



Monergism

THE SINNER'S LAST SENTENCE

GEORGE SWINNOCK



Monergism

THE SINNER'S LAST SENTENCE

GEORGE SWINNOCK

The Sinner's Last Sentence

to eternal punishment, for sins of omission wherein is discovered,
the nature, causes, and cure of those sins

by George Swinnock

Wherein is discovered,

The Nature,
The Causes, and
The Cure
Of those Sins.

By Geo. Swinnock, M. A.

Deut. 32.29. O that they were wise, that they understood this, that
they would consider their latter end.

Heb. 2.3. How shall we escape, if we neglect so great Salvation? &c.
London, Printed for Geo. Swinnock, and are to be sold at the Bible
and Three Crowns, at the lower end of Cheapside, 1675.

THE EPISTLE DEDICATORY

To the Right Honourable CHARLES, EARL OF CARNARVON, LORD DORMER, VISCOUNT ASCOT, BARON OF WING, &c.

MAY it please your Lordship, for so mean a thing as I am to address myself to a personage of your honour and quality may cause wonder in others, and abashment in myself, but for some considerations which may give them satisfaction, and me boldness and encouragement.

What I now present your Honour is a poor widow's mite; such as, being cast into the treasury of God's temple, may contribute something to repair the breaches of collapsed piety, and such as, I hope, the Lord of lords will not despise.

Do I call it mine? I must correct myself, it is indeed your Honour's, and my tendering it to your acceptance is but my paying you your own: it is a legacy left you by my dear deceased husband, who commanded me on his deathbed, in all humble wise, to present it to your Honour, and publish it under your protection; so that, although it was left with me, it was left by him for your Honour.

Do I call it a legacy? I must again correct, and confess it is a due debt; for our poor family stands most deeply obliged to your Honour, who have been pleased to exercise a generous bounty towards us, and such as is suitable to none but a noble mind.

The debt is humbly acknowledged by us, and shall be undoubtedly repaid by the Lord, to whom it was lent. Your Lordship may with comfort read the specialty in God's own word, Prov. 19:17, which is very good security. But as for us, alas! what have we to return, except these gleanings of the fruits of my dear husband's labours, even some of those which were brought forth when he last laboured in the Lord's vineyard?

I desire for ever to adore the goodness of God towards me, whose weak condition seemed to cry, like that woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets unto Elisha, saying, 'Thy servant my husband is dead, and thou knowest that thy servant did fear the Lord,' &c., 2 Kings 4:1. To which cry your Lordship's overflowing munificence hath answered very like the man of God, ver. 7, 'Go, and sell the oil, and pay thy debt, and live thou and thy children of the rest.'

As for the matter of this discourse, it is not proper for me to reflect thereon. Only I have a good confidence, that, as your Honour hath been pleased to cast a favourable eye on other of my husband's works, professing profit and pleasure in the reading of them; so these words of your dying servant will not be unsuccessful, but have the like good acceptance, and leave the like impressions in your noble breast.

Nor will it, I hope, be interpreted base flattery what is here expressed, barely in token of sincere gratitude and due resentment of your Lordship's favours. But if the world shall be so disingenious, I shall cease from speaking before men, and direct my supplications to the most high God.

May the Lord of heaven prosper your Honour in the ample inheritance of your fathers; may it blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing; 'the glory of Lebanon be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon,' Isa. 35:2. May your Honour on earth be daily increased, as of those who did worthily in Ephrata, and were famous in Bethlehem, Ruth 4:11; and let your house be like the house of Pharez. Nay, lastly and lastingly, as the crowning mercy of all, the special favour of the King of heaven be placed upon you, to be your sun and shield, to give you grace and glory, Ps. 84:11. In all respects blessed be he of the Lord, who hath not left off his kindness

to the living, and to the dead, Ruth 2:20. So humbly and heartily prayeth,

My Lord, your Honour's most obliged and thankful servant,

JOANNA SWINNOCK.

TO THE READER

GOOD READER,—Being requested to recommend this treatise to thy acceptance, I readily complied with the motion, induced thereunto partly by my respect to the author, Mr Swinnock, a name well known to most serious Christians by his former savoury and useful works, published for the good of the church, before one of which I have expressed my just esteem of his gifts and graces in an epistle prefixed, and therefore commendation is not my business now, it needeth not but attestation; and to assure thee that this piece is his, delivered by his own hands to his son, a little before his, to him blessed, but, alas! to us untimely death, and accordingly thou wilt find the one spirit of the author in it, and the same holy, lively way of discoursing, which is so remarkable in his other writings, partly with respect to the matter, which is about the eternal recompenses, as they are represented by our Lord in a scheme or draught of the last judgment. We are hedged within the compass of our duty both on the right hand and on the left; on the right hand, with the hopes of a most blessed everlasting estate; on the left, with the fears of endless and never-ceasing torments. Reflections on the former are comfortable; what is sweeter than to live in the expectation and

foresight of endless glory? But the consideration of the latter is also profitable. We need many sermons about hell, to keep us out of hell; therefore in this treatise the worthy author insisteth on the dreadful doom and sentence that shall pass on the wicked at the last day.

There is also another thing largely represented which is of great use, the heinousness of sins of omission. Sin in the general is a transgression of the law, 1 John 3:4. Now the law may be transgressed either by omitting what is commanded as a duty to God, or by committing what is forbidden when we directly transgress an affirmative precept, that is a sin of omission; but when we do anything against a negative precept, that is a sin of commission; in both there is disobedience, and so by consequence contempt of God's authorities. When Saul had not done what God bids him to do, he telleth him that rebellion is as a sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness as idolatry, 1 Sam. 15:13; implying that omission to be rebellion and stubbornness, for which God would rend the kingdom from him. So for a sin of omission he put by Eli's family from the priesthood, 1 Sam. 3:15: 'I will judge his house for ever, because his sons had made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.' Now the more necessary the duties omitted are, the greater is the sin, as Heb. 2:3, especially if the omission be total, Ps. 14:3; Jer. 2:32; or when the duty is most seasonable, Prov. 17:16; or the performance easy, for this is to stand with God for a trifle; he is denied a drop that would not give a crumb, Luke 16:24; or when we are fully convinced that it is our duty, James 4:17. Briefly, these sins of omission are the ruin of most people in the world; yea, the children of God oftener offend in these kind of sins than in fouler excesses. Oh, how many of them go out of the world bewailing their neglects and omissions. The best might have done much more for God than ever they have yet done. But I detain thee too long from the book itself; read and peruse it, and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.—I am,

Thine in all Christian observation,

THO. MANTON, D.D.

THE SINNER'S LAST SENTENCE

Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink.—MAT. 25:41, 42.

CHAPTER I

The preface and introduction to the text

THOUGH the wise God is pleased now and then to keep a petty sessions at this day, and to execute vengeance on some sinners, lest men should question his providence, and but on some, lest they should question his patience; yet the great assize, when justice shall have a solemn, public, and general triumph, will be the last day. This world is the theatre whereon mercy is acting its part every moment: if justice peep out a little, as the sun out of a cloud, it is quickly recalled and hidden again; it will not appear in its full beauty, and glory, and brightness, till all nations appear in the other world. Here

all things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked; to the clean, and to the unclean; to him that sweareth, and to him that feareth an oath, Eccles. 9:2. The sun of prosperity shineth, and the showers of adversity fall on both promiscuously. If there be any difference for the better, it is commonly on the worser side, Psalm 73:3–8. But there when the last trump shall sound, the living be changed, the dead raised, and all shall appear before the judgment seat of Christ; when the saints shall be called, honoured, acquitted, and rewarded; when the sinner shall be arraigned, accused, condemned, and executed; when the judge shall say to the saints on his right hand, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world;' and to the sinners on his left hand, 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels;' then men will see and say, 'Verily there is a reward for the righteous; surely there is a God that judgeth in the world;' then men shall return and discern a difference between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not.

In relation to this great and general judgment, we may consider:

1. The efficient or judge: ver. 31, 'The Son of man shall come in his glory, with all his holy angels, and shall sit on the throne of his glory.' He that was judged by man, shall be judge of men.
2. The subject or persons to be judged, all the world: ver. 32, 'And before him shall be gathered all nations.' The congregation of the whole world together shall follow upon the sound of the trumpet. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet, (for the trumpet shall sound,) the dead, indefinitely, shall be raised, 1 Cor. 15:52. Some understand the sound of the trumpet metaphorically, for the virtue and power of Christ, whereby he shall cite and cause all the

world to appear before him. Others take it literally and properly, as God appeared on mount Sinai, when he gave the law with the long and loud sound of a trumpet, Exod. 19:19. So he will appear at the great day with the sound of a trump, when he comes to reckon with men for the breach of the law: Mat. 24:31, 'And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet.' The Jews gathered their solemn assemblies together with the sound of a trumpet.

And God will gather the greatest assembly of men that ever was with the sound of a trumpet. Adam shall then see all his children to the hundredth, and thousandth, and hundred thousandth generation.

3. The form or proceeding at that day, from ver. 32 to the end.

4. The event or execution of the sentence, ver. 1. And these shall go into everlasting punishment, (as Haman's face was covered when the sentence was given, and presently led forth to execution,) and the righteous into life eternal.

About the form or proceeds of this day, wherein the text lieth, these four particulars are observable:

1. The separation of persons.

2. The setting them in their places.

3. The manifestation of persons and things.

4. The pronounciation of the sentence.

1. The separation of persons. Now the tares and wheat grow together, but then they shall be parted asunder: ver. 32, 'And before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd separateth his sheep from the goats.' Here

they mingle together in the same house, and family, and society, but there the devil's herd of goats shall be by themselves, and Christ's flock by themselves. The wicked shall be gathered together, and he shall bind them in bundles, Mat. 13:41, and the godly gathered together. The sinner shall have his desire, not to be troubled with admonitions or singularity of the precise; and the saint shall have his prayer, not to be vexed with the filthy conversation of the profane, Ps. 26:4–7, 'I have not sat with vain persons, neither will I go in with dissemblers. I have hated the congregation of evil doers; and will not sit with the wicked,' &c.

2. The setting them in their places. Now the vilest men are exalted, and the most virtuous debased, but then it shall be otherwise. And then he shall set the sheep on his right hand, and the goats on the left, ver. 33. Here the godly are set in low places, on footstools, the wicked in high places, on thrones; but there the godly shall be honoured, and the wicked disgraced. The right hand is a place of the greatest honour. To sit at a king's right hand is the highest seat next him. To sit on king Solomon's right hand was the honour he gave his mother, 1 Kings 2:19. To sit at the right hand of God is peculiar to Christ, whom he hath honoured and exalted above principalities and powers: 'To which of the angels said he at any time, Sit thou on my right hand? Eph. 1:20; Heb. 1:13. And to sit on the right hand of Christ will be the honour of his spouse, his queen: 'At thy right hand was the queen in gold of Ophir,' Ps. 45:9. They who are now placed at the left hand of earthly princes, will then be placed at the right hand of the King of kings, of the blessed and glorious potentate; and they who are now placed at kings' right hands, will be placed at Christ's left hand.

3. The manifestation of persons and things:

(1.) Of persons.

[1.] Of men. All men shall then be pellucid and transparent as crystal. 'We must all appear, τοὺς γὰρ πάντα ἡμᾶς φανερωθῆναι δεῖ: 2 Cor. 5:10, 'For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ,' φανερωθῆναι. The word signifieth a clear and a permanent manifestation. Such a clear manifestation of men, that every one may see into them, what they are, and what they have been; and such a permanent manifestation as will last for ever, according to the Greek scholiast on 1 Tim. 3:16. Good men shall then be manifested; their principles, their practices, their designs and purposes, and their uprightness in all, to their glory and praise. They who are now accused of hypocrisy, and obstinacy, and pride, and peevishness, because they could not swim with the stream, nor run with others to the same excess of riot, will then be manifested to be men of integrity and humility, and to have declined the profane courses of others, not out of foolish preciseness, or needless scrupulosity, or humoursomeness, but out of conscience to the commands of God. Their faith, and love, and sincerity, will be found to their praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus: 'When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye appear with him in glory,' 1 Pet. 1:7. They who are now despised, and reproached, and trampled on as the dirt and dung and filth of the earth, will then be manifested to be God's jewels, Christ's glory, and the temples of the Holy Ghost: 'When Christ who is our life shall appear, we shall appear with him in glory,' Col. 3:4. Then there will be a manifestation of the sons of God, Rom. 8:19.

Bad men will then be manifested to be the servants of unrighteousness, the children of the devil, the slaves and vassals of corruption, and notwithstanding all their glorious profession, and specious pretences, to have been but as a painted sepulchre, gaudy

without, and rottenness within; or as a curious chimney-piece, without white and shining, but within full of soot and blackness: 'He will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the thoughts of the heart.'

[2.] Of the Lord Jesus Christ. We read of the appearing of Christ at that day, 1 Pet. 1:7; Col. 3:4. He was veiled, and hid, and obscured, when on earth, but then he shall be revealed and discovered to the whole world: 'When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven,' 2 Thes. 1:7. And it will be a glorious revelation: 'Looking for the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ,' Titus 2:13.

In this world he appeared as the Son of man, as one born of a woman, and in the form of a servant; but then he shall appear as the Son of God, as the only begotten of the Father, and as the head of principalities and powers, and as the heir of all things: Mat. 16:27, 'For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels: and then he shall reward every man according to his works.' He shall come in the glory of his Father, i.e., in that glory and honour which is proper and peculiar to the divine nature.

At his first appearing a weak mortal man was his harbinger, to prepare his way before him, Mat. 3:3, 4; but at his second appearing, a mighty immortal archangel shall be his forerunner, and go before him: 'For the Lord himself shall descend with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God,' 1 Thes. 4:16. At his first appearing he was accompanied with a few poor, mean fishermen, but at his second appearing he shall be attended with his mighty angels, 2 Thes. 1:7; with all his holy angels, Mat. 6:27; with the thousand thousand that are before him, and the ten thousand times ten thousand that minister to him.

At his first appearing he came as a servant to minister unto others, and to be abased: he came riding upon an ass, Mat. 21:5, and 28. But at his second appearing he shall come in the clouds of heaven as his chariot, Mat. 26:61, to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe. And then he shall appear as a Lord; some think it is therefore called the Lord's-day, 2 Pet. 3:10.

At his first appearing he appeared wholly as a Saviour and Redeemer. When he appeared to the world, the philanthropy, or kindness of God to man appeared, Titus 3:4: 'And the grace of God that bringeth salvation appeared,' Titus 2:11. But then he shall appear as a judge, full of fire, and fury, and wrath against his enemies. The kings, and captains, and nobles will call to the rocks to fall on them, and to the mountains to cover them from the wrath of the Lamb, when that great day of his wrath is come, Rev. 6:16, 17.

At first he appeared as a sinner, in the likeness of sinful flesh, Rom. 8:3; he was numbered among the transgressors; the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all, Isa. 53:12. He was called a Samaritan, and one that had a devil, John 10; a wine-bibber and a glutton, a friend of publicans and sinners, John 8:48; Mat. 11:19; a traitor against Cæsar, John 19:12; one guilty of blasphemy against God, Mat. 26:65; a conjuror, and one in compact and covenant with the devil, Mat. 12:24. But his second appearing will be without any such likeness of sinful flesh, or imputation of sin by God, or reputation of a sinner among men: 'But unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation,' Heb. 9:28.

(2.) There will be at that day a manifestation of things. The books that are now sealed up will then be opened, Rev. 20:12.

The book of the divine decrees will then be unclasped, and the names written in the Lamb's book of life will then be visible and legible to

all: 'And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God, and the books were opened, and another book was opened, which is the book of life,' Rev. 20:12. All the divine providences in time will be manifest; then will the divine purpose from eternity, as now the divine purpose is manifest by the divine providence.

The book of divine providences will then be opened, and all the rare curious contrivances thereof unfolded; the agreement of providence with the promises, as well as with the eternal purpose, will then be apparent. The history of the whole world will then be read by the saints in one entire volume. Now we see a little of God's wisdom, and power, and faithfulness, in one providence, and a little in another, and a little in a third; yea, we are so blind, and providences often so dark, that, through our ignorance and unbelief, God loseth much of the glory due to him for them, and we much of the comfort we might receive by them; but then we shall with strengthened and enlarged understandings discern the whole series, method, and contexture of divine providences together, and how by a powerful, wise, gracious government, all things conspired, and combined, and wrought together for our everlasting good, Rom. 8:28. It is one thing to see a rich piece of arras, with a curious story wrought in it, by parcels and pieces, and another thing to see it all together, hung up, and to be seen all at once with one view.

The book of conscience will then be opened. Though now wicked men blot and blur this book by their wilful presumptuous sins, that they cannot read it; though they darken their eyes, and stiffen their wills, and harden their hearts, and will not read it; yet then they shall have the book of conscience representing to them in large, though black, yea, bloody characters, all their atheistical impieties, enormities, drunkenness, revellings, debaucheries, hypocrisies,

blasphemies, and they shall be forced to read them with sorrow and terror, whether they will or no.

CHAPTER II

The division and brief explication of

4. The pronunciation of the sentence, ver. 41–43, &c.

In which we may take notice,

1. Of the persons sentenced; these are described,

(1.) By their station, on the left hand: 'Then shall he say to them on the left hand.'

(2.) By their condition, cursed ones: 'Depart, ye cursed.'

2. Of their punishment. In which there is,

(1.) Pain of loss: 'Depart from me.'

(2.) Pain of sense, which punishment is aggravated,

First, By its extremity, fire. This is amplified,

1. By their companions in those flames, the devil and his angels.

2. By the divine ordination of it for them: 'Prepared for the devil and his angels.'

Secondly, By its eternity, everlasting fire.

3. Of the reason of this punishment: 'For I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink,' ver. 42, 43.

I shall begin with the sentence, wherein every word speaks woe and wrath, fire and fury, death and damnation; and every syllable speaks the deepest sorrow and dreadfulest sufferings. It is like Ezekiel's roll, written within and without; and within is written lamentation, weeping, and woe, Ezek. 2:10. The Lord Chief-Justice of the world, the judge of the quick and dead, is now in all his robes and royalty, with millions of glorious attendants, in the glory of his Father, with all his holy angels, set on the bench. The poor prisoner, whose trembling soul is newly reunited to the loathsome carcase of his body, is dragged to the bar, awaiting and expecting some doleful doom. He is lately come from hell, to give an account of his life on earth, and to receive his sentence; and loath he is to go back to that place of torments, as knowing that the pain of his body will be a new and grievous addition to his misery, when that shall burn in flames as his soul doth already in fury. Therefore he pleads:

Prisoner. Lord, let me stay here, (though, poor wretch, he hath his hell about him in his accusing, affrighting conscience,) rather than go to that dungeon of darkness. A sight of thy beautiful face may possibly abate my sorrows, and thy presence may mitigate my sufferings.

Judge. No, saith Christ, here is no abiding for thee; be gone hence. Thou mayest remember when my presence was thy torment, when thou didst bid me depart from thee, choosing my room before my company. Now my absence shall be thy terror; I like thee not so well to have thee nigh me; depart, I say, from me.

Prisoner. Lord, if I must undergo so dreadful a doom as to depart from thee, the Father of lights, and fountain of life, yet bless me

before I go. One good wish of thy heart, one good word of thy mouth, will make me blessed wherever I go. Those whom thou blessest are blessed indeed. Bless me, even me, O my Father; at this parting grant me thy blessing.

Judge. Sinner, be gone, and my curse go along with thee. Thou hast many a time despised my blessing when it hath been offered to thee, though I was made a curse to purchase it for thee; therefore, I say, depart from me, and the curse of an angry Lord and of a righteous law accompany thee for ever; depart, I say, thou cursed.

Prisoner. Lord, if I must go, and thy curse with me, send me to some good place, where I may find somewhat to refresh me under thy loss and curse. It is misery enough to lose thy presence; good Lord, command me to some good place.

Judge. No, sinner, be gone with my curse to that place which will torture and rack thee with extremity and universality of pains. The time hath been that thou hast wallowed in sensual pleasures, now thou must fry in intolerable flames; depart, thou cursed, into fire.

Prisoner. Ah, Lord, if I must go with thy curse, and to so woeful a place as fire, I beseech thee let me not stay there long. Alas! who can abide devouring flames one moment? material fires of man's kindling are terrible, but how intolerable are those flames which thy breath, like a stream of brimstone, hath kindled! I beseech thee, if I must go to it, let me pass swiftly through it, and not stay in it.

Judge. No, sinner, depart and my curse with thee to those extreme torments that admit of no ease and no end, where the worm never dieth and the fire never goeth out; to the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone for ever. Depart, thou cursed, into everlasting fire.

Prisoner. Lord, this is dismal and dreadful indeed, to go from thee, who art all good, and to go to fire, which hath in it extremity of all evil, and to lose thee, and fry in flames for ever, ever, ever; yet, Lord, if it is thy will it should be so, hear me yet in one desire, let me have such society as may mitigate, at least such as may not aggravate my misery.

Judge. No, sinner, thy company must be such for ever as thou didst choose in thy lifetime. He who was thy tempter shall be thy tormentor; and they who led thee captive at their will, shall be bound with thee in chains of everlasting darkness, and fagoted up with thee together for unquenchable fire. Such fiery serpents, gnawing worms, stinging adders, poisonous toads, roaring and devouring lions, hideous monsters, frightful fiends must be thy eternal companions. 'Depart from me, thou cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.'

I shall now speak particularly to the punishment of these wicked ones, and explain the words as I come to speak to them.

I begin with the beginning of Christ's sentence, viz., the pain of loss, which shall be the punishment of the damned: 'Depart from me.' The word depart is a metaphor which describes the course of human life by a journey, Luke 1:6; 2 Peter 2:10; and also their progress to death, Luke 13. The eternal death of the damned will consist partly, if not principally, in their departure from the Lord of life.

But it may be objected, Who can depart from him who is everywhere? Christ is God, John 1:1; 1 John 5:20; and God is omnipresent: 'Whither shall I fly from thy presence?' Ps. 139:7. Therefore we must know there is a threefold presence of God or Christ:

1. There is the essential presence of God, as he is infinite in his being, included in no place, and excluded out of none, so none can depart from him, Ps. 139:6–10; Jer. 23:24; Amos 9:2, 3.

2. There is the favourable presence of God, as he is the fountain of life and love, and the Father of mercy and kindness, and all good. The former is the presence of his being, this of his bounty. This is as the presence of the sun by his heat cheering, and by his light delighting the creature. His presence in this sense is the substance of his promises: 'Fear not, I will be with thee,' Isa. 43:2, 3, 5; Jer. 1:8, and 15:20; Luke 1:28; Acts 18:10. His presence in this sense is the Redeemer's purchase: 'He suffered the just for the unjust, to bring us to God,' 1 Peter 3:18. Thence the name of the Redeemer is Immanuel, God with us, Mat. 1:23. Against his departure in this sense, Jer. 14:8, is the church's earnest prayer, Leave us not; and the fear of it doth so affect Moses, that he is ready to throw up all, Exod. 33:15: 'If thy presence go not with us, carry us not hence.'

His presence in this sense is heaven itself: Ps. 16:11, 'In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand are pleasures forevermore;' Luke 22; 1 Thes. 4:17, '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. This is that presence of Christ which the wicked shall want for ever. This is included in 'Depart from me.'

3. There is the afflicting punishing presence of God. There is the presence of his fury, as well as of his favour. In this sense Job prayeth for God's absence: 'How long wilt thou not depart from me?' Job 7:19. Which Junius glosseth, Turn thine anger away from me. In this sense God tells men that he will visit them, i.e., with judgments; as a father, beholding his child about some naughty action, tells him,

I will be with you presently, meaning to correct him, Isa. 23:17; Jer. 6:15, 'At the time that I visit them, they shall be cast down, saith the Lord.' In this sense wicked men shall have the presence of God for ever. His tormenting presence, as well as the absence of his grace and favour, will be their eternal portion. And certainly, if his afflicting presence in this world, which hath love for its original, and their good for its end, be so grievous to his own people, that they cry out, Let him turn from me, Job 14:6; let him depart away; what will his tormenting presence be to the wicked in the other world, of which wrath, pure wrath, is the original, and satisfaction to justice his end?

CHAPTER III

Concerning the privative part of the sinner's punishment

This part of the verse will afford this doctrine:

Doct. That a great part of wicked men's punishment in the other world will consist in their departure from the presence of Christ. 'Then shall he say to them on his left hand, Depart from me.' They now bid God depart from them; they say unto God, 'Depart from us,' Job 21:14. But that which is their wish here shall be their woe for ever. And he shall say unto them, 'Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity; I know you not,' Mat. 7:23. The presence of Christ is now their trouble, but his absence will then be their torment. Hence the state of the wicked in the other world is called utter darkness, Mat. 8:12; and blackness of darkness for ever, Jude 13; because of its separation from Christ, who is the light of the world and the Sun of righteousness, John 1:9; Mal. 4:2. It seems an allusion to them that are fettered in dark doleful dungeons, or to those that in the night-

time stand without in the dark, being excluded such rooms as are full of lights, wherein are rare and costly feasts.

In the explication of this doctrine, I shall describe the punishment of the wicked: 1. In the perfection of the object from which they must depart; 2. In the properties of their departure; and then give the reasons of the doctrine.

First, As for the object of their loss.

1. They lose the Lord Jesus Christ, the Prince of life, the Lord of glory, the fairest of ten thousand, the only begotten of the Father, and the heir of all things. The better the object is, the greater their loss who are deprived of it. The more excellent the person of Christ is, the more exquisite their punishment will be who must depart from him. Christ is the highest, the greatest, the chiefest good. In losing him,

(1.) They depart from an universal good, one that is bread, water, light, life, rest, health, ease, wine, marrow, a feast, a friend, a father, pardon, peace, love, grace, glory, anything, everything, all things that the soul wanteth and requireth to its perfect felicity.

(2.) They depart from a suitable good, that very savoury meat which the soul loveth and needeth. They lose that good which the soul should have, and would have, and must have, if ever it be happy. The soul is guilty, and Christ is pardon; pardon is suitable to a guilty soul: 1 John 1:7, 'The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.' The soul is poor, and Christ is riches; riches are suitable to a poor creature: Eph. 3:8, 'The unsearchable riches of Christ;' Prov. 8:18, 'Riches and honour are with me, yea, durable riches and righteousness.' The soul is miserable, naked, filthy, obnoxious to death and wrath, but Christ is mercy, raiment, cleansing, freedom

from hell, and the heaven of heaven, Rev. 3:17, 18; 1 Thes. 1:10; Rom. 8:1. He is a good that doth exactly, directly suit the condition of the soul, the miseries of the soul, and the necessities of the soul. He is the plaster that fits the sores, and the balm that hits the wounds of the soul, when creatures are physicians and physic of no value.

(3.) They depart from an eternal good; they lose that good which doth not only suit the soul's disposition, but also its duration, that will last, and abide, and continue for ever: 'Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever,' Heb. 13:8. He is everlasting righteousness, Dan. 9:24; everlasting meat, John 6:27; eternal life, 1 John 5:20.

2. They depart from, with Christ, the society of all Christians. When they depart from the head, they depart from the members; when they depart from the root, they depart from the branches. For head and members, root and branches, must be together for ever: John 14:2, 3, 'Where I am, there ye may be also.' Now the sheep and goats flock together, but then they shall be parted asunder: Mat. 8:11, 12, 'And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and from the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into utter darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' They who are now the objects of their contempt, will then be the objects of their envy. When once they lose the sight, they shall lose the sight of those glorious stars for ever. Every saint may then say to the sinner, who now frets and fumes at the saint's presence, because of his preciseness, as Moses to Pharaoh, 'I will see thy face no more,' Mat. 25:46.

3. They shall depart, when from Christ, from all the means of grace, or communion with God. They shall hear no more sermons, and join

in no more prayers, and receive no more tenders of grace, or entreaties of the gospel: Isa. 38:11, 'I said, I shall not see the Lord, even the Lord, in the land of the living: I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world.' Where the king is, there he hath his secretaries, and seals, and ministers of state, and they who are banished the court are banished from these.

4. They shall depart from all the good things of this life. Each country hath its proper peculiar commodities, and so hath each world. This world hath its peculiar good things, such as are proper to this, and not to be found in the other world; therefore the apostle calls them this world's goods: 'He that hath this world's goods,' 1 John 3:17. So the other world hath its proper peculiar commodities, such as are to be found nowhere else. The blessings of this are not to be looked for in the other life: 'There is neither marrying nor given in marriage, but all are as angels;' good men, as good angels, above all bodily and temporal blessings; and evil men, as evil angels, without them, and fixed in a state of endless misery. The wicked man possibly was honourable, but his glory doth not follow after him, Ps. 49:17. He was rich, but that was only in this world, 1 Tim. 6:17. He was one that abounded in pleasures, but now they are gone, and exchanged for pains, James 5:5; Luke 16:25, 'But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.' The sinner shall bid adieu to temporal good, spiritual good, eternal good, all good, that he may speak indefinitely, what Job, supposing himself dying, spake restrictively, 'Mine eyes shall no more see good,' Job 7:7.

CHAPTER IV

The properties of the sinner's loss

Secondly, I shall speak to the properties of this departure from Christ, or loss therein.

1. It is spiritual. It is a loss peculiar to the soul or spirit of man, and a loss of that good that is most suitable to the soul or spirit of man. No mercies are like soul-mercies, Eph. 1:3, and Job 4:4; no miseries are like soul-miseries. For, the nobler any being is, the better that is which advantageth it, and the worse that is that injureth it. It is one thing to relieve or abuse a distressed prince, and another thing to relieve or abuse a distressed subject. The soul of man is the prince, the chief and noblest part of man, and it is principally the subject, as chiefly sensible of this departure. It is true the soul cannot depart from God locally, but it can and doth morally here in its affections and conversation. But that which is now its practice and pleasure, will then be their torment and punishment. Other losses pinch the flesh, but this pierceth the spirit. Other losses are castigatory, and the portion of children; but this is damnatory, and the portion of devils. Ah, how will the soul pine and wither away, when it shall take its farewell of that Sun, who alone could revive and refresh it! What a dismal, doleful death must it undergo, when it shall depart from him who is its only life! Such a wounded spirit who can bear? The soul hath more exquisite sense, and more curious feeling, than the body; therefore its loss of its own peculiar suitable satisfying good will cut deep, and fill it with bitter horror.

2. It will be a total departure. Here they depart in part from God, but then totally. Here Cain complains, if not allowed God's presence in ordinances, though he had his presence in many ways of ordinary favour: 'Behold, thou hast driven me this day from the face of the earth, and from thy face shall I be hid,' Gen. 4:14. But, alas! Low doth

he complain there, where he is wholly deprived of the divine presence in any way of favour; where he hath not the least glimpse of the light of his countenance. The partial departures of God have forced sad complaints from them that are godly: Job 13:24, 'Why hidest thou thy face, and holdest me for thine enemy?' saith Job. I can bear the withdrawals of men, and their absence; I can bear the strangeness of my friends, and the unkindness of relations, but I cannot bear thy strangeness to me, thy withdrawals from me. 'Why hidest thou thy face?' Job, though a strong stout man, able to overcome the strong one, the devil, yet was ready to faint away and die at this. David crieth out mournfully at it: Ps. 10:1, 'Why standest thou afar off, O Lord? why hidest thou thyself in time of trouble?' Poor Heman is distracted, and almost dead with it: Ps. 88:14, 15, 'Lord, why hidest thou thy face? I am afflicted and ready to die; while I suffer thy terrors, I am distracted.' If these partial departures, which had much love in them and with them, cast down the friends of God so heavily, oh what will his total departures out of pure wrath cause to his enemies? That world must needs be dolesome and darksome indeed, to whom this Sun is wholly set, and totally eclipsed.

3. It will be an eternal departure. They must leave God for ever. Though it had been spiritual and total, yet if but temporal, there had been somewhat to have allayed their sorrows; but to suffer so great a loss, and that wholly and for ever too, must needs pierce to the quick. The sinner shall see the blessed Jesus no more for ever. He must depart from the tenderest father, lovingest friendship, richest treasure, choicest good, greatest glory, sweetest pleasure, and that for ever: Jude 13, 'To whom is reserved blackness of darkness for ever.' The sentence once denounced, 'Depart from me,' will be like the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be altered: 2 Thes. 1:8, 9, 'Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the

presence of the Lord.' The anchor of hope will then be broken, the bridge of grace will then be drawn, the gate of mercy will then be shut, and the gulf between Christ and the wicked never to be passed over. They may cry out in truth, what the psalmist in unbelief, 'Will the Lord cast off for ever? will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever?' Ps. 77:7, 8. Alas! they are cast off for ever; he will be favourable to them no more. They may roar out in vain, How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord? shall I never be remembered? Ps. 13:1.

4. It is an irreparable loss, such a loss as nothing can make up. There are many good things which we may do well without, because the want of them may be supplied by other things; but Christ is the one thing necessary, the one thing excellent, the want of whom no good thing in heaven or earth can make up. When the soul departs from Christ it departs from all good, because nothing is good without him, and nothing can be had in the room of him. If some kind of food be wanting, another kind may possibly do as well; so if some sort of drugs or herbs for physic be wanting, there may be others found of the same virtue and operation; but if once the soul be sentenced to depart from Christ, there is nothing to compensate this loss. He is the Saviour, and indeed the only Saviour, Acts 4:12; he is the mediator between a righteous God and a guilty creature, and indeed the only mediator: 1 Tim. 2:5, 'For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.'

CHAPTER V

The reasons of the sinner's privative punishment

Thirdly, I proceed to the reasons of this doctrine, and shall name but two.

1. Wicked men in the other world shall be sentenced to depart from Christ, because of their wickedness or unworthiness of his presence. The judge himself gives this reason in the text: ver. 42, 43, 'For I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat,' &c. Sin is the great wall of partition between God and his creatures: 'Evil cannot stand in thy sight, neither canst thou behold the works of iniquity,' Ps. 5:5. They must lose the light of his countenance, who never minded the light of his commandments; the holy Jesus cannot abide the company of unholy creatures: 'Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee?' No, it may not, it cannot, Ps. 94:20. It is contrary to his honour, who hath threatened their banishment from him; and it is contrary to his nature, who hates their company.

If God depart from his own people in this world in part, and for a time, it is for their sins. 'Your iniquities separate between me and your souls,' Isa. 59:2; thus they are the cloud that interpose between the soul and the Sun of righteousness, and hinder the light of his favour from shining on us, Isa. 44:22. Job knew and acknowledged this: chap. 13:24–26, 'Why hidest thou thy face? Thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the sins of my youth.' And if wicked men depart totally and eternally from God in the other world, it is for their sins: 'Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity, I know you not,' Mat. 7:23; Luke 13:27. Departure from Christ is the wages which the workers of iniquity earn. Deeds of darkness merit utter darkness.

Wicked men now desire Christ to depart from them: 'They besought him to depart out of their coasts,' Mat. 8:34; but what is now their pleasure, shall then be their punishment. He will go from them, who

bid him be gone; and hide his face for ever from those who turn their backs upon him in time. He that prepares for sinners the torments of hell, will not bestow on them the joys of heaven.

2. Because of their unfitness for the presence of Christ. A carnal heart cannot savour a spiritual heaven. The vitiated nature of man cares not for the pleasures joined with the holiness of the celestial paradise: 'When angels kept not their first estate, they left their own habitation, Jude 6. As soon as they lost their primitive purity, they lost the place of their glory and felicity. When once they turned haters of God and holiness, of their own accord they forsook heaven. Distempered palates cannot relish the choicest dainties. How can the wicked delight in God, which is the heaven of heaven, who have in them a predominant enmity against him: Heb. 12:14, 'Follow after holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.' It is holiness that makes the soul fit and meet for heaven: Col. 1:12, 'Giving thanks unto the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.' The blind are as capable of seeing, and the deaf of hearing, and the dead of eating and drinking, as wicked men are of seeing God as he is, and hearing the melodious songs of saints and angels, and of feeding of the tree of life that groweth in the midst of paradise, and of drinking of the pure water that floweth from the throne of God and the Lamb. If the tabernacle on earth, wherein are the saints of God, and holy institutions of Christ, and the divine worship, for four or five hours in a week, be a prison to earthly, carnal men, surely the temple in heaven, wherein is the Holy One of Israel in the greatest manifestation of his holiness, holy angels, perfect spirits, pure service of the blessed God, without interruption or cessation, would be a purgatory, yea, a hell to them. Communion with God is impossible (in natura rei) without conformity to him, 2 Cor. 6:14. They tell a broad lie who say, they have fellowship with God here, and walk after their own lusts, 1 John 1:6. 'He that saith he

abideth in him, ought himself also to walk even as he walked.' Our delight in God is ever proportionable to our desires of him. Now wicked men desiring above all things the absence, yea, the dethroning of God, can never take any delight in his presence, though they should be admitted thereunto.

If suitableness be wanting, that which is never so excellent is no way joyous or pleasant to us. All creatures delight only in what is suitable to their natures. Barzillai refused the pleasures of David's court, because they were so unsuitable to an old man that they would be no pleasures to him; he could not taste their meat, nor hear their music. So all the delights of the celestial court would be no delights, because of their unsuitableness to sinful sensual natures. Ungodly men could not relish the spiritual dainties at the marriage-supper of the Lamb, nor hear with pleasure the heavenly choir singing the song of Moses and the Lamb. I grant that wicked men are naturally capable of heaven, as they are rational creatures, but they are morally incapable, as they are predominantly carnal and sinful; so they want that holiness which should prepare, and dispose, and fit them for heaven.

CHAPTER VI

Uses concerning the heinous nature of sin, and grievous misery of sinners

Use. I shall now apply this doctrine. It may be useful by way of information, and by way of exhortation. 1. By way of information.

1. It may inform us, if the wicked in the other world shall be banished the presence of Christ, then how heinous is the nature of sin, and

how odious to God! God is love itself, and delights in mercy, yea, takes pleasure in the prosperity of men: John 1:4, 'In him was life, and the life was the light of men;' Micah 7:18, 'Who is a God like unto thee, who pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy.' Therefore it must be some grievous crime, and somewhat which is very offensive to him, that provokes him to sentence them to an eternal banishment from him. Oh how horrid a thing is sin! it brings all evil, Rom. 2:7, 8, and deprives of all good, Isa. 59:2. Its formal nature is a voluntary departure from God's precepts, Heb. 3:12; Jer. 2:5; and its woeful effect is an eternal total departure from his gracious presence. His partial temporary departure from his own people, who are the objects of his eternal choice and infinite love, 'which makes them go mourning all the day, and lie roaring all the night, because of their sins,' speaks much of the evil of sin; but his full everlasting departure from others, which leaves them naked, and stripped of all comfort, and exposed to all misery and mischief, doth more abundantly proclaim its filthiness and loathsomeness. It can be no ordinary cloud or vapour that can obscure the sun at noonday, in all his beauty and brightness, and turn the clear day into a black night; and it can be no little or small thing which provokes the Father of mercy, and God of all grace, to deal so severely with the works of his own hands.

2. It informs us of the inconceivable misery of sinners; they must depart from Christ for ever. To depart for ever from loving and lovely relations, is no mean misery to them who have no other kindred than those on earth. It was no small trial of Abraham to leave his kindred and father's house, Gen. 12:1. To depart for ever from dear and intimate friends is a sore trouble to him whose heart is knit to them. The failure and distance of friends was grievous to Job, chap. 19:13, 14; and David, Ps. 38:11. To depart for ever from all the saints, the

children of the Most High, the excellent of the earth, from the members of Christ, of whom the world is not worthy, will cut deep in them who have any eyes to see the amiableness of their persons, and any hearts to understand the benefit of their prayers and patterns; but to depart for ever from Christ, the Prince of life, the Lord of glory, the heir of all things, the richest treasure, and highest honour, and sweetest pleasure, is doleful and dreadful indeed. How may the damned cry out, Ah whither do we go now! we are going from thee; thou hast the words of eternal life.

The presence of Christ is the happiness of the soul on earth: Deut. 4:7. 'I will see you, and your hearts shall rejoice.' John 16:22, 'And ye now therefore have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your hearts shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.' No such hearty comfort as in the gracious presence of Christ; and the presence of Christ is the happiness of the soul in heaven. 'I desire to be dissolved,' though death simply considered be not desirable, 'and to be with Christ.' *Finis conciliat mediis amorem.* His presence is the heaven of heavens. It is the excellency of the New Jerusalem, that there the tabernacle of God is with men, and God himself shall be with them, Rev. 21:3. And the felicity of the citizens there, 'They shall see his face,' Rev. 22:4. In the presence of Christ is all good, and in the absence of Christ is all evil. If it were death to Absalom not to see the king's face, what death will it be to the damned to be denied for ever the blissful sight of the face of Christ!

If God depart from his people in some degrees, for he is their God still, Ps. 22:1, and 88:1, and but for a time, as a loving father, to make his children more sensible of their folly, and of the worth of his favour, how sadly have they cried out, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' How horribly will they screech and roar from

whom he departs wholly and eternally, as a supreme and righteous judge.

It will greatly aggravate their misery to consider these particulars:

1. The greatness of their loss. It is not the loss of a house, or estate, or bodily good, but the loss of a soul, the loss of a Saviour, the loss of a God, yea, the loss of all good, and that for ever. It is such a loss as never had its fellow or equal; it is such a loss as cannot admit of any addition to it. It is a loss that never had the like before it, nor shall have the like after it. It is an incomparable loss, that the damned may say as he, 'Ye have taken away my God, and what have I more?'

2. For how small a thing they lose the blessed Jesus. If they had lost Christ for somewhat which might have countervailed the want of him, or had in any degree equalled him, it had been the better; but to lose a God, a Christ, a soul, fulness of joy, for a little airy honour, or brutish pleasure, this will cut to the heart. Oh how will it wound the soul in the other world to think, for how small a toy, for how pitiful a trifle, have I lost a crown of glory, and rivers of pleasures for ever! Ah, what a fool have I been to lose substance for shadows, bread for husks, a fountain of living waters for broken cisterns, their own mercies for lying vanities, crystal streams for puddle water, the choice dainties of God's house for the devil's scraps, heaven for earth, and all things for nothing! Was any in bedlam ever half so distracted!

3. It will much aggravate their misery to consider that it was their own voluntary act to lose so much for so little. They shall then think with themselves, that this woeful condition in which they are was their own choice. All the power and policy of earth and hell could not force them to destroy themselves. The cords that bind them were of their own twisting; the rods that scourge them were gathered with their own hands; the web in which they are caught and killed was

spun out of their own bowels. God may say to them, as once to Israel, 'Ye have destroyed yourselves,' Hosea 13; ye are your own murderers. I put your salvation so far into your own hands, that ye could not be damned against your wills. Your own iniquities correct you, and ye are holden with cords of your own sins, Prov. 5:22; Jer. 4:18. Thy way and thy doings have procured these things unto thee; this is thy wickedness, because it is bitter, because it reacheth unto thine heart. Jer. 2:19, 'Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backsliding shall reprove thee: know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God.'

4. It will exceedingly increase their anguish, to know perfectly the greatness of their loss. Here they know not the worth of a Christ, and thence they are little troubled at the want of Christ; but then their eyes shall be opened to see the beauty, excellency and amiableness of him whom they have lost, and to see the costly delicacies, choice dainties, pure and perfect pleasures which the godly enjoy in him, and with him; and so by the increase of their knowledge will be an increase of their sorrow. They shall see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven; they shall see their neighbours, whom they scorned and mocked for their purity and preciseness, in the presence of Christ, in the arms and embraces of Christ, in a state of full happiness and perfect satisfaction, while they themselves are shut out, and denied entrance, Luke 13:25, 28. The fire of hell will give them light enough to see, as well as heat enough to feel, themselves infinitely miserable.

5. It will greatly add to their torment and anguish to consider, that they were sometime near the enjoyment of this blissful presence of Christ. Pardon, and peace, and love, and life, and the endless fruition of the blessed Jesus were tendered to them, were nigh them, were at the very door of their hearts. They were solemnly commanded,

lovingly invited, severely threatened, sweetly allured, and pathetically persuaded to accept of Christ and grace; yea, and heaven, and happiness, and eternal life; yea, and their hearts began to relent, and to close with the entreaties of the gospel. They were almost persuaded to be Christians indeed; there was but a little, a very little, between them and Christ. The bargain was driven so far that Christ was got into their consciences, they bore witness for him, and warned them, if they loved their lives, their souls, to accept of him while he would accept of them; yea, Christ was got into their judgments, they gave their verdict on his side, as one infinitely more amiable and eligible than the world or flesh; nay, he had possibly got into their affections, they delighted to hear of his great love to poor sinners, and of the great things he purchased for them with his own blood; and yet though they were so near, they came short, and, like Ephraim, played the part of unwise sons, and stayed in the place of the breaking forth of children.

Oh how like a dagger will it pierce the heart of them that live under the gospel, and neglect the great salvation offered to them, when they come to be banished the presence of Christ, and to see others, who made religion their business on earth, bathing their souls in rivers of pleasures, drawing water with joy out of the well of salvation, eating of the tree of life that groweth in the midst of paradise, and housed in the arms of their dearest Saviour, and shall reflect and consider with themselves, all those joys and pleasures, all those dainties and delicacies, all those robes, and riches, and glories, and felicities, which they enjoy in the presence of Christ, might have been mine; they were freely, and frequently, and affectionately offered to me; I had the refusal of them; nay, I had a good mind to them, I was not far from the kingdom of heaven. There was but a little between me and them, they were at the very door of my heart, and stood knocking there for admission, and desired only hearty acceptance;

but like a fool I dallied with them, and deferred them, as if hereafter had been time enough; and so have lost them for ever.

(6.) It will much augment their anguish and misery to consider who it is that passeth so severe a doom upon them. This dreadful sentence is pronounced by love, and grace, and goodness itself. He that sometimes called them to him so sweetly, so affectionately, now casts them from him so sharply, so furiously; he who sometimes cried to them, 'Come to me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden,' and wept over them, 'Oh that thou hadst known, even thou in this thy day, the things of thy peace;' he that formerly invited, entreated, besought them to be reconciled, 2 Cor. 5:20, and shewed them his heart-blood, the price of their pardon and life, and stretched out his arms to embrace their returning souls, will now in wrath, and rage, and flames, and fury, bid them begone from him, and his curse go along with them. And if love prove their enemy, surely wrath will not be their friend; and if mercy be thus against them, surely justice will not be for them. Ah, how sorely will it gall the sinner to consider: this dreadful doom is denounced against me not by an enemy, or one that hated me, but by a friend and father, by one that loved me, and took my nature on him, and suffered therein the law's curse, to render me capable of escaping these torments which I now suffer, and partaking of those pleasures which yonder blessed souls enjoy.

CHAPTER VII

Containing the folly of sinners, and the vast difference between them and the godly at the great day

3. It informeth us that every wicked man is out of his wits. Surely the man is mad who exchangeth his soul, and Saviour, and God, and all for a little worldly profit or fleshly pleasure; yea, that parts with true and durable riches for shadowy and fading treasure, that loseth heavenly and eternal joys for earthly and transitory pleasures.

No man can love sin, but he hates himself; nor part with his duty, but he parts with his felicity. And surely such a man who hates himself, and forsakes his happiness, is a madman. Well might the Holy Ghost speak the prodigal out of his wits when he was out of his way, and wandering from his father's house. How mad was he to forsake bread for husks! All the world is but husks, dry, coarse, empty fare, to the dainties of the gospel. Bread in a father's house for husks among swine; yea, and plenty of bread, enough and to spare, for a few husks that could not fill their bellies.

If one soul be more worth than a whole world, surely one Saviour, one God, is more worth than a thousand souls, than a million of worlds. How mad then is he that parts with this soul, this Saviour, this God, for a little, a very little, of this world; yea, for this little of the world for a very little time.

If all the delights of the flesh, and all the pleasures of sin, and all the profits of the world, cannot balance the partial enjoyment of God in his ordinances for one hour, how unable will they be to compensate the loss of full communion with God for ever? Oh how infinitely doth Christ outweigh whatever the flesh or world can offer in exchange for him!

4. It informeth how contrary the portion of the godly and the wicked is at the day of judgment. At this day they fare often alike, they fall under the same favourable and frowning providences, they have the same comforts and the same crosses. If any difference for the better,

it is usually on the sinner's side. The vilest men are exalted, and the proud prosper. But at that day there will be a difference indeed for the better on the saint's side. That day will be terrible to the wicked—a day of wrath, a day of the perdition of ungodly men, Rom. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:7. To the godly a day of redemption, a time of refreshing, a day of light and gladness, and a good day, Luke 21:28; Acts 3:19, 'Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the time of refreshment shall come from the presence of the Lord.'

The difference between the godly and the wicked at that day will be vast:—

1. In regard of their station: 'Then shall he separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep at his right hand,' (in token of honour and favour,) 'and the goats on his left,' (as a sign of shame and contempt,) Mat. 25:32, 33. Those who are now uppermost, will then be undermost. The filth of the world will then appear to be God's jewels, and the darlings of the world will then appear to be the children of the devil: 'The righteous shall have dominion over them in the morning,' Ps. 49. In the night of this world the wicked sit in high places, and have dominion over the godly; but in the morning of the world the godly shall sit at the right hand of Christ, and have dominion over the wicked.

2. In regard of the sentence. And indeed herein is the principal difference. God and the devil, light and darkness, heaven and hell, are not more contrary than the doom of the godly and wicked at the great day.

- (1.) His voice to the wicked is, 'Depart from me;' and those words will wound to purpose. Ah, whither do they go that go from Christ! His

voice to the godly, 'Come, come.' No honey to the taste, no music to the ears, no cordial to the heart, was ever so sweet as this word of Christ. His voice in the gospel, when he called out, 'Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,' was sweet and refreshing to them; but that was but as water to this wine: come, oh come, and welcome, into my arms and embraces. When they who had longed for his coming, and looked for his coming, Titus 2:13, and loved dearly his coming, 2 Tim. 4:8, and sighed and sobbed so often for his coming—'Why are his chariots 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'—and prayed so earnestly for his coming: 'The spirit and the bride say, Come,' Rev. 22:17. 'Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly,' ver. 20; for these to see him coming in the clouds, with all his train of angels, and to hear him calling to them, Come to me, oh who can imagine the joy that will fill their hearts! If when they saw him coming with the prospective of faith, they rejoiced with joy unspeakable, how will they rejoice when they shall see him coming with the eye of sense, and hear him call to them to come to him.

(2.) His voice to the wicked will be, 'Depart from me, ye cursed.' Begone as a cursed brood, and my curse shall follow you wherever you go. His voice to the godly will be, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father.' Oh come, dear souls, whom my Father blessed in his eternal choice, to bless whom he sent me into the world, as a token of whose blessing he hath provided an everlasting inheritance for you. Come, ye blessed in your souls, blessed in your bodies, blessed in your names, blessed in your conditions, and thrice blessed in your eternal possessions.

(3.) His voice to the wicked will be, 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.' Begone from me to extremity of torments, fire; and

eternity of torments, everlasting fire. His voice to the godly will be, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom.' Ye have been heirs a long while under age, and kings in the lower world in disguise, the time is now come for you to enjoy your inheritance. Oh come, ye blessed ones, and inherit the kingdom as kings thereof. Enjoy your full glory, 1 Cor. 7:17; perfect pleasure, Ps. 18:50; and vast dominion, 1 Cor. 6:3: and Rev. 2:26, 27, 'And he that overcometh, and keepeth my words unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron,' &c. Ay, and enjoy this kingdom for ever, 'inherit the kingdom'; inheritances are for ever: 'The Lord knoweth the days of the upright, and their inheritance shall be for ever,' Ps. 37:18.

(4.) His voice to the wicked will be, 'Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.' Begone to that place of torment which infinite wisdom and wrath contrived, and infinite power and justice provideth for the devil and his cursed crew. Depart from me, and be their partners and companions in torments for ever. His voice to the godly will be, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.' Come, take possession of a crown, to which your heads were destined before ye were born. Oh come and partake of those pleasures and joys, of that glory and dignity, to which infinite love elected you, and which infinite wisdom, and goodness, and grace hath prepared for you.

Oh how vast will the difference be at that day between the servants of God and the servants of sin; when those shall weep, and howl, and wail, and gnash their teeth for envy and vexation, and shall call to the rocks to fall upon them, and the mountains to cover them from the wrath of the Lamb, the servants of God shall sing and rejoice, and lift up their heads with joy, because the day of their redemption is come,

Rev. 6:16; Luke 21:28, 'And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh.'

CHAPTER VIII

A use of trial, with the marks of those that shall be banished Christ's presence

Secondly, This doctrine may be useful by way of exhortation, and that two ways:

1. To try whether thou, reader, art one of them that are like to be banished the presence of Christ. It is a woeful doom, as thou hast heard at large; therefore examine thyself whether it shall be thy part and portion or no. To help thee herein, that thou mayest not deceive and delude thy own soul, I shall give thee, out of the word of truth, the characters of them to whom Christ will say, 'Depart from me.'

(1.) The evil liver and profane person shall be banished Christ's presence. The black sinner shall not stand before the white throne: 'Then shall he say unto them, Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity; I know you not,' Mat. 7:23; Luke 13:27. Those who lived in the breach of his commands, must not live in the enjoyment of his company. The workers of iniquity must associate with the wicked one, not with the holy one. Heaven can by no means admit the unholy: 'Into it can in no wise enter any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination,' Rev. 21:27. Scandalous sinners proclaim to the world, that the devil, not Christ, is their master; and that hell, where the devil is with his angels, not heaven, where Christ is with his angels, shall be their eternal home. They who never liked

or loved his presence on the earth, but banished him their hearts and houses, must think and expect that he will not like or love their presence, but sentence them to an everlasting banishment from him.

(2.) The grossly ignorant creature shall be banished the presence of Christ. He will not know them who do not know him. Wilful ignorance doth certainly exclude the undefiled inheritance. A blind eye cannot see the blessed Jesus in all his glory, neither can a dark heart enjoy the kingdom of light. 'The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels; to render vengeance on them that know not God, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord,' 2 Thes. 1:7, 8. The portion of such will be everlasting destruction from his presence. They are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because they reject knowledge, Christ will reject them, Hosea 4:6. They are lost souls, whose eyes the God of this world hath blinded, 2 Cor. 4:4. Inner darkness is the direct way to utter darkness.

(3.) The hypocritical professor shall be excluded the presence of Christ. He that hath but the shadow of holiness, must expect a real hell. If thou bearest the name of Christ, and art not partaker of the divine nature, thy profession, as Uriah's letter to Joab, will but hasten thy execution: Job 13:16, 'He (i.e., God) also shall be my salvation; but an hypocrite shall not come before him.' God will be the godly upright soul's salvation, but not the hypocrite's. He shall not dwell with God, Ps. 5:4; no, not stand in his sight, Ps. 5:5; nay, not so much as come before him with any comfort. He may come before good men with acceptance, as the foolish virgins before the wise, who were ignorant of their hypocrisy, but he shall not come before the omniscient God. When those virgins came which wanted oil, the door was shut, Mat. 25; there was no entrance, no admission for them. They had not received God into their hearts, though he was

often in their lips, and he would not receive them into his house; the door was shut.

CHAPTER IX

An exhortation to fly from this wrath to come, with some helps thereunto

2. It may exhort us to take heed that this separation from Christ be not our portion. O reader, how much doth it concern thee, whatever thou lovest, to make sure of the presence of Christ in the other world! Believe it, though thou canst bear the loss of an estate, or friends, or relations, yea, and the partial absence of Christ in this world, yet the total loss of Christ in the other world will be an intolerable loss. They who live here cheerfully without him, cannot do so there. When thou shalt be banished from all thy possessions, and all thy relations, and all thy worldly comforts, then also to be banished from Christ, the Prince of life, and Lord of glory, and consolation of Israel, will be a woe with a witness.

Canst thou read and hear the misery of the wicked, in their total, eternal separation from Christ, and not tremble for fear it should be thy portion, lest thou shouldst be of the number of them that shall hear that dreadful voice, 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire'?

To this end, that thou mayest escape this woeful condition of the ungodly, obey these few directions.

1. Believe and bewail your enmity against Christ. He loves you, yet by nature thou hatest him, Prov. 8; Rom. 1:31, and 8:7. Indeed he may

say of thee, and all others in thy condition, 'They hated me without a cause.' But thou dost hate him, and thereby art wholly incapable of his presence: 'Can two walk together unless they be agreed?'

This enmity of thine against Christ, which discovers itself in thy daily rebellions against his laws, and opposition to his authority, must be felt and lamented. There is little hope of their recovery who are sick unto death, and insensible thereof: Mat. 9:12, 'They that be whole need not the physician, but they that are sick.' Thy first work must be to know this plague of thine own heart; and to know it, not notionally, as a physician, by reading of it, or beholding it in others; but experimentally, as the patient knoweth a disease by feeling it, complaining of it, mourning for it, and longing to be freed from it.

Consider with thyself how impossible it is for thee to delight in the presence of Christ, whom thou abhorrest, and to take pleasure in the company of any whom thy nature hath a reluctancy against.

2. Make Christ your friend through faith in his blood. There is no getting to Christ hereafter, but by coming to him here. Accept him now, and he will accept thee then. He will say to those that are now strangers to him, 'Depart from me, I never knew you.' If thou dost not know him, and him crucified, in this world, he will not know thee in the other world. Thou canst not rationally expect admission into his presence, if thou hast no acquaintance with his person. Strangers and enemies are kept out, when children, and those that are the friends of the master of the house, are taken in. It is by faith in his blood that thou canst be united to him, and made one with him; as the wife is united to the husband, and the members to the head: Eph. 5:27, 'That he might present it to himself a glorious church.' Eph. 1:23, 'Which is the body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.' Eph. 3:17, and being so made one with him, husband and wife, head and

members shall be together for ever: 'Where I am, there shall ye be also,' John 14:2, 3. The great ground of Christ's passion was, to bring those that believed to God, and that they might abide with him eternally.

3. Follow after holiness. The holy soul can only suit a holy Saviour, and therefore the holy soul can only enjoy the holy Saviour. Two cannot walk comfortably together, unless there be an agreement in their dispositions: 'Into the new Jerusalem can in no wise enter any thing that defileth, or is unclean,' Rev. 21:27.

Heaven is a holy hill, Ps. 15:1; an undefiled inheritance, 1 Peter 1:3; the holiest or most holy place, Heb. 9:8, 12; and therefore will admit of none but holy persons. Dogs must be without, when children shall be taken within doors.

CHAPTER X

The positive part of the sinner's misery, expressed by fire, and why

I come now to the second part of the punishment of the wicked, and that is *pæna sensus*, the positive part of their misery, or that anguish which God will inflict on their souls and bodies. Which punishment is set forth,

1. By its extremity.
2. Eternity.

I shall speak first to its extremity, fire: εἰς τὸ πῦρ. The Greek word πῦρ comes from the Hebrew *ur*, and so the Latin *uro*, to burn. From

the Greek πῦρ comes pyrausta, a fly that lives in the fire, and dies out of it. Fire is used to describe the pains of hell, because of the violent pain and extreme torture which it causeth. Whether it be a material fire, as Augustine and Bullinger think, or metaphorical, as Gregory and Calvin, i.e., a pain equivalent thereunto, nay, much more grievous, as others imagine; but this is certain, no racks or engines of pain or misery here below are sufficient to set forth those instruments of eternal death which God hath prepared for the wicked in the other world. The wrath of God, which is the very dregs of the cup that the damned shall drink, is called fire, Ps. 18:8; nay, God himself in this respect is called a consuming fire: Heb. 12:29, 'For our God is a consuming fire.'

The doctrine which I shall draw from this positive part of the wicked's punishment shall be this:

Doct. 2. That the wicked shall in the other world depart from Christ into fire: 'Depart from me into everlasting fire.' They shall not only be stripped of all good, 'Depart from me,' but also be filled with all evil, 'into everlasting fire.' Our Saviour, in Mat. 18:9, calls it hell-fire; and the Holy Ghost terms it 'the vengeance of the eternal fire,' Jude 7.

In the explication of this doctrine, I shall shew,

1. Why the positive punishment of the wicked is set out by fire.

2. Wherein it exceeds our fire.

1. For the former. The punishment of the damned resembleth fire,

- (1.) In regard of its intension, and the extreme pain and anguish it causeth. Fire is the most outrageous and tormenting of all the

elements. Nebuchadnezzar thought to fright and fear men to purpose with the threatening of a fiery furnace. The fire in the valley of Hinnom, wherein children were offered as a burnt-offering to the devil, was exquisitely tormenting. But who can tell the pains of hell? Those fires are but dark shadows and representations of this fire. What elementary or culinary fire is comparable to that fire? Phalaris's bull, Low-Country racks, foreign strapadoes, are nothing; not so much as flea-bites to the fire of hell.

The woeful effect of it speaks it terrible. It causeth weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth. The stoutest heart will then be forced to weep like a child for pain; the most resolute sturdy spirit will wail and moan for anguish, and all will bite their flesh, and gnash their teeth with envy. There Cain may cry out indeed, 'My punishment is greater than I can bear.' For alas! who can dwell in everlasting burnings?

The infinite wisdom that prepared it, speaks it intolerable; 'Prepared for the devil and his angels,' ἡτοιμασμένον; the word signifieth divinam destinationem, 1 Cor. 2:9. Heaven is prepared for the godly, Mat. 25:35; and they for heaven, Rom. 9:23; Col. 1:12. So wicked men are prepared for hell, Rom. 9:22; and hell for them. As if God had from eternity consulted and contrived the most exquisite way and means of afflicting the creature; as if his wrath had set his infinite wisdom and power on work to devise the fittest materials for the punishment of the wicked, and the most cutting, killing instruments of eternal death.

The company in this place of torment will render it the more miserable; the devil and his angels, those frightful fiends and bitter foes of mankind, shall be his eternal associates. That cursed crew which drew men to sin, and tempted them so diligently, shall be tormented with them, and a torment to them for ever. The word for

devil properly signifieth a calumniator or slanderer. He first slandered God to man, and then man to God; he is therefore called the accuser of his brethren, Rom. 12:11. Those evil angels have their names either from their natures, as spirits; or office, as angels; or dignity, as principalities and powers; or malice against God, as Satan, devil; or their fall and fruits, as unclean spirit, evil one, father of lies, murderer, deaf and dumb spirit. The devil is mentioned singularly, because there is one chief, the prince of devils, Mat. 12; and the rest under him; or because they are all one in counsel, as if but one in being. The chief devil hath many others under him, at his call and command. This fire is said to be prepared for the devil and his angels, because they are the greatest and chiefest of sinners, others are but their scholars. Now how hot is that hell, that fire which God from all eternity devised for the devils, his most malicious enemies! And how ill will they speed who have millions of such dreadful devils for their everlasting companions.

(2.) In regard of the universality of the pains it will cause. Fire hath all manner of torments in it, and afflicts the whole man. If any be troubled extremely with the gout, or the stone, or the colic, or the toothache, or any one racking distemper, how dolefully doth he cry out and complain! But if all manner of diseases should in extremity seize a man, and that in every part of him, how dreadfully would he weep and wail! The truth is, colic, stone, cancer, gout, toothache, pleurisy, St Anthony's fire, and all other, are included in this fire. It hath not only extremity, but also universality of torments; thick darkness for the eyes, hideous yelling for the ears, loathsome brimstone for the smell; and every sense molested and offended in the highest degree, every part tormented in flames.

CHAPTER XI

The difference between our fires and hell fires

But the great pain of the wicked will more fully appear, if we consider the difference between our fires on earth, and that in hell.

1. They differ in the cause of their kindling. Our fires are kindled with cold air, a puff of wind; thus the spark is blown up into a flame. 'But Tophet is prepared of old; for the king it is prepared; the pile therefore is fire and much wood: and the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it,' Isa. 30:33. Oh what a flame is that which is blown up by the breath of an almighty God. What a vast difference is there between the breath of man, or of a pair of bellows, and the breath of a God? This breath is like a stream of brimstone; and if the breath that kindleth the fire be like a stream, or rather a sea of brimstone, what is the fire itself? What a vast difference is there between the breath of a pair of bellows, and the fire kindled by them.

2. They differ in their nature. Our fires are by philosophers described to be a stream of sulphurous particles, or swarm of motes of brimstone, violently agitated, and forcibly breaking forth from those respective bodies to which they did formerly belong. And this is apparent, because when anybody is thoroughly burnt, the sulphurous parts are almost gone; and when those parts are gone what remains will burn no longer. But the fire of hell, whether it be material or metaphorical, is quite another thing. It is a deep impression of infinite wrath and fury on every member of the body, and faculty of the soul, And oh what a fearful thing is it to fall into the hands of the living God: 'For our God is a consuming fire,' Heb. 12:29. The wrath of God is sometimes compared to that of a lion

roaring after her prey, which tears, and rents, and kills, and slays, without the least pity; and to a bear robbed of her whelps, which claws and wounds, and destroys whatsoever comes near her; but, alas! the wrath of a God is infinitely more cutting, more killing. The mountains are moved, the rocks are rent in pieces, the stoutest oaks are rooted up, the foundations of the earth tremble, the great luminaries are darkened, the course of nature is overturned, when he is wroth. 'Thou, even thou art to be feared; for who may stand when thou art angry?'

If his wrath be kindled but a little, how woefully do his own children cry out! Job 6:4, 'The arrows of the Almighty are within me.' Job 13:24, 'Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and holdest me for thine enemy?' Ps. 88, 'Their spirits are drunk up, while they suffer his terrors, they are distracted.' What then will be the condition of them on whom he will pour out all his wrath? If a small degree of God's anger be so terrible, when it is mingled with love, what will a full cup of pure wrath be?

3. They differ in the ends of their creation. Our fires were created for our service and comfort; God made these for the use and benefit of man, to fence us against the cold, to melt and mould metals, and form them into several moulds, &c. But the fire of hell is created for the torment of men and devils; God makes it of such a nature as may best suit his end. For every wise agent fitteth his means to his end; and the more wise the agent is, the more proper means he findeth out for his end. Now when the only wise God, to whom angels themselves are fools, shall set his infinite wisdom a-work about the most proper means of racking and torturing the poor creature, surely it will be done to purpose. As when his love sets his wisdom a-work, to find out a way to comfort his children, what rivers of pleasures, weights of glory, crowns of life, fulness of joy doth he provide! So

when his wrath sets wisdom a-work to find out a way for the afflicting his enemies, what stinging adders, and gnawing worms, and chains of darkness, and lakes of brimstone doth he provide!

4. They differ in the fuel that feeds them. Our fires are maintained and preserved in burning by wood or coals, or somewhat that is combustible, and the fire must be suitable to the meanness and limitedness of the fuel; but the fire of hell is fed with the curse of a righteous law, and the wrath of an infinite God, and the lusts of the damned. Ah, what work will sin, backed with the curse and wrath of God, make in the souls and bodies of men. If David, beloved of God, under the weight of sin, and sense of divine displeasures, went mourning all the day, and crieth out so mournfully, 'Thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore. There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger; nor rest in my bones because of my sin. Mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me,' Ps. 38:2–4. Oh what will they suffer, and how will they roar and howl, whose sins, as a mountain of lead, shall press and oppress their consciences! all whose lusts shall gnaw their spirits, set home and close to their souls by the fury and malediction of God.

5. They differ in this, that our fires are accompanied with light; but the fire of hell, though it hath heat to torment, hath no light to comfort. It is a state of darkness, of utter darkness, Mat. 25; of blackness of darkness, Jude 13. They have only light enough to see themselves endlessly and easelessly wretched and miserable. Darkness is dreadful, but what darkness like utter darkness, or blackness of darkness? The Egyptians did not move out of their places in the time of their darkness; but what will men do in the dark, in the midst of ravenous wolves, and roaring lions, and stinging adders, and fiery serpents, and frightful devils.

6. They differ in their operations.

(1.) Our fires work only on the body, they cannot pierce the soul; but hell-fire pierceth the soul. Spirits burn in it as well as bodies: 'Go into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.' If it seize on devils, it will also on the souls of men. The spirit whose senses are most acute, will feel the greatest pain in the unquenchable fire.

(2.) Our fires destroy and consume their fuel; they turn their wood and coals into dust and ashes; the bodies of men are by them turned into ashes, and hereby the pain ceaseth with the life of the creature. But the fire of hell will never consume, though it be ever consuming; it will always be destroying, but never destroy the sinner. The damned will be always dying, but never die. The almighty hand of God will preserve them, to undergo that wrath that is intolerable, and those flames that are unquenchable.

CHAPTER XII

The fulness of wicked men's misery, in that it is positive and privative, with some cautions against it

Use. Learn hence the full misery of the wicked in the other world. They shall not only be deprived of all good, in their banishment from the presence of God? but also be afflicted with all evil, in their suffering the pains of hell-fire. The godly in the other world shall be perfectly blessed, in their freedom from all penal and all moral evil, and their fruition of all that is truly good, for they shall ever be with the Lord, who is an universal good. So the wicked in the world to come shall be perfectly cursed in the absence of whatever is

comfortable, and in the presence of whatsoever is dreadful, and may render them miserable; snares, fire, brimstone, a horrible tempest shall be rained on them as their portion. Woeful are the fruits of sin oftentimes in this world. It keeps good from men here, strips them of their estates, relations, liberties, limbs, health, names; nay of the gospel, ordinances, and seasons of grace, and brings on them much evil here, aches, pains, diseases in their bodies, horrors and terrors in their souls. But these are nothing to the effects of sin in the other world. Here in the midst of judgment, mercy is remembered; there is no state on earth of mere or pure wrath; all good things are not removed, nor all evil things inflicted on any. In the worst estate there is life, and that clothed with some favours; the pained have some intermission, or at least remission of their pains. In the lowest estate there is hope of better, and that is no small cordial to a poor creature; there is no condition so bad, but might have been worse, both for its intension and duration. But now in the other world the wicked have judgment without a mite of mercy, and misery without any ease, either in regard of degree or intermission; all good banished from them, and all evil inflicted on them.

Exhort. If the wicked shall be thus punished with the loss of Christ and the pains of hell-fire, it exhorts us to flee from the wrath to come. Ah, who would fry one hour in flames for a kingdom! How dreadful is the hearing of fire, fire, in the night! How doth the very sound of it fright men and women! Ah, then, what will the feeling of it be in utter darkness, in that black long night of eternity! Sinner, when thou art tempted to sin, consider whether the satisfaction of thy lust will make thee amends for, and balance the loss of, God, and thy suffering the flames of hell.

Alas! how little is the pleasure of sin, but how terrible, how intolerable, is the pain of it! What wise man would be racked a day

for a moment's delight? much less suffer the wrath of an infinite God for the dreggy pleasures of a beast. Dost thou think thou canst bear it? art thou able to endure it? canst thou suffer the pain of our fire? if not, how wilt thou endure the pain of that fire which the breath of a God kindleth and keepeth burning—which tortures the soul as well as the body, and which was prepared of God for the afflicting and punishing his creatures? O friend, fly to Christ if thou wouldst flee from the wrath to come, 1 Thes. 1:10. He is the only screen between thee and the fire of hell. Fly from sin if thou wouldst fly from hell-fire. Fly the cause, and thou fliest the effect. Take away sin, and you take away hell. Whatsoever thou sowest now, thou shalt reap hereafter, Gal. 6:7. Sow lust, and reap the lake that burns with fire and brimstone for ever. Sow holiness, and reap happiness: 'They who sow to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but they who sow to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting,' Gal. 6:8.

CHAPTER XIII

The eternity of the sinner's misery in the other world, with the grand reason of it

I come now to the eternity of the sinner's punishment in that word everlasting.

Τὸ αἰώνιον. The word is referred to God, and then is used for that which is eternal, a parte ante, or that never had a beginning. Sometimes it is referred to the rational creature, and then signifieth an eternity, a parte post, or that which never hath an end. The word comes from αἰών, an age, because what is everlasting endureth through all ages and generations, and infinitely beyond them.

The doctrine which I shall draw from this property of ungodly men's punishment shall be this:

Doct. 3. That the punishment of the wicked in the other world will be everlasting. It will not only be extreme, in regard of its intension, but also eternal, in regard of its duration. Their privative punishment will be eternal: 'They shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord,' 2 Thes. 1:7, 8; and so will their positive punishment be, Jude 7. Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them, are set forth suffering the vengeance of the eternal fire. And Christ tells us, 'There the worm never dieth, and the fire never goeth out,' Mat. 18; and again it is called 'the lake that burns with fire and brimstone for ever.'

It were no small ease to the damned, if they had hopes of any end of their misery; though after as many millions of millions of years as have been moments since the creation, and as are creatures small and great in both worlds; but it may not be, it cannot be; after all these years they are not to remain one moment the less in hell.

I shall only give the reasons of it, and proceed to the use.

There are several reasons given why the sinner's temporal fault should have an eternal punishment.

1. Some tell us, he refused eternal life, and therefore it is but reason he should be punished with eternal death. They had eternal pains and eternal pleasures set before them, and they chose eternal pains. In choosing the way, they chose the end; they chose the way of the flesh, the way of their own hearts, and so consequentially they chose hell, to which that way led. Now if a man hath but his own choice, whom can he blame but himself? If a man have what he desireth and loveth, if it be ill with him, he must thank himself: 'He that sinneth

against me, wrongeth his own soul; all that hate me love death,' Prov. 8:36; Jer. 4:17, 18.

2. Others tell us that if they should live here for ever, they would sin for ever; therefore God, taking the will for the deed, punisheth them for ever. They die eternally for sin, who would have lived eternally in sin. *Vellet sine fine vivere, ut posset sine fine peccare*, (Greg.): Man would live here for ever if he had his will, that he might sin for ever. Scotus and Aquinas tell us, *Peccant in æterno suo, et puniuntur in æterno Dei*: They sin in their eternity, and God punisheth them in his eternity. If God would give them an eternal abode on earth, they would employ it in disobeying and dishonouring him eternally; and because they would sin for ever, therefore they shall suffer for ever. Jer. 8:5, 'The children of Israel are slidden back with a perpetual backsliding; they hold fast deceit, and refuse to return.' How loath are they to forsake their lusts. 1. They hold them fast: 'As a fountain sendeth forth water, so doth the sinner send forth wickedness,' Jer. 6:7. Now a fountain sendeth forth water freely without constraint, and constantly without cessation. What anything doth naturally, it doth easily and unweariedly. The sun shines naturally, and he shines without any pains or tiresomeness; the fountain sends forth water naturally, and doth it with ease and constancy. So the sinner sins naturally, and doth it delightfully and unweariedly. When the body and its members, the instruments of sin, are tired and worn out, and unable to execute the lusts of the flesh, the body of sin is still fresh and vigorous in plotting and conspiring evil, and in embracing and cherishing evil motions; whence it appears that man sinning naturally would, if he lived, sin eternally, and then, say they, he is tormented for ever. But,

3. The principal reason of the eternity of the sinner's misery, and indeed the only reason in my judgment, with due respect to others, is

the infinite demerit of sin, as committed against an infinite majesty. Because the sinner is not capable of bearing a punishment infinite in intension, therefore he must have it infinite in duration. I doubt not but if the sinner were able to bear the infinite stroke of divine justice, notwithstanding his will to sin for ever, and his choice of eternal death, and all the other reasons that are usually brought for the eternity of their pains, he should not stay long in that prison of hell, but quickly be released. But because a poor finite creature hath not a back strong enough to bear an infinite blow, therefore he must be always suffering.

The notoriety and malignity of sin proceeds from the dignity of the person against whom it is committed, as I have largely shewn elsewhere. Because the authority of an infinite God is despised, the law of an infinite God disobeyed, the love of an infinite God undervalued, and the image of an infinite God defaced by sin, therefore there is an infinite demerit in sin: and because man cannot give satisfaction infinite in value, therefore he must give that satisfaction which is infinite in time, or rather in its eternity, Ps. 49:7, 8, and 51:4; Job 7:20. And considering that God was resolved to have full satisfaction for sin, I conceive Christ himself could not have satisfied for the sins of any, if he could not have offered a sacrifice of infinite merit to answer the infinite demerit of sin. But herein the wisdom and goodness of God did superabound, in providing an antidote stronger than the poison; for whereas sin is infinite, only objectivè, as committed against an infinite God; the sacrifice of Christ is infinite, both objectivè and subjectivè, as offered up to an infinite Majesty, and offered by one that was an infinite Majesty; whose person being infinite, rendered his sacrifice of such boundless value and merit.

CHAPTER XIV

How little cause to envy sinners, and how careful we should be to avoid their eternal misery

Use. 1. We may learn hence what little cause any have to envy sinners their fat and sweet in this world. Alas! for their poor short pleasures of sin, they must have extreme and eternal torments. Who would grudge them their portion, or eat of their dainties, or buy their bargains, that is not mad, and quite bereft of his wits: Prov. 23:17, 18, 'My son, envy not sinners; for surely there is an end;' ay, and a sad end for poor sinners. An end, of woe, and wrath, and death, and misery, without any end or ease. Ah, what sad objects are they of pity who laugh a minute, and must weep for ever! who for a little giggling mirth, and poor drossy pleasures, must fry eternally in hell flames among devils and damned spirits.

Exhort. Reader, believe and consider this misery of the wicked, and be restless till thou art secured against it. Ponder it well, to be among devils, those stinging serpents, roaring lions, frightful monsters, would make thy hair stand on end, and thy heart to ache; but to be amongst them in extremity of torments, in fire, in fire kindled by the infinite wrath of God, and in universality of torments; to have all kinds of judgments and plagues inflicted on thee, ay, and on every part of thy body, and all the powers of thy soul; and to suffer all this for ever, ever, ever! Canst thou bear the company of lions, and bears, and wolves, and adders, and serpents, and the deformed monsters here for ever? How then wilt thou bear the company of devils, hideous, monstrous, frightful hell-hounds, for ever? Thou canst not bear the pain of our fire for one day, no, not for one quarter of an

hour, how then wilt thou bear the pain of hell-fire for ever? 'Ah, who can dwell in everlasting burnings?' who can endure abiding flames? The patient, in a violent fit of the stone, or colic, or gout, supports himself with this cordial, This will not last long. The woman in labour, in the extremity of her pains, hath this to revive her, All this, through the kindness of God, will soon be over. The primitive Christians comforted themselves under their dreadful sufferings from their persecutors with this, Our light afflictions are but for a moment; they are black clouds, but will soon pass over, and vanish away. But, reader, if once thou art turned into hell, into those unconceivable, intolerable flames, amongst those frightful devils, thou canst have nothing to bear up thy spirit, not the least hope of any cessation, or intermission, or remission of thy pains. Ah, how will despair, like a dagger, stab thee to the heart! What a cutting corrosive will it be to think, I am here amongst horrid, hideous, hellish devils, who have been my tempters, and are now my tormentors, banished the blissful presence of God and Jesus Christ, suffering those torments, and pains, and misery, to which all the fires and racks on earth are but as the raising of skin to Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace. Ah, what tongue can tell what this poor body suffereth in every part of it! Ah, what understanding can apprehend the anguish and remorse of this soul, its cutting reflections on what it hath been and done, and its killing prevision of what it must undergo, and I must endure all this for ever! Though my pains are so extreme in their intension, yet if they were short in their duration, I had some ground of comfort; nay, if they were to last no more millions of years than there are stars in heaven, and drops of water in the ocean, I should have some crevice of light, some hope to bear up my heart; but alas, alas! I am here in the midst of this cursed crew, under these extreme ineffable pains, and must be here for ever. The wrath upon me is abiding wrath, John 3:24. It is wrath to come, and ever will be wrath to come. After ages, and generations, and millions

of them, ay, and millions of millions of them, my pain would not be a moment the nearer a period. My night of darkness and horror will be a long night indeed; the clock will never strike, the time will never pass, the morn will never dawn, and the sun will never rise. Oh what shall I do? thousands, and thousands of thousands, millions, and millions of millions of millions, signify not a moment to my wretched and cursed eternity. Ah such company, such misery, and that for ever, ever, ever! Reader, doth not thy soul tremble to think of this, which will be the portion, probably, of most in the Christian world; and wilt thou give thyself a moment's rest, in a state liable and obnoxious to it? For the sake of thy precious soul, if thou hast any true self-love, break off thy sins by repentance, and thine iniquities by accepting of thy Redeemer. Hell hath not yet shut its mouth upon thee, nor is the gate of mercy yet shut against thee. Oh bless the divine patience, and know the things that concern thine own peace.

Thy life is short and uncertain; when once death seizeth thee, thou art immediately fixed, there can be no change, no alteration of thy state. Tears, prayers, groans, sighs, sobs, will work nothing, prevail nothing with the judge to alter his sentence, or thy condition. 'Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.' Therefore, O sinner, 'agree with thine adversary quickly, while thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing,' Mat. 5:25, 26. But having written largely of this in another treatise, and intending to speak of it here only by way of preface to what I mainly intend, and now come to discourse of, and that is the nature, danger, cause, and curse of sins of omission, in the reasons of this severe sentence, I shall speak no more thereof, but proceed to the third general part of the text, and that is the reason.

CHAPTER XV

The reason of Christ's severe sentence, and a question resolved, whether the righteous, by their acts of charity, do not deserve heaven, as well as the wicked, by their omission thereof, deserve hell

Thirdly, The reason of Christ's severe sentence against them: ver. 42, 43, 'For I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink. I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick and in prison, and ye visited me not.'

The words have nothing of difficulty in them, and therefore I shall not waste time in the explication of them. Every one knows what it is not to give meat to the hungry, or drink to the thirsty, or raiment to the naked, &c. That it is the omission of a duty, viz., charity, which God commands, and also that believers are the members of Christ, Eph. 1:23, Christ mystical, 1 Cor. 12:12; and therefore what injuries are done to them are done to Christ, Acts 9. Only it may be needful to speak to these two particulars before I raise the doctrine.

1. Whether there be not the like ground of the salvation of the blessed that there is of the damnation of the wicked; namely, the merit of their works. Both seem to speak it: 'Come, ye blessed,' &c.; 'For I was hungry, and ye gave me meat.' Again, 'Go, ye cursed,' &c.; 'For I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat,' &c.

2. Why Christ will try men at the great day by the performance or neglect of this duty of charity, and not rather by their performance or

neglect of prayer, hearing, watchfulness, or some other duty, or by their humility, heavenly-mindedness, patience, temperance, &c.

In answer to the first, though Bellarmine affirms there is the same reason in each, and Cornel. A Lapide, with the rest of the papists, concur therein, yet if they were not wilfully blind, they might see enough in the text to disprove them.

1. In that Christ calls to the blessed to inherit the kingdom. κληρονομήσατε τὴν βασιλείαν, which word signifieth hæreditatis jure possidere, to enjoy a thing by right of inheritance, from parents and ancestors, and not by right of purchase, or deserving; therefore heaven is often called κληρονομία, an inheritance, Col. 1:12; Eph. 1:14; 1 Pet. 1:3. So the type of it, the land of Canaan, is often called by the LXX, probably from the division or distribution of the land by lot to them, Josh. 14:2, which to a word is the import of the word. Now, they who enjoy an estate by right of sonship do not possess it by merit. What can a child, who may inherit his deceased father's estate in his childhood or infancy, do to deserve that estate?

2. In that Christ tells them that this kingdom was prepared for them before the foundation of the world. Now, what could they do before they had a being to deserve this inheritance? And the apostle is positive that all is to be referred to the purpose of God, not to the piety of any men. 'For,' saith he, 'the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, (mark) not of works, but of him that calleth; it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger,' Rom. 9:11, 12; Eph. 1:4; Rev. 13:8.

If it be objected, that God foresaw that they would improve their free-will unto the performance of such good works, whereby they

would deserve heaven, and therefore chose them to heaven, which the papists stand much upon, I answer,

1. The foresight of their faith and good works cannot be the cause of their election, because their election is by God himself declared to be the cause of their faith and good works. If their faith and obedience be the effect of election, they cannot be the cause of it; but so they are: John 6:37, 'All that the Father hath given me shall come to me,' i.e., believe on me. Again, 'As many as were ordained to eternal life believed,' Acts 13:48; so for good works, John 15:13; Eph. 1:4; Rom. 8:30.

2. Then man's will must be the ground of God's actions, not his own will. The Scripture tells us that God 'worketh all things after the counsel of his own will,' Eph. 1:11. But, say the papists, in election, God worketh according to the improvement of man's will.

3. Then the accomplishment of God's decree depends upon the mutable and uncertain will of man, so that there is a possibility that God may be disappointed of his choice, and his elect of that happiness to which they are chosen, if both depend on a changeable creature. But the word of God speaks the contrary, that God cannot be frustrated of his choice: Ps. 33:11, 'The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations.' His decrees are sure, 2 Tim. 2:19, though his sentence may be altered, Jer. 18:7–10. Nor can the elect be disappointed: Mat. 24:24, 'If it were possible, they would deceive the very elect.' Here the impossibility of their seduction is grounded on the stability of their election.

4. Then there can be no election of infants to everlasting life; I mean, of such as God foreseeth or ordaineth to die in their infancy, because God cannot foresee that these will improve the liberty of their wills

unto faith and repentance. That infants may be saved is clear: Mat. 19:14, 'Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.' Matthew calls them *παιδιά*, Luke, *βρέφη*; the first word signifieth puerulus, a little child,—one, say the critics, that is in the first seven years of his age; but the latter, Luke 18:15, signifieth infants newly born, or sucking babes. Now, if of such is the kingdom of heaven, then they may be saved. But none are saved save such as are elected; therefore without any foresight of faith or good works, rational creatures may be elected, Rom. 8:30, and 11:7.

5. If foresight of men's works be the cause of their election, then man hath whereof to glory. He is then the cause of his own salvation. Election is the original of all; a spring that runneth under ground for a time, first bubbleth up and discovers itself in effectual calling, so glideth along in a life of faith and holiness, and at last emptieth itself in the ocean of peace, and joy, and happiness; so that if man be the cause of his election, then he may thank himself for his salvation. John is no more beholden to God than Judas, for it is the improvement of the freedom of his will which brings him to heaven. God did as much for Judas, say they, as for John. But how contrary is this to the word of truth: Rom. 4:2, 'But if Abraham were justified by works, he had whereof to glory.' The Scripture speaks in another dialect: 'By grace ye are saved through faith; not of works, lest any man should boast,' Eph. 2:8, 9. The knife with which Adam cut his own throat, and wherewith he murdered his posterity, was pride; he would hold of himself, and not of God. The wise and gracious God, in the way he hath taken for our recovery, is pleased to lay this knife as far as may be out of our way, lest we be ruined by it a second time. Though this pride, the popish doctrine of merits, and foresight of good works maintains; but God tells us, man is nothing, and God all in all, 'that no flesh might glory in his presence,' 1 Cor. 1:27–29.

6. The Holy Ghost gives us the true ground or motive of election, far differing from this of the papists, and that is the will and pleasure of God: 'Having predestinated us according to the good pleasure of his will,' Eph. 1:5; 'Being predestinated according to the purpose of him,' ver. 11.

Rom. 9:18, 'Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.'

Mat. 11:26, 'Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight.'

2 Tim. 1:9, 'Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our work, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ before the world began.' Again, the particle for, enim, γὰρ, is counted causal, not that always it noteth the cause, but sometimes a reason or argument, whether taken from the cause or effect, Mat. 1:18, and 15:14; 2 Tim. 2:7. Besides, this is sufficient for parity of reason, or the resemblance, that as some go by the way of good works to heaven, so others by the way of evil works to hell. Good works are not ποιητικὰ, *ceu causa salutis*, sed σημαντικὰ, *respectu fidei et finis ejus vitæ æternæ*, (Glass. ;) not the cause of reigning, but the way to the kingdom. Once more, let the papists shew the same proportion between a few imperfect defective good works, which men are enabled to do by the help of God, and the unconceivable eternal joys and glory of heaven, that is between the evil works of men and the endless pains of hell, and then let them plead their merits. They may, if they please, observe that the saints themselves are so far from pleading their merits, or boasting their deserts, that they hardly remember that they ever did those works which Christ proclaims to their praise, and rewards through his own blood with a kingdom: 'Lord, when saw we thee hungry or thirsty?' &c. Oh, what a vast difference is there

between an upright humble Christian, who acknowledged himself less than the least of all God's mercies, and a proud papist, that dares say, *Coelum gratis non accipiam!*

CHAPTER XVI

Why Christ will try men at the great day by acts of charity

The second question to be discussed before I proceed to the doctrine is, Why Christ trieth men at that day by the neglect or performance of charity, and not of some other duty, as hearing, praying, watching? &c., or by their patience, humility, temperance, or heavenly-mindedness? &c. To this I answer:

These works of charity are by a synecdoche put for new obedience, and all the good works of a Christian's life. Though Christ mention those as the test of men at that day, yet he doth not hereby exclude others. The Scripture abundantly proveth that other graces and duties shall be rewarded at that day, 1 Pet. 1:6, 7; Mat. 10:18; Heb. 6:10, &c., and that men shall be condemned for other sins beside the neglect of charity. The want of the wedding-garment, Mat. 22:12, 13; unprofitableness in the improvement of talents, Mat. 25:30. We have a bed-roll of other sins condemning, 1 Cor. 6:9, 10; Rev. 21:8; indeed every sin, any sin that men have lived in and loved, who have died impenitent, will be found damnable at that day.

It cannot rationally be supposed that the performance or neglect of those outward acts of charity should be the general test, I mean of all; for how then shall those that die in their infancy and childhood, or such as are extremely poor, be tried, who are rendered wholly

incapable of feeding the hungry, or clothing the naked. Neither do I judge it shall be the sole test, for it is possible for a man in those outward acts to be bountiful to men, who hath no regard or fear of God in him. The apostle supposeth a man may give all his goods to the poor, and yet be void of true love to the poor, 1 Cor. 13:3. It is unquestionable that the worship of the blessed God is much more excellent than our kindness to the children of men, as Calvin well observeth on the text; yet Christ, who knoweth the hearts of all men, and from what principles they act, will mention the saints' acts of charity at that day, and reward them accordingly, and will mention the sinner's omission of charity at that day, and condemn him for it.

1. Because acts of charity are more obvious and apparent to the world. Though the Christian usually is close therein, and will not let his left hand know what his right hand doth, yet charity, like musk, will discover itself; the objects thereof will publish their benefactors; and he himself thinks it needful sometimes to be open and public in his liberality, though not for self-ostentation, yet for others' imitation. Luther tells us that Christ will try men this way, because the world shall justify his sentence both of reward and punishment. If a man be charitable, all his neighbours take notice of it, yea, commonly love him for it; the vilest of them will commend him, though by his holy conversation he condemns them. I suppose this is the good man of whom the apostle speaks, when he tells us, that for such a one a man will even dare to die, Rom. 5. Therefore when Christ shall acknowledge the charity of his people, and then reward them with himself, the wicked neighbours of these men will confess the truth thereof, and their consciences will force them to consent thereto. Again, there is hardly a muckworm, whose motto is to have and to hold, to heap and to hoard up, who will as soon part with his blood as anything considerable to the poor, but all his neighbours, good and bad, observe him, speak of him, and generally condemn

him for his earthly-mindedness. So that when Christ, at the great day, shall accuse him, they will be forced to attest the truth of that accusation, and when Christ at that day shall condemn him, they cannot but agree to the sentence: Ps. 52:6, 7, 'The righteous also shall see, and fear, and shall laugh at him: Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength; but trusted in the abundance of his riches, and strengthened himself in his wickedness.'

2. Because these acts of charity are signs of faith and love, to which graces heaven is promised, James 1:12, and 2:5; John 3:16, 17, 36. Christ, who knoweth the heart, understandeth from what inward root our outward fruit springeth; and therefore faith and love, which are the fountain of true charity, James 2:15–17, being inward and secret, he mentions what is more open and known as a sign and testimony of that faith in him, and love to him, which are invisible and unknown to the world. Faith is a grace seated in the heart: 'With the heart man believeth unto righteousness;' where by heart, I suppose, is understood the understanding and will; for faith, in habitu, is in each; and in exercitio, an act of both. And the heart is called a hidden man, 1 Pet. 3; but it discovers itself to the believer by love. For when once the soul applieth Christ for pardon, and begins to hope for those great and good things which Christ hath purchased for him and promised to him, this faith kindleth a holy flame of love in the affections to Christ, and hereby the soul understands that he is a true believer beloved of God; for our love is but the reverberation of God's love back again to himself, 1 John 4:19. And then faith discovers itself to others by these fruits and effects of love to God, i.e., feeding the hungry and clothing the naked. St Paul tells us that faith works by love, as its tool or instrument, Gal. 5:6. Love to God produceth love to his saints, and love to the saints will draw out the hand, and heart, and purse, to relieve them in their wants, 1 John 3:17. Love is costly and expensive, thinks nothing too much or too

good for its beloved. Mary's box of ointment is very precious, but not too precious for her Lord. Life is worth all the world, yet laid down for a Christian at the command of love, 1 John 3:16, 'Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us.'

3. Because practical godliness, of which charity is a part, will be that by which men shall be tried at the great day. Our Lord Jesus doth hereby declare, that it is not the profession, but the practice of religion that will be inquired into by the judge of quick and dead. It is not saying, Be thou fed, and be thou clothed, without giving wherewith to be fed and clothed; but it is feeding the hungry and clothing the naked that shall be rewarded. Good words may please ourselves, but good works only please God, and profit our own souls: 'Not every one that saith, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven.' It is the doing, not the talking Christian that hath the promise of heaven, Mat. 7. It is the practical, not the verbal Christian that hath a right to heaven, through the precious blood of Christ, and the gracious promise of God: Rev. 22:14, 'Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.' It is the real, not the nominal Christian, that is prepared for heaven. None are fit to do the will of God in heaven, but those who have been accustomed to do the will of God on earth. There is a making meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, Col. 1:12. A young man by the school is made meet for the university, and a Christian by practical holiness is fitted for eternal happiness.

Our Redeemer would hereby declare, that all shows and shadows of godliness, all gaudy professions and curious flourishes of religion, if void of good works, though, as glow-worms, they shine somewhat in the dark night of this world, yet in the long day of eternity they will

all vanish and disappear. God will not then examine who hath been the greatest talker of his will, but the greatest walker in his way; nor who hath been the best speaker, but who hath been the best doer: 'For whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work; this man shall be blessed in his deed,' James 1:25. Hearing the word, without doing the work it commands, brings no blessing. The life and substance of religion consists in practising what is good, and not in praising what is good. It consists in Scripture duties, not in Scripture phrases.

4. Because Christ would hereby publish to the world the great respect he hath for charity; therefore he tells us he will take special notice of his saints' charity at that day. Charity, whether in relieving the oppressed, or comforting the sorrowful, or counselling the doubtful, or supporting the feeble, or feeding the hungry, or visiting the sick, or clothing the naked, is highly esteemed of Christ. To what duty hath he annexed more or larger promises? Mat. 5:7; Ps. 18:25; Eccles. 11:1, 2; Ps. 46:1, and 112:1; Isa. 58:12. He speaks of it as if very much of religion did consist in it, and almost all of it: 'Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is, to visit the fatherless and the afflicted,' James 1:27. He slights our most severe duties, those which are most irksome to the flesh, if this be wanting, Ps. 58:7–10. He limits his own mercy to the merciful, 2 Sam. 22:25; James 2:13. He is himself a merciful high priest, Heb. 5. He had compassion on the ignorant, and those that were out of the way, Heb. 5:2; on those that had nothing to eat, Mat. 15:32; on those that were scattered as sheep without a shepherd, Mat. 9:36. Therefore he cannot but value exceedingly, and love tenderly, those that are like him. That which lieth so near his heart, must needs be inquired after, as much, if not more, than anything else; and there is scarce anything that speaks our respect of persons or things more than our inquiry after them.

Joseph loved his father Jacob dearly, I suppose far above all his kindred, and therefore he first inquires after him: 'Is your father well, the old man of whom ye spake?' Gen. 43:27. David's heart was set on Absalom, therefore, when the messenger returned from the battle, he doth in the first place, and in a special manner, inquire after him: 'Is the young man Absalom safe?' 2 Sam. 18. Thus Christ, being so infinitely taken with charity, cannot but make a great inquiry after it at the great day. It is fruit that will then abound to the saints' account, Phil. 4:17; and such seed, that they who sow it liberally shall reap it liberally, 2 Cor. 9:6.

CHAPTER XVII

Three particulars about the text

I come now somewhat closer to the reason of the sentence: 'For I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat,' &c. Here we must understand,

Obs. 1. That the omission of inward charity is included in this of outward, and will be as dangerous, if not more, at the great day. The subject of it, the soul, is much more noble than the body; therefore to suffer a soul to perish through our neglect of giving it spiritual alms is a greater sin than to suffer the outward man to perish for want of bodily alms. Again, the end of spiritual alms is higher than of bodily—the eternal salvation of the soul: 1 Pet. 1:9, 'Receiving the end of your faith, the eternal salvation of your souls.' Both sorts of charity are comprehended into these two verses:

Visito, poto, cibo redimo, tego, colligo, condo;

Consule, castiga, solare, remitte, fer, ora.

Obs. 2. That other works beside works of charity, and other omissions beside the omission of this duty, will be mentioned at that day, and men shall be judged according to them. Indeed all our works will be then accounted for. But you will say, What time will this take up? I answer, It seems probable that the day of judgment may last longer than most imagine. The Holy Ghost tells us that 'God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil,' Eccles. 12:14. If every work, then more than acts of charity; and if every work good or bad, open or secret, then the day of judgment must be a long day. The apostle speaks the same as to the matter of judgment with the wise man: 'We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ,' 2 Cor. 5:10.

There are two of our eminent English divines now with God, who have left their judgment herein upon record. One tells us: I humbly conceive that the day of judgment shall not be passed over in an instant, but shall be of long continuance. For if Christ should judge only as God, he could despatch it in an instant; but his judging us men will be after the manner of men, that the creature may understand, admire, and approve what is done. The other saith: It must take up some large quantity of time to manifest all the secret sins of men; and therefore it may be made evident, both from Scripture and reason, that this day of Christ's kingly office, in judging the world, shall last happily longer than the day of Christ's private administration now in governing the world.²

Augustine tells us, *Per quot dies hoc iudicium extendatur incertum est, Scripturarum more diem poni solere pro tempore nemo nescit.*

Obs. 3. Christ doth not say, Ye took my meat from me, or wronged me of my raiment, or persecuted me, and cast me into prison; but, 'I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat; naked, and ye clothed me not;

in prison, and ye visited me not.' He doth not say, I was hungry, and naked, and sick, and instead of relieving ye derided me, and by your taunts and jeers added affliction to the afflicted; or, Ye despised and condemned me, as they, James 2:6; but, 'I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat,' &c. It was a bare omission of a necessary duty, for which they are sentenced to hell. It is not robbing, but not relieving; not oppressing them with violence, but not supplying their necessities, which Christ here condemneth them for.

These words, considered thus relatively as the reason of Christ's severe sentence, will afford us this doctrine which I chiefly intend.

CHAPTER XVIII

That sins of omission are dangerous and damnable

Doct. That sins of omission are dangerous and damnable, or Christ will sentence men at the great day to eternal punishment of loss and sense for not feeding the hungry and clothing the naked. Observe how naturally the doctrine floweth from the text: 'Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat; thirsty, and ye gave me no drink,' &c. The sin mentioned is a bare omission, and the sentence clearly speaks the punishment; hence I gather that sins of omission are damnable. Christ will sentence men to hell for them. Saul's not slaying Agag (an omission) lost him the kingdom, 1 Sam. 15:20, 26. The Moabites and Ammonites were excluded the sanctuary of God (a high and special privilege) to the tenth generation for an omission, for not meeting Israel with bread and water in the wilderness, Deut. 33:4.

But it is as clear these sins bring eternal as well as temporal pains and punishment. The slothful servant is sentenced, and sent into utter darkness, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth, for a bare omission, for not improving his talent, Mat. 25:24–31. The servant did not waste his talent by riotousness, as the prodigal did—for he tells his lord, ver. 25, 'Lo, here is thine'—only omit to improve it through idleness. But he who wanted hands to work, had fetters provided for hands and feet; and he who would not work by the light, is rewarded with utter darkness.

Again, we have a clear and full proof of the doctrine in Mat. 3:10, 'And now also the axe is laid to the root of the trees: therefore every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire.' In the verse we have three parts considerable:

1. The sin, and that is a bare omission, the not bringing forth good fruit. Our Saviour speaks the same in Mat. 7:19. He doth not say, Every tree that bringeth forth evil fruit is hewn down; that bringeth forth drunkenness, or robbery, or uncleanness, or unsavoury communication, &c., is cast into the fire; but 'every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit.' The sin is only a neglect of positive holiness.

2. The severity of the punishment; 'is hewn down, and cast into the fire.' The hewing down is the fitting and preparing the sinner for the fire, as the tree cut down is prepared for burning. This is done by their provoking God to leave them to impenitency, under the ministry of the word. The word is compared to a sword, Eph. 6:17; a two-edged sword, Rev. 1:16. And it will cut, and hack, and hew to purpose: Hosea 6:5, 'God heweth them by his prophets, and slays them by the word of his mouth.' It cuts to the heart, Acts 2:37, and 5:33, and hath dreadful effects on them: Isa. 6:9, 10, 'And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; see ye

indeed, but perceive not. Make the hearts of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and convert, and be healed.'

And this hewing them down is also by death. The axe of death fells the tree for the fire of hell. The rotten tree, or the barren tree, is not good for fruit, therefore for the fire.

He is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Abscission is the way to perdition, to eternal burning. This is the catastrophe of the barren tree's tragedy.

3. The certainty of it. Both Christ and the Baptist speak of the punishment in the present tense, not the future: 'Is hewn down, and cast into the fire;' not, shall be hewn down, &c. The fruitless person shall as certainly be in hell as if he were there already; therefore promises and threatenings, though future, are delivered to us as present. As, 'To us a Son is born,' Isa. 9:6, and 21:9, 'Babylon is fallen.'

4. The universality of the persons: 'Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit.' Every man, whatever his profession may be, or his hopes are, or his privileges have been, if he bring not forth good fruit, he is hewn down, and cast into the fire. The doctrine being thus proved by Scripture, I shall proceed to the explication of it in several particulars.

(1.) I shall speak to the nature of them, and shew what sins of omission are.

(2.) To the danger of them.

(3.) To the reasons why they are so damnable.

CHAPTER XIX

The nature of sins of omission in general

First, Concerning the first, i.e., the nature of them; I shall speak to one more generally, and two more particularly.

1. By the several distinctions of these sins.
2. By their agreement with, and difference from, sins of commission.

(1.) More generally, a sin of omission is a neglect of some duty commanded us in the word of God.

In every command there is a precept and a prohibition: a precept enjoining, and a prohibition forbidding; a precept enjoining some duty, and a prohibition forbidding the contrary. The neglect of doing what the precept enjoins is a sin of omission, and the doing what the precept forbids is a sin of commission.

The truth is, in every commission there is an omission, as in every deadly disease somewhat of a fever; for in every commission, as in drunkenness, or oppression, or uncleanness, there is a neglect or omission of the duty commanded, as temperance, charity, and chastity. But those we most properly call sins of omission, which are extrinsic from sins of commission, as not praying, not reading the word, not believing, not feeding the hungry, &c. But to speak strictly, there is no sin but sins of omission; for all sin consists in privation of due rectitude or deficiency, and coming short of the rule. Though the commands are generally delivered by way of negation, partly because

of the proneness of men to commit those sins that are forbidden, and God would, by his negative command, curb and keep them in—thou shalt not, &c., thou shalt not, &c.; partly because negative commands bind more strongly than the affirmative. The affirmative obligant semper, but not ad semper; but the negative bind semper et ad semper, as the schoolmen speak. The affirmative bind us always—i.e., there is no time wherein it can be said that they are of no force—but not to all times. I am always bound to pray, but I am not bound to pray at all times. I am bound always to speak truth, but I am not bound to speak all truth at all times. But negative commands bind always, and at all times, as, 'Thou shalt not kill;' 'Thou shalt not commit adultery.' These bind every moment of a man's life; I mean, every moment of his life these sins are to be forborne—they are at no time lawful. Though I say the commands are delivered negativè for the most part—viz., eight of them—yet we must understand that all the negative commands of God include their affirmative, as, 'Thou shalt have no other gods before me;' this includes, Thou shalt have me for thy God, thou shalt know me, love me, fear me, trust me, and worship me as thy God. And when God saith, 'Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image,' &c., this includes, Thou shalt worship me according to my will revealed in my word. When God saith, 'Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain,' this includes, Thou shalt use reverently all my names, titles, attributes, ordinances, word, and works. When God saith, 'Thou shalt not kill,' this includes, Thou shalt use all lawful means for the preservation of thine own and thy neighbour's life. When God saith, 'Thou shalt not commit adultery,' this includes, Thou shalt, by all just ways, maintain thine own and thy neighbour's chastity, in thought, word, and deed. When God saith, 'Thou shalt not steal,' this includes, Thou shalt be true, faithful, and just in all thy contracts and dealings with others; restore what is ill-gotten, be diligent in thy calling, and endeavour the furtherance of thy own and thy neighbour's estate by all just ways.

When God saith, 'Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour,' this includes, Thou shalt, to thy power, promote truth in thyself and others, maintain thine own and thy neighbour's good name. When God saith, 'Thou shalt not covet,' &c., this includes, Thou shalt be fully satisfied with thine own condition, and desire and delight in thy neighbour's prosperity. Thus the negative commands of God include their affirmative; so that, to depart from the evil forbidden is not to keep these laws, unless also we practise the duties commanded. The neglect of any of them is a sin of omission.

CHAPTER XX

Three distinctions about sins of omission

(2.) I shall speak more particularly, and explain these sins—

1. By these distinctions.
2. By their agreement with, and difference from, sins of commission.

First, These sins of omission are to be distinguished in regard of substance, manner, or measure.

1. When a duty is omitted in regard of the matter of it, as when men pray not, give not to the poor, hear not the word, &c., these omit the substance of the duty. Of such as those God complains: 'There is none that looketh after God,' Rom. 3:11. And again: 'They will not hear the law of the Lord,' Isa. 30:9. 'And he that turneth away his ears from the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard,' Prov. 21:13. These are most deeply guilty before God. They shew their utter contempt of him, and openly manifest it to others, when they omit to relieve the poor, to pray in their families, or to

attend public praying and preaching; hereby they are scandalous and offensive. They grieve the godly: 'Rivers of tears run down mine eyes, because the wicked forsake thy laws,' Ps. 119; and they harden the wicked. When ungodly men see others neglect all religion, they are encouraged in their atheism and irreligion, and presuming others are wise, and that themselves shall fare as well as others. As it was said of those, Ezek. 13:22, so it may be said of these, 'They strengthen the hands of the wicked.' Again, these are guilty in all respects. They who offend in the matter of a command by neglecting the duty itself in the substance thereof, offend in the manner and measure also; but they who offend in the manner and measure, may not offend in the matter.

2. When the omission is in regard of the manner of the duties' performance, as when men do pray, but they pray not uprightly, with the heart: Jer. 12:2, 'Thou art nigh their mouths, but far from their reins.' Nor earnestly, with their whole heart, and with all their heart, and all the powers of their souls, as the precept is, Jer. 29:13, and that prayer to which the promise is annexed, James 5:16; but pray as if they prayed not, formally, and customarily, and carelessly, scarce hearing themselves; and no wonder, then, if God hear them not. They pray not reverently, with the awe of God upon their spirits, but are rash in their words, and irreverent in their hearts, Eccles. 5:1, 2. So when men give alms, but do not give cheerfully, with a free, willing, ready heart: 'For God loves a cheerful giver,' 2 Cor. 9:7. Nor seasonably, when it may do most good: Prov. 3:28, 'Say not to thy neighbour, Go, and come again to-morrow; when thou hast it by thee.' So when men hear the word, but hear not awfully, in the fear of God, as in the presence of God: Acts 10:33, 'We are all here present before God, to hear all things commanded thee of God:' neither hear believingly, giving their assent to what they hear, and applying it to their own souls: 'The word preached did not profit them, not being

mixed with faith in them that heard it,' Heb. 4:2. These, and suchlike, though they are not guilty of omission in regard of the matter of a duty, yet they are guilty of omission in regard of the manner of it. Though they do the thing commanded, yet they do it not as it is commanded, and so are guilty of the breach of a positive law and command.

3. When the omission is in regard of the measure of the duty, as when a man gives alms, but not answerable to his estate; though God hath filled his belly with hidden treasures, and waters of a full cup are wrung out to him, and he is able to give pounds to poor indigent families, he puts them off with a few pence, or at most shillings, this is an omission in regard of the measure. God expects charitable contributions from men, answerable to his bounty to them: 1 Cor. 16:2, 'Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.' According to the measure of the divine mercy to us, such should be the measure of our charity to others. According to the seed thrown into the earth is the crop returned by the good ground. Therefore to make scanty returns, when we have large receipts, is a sin of omission; so when men pray, but not with that frequency which they might and ought. The command is, to pray continually, to pray without ceasing, to pray evermore.

Which must include at least frequent, i.e., daily prayer, each morning and evening; but some men pray, but it is only at certain seasons, now and then, by fits and starts. Some pray only upon the Lord's days, as if they had liberty all the working days to be atheists, and neglect the owning of the great God. Others pray only under some affliction; and as patients to their physician, never go to God but when they cannot tell what to do without him. So the Jews, in their affliction, 'they will seek me early,' Hosea 5:15. 'When he smote

them, then they sought him; but their heart was not right with him, neither were they steadfast in his covenant,' Ps. 78:34, 37. Unevenness of pulse argues a distempered body, so doth unevenness in duties a distempered soul. In their trouble they will pour out a prayer. When troubles are on them, they will make bold to trouble God, and call him up for their help. God expects frequency of application to him every day, and greater frequency of those that have more time, and fewer obstacles and impediments than others. Now the putting God off with applications to him, and acknowledgments of him, once a week, instead of every day, and much under affliction, instead of doing it in all conditions, and at all seasons; or putting him off with morning prayer only, instead of morning and evening prayer, or with family prayer only, when we should also pray in our closets daily; these are sins of omission, in regard of the measure of the duty.

Secondly, These sins of omission are either partial or total.

Total omissions are, when men wholly neglect the duties commanded; as when they altogether cast off praying, and hearing, and giving alms, and examining their own hearts: Ps. 14:3, 4, 'They are all gone aside; there is none that doeth good: they call not upon God.' A man may read the word atheist in the foreheads of these men. They carry about them, wherever they go, the sign and mark of condemnation. They please themselves possibly that they do not abound in scandalous sins of commission, not considering that they may be guilty of self-murder, as well by starving or not feeding their souls, as by stabbing or poisoning their souls.

2. Partial omissions are, when men do sometimes perform the duties commanded, but not with that constancy which they ought: Job 15:4, 'Thou castest off fear, and restrainest prayer before God,' i.e., Thou

imprisonest prayer, and dost not afford it the liberty it formerly had; it was wont to appear every day openly, but now it is kept in, and shews itself but seldom.

Thirdly, Sins of omission are distinguished into external or internal omissions.

1. External omissions are a neglect of the outside, as I may call it, of the command.

2. Internal omissions are the neglect of the inside of the command. We must know, that in every command there is an extra and an intra, an outside and an inside; somewhat that concerns the hands and conversation, somewhat that concerns the heart and affections. As, for example, in the fourth commandment, of sanctifying the Sabbath, there God commands us to spend the whole time of his day, except so much as the works of necessity and mercy call for, in religious exercises, and the duties of his own worship, as praying, reading, hearing, singing, &c. Now the bare performance of these duties is the outside of the command, and he who doth them, though customarily, obeys the command literally; but the sanctifying the name of God in these duties, and the performance of them with reverence, humility, faith, love, joy, according to the several duties and several parts of them, is the inside of the command; and he alone that performeth these duties in such a manner obeyeth the law spiritually. The neglect of the former is an external omission, for which God threatens families and nations: 'Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not upon thy name,' Jer. 10:25. They who will not deprecate the wrath of God, must feel it; and they who will not entreat his favour, must go without it. So the not casting the incestuous person out of the church, was an external omission, 1 Cor. 5:2. The neglect of the

latter, i.e., of performing Sabbath duties in the forementioned manner, is an internal omission. Thus God complains of his people, that though they prayed, and possibly made long prayers, yet God counts their prayers as no prayers for their internal omissions: 'There is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee.' They put up, it may be, some lazy petitions, but they pour out no hearty desires; nay, God curseth men for doing his work negligently: Jer. 48:10, 'Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully.'

CHAPTER XXI

The agreement and difference between sins of omission and sins of commission

2. It will further explain these sins of omission, to consider the difference between omissions and commissions, as also their agreement.

(1.) They agree in the authority forbidding them. The same God forbids each sin; he that saith, 'Thou shalt not kill,' the same saith, 'Thou shalt serve me diligently,' Exod. 20; Jer. 48:10; Mat. 22:37; 'With all thy heart,' Mat. 7:13.

(2.) They are both against the same particular command. In the same command wherein he forbids theft, he commands diligence in our callings, and the use of all lawful means for the increase of our own estates; in the same law wherein he forbids uncleanness, he commands care and endeavour to preserve our own and our neighbour's chastity.

(3.) They are both a privation of that rectitude which is required by the law to the goodness of every action. For if *malitia moralis non est quid positivum*, if there be nothing positive in the formal nature of sin, according to the schoolmen—as there can be nothing positive in it, unless we will make God the author of it—but a want of conformity to the law, then every commission is an omission in this respect, and so they agree in their formal nature.

(4.) They agree in their fruit and effect. Sins of commission exclude heaven, and condemn to hell: 'Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor drunkards, nor covetous, shall inherit the kingdom of God,' 1 Cor. 6:9, 10; Eph. 5:9; and so do sins of omission, as the text doth abundantly prove.

The difference between sins of omission and sins of commission consisteth,

1. In that sins of commission are against a negative law, and sins of omission are against an affirmative law. Oppression is against a negative law: 'Thou shalt not oppress thy neighbour; thou shalt not oppress a stranger.' Neglect of charity is against an affirmative law: 'Give to him that asketh of thee; and from him that would borrow, turn not thou away,' Mat. 5:42.

2. They differ in this: every commission proceeds originally from a sin of omission, but sins of omission do not proceed originally from sins of commission. All sin springeth from this, the departure of the heart from God, Jer. 2:5; Heb. 3:12, and the want of true love to, and fear of, his majesty, 1 John 5:3, John 15, which are sins of omission. Where there is no love to God, there is no care to forbear what he forbids: John 14:24, 'He that loveth me not, keepeth not my sayings;' and where there is no fear of God, all manner of wickedness will

abound, Ps. 36:1, 2. David concludes a wicked man's omission from his sins of commission; the 'transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes,' i.e., His scandalous practices, and sins of commission, tell me that he is guilty of inward omissions, that there is no fear of God before his eyes. He who casteth off fear, will soon let the reins loose to all licentiousness: 'They who called not on God will devour Jacob, and make waste his dwelling-place,' Jer. 10:25; no sin comes amiss to them, Rom. 3:9–14. The monstrous, horrid, unnatural sins of the heathen had their beginning in sins of omission. When they knew God, i.e., by the light of nature, which plainly speaks a deity, they glorified him not as God; i.e., did not love him, fear him, trust in him, honour him as God, neither were thankful, did not acknowledge their engagements to him, for their noble beings, and manifold mercies. These were sins of omission; but what followeth upon them? truly unnatural bestiality, unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, envy, murder, pride, &c., Rom. 1:21, to the end. Men leave the fountain of living waters, and then hew themselves broken cisterns which will hold no water, Jer. 2:13.

The first and great sin of mankind proceeded from an omission. Adam's heart was turned from God by unbelief, I humbly conceive, before ever his hand touched, or tongue tasted, the forbidden fruit. But now sins of omission do not proceed originally from sins of commission: James 1:14, 15, 'But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.'

3. They differ in this, that sins of commission are founded in some act or habit; sins of omission only in the soul, without acts or habits.
1. There is somewhat positive about sins of commission, but nothing

about sins of omission, and that is the reason. 2. As drunkenness is an immoderate use of beer or wine, here is an act of the creature, and much positive about this sin, though nothing positive in the sin itself. So in theft, another sin of commission, there is somewhat positive about the taking away our neighbour's goods, and keeping them as our own; but in sins of omission there is nothing positive; as in not praying, not hearing, not believing, not giving to the poor, there is nothing positive, no acts, but a neglect of acts required. Sins of omission are wholly privative, and have nothing of positivity in them.

4. They differ in this, that sins of commission are more scandalous in the eyes of men than sins of omission. I do not say sins of omission are always less heinous than sins of commission—I shall prove by and by they may be more heinous—but that they are less scandalous. Sins of commission, as drunkenness, uncleanness, theft, swearing, murder; these make a great noise in the world, are taken notice of by all, and with the snail, leave a slime and filth behind them, wheresoever they are: but sins of omission, as not praying in our closets, not examining our own hearts, not relieving the poor and needy, not bringing up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, &c.; these are more still and quiet, observed by few or none.

5. They differ in this, that sins of omission are the aversion of the heart from God, and sins of commission are the conversion of the heart to the creature, or somewhat below God. Omission turns the heart from God; hence we read of man's going far from God, Jer. 2:5, and of their departing away from the living God, Heb. 3:12; which is not meant in regard of local motion, for so none can depart from God, Ps. 139:2–5, but in regard of their inward carnal affections, and disobedient conversations: Jer. 17:5, 'Whose heart departeth from the Lord.' Commissions are a turning to the creature: 'whose heart is

after coveteousness.' 'They imagine mischief in their hearts,' Ps. 140:2; Eccles. 9:3, 'The heart of the sons of men is full of evil.'

Having spoken to the nature of sins of omission in general, and more particularly by their several distinctions, and their agreement with, and difference from, sins of commission, I come to the second thing promised in the explication of the doctrine, and that is the danger of them.

CHAPTER XXII

The danger of sins of omission, in the heinous nature of them, and their offensiveness to God

Secondly, The danger of sins of omission. Though men are ready to conceive that sins of omission, because they make no great cry in the world, are but infirmities, are venial sins, and are not much to be regarded, as having little of danger to the soul in them, yet the contrary will appear plainly, if we consider these particulars.

1. The malignity and sinfulness of them speaks their danger. The more venom and poison there is in any cup or dish, the more dangerous it must needs be; the more sinfulness there is in any sin, the more hazardous it is to the soul. Now I shall shew the sinfulness of omissions.

(1.) They are most against the mind and will of God. Those sins are the greatest which most cross the will of the lawgiver, for sin is a transgression of the law or mind of God; and every one knoweth that the mind of God is more in the precept or affirmative part of the law,

than in the prohibition or negative part of it. The precept or performance of the duty commanded is the main thing; the prohibition is, as it were, accidental, in order to our obedience to the precept; therefore sins of omission being against the substance and principal part of the command, and so most directly against that which is the special mind of the lawgiver, must needs be the greatest sins. It is more good to do good, than not to do evil. Omissions are not to be esteemed bare negations or privations, but as breaches of a positive law, wherein the mind of God is most discovered. Now how great a sin, and how dangerous is it to cross the mind of God! surely it is bad thwarting him that can cast body and soul into hell: 'I say unto you,' saith Christ, 'fear him,' Mat. 10:28.

(2.) Sins of omission are the ground of, and make way for, sins of commission. The want of love to God, and our not believing his word, which are sins of omission, are the ground of all abominations. When a man once casteth off daily reading the word, and seeking God by prayer, or performs those duties coldly and carelessly, he throws himself out of God's protection, and so becomes a lackey to the devil, and a tame slave to every lust to trample on and tyrannise over at pleasure: Ps. 14:3, 4, 'They are all gone aside, they are altogether filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one.' *Negligentiam in orando semper aliqua notabilis transgressio sequitur*, saith one: Always some notable sin followeth upon slothfulness in prayer.

David's not watching his eyes and heart, and his not employing his time better at that hour of the day, brought forth drunkenness, murder, adultery, lying, &c. Some sins of omission are like great men, that never go without many followers: admit their persons, you must admit their long train which they bring with them. So a Gad, a whole troop of ugly lusts, will throng in upon our neglect of one duty.

Not doing good, fits the heart for doing evil. The ground not sown with good corn doth naturally of its own accord bring forth evil weeds. Indeed, it is impossible for him that doth no good, not to do evil: 'He that doth not gather with Christ, scattereth; and he that is not with me is against me,' Mat. 12:30. He that fights not for his prince in a day of battle, is his enemy; and that servant who helps not his master in harvest, hinders him. Not to save a life when we may, is to destroy and murder it. The negative Christian will quickly fall to be a positive atheist and heathen. If the heart be empty of good, and swept clean of grace, the unclean spirit will quickly take up his lodging in it. Besides, God doth often judicially give up them to commit evil, who refuse to do good: 'Because they received not the truth in the love of it, (here is a sin of omission,) God gave them up to strong delusions, that they might believe a lie,' &c., 2 Thes. 2:10, 11. Now how great and dangerous is this sin, that ushers in so many sins! Alas! one sin is too weighty for thy soul to bear; how heavy then will that whole rabble and regiment of sins be, that one sin of omission may bring along with it! If I live in sins of omission, sins of commission will follow both naturally and judicially.

(3.) Sins of commission do exceedingly grieve the Spirit of God. Indeed every sin is offensive to the Holy Ghost, or Spirit of holiness, as directly contrary to its nature; but the Spirit of God sets a particular special brand and mark upon these sins as grievous to him: 'Follow that which is good. Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks. Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings,' 1 Thes. 5:15–19. Observe, the duties are all positive (the neglect whereof is a sin of omission) to which he exhorts them, if they would not quench the Spirit. The Spirit is not only grieved, but also quenched, by sins of omission. Fire may be quenched by withdrawing fuel from it, as well as by throwing water on it. By scandalous sins of commission, we throw water on this

heavenly flame to quench it; but by neglecting to pray, and to attend on prophesying, and such sins of omission, we withdraw fuel from it, and thereby put it out. When the Israelites would not hear the voice of God, they are said to grieve his Holy Spirit, Ps. 95; and when they believed not his word, the wonders that he wrought, they are said to vex his Holy Spirit, Isa. 63:10, with Num. 14:11, and 20:12: 'Then they rebelled, and vexed his Holy Spirit.' Not to obey God is to disobey him; not to be loyal to him is to be rebellious; now hereby they vexed his Holy Spirit. Now how great a sin, and how dangerous is it to grieve the Spirit of God! the size or measure of sin is to be taken from the Majesty slighted, disobeyed, and offended by it. The Spirit is God, an infinite, boundless being, whom these sins of omission grieve and vex. Again, how dangerous is it to grieve and drive the Spirit from us! It is the Spirit that must enable us to our duties, Rom. 8:26; direct us in our walkings, Ps. 143:10; comfort us in our sorrows, John. 14:16; Isa. 45:1–3. It is the Spirit that is the Spirit of grace and holiness, Zech. 12:10; Rom. 1:4, and must work them in our hearts, if ever we be gracious and holy, 1 Pet. 1:2. It is the Spirit must strengthen us with might in our inward man, to keep the commandments of God, Eph. 3:16; Ezek. 36:27. It is the Spirit that is the earnest of our inheritance, the first-fruits of our eternal, blessed harvest, and that must seal us up unto the day of redemption, Eph. 1:13, 14; Rom. 8; Eph. 4:30. How great a sin, and how dangerous therefore is it to grieve this Spirit, and by sins of omission to incense him to withdraw from us, without whom we are unable unto any good, and indeed exposed to all evil.

2. The danger of these sins will appear by their offensiveness to God. Since our felicity depends on the favour of God, and our misery on his anger, (hell itself being but his wrath ever to come, 1 Thes. 1:10,) those sins which are highly provoking to God must be very dangerous. If in his favour be life, Ps. 30:5, and his wrath be worse

than death, Ps. 90:11, I had need to beware how I provoke him to jealousy. Now the not believing God, which is a sin of omission, is called the provocation: Ps. 95:8, 9, 'Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, as in the day of temptation in the wilderness: when your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works.' This provocation was their not believing his word, for all the wonders he had wrought for them: 'They said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? Behold he smote the rock, that waters gushed out; can he give bread also? can he provide flesh for his people? Therefore the Lord heard this, and was wroth: so a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger also came up against Israel: because they believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation,' Ps. 78:19–23.

It will appear how provoking sins of omission are to God by these three particulars.

(1.) By his frequent reprehensions and complaints of men for them. He blames men for not sacrificing, Mal. 3:18; for not mourning, 1 Cor. 5; and sharply reproves for not receiving correction: Jer. 2:30, 'In vain have I smitten your children; they received no correction: for not grieving when smitten, Jer. 5:3; for not seeking God, Isa. 9:13. Nay, observe what special notice he takes of, and how sadly he aggravates, their omissions: Jer. 3:7, 'I said after she had done all these things, (i.e., gone up upon every high mountain, and upon every green tree,) Turn thou unto me. But she turned not.' Here he complains of Israel's omission in not turning to him; but mark how he accents Judah's omission, who knew what Israel had done, and how God had put her away: ver. 8, 'Yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not,' the dreadful doom of Israel struck no awe into the heart of Judah. And ver. 10, 'And yet for all this (that Israel hath committed, and been severely punished for) her treacherous sister Judah hath not turned unto me with the whole heart, but feignedly,

saith the Lord.' Here was an omission internal, or in the manner of her conversation; it was not sincere, but with dissimulation.

(2.) By his severe comminations and threatenings denounced against those that are guilty of omissions. He curseth those that deny him their help in a day of battle, and that come not forth to help the Lord against the mighty, Judges 5:23; he curseth those that are not diligent about his work, Jer. 48:10. And believe it, his curse is effectual, not like the discharge of a piece with powder only, which doth no execution. Those whom he curseth are cursed indeed: his curse, like lightning, blasteth and withereth wherever it cometh. 'I cursed his habitation,' saith Eliphaz, not as a private malediction of his own spirit, but as a pious prediction of God's Spirit. Now mark what followeth upon God's cursing the wicked man's habitation, Job 5:2-4. His house is by this breath of God tumbling to the ground presently. 'His children (that should be the honour and support of it) are far from safety,' ver. 3; 'They are crushed in the gate, and there is none to deliver them,' ver. 4. 'Whose harvest the hungry eateth up, and taketh out of the thorns, and the robber swalloweth up his substance.' His estate, which is a second thing requisite to the outward glory of a family, that is seized on, and snatched from him. So God threateneth multitudes with his wrath (which is so terrible, so intolerable, that none can stand before it, Ps. 147:8; that mountains are moved, rocks are rent in pieces, the foundations of the earth tremble at it; yea, that God's own people are ready to be distracted at it, Ps. 88:3-5, for a sin of omission, for not calling on his name, Jer. 10:25.

God threateneth to cut a man off from his people (which includes either a cutting off from the society of God's people here and hereafter, as Gen. 17:14, or of being cut off out of the land of the living by the sword of the magistrate, Exod. 30:33, or both, as some

think) for a mere omission. 'But a man that is clean, and is not in a journey, and forbeareth to keep the passover, even the same soul shall be cut off from his people,' Num. 9:13.

(3.) It appears that sins of omission are highly provoking to God, by the execution of his judgments on them that are guilty of them. His works as well as his word speak his great indignation against these sins. Saul lost his kingdom for not killing Agag and the best of the flock: 'Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, the Lord hath also rejected thee from being king,' saith Samuel to him, 1 Sam. 15:23, 26, 28. Ahab omitted to kill Benhadad, and lost his life for it: 1 Kings 20:42, 'Because thou hast let go a man out of thy hand, whom I appointed to utter destruction, thy life shall go for his life.' Eli was a good man, and as much in God's favour, but by not reprovng his sons he so far incurred God's anger, that he lost his two wicked fondlings in a day, and the priesthood for ever, 1 Sam. 3:12, 13, &c. Moses was God's special friend and favourite: 'And the Lord spake to Moses face to face, as a man speaketh to his friend,' Exod. 33:11. 'And the Lord said to Moses, Thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name.' Yet when this Moses is guilty of an omission, that he doth not believe God, nor sanctify his name in the eyes of the children of Israel, he is excluded the temporal Canaan, Num. 20:12. Though Moses was taken up to the mount, to converse with God forty days together, when Aaron and all the people must stay below; though Moses was honoured to see the commands written with God's own hand; though Moses was taken into a rock, while God passed before him, that he might hear his name, 'the Lord, the Lord God gracious,' &c., proclaimed, and see his back parts; though God was pleased to confer with Moses, as one friend with another; yet when this Moses comes to be guilty of such an omission, he is denied liberty to enter into the land flowing with milk and honey. Nay, though this Moses begs so hard, 'I pray thee, let me go over and see

the good land beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon,' yet God was so provoked by his omission, that though he had heard him once and again for greater things on the behalf of others, Exod. 33:11–15; Num. 14:10, he would not hear him in this small request for himself: 'But his wrath was kindled, and he would not hear me: and said, Let it suffice thee, speak no more unto me of this matter,' Deut. 3:25, 26.

Nay, how angry was Christ with the man who had not a wedding garment at his supper! how severe is his sentence! how dreadful his doom! 'And when the king came in to see his guests, he saw there a man which had not a wedding garment,' Mat. 22. Though but one in a crowd, Christ spied him.

1. Here is his transgression. We do not read that the man slighted the invitation, and denied to come, as they in ver. 5, nor that he entreated his servants spitefully, and slew them, as those, ver. 6; we do not read that the man came to the feast in a drunken fit, or reproached and abused either the master or guests, but only omitted to bring with him a wedding garment, which some say is charity, others obedience; he was a professor, but without godly practices; but I suppose is meant Christ, and the graces of the Spirit, which are compared to a garment, Rom. 13; Col. 3; Eph. 4:23, 24, 'And that ye be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man.'

2. Here is the man's self-conviction: ver. 12, ἐφιδώθη, he was muzzled; the same word is used of muzzling the mouth of a beast, whereby it is unable to open it to eat, 1 Cor. 9:9. His conscience was that which put a muzzle on his mouth, being convinced that he might and ought to have procured a garment before he had gone to the feast. They who have a form, and no power of godliness, who make a

show without any substance of religion, will be speechless when Christ shall come to reckon with them.

Here is his condemnation: ver. 13, 'Bind him hand and foot.' When malefactors are cast in law, either by their own confession, or the evidence of others, the jailer puts new fetters and shackles on them, to secure their persons against sentence and execution, lest they should make an escape. 'Bind him hand and foot:' make sure of him. The sinner shall have no power of resisting, or possibility of flying from divine severity. And ἐκβάλετε, ejective, cast him forth. Cast him out as a vile, loathsome, abominable wretch, unfit for company, whom I hate to behold, into utter darkness, εἰς τὸ σκότος τὸ ἐξώτερον, a prison, a dungeon, where there is no light, a condition most remote from joy and comfort; such darkness as hath a blackness joined to it, Jude 13. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth; weeping for the extremity of their own pain, and gnashing of teeth out of envy at others' happiness.

CHAPTER XXIII

The danger of sins of omission, in their destructiveness to man, and our proneness to overlook them

3. The danger of sins of omission will appear by their destructiveness to men. The more wrong and injury any sin doth us, the more danger is in it. Now what hath been already spoken doth abundantly evince this. If omissions are so great sins, that they most directly cross the mind of the law, and make way for all sins of commission, and exceedingly grieve the Spirit of God, they must needs be dangerous and destructive to men. If God himself blame them so sharply, threaten them so severely, and punish them so grievously who are guilty of such sins, then these sins must be very injurious to us. But it will further appear if you consider that they cause,—

1. The judgments of God on men, in regard of their bodies or external comforts. He punisheth many with extreme penury, for not being diligent in their particular callings. Their idleness, which is a sin of omission, clothes them with rags, Prov. 23:21. Again, 'the idle soul shall suffer hunger,' Prov. 19:15. How doth experience prove the truth of this. Many begin the world, as we say, with considerable estates, who, in a few years, for lack of care and industry in their employs, have wasted all. The idle man may call the prodigal brother. Besides, these sins of omission are punished with a temporal destruction. The Lord having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterwards destroyed them that believed not, Jude 5. Israel was God's own people, his peculiar treasure, Exod. 19:5; a people nigh unto him, Ps. 148:14; incomparable for this, Deut. 4:7, and other privileges, Rom. 9:4. Yet when guilty of this omission, God would not spare them, but destroyed them. No privileges can exempt

from punishment. God may forsake his tabernacle at Shiloh; deliver his strength into captivity, and his glory into the enemies' hand, if they will not believe him, if they will not obey him, Ps. 78:60, 61.

2. A judicial tradition to spiritual judgments. Of all judgments, none in this world are so dreadful as those that are spiritual; bodily judgments touch the flesh, but these the spirit. When God would speak and wreak his anger against a person or people to the utmost, he doth it in this way, by giving them up to their own wickedness. When he would strike Ephraim under the fifth rib, and kill him at a blow, it is by this judgment: 'Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone,' Hosea 4:17. He is given to idolatry, let him take his fill of it, and see what the end will be; he is fond of lies and vanities, and delights in prostituting himself to their embraces, let him alone. Let none disturb him or recall him; let no mercy, no misery, no means, no ministry ever hinder him in the prosecution of his lusts, or stop him in his course, much less be effectual for his repentance and amendment. In temporal judgments, God acts the part of a father, to whip his child, that he may reclaim him from his errors, and be fit to inherit his estate. But in spiritual, God acts the part of a judge, to deliver the malefactor over to execution. In the former, he prunes the tree, that it may bring forth fruit, and so continue in his garden to his joy and delight; but in the latter, he leaves the tree as unsound and barren, to be cut down for the fire. Now sins of omission cause God to deliver men up to these judgments. God calls upon Israel to hear and obey him, they will not: 'But my people would not hearken to my voice; Israel would none of me.' What was the result of their refusal? 'So I gave them up to their own hearts' lusts: and they walked in their own counsels,' Ps. 81:11, 12. God doth not testify his anger for their contempt of him by sending plague, or flames, or wild beasts among them. He doth not say, Well, since they thus slight my authority, I will be avenged on them to purpose; I will give them up to the sword,

or famine, or racking diseases, or greedy devouring lions, which would have been sad and grievous; but he executes on them a far more sad and grievous judgment, when he saith, 'So I gave them up to their own hearts' lusts: and they walked in their own counsels.' God's leaving one soul to one lust, is far worse than leaving him to all the lions in the world. Alas! it will tear the soul worse than a lion can do the body, and rend it in pieces, when there is none to deliver it. God's giving them up to their own wills, that they walked in their own counsels, is in effect a giving them up to eternal wrath and woe.

3. The destructiveness of sins of omission to the souls of men appears in that they render the condition of men desperate, and without remedy. Sins of commission wound the soul dangerously, but sins of omission make the state of the patient hopeless and desperate. Sins of commission are directly against the law, and so bind the sinner over to its curse; but sins of omission are directly against the gospel, and thereby hinder the patient's cure, Gal. 3:20; John 3:36. He that hath broken the precepts of the law is liable to its punishment; but yet this sinner may fly to the gospel, as his city of refuge, and lay hold on Christ, there tendered, for pardon and life. But by some sins of omission, he rendereth the gospel ineffectual for his good, and himself incapable of the good things promised in it. Faith and repentance are the two conditions upon which all the exceeding rich and precious promises depend; so that by not believing, and not repenting, which are sins of omission, men deny themselves all the benefit and advantage of the gospel: 'He that believeth shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned,' Mark 16:16. 'He upbraided the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not: Woe to thee, Chorazin! woe to thee, Bethsaida!' &c., Mat. 11:21–23. Sins of commission make the wound, and sins of omission keep off that plaster which alone can heal it. Sins of commission plunge us into a bottomless gulf of

misery, and sins of omission stop the current of that mercy that alone can relieve and succour us. These sinners are like men in swoons, gasping for breath, and ready to expire, yet shut their mouths, and fasten their teeth together, to keep out those cordials that alone can recall them to life.

4. The danger of sins of omission will appear by our proneness to slight and neglect them. If sins of omission are of so deadly a nature, as most to contradict the will of God, and so highly provoking to him, and so mortally destructive to us, then the more we slight this great enemy, the more dangerous it is to us. A weak enemy, and an enemy that can do us little harm, may be slighted without great danger; but when an enemy is so powerful, so deadly, so damnable, our contempt of him is a great advantage to him, and a great disadvantage to us; for by this means he falls upon us disarmed and unprepared for him. Pompey slighted Cæsar, when news first came to Rome of his marching into Italy with his army, and said, That if he did but stamp with his foot, he should therewith fetch soldiers enough out of all parts to subdue Cæsar, and so made small preparation to resist him, which was his own and the commonwealth's destruction. Truly, thus men are apt to slight sins of omission, and thereby to undo themselves. As it is said of Joab, he spake kindly to Amasa, and made as if he would kiss him: 'But Amasa took no heed to the sword that was in Joab's hand: so he smote him therewith in the fifth rib, and shed out his bowels to the ground, that he died,' 2 Sam. 20:9, 10. Thus sin of omission is familiar with us, and pretends rather love and kindness than any hurt to us; for in all sin there is a deceitfulness, Heb. 3:13; and we taking no heed to the sword in its hand, to its malignant killing nature, but slighting it, as if it were venial, are destroyed by it.

And there are three reasons why we are so apt to overlook sins of omission:

1. Because conscience doth not so soon check us for them, as for sins of commission. If a man commit murder, or adultery, or theft, his conscience is ready to fly in his face, and thunder in his ears, as it did with Cain after the slaughter of his brother, that he cried out, 'My punishment is greater than I can bear;' and he went up and down trembling, as some think, all his days, Gen. 4:13, 14. But men may neglect praying, or reading, or charity, especially in regard of the manner of doing them, and conscience will take little notice of it. Such omissions may pass with little or no regard. Cain in the offering he brought to God, neglected probably to bring the best of the fruit of the ground, however to offer it with an upright believing heart; but we read not that he took notice of these omissions, though he did of God's manifest disrespecting his offering, Gen. 4:3–5. It is ordinary with some moral men, if they fall into ill company sometime by accident, and are made drunk, to be ashamed of it, and much troubled for it; but these men can live in their families without prayer and Scripture, and neglect to teach their children and servants the ways of God; and yet these omissions do not at all disturb them—they go up and down, and eat, and drink, and sleep, as merrily as if they obeyed the whole will of God. Job tells you of those that bid God depart from them, that desire not, nor endeavour to know him; that cast off prayer to him, and all his service, as fruitless; and yet these men, guilty of such great and gross omissions, could take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ, and spend their days in wealth and mirth, Job 21:12–15. These negative sins are still and silent, and make none or little noise in the ears of conscience; but positive sins are more clamorous. We read of those that were guilty of bribery and oppression under their guise and mask of religion, and how they are stabbed and frightened! 'A dreadful

sound is in their ears, trouble and anguish make them afraid. They believe not that they shall come out of darkness,' Job 15:21–24, compared with 34th and 35th verses. How many do we know in places where we live, who, if they should rob or wrong their neighbours, would hardly enjoy any peace or quietness in their spirits, who can live cheerfully and contentedly day after day, nay, year after year, while all this while they rob God of that love, and fear, and trust which they owe him in their hearts, and of that open homage and allegiance which they owe him in their houses.

The reason hereof is, because sins of commission are most against natural light. In sins of omission there is no such actual disturbance, by which the free contemplation of the mind is hindered, as in sins of commission. Besides, foul acts of sin, as uncleanness and murder, &c., bring more shame, and cause more horror, than bare neglects of our duty. Conscience is not wont to take any great notice of external neglects, or of spiritual defects.

2. We are the more prone to overlook, and take no notice of sins of omission; as conscience is less troubled for them, so our Christian friends are not so apt to warn and admonish us of them, as of sins of commission. If a professor fall into some gross sin of commission, as if he be overtaken with intemperance, or lying, or going beyond his neighbour, all the town or neighbourhood rings of it; his Christian friends hear and take notice of it, and out of love to his, and faithfulness to their own souls, admonish him of it, and endeavour, with the spirit of meekness, to bring him to repentance for it. But this professor may neglect prayer in his closet, reading and meditating on the word of God, examining his own heart, nay, possibly prayer in his family, and the instruction of those committed to his charge in the principles of religion, and his friends be wholly ignorant hereof, and so be all their days wanting to acquaint him with his sin herein.

When David had been guilty of several sins of commission in the matter of Uriah, Nathan hears of it, for it seems to be the town talk, in that it is said 'That he caused the enemies of God to blaspheme,' ver. 14. And I suppose God's narration of it to him was rather a command or commission, for the manner of his reprehension of David, than of certifying him of that he was ignorant before; he goeth to him, and tells him thereof, and calls him to repentance for them, 2 Sam. 12:1–10. But though David in all this time, likely nine months, for the child was born, ver. 14, had been guilty of many omissions, in not confessing his sin with sorrow and shame, in not begging pardon with faith and hope, and in several other particulars; yet Nathan takes no notice thereof in his speech to him, neither makes any mention of them.

3. We are the more prone to overlook sins of omission, because they are so near akin to intermissions, which are lawful and necessary. Affirmative precepts, as was said before, do not bind *ad semper*; I am bound to pray in my closet and family every day, but I am not bound to pray in either all the day. God commands me to mind the nourishing and refreshing my body, and to follow my particular calling, and as occasion is to visit the fatherless and afflicted; now because these intermissions or omissions for a time are allowed and commanded, men are apt to turn them, or to fall from them, into total omissions, and when they do so, to be little troubled for them. Because men may be excused from solemn religious duties three parts or more of the week-day, therefore they will neglect them altogether, and are insensible of their neglect. Commissions being never lawful, for the negative commands bind *ad semper*, therefore if men be guilty of them, they take the more notice of them, and lay them more to heart; but positive precepts being sometimes unseasonable, and binding but at some times—i.e., the duties of them are to be performed but at some time—when instead of our

intermission there be an omission, we are ready to wink at it, and regard it at most but as an infirmity, which may require a pardon of course. If I may omit prayer and Scripture ten hours of the day, saith the subtle, wicked heart of man, why not eleven hours? and if eleven hours, what great hurt if it be omitted twelve hours, i.e., the whole day, and the duty be not performed at all?

CHAPTER XXIV

The reasons why sins of omission are damnable

I come now to the third thing to be spoken to in the explication of this doctrine, and that is to give the reasons why Christ will condemn men at the great day to eternal torments for sins of omission.

Thirdly, The reasons of the doctrine why sins of omission are damnable.

Reas. 1. The great and grand reason is, because they are sins. Every sin is damnable: 'The wages of sin (as sin) is death,' temporal, spiritual, and eternal, Rom. 6:23. Therefore these omissions, being sins as well as commissions, must of necessity be damnable to our souls. As there is bitterness in every sprig or branch of wormwood, and saltness in every drop or spoonful of sea-water, so there is death and hell, and wrath and damnation, in every sin. The wicked papists distinguish sins into venial and mortal, but they got that distinction from the devil, not from God. They have their seven deadly sins, but the Holy Ghost tells us all sins are deadly, without any distinction, Gal. 3:10. Though one sin may be greater and more heinous than another, yet every sin is mortal. A pistol is less than a musket, and a

musket than a cannon, but they are all of them killing: Ezek. 18, 'The soul that sins shall die.' Under the word death is comprehended all the misery of this and the other world. Sin being a contempt of the authority, a violation of the law, and a slighting the love, of an infinite God, deserves all that privation of good, and infliction of evil, which this sentence of Christ includes, 'Go, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.' God cannot inflict a greater punishment, nor can a finite limited creature bear greater torments, than sin, being of infinite demerit, requires and calls for.

Now I have largely proved that omissions are sins as well as commissions; and to speak properly and exactly, there is no sin but the sin of omission. For even in commissions, their sinfulness consisteth in their want of that goodness which the law requireth. Were there not a deficiency in them of somewhat which they ought to have, or a want of conformity to the law, there would be no sin in them. Yea, I have proved sins of omission in some respect greater sins, as more against the mind of the lawgiver, whose will consists rather in the affirmative than negative part of the command, and as the ground of sins of commission, and as more directly against the gospel than sins of commission. They are much mistaken who judge omissions pure privations, or mere negations, little other than nonentities; for omissions are transgressions of an affirmative command, and violations of a positive precept, and the greatest contradictions to the mind of the law, and therefore most justly liable to its curse. The apostle tells us what obedience the law requireth, and what the condition of such as fail therein is, Gal. 3:10. 1. It requireth practical obedience; not hearing, or knowing, or speaking only of what is written in the book of the law, but doing it—'to do them.' It is doing that the law requireth: 'Do this and live,' &c. And it is doers that the law justifieth: Rom. 2:13, 'Not the hearers of the law,

but the doers thereof shall be justified.' Now under this doing, sins of omission are expressly forbidden, and those duties, the neglect of which are sins of omission, are commanded.

2. It requireth personal obedience: 'Every one.' It takes no notice of obedience by a proxy, or a surety, but requires it in our own persons. The law admits not a mediator.

3. Perfect obedience: 'In everything written in the book of the law.' It will not admit of the least deviation, of any one step awry, but presently curseth and condemneth for them. If any thought, word, or deed be never so little too light, it will not grant the least grain of allowance, but damneth for them.

4. It must be perpetual: 'That continueth not.' If in one day, one hour, one moment of his life he fail, he is undone. If a man could be obedient to the whole law all the time of his life, and should in his dying hour disobey it, the law would take no notice of all his former obedience, but send him to hell for his latter disobedience. For mark the state of those that yield not this perfect, personal, perpetual, practical obedience. Their condition is cursed: 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them.' In the word cursed, all evil is included; so that omissions, or the neglect of those duties which the law requireth, being sins, they render the creature liable to the curse, which is indeed all manner of misery here and hereafter.

Death and hell are the end of every sin, though they are not the end of every sinner; they are the reward of every evil work, though not the reward of every evil worker. Free grace in the blood of Christ doth sometimes interpose, and put in an exception to this general rule. The gospel accepted and pleaded is a bar to those rigorous proceedings of the law; therefore, though this reason will justify

Christ, and condemn the sinner in the judgment of his own conscience, especially this sinner being under a covenant of works, yet I shall give farther reasons from the sinner's non-interest in the privileges of the gospel.

Reas. 2. Christ will condemn men at the last day to eternal torments for sins of omission, because they speak a man in a carnal, natural estate. The gospel, that is the only ark for a Christian to shelter his soul in against the flood of the law's curses, requireth a change of the nature and disposition as absolutely necessary to salvation. Christ, the great preacher and purchaser of the gospel, affirmeth solemnly, 'Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he shall never see the kingdom of God,' John 3:3. This is indispensably requisite, not only as a condition without which heaven may not be had in regard of God's pleasure, but also as a disposition without which heaven or happiness cannot be enjoyed in regard of the subject; for it is this that is meant by our being 'made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light,' Col. 1:12. Again, the Holy Ghost tells us, that 'without holiness no man shall see God,' Heb. 12:14. This holiness, as a due qualification of the agent in relation to the beatifical vision or sight of God, the blessed-making object, is necessary by the gospel. How often are the unregenerate and unsanctified by the Spirit of God doomed to hell, and excluded heaven, John 3:18; Rev. 19, 'Into it can in no wise enter anything that is defiled or unclean.' Again, 'Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?' Ezek. 33:11; implying that death and destruction are the portion of the unconverted.

Now these sins of omission are evidences of a man's want of regeneration. Nay, there is much more evil in a state of sin than in an act of sin, which state of sin consisteth most in sins of omission. For this was the great evil and misery of the Ephesians by nature, Eph.

2:12, that 'they were without God,' i.e., were without any inward regard of him, or outward obedience to him. Sound conversion and saving repentance make clear work. As the flood drowned all out of the ark, Noah's friends as well as others; so repentance destroys all sins, even sins of omission as well as commission. It loves none, it allows of none. Restraining grace will probably refuse the way of disobedience, but renewing grace will close the way of obedience. Those that are in a wicked and unregenerate state are characterised in Scripture from their sins of omission: 'The wicked through the pride of his heart will not seek after God; God is not in all his thoughts,' Ps. 10:4. 'The Lord hath a controversy with the land, because there is no mercy, nor truth, nor knowledge of God in the land,' Hosea 4:1. Nay, the reign of sin, which ever speaks an unconverted and unregenerate estate, is as visible, if not more, in omissions than in commissions. As there is as high an act of authority, and sovereignty, and princely power in a negative voice, or denying such and such things to be done, as in a positive law, enjoining such and such things to be done; so the omission of what is good, or refusing to do what God commands, may speak sin reigning in the soul, as well as doing, or commanding to be done, what God hath forbidden. It is indeed the judgment of many, that a prince's negative voice is a greater part and mark of his royalty than any affirmative command of his; for a king may have power to command that which he hath no power to forbid. As he may and should enjoin his subjects to worship the true God, according to his revealed will, but he hath no power to forbid them. Thus in sins of omission, for a man to live without prayer, without the love and fear of God, without delight in him, and communion with him, without care of, and watchfulness over, his own heart and life, may be a greater sign of the reign of sin, and thereby of an unregenerate state, than the commission of some gross actual transgressions.

It is apparent that this man is under the power of lust, as a servant to it, Titus 3:3; and under the dominion of the devil, 'carried captive by him at his will,' 2 Tim. 2:26; and an unregenerate, unsanctified person; because he lives in disobedience to these positive laws of God. Whereas he that is born of God sinneth not, 1 John 3:9, with his whole will; there is not a free, voluntary, cheerful submission of his will to the quiet, undisturbed dominion of sin. And he that is born of God hath a tender regard to the whole law: 'I have esteemed thy precepts concerning all things to be right; therefore I hate every false way,' Ps. 119:128. He hath respect to affirmative as well as negative precepts. He hath an equal uniform regard to all the law—to that part which commands the doing good, as well as that part which forbids the doing evil. Therefore the man that lives in sins of omission is not born of God, and therefore incapable, by the gospel, of heaven, and so justly for this cause sentenced to hell.

CHAPTER XXV

Further reasons why Christ at the great day will condemn men for sins of omission

Reas. 3. Christ will condemn men at the great day for sins of omission, because those that live in such sins have no interest in himself. There is no way to escape hell but by the Lord Jesus Christ, 1 Thes. 1:10; 'Jesus that delivereth from the wrath to come.' There is no way to attain heaven but by Christ: 'I give to them eternal life, and they shall never perish,' John 10:28.

As salvation is God's gift, Rom. 6:23, so it is Christ's purchase: 'There is no name under heaven whereby men may be saved, but by the

name of Christ,' Acts 4:12. So that all who are without Christ, not interested in him, must of necessity perish: 'He that hath the Son hath life; he that hath not the Son hath not life,' 1 John 5:12. Those that are without Christ are unpardoned; all their sins are imputed to them, Eph. 4:32; Rom. 3:25. And wherever sin is imputed, it condemneth, Ezek. 18:3. Those that are not interested in Christ are children of the devil, John 8:44, and children of wrath, Eph. 2:2, 3. And such children must be with their father the devil, and under wrath for ever.

Now those that live in sins of omission have no interest in Christ. Our interest in Christ, and so in life, is by faith: 'That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith,' Eph. 3:17; Gal.2:20, 'I live by faith in the Son of God.' It is faith that causeth the union between Christ and the soul, and joins them together; by virtue of which union the Christian hath communion with Christ in his merits and righteousness, that his life, and death, and burial are the Christian's, are by God imputed to him, as if performed in his own person. Hence it is said that the Christian lives with Christ, is crucified with Christ, and buried with Christ, Rom. 6:4. And the Christian is said to be the righteousness of God in him, 2 Cor. 5:21. By this union with Christ, which is the fruit of faith, the Christian is made a son of God, Gal. 3:26, and so 'an heir of God, and joint-heir with Christ,' Rom. 8:17. As a woman, by marriage being united and made one with a man, hath communion with him in his relations, honours, and estate; so the Christian, by faith made one with Christ, hath communion with him in his relations: 'Go tell my brethren, I go to my Father, and your Father; to my God, and your God,' John 20:17. In his estate Christ is heir of all things, Heb. 1:2, and the believer is a joint-heir with him, as is before proved. Christ was the first-born among many brethren, and so the inheritance did belong to him, Col. 1:18. Believers are a congregation of first-born, and so the right of the inheritance is

theirs, Heb. 12:23. But such as live in sins of omission are without faith, and therefore without Christ, and therefore must be without heaven for ever. Faith is a sanctifying as well as a justifying grace—Acts. 26:18, 'And to give them an inheritance among them that are sanctified through faith in Christ'—and therefore will not suffer the soul to live in any sin.

Faith will not suffer a man to live in the want of love to God, in so great an omission; for when faith certifieth the soul of God's love to it, this kindleth in the soul flames of love to God, 1 John 4:19. When faith brings much fuel, the fire of love will be great. Faith will not suffer a man to live without repentance. The eye of faith, which beholds a Christ crucified for sin, affects the heart with sorrow for, and indignation against, those sins that crucified him: Zech. 12:10, 'They shall see him whom they have pierced, and mourn.' Faith will not suffer a man to live without delight in Christ, and rejoicing in the God of all consolation. Faith seeth so much good certainly laid up in the covenant and promises for the soul, that it fills the soul with joy in the hope and expectation of the enjoyment of them: 'Whom having not seen, we love; and in whom believing, though now we see him not, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory,' 1 Peter 1:7, 8. Faith will not suffer a man to live without waiting quietly on God. Faith will not limit the Holy One of Israel, but patiently stay God's time for the mercies the soul wanteth. Faith knoweth his bonds are good, his debts are in sure hands: 'The God that cannot lie hath promised,' Titus 1:2; and therefore is not hasty to call them in: 'He that believeth will not make haste,' Isa. 28:16. Faith will not suffer a man to live without prayer. He that knows his own wants and necessities, how great and urgent they are, and also where he may quickly have liberal supplies, and bountiful relief, will not long be kept from that door. You may sooner and easier put off a beggar ready to starve, who must needs perish if charity do not help him,

and persuade him never to ask alms more, as keep a believer from his daily waiting at heaven's temple to ask spiritual alms. An unbeliever hath little hope to speed, and therefore little heart to speak; but a believer hath tasted God to be gracious, and received many a blessing upon his knees, and therefore cannot but know that door again at which he hath received so good, so large doles. He knoweth that whatsoever he asketh, according to the will of God, in the name of Christ, shall be granted him, 1 John 5:14; John 14:14. Hereby he is encouraged to beg and ask: 'I believed, therefore have I spoken,' saith David, Ps. 116:10: I believed, saith the soul, therefore have I wept, and prayed, and made supplication, and have prevailed.

Faith will not suffer a man to live without Scripture. The word of God is the food of faith, and a man can as well live without bread, as faith without the word, 1 Peter 2:2. It is Scripture that breeds faith: 'Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God,' Rom. 10:17. And it is Scripture that feeds faith, and helps it to thrive: 'I hope in thy word,' Ps. 119:114. Hope is a degree of faith: so Ps. 119, 'Establish thy word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to trust.' Thus I might shew how inconsistent other sins of omission are with faith; and therefore they who live in such sins must be unbelievers, and so obnoxious to the wrath of God, John 3:36. But I shall conclude this head with this note, that faith is obediential, and therefore it is impossible for a believer to live in disobedience to God's positive laws. We read in Scripture of the obedience of faith.

Faith in the promises works obedience to the precepts. As it is impossible without faith to please God, Heb. 11, so it is impossible with faith not to desire to please him. The disobedient and unbelievers are joined together.

Abraham was called to a hard piece of service—to leave his country; this was hard, to forsake his native soil, Jer. 2:10. *Nescio qua natale solum, &c.*; therefore God commands us to pity and relieve strangers, Jer. 22:3, because they are comfortless, being out of their own country. To leave his kindred, this was harder; there is a tender affection between near relations. If he had gone into a strange country with his kindred, their company might have sweetened the bitterness of his banishment; but he must leave his country as well as kindred behind him; nay, he must leave these, and go into a place where he must not have a foot of land for himself, Gen. 12:1–4, yet Abraham obeys. But what was the weight which set the wheels in such quick ready motion? truly his faith was the spring of his obedience: mark, Heb. 11:8, 'By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place, which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed, and went out, not knowing whither he went.'

Reas. 4. Christ will at the great day condemn men to hell, who live in sins of omission, because such persons are hypocrites. Hell is prepared for hypocrites and unbelievers, saith Christ, Mat. 24:51. Others, as younger brethren, receive their part of wrath under them as the heirs. They are the great owners of hell, the chief landlords of the valley of death; others do, as it were, hold from and under them. 'So the hypocrite in heart heaps up wrath.' The hypocrite in heart. Hypocrisy lies close in the heart, as the juggler's tools, out of sight. As in the cellar under the parliament there was nothing to be seen but what was lawful and allowable, coals and wood, fit provision for winter; but when these were taken away, and the cellar was searched to the bottom, then the barrels of powder appeared, and the coals and wood were discovered to be fuel laid in for the devil's kitchen. So many persons who are unblamable, as we say, in their lives, walk without offence, are negatively holy, these seem to be good men, and approved; but if we search them further, to the bottom, their

hypocrisy appears, that all this was for vainglory, or some carnal interest; they heap up wrath, and shall have that wrath which is so dreadful, that hell is called by that name, in great measure; or he himself by his hypocrisy is daily filling up that cup of wrath which he must drink of eternally. A hypocritical nation are the people of God's wrath, Isa. 10:5, 6, whom he appoints to ruin. They go about to mock God as they do men; but they deceive themselves, God is not mocked. They do as those who use much art to hide the wrinkles and defects of nature, but God can see Jezebel under all her paint, and find out the wife of Jeroboam, notwithstanding her disguise, and will punish the dissembler with the lake of fire; and then what shall become of the professor? All that love and make a lie are doomed to that dungeon of darkness. Hypocrisy is the loudest lie that ever was told, because it is given to God himself. It may be said to every hypocrite, as Peter to Ananias, 'Thou hast lied, not to man, but to God,' Acts 5:4; for he tells God, and would make him believe, he forbears gross sins, and is negatively holy, because it is his will, when he neglects his positive precepts, wherein he hath discovered most of his will. Now such as live in omissions, notwithstanding all their profession, and all their negative piety, are but jugglers and dissemblers. They who are partial in their holiness are not sound at heart. Whoever obeys any command out of conscience, will endeavour obedience to every command. David is approved for his integrity, from the universality of his obedience, 1 Kings 14:8. So Zacharias and Elisabeth are declared righteous before God, i.e., upright, 'walking in all the statutes and commandments of the Lord blameless,' Luke 1:6. Uprightness makes no baulks in the field of divine precepts. Were not this man who lives in omissions unsound, he would fear omissions as much as commissions, for sincerity hates every evil way, Ps. 119:104, and he would be careful to obey affirmative as well as negative commands; for uprightnes, as Moses, hath the whole law in its hands, nay, written in its heart, and

expounded in its life. But this man, who, like a globous body, toucheth the law of God in some one point, but meets not in the rest, sheweth plainly that he is hollow within, as your globes are. For, observe it, if this man were sincere, and acted upon conscientious grounds, then those pious reasons upon which he forbears sins of commission, would incline him to take heed of sins of omission. If he forbears commissions, because they are against the will of God, which should be the main ground of all obedience, Ps. 119:5, 6, then he would also take heed of omissions, because they are as much against the will of God as commissions. If the authority of God were that which swayed him in his negative, the same would move him to positive holiness, for there is the same authority in negative and in positive precepts, Exod. 20. The same God that saith, 'Thou shalt not steal,' saith, 'Thou shalt be diligent to know the state of thy flock; and thou shalt give to him that asketh.'

Again, if this man abstains from commissions, because they dishonour God, he would also take heed of omissions, for they dishonour God also. Every breach of the law is a dishonour to the lawgiver, Rom. 2:23, 24. Further, if he forbear commissions, because he is redeemed from them with the blood of Christ, 1 Pet. 1:17–19, he would take heed of omissions; for Christ did not only redeem from sin, but also unto service: Tit. 2:14, 'He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.' Once more, if he did forbear commissions, because they are injurious to his own soul, and deprive him of heaven and happiness, then he would take heed of omissions, for they are as destructive to his soul, and will as certainly hinder it of heaven, as the text assureth us. So that upon whatsoever conscientious grounds he forbears commissions, he would upon the same grounds take heed of omissions, which he not doing, proclaims himself a hypocrite, and as such, is most justly condemned to die

eternally. He that forbears sin from a principle of grace, will be as careful to do good as to abstain from evil. Restraining grace matters not much the omission of good, but renewing grace or holiness in truth cannot allow it. Such a man chooseth the things that please God, Isa. 56:4.

CHAPTER XXVI

Use 1. Of the doctrine by way of information, How dreadful will be the condition of those that live in sins of commission

Having explained the doctrine, by describing the nature and danger of sins of omission, as also the reasons why Christ will sentence those that are guilty of them to an eternal banishment from his presence, and to eternal torments with the devil and his angels, I now proceed to the application of the point. This doctrine may be useful, 1. By way of information; 2. By way of examination; 3. By way of exhortation.

1. The doctrine is useful by way of information.

Use 1. If Christ will condemn men for sins of omission at the great day, what will become of them that are guilty of gross crimes, and who live in sins of commission? 'These must be doubly punished, for they are guilty of omissions and commissions too. If they who feed not the hungry, and clothe not the naked, shall be damned, surely they who take meat out of the mouth of the poor, and rob the needy of their raiment by fraud or force, shall be doubly damned. If they be sent to hell who visit not the sick and imprisoned, how doleful will their judgment be who wound the servants of Christ, and cast them

into prison! If the mere civil man be excluded the highest heaven, surely the scandalous sinner shall be cast into the lowest hell: Jer. 22:13, 'Woe to him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong.'

If the tree that is void of good fruit be hewn down, and cast into the fire, Mat. 3:10, what will become of the tree that aboundeth in evil fruit? If barrenness of good expose to divine vengeance, what will fruitfulness in evil do? If the fig tree that had leaves and no figs was cursed, and withered away, what curse shall befall those trees that bear gall and wormwood? 'Whose grapes are the grapes of Sodom, and whose clusters are the clusters of Gomorrah.' If men shall perish who call not on the name of God, what shall become of them who blaspheme the name of God? If they who hear not the word of God shall be destroyed, what destruction shall befall them who deride it, and mock at it? If those whose feet run not the ways of God's commandments, who lift not up their eyes to heaven and pray, whose hands are folded in their bosoms, and whose tongues talk not of judgment, shall be cast into the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone for ever; where shall they be cast whose feet are swift to shed blood, whose eyes are full of adultery, and cannot cease from sin; whose hands are full of bribery and extortion, and whose tongues are full of cursing and lying, and whose throat is an open sepulchre.

What tongue can tell the misery that will befall such sinners at the great day? If not relieving the poor, and not supplying the needy, and not visiting the fatherless and widow, the sick and imprisoned, cause such a severe sentence to be denounced against them as, 'Go, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels for ever,' what sentence shall be denounced against those that grind the faces of the poor, that make music of their moans, Isa. 3:15, that sell

them for a pair of shoes, Amos 2:6, who oppress the poor and crush the needy, Amos 4:1, and who slay the widow and fatherless?

'Go to, you rich men, weep and howl for the miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Behold, the hire of the labourers which have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them that have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth. Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you,' James 5:1–6. Those sins that are crying, and do more especially require vengeance at the hands of God, and provoked divine justice to take notice of them, are sins of commission. As murder: Gen. 4:10, 'The voice of thy brother's blood crieth to me from the ground.' Sodomy, 'The cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, because their sin is grievous,' Gen. 18:20. Oppression of God's servants, Exod. 3:7, or of any widows or fatherless: 'If thou afflict the widow and the fatherless, and they cry unto me, I will surely hear their cry, for I am gracious,' Exod. 22:23; or of any poor and needy, as in the text of James 5:4, 'The cry of the labourers are entered into the ears of the Lord.'

1. These sinners who are guilty of these gross commissions are guilty of omissions also; they have the weight of both sorts of sins to press them to hell. A man may be guilty of omissions, as not to believe, not to pray, not to examine his own soul, &c., and yet be free from gross commissions; he may be no liar, no thief, no oppressor, no murderer, no adulterer, at least in regard of the outward acts, which I intend here; but a man cannot live in gross commissions, but he must also live in omissions. The oppressor must omit to relieve the poor; he that destroys life must neglect to save it. Besides, they who live in such commissions must omit faith and repentance, which are

inconsistent with them; they must neglect daily to call on God, for prayer would make them leave such sinning; but indeed such sinning makes them leave off, though possibly they did sometimes begin to seek God in a formal way, praying. Those in the 5th of James, who oppressed the labourers, who condemned and killed the just, gross commissions, had their riches corrupted, and garments moth-eaten, i.e., were guilty of omissions, would rather their wealth should waste with rust, and their raiments with moths, than bestow any on the poor. Those in Hosea 4:1, 2, who were guilty of swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and adultery, omitted truth, and mercy, and the knowledge of God.

2. Sins of commission, I mean those gross crimes, do more openly dare God than omissions do. By omissions we deny him, but by such commissions we dare him, and defy him. Such sinners, as it were, bid God do his worst, they fear him not. They do, at least implicitly, mock at his threatenings, and deride his reproofs, and slight his judgments that are executed on their fellows before their own faces. They speak in the language of the Jews, Isa. 5:19, 'That say, Let him make speed, and hasten his work, that we may see it, and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh and come, that we may know it.' These jeer at God's judgments, and mock at his menaces; they credit not his comminations, nor expect their execution. They look on the words of their prophets as mere wind, and the matter of their prophecy as a mere mockery. 'Let him make speed,' &c., 'and the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh;' i.e., you have much and long told us, that your Holy One, forsooth, who cannot abide sin, 'and who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity,' will execute his judgments on us for our sins, and that this is by counsel established, and cannot be reversed. We would willingly see these judgments so much talked of, and do wish that they may hasten, and not linger as they do; for we neither believe you nor fear them. But who were these

that spake at this desperate rate? Truly those that lived in commissions, 'who brought forth wild grapes,' Isa. 5:4; who brought forth filthy, naughty, abominable fruit; instead of grapes, the vineyard brought forth thorns and briers. These were they who dared the divine justice, as if they had been incarnate devils.

3. Gross sins of commission are more directly contrary to the very light of nature. Indeed it is against the light of nature not to feed the hungry, and clothe the naked, and help the distressed; but it is much more against the light of nature to oppress the poor and needy, and slay the widow and fatherless. Because natural light is much more disturbed by gross commissions than by bare neglects, it appears that those are more against a natural conscience than these. We read that the natural light of the heathen did discover the sinfulness of their commissions, and condemn them for them, Rom. 1:2, 32; and that the barbarians, by the light of nature, could discover the evil of murder, and how vengeance, like a blood-hound, did pursue the violent man, to take and slay him, Acts 28:4. Now that which so directly opposeth, not only Scripture, but nature, and that which a man will do, as it were, violence to his own conscience that he may commit, must unquestionably be dreadful, and out of measure sinful. As the apostle saith, 'To him that knoweth to do good, and doth it not, to him it is sin,' James 4:17; so say I to him that knoweth he should not do these evils, and doth them, to him they are sins, i.e., a wickedness with a witness. They have more of enmity against God, and contempt of his mind, and have sadder marks of divine vengeance. But what sins are more against knowledge, than those that are not only committed in spite of Scripture, but also of nature itself. No vinegar so sharp as that which is made of the sharpest wine. 'He that knoweth his master's will, and doth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes.' He that knoweth his master's will is that

he should forbear such sins, and yet commits them, shall be beaten with many stripes, Luke 12.

4. Gross sins of commission are more scandalous to men, and bring more dishonour to God. They give greater offence to men; good men are grieved by them. Lot's righteous soul was vexed with the unclean conversation of the Sodomites, 2 Pet. 2:7. David tells us rivers of tears ran down his eyes, because the wicked broke God's law, Ps. 119:136. Jeremiah wept in secret for the sins of Israel, Jer. 13:17. Wicked men's sins cause godly men's sorrow. They need not disturb the righteous by their persecutions of them; they do it sufficiently by their transgressions against God. As these gross sins grieve the good, so they harden the bad; others are encouraged to dress themselves by such foul and false glasses, Jer. 23:14. Vile sinners presume their states good though their lives be bad, because they are no worse than such and such, (possibly who are learned, and rich, and therefore counted wise men,) and therefore, whatever befalls them, they shall fare as well as others. Alas! how many walk more by patterns than by commands, and so are led by following others to hell! And how deep will they be damned who draw others after them to sin and hell! 'They who forsake the law, praise the wicked,' Prov. 28:4, i.e., commend them for their wickedness, as they who keep the law condemn them. Gross commissions dishonour God most; they cause others to speak ill of God, and disgracefully of religion. Nathan tells David, that by his uncleanness and murder he had caused the enemies of God to blaspheme, 2 Sam. 12. If a child of God commit one such noisome act, the wicked quickly take the scent, and a cry is raised among the whole pack, who with open mouth upon this pursue and blaspheme God and godliness. By these particulars it appears that gross commissions are sins of the greatest size, and therefore must have the greatest severity. If they are used as bastards who met not Israel with bread and water, how will God use them at

last who meet his people with bonds and fetters, with fire and fagot? If Christ pronounce such a dreadful sentence in the text against the (comparative) green tree, what shall become of the dry?

CHAPTER XXVII

Negative godliness is not enough.— Christ's impartiality in judgment

Use 2. In the second place, if Christ will condemn men at the great day for sins of omission, it may inform us that a negative religion, or negative Christianity, is not enough. Many please themselves that they are gracious, because they are not openly vicious; and that they are pious, because they are not scandalously profane; but they mistake and deceive themselves. It is good not to do evil, but it is evil not to do good. Negative Christians are, as it was said of Galba, *potius extra vitia quam cum virtute*, rather seemingly free from vice, than really filled with virtue. Or at best, as was reported of Cato, that he was *homo virtuti simillimus*, a man that looked like a virtuous person.

How many civil men presume their persons holy, because they are not so filthy as those who rake in ditches and kennels, and defile themselves daily with scandalous abominations; and they presume their states to be good, and themselves in the way to heaven, because they are no drunkards, no swearers, no adulterers, no thieves, no murderers; when for all this they shall be cast to hell, because they are no believers, no penitents, no obedient subjects to the King of saints, 'Because they know not God, and obey not the gospel,' 2 Thes. 1:7, 8. Such men are farther distant from good than from evil.

Ceasing from evil is not enough, it is but one step heavenward; doing of good must accompany it, or it will be of small moment.

I confess, when I behold a civil man, who is harmless in his carriage, unblameable, in regard of scandal, in his public conversation, and courteous in his behaviour to all, I cannot but respect him, and am ready to wish (as Athanasius, that all the world of atheists and profane wretches would turn hypocrites) that all scandalous sinners would turn civilians, and come so far towards holiness; but yet I must say that this is scarce half way to Christianity. He is not half a saint, who is but a negative saint. The forbearance of gross corruptions is the easiest and least part of religion, and therefore will not speak any man in a state of salvation. The tree that is barren, and without good fruit, is for the fire, as well as the tree that brings forth evil fruit.

For men to think to excuse themselves that they do no hurt, wrong neither man, woman, or child, and are not, as the pharisee said, as the publicans, who generally were oppressors, is but a vain, foolish thing. The idle servant might have said, Lord, I did no harm with my talent; I did not lay it out in rioting and drunkenness, or any way to thy dishonour; I only hid it, and did not improve it, Mat. 25, yet this was enough to condemn him. Can we call ground good ground for bearing no weeds, if it never bring forth good corn? Or do we count that servant a good servant, who doth not wrong his master in his estate, by purloining or wasting it, if he live idle all day, and neglect the business his master appoints him? Believe it, reader, thou mayest not be morally evil to the abomination of men, and yet not spiritually good to the acceptation of God. He keeps no law of God, who minds only the negative part of it. A life free from enormity is too often accompanied with a heart full of iniquity. And that this negative holiness is insufficient, will appear if we consider,—

1. That the Holy Ghost characteriseth a godly man, both negatively and positively. The Scripture tells us that a true Christian minds both parts of the law, its commanding part as well as its forbidding part. When the Holy Ghost speaks of David's goodness, he tells us that he served the wills of God in his generation, not only his forbidding will, but also his commanding will, Acts 13:36. When Job is commended as a godly man, he is said to eschew evil, there was his negative holiness; and to fear God, there was his positive holiness, Job 1:1, 8. The psalmist describes the happy man by his holiness both ways.

(1.) By way of negation: 'Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, (i.e., that committeth not wickedness, which is the consultation of the ungodly,) nor standeth in the way of sinners, (i.e., that goeth not on with pleasure in any course of profaneness,) nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful,' (i.e., that hardeneth not his heart against advice and admonition, &c.)

(2.) By way of position: 'But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in that law doth he meditate day and night.' His affection to the law, and his meditation in it, are both positive; and without these the man could neither be holy nor happy. He might have been able to say, I have not walked in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stood in the way of sinners, nor sat in the seat of the scornful, and yet been a wicked and cursed man; for negatives neither speak nor make any man holy. It is a positive quality that gives being, perfection, and denomination to piety; therefore Jehu is branded for a wicked man, notwithstanding all his zeal against Baal, because he took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel, 2 Kings 10:29–31. Philosophers tell us that motions are imperfect, and but in fieri, whilst they are passing from the terminus a quo, and are not perfect, or in facto esse, till the terminus ad quem be attained. Whilst a man is departing from evil, he is but an imperfect Christian; when he

comes to the doing of good, which is the end of the former, then he is a Christian indeed.

2. The law, which is the rule of religion, is affirmative as well as negative. Every man is so far perfect in his calling, or in any art, as he agrees with his rule; and every man is so far religious, and no farther, as he agreeth with the will of God revealed in his word, which is the rule of religion: Gal. 6:16, 'As many as walk according to this rule, peace be to them,' &c. Now this rule hath positive as well as negative commands; nay, all its negative commands have, as hath been shewn before, somewhat positive in them, and therefore negative holiness cannot be sufficient. He that makes not conscience of every part of God's will, makes conscience of no part of God's will. He that denieth ungodliness and worldly lusts, because the law, his rule, forbids them, will also live righteously, soberly, and godly, because the same rule commands them, Titus 2:11, 12. Indeed, all true eschewing of evil doth proceed out of love to good, so that he who doth not delight in good, and do it, cannot eschew evil out of any good principle. Observe the rule, Eph. 4:23, 24, 'And be renewed in the spirit of your mind. And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness;' Isa. 1:15. But men love to be complete in everything, but that which deserves exactness.

3. A heathen may be negatively religious. A Cato, a Seneca, an Aristides, may be free from intemperance, bribery, injustice, uncleanness, and all gross sins; and can we think that religion sufficient for us which heathens may attain to? Is there nothing revealed by the sunlight of Scripture for us to do, which they were unable to see by the dim rush candle of nature? The Holy Ghost acquaints us with the condition of the heathen: Eph. 2:12, 'That they were without God, without Christ, strangers to the covenant of promise, and aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and without

hope in the world.' In which words we have their dreadful estate, how far they are from any Saviour, and so from any hope of salvation; which would not be, if their negative holiness were sufficient to make them happy.

Use 3. If Christ will condemn men for sins of omission at the great day, then it may inform us of the justice and righteousness of Christ, that 'he loveth righteousness, and hateth iniquity,' Ps. 45; and again, 'that he shall judge the world in righteousness,' Acts 17:31. Herein it appears,—

1. Because he spares no sins. He condemneth those that live in omissions, little light sins in the imaginations of men, as well as those that live in commissions. He sends to hell those that do not relieve, as well as those that rob his people. He poureth out his wrath upon them that do not visit his members in prison, as well as those that cast them into prison. Those sins that are peccadilloes in the world's eye, have felt the heavy weight of his hand. The man that gathered a few sticks was destroyed with stones. Uzzah touched the ark out of kindness, but God smote him with death for it. Moses, for omitting the circumcision of his child, was like to have lost his life. Aaron's two sons, Nadab and Abihu, neglected, as is supposed by expositors, to fetch fire from the altar to burn their sacrifices, and were destroyed with fire from heaven, Lev. 10. The impartiality of Christ is evident herein, that at the great day he will bid the civil as well as the scandalous sinner depart from him into everlasting fire.

2. Because he spareth no sinners. He saith to all those on his left hand, whether rich or poor, great or small, high or low, if guilty of these omissions, 'Depart from me into everlasting fire.' He is no respecter of persons; he spareth none for their greatness and strength. His hand reacheth the tallest cedars, and plucks up the

strongest oaks. Neither power nor majesty can free or exempt persons from his severity. If princes and potentates will omit their duty, they must expect to feel his fury, Rev. 6:15. Pharaoh, Jeroboam, Ahab, Ahaz, Nebuchadnezzar, Herod, might neglect their duties to men, and escape punishment from men, but could not neglect their duties to God at so easy a rate. As all their sins were within the view of his omniscience, so all their persons were within the reach of his vengeance, and that found them out to their cost.

He spareth none for their nearness to him. He beholdeth them afar off that are very near to him, when they make bold with him. Judges on earth may sometimes, though sinfully always, favour their kindred in an unrighteous cause, but he judgeth otherwise: 'Though Coniah be to be as the signet on my right hand, I will pluck him thence,' Jer. 22:24. Israel was the nearest people to God of any people in the world, Ps. 148:14, with Deut. 4:7; and Moses was the nearest to God of any of the people of Israel, yet they were excluded his rest for not believing his word; and he was denied entrance into Canaan for not sanctifying God's name.

3. He judgeth all according to law. This is another requisite to suffice; he will not condemn any for their omissions or commissions, but according to law. We count that judge just indeed that keeps the law, and will not upon any account swerve from that. Our Lord Jesus, when he sentenceth those that neglect to feed the hungry, and clothe the naked, &c., to everlasting fire, proceedeth according to law exactly. These persons, as hath been before proved, are under the law of works, and so must stand or fall for ever, as they obey or disobey that law. Now that law condemneth for omissions, and not doing our duties, as well as for commissions, and abounding in enormities. It saith, 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law, to do them,' Gal. 3:13. Observe, the law curseth

those that omit, that continue not to do their duties, as well as those that do the contrary.

4. He will render to every man according to his works. He may punish, and doth in this world, less, but neither in the other nor in this more, than our iniquities deserve. All men's sins are not equal, therefore all men's sufferings shall not be equal. According to the degree of men's defilements, such shall be the degree of their punishment. He distinguisheth between sins and sins, between them that afflict his children, and those that relieve them not in their afflictions; between those that hale them to prisons, and put them to death, and those that visit them not in prison. He exacteth not of men more than is meet.

He will put a difference between heathens, who have little means to know and worship him aright, and Jews, to whom were committed the oracles of God, to whom pertained the adoption, and the covenant, and the giving of the law, and the promises. These have greater means and mercies, and therefore greater wrath and severity: 'Tribulation and anguish, indignation and wrath on the soul of every man that doth evil; on the Jew first, and also on the Gentiles,' Rom. 3:2, 9:4, and 2:7. 'You only have I known, therefore you will I punish of all the families of the earth for your iniquities,' Amos 3:2. He will distinguish between Jews and Christians that live under the gospel. Omissions are more tolerable, and less punishable, among heathens than Jews, and among Jews before Christ's coming, than those Jews that lived under the gospel, and saw Christ's miracles, and heard his sermons, with those Christians that enjoy the gospel, Mat. 11:21–23. It will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon than for Chorazin and Bethsaida, and for Sodom and Gomorrah than for Capernaum, because these lived under greater light and helps, and yet continued in the neglect of faith and repentance.

He will not punish those that omit their duties ignorantly, when they are diligent to improve what advantages they have for knowledge, so severely as he will those who neglect their duties knowingly. God expects a life answerable to that light which he hath given us, and if we imprison his truth in unrighteousness, we provoke him in the highest degree: 'He that knoweth his master's will, and doth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes. He that knoweth not his master's will, and doth it not, shall be beaten with few stripes.' Both shall be beaten, but the former suffer more stripes than the latter. It is cold comfort, yet herein the righteousness of the judge appeareth, that some who are guilty of omissions shall have a cooler hell than others: 'For he rendereth to every man according to his works,' Rom. 2.

CHAPTER XXVIII

Practical godliness necessary

Use 4. If Christ will condemn men at the great day for sins of omission, for not visiting the sick and imprisoned, and not relieving the hungry and naked, then it may inform us that nothing short of practical godliness will speak a man's estate safe at this day, or forespeak his estate to be comfortable at that day. The want of this is the cause of these men's condemnation. They might forbear injuring the saints; they might speak them fair, bid them, Be ye fed, be ye clothed; they might wish them well, they might honour and respect them, as Herod did the Baptist, for their sanctity and righteousness, yet because they were void of this practical godliness, they gave them not wherewith to be fed and clothed, they are banished the presence of Christ, and adjudged to the curses and company of devils.

1. A great profession will not do without this practical godliness. Some soar high in their professions of, and pretences to, greater strictness and degrees of grace and holiness than others, who, alas! fall foully often on earth, and always into hell, for lack of this practical godliness; as some great tradesmen, who living wholly upon their credit with others, without any stock of their own, quickly break and miscarry. A profession is but as the leaves of a tree, a sign of fruit, not the fruit itself. There is a vast difference between leaves and fruit. Some think that Christ had not cursed the fig tree if it had been without leaves as well as without fruit; but when by its leaves it professed to have fruit, and invited him to it in expectation thereof, and disappointed him, he presently claps a curse on it, that withers it at the very roots. The pharisees were great professors, made broad their phylacteries, wherever they went, would be known for persons extraordinarily pious and religious, yet how wicked was their state: Mat. 5:20, 'Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, ye shall never enter into the kingdom of God;' and how woeful is their condition! 'Woe to you scribes, pharisees, hypocrites!' ye live in omissions, ye neglect the great things of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith, Mat. 23:23.

2. Great gifts and parts will not do without this. A man may have choice natural abilities, rare acquired accomplishments, yea, common gifts of the Spirit of God, and yet for want of this practical godliness be damned. What amiable words come out of Balaam's mouth! he speaks like a saint, yea, like an angel. How often have I heard his prophecies with great admiration and affection! His tongue hath melted my heart, and yet he had no good works, for all his many good words; and his lack of practical godliness ruined him. What special endowments had they who preached in the name of Christ, and in his name cast out devils, and in his name did many marvellous works, and yet were cast to devils for being workers of

iniquity, as all are who are void of this practical godliness, Mat. 7:21, 23. What excellent gifts doth the apostle suppose a man to have, the gift of prophesying, of understanding all mysteries, and all knowledge, and of all faith, so as to remove mountains, and yet if he have not charity, he is nothing, &c., 1 Cor. 13:2, 3. If he love not his brother, and express it not to his power, by spiritual and bodily charity, which is part of practical godliness, he is nothing in God's eye, whatever he may be in the eyes of men.

3. Great privileges, with seeming performances, without this practical godliness, will not do. They who had tabernacle, temple, ark, covenant, promises, for want of this were destroyed; the ark could not preserve them. Afterwards, when they neglected practical godliness, the temple could not protect them. He bids the Jews go and see what he did to his place at Shiloh for their iniquities. He made them monuments of his fury, who had been patterns of his pity, when they neglected this practical godliness.

How meanly doth God discourse of seeming obedience to his own institutions when this is neglected. Though they had his own divine stamp on them, and were signs of the sweetest sacrifice, and the most acceptable service imaginable, and he had often taken delight in them, yet when they left off to do well, observe his language about them: 'To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to me, saith the Lord. Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination to me; your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth; I cannot bear them.' What strange expressions are here of his own institutions! But what is the reason? Truly the lack of this: ver. 17, 'Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow,' Isa. 1:11–28. And how peremptorily doth he beat men off from trusting in their privileges, as of no advantage without this practical godliness: 'Think not,' saith

the Baptist, 'to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father.' This was a great privilege, for with him and his seed was the covenant made, and to them were circumcision, and the passover, the seals of it, given. But what counsel doth he give them? Truly, to mind practical godliness. Bring forth fruit meet for repentance; i.e., for all the great privilege in which you take so much pride, and upon which you lay so much stress, yet you can never flee from the wrath to come, unless you bring forth good fruit, fruit meet for repentance—such fruit as will speak your hearts to be changed, such fruit as is suitable to a renewed nature. This, and this alone, is practical godliness. The coherence in that Mat. 3:8–10, deserves our observation. And John saith unto the Pharisees, 'O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? bring forth therefore fruit meet for repentance: and think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father; for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham.' Do not think that God is bound to, and must save you, because ye are Abraham's seed, for God can of stones make sons of Abraham. 'And now also the axe is laid to the root of the tree; therefore every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire.'

CHAPTER XXIX

The condition of men only civil is unsafe and sad

Use 5. If Christ will condemn men at the great day for sins of omission, for not relieving the poor and afflicted, it may inform us that the condition of men merely civil, and negatively religious, will be woeful at that day. Why? Because Christ will command them to

depart from him into everlasting fire. Ah how dreadful will it be to take an eternal farewell of the Lord of life, the God of all grace, the well of salvation, and to enter into a state of death and wrath, and that for ever. 'If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the sinner and ungodly appear,' 1 Pet. 3. By sinner, I suppose, is meant the scandalous man, who liveth in commission. It is said of Mary Magdalene, who had been guilty of notorious enormities, Luke 7, 'For she is a sinner;' and it is said of the publican (whose whole tribe was infamous for extortion and bribery) that he was a sinner: 'He is gone to be a guest to one that is a sinner.' By ungodly, as the very word ὁ ἀσεβῆς signifieth, is meant one that liveth in omissions, one that liveth without the worship of God; i.e., without the love and fear, the acknowledgment and adoration of this God. Worship is that high honour and solemn respect that the creature owes to God; not to give him this is ungodliness. An ungodly man is one that doth not seek God, nor trust God, nor obey God; that doth not own him in his mercies as his father and benefactor, nor in his judgments as a wise master, that would by chastisements make him partaker of his holiness. Now if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the sinner and ungodly appear? If there be a difficulty in the salvation of the righteous, there is a necessity of the damnation of the sinner and ungodly. If the righteous get so hardly to heaven, the sinner and ungodly must surely be cast into hell. Where shall the sinner and ungodly, those that are guilty of these omissions and commissions, appear? They must appear somewhere, but they can appear nowhere with comfort, or without unspeakable horror. Where shall they appear? before God? why, they hate his being, despise his dominions, slight his love, disobey his laws, and indeed seek his life; and can they appear before him? Can they look for a smile from his face, who loathe him perfectly? or can they stand before his frowns and fury? Do they know the weight of his hand, the killing darts of his eye, and the power of his anger? No, surely, they cannot appear

before him: 'Thou, even thou art to be feared; and who may stand when thou art angry?' Where shall they appear? Shall they appear before Christ the judge of quick and dead? before him who sometimes invited them earnestly to come to him, and entreated them affectionately to accept of him, and live with him? Shall they appear before him? It is his call which they have despised, and his commands which they have violated. It is his blood which they have trampled on, and his Spirit whom they have grieved. They are his members whom the sinners have oppressed and wronged, and his children, and spouse, and body, which the ungodly have neglected, and not relieved. Oh how glad would they be if the rocks would crush them to pieces, that they might be delivered from the wrath of the Lamb! Rev. 6:15. Their severe sentence, which may make every ear to tingle, and heart to tremble that hears it, will proceed from his mouth: 'Then shall he say unto them on his left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.' But where shall these sinners and ungodly appear? Shall they appear before the saints? Alas! with what face can they behold them, whose persons they have imprisoned, whose estates they have plundered, whose profession they have derided, whose names they have abused, and whom they have often wished out of the way, and thought the troublers of the family, and town, and country where they lived? If the saints plead it must be against them, for they cannot but as justices agree and concur with the sentence of the judge as righteous and just.

But where shall they appear? Shall they appear before the law? No, that condemneth them for the least omission, for the smallest commission, to hell fire; they are the prohibitions of the law that the sinner hath transgressed, and they are the precepts of the law that the ungodly hath not obeyed; and therefore the law curseth them both to the uttermost. The law enableth sin to bind over the

transgressor of it to the wrath and curse of God; hence it is said, 'The strength of sin is the law.'

But where shall they appear? Shall they appear before the gospel? No, their omissions have most relation to the gospel. They have not believed the truth of it. They have not embraced the goodness of it. They have not obeyed the precepts of it. They rejected the tenders of pardon and life made to them in the gospel with frequency and fervency. They would not come to their physician to be healed of their mortal diseases. Though he came to them, and offered his help freely, and assured them of effectual and speedy recovery, if they would be directed by him, yet they rejected the counsel of God against themselves; therefore the gospel will condemn as surely, and more sorely, than the law: 'If the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every disobedience received a just recompence of reward: how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?' Heb. 2:2, 3; John 3:19. And again, 'of how much sorer punishment shall he be thought worthy?'

But where shall they appear? Shall they appear on earth? Surely there will be no earth then for them to appear in. That earth which they sported so much in, as leviathan in the waters, and which they were fond of, and delighted in, will be burnt up with fire, and consumed with fervent heat.

But where shall they appear? Shall they appear in heaven? Can an unsanctified heart enter into the Holy of holies? No: 'Without holiness no man shall see the Lord,' Heb. 12:14. An impure eye cannot behold such an infinitely pure object. When angels, seated in heaven as their habitation, once lost their purity, they soon lost their place. Heaven could not bear them; it is not as Noah's ark, to take in all sorts, clean or unclean: 'Into it can in no wise enter anything that

is unclean,' Rev. 21:27. Neither could they bear heaven. The spiritual delights of that celestial court became unsuitable to their polluted natures. The rarest dainties and most curious delicacies are altogether unsavoury and unpleasant to an aguish and distempered palate.

But where shall they appear? If they cannot appear before God their maker, before the Lord Jesus Christ, before the saints, before whom shall they appear? If they cannot appear before the law, before the gospel, before what shall they appear? It must be in hell, before devils and damned spirits, with them to lodge and dwell for ever. Ah, the great day is called the terrible day of the Lord Jesus, and it will be a terrible day indeed to these mere civilians.

It is called the day of perdition of ungodly men. It is to others a day of consolation: 'Lift up your heads with joy, for the day of your redemption draweth nigh;' a day of promotion: 'It is your Father's pleasure to give you a kingdom,' Luke 12:32; John 17:24. A day of rest from all their labours, and sorrows, and sufferings, bodily or spiritually, Rev. 14:13. But it is the day of perdition of ungodly men. They who live without God here, must live without him for ever; and this farthest, utmost, endless departure of the creature from God, who is the only life and heaven of him, will be a death and hell with a witness. God will be God at that day in the account of the worst of men, though he be their laughing-stock and sinning-stock at this day.

Though these ungodly ones sit aloft here in the courts of men, and who but they, yet 'the ungodly shall not stand in his judgment,' Ps. 1:5. At the great day, when they shall be judged, 1. They shall be ashamed, they shall not stand, i.e., not hold up their heads with joy, but hang down their heads with shame, Dan. 12. Some shall arise to shame and confusion of face. 2. The ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, i.e., they shall not be justified. When they shall be tried for

their lives and deaths, for their endless, unchangeable states, they shall be cast and condemned. When all Adam's posterity shall make their personal appearance before the God of the spirits of all flesh, to receive their eternal doom; and when the judge of quick and dead, clothed with his majestic robes of glory, accompanied with an illustrious train of angels, shall sit down on the judgment seat, he shall pronounce a sentence of condemnation on all ungodly ones. 'If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, O Lord, who should stand?' Ps. 130:3; i.e., if thou, Lord, should observe exactly the best man's heart and life, and accordingly deal with him, not one man could be justified. Who shall stand, i.e., righteous, at thy bar? 3. The ungodly shall not stand in the judgment; i.e., they shall not conquer, when they shall be impleaded and accused by the devil and the law at that day. An army foiled, is said not to stand before their enemies. And again, an army beaten is said to fall before their adversaries, Dan. 11:25. And the conquerors are said to stand, Eph. 6:13. The devil will bring his large bills of indictments into the court against the ungodly, for he is ἀντίδικος, 1 Pet. 5:8, a court-adversary; and the law will second the devil, and join with him in his accusations; the sinner's conscience will join with both, and assent to the truth of their indictments. The ungodly will have no advocate to plead for him. Christ, that sometimes offered him that kindness, will now plead against him, and so he must needs fall and be conquered by his enemies

CHAPTER XXX

Sinners' conviction at the day of judgment. The purity of Christ's religion above all others

Use 6. If Christ will say to them on the left hand, 'Depart from me: for I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat;' or if Christ will condemn men for sins of omission at the great day, it informs us that Christ will be rational in his most severe proceedings, even to the conviction of the sinner's own conscience. I draw this from the coherence of the verses. Christ first pronounceth the sentence: ver. 41, 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire;' and then, ver. 42, he gives the reason, 'For I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat,' &c., which, though at first they seem to question, yet at last they are muzzled and put to silence. Jude tells us of solemn condemnation and solemn conviction of these ungodly ones, as the chief business of that day: 'Behold, he cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment on all, and to convince all that are ungodly amongst them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodlily committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him,' Jude 14, 15. Execution, by an hysteron proteron, is put before conviction; yet one great work of that great day is to convince these ungodly ones, and the severity of the process is against the ungodly.

This conviction implieth,

1. A reflection of conscience upon all their past and former sins. Conscience, as a glass, shall represent to the sinner all his lusts, which he hath loved above his soul and Saviour, in all their ugly features and loathsome colours. The books at that day will be opened, Rev. 20:12, i.e., the book of God's remembrance, Mal. 3, and the book of conscience. Sins are not gone as soon as done; God records them in his book of remembrance, and conscience will review them all in that day of vengeance. Though it could not be heard by the sinner in this world, for the noise of his carnal delights, and cry of his worldly delights, yet when it sets his sins in order before his eyes in their monstrous frightful shapes, it will thunder in

his cars, as Reuben to his brethren, Did not I tell you of this, and say, Do not sin, and thou wouldst not hear; therefore all this wrath, and fury, and flames, and darkness, and chains are come upon thee.

2. This conviction implieth a silencing the sinner, that he will have nothing to say either against God, or for himself. A man that is convinced hath his mouth stopped. When the spirit convinceth the world of sin, the world hath not a word to say against the sin and guilt which the law chargeth on it; every mouth is stopped, and all the world is guilty before God. How often is the poor creature self-convinced and self-condemned here; but soon after the sick qualms go off his stomach, and he is revived with the cordials of sinful shifts and excuses, wherewith he deludes himself, and presumes he may also deceive God; but at the great day, as his convictions will be more killing, so they will be more lasting. The man will be dumb and speechless when Christ shall say, Why didst thou deny to relieve my servants in their wants? Why didst thou slight my blood, neglect my worship, grieve my Spirit, and omit to obey my positive laws? Mat. 22:3–5. The very heathen, who shall be imprisoned in the dark dungeon of hell, for imprisoning the truth, and holding it in unrighteousness, will not have a motion in their breasts of accusing God for false imprisonment. How certainly then, and how fully, will the consciences of Christians, who lived under the gospel, justify God, when he shall condemn them for not believing, and not repenting, upon the messages he sent to them of pardon and life.

Use 7. If Christ will condemn men at the great day for sins of omission, it may inform us of the excellency of the Christian religion above all other religions. The excellency of any religion consisteth in the purity of its precepts, and strictness of its commands; now no religion is so holy in its commands, and so exact in its laws, as the Christian religion. Moral duties are advanced by it to their highest

perfection, and moral vices are debased by it to their lowest degradation. 'The commandment of the Lord is pure,' Ps. 19. 'Thy word is very pure.' Christ will condemn men to hell at the last day for omissions as well as commissions, for neglect of known duties, as well as for the perpetration of gross enormities.

1. If we consider the religion of the heathen, we shall find that it is vastly inferior in purity to the Christian religion. Among the Gentiles, who lived without the gospel, it can scarce be said there was any religion at all, for their gods were stocks, and stones, and trees, and fire, and water, and beasts, and dead men; nay, their precepts were so far from purity, that they commended and commanded impurity. As among the ancient Babylonians, in the worship of Venus, the women prostituted themselves to all strangers; nay, the very gods of the heathen did, according to their own fictitious writers, patronise all their impieties, even by their own patterns. Jupiter, the chief forsooth of their gods, who had his name from being a helping father, commits incest with his own sister Juno, and his daughter Minerva, sodomy with Ganymedes, ravisheth Europa, banisheth his father Saturn out of his kingdom. Venus was a whore, Mercury a thief, Bacchus a drunkard, &c. But to leave these, and speak to them that were more sober in their understandings, and not so vain in their imaginations, who had ἔργον νόμου, the work of the law written in their hearts, Rom. 2:14, and improved it to more purpose than others; yet these pleased themselves with a little outward civility, without any inward or outward practical godliness. Their chief devotion consisted in abstaining from gross sins, which might expose them to the shame of men, and the doing some external acts of piety, as sacrificing and mumbling over a few prayers that were little significant. Oh how vastly doth the Christian religion excel this! This religion of the heathen doth rather hide sin than heal it. It doth not root the love of sin out of the heart, only restrain it in the life. But the

Christian religion doth forbid sin in the affections as well as in the conversation, it doth abscindere as well as abscondere, cure sin as well as cover it. In the best heathen the fire of their lusts was only raked up, and covered with ashes from the eyes of the world; but now in the Christian it is quenched, at least in part, and shall by degrees be wholly quenched. The Christian religion doth not only forbid all sins, or outward commissions, but also all lusts and inward inclinations: 'I beseech you, brethren, to abstain as pilgrims and strangers from all fleshly lusts, that war against the soul,' 1 Pet. 2:11. And a religious Christian doth not only forbear gross commissions, but also abhor secret sinful motions: 'I hate vain thoughts, but thy law do I love,' Ps. 119.

Those among the heathen who were the wisest, made nothing of neglecting to give God their love, and fear, and trust, their highest honour, and superlative esteem, and exactest obedience, which are the chief of religion. They allowed revenge in case of suffering injury; and some of their greatest lawgivers ordained theft to be unpunishable, if it could be done cleanly and cleverly, so as not to be found out. They put away their wives upon any small distaste, and took others during their pleasure only. Their whole religion had not one prohibition against inward corruptions, nor one precept for inward heart duties, and therefore must of necessity come short of the Christian religion for purity.

2. If we consider the Turkish religion, what a bundle of fooleries is Mahomet's Alcoran, and what a dunghill of filthiness is the religion of his followers! They allow a man as many wives as he can maintain, and encourage men to murder, with a promise of a (poetical, carnal) paradise to all that shall die in the wars against the Christians. They obey the lusts of their tyrant in all things, even to the murder of their sovereign's nearest relations, or chiefest ministers of state, against

the very light and law of nature. They do not so much as profess to mind those heart prohibitions and precepts, without which all external holiness is but as a rotten carcase, noisome and unsavoury to God's nostrils, and without any loveliness or life in his eyes. Nay, the popish religion, so far as it differs from the true Christian religion, is impure. They have sins that are venial, allow publicly of uncleanness. The pope hath a revenue out of the stews; they dispense with sodomy, incest, any sin, for money; they place all their holiness in some external mortifications, which God never required at their hands. But what doth the Christian religion do? It reacheth the heart, and teacheth the soul: 'The law of the Lord is perfect,' Ps. 19.

(1.) It directs the whole man, and gives laws to all the powers of the soul, and parts of the body. It directs us about our bodies and outward conversation: it commands to present our bodies a living sacrifice to God, Rom. 12:1, and the members of our bodies as instruments of righteousness unto holiness. It binds the eyes, ears, tongue, hands, feet, all the members to their good behaviour. It allows not any part to be abused to profaneness, Job 31:1; Ps. 119, 37:30, 31, and 34:13, 14; Rom. 6:13–17. It directs us about our souls: 'The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul,' Ps. 19:7. It changeth the nature of the soul, and opens the eye of it, and turns it from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, Acts 26:18. It directeth the mind to learn the knowledge of God, as the richest treasure, and choicest portion, and only happiness of the creature: 1 Chron. 28:9, 'And thou Solomon, my son, know the God of thy fathers.' It directs the will to choose this God for its suitable, and satisfying, and everlasting felicity, Ps. 73:25. It limits the affections as to their objects, and their motion towards those objects. It forbids inordinate desires after, or delight in, sublunary vanities, and commands moderation in our love to all created comforts: 'Let your moderation be known to all men. The time is short; let them

that have wives be as though they had none,' &c., 1 Cor. 7:29. It enjoins our love in the greatest degree to be placed on the worthiest object: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and all thy soul, and all thy strength,' Mat. 22:37. And so our fear: 'Fear him that can cast body and soul into hell; I say unto you, fear him.' It keeps all the unruly passions within their proper banks and bounds, and preserves the superior and inferior faculties in their proper places. Now, what religion, either of moralists or Mohammedans, doth so?

(2.) As it directs about the whole man, so it directs as to every part and passage of this man's conversation. We need never be at a loss for a rule, or at a stand what to do, if we will but use diligence to know and understand the revealed will of God. The Christian religion directs us in our callings, whether magistrates, ministers, tradesmen, soldiers, Luke 3. It directs us in our relations, as husbands, wives, parents, children, masters, servants, Eph. 5, and 6; Col. 3, and 4. It directs us in all conditions how to demean ourselves, in prosperity to be joyful, in adversity to consider how God hath set the one against the other; in afflictions to be patient and prayerful, and more studious of a right improvement of them, than of deliverance out of them. Under mercies it directs us to be thankful to God, the more cheerful in his service, and faithful in the use of our talents, for the honour of our Master. It directs us in all our thoughts, Jer. 4:14; words, Ps. 39:2; works, Prov. 4:23, 24, 26. It directs us in all our natural actions, as eating, drinking, sleeping, 1 Cor. 10:31; Titus 2:12; in our civil converses, Micah 6:8; in our religious duties, how to pray, James 1:5, 6; how to hear, how to receive, 1 Cor. 11.

(3.) Its purity above and beyond all other religions appears in this, that it forbids evil, all evil, nothing but evil; it commands good, whatsoever is good, and nothing but good, Isa. 1; Ps. 34:14. The laws

of Lycurgus among the Grecians, and Numa among the Romans, had somewhat of good in them, but not all; prohibited somewhat that was evil, but not all that was evil. But the Christian religion is of a larger extent, both in its precepts and prohibitions: 'I have seen an end of all perfections, but thy commandments are exceeding broad,' Ps. 119:96. A man with the eye of his body may behold an end of many worldly perfections, of many fair estates, great beauties, large parts, hopeful families; but a man with the eye of his soul (or by faith) may see an end of all earthly perfections. He may see the world in a flame, and all its pomp, and pride, and glory, and gallantry, and crowns, and sceptres, and riches, and treasures, turned into ashes. He may see the heavens passing away like a scroll, and the elements melting with fervent heat, and the earth, with the things thereon, consumed; and all its perfections, which men doated so much on, vanished into smoke and nothing. It is easy to see to the end of all terrene perfections; but it is difficult, yea impossible, to see to the end of divine precepts: 'But thy commandments are exceeding broad,' of a vast latitude, beyond our apprehension. They are so deep, that none can fathom them, Ps. 36:6; so high, that they are established in heaven, Ps. 119:48; so long, that they endure for ever, 2 Pet. 1; and so broad, that none can measure them. They are not only broad, but exceeding broad: 'Higher than heaven, longer than the earth, broader than the sea.' The commands of God reach the inward parts, the most secret motions and retired recesses of the soul. They reach all the privy thoughts. They pierce even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and discern the thoughts and intents of the heart, Heb. 4:12. They reach to all our actions; to those that seem smallest and of less concernment, as well as to those that are greater and of more concernment.

They reach to the manner, nay, circumstance, of actions. The divine law takes notice of all the circumstances of sins as aggravations of sin. As, 1. From the time of God's patience towards the sinner: 'These three years I came seeking fruit,' Luke 13:2. The place where the sin was committed: 'The sons of Eli lay with the women that assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation,' 1 Sam. 2:22. 3. From the season of committing the sin, Isa. 58:3, 4: 'Behold, in the day of your fast, ye find pleasure, and exact all your labour,' &c. 4. From the condition of the person that sins: 'He that eats bread with me lifts up his heels against me,' John 13:18. A familiar friend proves a treacherous enemy. So John 3:10, 'Art thou a master in Israel, and knowest not these things?' 5. From the means the person enjoys: 'You only have I known, therefore you will I punish for your iniquities;' Amos 4; Rom. 2:7. 6. From the manner of committing the sin: 'So they spread Absalom a tent on the top of the house, and Absalom went in to his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel,' 2 Sam. 16:22. Impudency in sin doth highly increase it. 'Were they ashamed when they committed all these abominations? No, they were not ashamed.' But how far are other religions from observing, much more from condemning, men for such sinful circumstances!

CHAPTER XXXI

The holiest have cause of humiliation

Use 8. If Christ will condemn men at the great day for sins of omission—'I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat,' &c.—then it may inform us, that the best have abundant cause of humiliation; for the best have in them abundant matter of condemnation. Oh, how many are our omissions every day, every hour! and by reason of them we are obnoxious to hell flames. Good Bishop Usher, who, for piety and

learning, was honoured through the Christian world; though he was early converted, and feared the Lord in his youth; though he was eminently industrious in private, in his family, in catechising and instructing, and praying often every day with and for them that were committed to his charge; though he was a constant preacher, and that with judgment and affection; though he was singularly famous for his many worthy pieces which he wrote in Latin and English, yet, after all this diligence and labour, when he came to die, the last words almost which he was heard to speak were, Lord, in special forgive my sins of omissions. Sins of omission will at death lie heavier on our hearts than we think for in life. If such a laborious person found cause of bewailing his omissions, surely much more cause have loiterers as we are.

Omissions are fruits of original corruption, as well as commissions. It is from that dead stock that we are so defective in bringing forth good fruit. Paul layeth his omissions at this door: Rom. 7:17–23, 'In my flesh is no good. When I would do good, evil is present with me,' &c. Now, whatsoever is the child of such a monstrous parent is loathsome, and calls on us for sorrow and self-abhorrence. Holy Job did but suspect his children to be guilty of omissions, of not sanctifying the name of God in their hearts, according to their duties, at their feasts and meetings: 'And he riseth early and offereth sacrifice, according to the number of them all,' Job 1:4, 5. He goeth to God, and begs pardon for them, and the blessing of God upon every one of them: 'It may be,' saith he, 'my sons have sinned, and cursed' (and not blessed God, so Calvin reads it) 'God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually.' Now if Job, upon a supposition that his sons might be guilty of omissions, was so constant in his addresses to God on their behalf, by way of humiliation, acknowledging their iniquity, and beseeching his mercy, what cause have we, on the behalf of our own souls, who know that we often offend God by omissions, and

know not how often we offend him by them? God may say to thee and me, reader, 'Is not thy wickedness great, and iniquities infinite?' as he to Job, chap. 20:5; where, by wickedness, expositors understand commissions, or those sins by which we prejudice or injure others; and by iniquities, omissions, by which we neglect, according to our duties, to relieve others. And Eliphaz calls his wickedness great, because, as I have shewed in the first information, they are in some respects greater, more heinous, than sins of omission; and his iniquities infinite, because sins of omission are more numerous than sins of commission. Corrupt nature can much better forbear what it hath an inclination and propensity to, than do that which it hath a dislike of, and an enmity against.

For their nature, I have proved that they are very ponderous, that they are breaches of a positive law, grieve the Holy Ghost, provoke God, defile the conscience, yea, and destroy the soul for ever—how light soever some make of them—and for their number they are infinite, beyond all account or reckonings. If they were small sins, their number would compensate their lightness; grains of sand are little, but a heap of them together is weighty: Prov. 27:3, 'The sand is weighty.' 'In many things we offend all,' James 3:2. Now, how should the nature and number of these sins humble us every day before the Lord! What hour is there when we are awake wherein we may not do more good than we do? When did we, in visiting a friend, or conferring with a neighbour, advantage their souls as we might and ought? Can we say that we have been as diligent in our callings, as watchful and exemplary in our conversations, as thankful for our mercies, as fruitful under the ordinances of God, and as faithful in the improvement of our talents, as we are commanded to be? Do we every day pray and read Scripture in our closets and families with that holy reverence, humility, faith, seriousness, and integrity which God requireth? Do not worldly concerns now and then contend with,

and jostle out, the worship of the great God—at least cause us to slip our prayers, and adjourn the Scripture's reading till a more convenient season? Are we every week-day laborious in our callings, out of conscience to God's precept, and not out of a principle of covetousness? Do we spend the greatest part of the day therein, without diversions by vain companions, or needless recreations? Are our affections in heaven, and our hearts above, while our actions are earthly, and our hands are busy here below? And do we deal in all things with others as we would, in the judgment of sound reason, that others should deal with us? Mat. 7:12. Is our daily carriage towards our relations sober, pious, affectionate, exemplary, and in all things as becomes the gospel of Christ? Oh, how many are our omissions, and what millions of them are we guilty of, and therefore they call aloud upon us to mourn for them! Others are in hell; and must weep for ever for them, where their sighs, and sobs, and prayers, and tears, will no way advantage them. Blessed be God, it is not so with us: though their tears will prove their hell, our tears, through the blood of Christ, may prove our heaven. Nehemiah, in the day of his solemn humiliation with the Jews, acknowledgeth and bewaileth their omissions, their not hearkening to his commands, and their not minding the wonders that he wrought for them, Neh. 9:16, 17. So Daniel, when he fasted and prayed, and confessed his sins, and the sins of his people, bewails their omissions: Dan. 9:6, 'We have not hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spake in thy name to our kings, and princes, and fathers, and to all the people of the land;' ver. 10, 'We have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God, to walk in the laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets;' ver. 13, 'All this evil is come upon us, yet made we not our prayer before the Lord our God.' What then? why, he judgeth himself and his people for these sins, and justifieth God in all his severity. 'O Lord, righteousness belongs to thee, but to us confusion of face, as at this day, to the men of Judah, and inhabitants of

Jerusalem,' ver. 7. So again, 'O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee,' ver. 8. Omissions must be lamented in this or the other world; we must all be ashamed of them here or hereafter; and is it not much better to bewail them here, than to bewail them in hell; to judge and condemn ourselves for them, than to be judged and condemned by God for them at the great day? Ah, at what a cheap rate may a Christian, by repentance, prevent that blow that will separate him and all his happiness, and bring him to that repentance which will ever be repented of, but all to no purpose! Oh, it is good to be wise on this side another world!

CHAPTER XXXII

Use of trial, whether we be guilty of these omissions or no

Use 2. This doctrine may be useful in the second place by way of examination or trial. If Christ will condemn men at the great day for sins of omission, then it concerns us to examine ourselves, whether or no we are of the number of them that shall be condemned for them at that day. Reader, it will not be amiss for thee to retire out of the crowd of the world into thy chamber, and there to commune with thine own heart concerning thy present condition, and how thou art like to fare for the future; nay, it is of infinite weight and concernment, and may be as much worth as thy soul and eternal salvation. How many prove bankrupts, and are quite undone for this world, for want of a timely casting up their accounts. If they had cast up their accounts before, and perceived how far they had run behind-hand, they might have retrenched their expenses, and advised and consulted some way to have prevented their utter destruction; but

they neglected to cast up their accounts, till their accounts cast them up, and it was too late to think of recalling what was past, or remedying what was amiss. Thus many that are professors, or Christians in title, deal with their own souls, and defer the trial of their estates till it be too late to amend anything amiss. If they would now in their health and strength search and try their hearts and ways, if they found things ill, they would have advantages and opportunities through the help of Christ to make them better: 'They might seek the Lord while he would be found, and call upon him while he is near.' They might sue and seek to Christ for eye-salve, that they might see the things of their peace; for raiment to hide their nakedness, that it might not appear to their everlasting shame; and for gold to enrich them for ever, to make them more worth than both worlds: if upon a faithful trial they found things well, it would rejoice their hearts, encourage them in ways of holiness, and confirm them against Satan's temptations to despair. But men generally neglect their examinations till God comes to examine them, as the rulers commanded Paul to be examined, with scourgings and scorpions. They presume all is well, hope the best, and would be sorry any should question their estates, and thus persist in their self-deceits, till they come to appear before God, that the gate of mercy be shut, and the golden sceptre of grace be wholly withdrawn, and their estates become as desperate as the estates of the devils.

To urge this use a little, reader, consider these two particulars:

1. Consider of what weight it is, and how much depends upon this question: Am I of the number of them that shall be condemned for sins of omission or not? Or am I guilty of omissions, so as to be banished the presence of Christ for them or not? I tell thee, thy eternal joy or sorrow, happiness or misery, pleasure or pain, depends on it. Do but read and consider, and then say whether it be not of

infinite weight: 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you before the foundation of the world: for I was hungry, and ye gave me meat; thirsty, and ye gave me drink,' &c. On the other side, 'Go, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat; thirsty, and ye gave me no drink,' &c. Friend, are not these weighty things, that depend on the performance or neglect of these positive precepts? 'Come, ye blessed of my Father.' Is not a coming close, near, intimate, familiar, into his very bosom and dearest embraces, to Christ, a weighty thing? To come to Christ here is so weighty, that he came to men into this world to call them to him, Mat. 11:28, and 9:13; but to come to Christ there in all his robes, and riches, and royalty, in all his beauty, and glory, and magnificence, will unquestionless be of more concern to the soul. On the contrary, 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.' Is there not weight, reader, in these words? Dost thou know what it is to bid Christ farewell, farewell for ever, to take an eternal leave of all good? Canst thou bear the extremity of our culinary fires for a day? Canst thou dwell in everlasting burnings, or abide unquenchable flames? Thou seest all this depends upon thy performing or neglect of the divine positive precepts. Doth it not concern thee, in a matter of such weight, to be faithful in a trial of thyself? Friend, are life and death, are eternal life and eternal death, indifferent things, or things of small moment? Are an eternal enjoyment of God, or an endless separation from God, mean or trivial things? Oh, how infinitely do they exceed and over-balance thy understanding! How short must thou of necessity come of conceiving of these things according to their weight? Alas, friend, what pitiful toys and trifles are houses, and lands, and friends, and relations, and honours, and preferments, ay, and liberty, and this temporal life, to an eternal happy life!

2. Consider, all are guilty of omissions, even the good as well as the bad, and therefore the more faithfulness, and prudence, and caution is requisite, lest we mistake. If saints and sinners are both guilty of omissions, how shall I know whether my omissions are such as will consist with salvation, unless I try and examine myself? The good man, being guilty of omissions, may fear the dreadful sentence of 'Go, ye cursed,' &c. And the wicked man, knowing that the best are guilty of many omissions as well as he, may presume upon the joyful sentence, 'Come, thou blessed of my Father,' &c. How shall each be rectified in his mistake, and satisfied in the truth, but by an impartial and thorough examination of himself? God hath given us a test, which is the word of truth, Eph. 1:13, whereby we may try ourselves, and prevent all mistakes. Where there is a possibility of a mistake in a business of such infinite weight, there is sufficient ground for a serious trial; but where there is so great a probability of mistaking, as a thing that is so easy and ordinary, because all men are guilty too much of omissions, there is a necessity of a faithful and impartial trial. There is that maketh himself rich—in temporals he is worth thousands, in spirituals he is rich towards God, and worth millions—yet hath nothing (orig., yet nothing, in him or to him he is nothing, he hath nothing for all his brags;) there is that makes himself poor—speaks himself poor, would have others think him poor—yet hath great riches, (Heb., yet much substance; the man hath a great estate, but is willing to conceal it. Merchants, who are worth thousands, do not publish or boast of their wares or wealth about the city; these poor creatures do it, who carry all their worth on their heads, or in their arms.) Junius reads the words well, *Est qui divitem se jactat quum desint omnia, item qui pauperem se fingit cui substantia ampla.* There is that boasts himself rich, to whom all things are wanting; and that feigns himself poor, yet hath large substance. There is that boasts and brags himself rich in the fear and favour of God, and will tell you of his communion and converses with the

divine majesty, of his love to, and delight in the ways, and people, and ordinances of God; when all these things are wanting to him, he hath nothing at all in reality of any of them. There is that feigns himself poor, that dissembles, as it were, his estate, that is a beggar, as some read the word poor here, in his own account, and would have all others judge him so too; he is so covetous after more, that he overlooks what he hath; and so greedy of further attainments, that he takes little notice of his present spiritual enjoyments. If you will believe him, he is a mere beggar, hath not one bit of bread to eat, and if his Father, in whose house there is bread enough and to spare, do not pity and relieve his prodigal child, he shall perish for hunger; yet this man hath much substance, is a man of worth and wealth indeed. He is like a branch mightily laden with fruit, and an ear fully laden with corn, which the heavier they are laden, the more they bow down to the ground. A mere titular Christian, like an empty vessel, may make a great sound, but the full vessel, that contains the precious liquor, is silent.

I come now to the marks whereby men may know their estates. And for that end I shall lay down several propositions.

Prop. 1. Those that live in commissions as well as omissions must certainly be condemned at the great day. These bid open defiance to the prohibitions, precepts, and penalty of the law, and dare the law to do its worst. Either these must be condemned, or all shall be saved. But God is of a holier nature than to dwell with such sinners. They may read their doom written under his own hand, and, like the law of the Medes and Persians, that cannot be altered, 1 Cor. 6:9, 10; Eph. 5:5; Rom. 8:5, 'To be carnally minded is death;' ver. 13, 'If ye live after the flesh ye shall die.'

Prop. 2. They who are guilty of total external omissions, are in a damnable condition. This is written in broad letters, that he who runs may read it. They who pray not are under wrath, and the effusions of wrath, Jer. 10:25. They who neglect to pay their external allegiance to the true God, and deny him his outward homage and acknowledgment, shall be denied and disowned by Christ, before his Father, and before his holy angels. The holy God doth all along speak of these as heathens, Ps. 79:6, and sinners with a witness, Ps. 36:1–3; and threateneth that Christ shall come in flaming fire, to render vengeance on them, 2 Thes. 2:7–10. Those who are guilty of these total omissions, in regard of the matter of the duties commanded them, are ungodly in the highest degree, (for ungodliness strictly and properly speaks the neglect of our duties to God, and sins against the first table, as unrighteousness, the neglect of our duties to our neighbour, and our transgressions against the second table,) and so none in the whole Scripture more obnoxious to wrath and ruin, Ps. 73:12. 'These are the ungodly who prosper in the world;' but mark how soon they perish: ver. 18, 'Thou castest them down to destruction, and utterly consumest them with terrors;' 2 Pet. 3:7; Jude 4, 15.

Prop. 3. Those who perform external duties, and wholly neglect internal, or please themselves in total inward omissions, cannot be in a state of salvation. God will not be put off with the body, without the soul of religion. Indeed, external duties are but the garments or clothes of religion, wherein it appears, and whereby it is known to the world; the life and power of it consists in internal performances, or those that are the motions and actions of the understanding, and will, and affections, as in the knowledge of God, his being and excellency, and the kindness he hath for, and the love he hath to, mankind in Jesus Christ; as also in the choosing him for our richest treasure, and supreme Lord and lawgiver, and in loving him with all

the heart, and soul, and strength, and desiring his love above all the world, and delighting in his favour, as the soul's felicity, and seeking to please him, rather than to command the creation. A man without these is but the picture of a saint; he hath somewhat of the resemblance, but nothing of the reality of a Christian; he hath a form, but nothing of the power of godliness, 2 Tim. 3:1–7, and therefore is in a state of perdition. The neglect of believing, repenting, loving the Lord Jesus Christ, are all inward omissions, for these are acts proper and peculiar to the soul, and condemned in Scripture with the most dreadful damnation, Mark 16:16; John 3:36; Luke 13:3; 1 Cor. 16:22. If a man pray, and pray wholly without faith and without fervency, James 1. and 5, this is no way acceptable to God. All such prayers are howlings and babblings, and of no sweet sound in God's ears, Hosea 7; Isa. 1:15–17. Whatsoever a man doth either by way of hearing, or singing, or praying, or receiving, if there be not that dread of God, and love to his name, and faith in Christ, which are the essentials of these duties, all is as nothing.

Prop. 4. Those who allow themselves in partial omissions, whether external or internal, are in no good condition. By partial omissions, I mean at some times; as for prayer; a man, it may be, prays in his closet or family usually, but if any worldly business intervene and calls for his company, he will as usually attend on that, and wholly omit his closet and family duties for that morning or evening. Or for a man to pray, as some do, only at the evening, and not in the morning, as if God were the God of the night, and not of the day; or as some others, who will pray only upon the Lord's-day, as if God had a right to them then, but not all the week after. Or when men perform some religious duties, and not others, will pray, but not read Scripture daily, or pray, and read the word, but not take notice of those under their roofs, to instruct, and admonish, and support them, as occasion is. Or some will perform their duties which

immediately concern God, but will not be charitable to the poor, at least not in such a degree and measure as their estates will bear, and as God expects. These, and suchlike, I understand by partial and external omissions. What is meant by internal partial omission is next to be considered. 'Partial internal omissions are, when men oftentimes, though not constantly, are negligent in the manner of performing their duties; and though they be formal, and superficial, and lazy, and slothful in the worship of God, yet they take little or no notice thereof. Indeed, sometimes they find some heat and warmth, and this pleaseth them; but at other times they are cold and lifeless in their duties, and this doth not much displease them. They can commonly pray as if they prayed not, and read as if they read not, and wait on God without any suitable and considerable affections towards him, and not be disturbed at it. These sudden heats at one time, and colds at another time, speak the body out of order, and the soul not healthy. The next thing to be explained is, what is meant by allowing themselves in partial omissions; and indeed the stress of the proposition depends on that. To allow themselves in these partial omissions notes these two things: to know these partial omissions to be sins, and yet to continue in them without any great disturbance or trouble of spirit. They must know that they are sins, otherwise continuance in them will not argue a total want of grace, or the predominant power of sensuality in the soul. I doubt not but in many dark places of this nation there may be those who live in a total omission of some duties, as praying with their families, and a strict sanctification of the Sabbath; or who yet fear God in truth, and make great conscience of their conversations. These men neglect prayer, and devoting the Sabbath wholly to God, &c., because they do not know them to be their duties. And where a man desires and endeavours to know his master's will, and lives up to that light God hath given him, he may upon a general repentance expect pardon through the blood of Christ for sins of ignorance; but those who live

under the clear, and plain, and full discovery of the gospel, must know that these omissions are sins. Their ministers are not so ignorant or unfaithful as to leave them in the dark about such necessary duties. 'Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doth it not, to him it is sin,' James 4:17. The second thing in this allowance is, to continue in these omissions, though we know them to be sins, and to be little or nothing troubled for them. And, I say, those who do so are in no good condition; they shall be condemned at the great day. And my reasons are partly because it is proper to a wicked man to continue in sins. A sheep may fall into the ditch and defile himself, but he hastens out of it as soon as he can; but the swine chooseth a dirty place, walloweth all the day long in the mud and mire. A saint may fall into sin, but he hasteneth to recover himself by repentance. A sinner lives in it day and night, Prov. 4:17. It is their food in the day, and their refreshment in the night. Their sleep departeth from them, unless they cause some to fall. Hence we read, that sin is their way, or work, or conversation, Isa. 55:7. Partly because allowance of any sin is inconsistent with grace. Sin and grace are contrary each to other; and, therefore, though they may be, and are in the same subject, yet they are not, they cannot be there together, but as enemies seeking the destruction one of another: 'The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against flesh; for these are contrary the one to the other.' Fire and water are not more contrary than vice and grace, so that he who suffers vice without opposition declares plainly that he hath no grace, for these enemies never meet but they fight. Therefore, reader, examine thyself; thou hast laid down the commission of evil, but hast thou taken up every known duty? Thy reason will tell thee he is a bad husband who drains his ground, and then neither soweth nor planteth it. It is all one as if it had continued under water; as good be undrained, as unimproved when drained.

CHAPTER XXXIII

A caution against sins of omission in regard of the matter of duties

Exhort. If Christ will condemn men at the great day for sins of omission, it may exhort us to mind the doing of good, as well as the forbearing of evil, to be as watchful against sins of omission, as well as against sins of commission, and make conscience of affirmative as well as negative commands. Do not think it sufficient to forbear what is evil, unless also thou dost what is good. It is good not to be evil in doing what the law forbids, but it is evil also not to be good in doing what the law enjoins. The minister is not a good minister, because he doth not seduce, or mislead, or deceive his people by false doctrine, or scandalous living, if he do not teach them the right ways of the Lord, and be not instant with them, in season and out of season, to know, and adore, and honour their Maker and Redeemer. A good shepherd must look to good pastures for his sheep, as well as defend them from lions and wolves. Paul proves his integrity by this, that he kept nothing back that was profitable for his people, but taught them publicly, and from house to house, and that he declared unto them the whole counsel of God, Acts 20:21, 22, 27. The magistrate is not a good magistrate, who can only say that he never oppressed or persecuted the innocent. He must be able to say with Job that he relieved them in their necessities, and redressed them in their grievances: 'I delivered the poor that cried, and him that had none to help. I was eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame. I brake the jaws of the wicked, and plucked the spoil out of his teeth,' Job 29:12, 15, 17. The Christian is not a good Christian that can tell us that he is a harmless man, he doth no mischief, he wrongs none in thought, word, or deed. The barren tree brings forth no bad fruit, yet it is cut

down for the fire. He is an evil man that neglects what is good, as well as he that follows what is evil.

Therefore, reader, cease to do evil, Ezek. 18:31; but let not that suffice, learn to do well, Isa. 1. Remember to watch against what is evil. 'But also to do good and to distribute forget not: for with such sacrifice God is well pleased,' Heb. 13:16. To do good, and to pray in thy closet and family, and to read the Scriptures, and to instruct thy children and servants, and to sanctify the Lord's-day, and to visit the fatherless and widows in their afflictions, forget not, for with such sacrifice God is well pleased, 2 Cor. 7:1. 'Forsake the foolish,' this is well, but not enough, 'and walk in the way of understanding.'

The law of God must be kept tenderly, as the very apple of our eyes, Prov. 7:2. The smallest dust will offend the eye, and the smallest omission will offend the law. If thy conscience be dispensatory, it is unholy. Friend, thou hast largely heard how far short a negative religion will bring thee of heaven, and canst thou content thyself a moment therewith? Nay, thou hast heard that for all that thou shalt be sent to hell, and wilt thou rest one day or night therein? O friend, be wise in time, and mind positive godliness whilst thou hast opportunity.

In these days of the gospel, God is quick and speedy, sharp and severe, with men that are barren and unfruitful. Behold now, saith the Baptist, the axe is laid to the root of the tree. Behold, consider now at this time, when the Redeemer is coming, whose way I am preparing. Now the axe is laid to the root of the tree, Mat. 3:10. He is now laying aside his basket, and taking up the axe; yea, he lays his axe at the root of the tree, as one taking aim where to strike, and how to fell the tree with the greatest advantage; therefore it concerns thee to be fruitful. Again, the apostle tells us that former times of gross

darkness were overlooked by God, but now saith he, now his Son is come into the world, and he reveals his mercy and our duty so fully and clearly; now he commands men everywhere to repent,' Acts 17:29, 30. Now he exhorts fruits meet for repentance, or he will not wink at your disobedience, but judge you to hell flames. And believe it, the valley of vision will prove the heaviest burden, and the highest means will cast thy soul into the lowest misery. Opportunities of doing good to our own and others' souls are choice mercies; they are talents that must one day be reckoned for. Therefore, saith the blessed Redeemer in the justification of Mary about the ointment, 'Me ye have not always;' the poor ye have always, and may do them good when ye will; 'but me ye have not always.' Mary did well to improve the season she had in her hand, as knowing if once lost, it was lost for ever.

The apostle Paul upon this account adviseth the Galatians, 'While ye have time, do good to all,' Gal. 6:10. Nothing more sads and dulls the heart when one comes to die, saith a divine now with God, than his neglect of such opportunities which God's providence, or his own place, have put into his hands of doing or receiving good. Nor is there a sharper corrosive than the reflection upon those days and times that have passed over him, male, aliud, nihil, agentem. Ah, how sad and uncomfortable will it be for thy time to be gone, when thy work is not done! when thy sun is setting, and the shadows of the evening are stretching themselves upon thee, for conscience to give thee this salute, Thy day is passed, thy time is wasted, the business of life is neglected, and now thine errors can never, never be amended. Ah, what a dreadful hour will a dying hour be to thee, when conscience shall plead against thee with whips, and scorpions, and flames, and not the dearest friend or relation thou hast be admitted to plead for thee, or be able to comfort thee! But if the day of death will be so uncomfortable, how terrible will the day of judgment be! Then it is

that the saint shall reap the benefit of all the good he hath done, and the sinner shall reap the mischief of all the good he hath omitted or left undone. Then the idle servant that did not trade with his talent will be found an evil servant, and as such condemned to the 'worm that never dieth, and the fire that never goeth out,' Mat. 25. Then the unfruitful factor will be found an unfaithful factor, and as such disowned and condemned by his Lord.

Reader, believe it, though thou mayest live by a negative religion, yet thou canst not die by it, much less stand before the judgmentseat of Christ with it. It is true, even such a religion is of high price with men; but if alone, it is abomination in the sight of God. Reader, let me reason the case with thee. In other things all are for fruitfulness in what is good. The husbandman would have his ground fruitful in good corn, as well as empty of weeds. He would have his cattle labour, and do him service, and thinks it not enough that they are in the stable or fields, and do him no hurt. The master would have his servant industrious in his shop or field, or some way or other about his business, and is not pleased to see him sit still all day, and forbear to purloin his goods, or fight with his fellow-servants. The father who sends his child to school would have him learn the languages, and profit daily therein, and without this will not be satisfied to hear that his child sits still all day at school, learns no oaths or blasphemies, calls no names, abuses none of his companions. And, reader, why should God be contented with thy harmlessness, when thou art barren and unprofitable? Hath not God as much right to thee as thou hast to thy ground or cattle? and art not thou as much bound to God as thy servant or child is bound to thee? and why then shouldst thou think to put God off with that in thyself, which thou wilt not be put off with in thy ground, or cattle, or servant, or child? Besides, I must tell thee, thou art not harmless if thou dost no good, though thou livest not in the commission of gross evils. The tree in the garden

that brings not forth good fruit is hurtful, though it bring not forth evil fruit; partly because it cumpers the ground, and takes up room to no purpose; partly because it draws the moisture of the earth to it, and so hinders the thriving of those trees that are near it, who, but for them, would be more fruitful. So if thou neglectest what is good, though thou dost no open scandalous evil, thou art mischievous and hurtful in the place where thou livest. Thou takest up the room of a member that might be serviceable to God and his country. If thou wert gone, there might be one in thy house, place, lodging, kept and maintained by the great house-keeper of the world, with the same mercies with which thou livest, that should adorn the gospel, glorify the name of God, and edify the souls of others; and dost thou no harm then by hindering such a one? Is not the drone hurtful, which idly all the day, and lives upon the bees labour, and forceth them sometimes to want because of her theft. Is not the wen in the body hurtful, when it serves to no use, yet sucks away the nourishment from other parts of the body? Doth not that factor wrong the master who employs him if he let his stock lie still, though he do not waste it in riotousness, and drunkenness, and filthiness, when the master might have had one in his place who would have traded with it, and probably have improved it to his great advantage? Did ever any merchant trust a servant with a stock to lie by him? Nay, is nature itself content with the removal of what is oppressive? doth it not long and breathe after what is perfective? Is not the presence of malum, what is evil, a burden? So the absence of bonum, what is good, occasion of complaint? There is ingrafted within us not only a distaste, a depth of distaste against feared evils, but also a hiatus, large desires after known good. As nature, much more doth religion, call men off what is bad, and provoke men to what is right, and just, and good.

Reader, let me come up a little closer to thee. What is it that I am advising thee to? Is it anything that is evil? If it be, reject and

renounce it. Is it not to be good, and to do good? I will tell thee what I would desire of thee, and then do thou judge whether I advise thee as a friend, or whether my counsel be worth hearkening to or no.

1. Take heed of external omissions. If thou hast been faulty herein, I would advise thee every day to mind prayer, Scripture, watchfulness over thy heart, tongue, and actions, diligence in thy calling, faithfulness in thy relations, and to do good to others as thou hast opportunity. Hereby thou wilt acknowledge thy dependence on, and subsistence by, the blessed God, to whom thou art bound by millions of obligations; hereby thou wilt procure his protection of thy person, provision for thy family, and benediction on thy calling, and all thine undertakings. And is this ill counsel, to direct thee to the way how to procure his favour, which can sweeten the bitterest condition, and turn the most loathsome prison into a lovely palace, and a hell of misery into a heaven of mercy? Friend, do I advise thee for thy hurt, when I advise thee daily to walk and converse with the blessed and glorious God? Is not his law worth observing, his glory worth advancing, and his service worth minding, and his love worth accepting, when he can make thee miserable or happy with a word in an instant; when thou and all thou hast are in his hand every moment, to be disposed of for good or evil, altogether at his pleasure; when he can, with the breath of his nostrils, with the blast of his lips, with the glance of his eye, send thee to hell, where the worm never dieth, and the fire never goeth out? Friend, consider it; is it not good advice to wish thee to sue and seek to him, to pray to and please him, upon whom thine unchangeable felicity or misery dependeth, and who shall judge thee to thine everlasting state of life or death? Is it not good to have the king thy friend? How many pleasures may he do thee? and how many favours may he bestow on thee? But how much better is it to have the King of kings thy friend? What pleasure is there which he cannot do thee? what favour which he cannot bestow

on thee? He can give thee earth, heaven, riches, honours, pleasures, life, health, food, raiment, friends, relations, his day, his word, his ordinances, his love, his image, his peace, his joy, his Spirit, his Son, himself, every good, any good, all good. Oh how blessed is he that hath this God! But, reader, wouldst thou have all these without so much as asking for them? We say, they are poor favours that are not worth asking. Sure I am these mercies are of more value than thine understanding can conceive; and therefore must deserve more prayers, and tears, and groans for them than thou art capable of giving. Do not any day, upon any pretence, omit to offer up thy morning and evening sacrifices. Remember, so often as thou neglectest morning prayer, so often thou art all the day naked, destitute of thy spiritual guard, and exposed to all manner of evils and enemies, and dost forespeak thyself an evil day; and so often as thou omittest evening prayer thou presumest upon sleep, and rest, and safety, without God's leave, and forespeakest thyself an evil night. What did Thomas lose by one omission! Jesus appeared the first day of the week to his disciples, 'but Thomas,' saith the text, 'was not there,' John 20:24. But what is the issue of this omission? Truly, by his neglecting this opportunity of confirming his faith, he falls into a desperate fit of unbelief. When the apostles told him that they had seen the Lord, he presently answers, 'Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe,' John 20:24, 25. Ah, what had become of Thomas if infinite Majesty had not stooped to recover him?

2. Take heed of internal omissions. In the next place, I advise thee to look seriously to the manner of thy performances, to be sure that thou worship God with thy heart and affections. This is the chief, and substance, and heart of thy performances, according to which they shall be accepted or not. In all thy addresses draw nigh to God with a

humble faith and confidence, as to a father ready, able, and willing to supply all thy wants, and answer all thy doubts, and to grant all thy prayers and desires; as also with a cheerful reverence and awfulness, as to a God infinite in his being and in all his perfections, between whom and thee, a poor worm, there is an infinite distance. In every duty let thy faith in Christ, thy love to God, and thy repentance from dead works, be exercised; hereby thy duties will be more comfortable to thyself. Men that perform duties in a round, out of custom or for fashion sake, have no pleasure therein, are backward to them, untoward at them, and careless after them. They come to them with trouble, as to that to which their hearts have a reluctancy, and go from them with joy, as from that which was burdensome and tedious to them. But when men pray with a sense of their wants, and beg mercy, with hope in the blood of Christ, and have their love and joy acted in their duties, how sweetly do they come off! nay, how pleasant are they in the very performance of them! Communion with God in them brings peace and comfort indeed. Now, reader, do I advise thee to thy hurt when I advise thee to the life of a saint, to the life of an angel, to a life of love, and joy, and delight in the Father of mercies, and God of all consolations? Is not this life the suburbs, the earnest, the first-fruits of the life of the blessed, of the life of those heavenly courtiers who bathe themselves without intermission in springs of joy and in rivers of pleasures? And by this care of thine about the manner of performing thy duties they will be the more acceptable to God. He commands the heart, Prov. 23:26; delights in truth in the inward parts, Ps. 51; and is nigh to them that call upon him in truth, Ps. 34. How pleasing would it be to thee to know thy prayers and readings to be pleasing to God: Jer. 30:21, 'And I will cause him to draw near and to approach unto me, (i.e., with welcome and acceptance,) for who is this that engageth his heart to approach unto me?' If thou bring thy heart to a duty, God will bring his ear to hear thee.

In the prosecution of this use, I shall, first, Lay down some arguments or motives to enforce it.

2. Lay down the cause of these omissions which are so frequent among us.
3. Prescribe somewhat for the cure and remedy thereof.

CHAPTER XXXIV

Arguments against omissions. The positiveness of our rule, and of God's mercies

I begin with the first, viz., The arguments to move us to mind positive duties.

1. Consider, the law which God hath given us for the rule of our lives is both positive and negative, and therefore our obedience must be such. What need positive precepts but to require positive practices? Single prohibitions would have sufficed for a negative religion. 'The law is holy, (in its commands that immediately concern God,) just, (in what it commands concerning our neighbours,) and good,' (in what it commands concerning ourselves,) Rom. 7:12. Look to the moral law, every negative command hath a positive precept. Take the prophets all along that speak in the name of the Lord, and we shall find that they still enjoin duty as well as forbid sin: Deut. 12:29 to the end, 'Take heed that thou be not snared by following the nations that are destroyed before thee; and that thou inquire not after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise.' Here is sin forbidden; but mark also duty is commanded:

'What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.' Nay, a copy of this law, both positive and negative, must be written out by the magistrate that we might observe it; and it was also written in a book by Moses, and put into the ark, as a witness against the Israelites if they should not observe it, Deut. 31:24–26. Joshua succeeds Moses in his charge over the Jews, and in his commands to them both affirmatively and negatively, Joshua 23:7. Samuel follows after, and speaks the same language: 'Serve the Lord with all your heart, fear him, and serve him in truth; and turn ye not aside, for then ye should go after vain things, which cannot profit or deliver; for they are vain,' 1 Sam. 12:20, 21, 24. David doth the like: 'Depart from evil, and do good,' Ps. 34:14. Solomon writes after his father's copy in the very qualifications of those whom he entreats mercy for: 'If they sin, and afterwards bethink themselves and turn, (i.e., from their sins,) and return unto thee with all the heart and with all the soul, then hear thou from heaven, from thy dwelling-place,' 2 Chron. 6:36–40. Isaiah calls on men not only to forsake their evil ways and evil thoughts, but also to return unto the Lord, Isa. 55:7. Jeremiah crieth to his people not to oppress the stranger, the fatherless, and the widows; and also thoroughly to execute judgment between a man and his neighbour, Jer. 7:5, 6. So Ezekiel and the rest of the prophets, Ezek. 18:21. Our Saviour, in his exposition of the law, doth forbid what is evil and command what is good, Mat. 5:43, 44; so Mat. 7 per tot. The apostle St Paul commands not to be conformed to the world, there is the prohibition, 'but to be transformed by the renewing of our mind, proving what is the good, and perfect, and acceptable will of God,' there is the precept, Rom. 12:1, 2. Again, 'Put off the works of darkness, put on the armour of light': 'Put off the old man, which is corrupt according to his deceitful lusts; and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness,' Eph. 4:23, 24. 'Lie not one to another, but speak the truth.'

The apostle St James tells us religion consisteth in negatives and positives also, James 1:21, 22, 26, 27. So St Peter, 1 Pet. 1:14, 15, and 2:11, 12; St John, 1 Ep. 3:9, 10; Jude, ver. 21–23. Thus we see through the whole Bible the mind of God, by his messengers, to be positive as well as negative, and this mind of his he hath ordained to be the rule of our hearts and lives; and what shall we answer when we shall be called to an account for our disobedience? To what purpose is a rule if it be not followed? and to what end is the penalty denounced against the ungodly if it be not executed?

This is the voice of the law of God; and therefore, reader, either thou must betake thyself to practical godliness, or else disown the Scriptures for thy rule and square. Thy duty must, at least in thy desires and endeavours, carry some proportion to thy standard and rule, or else thy religion is a mere cipher, and signifieth nothing.

So far as the best come short of the law they sin: 1 John 5:3, 'Sin is a transgression of the law.' And that because the law is given to him as a rule of life, God hath therefore qualified it with the properties of a rule. 1. A rule must be perfect, and not defective, not redundant: 'The law of the Lord is perfect,' Ps. 19:7. 2. A rule must be plain, not dark: 'All her ways are plain to him that understandeth.' 3. A rule must be published and known, otherwise it is a snare to entrap men. God hath proclaimed his law: 'The command is not hidden from thee, nor far off,' Deut. 30:11. 'It is not in heaven, that thou shouldst say, Who shall go up for us thither, and fetch it thence, that we may hear it and do it? Nor beyond the seas. But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart,' ver. 12–14, 'that thou mayest do them.' 4. A rule is that by which men shall be judged, so is this law: John 12:48, 'The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge you at the last day.'

2. The mercies of God to thee are positive as well as privative, and why should not thy duty be suitable to the divine bounty? God is not only a shield to defend thee from evil in thy body, in thy soul, in thy person, in thy relations, in thine outgoings and in thine incomings, by night and by day, at all times and in all places; but he is also a sun to refresh thee with good, with temporal good, food, raiment, friends, relations, sleep, liberty, wealth, esteem in the world, &c. With spiritual good, with Sabbaths, Scriptures, sacraments, seasons of grace, with the tenders of pardon, and peace, and adoption, and eternal salvation, upon excellent and equitable terms. And what reason can we give why our obedience should not bear a proportion to his beneficence? 'He is a sun and a shield, and gives grace and glory, and withholdeth no good things from them that walk uprightly,' Ps. 84.

Shall God withhold no good thing from thee, and canst thou find in thy heart to deny the doing of any good thing for him? Is his bounty of so large an extent as to comprehend protection from all evil, and the fruition of all good? and must thy duty be so narrow and scanty, as if he did not deserve so much as he requireth? Is it honest to receive or buy in by one measure, and to return and sell out by another? 'Divers weights and divers measures, both of them are abomination to the Lord.'

A weight and a weight, a measure and a measure, one to buy with that is large, another to sell with that is less; I only allude to it. It is abominable for thee to receive of God by the largest measure, and to return to him by the least. Reader, if thou art born of God, and guilty of these partial, temporary omissions, consider it seriously, let ingenuity plead for God. When he first wrought upon thy soul, he did not only translate thee out of the kingdom of darkness, but also bring thee into the kingdom of his dear Son. He did not only turn thee

from Satan, but also cause thee to return to himself. He brought thee out of a state of wrath, and brought thee into a state of love and favour, 1 Peter 2:9. He redeemed thee from those enemies which had carried thee captive, sin, Satan, death, hell, Rom. 6:11; Eph. 2:3, 4; Heb. 2; 2 Tim. 1:9, 10; 1 Thes. 1:10. But this is not all; he hath also 'brought thee into the glorious liberty of the children of God,' Rom. 8:21; 1 John 3:1. He hath delivered thee from this present evil world, that its affrightments, its allurements, that all its power and policy, shall not be able to destroy thee; but this is not all, he hath made thee an heir of a better world. Of a child of the devil, thou art made a child of God, of a slave to sin, a citizen of Sion; nay, he doth not only free thee from damnation and the curse of the law, but also give thee the blessing of eternal life, in and with himself, among his innumerable company of angels, and the congregation of the first-born. Now, reader, judge whether it be not very disingenuous to receive from God all sorts of mercies, and to give to God not half the duties we owe to him. How canst thou mete to God one measure, and expect from him another? Friend, God doth not put thee off with half happiness, and why shouldst thou put him off with half holiness?

CHAPTER XXXV

Arguments against omissions. Christ purchased positive as well as negative holiness, and our privileges oblige to both

3. Consider, Christ died to purchase positive as well as negative godliness for men, and wilt thou disappoint him of the fruits of his death? Indeed, if it had been possible for him to have bought man's deliverance from sin without the re-impression of God's image on the soul, he had been but half a Saviour, and made us at the most but half happy. But according to the apostle's phrase, he saves perfectly, or to the utmost, upon all accounts and in all respects, Heb. 7:25, and in order thereunto bought man off from sin, and unto the service of God. He redeems us from sin: 'We are redeemed,' saith the apostle, 'from our vain conversation received by tradition from our fathers; not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without spot and blemish,' 1 Peter 1:17–19. He redeems also unto his own service: chap. 3:18, of the same epistle, 'He suffered the just for the unjust, to bring us to God.' He died that we might die to sin; and he died that we might live to God. He suffered to bring us off from our cursed, loathsome lusts; and he suffered to bring us to the fear, and love, and service of the blessed and glorious Lord. We have both these ends of our Saviour's sufferings mentioned in Titus 2:14, 'Who gave himself (his death is called a giving himself, because it was voluntary, and a freewill offering) for us, (here is his passion; but what ends had he in his eye? truly both these,) that he might redeem us from all iniquity, (make us negatively religious, in freeing us from the bondage of sin,) and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works,' i.e., make them positively holy. None are purified without positive qualifications, and gracious habits in the soul. To be purified unto

himself, is to be thus qualified for the honour and service of Christ. And to make it more plain, the apostle tells us, to 'purify unto himself a peculiar people, (a people that shall disown all other lords, and all other work, and shall be his servants, and do his work only,) zealous of good works.' He did not die only to make men good, and to enable men to do good, but also to cause them to do good with heat, and heart, and fervency of spirit. Nay, it is evident, that to make men positively pious was the main and principal end of his passion, and that his delivering us from sin was only in order to this, to his adorning us with sanctity. As a man cannot put on new robes till he hath first put off his old rags, so a man cannot put on the new man, the beautiful image of the heavenly, till he hath put off the old man, the abominable image of the earthly Adam: Luke 1:74, 75, 'We are delivered out of the hands of our enemies, that we should serve him in holiness and righteousness all the days of our lives.' He plougheth up the fallow ground of the heart, and kills the weeds of sin, in order to the casting in the seed of grace into the soul.

Now, reader, consider, if Christ died to purchase positive holiness for thee, what hope canst thou have of an interest in his death without it? Canst thou think he bought one for thee without the other, or that thou mayest be a partial sharer in his death? And what wilt thou do without an interest in his sufferings? Except he wash thee in his blood thou hast no part in him; and if thou hast no part in him, thy part must be among devils and damned spirits. Again, wilt thou by thy omissions deny and deprive Christ of that service which he hath bought so dearly? Alas! how little is it that thou art able to do for him when thou dost all thou canst! And how much did that cost him! what pangs and throes did he bear! what rage from men! what wrath from God! How did he wrestle with the frowns and fury, with the power and policy, of the world and hell! And after all this, dost thou grudge him that poor service for which he was hungry, and thirsty,

and weary, and tempted, and betrayed, and crucified? 'Whether we live,' saith the apostle, 'we live to the Lord; whether we die, we die to the Lord; whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.' To this end Jesus died, and rose again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living,' Rom. 14:7, 8. Thou wouldst take it ill thyself to be denied the service of that for which thou hast so dearly paid. Oh think of it, when thou art guilty of omissions in the matter or manner of duties, I now rob Jesus Christ of that which he bought with his most precious blood, and let him see the travail of his soul upon thee, and be satisfied.

4. Consider, the privileges thou enjoyest call aloud upon thee to mind positive holiness, and to do good as well as to forbear evil. I am sure thy privileges are positive, and so should thy piety be. What is the gospel but a cabinet of precious jewels, a river of living water, a case of the richest and costliest cordials, a counterpart of heaven's eternal court-rolls concerning the philanthropy or kindness of God to mankind, wherein are all sorts of blessings for body and soul in every condition treasured up? The enjoyment of it is a special singular privilege, the ministration of the Spirit, 2 Cor. 3:8, 9. The ministration of righteousness, far above the legal ministration. The psalmist tells us the laws God gave to the Israelites were a special distinguishing mercy: 'He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with every nation; as for his judgments they have not known them,' Ps. 147:19, 20. But his gospel dispensation is a higher and greater favour. But what doth this gospel privilege call for? surely positive as well as negative godliness. 'The grace of God, (the gospel is so-called because it declares it to us, 2 Tim. 1:10, and interests us in it as an instrument thereof, Rom. 1:16,) which bringeth salvation, (which proclaimeth life upon holy conditions,) teacheth us that denying all ungodliness, and worldly lusts, (commissions against the first and second table,

but that is not all,) we should live righteously, soberly, and godly, (righteously towards men, soberly in relation to ourselves, godly in the duties that concern God,) in this present evil world.' The gospel allows of omissions no more than the law, and is so far from indulging men in sin, because it hath mercy for the penitent sinner, that it addeth stronger obligations to obedience, and threateneth more severe condemnation to the disobedient, 2 Cor. 5:15, 16; Heb. 10. Again, the promises which have in their bowels all the good of heaven and earth, all the blessings of this life and a better, which are as much worth as both worlds, 1 Tim. 4:8, which are exceeding great in their quantity, and precious in their quality, 2 Peter 1:4, and the peculiar portion of God's own children, Heb. 6:17, who are the only heirs of them, and all others strangers to them, and therefore miserable and in a hopeless and desperate condition. These promises are so far from excusing or exempting from these positive duties, that they engage us the more firmly to them: 2 Cor. 7:1, 'Having therefore, dearly beloved, these promises,' that God will be our Father, and we shall be his children, &c, chap. 6. ver. 18, 'let us cleanse ourselves from all pollutions of flesh and spirit, (but this is not all,) and perfect holiness in the fear of God.' The promises do not only bind to purity, but also to proficiency therein, till we come to perfection: 'And perfect holiness in the fear of God.' The covenant of grace, which is a mine of unsearchable riches, a book wherein every leaf, nay, every line, speaks love and life, which contains more mercy in it, even the boundless God, than heaven and earth are able to contain; this requires positive as well as negative holiness, Deut. 26:17, nay, it engageth for both, Ezek. 36:25, 'From all your idols, and from all your filthiness, will I cleanse you;' but more than this, ver. 26, 27, 'I will take away your heart of stone, and give you a heart of flesh; I will put my Spirit into you, and ye shall keep my commandments and do them.' So that all these privileges are to no purpose if we be not provoked by them to do good, and perform the

duties which are the conditions of them. Reader, think of it, why should God give thee precepts, to direct thee about the matter and manner of performing thy duties and promises, to encourage thee to diligence and faithfulness therein, if thou mayest live in the omission of them? Surely such infinite cost calls for some great care and conscientiousness in thy conversation. Might not God, by virtue of his dominion over thee, as grand proprietor of the universe, have required this at thine hands? but when he is so gracious as to sue to thee, and to allure thee, and seek to draw thee by such cords of love, wilt thou stand out and deny him? Oh blush for shame, that thou hast neglected so long the wooings, and beseechings, and entreaties of such a glorious gospel, and such precious promises, and such an inestimable covenant! The greater the charge God is at with thee, the greater should be the service thou dost him. Where the ground is well dunged, and dressed, and watered, and manured, a greater crop is expected by the husbandman. I must tell thee, friend, that thou wilt one day find 'that to whom much is given, of him much will be required,' Luke 12:48, and that God expects returns answerable to thy receipts. Do not imagine, as some vainly have done, that the bare enjoyment of these privileges will save thee. I must tell thee, and that from God's own mouth, they will be so far from it, that they will make hell-fire the hotter for thee, and much deepen thine eternal condemnation, Mat. 11:21–23; Jer. 7:3, 4, 'Amend your ways and your doings, and trust not in lying words, saying, The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these.' Such privileges without positive holiness do but usher men to a hotter hell.

CHAPTER XXXVI

Arguments against omissions. We profess ourselves God's servants, and all our

religion will come to nothing without positive holiness

5. Consider, you are the professed servants of God, and will you not do your master's business? You are baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; you own your baptism by your attendance on God, though but sometimes, in public ordinances. You wear the livery of Christ before the world, and if any ask you what you are, you say a Christian; or whose you are, you say you belong to Jesus Christ. And, friend, will you pretend to be God's servant and neglect his business? This is but to put a mock and cheat upon him. Like him in the Gospel, who, when he was bid go work in the vineyard, said, 'I go, but went not.' 'If I be a master, where is your fear?' Mal. 1:7. If God be your master, where is your fear of displeasing him, either by neglecting what he enjoins, or doing what he forbids? True, servants are not at their own, but at their master's pleasure and disposal, as the centurion's soldiers, when the master saith, 'Go, they go;' when he saith, 'Come, they come;' when he saith, 'Do this, they do it,' Mat. 8:9. The Redeemer himself, when he took upon him the form of a servant, and became so to his Father, Phil. 2:7; Isa. 53:10, did not what he himself would: 'I came not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me,' John 6:30; 'And as the Father gave me commandment, so do I,' John 14:31. And to shew his faithfulness in that relation, when he came to die, he tells his Father, 'I have glorified thee on the earth, and finished the work thou hast given me to do,' John 17. Nay, the very irrational and inanimate creatures are the servants of God, and as such do him positive service. The psalmist speaks of the heavens and the earth, with the creatures therein. All are thy servants, at thy beck and bidding, at thy call and command, Ps. 119:91. If thou speak to the sun, it riseth not;

if thou speak again, it will stand still; if thou speak a third time, it will move faster or slower, which thou pleasest.

If thou commandest the stars, they will fight in their courses against thine enemies, and serve thee faithfully after their manner, as their Lord of hosts.

Nay, those creatures which seem most stubborn and rebellious, being God's servants, are pliable to his pleasure: 'Fire, and hail, and stormy winds, fulfil his word,' Ps. 148:8. Reader, what dost thou think of these examples? thou seest the highest, the heir of all things, when he became his servant, did his will and work, for thee fulfilled all righteousness, and went about doing good, Acts 10; and thou seest the lowest beings, God's servants, do not only forbear doing evil, but after their manner, analogically they do good, and positively serve God; and wilt thou content thyself with a bare forbearance of what is evil, and be shamed by inanimate creatures, who according to their natures in their places do good? Why dost thou call thyself a Christian, if thou wilt not follow the pattern of Christ? and how canst thou profess thyself God's servant, if thou wilt not do him service? 'Know ye not,' saith the apostle, 'that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey,' Rom. 6:16. Either obey God as a servant ought, or disown him to be thy master. Can he be said to be thy servant who neglects thy work, though he do thee no mischief? Another man's servant in this respect may as properly be said to be thine; for as he minds not thy business, so he doth thee no prejudice. I must speak plainly to thee; if thou allowest thyself in these omissions, thy practices give the lie to thy profession, and thou art the devil's servant, though thou wearest God's livery. I shall end this head with commending to thee the counsel of Christ! You call me Lord and master, and thou sayest well, for so I am. If I

then your Lord and master have washed your feet, and gone about doing good, how much more should you my servant?

6. Consider, all your religion is nothing, and will come to nothing, if you live in the neglect of God's positive will. And will you deny yourself once and again in forbearing many things that would delight and gratify your flesh, and possibly incur the anger of your profane neighbours, for not running with them to the same excess of riot, and then lose all for want of doing what is commanded thee? Wouldst not thou think him a foolish husbandman, that should take care for the casting out the stones, and plucking up the weeds out of his ground, and then lose all his cost and pains for want of sowing it with good seed? Would it not vex a scrivener, after he had taken much pains, and spent much time about a large deed, or conveyance, after he had taken great care to write it fair, without any blots, to be forced to write all over again, for his omission of some material passage in it? The apostle writes to the elect lady, 2 John 8, 'Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.' If he that doth not persevere in well-doing may deprive himself of all the benefit of his good deeds which he hath already done, what benefit can they expect who never began to do good? How can their good works follow them to their comfort into the other world, who never did any? Or how can God register their prayers, and watchings, and fastings, and weepings for sin, and acts of devotion in his book of remembrance who never minded them, Rev. 14:13; Mal. 3:7. Christ tells us, 'Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give to every man according to his works,' Rev. 22:12. Now, reader, if thou contentest thyself in thine omissions, what works hast thou for Christ to reward? All the reward of a negative holiness is but a cooler hell, and, God knoweth, that is small comfort. Thou hast no work of faith, or labour of love, or patience of hope, or fervency in prayer, or breathings and longings after

conformity to, and communion with, the blessed God, for Christ to record and reward. The Holy Ghost, when he tells us that 'God will render to every man according to his deeds,' presently subjoins, 'To them who by patient continuance in well-doing (i.e., positive holiness) seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, everlasting life,' Rom. 2:6, 7. *Virtutis est magis honesta agere quam non turpia*, as he said well: It is rather the property of virtue to do things laudable, than not to do things loathsome.

A negative Christian in God's account is no Christian; and though he may stand for somewhat among men that are no better than himself, yet he is a mere cipher in the account of God. God seeth that, as he is not outwardly bad, so he is not inwardly good; and that he is at a greater distance from piety than from profaneness, and he looking most to the heart and bent thereof, Ps. 51:7; 1 Sam. 15, must needs loathe a filthy, unclean conscience, under a fair, civil conversation.

A tree may be full of vermin, when the green leaves may hide them from the eyes of men; so the vermin of pride, and unbelief, and hypocrisy may crawl in thy heart, though thy civility may hide them from the sight or suspicion of thy fellow-creatures. We say, All is not gold that glitters, much less is shining civility sincere sanctity. The Jews, who obeyed some of God's laws, because they lived in the wilful breach of others, are said to have done nothing of all his commands: Jer. 32:23, 'And they came in and possessed it,' i.e., the land of Canaan, 'but they obeyed not thy voice, nor walked in thy law: they have done nothing of all that thou commandedst them to do.' It seems strange that the indictment should run so high, as to accuse them of the breach of every law, and the neglect of every positive precept. Surely the Jews offered sacrifice, circumcised their children, kept the passover, observed their new moons and Sabbaths, and did many things which God commanded them to do, and yet here they

are charged to do nothing that God commanded them to do. Truly, because they had not a conscientious eye to every known duty, but allowed themselves in the omission of some, God reckons that they obeyed him in none, and deals with them as if they had done nothing of all that he commanded them. Now, reader, if they who perform some positive duties are counted by God as performing none, if they wilfully neglect any, what a pitiful nothing will God reckon thy religion, if it be wholly negative, without any positive obedience at all. Though brass coin be not so bad as leathern, yet, not being so good as silver, it is little accounted. Though thou art not as bad as the scandalous, yet if thou art not as good as the truly pious, God will not esteem thee; for what is highly esteemed of men may be an abomination in the sight of God.

Reader, weigh this argument; wouldst thou lose all the pains thou takest to forbear what is evil? Art thou contented to work all thy days at the labour-in-vain? Canst thou be satisfied that thy negative religion should be counted at the great day a nullity, or no religion at all? Little dost thou think how deep it will cut thy heart to find thy civility judged by God himself to be but varnished heathenism, or glistening impiety. The young man who was more than a mere negative Christian, thought his condition safe and sound; but when Christ discovered him insincere, he went away as heavily as he came to him hastily. Probably thy hopes are great; but I must tell thee, thy disappointment will be the more grievous when thou shalt find thyself deceived, and that thou hast all thy life long been a laborious loiterer, and done nothing. The greater rise thine expectation had, and the higher thy hope was, the more bruising will thy fall be, and the heavier thy heart for ever.

CHAPTER XXXVII

Arguments against omissions. God deserves our positive obedience before all others, and true sanctification cannot be without it

7. Consider, God deserves your positive obedience as well as your negative. Friend, if God hath thy negative obedience, some other hath thy positive,—for I cannot suppose thee idle all the time of thy life,—either the devil, or the world, or the flesh; man cannot live without a master, whose work and business he will do. Now let thy conscience judge which of these deserves thy service best. If, as Alexander said, when asked, of his kingdoms, who should inherit them after his death, Let them be given to the most worthy, thou wilt for the future give thy affections and conversation to the most worthy; I doubt not but thou wilt quickly give them to God. For the devil, surely thou wilt not for shame put him in composition with God. Is not he an old serpent, solicitous night and day with his wiles, and snares, and devices to deceive thee? And is not he a roaring lion, seeking continually how he may devour thee? 2 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 6:11; Rev. 12:9; 1 Pet. 5:8. Is not his enmity such against God, that he hates thee for his sake, and improves all his power and policy to bring thee to be a partaker of the same misery and wretchedness with himself? And is he fit to be thy master? Art thou willing to be his servant? Yet I must tell thee, if thou wilfully neglectest the work of God, thou art of thy father the devil, if the devil and his works thou dost, John 8:44. And remember, the Redeemer had not died to subdue the devil to us, if it had not been cruel bondage for man to be enslaved to him, Heb. 2.

For the world, what is in it that should deserve thy service? I am sure God made the world for thee, and not thee for the world; and the end

is more excellent than the means. God made the world to serve thee, and not thee to serve the world. Is it riches that thou payest thy homage to? Ah, how infinitely inferior are they to thy spiritual soul! Is it not a rare lovely sight to see a noble, heaven-born immortal spirit truckle, and bow, and submit, and be a drudge and slave to white and yellow dust, to the guts and garbage of the earth? Is not this a fine sight, thinkest thou, for thy love and desires, and joys and delights, like moles to be grovelling in the earth, when high and noble objects worthy of them are always before thee expecting them?

Or is it the honour of the world which thou adorest? Dost thou know what an idol thou hast set up in thine heart?—a vapour, a wind, the stinking breath of a company of ignorant, vile people, who understand nothing of true worth or excellency. Where is this? or what is this god whom thou worshippest? a fashion, σχῆμα τοῦ κοσμοῦ, 1 Cor. 7:31; a mathematical figure, somewhat in show, nothing in substance; φαντασία, a fancy, Acts 25:23, that hath an existence in the brain, but nowhere else. It is as an echo to the ear, which is a voice, a buzz, a hum, and no more. It is as a picture to the eye, which hath some shape, but no life. In brief, honour of the world is so poor, so pitiful, so inconsiderable a thing, that a wise man would not give a farthing for it.

Or is it pleasure, that bewitching bait, that sugared poison, which hath caught and killed many? Thou knowest not what thou dost, when, as the apostle saith, 'Thou servest divers lusts and pleasures,' Tit. 3:2, 3, reckoning it as the misery of man by nature. What is this pleasure, but the satisfaction of thy senses, and the delight thou hast therein, which the beasts may enjoy above thee? Let conscience judge, are brutish pleasures worthy to domineer and bear sway over a mind that is large enough to grasp both worlds, and a heart capable of the joys and pleasures of glorious and blessed angels? Reader, if

the world were worthy to be thy master, or its treasures, or honours, or pleasures, did deserve thy service, the Redeemer might have spared his pains and passion, when he gave himself to [deliver you from] this present evil world, Gal. 1:4.

Or is it the flesh thou art so fond of? Why, that is but a poor piece; it is deceitful, and will cozen thee, Jer. 17:9; it hath such a depth of deceit in it, that neither thou nor any other creature can fathom it. And is it good to be a servant to so treacherous a master? It is dying, and will forsake thee, Ps. 73:25. It must shortly be laid in the dust, become food for worms; nay, be turned into dust. And canst thou think this clod of clay, this lump of earth, this sink of filthiness, this receptacle of crawling vermin, a fit master to rule over a soul that is of celestial extraction, of a spiritual angelical nature, and of an eternal duration? Surely, reader, thou art no debtor to the flesh, to live after the flesh, Rom. 8:12. Thou owest thy flesh nothing but care and watchfulness to keep it under, and to subdue it, that it lord it not over thy spirit. If thou servest the flesh once, thou servest it too much by once; for thou art no debtor to it, and dost not owe it the least service imaginable, but in subordination to thy soul and Saviour. Surely then, if neither the devil, nor the world, nor the flesh deserve thy positive obedience, God must. Reader, let me come up a little closer to thee; I pray, who hath laid most obligations on thee, God or they? To whom art thou most indebted, to God or to them? Did they give thee thy being when thou wast nothing? Did they form thee and fashion thee in thy mother's womb? Was it by them that thou wast born? Did they look after thee in thine infancy, and cause mercy all along to grow up with thee? Have any of them protected thee in thy dangers, supported thee in thy difficulties, supplied thee in thy wants, or delivered thee out of thy distresses? Who spreads thy table, and blesseth thy food to thee every day? Who makes thy bed, and commandeth sleep for thee every night? Whose mercy is it thou

livest, God's or theirs, and through whose compassion is it that thou art not consumed? Whose visitation is it that preserveth thy spirit? Who defendeth thee night and day from devils and damned spirits, who watch continually to drag thee to their own den and dungeon of darkness? and who hath relieved thee with all the mercies which ever thou hast enjoyed? And is all this nothing to engage thee to his service? Doth all this care of thee deserve nothing from thee again to God? But, friend, to come up one step nearer to thee. Did God, or any of them, send his only begotten Son to redeem thee out of the hands of the law and divine justice, and to purchase for thee a state of peace, and love, and adoption, and everlasting life? Did they, or any of them, bear the curse of the law, and the wrath of an infinite majesty, and the rage of the fiends of darkness, to deliver thee from them, and to make thee blessed? O reader, where are thy wits? What is become of thine understanding? If he that sends thee in all the good thou enjoyest, and freeth thee from all the evil thou escapest, doth not deserve all thou hast and art, who doth I know not. Hast thou laid the thousandth part of those obligations on any child or servant thou hast, which God hath on thee? Didst thou make them? Dost thou preserve them? Canst thou redeem them? Alas! thou art but a poor instrument in the hand of God, to convey some small matters to them; yet thou expectest positive as well as negative obedience from them; and why should not God, who hath laid such millions of obligations on thee, look for the like from thee? Once more, to whom wilt thou call in thy day of distress? to whom wilt thou cry in thy time of trouble? to God, or any of those three fore-mentioned masters? Is it to them, or to God, that thou wilt lift up thy hands, and eyes, and heart on thy sick, on thy dying bed, when all thy friends and kindred will be insignificant and helpless to thee, and devils will wait on thee to devour thee? Who is it that offereth thee an unchangeable state of pleasure and happiness upon excellent and equitable terms, that entreats, and invites, and wooeth, and courteth

thee to accept of freedom from misery, and hell flames, and eternal damnation; and also to embrace his tenders of fulness of joy, and a crown of life, and a kingdom of glory for ever and ever? Ah friend, little dost thou know how much thou owest the blessed God. I am sure thou canst not deny him any part of thy heart or life; if thou wilt give him what he deserves, thy conscience must tell thee that it is his due. And then if thou wilt give every one his due, why shouldst thou put by the glorious Lord? If thy friends, thy neighbours, thine enemies, all must have their due, I beseech thee do not deny God, but let him have thy positive obedience, which is unquestionably his due.

8. Consider, sanctification, repentance, or sound, saving conversion, consisteth in positive as well as negative holiness; nay, more especially and principally in positive holiness, as that which consummateth and perfecteth the work. And how then canst thou have any grounded hope that thy condition is safe without it? When the prophet mentions that repentance which is never to be repented of, that repentance which shall find mercy and obtain pardon, Isa. 55:7, he enjoineth both an aversion from sin, and a conversion to God, as their supreme and chiefest good. When the apostle mentions that sanctification, which is the inseparable concomitant of justification, and the constant effect of our union with Christ, he mentions both: 'Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, (freed from its laws, as a dead wife from the laws of her husband, and disabled unto its service, as a dead man is unto the actions of life; here is negative holiness,) but alive unto God, (obliged unto the laws of his sovereign, and enabled unto his service, as a living man is unto actions that are suitable to life; here is positive holiness,) through Christ.' This is the root upon which sanctification groweth as the fruit, Rom. 6:11. So ver. 18, 'Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.' Being delivered from the

former usurper, they became obedient to their rightful Lord, and served him.

Now, friend, what wilt thou do for an evidence of repentance and sanctification, which are of such absolute necessity that thou canst not be saved without them, Luke 13:3; Heb. 12:14, if thou neglectest positive godliness? Indeed thou mayest flatter thyself with a hypocritical repentance, but a sincere one respects both parts of the law. A Hebrician observes that in the word tamim, which signifieth upright or perfect, there is a great tau, to note that an upright man observeth the whole law from the first to the last letter thereof. He may be too critical, but this is certain, the true penitent chooseth the way of obedience, as well as refuseth the way of disobedience. He is described by this character: 'He chooseth the things that please God,' Isa. 56:4. He doth not only refuse the things that displease God, but also choose the things that please him; yea, and because they please him. The natural votary is what he is, from the good temperament of his body, which makes him more gentle and pliable than otherwise he would be. The moral religionist is what he is, from the improvement, or rather misimprovement, of his natural reason. The civilian is what he is from fear of man, or out of respect to man: 'He is still in the bond of iniquity;' but he is so careful to line his fetters, that they do not clink to the disturbance of others, or to his own shame. But the true Christian is what he is from conscience of, and love to, the will of God; and as he at his first implantation into Christ brings forth this good fruit, so he continueth in it to the end of his life: 'He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit,' John 15:5.

As naturalists observe of the bees, that they are laborious in their youth, and do not dispense with themselves to be idle in their age; but as they increase in dexterousness, so also in laboriousness, being

more early at work than the younger; nay, when their bodies are over-spent, and their wings ragged, they will venture abroad to work, though they often prove too weak to return home; thus the right convert flourisheth as the palm-tree in his youth: 'And is fat and flourishing, and brings forth fruit in his old age,' Ps. 92:12–14.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

If God should omit his care of us a moment we are undone. And if Christ had omitted the least in our work of redemption, we had been lost irrecoverably

9. Consider, if God should omit his care of thee, and neglect thee as often as thou omittest his service, and neglectest him; nay, if he should withdraw his positive providence from thee one moment, what would become of thee? Thy body would be turned into a dead loathsome carcase, and thy soul would be haled by devils to hell-fire. Is it not more just that God should neglect thee, than that thou shouldst neglect him? And hath he not much more reason to neglect thee a moment, than thou hast to neglect him days, and months, and years? He hath no obligation to thee, thou hast thousands to him. All he doth for thee is mercy, mere mercy; not only beyond, but contrary to merit. All he requireth of thee, and all thou canst do for him, is duty, and that which the greatest justice calls upon thee for. Now, if thou art unwilling to be neglected by God, why shouldst thou not be as unwilling to neglect God? Is thy safety of greater concern than his

glory, or must thy pleasures be preferred before his? Wilt thou not make that golden rule of Christ the rule of thy actions with men, to deal with them as thou wouldst have them to deal with thee; and wilt thou deal otherwise with the blessed God? Must he remember thee at all times, in all conditions—keep thee night and day, lest any hurt thee, support and supply thee every moment, and thou forget him days without number? Is this fair or honest dealing?

Reader, let me tell thee, upon him thou livest, by him thou movest, and from him thou hast thy being. Thou canst not think, or speak, or act in the least, if he should suspend his care of thee; thine eyes could not see, nor thine ears hear, nor thy mouth taste, nor thy hands or feet move, if his providence doth not concur to them. If he should but withdraw his manutenance, and the hold he hath of thee, for the smallest pittance of time, thou wouldst drop into the bottomless pit. The flames do not depend more on the fire, nor the streams on the spring of water, than thy life, and all thy comforts for this and the other world, do upon God; and wilt thou provoke him to leave thee? He hath said, 'With the froward he will shew himself froward,' Ps. 18:26; that he will walk contrary to them that walk contrary to him, Lev. 26:24; and that he will forsake them that forsake him, and pay men in their own coin; and wilt thou venture him any longer? 2 Chron. 15:2. Others have felt the truth of those threatenings, and dost thou think to go unpunished? Surely if common ingenuity will not move thee to remember him night and day, who remembereth thee with loving-kindness every minute, yet the divine severity may fright thee from forgetting him, lest he forget thee for ever. Believe it, if he leave thee, wrath, and death, and hell, and damnation, and devils, will soon find thee. Thou canst now depart from him, by thy neglect of his worship, and be merry and cheerful notwithstanding; but if once he depart from thee, though but for a moment, thou art undone eternally: 'Woe be to thee when I depart from you,' Hosea

9:12. Thy friends, and relations, and creature comforts may depart from thee, and it may be well with thee; but if the fountain of thy life, the God of thy health, the Father of all mercies depart from thee, woe will be to thee. Heaven and earth cannot make him blessed, or hinder him from being extremely cursed, whom God leaves and forsakes. Alas! if the heavens omit to give us its showers, or the sun omit to dispense its influences, or the earth omit to yield its increase, where are we? What can we do? How lamentable is our condition! Those persons that were purer than snow, that were whiter than milk, that were more ruddy than rubies, or than polished sapphires, their visage is blacker than a coal: 'They are not known in the streets; their skin cleaveth to their bones, it is withered, it is become like a stick,' Lam. 4:7, 8. The children and the sucklings swoon in the streets, Lam. 2:11, 12. But if our case be so woeful, when creatures omit their accustomed kindness to us, what will it be if God should omit his care of us?

10. Consider, if the Lord Jesus Christ should omit the least in the work of thy redemption, thou wouldst be undone for ever. Had Christ been as unwilling to save thee to the uttermost, as thou art to serve him to the uttermost, what would have become of thee? Friend, Jesus Christ trod the whole wine-press of his Father's wrath alone; had he left but one drop of that bitter cup of divine wrath for thee to drink, it would have caused thy belly to swell, and bowels to be troubled, and bones to ache, and whole body and soul to suffer extremity of torments for ever. When Christ undertook to interpose between thee and his Father, to stand as a screen between thy poor soul and a consuming fire, he omitted not the least that was requisite for thy good. Though it was hard work, painful work, amazing work, such work as neither men nor angels durst undertake, yet when thy miseries and necessities required it, he did it. He did not omit to contend with earth, and heaven, and hell for thee. He did not omit to

drink of the brook in the way, of the cup of his Father's wrath, and to tread the winepress of his anger alone, that he might obtain favour and life for thee. He omitted not the least in point of satisfaction to his Father's justice; he desired not the smallest abatement of those vast sums which thou didst owe to the divine majesty, but paid the utmost farthing for thee. He never gave over till all was finished, till all the types were verified, all the promises accomplished, and all the demands of his Father fully answered, John 19:28. He omitted nothing in point of application of the purchase which he had bought for sinners. As he died to make satisfaction for us, so he ever liveth to make intercession for us. As he died to make his will good, for a will is not of force as long as the testator liveth, Heb. 9:17, wherein he gives pardon, and love, and life to his people, so he liveth to see his will made good, that his chosen might enjoy whatsoever his boundless love and grace had bequeathed to them. He died, that he might be a legal testator; and he liveth, that he might be his own executor.

Now, reader, did Christ omit nothing which related to thy salvation, and wilt thou omit anything that relates to his service? Did he not shrink back when thy miseries called him to bear that burden which made the earth to quake, the whole creation to groan, and would have broke the backs of angels and archangels, and all the heavenly host, if they had put their shoulders under it; and wilt thou shrink back from that easy yoke and light burden which he calls thee to take upon thee? Is this thy kindness to thy friend? why dost thou use him thus? as Absalom said to Hushai. Is this thy gratitude to the Lord Jesus Christ? why dost thou serve him so? 2 Sam. 16:17.

When the most righteous God demanded full satisfaction for the breach of his law, by the nature that had transgressed it, and resolved, that if he had it not, the whole posterity of Adam should

perish; when his wrath was breaking in like a flood to overwhelm the whole world of mankind, and neither man nor angel durst stand in the breach to divert this deluge of fury, when the knife of the law's curse was even at the creature's throat, as Abraham's at the throat of Isaac, thy Redeemer called to his Father, O Father, Father, hold thine hand, slay not those poor creatures; I have provided a sacrifice such as thou wilt accept. I know that beeves, and goats, and lambs are not the sacrifices for sin which thou wouldst have—what proportion hath the blood of beasts to the infinite demerit of sin?—but I know what sacrifice thou wouldst have; thou wouldst have me to offer myself upon the cross as a sacrifice to thy justice, that the whole world might know the holiness of thy nature, the righteousness of thy law, and thine infinite kindness to thine elect. Well, I come to do thy will, O God. Though the task be so great, and the work so grievous, that no other dares so much as touch it, and though I am wholly free, and none can oblige or compel me to it, yet I will undertake it. Now, reader, was Christ so forward, so willing to obey such a command of dying a cursed, painful, shameful death, that he tells his Father, 'I delight to do thy will, O God;' and art thou so backward to obey his commands, and to walk in his ways, when 'his ways are ways of pleasantness, and all his paths are peace'? Ps. 40:6; Heb. 10:5, Prov. 3:17. Was Christ so careful and tender of thee, that he would not omit anything needful for thy good, and art thou so careless and forgetful of him, as to omit that which is of such concernment to his glory? Friend, bethink thyself, doth not thy Redeemer deserve fairer dealings at thy hands? Heathens and publicans would not be so base and unworthy to their friends and benefactors.

CHAPTER XXXIX

Arguments against sins of omission. The new nature in believers inclines them to positive as well as negative holiness, and the profit will answer the pains

11. Consider, if thou art a believer, thy predominant new nature inclines thee to positive as well as negative holiness. And shall this be given thee in vain? shall God be at such cost and charge as to infuse a principle of life into thee to no purpose? Pray, observe what end God hath in this regenerating work: 'Of his own will begat he us again by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures,' James 1:18. Where we have the causes of regeneration: 1. The efficient principle, He; 2. The moving, His alone will; 3. The formal, Begat us again; 4. The instrumental, The word of truth; 5. The final, That we should be a kind of first-fruits. God begets us again, that we should be devoted to him; as the first-fruits of all the sheaves were consecrated to God, and that out of thankfulness to him for his innumerable blessings, Prov. 3:9; Rom. 12:1. The first-fruits were holy to the Lord, and so should all Christians be. Again, he tells us his design in giving a new spirit, and putting his Spirit into them, 'That they may walk in his statutes, and do them,' Ezek. 36:26, 27. So that it is sacrilege and God-robbery for a Christian to employ himself to the use of any but God, because he is devoted to God; and it is also below a Christian, as for a man to live as doth a beast, for him that hath a noble divine principle to live as other men. As all the children of the first Adam derive from him a depraved nature, which inclines them not only to omit what is good, but also to do what is evil, therefore his seed are known by both those signs, Ps. 36:3, 4; Hosea 4:1–3. So all the children of the second Adam derive from him a renewed nature—'For they are made partakers of the divine nature,'

2 Pet. 1:4—which doth not only take them off from what is evil, but also put them forward to that which is good, Rom. 6:11. As the branches derive from the root that sap and moisture which enableth them to fruitfulness, so the Christian draweth that virtue from Christ, even in his first conversion, that inclines him whilst he lives to bring forth fruit to God: Eph. 2:10, 'We are his workmanship, created in Jesus Christ unto good works, which God hath ordained that we should walk in them.' Mark, this new piece, that is indeed God's masterpiece, for the new creation doth far excel the old heavens and earth, is formed in Christ as the efficient cause unto good works, unto such works as flow from the Spirit of God as the principle, as are according to the will of God, as the rule, and for the glory of God as the end, Gal. 5:20, and 6:16; Phil. 1:11.

Each convert hath communion with Christ in his death, and also in his life; he knoweth Christ, and hath fellowship with him in his death, whereby he dieth to sin, hence he is said to be dead and buried with Christ: Rom. 6:6, 'Knowing this, that our old man (so sin is called, because it is nigh as old as man, is full of subtlety and craft, and should be always decaying and dying,) is crucified with him, (i.e., Christ whom sin crucified, and whose death crucifieth sin,) that the body of sin (sin is said to have a body, because it consisteth of many members, Col. 3:5) might be destroyed, (for as the life of sin gave Christ his death's-wound, so the death of Christ gave sin its death's-wound,) that henceforth we should not (willingly, cheerfully, customarily) serve sin as our lord and master.' And as the convert hath fellowship with Christ in his death, so also in his resurrection: 'That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection,' Phil. 3:10—i.e., have experience, for it is such a knowledge he speaks of, of the power and energy of the life of Christ, to quicken me unto new obedience.

Besides, the true convert hath the law of God written in his heart, which cannot but move him to the observation of the law in his life, Ps. 37; Heb. 8. According to the predominant principles that are in every man's nature, such are his inclinations, whether to God or evil, and such are ordinarily his practices; as a bowl moves this way or that way, according as the bias inclines.

Now, reader, consider, either thou art a believer or not. If thou art not, it concerns thee speedily to look about thee, lest thou die in this estate, and be damned for ever, John 3:36. If thou art a believer, it would be very strange for thee to continue in any omission, for all this while thou actest against thy nature. It is very much easier to sin with thy nature than against it. A wicked man that hath knowledge cannot sin with such pleasure and easiness as another, because he doth in sinning oppose and fight with conscience within him; but it seems harder for thee, for thou dost not only offer violence to thine enlightened conscience, but also to the new nature that is implanted in thee. By thy omissions, thou dost not only sin against thy natural light, but also against thy new spiritual life. It is hard, we say, for a man to thwart or cross nature, *naturam expellas furca, &c.*, and wilt thou take such pains to disobey thy God's precepts? The devil's servants do his will, but it is with their own whole wills, according to their own inclinations; they do not cross themselves to please him. But thou canst not neglect the will of God, but it must be in part against thine own will, and against thine own inclinations; and wilt thou displease thyself to displease God, and walk contrary to thyself, that thou mayest walk contrary to God? This is the part and guise of the most spiteful, envious, and malicious enemies, and I am sure it is impossible for thee, if a believer, to be such an enemy to God. God did purposely indue thee with a new spirit, that thou mightest live to his praise: Isa. 43:21, 'This people have I formed for myself, and (new made and moulded them) they shall shew forth my praise.' Now, how

is the praise of God spread in the world, but by good works: Mat. 5:16, 'Let your light so shine before others, that they seeing your good works may glorify your heavenly Father;' so John 15:8.

Again, it would be marvellous if thou shouldst not follow thy own natural propensity and inclinations. For a dead man to lie still, and not stir, nor perform any actions of life, is nothing strange,—none expecteth any other; but for a living man, one that hath a principle of life, to do so, would be accounted little less than miraculous. For a man dead in sins and trespasses, that hath no spirit of grace to enliven his poor soul, to lie still in his idleness, and slothfulness, and carnal security, and to neglect the performance of the duties of a spiritual life, is no wonder; but is it not a wonder for one that is quickened in Christ, Eph. 2:5, created unto good works, fitted and formed for them, Eph. 2:10, that hath Jesus Christ living in him, Gal. 2:20, and a principle of holiness inclining and enabling him hereunto, should omit those actions that are proper to life. I beseech thee, friend, do not displease thyself, and cross thy very nature, to disobey thy God; surely he is worthy of more dutiful behaviour from thee.

12. The reward will answer the work, and the profit of positive holiness will answer all thy pains. I confess obedience to the affirmative part of the command, to pray, and hear, and give to the poor, &c., with those qualifications, and in that manner which God commandeth, is much harder than to the negative; and to do good is much more difficult than not to do evil; but thy labour shall not be in vain. I have told thee already, all the reward of a mere negative holiness is a cooler hell; but I must tell thee now, that the reward of positive holiness will be a glorious, and blessed, and endless state of happiness in heaven. A negative holiness shall not have so much as a full negative happiness; it shall not abolish, only abate the torments

of hell; and the reason is, because such holiness is counterfeit and hypocritical. But positive holiness shall have both, a full negative and positive happiness. God will do him good that is good, and doth good, Ps. 125:4; and if God undertake to do good to a person, he will do it to good purpose. Man's doing good, which is his positive holiness, is little; yea, nothing to God. 'My goodness extendeth not to thee,' saith David, Ps. 16:2. But God's doing good, which is his positive bounty, is effectual, yea, all in all with man; therefore when he would speak in few words the great kindness he had in store for his people, he only tells them, Jer. 32:40, 'I will not turn away from them to do them good;' and ver. 41, 'I will rejoice over them to do them good.' Nay, though negative godliness obtains only at present some respect from men, and hereafter fewer stripes from hell's jailer, positive holiness hath a far greater, and another manner of reward, both here and hereafter: 'In the doing of thy commands there is great reward,' Ps. 19. In the forbearing thy prohibitions there is some reward, but in the doing thy commands there is great reward. Positive holiness hath meat in its mouth, affirmative obedience is its own recompense. It brings that calmness and serenity of mind that nothing else can do. Negative holiness may do somewhat towards a negative quietness, i.e., a freedom from those dreadful horrors and terrors which sometimes seize those who commit gross unnatural sins; but positive piety brings positive peace. 'Great peace have they which love thy law,' Ps. 119:165, 'and nothing shall offend them.' They are not only freed from those gripes of conscience with which many others are afflicted, but they have that spiritual joy and heart-comfort which the world is a stranger to, Gal. 6:16. Faith, which is not the least part of this holiness, fills the soul with joy; yea, with joy unspeakable and full of glory, Rom 15; 1 Pet. 1:8. I may appeal to the experience of a Christian, whether ever he find more comfort than when he hath done his God faithful service, and whether ever their hearts are more heavy than when they have been negligent of their

duty. David and the Israelites were almost transported, their hearts leaped for joy, that they had offered so willingly and liberally towards the building of the temple: 'Then the people rejoiced, for that they offered willingly, because with perfect heart they offered willingly to the Lord; and David the king also rejoiced with great joy;' and the wine of their joy was so strong that he was forced to give it vent: 'Wherefore David blessed the Lord before all the congregation, and said, Blessed be thou, Lord God of Israel our father, for ever and ever,' &c., 1 Chron. 29:9–12, &c. But mark, God is so tender of this man that mindeth his duty, that he will suffer no wind, no ill wind to blow upon him: 'Great peace have they which love thy law, and nothing shall offend them.' None must knock at their door to disturb them of their rest. All the creatures must be kind to them for his sake; they must have nothing done to them which may be offensive.

Yet this is not all the profit of holiness here, (though I shall pass to the next,) much less in the other world. As I said before, a positive holiness shall have a positive heaven. The Christian's avoiding what is evil, through the blood of Christ, shall be recompensed with a freedom from hell; and the Christian's doing what is good, through the same meritorious cause, shall be rewarded with the fruition of heaven. The two servants that had not hid their talents in a napkin, as the negative Christian doth, but traded according to his trust, and improved his stock faithfully in doing good, as he had opportunity, is commended by his master for a good and faithful servant, and honoured with his master's own happiness: 'Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.' No less will content his large liberal heart than his own joy for his holy ones, a joy so great that it cannot enter into them, their narrow vessels can never hold such an ocean, therefore they must enter into it, and be immersed and swallowed up as it were in this vast sea of pleasure and solace. But, reader, consider in this chapter before the text, ver. 34. What will be the profit of this sort of

piety? how infinitely the gains will exceed the pains, were they ten thousand times more than they can be: 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry, and ye gave me meat,' &c. How doth every word speak love and life, every syllable drop myrrh and mercy, in which we may observe the welcome those that are fruitful Christians shall find from Christ in the other world. We have, 1. The estate they shall be invested with, and that is a kingdom. 2. Their title to it, and that is by inheritance from their Father: 'Ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom.' 3. Its preparation for them: 'Prepared for you from the foundation of the world.' 4. Their formal introduction into it: 'Come, ye blessed of my Father.' 5. The qualification of the persons that shall inherit this kingdom—'I was hungry, and ye fed me'—such as feed the hungry and clothe the naked. 1. Observe, reader, for thine encouragement, to mind positive holiness, the estate thy loving and bountiful Father hath provided for thee, when thou comest to age. It is no less than a kingdom; thou shalt be a king now, and enjoy a kingdom then: 'He hath made us kings and priests unto God,' Rev. 1:6, with palms in thy hand, Rev. 7:9, of which the door of the Holy of holies was made, 1 Kings 6:33, an emblem of perfect victory over all thine enemies, and robes on thy back, Rev. 19:8, of perfect purity, spotless innocency, and meridian glory, and a crown on thy head, James 1:12, such a crown as will never wear, never waste, but endure, and therefore called incorruptible, 1 Cor. 9:25, and reign with Christ for ever and ever. Reader, hath a kingdom nothing of amiableness in it to allure thee? What fighting, and killing, and swearing, and forswearing is there for an earthly kingdom! Oh what shouldst thou not do for a heavenly kingdom! Where, (1.) Is the greatest glory, a far more exceeding weight of it, 2 Cor. 5:17, 18. (2.) The strongest security, a kingdom that cannot be shaken, Heb. 11. No devil or subtle serpent can crawl into the celestial paradise. (3.) The brightest splendour, transparent

as crystal, Rev. 21, wherein the inhabitants shall shine as the sun, and much more lustrously, Mat. 13. (4.) The highest attendants, cherubims and seraphims standing as servants or porters at the twelve gates of the city, Rev. 21:12. (5.) The greatest power, the saints shall inherit all things, Rev. 12; judge that world which now censureth and judgeth them, 1 Cor. 6:2, 3. And (6.) The most pure and perfect satisfaction; in every power and part of soul and body, there is fulness of joy, and rivers of pleasures, and (7.) eternity to complete their felicity: 2 Pet. 1:11, 'So an entrance shall be administered into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.' 2. The title, Inherit the kingdom. It comes to them not by their purchase, but by Christ's purchase; therefore called the purchased possession: Eph. 1:14, 'Until the redemption of the purchased possession.' It comes not to them by their goodness, but by God's gift. 'Fear not, little flock; it is your Father's good pleasure to give you a kingdom,' Luke 12:32. It comes not to them by their obedience, but by inheritance from their Father. Christ is God's natural son and heir of all things; by him believers are God's adopted children: Gal. 3:26, 'Ye are all the children of God through faith in Jesus Christ.' 'And if sons, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ,' Rom. 8:17.

3. Its preparation for them from the foundation of the world. When God first erected the stately fabric of heaven and earth, probably he made the empyrean heaven the place of the blessed; for at first, when he laid the foundations of the world, the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy; therefore it is likely the place of their residence was made. Besides, it was prepared in the decrees of God; they were destined to a diadem before they had a being.

4. Their formal admission into it: 'Come, ye blessed of my Father.' Come from all sin, from all sorrow, all sufferings; come from Babylon to Sion, from a barren wilderness, where is no water for a thirsty soul, to a fruitful, pleasant paradise, where are all sorts of luscious and heart-cheering rarities. Come, where have ye been all this while? how could ye bear my absence so long? what have ye done in a valley of tears, a Bochim, a place of weeping, so many years? When he calls them to die, his voice need not be unpleasant to them. He doth but call them as a father his child, out of the shower into his house: 'Come, my people, enter into the chambers; shut the door, hide yourselves for a very little moment, till the indignation be overpast,' Isa. 26:20. Come, child, go to bed; I will cause the dust to be a soft couch of repose to thee, and when thou awakest in the morning of the resurrection all shall be well with thee. But his voice at the resurrection will be sweet indeed: Come, child, oh come, dear child, into my arms and embraces; come into my heart, come into my very soul; come and take possession of my dear-bought purchase: 'Come and inherit the kingdom prepared for thee.' Come, child, and enjoy all that honour, and treasure, and joy, and delight, and happiness, which thou hast so often prayed, and wept, and watched, and sighed, and sobbed for. Come, child, to thy Father's house, sit down at his table, drink of his new wine, and eat of his hidden manna, and feast of the tree of life, that groweth in the midst of paradise, for ever and ever.

5. The qualifications of the persons that shall partake of this possession; they are such as feed the hungry, clothe the naked, &c.: 'For I was hungry, and ye gave me meat; thirsty, and ye gave me drink.' Reader, dost thou not observe, that those who mind this positive holiness are the blessed of the Father, and the heirs of the kingdom, and wilt thou neglect? A kingdom makes the greatest

difference among men. The height of any one's ambition can be but a kingdom; and will not a glorious, joyful, eternal kingdom move thee?

CHAPTER XL

Arguments against sins of omission. God delights chiefly in our doing good; and our opportunities for doing good will quickly be gone

13. Consider, God takes most pleasure in our positive holiness. It is true he is pleased to see men deny ungodliness and worldly lusts; but nothing to that pleasure which he takes in seeing them live righteously, soberly, and godly, in this present evil world. He likes ceasing from evil, because it is agreeable to his word; but he likes better doing of good, because it is more conformable to his will: Isa. 64:5, 'Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness.' Thou meetest him with the riches of mercy, who worketh what is good with alacrity. If he come to thee, thou wilt not cast him away; nay, thou wilt run to meet him, and embrace him. As the father of the prodigal ran to meet his returning son, Luke 15, and as one at odds, but willing to be reconciled, tells us, he will meet his opposite half-way. And I may say of God's meeting a soul that worketh righteousness, as God tells Moses, 'Behold, Aaron thy brother comes to meet thee; and when he seeth thee, he will be glad at his heart.' Behold, thy God and Father cometh to meet thee, and when he seeth thee working righteousness, he will be glad at his heart; nay, so glad, that the disadvantage of a man's country shall not hinder him of this kindness: Acts 10, 'And Peter said, I perceive now that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation, he that feareth God, and

worketh righteousness, is accepted of him.' God proclaimeth to all the world that he delighteth in such a man's way, Ps. 73:23, and therefore his word, which he hath given us for our rule herein, is called his good and acceptable will, Rom. 12:2; and the reason is, because such persons are most like God, therefore they have most of his love and delight. God is a pure act, and so cannot but approve of them that are active. He is ever at work: John 5:17, 'Hitherto my Father worketh, and I work.' And it is righteousness he is always working: 'The Lord is holy in all his ways, and righteous in all his works,' Ps. 145. He is good, and doth good; so that those who are positively holy do most resemble him, and so do most delight him. We all take most pleasure in those children that are our exactest pictures. Reader, art thou negatively holy? canst thou say, I am no drunkard, no glutton, no adulterer? thou mayest say this, and be like the devil, for the devil himself may say as much. Canst thou say, I am no thief, no swearer, no blasphemer, no Sabbath-breaker, no trader with false weights or false measures, no bearer of false witness against my neighbour? A beast may say as much, and thou mayest be free from these sins, and yet like a beast. But if thou livest in the love and delight of the blessed Majesty, doing his pleasure, this is to be like an angel, Ps. 103; and doing good to others, this is to be like God, and this is that which takes his heart. Common humanity is much affected with one that aboundeth in goodness, and is rich in good works; therefore the apostle tells us, 'That for a good man possibly some may even dare to die,' Rom. 5, the reason of which is, because the people of the Jews were divided into three sorts of persons: there were Reshagnim, or οἱ ἀσεβεῖς, the wicked or ungodly, those who lived without the worship of God, and walked in profane courses; there were also Tsidikim, or οἱ δίκαιοι, the just or righteous, men of rigid righteousness, or severe innocency; and Chasidim, or οἱ ἄγαθοι, the good and liberal, men of large hearts and open hands, to do good to others, who, as public conduits, are of public advantage in the

places where they live. Now, saith the apostle, scarcely for a righteous man, that is, for a man of austere justice, will one die; but for a good man, a man full of good works, one that is bountiful to others, and useful in his generation, a man would even dare to die. Humanity is so taken with doing good, that a man can be contented almost to die for such; much more must goodness itself, and the fountain of all goodness, be affected therewith. He tells us, that he is a God who executeth kindness, judgment, and righteousness: 'for in these things I delight, saith the Lord;' both in doing them myself, and seeing them done by others, Ps. 11:7; Micah 6:8.

What thinkest thou, reader, of this motive to good works? wouldst thou not delight the heart of God? How long hast thou by thy omissions grieved him, and is it not yet time to rejoice him? How often hast thou displeased him, how many millions of times, and wilt thou not please him? Thou daily seest, that though he hath no obligations to his creatures, but the contrary, he doth them good, and gives them food and fruitful seasons, and fills their heart with gladness. And wilt thou not do thy utmost to glad his heart, who hath above all apprehensions obliged thee? Truly, he doth not deserve the name of a rational creature, who doth not above all things seek to please his Maker; and there is no way hereunto like abounding in well-doing. Therefore the apostle begs for the Colossians, that they may be filled with the knowledge of his will. Why? that they might keep their light in a dark lantern, or have it as men wear a glass eye, for show, and not for use? or that men might be able to talk the more of religion, and the things that appertain thereunto? No; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord, unto all pleasing, εἰς πᾶσαν ἀρέσκειαν, to his whole liking and delight, that ye might please God. Ay, but how may this be done? He presently tells us how: 'That ye may walk worthy of the Lord, unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work.' There is no such way to please God, as fruitfulness in

every good work. It rejoiceth the husbandman to see his trees laden with fruit, to see his fields covered over, as the psalmist's phrase is, Ps. 65:13, with corn, and to see his returns answer his cost. And it rejoiceth the blessed God to see a heart that hath long lain fallow, and been barren, full of faith, and love, and humility, and heavenly mindedness, and all the fruits of righteousness; and so a life that hath been idle and unprofitable, abundant in acts of piety, charity, and the like. David, who served the will of God in his generation, he of all men was the man after God's own heart.

14. Consider, thou hast but a little time to do good in, therefore it concerns thee to set speedily upon it, and to be diligent at it. Alas! how short is thy whole life, from the womb to the tomb: 'It is but a shadow that fleeth away, and continueth not; a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away;' it is nothing, Job 14:2; James 4:14; Ps. 39:6. And how much of this time is gone, hath been spent as a tale that is told, impertinently, and to no purpose, in doing nothing, or in doing that which is worse than nothing, Ps. 90:9. How short that time is that remaineth God only knoweth; for thy time is in his hand, not thine own; surely then it behoveth thee to redeem the time, to make the most of it, and whilst thou hast it, to improve it for the doing of good. O friend, hast thou loitered so long, is thy work so great, thy day to work in so short, and yet is it not time to bestir thyself? Is death at thy door? art thou within a step of eternity, within the view of the other world, and yet wilt thou not up and be doing? Can any assure thee of standing in the vineyard another year; nay, another month; nay, another day; and is it not yet time to be fruitful? Dost thou not see that as labourers are sent into the vineyard at all hours, so they go out of the vineyard at all hours. Thou owest a debt to nature, to the God of nature; the day of payment is not expressed, therefore it may be demanded at any time. Reader, though some fruit falls from the tree by reason of its

maturity, yet how much more is blown off, or cudgelled off, whilst it is green? Do not thine eyes see coffins and graves of all sorts and sizes? And wilt thou be as the silly beasts, who, though the butcher come one day to the field and fetch away one, another day and fetch away another to the slaughter, yet those that remain neither miss them that are gone, nor dread their own destinies? O friend, what dost thou think to do when time is gone, and death comes? wilt thou stop the sun of thy life in its career? will it hear thy voice, and obey thy command? Or wilt thou call to time, as Israel's general did to the sun, Stand still, that I may be avenged of all my sensuality, and idleness, and pride, and impenitency, and all my spiritual enemies, which have robbed me of God and heaven? Do you imagine time will be at your beck? Or are the apprehensions of the king of terrors, and of a dreadful day of judgment, and of an amazing eternity, no whit rousing or awakening to thee?

Canst thou believe a dark night of death a fit time to trim, and adorn, and attire thy soul in, for the love and embraces of the King of kings, and Lord of lords. Now God gives thee a day, but of how many hours, whether longer or shorter, thou canst not tell. Thy life is fleeing away, time's chariot moves swiftly: 'Yet a little while the light is with thee; walk while thou hast the light, lest darkness come upon thee,' John 12:35. Two things especially occur in these words. 1. Now thou hast time, yea, opportunity; make much of it, improve it to the utmost: 'Walk while thou hast the light.' God allots thee a due time for bringing forth; hence it is observable that God gave the fig-tree three years to bear in. Other trees, as the olive and nut tree, required more time, but so succulent a plant as the fig-tree needed no more; nay, saith A Lapide, if the fig-tree bear not the third year, it will never bear. God never expecteth brick without allowing straw, nor requires his rent before quarter-day, or the time of payment comes. 2. Thy time, or at least thine opportunity, is very short; therefore work

much in a little time, whilst thou hast the light: 'Yet a little while the light is with thee; a little while, and the light will be taken from thee.' A little while, and the light of life; a little while, and the light of means, and helps, and seasons of grace, will be taken from thee. And what then? truly, then darkness will come upon thee; a dark grave will be the receptacle of thy body, and a dark dungeon will be the receptacle of thy soul, if thou now loiterest; and darkness is no fit state, nor a dark night a fit time, to walk or work in.

Darkness is dreadful, and everything seems more frightful in the night. If a man's house be on fire in the night, that he hears the noise and rattling of the flames, seeth no way of escape for himself, his wife, and his children, oh, in what a plight is he! he stands naked in his chamber, at a loss what to do; he is full of horrors and terrors, to be conceived by none but himself. How pale is his countenance, and how heavy his heart, when he seeth the flames seizing his chamber, when they come near his body! he is almost drowned to death with grief and sorrow before he is burned to death with the flames. So it is when the night of death surpriseth the loiterer, that hath neglected the doing of good, when conscience is in a flame about his ears, and frights him with the fore-apprehensions of the unquenchable burnings, and with cutting reflections upon his former negligence and unprofitableness; the man is quaking and trembling, not knowing what to do. Is that a time to put on the armour of light, when he is putting off his natural life? Is a dark night of fear and amazement a time to seek God in, or to work out his own salvation? Ah, friend, it is too great and weighty a work to be done in an instant, and the poor sinner is too much astonished to set about it. If the fear of a danger gone and over kill a Nabal, and make his heart like a stone, what will the fear, the certain knowledge of wrath, of the wrath of a God, of the everlasting wrath of a God to come, do to a poor sinner? O friend, make use of time while thou hast it: 'Work the work

of him that sent thee while it is day; for the night cometh, when no man can work,' John 9:4.

CHAPTER XLI

The grand cause of sins of omission, an unregenerate heart; with the cure of it, a renewed nature

I proceed now to the second and third particulars, viz., the cause and cure of sins of omission; I shall recite one more general and principal cause, others more special, and less principal, and join the cure to the cause.

1. The grand cause of these sins of omission is an unregenerate heart. Where the ground is unploughed, and lieth fallow, no fruit can be expected; weeds may grow, good corn cannot grow there. When the heart is not broken up by repentance, but hardened through custom and continuance in sin, no fruits of righteousness, no faith, no love, or humility, &c., can be expected there: 'Can the leopard change his spots, or the blackamore his skin? no more can he that is accustomed to do evil, learn to do well,' Jer. 23:13. Nature's fruit will be according to its root, whether sweet or sour. There must of necessity be a good foundation laid, before there can be a good superstructure of holiness reared. An unrenewed heart hath no tendency towards it, and nature will work little farther than its own inclination. The water will run as the tide carrieth it. Nay, the unregenerate heart is contrary to religious duties, hath a hatred and abhorrency of them; no wonder then if it live in the omission of them. The carnal mind, Lady Reason herself, the chief and principal faculty of man, is enmity against God: 'It is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can

be,' Rom. 8:7. He who is an enemy to a man's person, will never be a friend to his precepts, much less will he who is enmity against God's life, be subject to his law. There is an impossibility hereof: 'Neither indeed can be.' Till the heart be changed, it will never like the divine commands, that are so contrary to its lusts; and till it be brought to love them, it will neglect obedience to them. When the will, the great commander, is set against the laws of God, how can any of the other faculties submit to them? As in fleshly lusts, the titillation is from sense and appetite, but the consent of the reasonable will is that which makes it a vice; so unto good, the inclination may possibly be from example or education, but the royal assent of the will is that which makes it a virtue. The devil finds it no hard work to part sin and his duty, whose will never chose it, and whose heart never loved it; but it will be much easier to part him and his duty, whose will and heart have an enmity and reluctancy against it. If a lad's calling doth not suit his genius, he seldom comes to do anything well, or to be expert at it, much less when he hates it. The scholar who loves not his book, will hardly proceed from the degree of a dunce, much less he who loatheth his book. If the nature of a man be contrary to God and his ways, the presence of God is troublesome to him: Job 21:14, 'They say to God, Depart from us.' And the worship of God is tedious to them: 'When will the new moon be gone, and the Sabbath be over?' And the precepts of God are fetters and cords to them: Ps. 2:3, 'Let us break their bonds asunder, and cast away their cords from us.' Common gifts of the Spirit, as illumination, convictions, sudden flashes of affection, may do somewhat against this distemper of nature, but the virtue of that physic is soon spent, and then it returns to its former illness. Colours not laid in oil will soon be washed off.

Indeed, how can it be expected that a body separated from a soul should stir or move; and much less can it be expected that a soul without Christ, its life, should pray, or hear, or watch, or do anything

according to the will of God. Paul tells us, 'I live,' (i.e., to God, according to his will, doing what is good; but how comes this about? at whose cost doth he keep house?) 'Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.' I may thank my Lord Jesus; I am beholden unto him for all ability unto sacred actions: 'And the life that I live in the flesh, is by faith in the Son of God.' It is from Christ alone that I receive supplies of strength and virtue to live to God. What will then become of the unregenerate person who is without Christ? Eph. 2:12, 'He who hath not the Son, hath not life;' and he who hath not life, I am sure cannot live to God. The apostle fitly joins them together, 'trees without fruit, twice dead,' i.e., certainly dead, or dead indeed, Jude 12. Where the stock is dead, the branches must needs wither; and if they wither, there is little likelihood of fruit.

Besides, an unregenerate soul is necessitated, as to internal omissions, in regard of his want of spiritual life, so, to external omissions, in regard of his engagements to his carnal interest. One is possibly married to profit, and when that calls him, he must go, though closet or family, or any other duties, bid him stay: Mat. 8, 'No man can serve God and mammon; but he will love the one, and hate the other; or despise the one, and cleave to the other.' When once there comes a competition between godliness and gain in the life, it will quickly appear which hath the greatest sway and predominancy in the heart. The young man would not follow Christ, because his estate denied to give him leave. Had he been less rich, he had been, probably, more religious; but having once espoused the interest of his wealth, he could not leave it, though he left God, and Christ, and heaven for it. Another is engaged to pleasures; and when they require his presence, it cannot be supposed that he will deny them for the exercises of religion, which are so painful to him. Herod may pretend fair for religion, and profess some kindness to the Baptist, but when his Delilah commands, his love to her overcomes his fear of John;

and instead of doing many things, or anything that was good, he cuts off that head which had a tongue in it so bold as to reprove him for his sin. A third is wedded to honour; and if that be inconsistent with holiness, as sometimes the case may be, he will neglect his duty to God to pay his homage to this Diana. Jehu will do one good work, because God's and his interest were both conjoined. His slaughter of Ahab's sons and prophets tended to settle him the firmer in his throne, and so his ambition called for the same with God's command. But Jehu will omit another good work; he will not destroy the idolatry at Dan and Bethel, because there his interest and God's were divided; for though God enjoined the destruction of idols in one place as well as another, yet Jehu was fearful, as his predecessor Jeroboam, that the crown would not be fast on his head if the people should have gone up to Jerusalem to worship; therefore when his carnal interest forbids what God commands, he disobeys God to serve that. There is no unsanctified person in the world but hath some worldly interest of his own, superior and paramount; nay, in many things opposite and contrary to the interest of God; and therefore, though he may obey God while both those interests can agree and walk together in the same way, yet when there is a necessity of their parting, he will cleave to that which hath the predominancy within him. Where God hath some residence, and is entertained but as an underling to the flesh, when it comes to this pass, that one must be turned out of doors, for they cannot agree long together, you may easily guess which it shall be.

The cure of this, reader, must be, if thou art not born again, to get a new heart. An old heart will never serve for, or enable unto, the acts of new obedience. The water will rise no higher than the fountain-head whence it floweth. If you would have a clock to move regularly, and the hand without to go true, you must have the wheels and poises right within. A good temperament of body may cause a

propensity to some things that are honest; but that excellency must be of little worth that hath its original from man's basest part, as those materials are mean which arise out of the potentiality of the matter, and truly that honesty deserves not the name of virtue, being not quickened with the command of reason. An exact constitution may help a man to be mild, meek, courteous, modest, shame-faced; but these cannot be adopted into the family of goodness, because here, as they say in the motion of the serpent, the tail leads the way to the head; the body rules and governs the soul, and the man's perfection is from his meanest and worst part. Besides, the cause of all this seeming virtue is mutable and mortal. Age, or sickness, or change of air, or of condition, may alter a man's good nature, and then where is his religion? Truly, as a comet, it came without giving notice, and goeth away without giving warning. The cause being taken away, the effect ceaseth.

Improved reason will do more towards religion than a sound bodily constitution; but yet the moralists, for all their reason, were far enough from being religious. Indeed, reason rightly improved, is a special help, a serviceable handmaid to religion; but as they used it, or rather abused it, it became an opposite and enemy to religion. The mind, or understanding, which is the supreme faculty of the soul, they set up in defiance of revelations, and with it they outface illumination. *Ψυχικὸς ἄνθρωπος*, the natural man, *animalis homo*, he that hath no more than a reasonable soul, 'perceiveth not the things of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned,' 1 Cor. 2:14. Natural light will not help a man to see spiritual objects, because there is no proportion between the faculty and the object; and because it cannot apprehend them, therefore it condemneth them as foolish and ridiculous. It hath its high thoughts, and carnal reasonings, and vain imaginations, in which strongholds lust shelters itself against all the

convictions of our own spirit. And as the moralist deifieth his understanding in opposition to faith, so he idoliseth the liberty of his will in opposition to the special energy and virtue of the Holy Ghost. Liberty, saith the philosopher, I have by nature—that is, a freedom to choose good or evil I have in common with the rest of mankind; but goodness to that liberty, or an application of it to the choice of good rather than evil, this I have from myself, my reason, and I am beholden to myself for it. So that, as Augustine saith, if this be true, *Si nobis potest, libera voluntas ex Deo est, quoad hoc potest esse vel bona vel mala, bona vero voluntas ex nobis est; melius est id quod a nobis quam quod ab illo est, De Peccat. Merit., lib. ii. cap. 18.* If our will be free from God, it may be good or bad; but if it be good from ourselves, better is that which we have from ourselves than that which we have from God. In short, this moral votary differs from the natural, that the original of the latter's religion is the constitution of his body; of the former's, is the chief faculty of his soul; but neither of these can make a man religious; for where the vitals are tainted, and the inward parts infected, it is in vain to use plasters or outward medicines. Indeed, here is the great fault of both the former, that they take no notice of the depravation of man's nature, which alone would convince them of the necessity of a change. They who have crazed principles and cracked brains cannot see any defects in themselves, being prepossessed with an opinion of their own perfection. Both the naturalists and the moralists are so far from knowing the plague of their own hearts, that they count everything of nature rather lovely than loathsome. And as among the Moors blackness is counted a beauty, because it is common and general, and they see no other; so with these men the vitiosity of nature, which is the seed of all evil, is commended for the spring of virtue. Indeed they are in love with their disease, and instead of health have this unhappiness, that they feel not their own sickness; so that

neither the one nor the other can be religious, or perform those duties which God requireth.

Regeneration is absolutely requisite to this; he that layeth not that for his foundation, can never build a temple for God; he must needs prove a bankrupt, that is worse than nought when he begun. Some tell us that trees shoot above ground as much, and no more, than they do under ground. I am sure there is no more godliness outwardly in the life, than there is inwardly in the heart. If the fear and love of God be the great spring to set all the wheels agoing in the ways of religion, then all is right, but till then nothing is right. If there be not the oil of solid grace in the vessel of the heart, to feed profession in the lamp, and holiness in the life, both will quickly fail.

When God intends that his people should walk in his statutes, keep his judgments, and do them, what doth he for them to prepare them and enable them thereunto? Truly this: he regenerates them, and changeth them, and putteth a new principle into them: 'I will give them a new heart and a new spirit,' Ezek. 36:26; I will cast them in the fire of my word, and though they are old, tough, untoward metal, I will melt them, and soften them, and they shall run into my mould. But how can this be? nature will still run into its old temper; though it may be a little altered in its form, yet it will still continue the same in substance and matter. No; I will put my Spirit into them, and they shall walk in my commandments, and do them. My Spirit shall renew and quite alter their spirits; it shall turn the stream of their hearts from the world and flesh unto God, and shall be in them a principle of spiritual life and motion, strengthening them to 'walk in my statutes, and to keep my commandments, and do them.' The natural spirit would have served to [have] done natural actions. The spirit of the world would have served for a man to have walked according to the course of the world, but no less than a new spirit can serve for a

new life; and nothing below the Spirit of God can help unto a faithful walking with God.

Two things, reader, I would specially commend to thee, without which thou canst never rightly obey any positive precept; and they are to make sure of a change in thy judgment and thy heart.

1. Make sure of a change in thy judgment concerning sin and obedience. By nature thou hast looked on sin, as Achan on the wedge of gold, and David on Bathsheba, as lovely and desirable; thou hast beheld it through the devil's spectacles, and so hast judged it eligible; if still thou art of the same mind, though thou mayest for shame or fear forbear it a while, yet as two lovers parted by their parents, contrive and conspire how to meet together, and do find some opportunity or other concurring with their desires, so thou wilt find some time to give thy old beloved lusts a visit, and as close and fond embraces as ever. There is a necessity of being renewed in the spirit of thy mind, if thou wouldst not be conformable to the world in sin and folly, Rom. 12:2. Formerly thou hast looked on holiness as a mean, contemptible thing, as a foolish, ridiculous thing, as a fruitless, unprofitable thing, John 7:48, 49; 1 Cor. 2:14; Job 21:15; Mal. 3, and thereupon hast turned thy back upon it; if thou art still of the same opinion, thou wilt be still of thine old ungodly conversation. Till thy mind be enlightened to see the beauty of holiness, the excellency of obedience, the equity of the divine precepts, the right and title that God hath to thy person and service, thou wilt never perform duties to any purpose.

Till thou art turned from darkness to light, thou canst never be turned from Satan to God, Acts 26:18. They must be renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created them, who would put on the new man, which is after God, is created in righteousness and

true holiness, Col. 3:10; Eph. 4:24. This illumination is requisite in order to the second thing; there must be a change in the judgment, before there can be any in affections.

2. Get thy heart changed about sin and obedience; if there be not a loathing in thee of sin, and a love in thee to holiness, thou wilt not much or long forsake the one, or follow after the other. By nature thou lovest sin as thy meat and drink, Prov. 4:17; as thy dainties, Ps. 141; as thy members, Col. 3:5; as thy right hand and right eye, Mat. 18; as thyself, Mat. 16:24. Now whilst this love continueth, thou canst never leave sin. As the dog may forbear the meat on the table whilst the servant's eye is on him, for fear of the cudgel; but when he can come at it alone and escape, he will fall to it greedily. If, from a conviction of the great evil of sin, thy heart be not brought to abhor it, though some qualm of conscience, or sharp providence, may make thee desist from it at present, yet when these distempers, as thou countest them, are gone, thy stomach will come; and as one recovered of an ague, thou wilt fall to more greedily, and feed on it more largely than ever. By nature thy heart is set against obedience. Thy voice is, I will not have this man to rule over me; the voice of thy heart, which was the voice of their lips, for they spoke plain English, 'As for the word that thou hast spoken to us, in the name of the Lord, we will not do it,' Jer. 44:16. Both the king and his laws are odious to thee, and how then shall they be obeyed? If thy heart continue thus bent against holiness, dost thou think thou canst mind it? All thy shows, and shadows, and flourishes, and profession, and privileges, and purposes, and promises, will signify nothing for holiness, or against sin, till thou canst say with David, 'I hate every false way: but thy law do I love,' Ps. 119. He is hardly separated from his master, be he God or Satan, who is bound and fastened to him with the heart-strings of love. And the devil shall find it a tough task to rob Christ of that servant who takes pleasure and delight in his work. Therefore,

reader, thy judgment must be altered, that thou mayest judge of sin and holiness aright, and thereby thy heart be brought out of love with sin, and in love with holiness; and then the work of piety will go on pleasantly, and thou wilt cheerfully obey the divine commands. His statutes will be thy songs, whilst thou art in this house of thy pilgrimage, Ps. 119. Oh how readily wilt thou set about thy business, when the laws of God are the joy of thy heart! Ps. 119:111; and thy delight is in his law, Ps. 1; when thou hast a nature in thee that inclines, and enableth, and engageth thee to godliness; when thou canst savour and relish duties and ordinances, and taste them more pleasant to thy soul than ever the greatest dainties have been to thy body.

If thou wouldst be truly and positively holy, thou seest, reader, a necessity of conversion; without it thou canst no more act holily, than a dead man can move, or a stone walk, or the tide of itself turn backward, when in its full strength and career. What then wilt thou do? For I must confess, withal, that this regenerating work, which is a resurrection from the dead, and a new creation, is altogether beyond thy power. Thou canst as soon stop the sun in its course, and seal up the influence of the stars, as convert thyself. But to encourage thee, know that there is help to be had; God hath proclaimed himself the author of it: James 1:18, 'Of his own will begat he us (and his word and ministers the instruments of it) by the word of truth;' so Acts 26:18; 1 Cor. 4:15. So that thy work must be to wait on God in his word, and to beg hard of him that he would be found of thee in his own way. Alas! how shouldst thou fill heaven and earth night and day with thy cries, and groans, and tears, and prayers, when thou considerest, except thou livest to God, and walkest after the Spirit, thou art lost for ever; and without a new heart and new spirit thou canst not live or walk so; and none but God can do this for thee. O friend, fall down on thy knees before him, acknowledge thy

unworthiness; urge God with his promise, 'I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit will I put into you; and I will take away your hearts of stone, and give unto you hearts of flesh. And I will put my spirit into you, and cause you to walk in my ways,' &c., Ezek. 36:26, 27. God cannot deny his own handwriting; he will make good what he hath spoken. Look up to Jesus Christ to plead for thee, who died to purchase holiness, and delights to see that paid which he hath bought; and hath God engaged to him, 'that he shall see the travail of his soul, to his satisfaction,' Isa. 53:11; and persevere in so doing, knowing thou shalt reap in time, if thou faintest not.

CHAPTER XLII

Another cause of sins of omission, ignorance; with the cure of it, labouring after knowledge

2. Another cause of sins of omission is ignorance. They who know not their master's will can never do it. Let papists say that ignorance is the mother of devotion; the word of God and our own experience do loudly speak the contrary: Eph. 4:18, 'They are estranged from the life of God (i.e., a life of holiness, a life in heaven) through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts.' A blind man may well miss his way, and a blind mind can never do his work. Whatever the world talks of their honesty and goodness, notwithstanding their ignorance, 'without knowledge the mind is not good,' Prov. 19:2. They presume to excuse their dark heads with their good hearts, but these two are inconsistent. A dark cellar is not fuller of vermin, nor a dark hole of dust, than a dark heart is of filthiness, Hosea 4:1, 2. They who want the knowledge of God are under the

dominion of the devil; he is the ruler of the darkness of this world, Eph. 6. And I am sure the unclean spirit never bears sway in a clean heart, nor this evil spirit in a good heart. No, as the eagle, he first pecks out the eyes of his prey, and then devours it. How easily is a blind soul conquered and killed by the enemies of his salvation! What error will not an ignorant creature swallow down? He is like water, ready to take the impression and form of what vessel you please to pour him into. Mat. 22:29, our Saviour tells the Sadducees that 'they erred, not knowing the Scriptures;' and the apostles told the Corinthians, who doubted at least about the resurrection, as the Sadducees denied it, 'Some have not the knowledge of God,' 1 Cor. 15:32. What crime will not an ignorant man commit? Knowledge to the mind is as light to the world, which discovers our way, and thereby prevents our wanderings; but it is no wonder at all for men, in the night and darkness of ignorance, to go astray, or to stumble and fall. 'If a man walk in the night he stumbleth, because he seeth not the light of this world,' John 11:9. Why do we think sin is called a work of darkness? truly not only because it is from the devil, the prince of darkness, and he that doth evil loveth darkness, hates the light, and it is the way to blackness of darkness, but also because it is conceived in the womb of a dark heart. The prince of darkness may beget what monsters he pleaseth on such persons: 2 Tim. 3:3, 'Ignorant women were laden with divers lusts.' No soil fuller of such weeds than that which is not manured with knowledge. St Paul's ignorance was the ground of his wasting the church at such a cruel rate: 'I was a blasphemer, a persecutor, injurious, but I did it ignorantly,' 1 Tim. 1:13. That monster sin, which the sun hid his head as ashamed to behold, the murder of our Lord Jesus Christ, had ignorance for its mother: Acts 3:15, 'Ye killed the Prince of life;' ver. 17, 'And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers.' So the apostle Paul, 'Had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.' Now if ignorance be the cause of

such grievous commissions, it must much more be the cause of omission; for in all these commissions there are great omissions; but I shall shew particularly that ignorance is one cause of sins of omission.

We are bound to love God, and that 'with all our hearts, and with all our souls, and with all our strength,' Mat. 22:37; but is it possible to love one whom we are ignorant of? Did ever any fear an unknown evil, or desire or delight in an unknown good? Are not the greatest rarities and richest jewels of the world, that are undiscovered, undesired? The apostle saith, 'He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?' 1 John 3. I am sure he that doth not so much as see God with the eye of his soul, his understanding, can never love him. We say, What the eye sees not, the heart grieves not; it is as true, what the eye seeth not, the heart loves not.

Who can obey divine precepts who is ignorant of them? or fear divine threatenings who doth not know them? or be allured by divine promises who is altogether a stranger to them? God, and Christ, and pardon, and life, and promises, and covenant, may stand long enough knocking at the door of a heart fastened with ignorance, before they will find admittance. It is our duty, our great gospel-duty, to believe in Christ, John 6. 'This is his commandment, that ye believe in him whom he hath sent,' 1 John 3:23. But ignorance hinders this: 'How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?' Rom. 10:14. Who will trust a mere stranger, especially in a matter of weight? I had need to know him well whom I trust with my soul and salvation, with all I am worth for this and the other world. A wise man will not venture his estate, much less his life, least of all his soul, with one of whose integrity, and faithfulness, and ability, and responsibility, he hath not good assurance. The psalmist's saying

is, 'They that know thy name will trust in thee,' Ps. 9:10. They who know thy grace, and goodness, thy promise, and power, and truth, they will trust thee; but others will not. Paul's hope could not have been so high, nor the wine of his joy so brisk, when his death drew near, had it not been for his great acquaintance with him with whom he had ventured his all: 2 Tim. 1:12, 'I know whom I have believed, (how willing, how ready, how able to save me,) and what I have committed to him he is able to keep for me against that day.' Knowledge is so requisite to faith, that it is once and again put for faith, Isa. 53:10; 1 Cor. 2:2; John 17:3; Phil. 3:8, 9; but ignorance is faith's great hindrance.

Again, our duty is to repent upon pain of eternal perdition, Luke 13:3; Mat. 11:22, 23. But ignorance causeth men to omit this as well as the other. Where there is a veil upon the understanding, there is ever a caul upon the heart and conscience. As in the night season, we have always the hardest frosts and the coldest weather; therefore the Holy Ghost tells us, when Israel shall repent and turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away, 2 Cor. 3:16, 17. While the veil remains they are still turning more and more from God, till wrath come upon them to the uttermost; but when the veil shall be taken away, that they shall see the evil, and mischief, and loathsomeness, and folly of those ways they have turned to; and also for the beauty, and amiableness, and bounty, and kindness of that God they have turned from, then they will quickly return unto the Lord. Indeed, men may thank their ignorance for most of their omissions, especially the heathen, and many Christians who live in dark corners of the land; ay, and many who are as void and empty of knowledge as the heathen, who live under the gospel. Many of these neglect family duties, closet prayer, a strict sanctification of the Lord's day, edifying others to their power as opportunity is offered them, and several others, because they do not understand them to be their duty.

Reader, the cure of this must be for thee, if ignorant, to labour after the knowledge of God, and thy duty to him. When David leaves his charge with his son Solomon, to serve and worship the blessed God as the great business of his life, mark how he begins with the means thereof, and concludes with the motive thereto: 'And thou, Solomon my son, know the God of thy fathers, and serve him with a perfect heart and willing mind. If thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever,' 1 Chron. 28:9. As if he had said, Solomon, thou son of my love, thou son of my vows, I am now dying, and going to my long home; nature and grace, my love to thee and to God, do both strongly incline me to desire thy welfare, and to wish thee well eternally; I know not better how to speak and declare it, than by charging and commanding thee that whatever thou omittest or neglectest, thou wouldst adore and worship the God of thy fathers, and that not formally and customarily, but solemnly and sincerely, with a perfect heart and willing mind; and to this end there is a necessity of thy knowing him. Till thou knowest his grace and goodness, thou wilt never love him; till thou knowest his holiness and justice, thou wilt never fear him; till thou knowest his promises, and power, and faithfulness, thou wilt never trust him; and till thou knowest his boundless sovereignty and dominion over, his unquestionable right and propriety in, the works of his hands, thou wilt never obey him; therefore study the knowledge of this God of thy fathers, that thou mayest serve him; for be assured, he will not be mocked: 'But with the upright, he will carry himself upright; and with the froward, he will carry himself froward,' Ps. 18. 'If thou livest after the flesh, thou shalt die; if thou walkest after the Spirit, thou shalt live.' If thou seek him in his own way, with all thy heart, as the great work and business of thy life, he will reveal himself to thee, and be found of thee in a way of grace and favour; but if thou embrace the world, or the flesh, as thy sovereigns or portions, and so cast him off, be confident he will forsake and cast

thee off for ever, and then what will devils do to thee, and what misery will not surprise thee? Friend, God affords thee many helps for knowledge, and wilt thou not labour after it? Shall men stumble, and fall into hell for want of doing their duties, and neglect to do their duties for want of knowledge, and that in the clear sunshine of the gospel, as those do that live in the night and darkness of heathenism and paganism? Reader, wilt thou not see at midday, at noonday? Shall neither the works nor word of God teach thee the knowledge of him? Wouldst thou do the will of God or not? if thou wouldst not, I have no more to say to thee, but the Lord have mercy on thee. If thou wouldst, as thou must, if ever thou be saved, Mat. 23; thou seest a necessity of knowledge, for can thy child or servant do thy will if they be ignorant of thy will? Is it rational to expect that one who knoweth not what thou wouldst have, should do what thou wouldst have? Why canst not thou make thy beast as pliable, and as obedient to thee as thy son? Is it not because thy beast is not so capable of understanding thy mind as thy son is? Nay, if thou shouldst do what God commands, and not know that he commanded it, thou couldst not obey him in it, for all obedience consisteth in doing what God bids us, because he bids us, Ps. 119:5, 6. For unless his authority do principally sway the conscience, in our subjection to what he enjoins, it is nothing worth. God hates blind sacrifices, Mal. 1. Reader, wouldst thou have high and honourable thoughts of God? wouldst thou have awful and reverential apprehensions of God? wouldst thou have heart and life wholly at his command? then know him: Ps. 76:1, 'In Judah is God known; his name is great in Israel.' How comes his name to be so much revered, and praised, and admired in his church, more than in all the world beside, but because there he is better known? 'In Judah is God known, thence his name is so great in Israel:' 'Father, the world hath not known thee, but these have known thee,' John 17. So that, reader, if ever thou wouldst esteem, and honour, and love, and obey God, get the knowledge of

him. This is spiritual life, and the seed of eternal, John 17:3. Be not brutish in the shape of a man, as the horse and mule which hath no understanding, Ps. 32:9, 49:20, and 92:6, but take any pains in hearing, and reading, and meditating, and in conferring with others, that thou mayest get knowledge: 'They shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.' The merchant ventures to and fro, from port to port, in a wooden bottom, to increase his wealth, and get some precious pearls. Knowledge is a jewel of much greater value. Let no labour be thought too much for it; especially 'cry after knowledge, and lift up thy voice for understanding; seek her as silver, and search for her as for hid treasure: then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God,' Prov. 2:4-6.

CHAPTER XLIII

Another cause of sins of omission, idleness, with the cure of it

3. A third cause of sins of omission is idleness. Negative holiness requires no great pains; a man may forbear drunkenness, swearing, lying, stealing, &c., without any great labour. A man may keep his bed, or his chair all day, and so do no hurt. Some men, as the historian observes, are sola socordia innocentes, do no mischief, not because they dare not, God having forbidden it, but because it would cost them some pains to do it. Their heads must work to plot and contrive it, and their hands to manage and execute it. There is a sluggish temper and poorness of spirit in many men, who prefer a mean quiet before a treasure with labour. The sluggard would do evil as other men, only he is unwilling to lose his sleep and ease, as they do to accomplish their wicked designs; and he would do good as others, (I mean in regard of the matter of duties,) only he is loath to

be at the labour. Negative godliness requires only a sitting still, and a forbearing to meddle with such and such things which God hath prohibited; but positive godliness, if to any purpose, requires industry, and zeal, and activity, and the putting forth our strength and spirits, which makes the idle wretch take his leave of it. The slothful servant could let his talent lie still in the earth, and not lay it out in gaming and rioting, &c., and continue his slothfulness; but if he had improved it, in trading for his master's profit, he must have gone up and down, and taken pains.

It is easy to forbear cursing, and swearing, and blaspheming the name of God; these may suit well with a torpid, idle person, but to call on the name of God, to pray fervently, to pray without ceasing, to lift up the soul in prayer, to pour out the heart, to stir up one's-self to wrestle with God, to seek him with all the heart, with the whole heart; this will require some pains and labour, and this makes him forbear it. Again, it is no great pains for a man to keep himself from hearing lascivious, vain, backbiting, or flattering, or evil language; a man may but forbear coming into such company, or depart from them when he understandeth them about such wickedness; but for a man to hear the word of God with reverence as the word of God, with meekness as willing to be governed by it, with faith as believing all the promises and threatenings of it to be of unquestionable certainty, and with a resolution to practise it as knowing we shall be judged by it at the day of Christ; this will cost some head and heart work, which the sleepy drone is unwilling to come to.

Again, the right performance of duties, in regard of the manner, requires much more pains than in regard of the matter; therefore they who take upon them a form deny the power of godliness; and who are not guilty of external, are yet of internal omissions. How many pray or mumble over a few words morning and evening to

God, and are pleased with it, as if therefore all were well, and think God pleased too, who never trouble themselves with minding that reverence, humility, uprightness, sense of want, faith in Christ, importunity of desires, which God expects in every prevalent prayer; and the reason is, because the former is so easy, and the latter so laborious.

Besides, for a man to examine his own heart frequently and impartially, and to call himself to a strict account what he hath been and done in the world, and what is like to become of him, and to befall him for ever; for him to take the looking-glass of the law of God, and therein to behold his heart and life, and having compared his practices with the divine precepts, which are exceeding broad, to accuse, and judge, and condemn, and loathe, and abhor himself; for him to lay himself low before the Lord, and to acknowledge and confess with shame, and anger, and grief, his filthiness and wickedness, and to beg pardon and grace as earnestly as one that believes, if his requests be denied, his poor soul is damned for ever;—friend, friend, this is hard and painful work, and the idle man will not meddle. Once more, he that will be positively holy, must watch himself in all his ways, must watch for opportunities of service to God; he must catch at them, and improve them, when he hath them put into his hand; he must stand always upon his guard, to defend himself against his enemies; and be as a sparrow upon the house-top, to look about and consider where he may pick up any spiritual food for his soul; he must design, and study, and contrive how he may spend his time, and parts, and strength, and estate to the best advantage of his Lord and master; and think nothing too much, no pains, no labour, no, not his blood for his Lord's honour; and will a sluggard, that lieth with his hands in his bosom, do this, or any part of this? Ah friend, the sleepy world dream of happiness upon easy terms, as if they could walk to heaven in a pleasant meadow, or be

carried to heaven in a down bed; but it must not be, it cannot be—*difficilia quæ pulchra*. Canst thou obtain anything that is excellent unless thou art diligent? Doth the tradesman get an estate who is not industrious to look after his customers, his books, and whatsoever concerns his calling? Can he who sits still in his chimney corner, and neither minds buying in nor selling out, nor takes care how things are ordered in his shop, ever expect to be rich? Reader, if ever thou wilt make anything of it, there is a necessity of shaking off this slothfulness. I must tell thee, an idle person is the devil's cushion, his own burden, unlike and loathsome to God, and a wen in the body politic where he lives. To cure this, reader, I must say to thee, as the apostle to the Ephesians, 'Awake thou that sleepest, arise from the dead,' Eph. 5:14. Friend, thy work is not to be done sleeping; God work, soul work, eternity work is not to be done sleeping. Labouring, wrestling, fighting, striving, running, are not to be done sleeping, John 6:27; Gen. 32:24; Mat. 6:13; 1 Cor. 9. Dost thou think to attain everlasting pleasures and not to take pains? Doth God value his blissful mansions at so low a rate as to throw them away upon those who slight them, and judge them unworthy their utmost endeavours? Is the price of heaven fallen since the Redeemer's being in the world? Then it was, 'Seek first the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof,' Mat. 6:33; 'and strive to enter in at the strait gate,' Mat. 7:13; 'and labour for the meat that endureth to everlasting life,' Mat. 6:27; and is it now laze and loiter, and be blessed for ever? Though God doth not expect from thee a natural price for his Son,—that is impossible for men or angels to give,—yet he doth expect that pactional price which he hath set down in his word, as the condition of those that shall have a part in him.

Reader, dost thou know what pains the merchant takes for corruptible treasures, how he ventures his life in a wooden bottom, and a tempestuous ocean, and is every moment in danger of death;

how he sails from haven to haven, disposing and exchanging commodities, trading and trafficking with persons of divers countries and languages, and all to get a little wealth? And if worldly pearls cannot be had without pains, dost thou think the pearl of great and inestimable price, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the fruits of his precious blood, may be had for nothing? I tell thee, as God valued his Son at so high a rate, as to accept of his temporary sufferings as fuller satisfaction to his justice on the behalf of millions of souls, than if they had fried millions of millions of millions of years in hell; so God will make thee value and prize him, if ever thou partake any benefit by him. And if thou once comest to know his worth, and to esteem him accordingly, thou wilt think no toil, no sweat, nay, no blood too good or too much for him.

Friend, ponder the work of positive godliness, and then judge whether diligence be not requisite. Closet duties, as praying, reading, self-examining, and family duties must daily be performed, and that with life and vigour, and all the soul, and all the strength. Thy earthly calling must be followed with heavenly affections, and whilst thy occupation is amongst men, thy conversation must be with God. In all companies, and at all seasons, and in all conditions, thou art to be in the fear of God, and watchful over thyself, that thou dost nothing to displease him, and solicitous how thou mayest do that which is most pleasing to him. Thou must love God with all thy heart, when he seems most angry with thee; and trust in his goodness, when he inflicts never so great or so many evils on thee. Thy duty is to believe in a crucified Christ, and so venture thy soul on the death of another, upon the bare warrant of Scripture; thou art required to deny, and bemoan, and abhor thyself, as near and dear as thou art to thyself, to mortify thy earthly members, and to cut off thy right hand, and pluck out thy right eye. Not a relation, not a condition, not an ordinance, not a providence, but calls for duties, suitable duties, to be

performed, and not one of these duties but calls for suitable graces to be exercised. Besides, ere these duties can be performed, and these graces exercised, many strong and sturdy lusts must be subdued; the allurements, on one hand, of a flattering, gaudy, giddy, skin-deep world, as babies to please children, trampled on; and its affrightments, as clothes stuffed with straw, to scare birds, must be despised; ay, and all the powers and policies of hell combated with, and conquered. And, friend, can all this be done with thy hands in thy pocket, or without pains? It is in vain to think of freedom from omissions whilst thou liest on the bed of security. Water corrupteth, and breeds venomous creatures, whilst it standeth still; it is preserved sweet by motion, as we experience in running streams. The unused iron rusteth, whilst that which is used groweth daily more bright. Neither nature nor art will afford us anything that is good, without labour. The ground will not yield its fruit, unless the husbandman dung, and plough, and dress, and harrow it. Can any artist make an excellent clock, or watch, or curious vessel, without pains? And wilt thou presume of holiness and heaven without it? The heavens are ever in motion for the benefit of this lower world, and never stand still but by a miracle. The earth is always labouring to bring forth fruit for our profit and delight, and never idle and barren, but as cursed of God for man's sin. Adam, in his estate of innocency, was by God himself taught a lesson of industry, and commanded to till the ground. Our blessed Saviour was not idle; but when he undertook the work of man's redemption, went up and down doing good, denying himself his sleep. A great while before day he was at prayer, Mark 1, and he prayed all night. He denied himself his food when he was hungry; and, disappointed of food at the fig-tree, he goeth not to a house to eat, but to the synagogue to preach. He denied himself his ease and pleasure, and all to follow his business, John 9:4. As he said, so he did: 'I must work the work of him that sent me whilst it is day.' And did Christ contend, and fight, and

strive, and wrestle night and day before he was crowned, or could enjoy the joy set before him, and dost thou think to have all for nothing?

Reader, to conclude this head, consider Rom. 12:11, 'Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.' Where we have the duty I am persuading thee to, commanded by the apostle, in regard of its great weight, extraordinary difficulty, or backwardness to it, both ways: 1. Negatively, 'not slothful in business;' i.e., you will do nothing at it if ye be sleepy or slothful; the business is not such as may be done in a dream. As idleness is the burial of our persons, so slothfulness is the burial of our actions. It is bad to be slow at our business, but much worse to be slothful. 2. Affirmatively, 'fervent in spirit;' this is the greatest diligence possible. Fervency is the heat and height of the affections, and is as contrary to slothfulness as fire to water. When the powers and faculties of the soul are wound up to their highest pitch in the service of God, then a man may be said to be fervent in spirit. The labour of the body is nothing to the labour of the brains, and the sweating of the outward man is little to the industry of the inward man. He that hath the heart of a man may command his purse, and hands, and what he hath. Fervency of spirit, or intension of mind about any business, will call in his time, and wealth, and strength, and all to its assistance.

3. The duty is urged by a high and weighty reason, 'serving the Lord.' It is the majesty, excellency, purity, and boundless perfection of the object which requires such warmth, and life, and heat, and fervency of spirit in those that adore him. Though we may make bold with our fellow-dust and ashes, with those that are of the same make and mould with ourselves, yet the Most High, he whose name alone is excellent, the God of the spirits of all flesh, to whom the whole creation is less than nothing, he is not to be made bold with. His

immense being and perfections command the highest and the hottest affections. The greatest prince must not be put off with less than the greatest peasant.

CHAPTER XLIV

Another cause of omissions is vain excuses men have, that omissions are little sins; with the cure of it

4. A fourth cause of sins of omission is a presumption, or false opinion, that men have concerning them, and so they think to excuse them.

1. That they are little sins, and so not much to be minded.

2. That the performance of them would be unseasonable at this or that time, and so they are put off to another time, that never comes.

3. That when they are called to the performance of this or that duty, they neglect it with this excuse, that it is but one duty they live in the neglect of, or it can be no great matter for once to omit it. Reader, I shall handle these severally, and shew, first, that these foolish excuses which men please themselves with, do cause omissions, and then direct to the cure of each severally.

1. The first excuse is, that omissions are small sins, and this opinion is generally rooted in all men. Because they do not fly in the face of conscience, disturb the light of reason, trouble the societies where, and debauch the persons amongst whom, we live, as some sins of commission do; therefore they fancy, for it is but a fancy, that they

are light and little, and no great matter is to be made of them. When once a man hath sucked in this poisonous opinion, no wonder if his heart swell, and his life swarm with such sins. For when his nature hath a reluctancy against the positive precepts, much more than against the negative, and his lazy temper sets him farther off, and he believes that they are peccadilloes, and little taken notice of by God; yea, that a pardon in the high court of heaven is allowed in course for such small offences; what should hinder but he should abound and continue in them to the end of his life, unless his judgment of them be altered?

In all our converses and dealings, we are most careless about matters which we judge to be of small concernment; for it is judged a part of folly to be very solicitous about toys and trifles. If I have a slight cut on my finger, or my skin raised, I possibly let it go, and am nothing troubled about it; but if a bone be broken, or a vital part infected, I am not a little perplexed, and quickly apply the best means for the cure of it. The less I apprehend the danger to be, the less care I take to prevent it.

We see it by experience about the laws of men, that those laws, the breach of which they presume will be generally winked at, and little taken notice of by the magistrate, as relieving beggars, and several others, are seldom observed, and men at most are indifferent whether they keep them or no; but for those laws which they believe will be severely reckoned for, if men break them, as those against thefts, murders, ravishments, treasons, and the like, these they will be tender of, and take care lest they should incur their penalties. Truly, so it is about the laws of God. We do usually make some conscience of those laws which we apprehend have death, and hell, and wrath, and damnation attending the breach of them; but those

laws, the breach of which we presume is no great matter, and little minded by God, we are careless and indifferent about.

To cure this, reader, consider these three or four particulars.

(1.) I grant that there are degrees of sin. All sins are not of the same size, nor every sinner of the same stature. All ordinary births which Satan begets upon the hearts of men are not of the same bigness, yet sometimes we find monsters born. Some sins are compared to camels, others to gnats, Mat. 23:24; some to motes, others to beams, Mat. 7:3; some to talents, others to farthings or pence. Our Saviour tells us of a creditor who had two debtors, the one owed much more than the other, Luke 7:41, and 16:5. Some sins are pardonable, other sins unpardonable: Mat. 12:31, 'Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.' The Stoics, as Tully observes in his Paradoxes,—and the Jovinians, as St Jerome testifieth in his Second Book against them, sided with them,—held that all sins were equal, because all sins are aberrations from the rule, and a going beyond the bounds; but it is to be considered that some may wander farther from their rule, and out of their way, than others. Some may shoot wider than others, though both miss the mark.

A sin against the first table, *cæteris paribus*, is greater than a sin against the second, 1 Sam. 2:25, as being more immediately against God. Whereas all sin hath its sinfulness from its opposition and offensiveness to so infinite a majesty: Ps. 51:4, 'Against thee, thee only have I sinned.' Thus we read that witchcraft and idolatry, which directly disown God, are the greatest sins, 1 Sam. 15:13; and our Lord Jesus, when asked what was the first and great commandment, answers, 'To love the Lord our God with all our hearts,' &c., Mat.

22:11. Spiritual sins are greater than bodily sins: 1. As those by which we most imitate the devil, who is for spiritual wickedness in high places, Eph. 6. All sin is from Satan per modum servitutis; but these sins per modum imaginis. 2. As those sins by which we most directly oppose God, who is a spirit, John 4:24, and therefore God most directly sets himself in battle array against them. 3. As those sins that defile and pollute most the chiefest part of man, his spirit, in which regard the apostle calls them filthiness of spirit, and distinguisheth them from the filthiness of the flesh, 2 Cor. 7:1. 4. As those sins which are the spring of all bodily and outward sins: 'Out of the heart proceed murders, blasphemies, thefts,' &c., Mat. 15:19. 5. As those sins have more of the heart and spirit in them, the malignity of sin, in regard of its object, is from the immensity of that God against whom it is committed; in regard of its subject, it is from the degree of that heartiness and willingness with which it is committed. To backslide in heart, is more than to backslide from God with our tongues, and deny him vocally: Prov. 14:14, 'Such a one shall be filled with his own ways and wickedness.' To err in heart is the provocation indeed, Heb. 3:10. To err in heart is much worse than to err in our heads; the more of the heart and spirit in any service, the more lovely and acceptable to God; the more of the heart and spirit in any sin, the more loathsome and abominable to God. 6. As those sins which have their full scope and swing. In bodily sins a man is curbed, as in uncleanness, by the weakness or weariness of his body; in prodigality, and luxury, and pride, by the weakness of his estate; in murder, by his antagonist's strength, or his fear of the law, or want of opportunity. But spiritual sins have none of these obstacles or hindrances. He whose body is so weak, that he cannot know one woman, may yet in his spirit defile hundreds in one day. He whose estate is so small, that he can scarce maintain himself, will yet in his thoughts keep a table for a prince, throw away hundreds upon provision for the flesh, and be as great an emperor as he pleaseth. He

whose sickness, and lowness of quality, and want of a convenient season, hindereth him from doing his neighbour the least actual injury, may yet in his spirit slay more than Samson did with the jaw-bone of an ass in a much less time.

Sins against knowledge are greater than sins of ignorance. Our Saviour tells the Jews, that if they had been blind, they had had no sin; 'but because ye say ye see, therefore your sin remaineth,' John 9. Sins against knowledge are sins against our own light, and thereby we offer violence to ourselves, Rom. 1:21–28. 2. More daring to God; for he who is ignorant of his master's will, cannot do anything, or omit anything to dare him or to provoke him, because he doth not know what is displeasing to him; but he who knoweth what God would have, and omits what he commandeth, or doth what he forbids, may rather be supposed to commit the one or omit the other, because of his enmity to God. 3. As more against the mercy of God. Knowledge is a great mercy. The understanding of man is the candle of the Lord. And sins against it are therefore the more provoking, because against the divine goodness, John 15:4. These sins against knowledge make way for the sin against the Holy Ghost, Mat. 12:32; Heb. 6:4–6. Sins against the gospel are greater than sins against the law. Those sins are against the natural law, the moral, and the law of faith, Rom. 3:27, and are committed in the face of the sun, as they are against the clearest light, so they are against the sweetest love, and therefore the more sinful. A taper in the hand of a ghost makes it look the more ghastly: 'This is the condemnation,' John 3:19.

Sins repeated and reiterated are much greater than sins once committed. Hereby the habit of sin is strengthened; frequent acts root the habits. Hereby the long-suffering of God is abused; for the more patient he is, the more he is provoked, Rom. 2:4. As in numbers, one, in the first place, stands but for a single one, in the

second place ten, in the third place for a hundred, the fourth place for a thousand; so here, each repetition is a great aggravation: Prov. 29:1, 'He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his heart, shall be (see the grievousness of his punishment, not afflicted, but) destroyed; (the quickness of it) speedily, (and the irrecoverableness of it,) and that without remedy.' It is one thing to fall into the water, another thing to lie there; it is the latter that drowns men.

The sins of the people of God are greater respectively than the sins of others; therefore they are said only to do evil, as if all the world beside were innocent, Jer. 32. 'The children of Israel and the children of Judah have only done evil before me,' Deut. 32:6. 1. As these sins are committed against the greatest obligations on God's part, against the electing, calling, pardoning, adopting, saving love, each of these is an aggravation of sin. God accents Israel's sin from his special kindness, Hosea 11:1; 'although I was a husband to them.' 2. As they are committed against the most solemn engagements on our part. Every of God's people doth expressly before God, angels, and men promise and covenant to be the Lord's, wholly, universally, and eternally the Lord's. The Israelites avouched God to be theirs. And David swore that he would be God's obedient servant: Ps. 119, 'I have sworn, and I will perform, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.' And it is no mean sin to be guilty of perjury. God aggravates the sin of his people by this, 'They all like men have transgressed the covenant.' 3. As these sins are committed against the greatest helps to obedience, an enlightened mind, a renewed will, sanctified affections, an awakened conscience, and a principle of life or new nature, are all opposed and resisted by their disobedience. This cut the heart of David, that God made him to know wisdom secretly, Ps. 51:6. 4. As the sins of these men cause God to be more blasphemed and dishonoured than the sins of others, Lev. 22:31. Nathan tells David, 'By this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of

God to blaspheme,' 2 Sam. 12:14. Indeed, these, by falling into sin after their repentance, seem to repent of their repentance, and to lick up their vomit.

Sins of omission may be greater in respect of the person committing them, a believer; in regard of the means the offender enjoyeth, the word of the divine grace; in regard of the matter he omits, the duties of the gospel; and in many other respects, than sins of commissions in others, who have not such circumstances.

It is very evident, and cannot be denied, that sins are unequal; for though original sin, as the logicians say of substantia, be not capable of magis et minus, of intension or remission, of aggravation or diminution; yet actual sins are like qualities and quantities which receive more or less addition or subtraction, and have their latitude and degrees. For this cause under the law there were diversity of sacrifices for diversity of sin, Lev. 4.

(2.) I answer, that no sins are little simply. Though there is a difference of sins considered comparatively, and so sins may be said to be little, if compared with those that are more heinous, yet no sins absolutely considered are little. The least sin resembleth the earth, which, though but a point to the heavens, yet is a vast immeasurable body in itself.

[1.] Because all sins are against a great and infinite majesty. Reader, it is the excellency of the person whose authority is contemned, and commands violated, and whose name is dishonoured by sin, that gives sin its name, speaks its heinous nature, and is the highest aggravation of it, Num. 32:23, and this is done in all sins. Friend, till thou canst hear of a little God contemned, abused, disgraced, and resisted by sin, speak no more of little sins in excuse for thy allowance of them, Zech. 1:5.

[2.] Because the price paid to make satisfaction for all sins, of what size or sort soever, was a great price, Lev. 5:17, 18. It is the blood, the precious blood of the Son of God, and that only that can wash away the least sin, 1 John 1:7. Aaron must offer sacrifice for pollution in a man's dream, that he never thought of possibly but in sleep; and for the sins which the Jews committed ignorantly, not understanding them to be any offence to God; and, in answer to those types, our Redeemer is said to die for the ignorance, the errors of the people. Reader, till that thou canst tell of a sin so little, that somewhat less than the death of him who was God will satisfy for it, call no sin little.

[3.] Because no little punishment is the due and desert of every sin. The wages of sin is death, and hell, and infinite wrath of an almighty God; and therefore it is the wages of every sin, Rom. 6:23. *A qua tenus ad omne valet consequentia.* Because fire, as fire, burns, therefore every fire burns; because sin, as sin, damneth, therefore every sin damneth. So that all sins bring greater intolerable eternal sufferings. Endless banishment from the blissful presence of God and Christ, everlasting burnings amongst devils and damned ones, is the desert of every sin. Reader, when thou canst tell of a little fire, and little torments in hell, and little horrors and terrors of soul, there to be the fruit of sin; call not any of thy sins little. Another thing, reader, I would advertise thee of, no sin is little to him who thinks it so. Sins may be said to be mortal or venial: 1. In respect of their own nature, and so no sins are venial, but the least is mortal; 2. In respect of the divine favour; 3. In regard of the issue. In the two last respects, all the sins of such as believe and repent are venial; not in the popish sense, so as to be in their own nature no transgressions, but preter-transgressions of the divine law, and not properly sins, but analogically, but they are venial, as God, for Christ's sake, doth forgive them. Either those sins which they term venial are forbidden by the law of God or not; if not, they are no sins, or the law of God is

imperfect; if they be forbidden, they are mortal: 'For cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do it,' Gal. 3:10.

(3.) I answer, suppose sins of omission were little, yet it is folly and madness upon this to allow of them. A mote in the eye is a little thing, it hindereth our sight of the sun, and is big enough to put us to great pain, and to disturb our whole body. The flies and lice of Egypt were little creatures, but great plagues. The sting of a bee is a little thing, but it puts us to grievous torment. He who refused to give a few crumbs, was denied one drop, Luke 16:21. A fly spoils an alabaster box of ointment; a little poison spoils much wholesome liquor.

[1.] If they were little, yet they are sins, and that enough to set a good man against them. It is as much treason to coin a penny, as a twenty shillings piece; because the royal authority is as much violated in the one as in the other. There is the same rotundity in a little ball or bullet, as in a great one. The authority of God is as truly despised in the breach of the least commandments, as some are called, as in the breach of the greatest, as others are called, Mat. 22:36, 37. A sprig of wormwood hath the same bitterness with the plant. A drop of sea-water hath the same saltness with the ocean. The smallest sin is a breach of the royal law as well as the greatest, 1 John 3:4. Though the object may be different, yet the command is still the same; and the wise man tells us that the law must be kept as the apple of the eye, which is offended by the smallest dust, Prov. 7:2. The brats of Babylon must be dashed against the wall, as the strongest men must be destroyed.

It is worth the while to observe in Scripture how lesser sins, being of the same nature, have given to them the names of the greater. Malice

is called murder, lustful looks adultery, sitting at idolatrous feasts (though with no thought of worshipping the idol) idolatry, Job 31:27, 28.

This is argument enough against the smallest sin, that it is a sin. As the will of God is the highest motive to obedience, so also against disobedience. All sin, as sin, affronts the divine dominion, as if he had not authority to command us; and to the divine wisdom, as if God did not know what were fit for us to do, and to forbear; and to the divine grace, as if he had no respect to our good in his precepts; and is not this sufficient reason for our hatred of it, and watchfulness against it?

Reader, I know thou wouldst not venture upon a spoonful of poison, but wouldst consider it is of the same nature with a pint or a quart; and why wilt thou venture on any sin, be it never so little in thine eye, when it is of the same nature, a transgression of the same law, a contempt of the same Lord, with the greatest. It is murder to stifle an infant in the womb, as well as to kill a grown person.

Reader, whatsoever hath the nature of sin, must be the object of thy hatred, let it be comparatively little or great.

[2.] These little sins, if they be so, will make way for greater. Little wedges open the way in the most knotty wood for bigger. As thieves, when they go to rob a house, if they cannot force open the doors, or break through the walls, let in a little boy at the window, who unbolts and unlocks the door, and so lets in the whole rabble; thus the devil, when men startle at greater sins, and by them he hath no hopes to get possession of their souls, he puts them upon those sins which they think little, and by these insensibly enters; for they once admitted, open the doors of the eyes, of the ears, and of the heart too, whereby the whole legion enter, and rule and domineer in their souls

to their ruin. Men do not, indeed they cannot, imagine the woeful consequences of neglecting their watch against the least sin. How many who have been so modest and maidenly at first, that they would not so much as give a lascivious person the hearing, when he hath spoken wantonly; yet by giving way to their own foolish thoughts, have at last prostituted themselves to their pleasure without any shame. Sinners increase to more ungodliness; when they once venture down hill, they know not where nor when to stop. Workmen bore holes with little wimbles, which make way for the driving of great nails.

When Pompey, saith Plutarch, could not prevail with a city to billet his army, he yet persuaded them to take in a few weak, maimed soldiers; but those soon recovered strength, and let in the whole army, to command and govern the city. Thus Satan, by sins of infirmity, prevails at length for sins of presumption. Great storms arise out of little gusts; and clouds no bigger than the palm of a man's hand comes in time to cover the whole heavens. The greatest river is fed with drops, and the biggest mountain made up of atoms. As Sylla said, when in his proscription time, that he slew so many, one pleaded for the life of Cæsar, *In uno Cæsare multi Marii*: In one little youth, many old subtle men; so in one little sin, there may be many great ones. When one evil spirit hath got lodging in the heart, he prepares it, and makes room for seven more wicked and worse than himself.

Keepers first ply their deer with little beagles till it be heated and blown, and then they put on their great buckhounds. So the devil first plies us with little sins; afterwards, when we are used to them, with greater. One circle made with a stone in the water, makes way for a second greater than it, the second for a third greater than that, &c. Rivers far from their springs grow as they go along greater and

greater, and enlarge their channels, till at last they empty themselves into the ocean. Thus sin encroacheth by degrees upon the soul; if it can get but one of its claws into us, it will quickly follow with its head and whole body: 'A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.' Unfaithfulness to God is first discovered in the smallest matters, then it proceeds to greater things. As the decay of a tree is first visible in its twigs, but by degrees it goeth on the bigger arms, and from them to the main body.

As it is the nature of a cancer or gangrene to run from one joint or part of the body to another, from the toe to the foot, from the foot to the leg, from the leg to the thigh, and thence to the vital parts. Do we not sometimes see a whole arm imposthumated with the prick of a little finger; and have we not sometimes heard of a great city betrayed by the opening of a little postern? These little sins will grow to great ones if let alone. Time will turn small dust into stone. The poisonous cockatrice at first was but an egg. Small twigs will prove thorny bushes if not timely stubbed up.

[3.] The least sin is damnable. The smallest bit of sin is a murdering morsel: Deut. 27:26, 'Cursed be he that confirmeth not ail the words of this law to do them.' To eat a little leaven seems a small thing, yet it is a cutting off from Israel, Exod. 12:19. Gathering a few sticks on a Sabbath, looking into the ark, nay, touching the ark, are all punished with death.

It is observable how God urgeth the command to abstain from blood, which seems a small matter, with this argument, as they desire God to do any good for them or theirs, Deut. 12:22–24, and upon pain of death. Friend, a little thing, a prick of a thorn festering, the kernel of a raisin, a small bone in thy throat, may deprive thee of thy natural life; and these little sins, as thou callest them, may hinder thee of

eternal life. A small leak in a ship unstopped may sink it. A drachm of poison diffuseth itself to all parts, till it seize and strangle the vital spirits. A penknife will stab mortally, and kill a man as surely as a sword. A pistol will kill as dead as a cannon. Cæsar was slain, as some report, with bodkins. There are other diseases mortal beside the plague. Some have been eaten up by bears and lions, others by mice and lice. It is spiritual murder to stifle and suppress the conceptions of the Spirit in thy soul, as well as to do open despite to the Holy Ghost.

The Rabbis reckoned up 613 commandments of the law, and distinguished them into greater and lesser; the lesser they judged might be neglected with little or no guilt; but what Scripture makes deadly, men must not make indifferent. God's thoughts are not as their thoughts in this particular: Ezek. 18:3, 'The soul that sins shall die,' without a distinction. Thou mayest say of sin as Lot of Zoar, 'It is but a little one, and my soul shall live,' when thou hast much more cause to say, as Jonathan, 'Behold, I have tasted but a little honey, and I must die,' 1 Sam. 14:43. I have been guilty of a little sin, and without repentance I must die eternally for it. A little spark may kindle such a fire as may burn down a whole city.

[4.] How little soever they should be in their own nature, they become great by thy allowance. The nature of sin stands not so much in the material part of it, which is often little, but principally in the form or anomy, which is the breach of God's law, and also in the manner or carriage of the heart in its commission. A sin may be great in abstracto, as the fact is measured by the law, and as the matter of it may be, and yet small in concreto, and by circumstances, as not allowed of or domineering in the soul. On the other side, a sin may be small, as measured by the law, or according to the nature of the fact, and yet great by circumstances, as liked and approved by us. In

a corporation, a man of a great estate and quality may be an inferior and underling in point of authority and sway, and one that is of small estate or degree may be chief governor. Sick bodies love to be gratified with some little bit which they love, though it never so much favour their disease. As some favours we receive from God are little in their kind but great in their circumstances, and so very engaging to the creature, as to have a little food sent in when a man is starving, &c.; so there are some sins which may be small in their nature, but by the time when, or wilfulness of the sinner, may be very great. For a man to commit a sin materially greater, is not so great a sin as to commit a lesser with deliberation. To commit actual adultery out of ignorance, or for want of advice, is not so great a sin as for a man to be guilty of adulterous thoughts with allowance and advisedly. Reader, take heed of this, for thou wilt find at last that it will be a hard thing to give them comfort who sin with counsel, though in small matters. A sin little in its nature, the more it is allowed, and the more wilfully committed, the greater it is; nay, it may be much greater than sins materially greater, if these be not committed plena voluntate, with a full consent of will. As a little stone thrown with a strong arm will do more harm than a much greater stone thrown with a weak arm; so a little sin committed with security, deliberation, and allowance, will more waste the conscience and wound the soul than far greater out of infirmity and inadvertency. Petty princes usually prove the cruellest tyrants, and do the most mischief to their subjects. Friend, dost thou not consider, wherever sin reigneth, it is horrid heinous, most defiling and damning; and thy little sins may reign as well as great ones. There have been kings of countries, as here in England in the time of the heptarchy, nay, of cities among the Grecians, as well as emperors of vast and large dominions. There are mayors and constables commanding-in-chief in their places, as well as justices and judges. A little hair hanging in the pen may make a great blot, and thy little sins allowed will very greatly defile and

wound thy soul. In this sense, what the philosopher saith is true, Ἀδικήματα ἐλάχιστα, are μεγίστα, the smallest errors prove most dangerous, Arist. Polit., lib. v. cap. 8.

[5.] The baser and unworthier art thou to fall out with thy best friend for a little small matter. Ah, how great is thy ingratitude, to disobey, and provoke, and displease, and dishonour the blessed God, to whom thou art so infinitely obliged, for a poor small business! And what folly and madness is it to forfeit the divine favour, and incur his anger, and to expose thyself to infinite torments, for a trifle, a bauble, a light, little, inconsiderable thing! God aggravates the sin of the Jews, and threateneth them severely for it: Amos 2:6, 'That they sold the poor for a pair of shoes;' that they sold what was of so great value, his people, for a pair of shoes, so poor and mean a price. Friend, how will he deal with thee, if thou sellest thy own soul and eternal salvation, the blood of thy Saviour, the love of thy Father, and all the joys and delights of the other world, for a pair of shoes—for that which thou thyself acknowledgest is but a small and little matter? Truly, the less the thing, the greater thy contempt in denying to do it. Ah, who will stand with his God for a tittle, for a small matter? Truly, the less the matter is, the greater is the malice that will offend and provoke God for it. How great is the unkindness to stand with God for a trifle! How little dost thou esteem thy God, the God of all consolation! How little dost value his love, and grace, and favour, and endless fruition, to part with all for little or nothing!

The less, reader, the thing is for or about which thou sinnest, the greater is thy sin. Believe it, that by which thou wouldst excuse thy sin doth increase it. It hath been formerly said, if a man will break his faith, it should be for a kingdom, for something of worth; yet this sinner were a loser, though by breaking his faith he could gain the whole earth; what then is that man who will lie and forswear himself

for a penny? Though no man should presume upon sin because its present profit will be great, yet there is more unkindness, more folly, and more sinfulness in sinning for a little. Some, like eagles, will not stoop at flies, scorn to sin for a small matter; others, as ants, will be busy about the least dust, will break the law for a very little; the former are bad, the latter worse.

[6.] The less they are, the more they call for thy care and caution, for they are the harder to be cured. As a wound made with a bodkin, if deep, is hardlier cured than a wound with a sword, because the orifice is so small, and presently almost closeth up, and so the wound bleedeth inwardly, often to the death of the patient. It is much more difficult for the mariner to avoid quicksands, that are hurried hither and thither, than known rocks, though sands are small things, and rocks are great vast bodies. Besides, our proneness to despise and slight them causeth our more frequent falling into them, as also our lying longer in them without repentance.

[7.] Small sins are not expiated without infinite satisfaction, and must they then be dallied with? There is more malignity in the least sin than the whole creation can expel, and more venom than men and angels can antidote against. Friend, consider it; thou sayest they are little sins, therefore I may live in them. Did Christ die for them, and wilt thou live in them? Dost thou not know what prodigious drops of sweat, what clods of blood, what strong cries, and groans, and prayers the least sins cost thy Redeemer? Dost thou not know that their weight was so heavy, as little and light as thou fanciest them to be, that they pressed and bruised his blessed body, that they oppressed and amazed his blessed soul; yea, that they made him, who is valour and courage itself, obedience and dutifulness itself, love and pity itself to shrink and draw back, and pray against his duty to his Father and his own mercy to fallen man, and decline the

very end and errand for which he came into the world? Reader, think of it. As Augustine saith, what matters it whether a ship be overwhelmed with one great wave, or sunk by a small cranny in the bottom, whereat the water enters drop by drop? And elsewhere, what easeth it a man to be pressed to death with a heap of small sand more than with a sow of lead, or to be strangled with a pack-thread rather than with a halter?

Reader, I would not have thee think any of thy sins little. It is unbecoming a Christian to entertain such a thought of his sins; nay, it greatens his sin for him to presume it is little. As we should not lessen the mercies of God, but always think them great, and too great for us, and ourselves less than the very least of them, so we should never lessen our sins, but judge the least of them great, and the lightest of them heavy, and every of them too great and too heavy for us to bear, and upon these accounts loathe and leave them. Friend, think of what I have said of little sins, and certainly thou wilt be of another mind than to allow of them because they are little, and rather reject them because they are sins. Is there anything that God hates but sin, and must that be the object of his hatred? Is there anything that offends God or grieves his Spirit but sin; and will nothing delight and please thee but what provokes and displeaseth him?

(4.) I answer, that omissions are not little sins. I have already largely proved that in some respects, and as they may be circumstantiated, they may be much greater sins than sins of commission. Reader, consider what is written in the danger of sins of omission before the uses, and then judge whether they are little sins or no.

Are they little sins which do most oppose the mind and will of God, which make way for whole herds of sins of commission, and which

do exceedingly grieve the good Spirit of God? Are those little sins which God complains of so frequently, threateneth so severely, and punisheth with such dreadful judgments, on their bodies, on their souls in this world, on both eternally in the other world, without any remedy? But, friend, consider farther:

[1.] Can that sin be little which denieth God the highest honour, and greatest homage, and chiefest respect which the creature oweth to him? What is that which is the choicest jewel in the crown of his glory? whence do the greatest revenues of his honour flow? Are not our highest esteem, our hottest love, our strongest trust, and our most reverential awe of his sacred majesty the best and the most we can give him, and can the omission of these be a little sin? The forbearance of commissions is but the skirt, and garment, and outside of that obedience which we owe to God; it is the giving up our hearts and souls to him in our most enlarged desires after him, and spiritual delights in him, and superlative valuation of him, which he requireth of us, and principally looks after: Micah 6:8, 'He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?' Surely, if any sin be little, it is that which encroacheth least upon the honour of God, not that which injures so greatly his royal prerogative. He that robs his sovereign of some petty goods, cannot be so great a transgressor as he who would rob him of his crown and kingdom.

[2] Is that a little sin which provoketh God to inflict the greatest punishment? Either we must believe that God punisheth men more or less according to the nature of their offences, whether greater or lesser, or else we must accuse him of injustice. The apostle undertakes to prove him righteous, 'Because he renders to every man according to his works,' Rom. 2:5, 6. If so, where he inflicts the

greatest judgment, there must be the greatest sin. Now all divines conclude the punishment of loss, which they say is for our omissions, to be far greater than the punishment of sense, which is for our commissions. It is the general assertion, that departing from God and all good for ever will vex and torture the soul more than the flames of hell can pain and torment the body. Therefore it is observable that our Saviour sometimes speaks as if all the misery of the damned were privative, and did consist in their banishment from him. 'Then will I profess unto them I never knew you. Depart from me ye workers of iniquity,' Mat. 7:23. This is all. *Pœna damni pœnalior est quam pœna sensus*, (Chrys.) As the sinner hath neglected to do good; 'they have left off to be wise and to do good'; so he shall be banished from all good, and that for ever. The omission of good was his sin, and the omission of good shall be his punishment. 'As he delighted not in blessing, so it shall be far from him.' Ah, how far will that be from the poor creature which shall never, never come to him! Friend, if the pain of loss be greater than that of sense, for which cause in scriptures and fathers hell-torments are called damnation, and this pain of loss be the punishment of thy omissions, then it must needs follow that omissions are greater sins than commissions, and for that cause more severely plagued by God. The presence of God is the heaven of heaven: Ps. 16:11, 'In thy presence is fulness of joy;' and the loss of God is the hell of hell: 'They shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord,' 2 Thes. 1:9. Which loss is the fruit of omissions, and therefore, reader, do not presume them little.

[3.] Is that sin little which Christ could not satisfy for without his observation of the whole law? There was requisite, that Christ might be a complete Saviour, both active and passive obedience. His active answers our omissions or sins against the precept; what was neglected by us, was performed by him; and his passive answers our

commissions or sins against the prohibition, because we do much evil, he suffered much evil. Now though we think this was a small part of his humiliation, yet upon serious consideration we shall find it otherwise. For him that was the great law-maker to become the law-observer; for him that was above all law, to be made under the law, is a condescension indeed. Therefore the apostle speaks of the love of God to be the greater because he sent his Son made under the law. As the Son of God, the infinite absolute Lord of all, and law-maker to all, he might have pleaded exemption from the law, though the human nature, as a creature, considered separately from the divine, was obliged to the observation of the law; yet being in conjunction with the deity, and making one person with the Son of God, it was privileged as to keeping the law; but he humbled himself to do it, that he might satisfy the divine justice for our omissions. Indeed, it is no disparagement to men, no, not to angels, to be subject to the law of God. It is as essential to them as their dependence is by virtue of their creatureship; but it was a great humiliation in Christ to be bound to that law of which he was Lord, especially if we consider these two things:

1. That he must be man before he could be made subject to the law. For as God, he was altogether above it. As the apostle saith, 'He was made of a woman, made under the law,' Gal. 4:4. His incarnation was the first, and greatest, and lowest step of his humiliation. It was not so great a marvel, nor so great a suffering for Christ, being man, to die, as for the Son of God to become man; 'he emptied himself, and made himself of no reputation, when he was made in the likeness of man,' Phil. 2:7. For God to become man was an emptying himself of his credit, and stripping himself of his robes of glory, and is the first enigma in the apostle's mystery of godliness, 1 Tim. 3:16.

2. He was bound to perfect personal obedience upon pain of the law's curse. I mean not on pain of bearing the law's curse as he did, notwithstanding his perfect obedience for others, but for himself. He was under the same covenant with God in regard of himself that the first Adam was, and if he had failed in obedience, as Adam did, his human nature had been separated from the divine, and had perished withal in him for ever. That covenant under which the Redeemer was for himself had no grains of allowance for the least infirmity, nor would admit of repentance for the smallest defect or offence; so that, if he had swerved the least from the law, he had been incapable of suffering and satisfying for others, Heb. 7:2, 28, and also had disjoined the human nature from the divine, which could not continue in conjunction with a sinful manhood; and his human nature, with all he undertook for, must have borne the curse of the law for ever. Reader, is that little which cost Christ so much to satisfy for? Was it easy to fulfil all righteousness, to obey all the rigid exceptions of the law to the utmost, to answer all its demands, which was still crying for work, yet afforded no help, neither allowed the least mercy in case of failing? I hope thou wilt not hereafter live in any omission, upon presumption that it is but a little sin, when it intrencheth so greatly upon the divine prerogative, hath the greatest punishment inflicted on it in the other world, and brought the Son of God to be made of a woman, and so to be made under the law here, that he might satisfy for it. For if after all this thou shouldst continue in it, I must say to thee, as Saul to Jonathan, with some alteration, Knowest thou not that thou hast chosen this son of the devil to thy own confusion? 1 Sam. 20:30.

CHAPTER XLV

**Another excuse for sins of omission,
which is a cause of them, that they would
be unseasonable, and so are deferred to
that time which never comes, with the
answer to it**

2. A second excuse that men have for their omissions, is the unseasonableness of the performance of their duties. They grant that they ought to perform them, that God requires it of them, and they must be done, but the present time is very inconvenient; other affairs now call for their presence, and another time they may be done with more advantage. So the Jews served God about building his house, Hag. 1:2. They acknowledged it was very fit that God's house should be re-edified, and very sad that his house should lie waste, whilst their own were ceiled; but the time was not yet come, it was unseasonable at present, they being amongst wicked neighbours who would possibly scoff at them, and oppose them, if they should go about it; it was best to defer it till another season. Thus Felix, when Paul's discourse of judgment to come had convinced him so far that he trembled, most unhappily denieth him leave to proceed, but defers him to a more convenient season, which never came that we hear of. Many persons put off in a morning closet prayer, and family duties, pretending they shall be better at leisure before noon, and thereby come to neglect them wholly for that part of the day; as Saul forbade the priest to ask counsel of God for want of leisure, 1 Sam. 14:19. Others, when alms are desired of them by fit objects of charity, will not deny them positively, but do it really, by deferring it till another season, which the poor creatures never see. Thus the devil destroyeth many souls by prevailing with them to delay their faith and repentance upon pretence; hereafter will be time enough, and

then such and such affairs will be over, and then they will be more at leisure to mind them. If he can thus gain time of men, he doubts not but to make them lose thereby a happy eternity; he is pleased well enough to hear men say they must and will repent, they must and will believe, knowing there are few in hell who enjoyed the gospel, but some time or other said as much; but as long as it is in the future tense, I will, and I will, and he can persuade them that they are unseasonable duties at present, he fears nothing, as knowing himself sure enough of his prey.

To take away this cause of omissions, I shall answer this excuse.

(1.) I answer, by confessing, that it may be that some positive duties may at some times be unseasonable. The best sort of food is not always in season. Solomon tells us, 'There is a time to sow, and a time to reap,' Eccles. 3:1, 2. All the year is not seed-time, only some part of it. And it must be granted that everything is most beautiful in its season, ver. 11; then in its season it is most lustrous and lovely, most amiable and comely. The grace and glory of an action consisteth much in the right timing of it; therefore it is the praise of a good man, that he bringeth forth his fruit in due season, Ps. 1. And it highly advanceth the wisdom of God, that all his actions are done in the neck, in the joint, in the fittest opportunity possible: 'When the fulness of time was come, God sent his Son,' Gal. 4:3, 4. He hath out of his goodness allotted time for every duty: Eccles. 3:1, 'There is a time to every purpose,' and duty for every part of time, so that a man can never say, at this time I have nothing to do. Nay, God hath allowed a season, an opportunity, for everything, wherein, by a concurrence of helps and means, it may be done with most ease and advantage, Isa. 50:4.

(2.) I answer, that some positive duties are never unseasonable. To honour our God, to work out our salvation, to keep a good conscience, to love and believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, are always in season. These, and suchlike, ought to be concomitant with every part of our time: 'Trust in the Lord at all time,' Ps. 62:8. 'I will bless thy name all the day.' 'Blessed are they that keep judgment, and do righteousness at all times, Ps. 106:3. Therefore it is, as some observe, that when Solomon mentions a time for several things, he mentions no time for doing evil, because that must never be done; and no time for doing good, because that must ever be done. That which ought to have no being, should have no time to be in; that which ought always to be, needs not the mention of any particular time to be in.

(3.) I answer, that no duties are unseasonable when more good than hurt is done by the present performance of them. To reprove our neighbour offending is a duty; yet if I knew that my reproving him at this time would make him curse and swear, and sin more against God, I would defer it till another time; but if I thought that I should not have another season to do it in, and that present reproof would only put him into a little pet or passion at present, but afterwards probably he would consider it to his advantage, I would embrace the present opportunity. He that will omit that duty till all things concur to his mind for the performance of it, must never perform it. There is hardly a step to be taken in our journey towards heaven but there is a block in the way to make us stumble at it, or go aside for it: that if I will observe the wind, I must not sow at all.

(4.) I answer, Take heed that this pretence of the unseasonableness of duties be not a device of the flesh, and a wile of the devil, to cloak and cover thy unwillingness to performance of them. It is easy to find some shift for every sin; and truly there is none thou canst live in but Satan, and thy own heart together, will help thee to sufficient

grounds for them. Scarce any are gone to hell without some reason on their side for going thither.

(5.) I answer, That we must consult God and his word for wisdom to know, and faithfulness to perform, our duties in their best seasons: 'The heart of the wise discerneth both time and judgment,' Eccles. 8:5. A good man that looks to God and his word with a single eye, desiring to know what he should do, and when he may do it best to the pleasing of God, shall be taught and led by the Spirit of God in the way which he should go in. The word of God is perfect, and directs thee about the fittest seasons for thy duties; it teacheth thee when to mourn, Joel 2:13, 14; Isa. 22:22, 23; when to rejoice, Exod. 15:1, 2; Neh. 8:10; when to pray, and when to sing, James 5:13; when to reprove, and when to be silent, Amos 5:13; when to give, and when to forbear giving, Prov. 3:27. Yet still there will be much need of Christian prudence, and it may be helpful to thee to observe some general rules.

[1.] That a greater good be preferred before a lesser, and a more weighty duty always have the precedency of what is less weighty. Though a lesser good and a less weighty duty must be minded in their time and place, yet the greater must have the precedency, Mat. 6:33. Public advantage must not be crowded out and put by for private, nor spiritual good give way to temporal. Shimei shewed his folly in minding his wealth more than his life; and Mary, her wisdom was, improving the present time for her soul, when Martha was troubled about other things.

[2.] That generally the present time be laid hold on, and the first opportunity for the doing of good. Time is bald behind, and therefore it is good to take it by the forelock. It is the mariner's wisdom to take the first good wind that offers itself for his voyage, and it may be the

merchant's policy to take the first chapman. The apostle saith, 'While ye have time, do good to all,' Gal. 6:10, implying that they will not always have it; it is winged, and flieth away.

Sometimes, I confess, it may be prudence, as circumstances may be, when there is a probability of enjoying another season, to defer it at present; but usually it is best to take the present, because future time is uncertain; and then it may be said, A price was in the hand of a fool, and he wanted a heart.

[3.] That if it be evident that more hurt than good will be done by our present performance of our duties, we forbear and defer them; for those duties that do not bind us ad semper, God leaves much to the wisdom of the faithful Christian as to the season of performing them.

[4.] That a certain good at present must be chosen before an uncertain future good, though greater than the former. If I have a price now in my hands to do myself or neighbour some good, and neglect to improve it, but defer it, hoping hereafter for an opportunity of doing myself and neighbour more good, this is sinful. I doubt not but Felix sinned in putting Paul off till another season, though he had intended to hear him afterwards for his own greater profit, which he was far enough from, because he must know that his own life, continuance in his government, and Paul's life, were all at the pleasure of another, not at his own.

Reader, if thou art upright with God, what is said will be sufficient; but if, out of the deceitfulness of thy heart, thy plea be only a pretence for the total omission of thy duty, know assuredly that, if thou canst find no season to do God service, he will find no season for thy salvation.

CHAPTER XLVI

A third excuse for sins of omission, it is but one sin; with the answer to it

3. A third excuse which men have for sins of omission, is, It is but one duty I omit, and I hope there is no such great danger in that. Though I do not read the word, yet I pray; though I examine not my own heart, yet I read Scripture and mind prayer. It is true, I give not to the poor, but I am painful in my calling, and provident for my family, as God commandeth me. What hurt can there be if some one secret duty, the omission of which cannot be scandalous, should never be performed? Surely God, who knoweth our weak, infirm, nay, wicked and depraved natures, cannot expect universal obedience to his positive or negative commands. He understands that perfection is impossible to the human nature since the fall; and therefore sent his Son into the world to take away the sins of it.

To cure the distemper of the brain—for it is a kind of frenzy which makes men argue after this rate—consider,

(1.) That there is a vast difference between thy being guilty of many sins, and allowing thyself in one sin. Grace may consist with the being of many sins in the same subject, but not with the liking of one sin. As the love of money is the root of all evil, so is the love of sin the root of all the evil that befalls the sinner. He who knew he could not hinder the inherency of many sins, yet desires and endeavours to prevent the regency of any one sin: Ps. 119:132, 'Order my steps by thy word, and let not any iniquity have dominion over me.' Observe, not any iniquity.

(2.) Consider that the omission of one duty may send thee to hell as well as the omission of many duties. One knife, one sword, one bullet, one blow, may kill a man as well as a thousand. If thou allowest thyself in one omission, thou art a servant to this one sin: 'For his servant thou art whom thou obeyest,' Rom. 6:16, and so the devil's slave—for he hath thee as fast by this one chain as by many—and consequently an enemy and rebel against God, and accordingly shalt suffer eternally. Thy soul, friend, is the price of every sin; and when thou allowest thyself in any one, thou dost implicitly, though not expressly, bargain with the devil, thy master, to sell him thy soul for the wages of unrighteousness, 1 Kings 21:20. One man, in law, may keep possession, and keep the right owner out of his estate. One sin may keep possession for Satan, and hinder Jesus Christ from his right—I mean, from sitting on the throne and swaying the sceptre of thy soul. Wallowing in one puddle defiles the body, and tumbling in one piece of filthiness defiles the soul. One piece of ward-land, though but a quarter of an acre, makes a man liable to the king, and brings in his whole estate, though he be worth thousands per annum. Therefore, friend, do not say it is but one sin, and I may be bold with it; but rather, it is sin, and so mortal, and I may not allow it. As Christ gave himself to redeem thee from all iniquity, Titus 2:14, so do thou give thyself to him in all manner of duty. How severely have some been punished for one sin! Moses, for not sanctifying the name of God at one time; Eli, for omitting to reprehend his children according to their wickedness, which was one sin; Aaron's sons, for not fetching their fire from the altar, as some judge, were struck dead, Lev. 10:1, 2. If the righteous be recompensed on the earth, much more the transgressor and the sinner. Take heed, if Saul's sparing one Agag lost him his temporal, thy sparing one sin lose thee not the eternal kingdom.

(3.) This one sin will not go alone; thou mayest hope, when thou hast opened the door for this one sin to enter, that thou canst presently shut and keep out its associates, but it is impossible. Sins are sociable, and ever go in company. First one evil spirit takes possession of the man, and then seven more worse than himself. As there is a concatenation of graces, where one goeth all the rest follow, 2 Pet. 1:5–8, so there is a concatenation of sins, 2 Tim. 3:2–5. They are so linked one in another, that, as in a chain, the drawing of one link brings with that a second, and that a third, and that a fourth, and all are drawn to the very end of the chain. When Delilah had enticed and prevailed with Samson, then come the lords of the Philistines and bind him, and put out his eyes, and set him to grind at the mill, and to make them sport. When one sin, by its flatteries, hath deceived and possessed thy soul, then come others more potent and lordly to strengthen Satan's hold, and make way for others. Any one sin allowed is a great-bellied monster, who hath a numerous brood in the womb of it. It doth insensibly harden the heart, and strongly disposeth it for other sins, as one wedge makes way for another. Who could have thought that David's idleness should be accompanied with so great and cursed a crew.

He who neglects morning prayer, is hereby disposed to neglect God in his calling, and to buy and sell, and do all without his counsel. Consider, friend, if thou fall from the top of a ladder but one round, it will be many to one if thou stop before thou comest to the bottom.

(4.) This one sin allowed makes thee guilty of all sins. By the breach of one command thou disownest the authority by which all the commands are enjoined: James 2:10, 'For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all.' It is true, he doth not break the whole formally: he may be no thief, no murderer, &c. But,

[1.] He breaks the whole law interpretatively. He slights and despiseth the author of the whole law. He cannot obey God in any command, who endeavours not to obey him in every command. The apostle subjoins this reason: 'for he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill;' so that if thou commit not adultery, yet if thou killest, thou art a transgressor of the law.'

[2.] He breaks the whole law collectively, though not distributively. All the commands are ten words, but one law. The whole law is one copulative or chain; break one link, you disorder and mar all. The whole body suffers by a wound given to any one part. The commands are considered all together, not severally, as they make one entire and perfect rule of righteousness, from which, whosoever swerveth in regard of any part of it, must needs swerve from the whole.

[3.] He breaks the whole law eventually, though not intentionally, in the consequent of his disobedience to one command. He is liable to the same curse with those that break every command. He is as truly out of favour with God as if he had kept never a command. Any one condition not observed forfeits the whole lease, be it never so large; and any one command not obeyed forfeits the benefits of the gospel, and subjects the soul to eternal damnation.

[4] He breaks the whole law habitually, though not actually. The same wicked nature which carrieth him out to break one command wilfully, would carry him out to break them all, if it were not restrained. This man's heart breaks every command, though his hands be tied, and he is hindered from breaking many of the commands.

[5.] He breaks the whole law by the breach of any one, because he sins against love, and breaks that bond and knot which keeps and fastens the whole law together, Rom. 13:10. Qui uno peccavit

omnium reus est, peccans contra charitatem, in qua omnia pendent, Aug. Epist. 29. He that breaks one command is guilty of all, because he sins against charity, on which all hang, saith Augustine. Therefore upon the breach of one, viz., that of the Sabbath, God chargeth the Jews with the guilt of all, Exod. 16:18.

(5.) I answer, if it be but one sin thou livest in, but one duty thou livest in the omission of, the more foolish art thou to lose all for lack of doing one thing more. Though, as the young man said, thou hast kept all the commands from thy youth, yet if, as Christ said to him, thou lackest one thing, truly, as with him, the lack of this one thing will be the loss of all. And what a fool is he who runs for a crown, an incorruptible crown, to run within one step of the goal, and then to make a stop, and thereby to lose the prize? Is not he an unwise man who layeth a large foundation, raiseth up stately floors, is at great cost in building a house, yet for want of a little more charge about some material pillar of the edifice, suffers it all to fall down?

Reader, consider it, the omission of one duty is the omission of all thy duties. If God lose but one, thou lovest all; and art thou willing to lose all thy labour, all thy days at the labour-in-vain, and that for want of taking a little more pains, and doing one thing more for thy soul and salvation.

One flaw in a diamond mars all its beauty and brightness; one blot in a writing may spoil the whole, and render it insignificant; one poisonous herb renders all the good and wholesome herbs in the pot unprofitable. Therefore do not say it is but one, therefore I may omit it; but rather it is but one duty more to all my other duties, and therefore I will not stick at it.

CHAPTER XLVII

A fifth cause of sins of omission, the example of others, with the cure of it

5. Another cause of sins of omission is the example of others. Men are much led by the eye more than by the ear, and look rather to what their neighbours do than to what God speaketh. Though all men are not of one mind in all things, yet most in the places where we live are of a mind about evil and against good. The whole city of Sodom will join together in a sin that was against the very light of nature. Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them, sinned in like manner. The diseases of others' souls are far more infectious than the plague, or any other disease of their bodies. The ground why several neglect the duties God requireth is because others neglect them. They see their neighbours, some of whom are counted possibly wise men, and are, it may be, rich men and great men, and others who are numerous, to live without God, to omit prayer and Scripture in their families, to neglect the instruction of their children and servants, and they think they may omit them as safely as others. Nay, they will tell us such and such men are sober men, and understand themselves well enough, and they think it needless to make so much ado about family duties and the sanctification of the Sabbath, &c., and our neighbours generally are of their mind; and why should we be wiser than our neighbours? Oh what a ready scholar is man to learn a wicked lesson that is set him by others! If Korah conspire against God, he shall quickly have some hundreds to join with him in his rebellion. They move swiftly towards the dead sea of destruction who are carried thitherward by the tide of nature, and blown powerfully with the wind of example.

The patterns of them who are persons of quality and estate have a strange prevalency upon the inferior sort, and are often the looking-

glasses by which they dress themselves. Ordinary men look on their superiors, especially if they be not scandalous, as men of wisdom, whether they be such or no, and fit to guide and govern others, and so judge they cannot err much if they follow their steps. The pharisees plead this for the omission of the great gospel duty: John 7:48, 'Have any of the rulers or the pharisees believed on him?' Will ye be wiser than they? Do you think that if faith in this Son of man, as he calls himself, were a duty, they would neglect it? or if he were the true Messiah, such understanding men as they would not know it?

One great man, as a great letter in an indenture, though it signify no more than another small one, hath many small ones following him. The Herodians, some think, were so called from their conforming to Herod in their religion; and it is judged the Melchites, who lived in the East, were so called from Melech, i.e., of the king's religion. The works of great men are more powerful with the ordinary sort than the will and word of the great God. Again, the example of the multitude is very forcible. Men are carried down with the stream both easily and strongly. It is as common to do as the most do in irreligious as in natural actions. We think ourselves in greatest safety when we are with the most numerous party. To be singular is looked upon as ridiculous; and those who are so are counted proud, conceited precisians. Men choose rather to be sociable in sin than singular in sanctity, and to do as the most do, than as the best do. The fewness of Christ's followers was a stumbling-block to his enemies and an offence to his friends.

To cure this, reader, consider,

(1.) That no patterns of any men are valid against the precepts of God. The precepts of God are like himself, of certain purity and

eternal verity; but the patterns of men are like themselves, vain and variable. Our business is not to look to what men do, but to what God speaketh. It is highly derogatory to the supreme being to make the examples of men, and not his commands, the rule of our lives. The examples of murderers, thieves, drunkards, swearers, are of as much force against the good and wholesome law of a prince as the irreligious examples of any men are against the holy and righteous laws of God. A judge would deride the malefactor's plea that should say, It is true I have broke the king's laws, but have done no more than such an esquire, or knight, or lord; I have but imitated them therein. Or that should say, I was guilty of such treasons, but I joined with many other traitors; I had good store of company with me. And dost thou think, reader, the judge of quick and dead, when he shall arraign thee for thine unchangeable estate, and demand of thee why thou omittedst the duties he enjoined thee, will accept thy plea when thou shalt say, It is true, Lord, I did live without Scripture or prayer in my family, but such and such great men who lived near me did so as well as I; I wrote after their copies, and thought it would be well enough to do as they did. Or when thou shalt say, Lord, though I neglected thy worship and service, I followed therein almost all the town and parish where I lived, and I judged it best to imitate the most. Canst thou imagine that such a silly, simple excuse will bear any weight? Thou wilt not take such a pitiful plea from any child or servant in thy family. If thy child, when reprov'd by thee for drunkenness, or thieving, or disobeying thy commands, should excuse himself and say, Sir, other men's sons are as bad as I; such a gentleman's sons are worse; the children of very many meet and join with me in all my drinking, stealing, and debauched courses. How ill would such an answer sound in thine ears! Or what wouldst thou think if thy servant, instead of doing the work appointed him, should run from alehouse to alehouse, and spend his time in carding and dicing, and then excuse it to thee that he did as others did; there

were many beside himself, and some of quality, who were examples to him? Consider how poor, how pitiful, how irrational a plea it is to excuse thy disobedience to God by thy imitation of irreligious men; and do not think that the great God will take that excuse from thee which thou wilt not from a child or servant. Surely there is a little more difference between the boundless, blessed God and thee, a poor worm, than there is between thee and any son or servant.

(2.) Consider, if thou wilt follow others, be they great or many, in sin, thou shalt also follow them in intolerable and eternal sufferings. The ways of such tend to death, and their steps take hold of hell. And if thou wilt walk in their ways and tread in their steps, thou canst not avoid their end: Rev. 18:4, 'Come out from among her, my people, and be not partakers of her sins, that ye receive not her plagues.' He that catcheth the plague of another catcheth all the pain, and weakness, and ill effects of such a disease. Do not think to feed on wicked men's dainties, to live their lazy, sensual lives, and not to pay their reckoning. Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them, went a-whoring after strange flesh. Here they join in sinning; but are they separated in sufferings; truly no: 'Are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire,' Jude 7. If they unite in wickedness, they shall be united in woe. God will bind them up together as tares for the fire.

I know, reader, thou wouldst not be willing to dwell for ever with, and fare for ever as, wicked great men shall. 'Tophet is prepared of old; for the king it is prepared: he hath made it deep and large; the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it,' Isa. 30:33. And why then wilt thou do as they do, and resemble them now in time? It is unavoidable: live as they do here, and live as they do for ever. Again, thou art unquestionably loath to be with and suffer as the most shall

to eternity: 'At the great day the world (i.e., the far greater part of it) shall be condemned,' 1 Cor. 11:31. When they shall be arraigned for their endless estates, they shall be cast and condemned to the company, and curses, and torments of the devils for ever and ever; and if thou wouldst not die their deaths, or partake of their unchangeable conditions, why wilt thou live their lives, and walk in their wicked ways.

(3.) Consider, of all patterns these two, the greatest or richest, and the multitude, are most unfit for thy imitation; because of all men these usually are the worst men, and do least imitate Christ. For great men, how few are there who are good; grace and greatness are happy and lovely, but rare conjunctions. Solomon tells us that 'wisdom is good with an inheritance,' Eccles. 7:11. But where shall we find wisdom and wealth, righteousness and riches together? Great and rich men have their farms and merchandising, and honours and pleasures, and other things to look after than their souls and salvation: 'How hardly,' saith our Saviour, 'shall a rich man enter into the kingdom of heaven.' It may well be hard for him who turns the cords of love and bands of kindness into fuel to his lusts and weapons of unrighteousness. Blessed be God, there are some great men who walk religiously, but truly they are very few: 'Brethren, ye know your calling; not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world,' &c., 1 Cor. 1:26, 27. Not many wise, or mighty, or noble are chosen or called of God: 'But God hath chosen the poor of the world, rich in faith, and heirs of a kingdom,' James 2:5. The poor are evangelised, transformed into the heavenly spiritual nature of the gospel. The poor receive the gospel; the rich receive the world, and the things of the world. The poor having little estate in the world, look after an estate in the covenant; but the rich having this world's goods, are satisfied, and desire no more. Now, reader, wilt thou

follow them that are wholly taken up with fleshly, fading pleasures and riches, and cast off all care of their eternal condition? Are they fit to be thy guides who bid defiance to God, and fight against him with his own mercies, and throw off all regard and care what shall become of them for ever and ever?

Again, for the giddy-headed multitude, how unfit are they to be thy examples. Most are usually the worst. Of all creatures, the basest and vilest are ever most numerous, as flies and vermin. How few jewels to pebbles or common stones. The weaker part are more than the wiser: 'The whole world lieth in wickedness,' as a brute in his filth, 1 John 5:19; and are such fit to be followed? The whole earth wandereth after the beast, Rev. 17; and is deceived by the devil, Rev. 12:9. And are such poor tame slaves to a cruel devil, who hates them and thee perfectly, good examples for thee to imitate? Dost thou not consider what truth speaketh, 'Broad is the way, and wide is the gate, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be who go therein,' Mat. 7:13. Stop a little, and ponder it. Wilt thou go after them who go in the broad way to destruction?

MONERGISM BOOKS

The Sinner's Last Sentence, by George Swinnock, Copyright © 2021

All rights reserved under International and Pan-American Copyright Conventions. By downloading this eBook, 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 April 2021 Requests for information should be addressed to: Monergism Books, PO Box 491, West Linn, OR 97068

Table of Contents

[THE EPISTLE DEDICATORY](#)

[TO THE READER](#)

[I. The preface and introduction to the text](#)

[II. The division and brief explication of](#)

[III. Concerning the privative part of the sinner's punishment](#)

[IV. The properties of the sinner's loss](#)

[V. The reasons of the sinner's privative punishment](#)

[VI. Uses concerning the heinous nature of sin, and grievous misery of sinners](#)

[VII. Containing the folly of sinners, and the vast difference between them and the godly at the great day.](#)

VIII. A use of trial, with the marks of those that shall be banished Christ's presence

IX. An exhortation to fly from this wrath to come, with some helps thereunto

X. The positive part of the sinner's misery, expressed by fire, and why

XI. The difference between our fires and hell fires

XII. The fulness of wicked men's misery, in that it is positive and privative, with some cautions against it

XIII. The eternity of the sinner's misery in the other world, with the grand reason of it

XIV. How little cause to envy sinners, and how careful we should be to avoid their eternal misery

XV. The reason of Christ's severe sentence, and a question resolved, Whether the righteous, by their acts of charity, do not deserve heaven, as well as the wicked, by their omission thereof, deserve hell

XVI. Why Christ will try men at the great day by acts of charity

XVII. Three particulars about the text

XVIII. That sins of omission are dangerous and damnable

XIX. The nature of sins of omission in general

XX. Three distinctions about sins of omission

XXI. The agreement and difference between sins of omission and sins of commission

XXII. The danger of sins of omission, in the heinous nature of them, and their offensiveness to God

XXIII. The danger of sins of omission, in their destructiveness to man, and our proneness to overlook them

XXIV. The reasons why sins of omission are damnable

XXV. Further reasons why Christ at the great day will condemn men for sins of omission

XXVI. Of the doctrine by way of information, How dreadful will be the condition of those that live in sins of commission

XXVII. Negative godliness is not enough.—Christ's impartiality in judgment

XXVIII. Practical godliness necessary

XXIX. The condition of men only civil is unsafe and sad

XXX. Sinners' conviction at the day of judgment. The purity of Christ's religion above all others

XXXI. The holiest have cause of humiliation

XXXII. Use of trial, whether we be guilty of these omissions or no

XXXIII. A caution against sins of omission in regard of the matter of duties

XXXIV. Arguments against omissions. The positiveness of our rule, and of God's mercies

XXXV. Arguments against omissions. Christ purchased positive as well as negative holiness, and our privileges oblige to both

XXXVI. Arguments against omissions. We profess ourselves God's servants, and all our religion will come to nothing without positive holiness

XXXVII. Arguments against omissions. God deserves our positive obedience before all others, and true sanctification cannot be without it

XXXVIII. If God should omit his care of us a moment we are undone. And if Christ had omitted the least in our work of redemption, we had been lost irrecoverably

XXXIX. Arguments against sins of omission. The new nature in believers inclines them to positive as well as negative holiness, and the profit will answer the pains

XL. Arguments against sins of omission. God delights chiefly in our doing good; and our opportunities for doing good will quickly be gone

XLI. The grand cause of sins of omission, an unregenerate heart; with the cure of it, a renewed nature

XLII. Another cause of sins of omission, ignorance; with the cure of it, labouring after knowledge

XLIII. Another cause of sins of omission, idleness, with the cure of it

XLIV. Another cause of omissions is vain excuses men have, that omissions are little sins; with the cure of it

XLV. Another excuse for sins of omission, which is a cause of them, that they would be unseasonable, and so are deferred to that time which never comes; with the answer to it

XLVI. A third excuse for sins of omission, it is but one sin; with the answer to it

XLVII. A fifth cause of sins of omission, the example of others; with the cure of it