anaxagoras was told that both his sons were dead, he boldly answered the messenger, I knew that I begat mortal creatures.

The people were enraged and perplexed at the death of Romulus, but were afterwards quieted and comforted with the news which Proclus brought, that he saw him in glory riding up to heaven; so when thou art sorrowing for the death of thy child or husband, or father or mother, or brother or sister, that sleep in Jesus, thou shouldst hearken to the news which faith brings, that it saw them filled with joy, mounting up to heaven, and there enjoying rivers of pleasures and a weight of glory; and surely if after such news thou shouldst continue weeping, it should be for joy.

Friend, this text containeth choice sweetmeats for thee to feed on at the funeral of thy dearest godly friend.

I suppose if thy relation died out of Christ, thou hast not a little cause of sorrow; and probably that was the sharp edge of the sword which wounded the soul of David for the death of Absalom, that he died in his sins: his fear was that his son died, not only in rebellion against the father of his flesh, but also against the Father of spirits. But when thy relation dieth in the Lord, thou hast surely more cause to rejoice that thou ever hadst such a friend, or relation, who shall to eternity be employed in the cheerful glorifying and beatifical vision of God, than to mourn that thou hast lost him for a little time. It was a memorable speech of William Hunter's mother, when her son was to

die a violent death, (for he suffered martyrdom under Bonner:) I am glad, saith she, that ever I was so happy as to bear such a child, that can find in his heart to lose his life for Christ. And then, kneeling down on her knees, she said, I pray God strengthen thee, my son, to the end; I think thee as well bestowed as any child that ever I bore.

Take the counsel of the Spirit, not to sorrow as others which have no hope; and know this for thy comfort, that 'those which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord: wherefore comfort one another with these words,' 1 Thes. 4:13 to the end.

## **CHAPTER XXIII**

### **The excellency of heaven**

I shall shew thee farther in what respects it is comfortable, and then conclude.

First, It is comfortable if thou considerest the excellency of this gain. As David said of Goliath's sword, so I may of this gain of a saint by death, There is none like it. Nicephorus tells us of one Agbarus, a great man, that hearing so much of Christ's fame, by reason of the miracles that he wrought, he sent a painter to take his picture, and that the painter, when he came, was not able to do it, because of the radiancy and divine splendour which sat on Christ's face. Whether this be true or no I leave to the author; but, without controversy, there is such a radiancy on the glorified head and members in heaven that none can conceive it, much less describe it.

There are three things which will speak a little how great the gain of every godly man is by death.

1. The foretastes of it do shew that it is excellent. Saints here have the first-fruits, Rom. 8:23, and they do speak what the harvest will be.

The Jewish Rabbis report that when Joseph, in the years of plenty, had gathered much corn in Egypt, he threw the chaff into the river Nilus, that so, flowing to the neighbour countries, they might know what abundance was laid up for themselves and others. So God is pleased, that we might know the plenty in heaven, to give us some sign, some taste of it here upon earth. He enableth us to conclude, if his ways are ways of pleasantness, how pleasant will the end be! If his people have songs in their pilgrimage, in their banishment, surely they have hallelujahs in their country, in their Father's house. If there be so much goodness laid out upon them in this valley of tears, how infinite is that goodness which is laid up for them in the Master's joy.

Christian, didst thou never taste and see that the Lord is gracious? Didst thou never in thy closet enjoy fellowship with the Father, and with Jesus Christ his Son. Didst thou never find one day in God's courts, nay, one hour, better than a thousand elsewhere? Did the Lord Jesus never call thee aside from others, and carry thee into his banqueting-house, and cause his banner over thee to be love? Did he never kiss thee with the kisses of his lips, and embrace thee in his dearest arms? Hast thou not sometimes seen the smiles of his face, and found them better than life? and hearing his voice, known thy heart burning toward him with love? Dost thou not remember at such a time he took thee up into his chariot, and gave thee a token for good, shewing thee a glimpse of thy future glory, solacing thy soul with a sense of his favour, ravishing thy heart with hopes of thy eternal happiness; when thou didst wonder exceedingly at the creature's emptiness, and befool thyself for doting so much upon nothing; when thou didst see sin in its opposition and contrariety to the divine nature, and thy own welfare, and didst curse thy lusts with

the most bitter curses, whereby thou hadst offended so gracious a Lord; when thou didst behold the Lord Jesus in all his embroidery and glory; oh how lovely was he in thine eyes! how sweet was he to thy taste! how precious was he in thy esteem! how closely was thy soul joined to him! how largely was thy spirit drawn out after him! how earnestly didst thou desire to be ever with him, when thou thoughtest, What joy is there in being with Christ, if there be so much in Christ's being with me! How happy are they that enjoy the fountain, if some small streams are so pleasant! when thou saidst, 'Master, it is good to be here, let us build a tabernacle. My soul is filled with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips. One thing do I desire of the Lord, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord for ever and ever.' This is the foretaste of glory; by this thou mayest conceive what heaven will be. As Fulgentius, when he beheld the beauty and bravery, the glory and gallantry, of Rome, cried out, If earthly Rome be so glorious, how glorious is heavenly Rome! So thou mayest gather, if thou hast so much joy when thou hast heaven only in hope, what joy shalt thou have when thou shalt have it in hand.

If the seed-time be so joyous, how great will the joy of harvest be! If the promise can stay one that is ready to die, surely the performance will be better than life from the dead.

If Jerusalem below be paved with gold, then, questionless, Jerusalem above is paved with pearl.

2. The price paid for it speaketh the excellency of it. Where there is honesty and righteousness in the seller, and wisdom in the buyer, there the price of a thing will speak its worth. Now, here there was infinite righteousness in God the seller, and the treasures of wisdom and knowledge in Christ the purchaser; therefore the price laid down for heaven will speak the excellency of it. If the price were very great, the place must be very glorious.

Heaven is called the purchased possession, Eph. 1:14, because it was bought with the blood of the Son of God. Reader, wonder at this price, and at this place: 'We are bold to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,' Heb. 10:19.

When thou hearest of a purchase on earth that costeth a hundred thousand pounds or a million, wouldst not thou presently conclude, Surely that must be an incomparable seat for delight! what pleasant springs, what stately rooms, what curious contrivances, what unheard-of excellencies, must be there! without question all things imaginable for richness, glory, and comfort. But when thou readest in Scripture of a purchase which cost the blood of God, to which all the wealth in the world is as dirt, as nothing, sit down and consider what a house, what a heaven that must be, if thou considerest God did infinitely love his Son, and was not so prodigal of his blood as to let one drop more be shed than heaven was worth.

Besides, canst thou think that the Lord Jesus would humble himself to such a contemptible birth, live such a miserable life die such a lamentable, painful death, to purchase low, mean things, or anything less than eminent, excellent, unspeakable, unconceivable happiness?

3. The titles given to it do abundantly speak the excellency of it. The holy men of God do, as it were, strive for expressions and words to set out the glory, richness, joy, magnificence of this gain.

To the weary it is rest, Isa. 2:5–7; Rev. 14:13. To the hungry, it is hidden manna, Rev. 2:17. To the thirsty, rivers of pleasures, Ps. 36:8. To the sorrowful, the joy of the Lord, Mat. 25:21; fulness of joy, Ps. 16:11. To the disgraced, glory, Rom. 8:18; a crown of glory, 1 Pet. 5:4; a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, 2 Cor. 4:17. To them that walk in darkness and see no light, it is the inheritance of the saints in light, Col. 1:12. To them that are dying, it is life, Col. 3:3; yea, eternal life, John 10:28. It is a kingdom, Luke 12:32; a kingdom that cannot be shaken, Heb. 12:28. Where all the inhabitants are kings and queens, Rev. 1:5; with palms and sceptres in their hands,

Rev. 7:9; crowns on their heads, James 2:5; sitting on thrones, Rev. 3:21, and shall reign with Christ for ever and ever, Rev. 22:5.

It is a being in Abraham's bosom, Luke 16:22; a being with Christ, Phil. 1:23; a being ever with the Lord, 1 Thes. 4:17; a seeing God as he is, 1 John 3:2; a seeing God face to face; a knowing God as we are known of God, 1 Cor. 13:12; and many more expressions doth the Spirit of God use to describe the excellency of the saints' happiness, and why in such variety of phrases, but to assure us that whatsoever is requisite or desirable in order to happiness it is there? The Holy Ghost doth gather, as it were, a posy of the most sweet, beautiful, pleasant, choice flowers that grow in the whole garden of this world, and telleth us this is heaven. Do but abstract all the imperfections that attend the riches, and honour, and pleasures of earthly kingdoms, and they may be dark resemblances to shadow out the glory and excellency of the heavenly kingdom. The philosophers could say, that happiness must consist in such a state wherein was an aggregation of all good things; so that though a man had all good things, and wanted but one, he could not be called a happy man. Therefore in Scripture the Hebrew word for happiness is in the plural number, because not twenty or forty things can make a man happy, but there must be all good things; and for this reason the Holy Ghost useth such variety of resemblances to represent this blessedness, to shew that it hath all desirable good things.

Reader, when thou art feeding on all those glorious descriptions of heaven that are set before thee on the table of the Scripture, do not swallow them altogether, but chew them severally, and thou mayest get much spiritual nourishment out of them. As, for example, it is called the joy of thy Lord, or the Master's joy, Mat. 25:21. Now, what joy must that be? What infinite, inconceivable joy hath the blessed God, the fountain of all joy, and the God of all consolations! Thou shalt partake of the very same joy according to thy capacity; thou shalt sit at the same table, drink of the same cup, and feed on the same dainties with his Majesty. Can it then enter into thy heart to imagine either the pureness or fulness of thy Lord's joy? Is not the

best joy of the servants on earth sorrow, and their greatest mirth mourning, to the Master's joy in heaven? 'Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord;' a joy too big to enter into us, we must enter into it. A joy more meet for the Lord than the servant; yet such a Lord do we serve as will honour his servants with his own joy.

Again, it is called a city whose builder and maker is God, Heb. 11:10; hence thou mayest gather, that structure must be beautiful indeed which hath such a builder. What a glorious fabric must that be which hath such a workman as he is, who hath infinite wisdom to contrive, who hath infinite richness to adorn, infinite bounty to bestow, and infinite power to erect! What a city must that be! If poor mortals can set up such stately buildings, what a place, what a palace, must that be whose builder and maker is God!

Besides, it is called the Father's house. Here I might expatiate, and tell thee that great princes have great seats often for their servants, but they have glorious ones indeed for themselves. In their own houses they manifest all their wealth and worth, their bounty and bravery, their honour and magnificence. What a house, then, hath the King of kings for his mansion-house! If the several excellencies of all the princes' palaces in the world were united in one; suppose it had the foundations of marble, the floors of pearl, the ceilings of wrought gold, all the varieties of Babel, the glory of Solomon's house, the richness of the temple at Jerusalem; suppose it had the stateliest rooms, the pleasantest music, the greatest dainties, the richest furniture, that this inferior world could afford; suppose all the choice perfections of the whole creation here below were extracted, and the quintessence of them all bestowed upon it yet after all this it would be but like a house of dirt made by children, in comparison of the Father's house, of that house not made with hands, but eternal in the heavens. But, Christian, I leave these titles to be considered and enlarged in thy own meditations.

## CHAPTER XXIV

## The certainty that saints shall obtain heaven

Secondly, It is comfortable if thou considerest the certainty of it. It is not only excellent, but certain. Though it were never so excellent, yet if it were not certain, it would be but little comfort; but know, to the joy of thine heart, that as heaven is a place of unspeakable excellency, so thy enjoyment of it, O new-born creature, is of unquestionable certainty. It is worthy our admiration how many ways the most high God, out of condescension to our capacities, and compassion to our infirmities, doth confirm and insure this gain by death to believers.

1. By his promise: Luke 12:22, 'Fear not, little flock; it is your Father's pleasure to give you a kingdom;' so John 3:16. 'Now all the promises of God are yea and amen,' 2 Cor. 1:20; they are as good as performances. Not one good thing faileth of all the good things which the Lord promiseth, Joshua 23:14. But mark, friend, one place for many: Titus 1:2, 'In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, hath promised.' God's people are a people that will not lie, Isa. 63:8, but God is a God that cannot lie; it is impossible for God to lie. Every lie proceedeth either from weakness or from wickedness. Some are weak—they would be as good as their words, but cannot; others are wicked—they can be as good as their words, but will not. Neither of these can be charged on the blessed God; he is able to perform his promise, for he is the almighty God, Gen. 17:1. 'I know that thou canst do all things,' saith Job, chap. 42:2. Omnipotency never met with a difficulty too hard for it. The promises of God will eat their way through all the Alps of opposition, because he is a God of infinite power; and as he is able, and free from weakness, so he is righteous and holy, and so free from wickedness: 'There is no unrighteousness in him,' Ps. 92:15. 'He is light, and in him is no darkness at all,' 1 John 1:5. There is not the least spot in this sun; his truth reacheth unto the heavens, and his faithfulness is above the clouds.

2. By an oath God hath confirmed it: Heb. 6:17, 18, 'Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two

immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation.' Thou wouldst take the word of a good man, and wilt thou not take the word of a God? But wonder at his goodness; he tendereth further security by his oath, nay, by the greatest oath imaginable. Having no greater to swear by, he swore by himself, Heb. 6:16.

3. By his seals. We have the broad seal of heaven, the seals of the covenant, to confirm this to us. The sacraments are seals of the covenant of grace, Rom. 4:11; and we have the privy seal of the Spirit, Eph. 4:30. So that if the hand and seal of a God will do it, heaven is insured to all that are sanctified.

4. By an earnest, that makes a bargain sure: 'Who hath sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts,' 2 Cor. 1:22.

When Christ went from us, he left his Spirit with us, to assure us that he would come to us; and took our flesh with him, to assure us that we shall come to him.

5. By first-fruits, Rom. 8:23, which did assure the Jews of their harvest.

6. By the death of Christ. Heaven is given to the holy by testament, by will: John 17:24, 'Father, I will,' saith the then dying Saviour, 'that they whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory.' Now, because a testament or will is of no force whilst the testator liveth, therefore Christ died to make his will valid, Heb. 9:16, 17.

## **CHAPTER XXV**

The eternity of the saints happiness in heaven

Thirdly, It is comfortable if thou considerest the eternity of it. Though it were never so excellent and certain, yet if it were for a

short time only, it would afford but little comfort; nay, the greater our joy were in the possession of it, the greater our sorrow would be in our separation from it. The very thought of ever losing such incomparable happiness would be a deep wound to a Christian's heart, and without question abate much of his joy whilst he did enjoy it. Nothing less than eternity can perfect the saint's felicity. And, lo, here it is; thy gain is not only of unspeakable excellency, and unquestionable certainty, but also durable even unto eternity.

The pleasures of the saints are for evermore, Ps. 16:11. The pleasures of the wicked on earth are like a standing pool, quickly dried up by the scorching heat of God's wrath, leaving nothing behind save the mud of vexation; but the pleasures of the godly in heaven are rivers of pleasures, running over, and running ever, because they flow from the fountain of living waters.

The joy of the sinner is like the crackling of thorns under a pot—it may make a bustling noise, but quickly goeth out; but the joy of a saint will be like the fire upon the altar, which never goeth out, day nor night: 'Their joy shall no man take from them,' John 16.

The glory of a Christian there will be an eternal weight of glory. The shame of a Christian here is transitory, like a cloud upon the face of the sun, which will soon be scattered; and the honour of a graceless man here is short, like a fleeting shadow; as Sejanus was one day adored like a god, and a little after, with the greatest ignominy, committed to the jail. But the honour of a Christian there is an eternal noontide of glory. Heaven is an everlasting home to the saints, Luke 16:9; 2 Cor. 5:1, when their earthly tabernacles are dissolved, they enjoy the building of God,' an house not made with hands, but eternal in the heavens.'

They enjoy the society of the good for ever; they sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven, Mat. 8:11. Standing is a posture of going, or at least of but staying little; but sitting is a posture of staying long. They shall enjoy God for ever;

they shall ever be with the Lord, 1 Thes. 4:17. The saints shall in heaven be like angels, Mat. 20:30. Now angels always behold the face of their Father, Mat. 18:10. Now God sometimes sheweth himself unto, and sometimes hides his face from, his children, that a godly man may say to Christ, as Jacob to his wives, 'I perceive that thy Father's countenance is not towards me as at other times,' Gen. 31:5. Some sin or other, like a cloud, interposeth, and hindereth the light of his gracious countenance; but there will be no cloud, or mist of sin, and the Sun of righteousness will ever behold the soul with the same favourable aspect. And therefore the joy and happiness of the saint will be ever like the moon at the full, because that Sun will ever look upon him with the same lightsome countenance.

Oh what a long day will eternity be to the damned, and what a short day to be saved! Eternal pain will make every moment seem eternity; eternal pleasure will make eternity seem but a moment; the joys there will be so great and many, that the days there will seem small and few; the delights there will spring every moment so fresh and full, that a Christian, like Jacob, will think them but few days, for the love he will bear to them.

Reader, if thou art in Christ, ponder much in time the eternity of pleasure which is prepared for thee. Consider, if there be so much felicity in seeing the lovely face of God in the glass of his ordinances for one hour, what will there be when thou shalt see him face to face, and always behold the face of thy Father!

When Christ and thy soul meet sweetly in a duty on the Lord's day, and thou sittest under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit is sweet unto thy taste, thou thinkest the duty is done too soon, and the Sabbath is too short; thou couldst wish the sun would stand still, as in the days of Joshua, and that day to be longer; but be encouraged, though thy Sabbaths now begin and end, yet within a few days thou shalt begin that eternal Sabbath which shall never end.

Certain it is, saith Mr Robert Bolton, in his epistle before Discourse of True Happiness, that if a man were crowned with the royal state, and imperial command of all the kingdoms upon earth, if his heart were enlarged to the utmost of all created capacities, and filled with all the exquisite and unmixed pleasures that the reach of mortality and most ambitious curiosity could possibly devise, and might without any interruption or distaste enjoy them the length of the world's duration, they were all nothing to the precious and peerless comforts of the kingdom of grace but for one hour. I speak the truth in Christ, and use no hyperbole—the Spirit of all comfort, and consciences of all true Christians, bearing me witness. What then will it be, my friend, to enjoy the unconceivable comforts of the kingdom of glory for ever? If one day in God's courts on earth be better to thee than a thousand elsewhere, how happy wilt thou be when thou shalt dwell in the heavenly house of the Lord, and that for ever, ever! when thou shalt be a pillar in the temple of thy God, and shalt go no more out for ever! Rev. 3:12. Oh sweet word, ever, ever! thou art music to the ear, and honey to the taste, and melody to the heart indeed; to be free from all evil, both of sin and suffering, and to be for ever free from them, to be with the Lord, enjoying all good imaginable, and ever to be with the Lord. Oh how much worth doth this one word ever add to the saints' portion in the other world!

Mortality is a flaw in all earthly tenures, which abateth their price, and embittereth their pleasures; but eternity is a diamond which sparkleth most radiantly in the crown of glory, and maketh it beyond all expression or comparison weighty.

Christian, how may this persuade thee to be exact in thy walking with God, when in doing of his commands there is such great reward! Thy temporal obedience shall have an eternal recompense. If Zeuxis, the famous painter, was so curious in drawing his lines, because he painted for eternity, how exact shouldst thou be in all thy duties, how curious in the whole course of thy life, when thou dost all for eternity!

How may this support thee in the greatest dangers! Thy sufferings are temporal, but thy solace shall be eternal. If Saul, when called to an earthly kingdom for a short time, could hold his peace, when men despised and derided him, surely thou mayest be steady in the greatest storm, and in all hardships bear up thy spirit with the lively hope of that heavenly eternal kingdom to which thou art called. Dost thou not know that all the suffering of this life, though all the sufferings of the mystical body of Christ were laid on thy back, are not worthy to be compared to that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, Rom. 8:18.

Thus thy felicity in heaven will be complete felicity, and thy consolation in the forethoughts of it may well be a full consolation, since for its perfections it is unspeakable, thy fruition of it is unquestionable, and thy condition in it will be unchangeable and eternal. When thou hast filled thy heart with that fulness of joy, and bathed thy soul in those rivers of pleasures, as many millions of years as there have been minutes since the creation, and after that as many thousand ages as there are creatures great and small in heaven, earth, and sea; and after that as many thousand millions of ages as all the men in the world can reckon up all the time of their lives; yet, after all this, thou shalt not have one moment less to continue in heaven, and enjoy that perfect happiness. The very greatest and highest numerations and multiplications of time are but drops, yea, ciphers, and nothing, to this boundless, bottomless, ocean of eternity. For of eternity, as Drexelius saith, rightly, There is no

FINIS.

-----

MONERGISM BOOKS

*Heaven and Hell Epitomised*, by George Swinnock, Copyright ©  
2022

All rights reserved under International and Pan-American Copyright Conventions. By payment of the required fees, you have been granted the non-exclusive, non-transferable right to access and read the text of this e-book on-screen. No part of this text may be reproduced, transmitted, downloaded, decompiled, reverse engineered, or stored in or introduced into any information storage and retrieval system, in any form or by any means, whether electronic or mechanical, now known or hereinafter invented, without the express written permission of Monergism Books.

ePub, .mobi & .pdf Editions March 2022. Requests for information should be addressed to: Monergism Books, PO Box 491, West Linn, OR 97068