

# THE TRUE BELIEVER

THE MARKS AND BENEFITS OF TRUE FAITH



*Jonathan Edwards*



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What are the marks of a true believer? And what are the blessings that come to those with true faith? These eternally significant questions are addressed in this collection of eight sermons by the great New England preacher Jonathan Edwards. Following the common practice of his Puritan predecessors, Edwards helps us discern the differences between true and counterfeit faith. He also holds forth the everlasting benefits of having Christ as our own.

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“Jonathan Edwards is known for the complexity of his thought. In these sermons, he brings that intellect to bear on the ‘simple’ truths of the gospel—repentance, faith, and assurance of God’s love. Many people know Edwards’s sermon ‘Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God’; this collection of sermons extends our appreciation of Edwards’s ability to show the power and the beauty of the gospel to a needy world.”

—Stephen G. Myers, professor of systematic and historical theology,  
Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, Michigan

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JONATHAN EDWARDS (1703–1758) pastored a Congregational church in Northampton, Massachusetts, and then moved to the frontier settlement of Stockbridge as a missionary to the Housatonic Indians. He was installed as the president of the College of New Jersey at Princeton but died within a few weeks from smallpox.



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Jonathan Edwards

Edited by Don Kistler



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## Publisher's Preface

For the Puritan preacher, like the Apostle Paul, the passion and desire of his heart was that his people be truly saved and found in Jesus Christ. There have always been true and false believers in the church, tares among the wheat, and separating the one from the other presented one of the greatest challenges to the Puritan minister. Paul told the church at Corinth to “examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith.”

But the Puritan minister also knew that treading too heavily might cause needless intro- and retrospection; yet a lack of self-examination might be the cause of a needless damnation. The threat of being an “almost Christian” was both ominous and real then; and it is no less so today, when “easy-believism” and “cheap grace” are rampant.

In this collection of sermons by the great American preacher, Jonathan Edwards, the issue of true grace versus its spurious counterpart is addressed in a variety of ways. While excessive self-examination can be oppressive and damaging, much more damaging (and damning) is a total lack of it.

May God use these sermons to convict sinners and comfort saints. It was Edwards's wish then, and ours now, that these sermons redound to the glory of God in accomplishing both ends.

*Soli Deo Gloria!*

# Sermon 1

## *Pardon for the Greatest Sinners*

“For Thy name’s sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity;  
for it is great.” Psalm 25:11

It is evident by some passages in this psalm that when it was penned it was a time of affliction and danger with David. This appears particularly by the 15th and following verses: “Mine eyes are ever towards the Lord; for He shall pluck my feet out of the net.” His distress made him think of his sins, and led him to confess them to cry out to God for pardon, as is suitable in a time of affliction. See verse 7: “Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions.” And verse 18: “Look upon mine affliction, and my pain, and forgive all my sins.”

It is observable in the text what arguments the psalmist makes use of in pleading for pardon.

First, he pleads for pardon for God’s name’s sake. He has no expectation of pardon for the sake of any righteousness or worthiness of his for any good deeds he had done, or any compensation he had made for his sins (though if man’s righteousness could be a just plea, David would have had as much to plead as most). But he begs God to do it for His own name’s sake, for His own glory, for the glory of His own free grace, and for the honor of His covenant faithfulness.

Second, the Psalmist pleads the greatness of his sins

as an argument for mercy. He not only does not plead his own righteousness, or the smallness of his sins; he not only does not say, "Pardon my iniquity, for I have done much good to counterbalance it," or, "Pardon my iniquity, for it is small, and Thou hast no great reason to be angry with me; my iniquity is not so great that Thou hast any just cause to remember it against me; my offense is not such but that Thou mayest well enough overlook it." But on the contrary he says, "Pardon mine iniquity, *for it is great.*" He pleads the greatness of his sin, and not the smallness of it; he enforces his prayer with the consideration that his sins are very heinous.

QUESTION. But how could he make this a plea for pardon?

ANSWER. Because the greater his iniquity was, the more need he had of pardon. It is as much as if he had said, "Pardon my iniquity, for it is so great that I cannot bear the punishment; my sin is so great that I am in necessity of pardon; my case will be exceedingly miserable unless Thou art pleased to pardon me." He makes use of the greatness of his sin to enforce his plea for pardon, as a man would make use of the greatness of calamity in begging for relief. When a beggar begs for bread, he will plead the greatness of his poverty and necessity. When a man in distress cries for pity, what more suitable plea can be urged than for the extremity of his case? And God allows such a plea as this, for he is moved to mercy towards us by nothing in us but the miserableness of our case. He does not pity sinners because they are worthy, but because they need His pity.

**DOCTRINE:** If we truly come to God for mercy, the greatness of our sin will be no impediment to pardon. If it were an impediment, David would never have used it

as a plea for pardon, as we find that he does in the text.

The following things are needful in order that we truly come to God for mercy:

1. We must see our misery, and be sensible of our need of mercy. They who are not sensible of their misery cannot truly look to God for mercy; for it is the very notion of divine mercy that it is the goodness and grace of God to the miserable. Without misery in the object, there can be no exercise of mercy. To suppose mercy without supposing misery, or pity without calamity, is a contradiction; therefore men cannot look upon themselves as proper acts of mercy unless they first know themselves to be miserable. And so, unless this is the case, it is impossible that they should come to God for mercy. They must be sensible that they are the children of wrath, that the law is against them and they are exposed to the curse of it, that the wrath of God abides on them, and that He is angry with them every day they are under the guilt of sin. They must be sensible that it is a very dreadful thing to be the object of the wrath of God, that it is a very awful thing to have Him for an enemy, and that they cannot bear His wrath. They must be sensible that the guilt of sin makes them miserable creatures, whatever temporal enjoyments they have; that they can be nothing other than miserable undone creatures as long as God is angry with them; that they are without strength, and must perish, and that eternally, unless God helps them. They must see that their case is utterly desperate, as far as anyone else being able to do anything for them; that they must hang over the pit of eternal misery, and that they must necessarily drop into it if God does not have mercy on them.

2. We must be sensible that we are not worthy that God should have mercy on us. Those who truly come to God for mercy come as beggars and not as creditors; they come for mere mercy, for sovereign grace, and not for anything that is due. Therefore they must see that the misery under which they lie is justly brought upon them, that the wrath to which they are exposed is justly threatened against them, and that they have deserved that God should be their enemy, and should continue to be their enemy. They must be sensible that it would be just with God to do as He has threatened in His holy law, which is to make them the objects of His wrath and curse in hell to all eternity. Those who come to God for mercy in a right manner are not disposed to find fault with His severity; but they come in a sense of their own utter unworthiness, as with ropes around their necks, lying in the dust at the foot of mercy.

3. They must come to God for mercy in and through Jesus Christ alone. All their hope of mercy must be from the consideration of what He is, what He has done, and what He has suffered. They must consider that there is no other name given under heaven among men whereby we can be saved but that of Christ; that He is the Son of God and the Savior of the world; that His blood cleanses from all sin, and that He is so worthy that all sinners who are in Him may well be pardoned and accepted. It is impossible that any should come to God for mercy and, at the same time, have no hope of mercy. Their coming to God for it implies that they have some hope of obtaining, otherwise they would not think it worth the while to come. But those who come in a right manner have all their hope through Christ, or from the consideration of His redemption and the

sufficiency of it. If person thus come to God for mercy, the greatness of their sins will be no impediment to pardon. Let their sins be ever so many, ever so great, and ever so aggravated, it will not make God in the least degree more backward to pardon them. This may be evident by the following considerations:

First, the mercy of God is as sufficient for the pardon of the greatest sins as it is for the least, and that because His mercy is infinite. That which is infinite is as much above what is great as it is above what is small. Thus God, being infinitely great, is as much above kings as He is above beggars. He is as much above the highest angels as He is above the meanest worm. One infinite measure does not come any nearer to the extent of what is infinite than another. So the mercy of God, being infinite, must be as sufficient for the pardon of all sin as it is of one. If one of the least sins is not beyond the mercy of God, so neither are the greatest, or ten thousand of them.

However, it must be acknowledged that this alone does not prove the doctrine. For though the mercy of God may be as sufficient for the pardon of great sins as others, yet there may be other obstacles besides the want of mercy. The mercy of God may be sufficient, and yet the other attributes may oppose the dispensation of mercy in these cases. Therefore I observe:

Second, that the satisfaction of Christ is as sufficient for the removal of the greatest guilt as it is for the least. 1 John 1:7: "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." Acts 13:39: "By Him all that believe are justified from all things from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." All the sins of those who truly come to God for mercy, let them be what they will,

are satisfied for, if God is true who tells us so; and if they are satisfied for, surely it is not incredible that God should be ready to pardon them. So that since Christ has fully satisfied for all sin, having wrought out a satisfaction that is sufficient for all, it is now in no way inconsistent with the glory of the divine attributes to pardon the greatest sins of those who, in a right manner, come unto Him for it. God may now pardon the greatest sinners without any prejudice to the honor of His holiness. The holiness of God will not allow Him to give the least countenance to sin, but inclines Him to give proper testimonies of His hatred of it. But since Christ has satisfied for sin, God can now love the sinner and give no countenance at all to sin, however great a sinner he may have been. It was a sufficient testimony of God's abhorrence of sin that He poured out His wrath on His own dear Son, when Christ took the guilt of it upon Himself. Nothing can more show God's abhorrence of sin than this. If all mankind had been eternally damned, it would not have been so great a testimony of it.

God may, through Christ, pardon the greatest sinner without any prejudice to the honor of His majesty. The honor of the divine majesty indeed requires satisfaction, but the sufferings of Christ fully repair the injury. Let the contempt be ever so great, yet if so honorable a person as Christ undertakes to be a Mediator for the offender, and suffers so much for him, it fully repairs the injury done to the Majesty of heaven and earth. The sufferings of Christ fully satisfy justice. The justice of God, as the supreme Governor and Judge of the world, requires the punishment of sin. The supreme Judge must judge the world according to a

rule of justice. God does not show mercy as a Judge, but as a Sovereign. Therefore His exercise of mercy as a Sovereign, and His justice as a Judge, must be made consistent one with another; and this is done by the sufferings of Christ, in which sin is punished fully and justice answered. Romans 3:25–26: “Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time, His righteousness; that He might be just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.” The law is no impediment in the way of the pardon of the greatest sin if men truly come to God for mercy; for Christ has fulfilled the law. He has borne the curse of it in His sufferings. Galatians 3:13: “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, ‘Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.’ ”

Third, Christ will not refuse to save the greatest sinners who, in a right manner, come to God for mercy, for this is His work. It is His business to be a Savior of sinners; it is the work for which He came into the world, and therefore He will not object to it. He did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance (Matthew 9:13). Sin is the very evil which He came into the world to remedy; therefore He will not object to any man that he is very sinful. The more sinful he is, the more need he has of Christ. The sinfulness of man was the reason for Christ’s coming into the world; this is the very misery from which He came to deliver men. The more they have of it, the more need they have of being delivered. “They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick” (Matthew 9:12). The physi-

cian will not make it an objection against healing a man who applies to him that he stands in great need of his help. If a physician of compassion comes to the sick and wounded, surely he will not refuse to heal those who stand in most need of healing if he is able to heal them.

Fourth, herein does the glory of grace by the redemption of Christ much consist: its sufficiency for the pardon of the greatest sinners. The whole contrivance of the way of salvation is for this end, to glorify the free grace of God. God had it on His heart from all eternity to glorify this attribute; and therefore it is that the device of saving sinners by Christ was conceived. The greatness of divine grace appears very much in this, that God by Christ saves the greatest offenders. The greater the guilt of any sinner is, the more glorious and wonderful is the grace manifested in his pardon. Romans 5:20: "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." The apostle, when telling how great a sinner he had been, takes notice of the abounding of grace in his pardon, of which his great guilt was the occasion. 1 Timothy 1:13-14: "Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious. But I obtained mercy; and the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant, with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." The Redeemer is glorified in that He proves sufficient to redeem those who are exceeding sinful, in that His blood proves sufficient to wash away the greatest guilt, in that He is able to save men to the uttermost, and in that He redeems even from the greatest misery. It is the honor of Christ to save the greatest sinners when they come to Him as it is the honor of a physician that he cures the most desperate

diseases or wounds. Therefore, no doubt, Christ will be willing to save the greatest sinners if they come to Him; for He will not be backward to glorify Himself, and to commend the value and virtue of His own blood. Seeing that He has so laid out Himself to redeem sinners, He will not be unwilling to show that He is able to redeem to the uttermost.

Fifth, pardon is as much offered and promised to the greatest sinners as any, if they will come aright to God for mercy. The invitations of the gospel are always in universal terms, such as, "Ho, everyone that thirsteth." "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden." And, "Whosoever will, let him come." The voice of Wisdom is to men in general. Proverbs 8:4: "Unto you, O men, I call, and My voice is to the sons of men." It is not to moral or religious men, but to you, O men. So Christ promises in John 6:37: "Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out." This is the direction of Christ to His apostles after His resurrection in Mark 16:15-16: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature; he that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved." Which is agreeable to what the apostle said, that "the gospel was preached to every creature which is under heaven" (Colossians 1:23).

### *Application*

The proper use of this subject is to encourage sinners, whose consciences are burdened with a sense of guilt, immediately to go to God through Christ for mercy. If you go in the manner we have described, the arms of mercy are open to embrace you. You need not be at all the more fearful of coming because of your

sins, let them be ever so black. If you had as much guilt lying on each of your souls as all the wicked men in the world, and all the damned souls in hell, yet if you come to God for mercy, sensible of your own vileness and seeking pardon only through the free mercy of God in Christ, you would not need to be afraid; the greatness of your sins would be no impediment to your pardon. Therefore, if your souls are burdened, and you are distressed for fear of hell, you need not bear that burden and distress any longer. If you are but willing, you may freely come and unload yourselves, cast all your burdens on Christ, and rest in Him.

But here I shall speak to some objections which some awakened sinners may be ready to make against what I now exhort them to.

**OBJECTION 1.** "I have spent my youth, and all the best of my life, in sin, and I am afraid God will not accept me when I offer Him only my old age."

**ANSWER 1.** Has God said any where that He will not accept old sinners who come to Him? God has often made offers and promises in universal terms; and is there any such exception put in? Does Christ say, "All who thirst, let them come to Me and drink, except old sinners"? Does He anywhere say, "Come to Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, except old sinners, and I will give you rest"? Or, "Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out, if he is not an old sinner"? Did you ever read any such exception anywhere in the Bible? Then why should you give way to exceptions which you make out of your own heads, or rather which the devil puts into your heads, and which have no foundation in the Word of God? Indeed, it is more rare that old sinners are willing to come than others; but if they do

come, they are as readily accepted as any whatever.

ANSWER 2. When God accepts young persons, it is not for the sake of the service which they are likely to do for Him afterwards, or because youth is better worth accepting than old age. You seem entirely to mistake the matter in thinking that God will not accept you because you are old; as though He readily accepted persons in their youth because their youth is better worth His acceptance. It is only for the sake of Jesus Christ that God is willing to accept any.

You say, your life is almost spent, and you are afraid that the best time for serving God is past, and that therefore God will not now accept you (as if it were for the sake of the service which persons are likely to do for Him after they are converted that He accepts them). But a self-righteous spirit is at the bottom of such objections. Men cannot get off from the notion that it is for some goodness or service of their own, either done or expected to be done, that God accepts persons and receives them into favor. Indeed, those who deny God their youth, the best part of their lives, and spend it in the service of Satan, dreadfully sin and provoke God; and He very often leaves them to hardness of heart when they are grown old. But if they are willing to accept Christ when old, He is as ready to receive them as any others; for in that matter God has respect only to Christ and His worthiness.

OBJECTION 2. "But I fear that I have committed sins that are peculiar to reprobates. I have sinned against light and strong convictions of conscience. I have sinned presumptuously, and have so resisted the strivings of the Spirit of God that I am afraid I have committed such sins as none of God's elect ever com-

mit. I cannot think that God will ever leave one whom He intends to save to go on and commit sins against so much light and conviction, and with such horrid presumption." And others may say, "I have had risings of heart against God, blasphemous thoughts, a spiteful and malicious spirit, and have abused mercy and the strivings of the Spirit, trampled upon the Savior, and my sins are such as are peculiar to those who are reprobated to eternal damnation."

ANSWER 1. There is no sin peculiar to reprobates but the sin against the Holy Ghost. Do you read of any other in the Word of God? And if you do not read of any there, what ground have you to think any such thing? What other rule have we by which to judge of such matters but the divine Word? If we venture to go beyond that, we shall be miserably in the dark. When we pretend to go further in our determinations than the Word of God, Satan takes us up and leads us. It seems to you that such sins are peculiar to the reprobate, and such as God never forgives. But what reason can you give for it if you have no Word of God to reveal it? Is it because you cannot see how the mercy of God is sufficient to pardon, or the blood of Christ to cleanse from such presumptuous sins? If so, it is because you never yet saw how great the mercy of God is; you never saw the sufficiency of the blood of Christ, and you know not how far the virtue of it extends. Some elect persons have been guilty of all manner of sins except the sin against the Holy Ghost; and unless you have been guilty of this, you have not been guilty of any that are peculiar to reprobates.

ANSWER 2. Men may be less likely to believe for sins which they have committed, and not the less readily

pardoned when they do believe. It must be acknowledged that some sinners are in more danger of hell than others. Though all are in great danger, some are less likely to be saved. Some are less likely ever to be converted and to come to Christ: but all who do come to Him are alike readily accepted; and there is as much encouragement for one man to come to Christ as another.

Such sins as you mention are indeed exceeding heinous and provoking to God, and do in a special manner bring the soul into danger of damnation, and into danger of being given to final hardness of heart. God more commonly gives men up to the judgment of final hardness for such sins than for others. Yet they are not peculiar to reprobates; there is but one sin that is so, the sin against the Holy Ghost. And notwithstanding the sins which you have committed, if you can find it in your hearts to come to Christ and close with Him, you will be accepted not at all the less readily because you have committed such sins. Though God more rarely causes some sorts of sinners to come to Christ than others, it is not because His mercy or the redemption of Christ is not as sufficient for them as others. Rather it is because in wisdom He sees fit so to dispense His grace for a restraint upon the wickedness of men; and because it is His will to give converting grace in the use of means, among which this is one, to lead a moral and religious life, agreeable to our light and the convictions of our consciences. But once any sinner is willing to come to Christ, mercy is as ready for him as for any. There is no consideration at all had of his sins. Let him have been ever so sinful, his sins are not remembered. God does not upbraid him with them.

**OBJECTION 3.** “Would it not be better for me to wait till I shall have made myself better before I presume to come to Christ? I have been, and see myself to be, very wicked now; but am in hopes of mending myself, and rendering myself at least not so wicked. Then I shall have more courage to come to God for mercy.”

**ANSWER 1.** Consider how unreasonably you act. You are striving to set up yourselves as your own saviors; you are striving to get something of your own on the account of which you may the more readily be accepted. By this it appears that you do not seek to be accepted only on Christ’s account. And is not this to rob Christ of the glory of being your only Savior? Yet this is the way in which you are hoping to make Christ willing to save you.

**ANSWER 2.** You can never come to Christ at all unless you first see that He will not accept you the more readily for anything that you can do. You must first see that it is utterly in vain for you to try to make yourselves better on any such account. You must see that you can never make yourselves any more worthy, or less unworthy, by anything which you can perform.

**ANSWER 3.** If ever you truly come to Christ, you must see that there is enough in Him for your pardon, though you be no better than you are. If you do not see the sufficiency of Christ to pardon you, without any righteousness of your own to recommend you, you never will come so as to be accepted by Him. The way to be accepted is to come not on any such encouragement—that now you have made yourselves better, and more worthy, or not so unworthy—but on the mere encouragement of Christ’s worthiness and God’s mercy.

**ANSWER 4.** If ever you truly come to Christ, you

must come to Him to make you better. You must come as a patient comes to his physician, with his diseases or wounds to be cured. Spread all your wickedness before Him, and do not plead your goodness, but plead your badness, and your necessity on that account. Do not say, "Pardon my iniquity, for it is not as great as it was," but say as did the psalmist in our text, "Pardon mine iniquity, for it is great."

## Sermon 2

### *True Grace Distinguished from the Experience of Devils*

“Thou believest that there is one God; thou dost well.  
The devils also believe, and tremble.” James 2:19

Observe four things in these words:

1. There was something that some depended on as an evidence of their good estate and acceptance, as the objects of God’s favor, such as a speculative faith or belief of the doctrines of religion. The great doctrine of the existence of one only God is particularly mentioned probably because this was a doctrine wherein especially there was a visible and noted distinction between professing Christians and the heathens, among whom the Christians in those days were dispersed. And, therefore, this was what many trusted in as what recommended them to, or at least was an evidence of, their interest in the great spiritual and eternal privileges in which real Christians were distinguished from the rest of the world.

2. How much is allowed concerning this faith: that it is a good attainment. “Thou dost well.” It was good, as it was necessary. This doctrine was one of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, and, in some respects, fundamental above all others. It was necessary to be believed in order to obtain salvation. To be without the belief of this doctrine, especially in those who had such

advantage to know as they had to whom the apostle wrote, would be a great sin, and what would vastly aggravate their damnation. This belief was also good, as it had a good tendency in many respects.

3. What is implicitly denied concerning it, that is any evidence of a person's being in a state of salvation. The whole context shows this to be the design of the apostle in the words. And it is particularly manifest by the conclusion of the verse, which is the fourth point:

4. The argument by which the apostle proves that this is no sign of a state of grace is that it is found in the devils. They believe that there is one God; they believe that He is a holy, sin-hating God; they believe that He is a God of truth, and will fulfill His threats by which He has denounced future judgments, and a great increase of misery on them; and they believe that He is an almighty God, and able to execute His threatened vengeance upon them. Therefore, the doctrine I infer from the words is this:

**DOCTRINE: Nothing in the mind of man that is of the same nature with what the devils experience, or are the subjects of, is any sure sign of saving grace.**

If there is anything that the devils have or find in themselves which is an evidence of the saving grace of the Spirit of God, then the apostle's argument is not good. His argument plainly is this: "That which is in the devils, or which they do, is no certain evidence of grace. But the devils believe that there is one God. Therefore, your believing that there is one God is no sure evidence that you are in a state of grace." So the whole foundation of the apostle's argument lies in that proposition: That which is in the devils is no certain sign of grace. Nevertheless, I shall mention two or

three further reasons or arguments of the truth regarding this doctrine.

ARGUMENT 1. The devils have no degree of holiness. Therefore those things which are nothing beyond what they are the subjects of cannot be holy experiences.

The devil once was holy. But when he fell he lost all his holiness and became perfectly wicked. He is the greatest sinner, and in some sense the father of all sin. John 8:44: "Ye are of your father, the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there was no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it." 1 John 3:8: "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning." He is often spoken of, by way of eminence, as "the wicked one." So, Matthew 13:19: "Then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart." Verse 38: "The tares are the children of the wicked one." 1 John 2:13: "I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one." 1 John 3:12: "Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one." 1 John 5:18: "Whosoever is born of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." So the devils are called evil spirits, unclean spirits, powers of darkness, rulers of the darkness of this world, and wickedness itself. Ephesians 6:12: "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

Therefore, surely, those things which the minds of devils are the subjects of can have nothing of the na-

ture of true holiness in them. The knowledge and understanding which they have of the things of God and religion cannot be of the nature of divine and holy light, nor any knowledge that is merely of the same kind. No impressions made on their hearts can be of a spiritual nature. That kind of sense which they have of divine things, however great, cannot be a holy sense. Such affections as move their hearts, however powerful, cannot be holy affections. If there is no holiness in them, as they are in the devil, there can be no holiness in them, as they are in man, unless something is added to them beyond what is in the devil. And if anything is added to them, then they are not the same things. But they are something beyond what devils are the subjects of, which is contrary to the supposition; for the proposition which I am upon is that those things which are of the same nature, and nothing beyond what devils are the subjects of, cannot be holy experiences. It is not the subject that makes the affection, experience, or quality holy; but it is the quality that makes the subject holy.

And if those qualities and experiences which the devils are the subjects of have nothing of the nature of holiness in them, then they can be no certain signs that persons which have them are holy or gracious. There is no certain sign of true grace but those things which are spiritual and gracious. It is God's image that is His seal and mark, the stamp by which those who are His are known. But that which has nothing of the nature of holiness has nothing of this image. That which is a sure sign of grace must either be something which has the nature and essence of grace, or flows from, or some way belongs to, its essence. For that which distinguishes things one from another is the essence, or

something pertaining to their essence. And therefore that which is sometimes found wholly without the essence of holiness or grace can be no essential, sure, or distinguishing mark of grace.

ARGUMENT 2. The devils are not only absolutely without all true holiness, but they are not so much as the subjects of any common grace.

If any should imagine that some things may be signs of grace which are not grace itself, or which have nothing of the nature and essence of grace and holiness in them, yet certainly they will allow that the qualifications which are sure evidences of grace must be things that are near akin to grace, or having some remarkable affinity with it. But the devils are not only wholly destitute of any true holiness, but they are at the greatest distance from it, and have nothing in them in any wise akin to it.

There are many in this world who are wholly destitute of saving grace who yet have common grace. They have no true holiness, but nevertheless have something of that which is called moral virtue. And they are the subjects of some degree of the common influences of the Spirit of God. It is so with those in general who live under the light of the gospel, and are not given up to judicial blindness and hardness. Yea, those who are thus given up yet have some degree of restraining grace while they live in this world, without which the earth could not bear them, and they would in no measure be tolerable members of human society. But when any are damned or cast into hell, as the devils are, God wholly withdraws His restraining grace and all merciful influences of His Spirit whatsoever. They have neither saving grace nor common grace, neither the grace of the

Spirit nor any of the common gifts of the Spirit; neither true holiness nor moral virtue of any kind. Hence arises the vast increase of the exercise of wickedness in the hearts of men when they are damned. And herein is the chief difference between the damned in hell and unregenerate and graceless men in this world. Not that wicked men in this world have any more holiness or true virtue than the damned, or that wicked men, when they leave this world, have any principles of wickedness infused into them. But when men are cast into hell, God perfectly takes away His Spirit from them, as to all its merciful common influences, and entirely withdraws from them all restraints of His Spirit and good providence.

ARGUMENT 3. It is unreasonable to suppose that a person's being in any respect as the devil is should be a certain sign that he is very unlike and opposite to him, and hereafter shall not have his part with him. True saints are extremely unlike and contrary to the devil, both relatively and really.

*They are so relatively.* The devil is the grand rebel, the chief enemy of God and Christ, the object of God's greatest wrath, a condemned malefactor, utterly rejected and cast off by Him, forever shut out of His presence, the prisoner of His justice, and an everlasting inhabitant of the infernal world. The saints, on the contrary, are the citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, members of the family of the glorious King of heaven, the children of God, the brethren and spouse of His dear Son, heirs of God, joint-heirs with Christ, and kings and priests unto God.

*They are extremely different really.* The devil, on account of his hateful nature and those accursed dispositions

which reign in him, is called Satan, the adversary, Abaddon and Apollyon, the great destroyer, the wolf, the roaring lion, the great dragon, and the old serpent. The saints are represented as God's holy ones, His anointed ones, the excellent of the earth, the meek of the earth, lambs and doves, Christ's little children, having the image of God, pure in heart, God's jewels, lilies in Christ's garden, plants of paradise, stars of heaven, temples of the living God. The saints, so far as they are saints, are as diverse from the devil as heaven is from hell, and much more contrary than light is to darkness. Also, the eternal state that they are appointed to is answerably diverse and contrary.

Now it is not reasonable to suppose that being in any respect as Satan is—or being the subject of any of the same properties, qualifications, affections, or actions that are in him—is any certain evidence that persons are thus exceeding different from him, and in circumstances so diverse and appointed to an eternal state so extremely contrary in all respects. Wicked men are in Scripture called “the children of the devil.” Now is it reasonable to suppose that men's being in any respect as the devil is can be a certain sign that they are not his children, but the children of the infinitely holy and blessed God? We are informed that wicked men shall hereafter have their part with devils, shall be sentenced to the same everlasting fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels. Now, can a man's being like the devil in any respect be a sure token that he shall not have his part with him, but with glorious angels and with Jesus Christ, dwelling with Him where He is, that he may behold and partake of His glory?

*Use of Instruction*

There are several inferences for our instruction:

INFERENCE 1. From what has been said, it may be inferred by parity of reason that nothing that damned men do, or ever will experience, can be any sure sign of grace.

Damned men are like the devils, and are conformed to them in nature and state. They have nothing better in them than the devils; they have no higher principles in their hearts, experience nothing and do nothing of a more excellent kind, as they are the children and servants of the devil, and as such shall dwell with him, and be partakers with him of the same misery. Christ says, concerning the saints in their future state, in Matthew 22:30: "They shall be as the angels of God in heaven." So it may be said, concerning ungodly men in their future state, that they shall be as the fallen wicked angels in hell.

Each of the aforementioned reasons, given to show the truth of the doctrine with respect to devils, holds good with respect to damned men. Damned men have no degree of holiness; and therefore those things which are nothing beyond what they have cannot be holy experiences. Damned men are not only absolutely destitute of all true holiness, but they do not have so much as any common grace. And lastly, it is unreasonable to suppose that a person's being in any respect as the damned in hell are should be a certain sign that they are very unlike and opposite to them, and hereafter shall not have their portion with them.

INFERENCE 2. We may hence infer that no degree of speculative knowledge of things of religion is any

certain sign of saving grace. The devil, before his fall, was among those bright and glorious angels of heaven, which are represented as morning-stars and flames of fire that excel in strength and wisdom. And though he has now become sinful, yet his sin has not abolished the faculties of the angelic nature. When man fell, he did not lose the faculties of the human nature. Sin destroys spiritual principles, but not the natural faculties. It is true that sin, when in full dominion, entirely prevents the exercise of the natural faculties in holy and spiritual understanding, and lays many impediments in the way of their proper exercise in other respects. It lays the natural faculty of reason under great disadvantages by many and strong prejudices; and in fallen men the faculties of the soul are, doubtless, greatly impeded in their exercise through that great weakness and disorder of the corporeal organ to which it is strictly united, and which is the consequence of sin. But there seems to be nothing in the nature of sin, or moral corruption, that has any tendency to destroy the natural capacity, or even to diminish it, properly speaking.

If sin were of such a nature as necessarily to have that tendency and effect, then it might be expected that wicked men, in a future state where they are given up entirely to the unrestrained exercise of their corruptions and lusts, and sin is in all respects brought to its greatest perfection in them, would have the capacity of their souls greatly diminished. This we have no reason to suppose, but rather, on the contrary, that their capacities are greatly enlarged and that their actual knowledge is vastly increased, and that even with respect to the Divine Being, the things of religion, and the great concerns of the immortal souls of men, the

eyes of wicked men are opened when they go into another world.

The greatness of the abilities of devils may be argued from the representation in Ephesians 6:12: "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers." The same may also be argued from what the Scripture says of Satan's subtlety (Genesis 3:1; 2 Corinthians 11:3; Acts 13:10). And as the devil has a faculty of understanding of large capacity, so he is capable of a great speculative knowledge of the things of God, and the invisible and eternal world, as well as other things. He must actually have a great understanding of these things, as these have always been chiefly in his view, and as his circumstances, from his first existence, have been such as have tended chiefly to engage him to attend to these things. Before his fall, he was one of those angels who continually beheld the face of the Father in heaven. Sin has no tendency to destroy the memory, and therefore has no tendency to blot out of it any speculative knowledge that was formerly there.

As the devil's subtlety shows his great capacity, so the way in which his subtlety is exercised and manifested—which is principally in his artful management with respect to things of religion, his exceeding subtle representations, insinuations, reasonings, and temptations, concerning these things—demonstrates his great actual understanding of them. In order to be a very artful disputant in any science, though it is only to confound and deceive such as are conversant in it, a person needs to have a great and extensive acquaintance with the things which pertain to that science.

Thus the devil undoubtedly has a great degree of

speculative knowledge in divinity, having been, as it were, educated in the best divinity school in the universe, the heaven of heavens. He must have such an extensive and accurate knowledge concerning the nature and attributes of God as we worms of the dust, in our present state, are not capable of. And he must have a far more extensive knowledge of the works of God, such as of the work of creation in particular, for he was a spectator of the creation of this visible world. He was one of those morning-stars (Job 38:4-7) "who sang together, and of those sons of God, that shouted for joy, when God laid the foundations of the earth, and laid the measures thereof, and stretched the line upon it."

He must have a very great knowledge of God's works of providence. He has been a spectator of the series of these works from the beginning. He has seen how God has governed the world in all ages. And he has seen the whole train of God's wonderful successive dispensations of providence towards His church, from generation to generation. And he has not been an indifferent spectator, but the great opposition between God and him, in the whole course of those dispensations, has necessarily engaged his attention in the strictest observation of them.

He must have a great degree of knowledge concerning Jesus Christ as the Savior of men, the nature and method of the work of redemption, and the wonderful wisdom of God in this contrivance. It is that work of God wherein, above all others, God has acted in opposition to him, and in which he has chiefly set himself in opposition to God. It is with relation to this affair that the mighty warfare has been maintained, which has been carried on between Michael and his angels and

the devil and his angels through all ages from the beginning of the world, and especially since Christ appeared. The devil has had enough to engage his attention to the steps of divine wisdom in this work. For it is to that wisdom he has opposed his subtlety. And he has seen and found, to his great disappointment and unspeakable torment, how divine wisdom, as exercised in that work, has baffled and confounded his devices.

He has a great knowledge of the things of another world. For the things of that world are in his immediate view. He has a great knowledge of heaven (for he has been an inhabitant of that world of glory), and he has a great knowledge of hell and the nature of its misery, for he was the first inhabitant of hell. Above all the other inhabitants, he has experience of its torments, and has felt them constantly for more than fifty-seven hundred years.

He must have a great knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, for it is evident that he is not hindered from knowing what is written there by the use he made of the words of Scripture in his temptation of our Savior. And if he can know, he has much opportunity to know, and must have a disposition to know with the greatest exactness so that he may, to greater effect, pervert and wrest the Scripture, and prevent such an effect of the Word of God on the hearts of men, as shall tend to overthrow his kingdom.

He must have a great knowledge of the nature of mankind: their capacity, their dispositions, and the corruptions of their hearts, for he has had long and great observation and experience. The heart of man is what he had chiefly to do with in his subtle devices, mighty efforts, restless and indefatigable operations

and exertions of himself, from the beginning of the world. And it is evident that he has a great speculative knowledge of the nature of experimental religion by his being able to imitate it so artfully, and in such a manner as to transform himself into an angel of light.

Therefore it is manifest from my text and doctrine that no degree of speculative knowledge of religion is any certain sign of true piety. Whatever clear notions a man may have of the attributes of God, the doctrine of the Trinity, the nature of the two covenants, the economy of the persons of the Trinity, and the part which each person has in the affair of man's redemption; if he can discourse never so excellently of the offices of Christ, the way of salvation by him, the admirable methods of divine wisdom, and the harmony of the various attributes of God in that way; if he can talk never so clearly and exactly of the method of the justification of a sinner, of the nature of conversion, and the operations of the Spirit of God in applying the redemption of Christ, giving good distinctions, happily solving difficulties, and answering objections, in a manner tending greatly to enlighten the ignorant, to the edification of the church of God, the conviction of gainsayers, and the great increase of light in the world; if he has more knowledge of this sort than hundreds of true saints of an ordinary education, and most divines; yet all is no certain evidence of any degree of saving grace in the heart.

It is true, the Scripture often speaks of knowledge of divine things as what is peculiar to true saints. John 17:3: "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou has sent." Matthew 11:27: "No man knoweth the Son, but

the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him." Psalm 9:10: "They that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee." Philippians 3:8: "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." But then, we must understand it of a different kind of knowledge from that speculative understanding which the devil has to so great a degree. It will also be allowed that the spiritual saving knowledge of God and divine things greatly promotes speculative knowledge, as it engages the mind in its search into things of this kind, and much assists to a distinct understanding of them. So that, other things being equal, they who have spiritual knowledge are much more likely than others to have a good doctrinal acquaintance with things of religion. But yet such acquaintance may be no distinguishing characteristic of true saints.

INFERENCE 3. It may also be inferred from what has been observed that for persons merely to yield a speculative assent to the doctrines of religion as true is no certain evidence of a state of grace. My text tells us that the devils believe. And as they believe that there is one God, so they believe the truth of the doctrines of religion in general. The devil is orthodox in his faith. He believes the true scheme of doctrine. He is no Deist, Socinian, Arian, Pelagian, or antinomian. The articles of his faith are all sound, and in them he is thoroughly established.

Therefore, for a person to believe the doctrines of Christianity merely from the force of arguments, as discerned only by speculation, is no evidence of grace.

It is probably a very rare thing for unregenerate men

to have a strong persuasion of the truth of the doctrines of religion, especially such of them as are very mysterious and much above the comprehension of reason. Yet if he is very confident of the truth of Christianity and its doctrines, and is able to argue most strongly for the proof of them, in this he goes nothing beyond the devil, who doubtless has a great knowledge of the rational arguments by which the truth of the Christian religion and its several principles are evinced.

And therefore, when the Scripture speaks of believing that Jesus is the Son of God as a sure evidence of grace, as in 1 John 5:1 and other places, it must be understood not of a mere speculative assent, but of another kind and manner of believing, which is called the faith of God's elect in Titus 1:1. There is a spiritual conviction of the truth, which is a believing with the whole heart, peculiar to true saints, of which I shall speak more particularly.

INFERENCE 4. It may be inferred from the doctrine which has been insisted upon that it is no certain sign of persons being savingly converted that they have been subjects of very great distress and terrors of mind, through apprehensions of God's wrath and fears of damnation.

That the devils are the subjects of great terrors, through apprehensions of God's wrath and fears of its future effects, is implied in my text, which speaks not only of their believing, but trembling. It must be no small degree of terror which should make those principalities and powers, those mighty, proud, and sturdy beings, to tremble.

There are many terrors that some persons, who are concerned for their salvation, are the subjects of, which

are not from any proper awakenings of conscience or apprehensions of truth, but from melancholy or frightful impressions on their imagination, or some groundless apprehensions, and the delusions and false suggestions of Satan. But if they have had never so great and long continued terrors from real awakenings, convictions of truth, and views of things as they are, this is no more than what is in the devils, and will be in all wicked men in another world. However stupid and senseless most ungodly men are now, all will be effectually awakened at last. There will be no such thing as slumbering in hell.

There are many who cannot be awakened by the most solemn warnings and awful threatenings of the Word of God—the most alarming discourses from the pulpit, and the most awakening and awful providence—but all will be thoroughly awakened by the sound of the last trumpet and the appearance of Christ to judgment. All sorts will then be filled with most amazing terrors from apprehensions of truth, and seeing things as they are, when “the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men (such as were the most lofty and stout-hearted, most ready to treat the things of religion with contempt) shall hide themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains, and say to the mountains and rocks, ‘Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?’ ” (Revelation 6:15–17).

Therefore, if persons have been first awakened, and afterwards have had comfort and joy, it is no certain

sign that their comforts are of the right kind simply because they were preceded by very great terrors.

INFERENCE 5. It may be further inferred from the doctrine that no work of the law on men's hearts in conviction of guilt and just desert of punishment is a sure argument that a person has been savingly converted.

Not only are no awakenings and terrors any certain evidence of this, but no mere real work whatsoever, though carried to the utmost extent. Nothing wherein there is no grace or spiritual light—but only the mere conviction of natural conscience, and those acts and operations of the mind which are the result of this, and so are, as it were, merely forced by the clear light of conscience, without the concurrence of the heart and inclination with that light—is any certain sign of the saving grace of God, or that a person was ever savingly converted.

The evidence of this, from my text and doctrine, is demonstrative because the devils are the subjects of these things. And all wicked men who shall finally perish will be the subjects of the same. Natural conscience is not extinguished in the damned in hell, but, on the contrary, remains there in its greatest strength, and is brought to its most perfect exercise, most fully to do its proper office as God's vicegerent in the soul, to condemn those rebels against the King of heaven and earth, and manifest God's just wrath and vengeance, and by that means to torment them, and be as a never-dying worm within them. Wretched men find means in this world to blind the eyes and stop the mouth of this vicegerent of a sin-revenging God. But they shall not be able to do it always. In another world, the eyes and

mouth of conscience will be fully opened. God will hereafter make wicked men to see and know these things from which now they industriously hide their eyes. Isaiah 26:10–11: “Let favor be showed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness; in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord. Lord, when Thy hand is lifted up, they will not see; but they shall see, and be ashamed for their envy at the people, yea, the fire of Thine enemies shall devour them.”

We have this expression often annexed to God’s threatenings of wrath to His enemies: “And they shall know that I am the Lord.” This shall be accomplished by their woeful experience and the clear light in their consciences, whereby they shall be made to know, whether they will or not, how great and terrible, holy and righteous, a God Jehovah is, whose authority they have despised. And they shall know that He is righteous and holy in their destruction. This all the ungodly will be convinced of at the day of judgment, by bringing to light all their wickedness of heart and practice, and setting all their sins, with all their aggravations, in order, not only in the view of others, even of the whole world, but in the view of their own consciences. This is threatened in Psalm 50:21: “These things Thou hast done, and I kept silence. Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself; but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes.” Compare this with the four first verses of that Psalm. The design of the day of judgment is not to find out what is just (as it is with human judgments), but it is to manifest what is just, to make known God’s justice in the judgment which He will execute to men’s own consciences, and to the

world. And therefore that day is called “the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God” (Romans 2:5).

Now sinners often cavil against the justice of God’s dispensations, and particularly the punishment which He threatens for their sins, excusing themselves and condemning Him. But when God comes to manifest their wickedness in the light of that day, and to call them to an account, they will be speechless. Matthew 22:11–12: “And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding-garment. And he saith unto him, ‘Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding-garment?’ And he was speechless.” When the King of heaven and earth comes to judgment, their consciences will be so perfectly enlightened and convinced by the all-searching Light they shall then stand in that their mouths will be effectually stopped, as to all excuses for themselves, all pleading of their own righteousness to excuse or justify them, and all objections against the justice of their Judge, so that their conscience will condemn them only and not God.

Therefore it follows from the doctrine that it can be no certain sign of grace that persons have had great convictions of sin. Suppose they have had their sins of life, with their aggravations, remarkably set before them, so as greatly to affect and terrify them. And withal they have had a great sight of the wickedness of their hearts, the greatness of the sin of unbelief, and of the inexcusableness and heinousness of their most secret spiritual iniquities. Perhaps they have been convinced of the utter insufficiency of their own righteousness, and they despair of being recommended to

God by it. They have been convinced that they are wholly without excuse before God, and deserve damnation, and that God would be just in executing the threatened punishment upon them, though it is so dreadful. All these things will be in the ungodly at the day of judgment when they shall stand with devils at the left hand, and shall be doomed as accursed to everlasting fire with them.

Indeed, there will be no submission in them. Their conscience will be convinced that God is just in their condemnation. Yet their wills will not be bowed to God's justice. There will be no acquiescence of mind in that divine attribute, no yielding of the soul to God's sovereignty, but the highest degree of enmity and opposition. A true submission of the heart and will to the justice and sovereignty of God is therefore allowed to be something peculiar to true converts, being something which the devils and damned souls are and ever will be far from, and to which a mere work of the law and convictions of conscience, however great and clear, will never bring men.

When sinners are the subjects of great convictions of conscience and a remarkable work of the law, it is only transacting the business of the day of judgment in the conscience beforehand. God sits enthroned in the conscience, as at the last day He will sit enthroned in the clouds of heaven. The sinner is arraigned, as it were, at God's bar. And God appears in his awful greatness as a just and holy, sin-hating and sin-revenging God, as He will then. The sinner's iniquities are brought to light; his sins set in order before him. The hidden things of darkness and the counsels of the heart are made manifest, as it will be then. Many wit-

nesses do, as it were, rise up against the sinner under convictions of conscience, as they will against the wicked at the day of judgment, and the books are opened; particularly the book of God's strict and holy law is opened in the conscience, and its rules applied for the condemnation of the sinner, which is the book that will be opened at the day of judgment, as the grand rule to all such wicked men as have lived under it.

The sentence of the law is pronounced against the sinner, and the justice of the sentence made manifest, as it will be at the day of judgment. The conviction of a sinner at the day of judgment will be a work of the law, as well as the conviction of conscience in this world. And the work of the law (if the work is merely legal) is never carried further in the consciences of sinners now than it will be at that day when its work will be perfect in thoroughly stopping the sinner's mouth. Romans 3:19: "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." Every mouth shall be stopped by the law, either now or hereafter, and all the world shall become sensibly guilty before God—guilty of death and deserving of damnation. And therefore, if sinners have been the subjects of a great work of the law, and have thus become guilty, and their mouths have been stopped, it is no certain sign that ever they have been converted.

Indeed, the want of a thorough sense of guilt, desert of punishment, and conviction of the justice of God in threatening damnation is a sign that a person never was converted, and truly brought with the whole soul to embrace Christ as a Savior from this punishment. For it

is easily demonstrable that there is no such thing as entirely and cordially accepting an offer of a Savior from a punishment which we think we do not deserve. But having such a conviction is no certain sign that persons have true faith, or have ever truly received Christ as their Savior. And if persons have great comfort, joy, and confidence suddenly let into their minds after great convictions, it is no infallible evidence that their comforts are built on a good foundation.

It is manifest, therefore, that too much stress has been laid by many persons on a great work of the law preceding their comforts, who seem not only to have looked on such a work of the law as necessary to precede faith, but also to have esteemed it as the chief evidence of the truth and genuineness of succeeding faith and comforts. By this means it is to be feared very many have been deceived and established in a false hope; and what is to be seen in the event of things, in multitudes of instances, confirms this. It may be safely allowed that it is not so usual for great convictions of conscience to prove abortive and fail of a good issue, as for lesser convictions, and that more generally, when the Spirit of God proceeds so far with sinners in the work of the law as to give them a great sight of their hearts, of the heinousness of their spiritual iniquities, and to convince them that they are without excuse, and that all their righteousness can do nothing to merit God's favor, but they lie justly exposed to God's eternal vengeance with mercy—a work of saving conversion follows. But we can have no warrant to say that it is universally so, or to lay it down as an infallible rule, that, when convictions of conscience have gone thus far, saving faith and repentance will surely follow. If any

should think they have ground for such a determination because they cannot conceive what end God should have in carrying a work of conviction to such a length, and so preparing the heart for faith, and, after all that, never giving saving faith to the soul, I desire that it might be considered where will the end of our doubts and difficulties be if we think ourselves sufficient to determine so positively and particularly concerning God's ends and designs in what He does. It may be asked of such an objector, what is God's end in giving a sinner any degree of the strivings of His Spirit and conviction of conscience when He afterwards allows it to come to nothing?

If He may give some degree that may finally be in vain, who shall set the bounds and say how great the degree shall be? Who can, on sure grounds, determine that when a sinner has so much of that conviction which the devils and damned in hell have, true faith and eternal salvation will be the certain consequence? We may certainly determine that if the apostle's argument in the text is good, nothing whatsoever that the devils have is certainly connected with such a consequence. Seeing that sinners, while such, are capable of the most perfect convictions, and will have them at the day of judgment and in hell, who shall say that God never shall cause reprobates to anticipate the future judgment and damnation in that respect? And if He does so, who shall say to Him, "What are You doing?" or call Him to account concerning His ends in so doing?

The Spirit of God is often quenched by the exercise of the wickedness of men's hearts after He has gone far in a work of conviction, so that their convictions never have a good issue. And who can say that sinners—by

the exercise of their opposition and enmity against God, which is not at all mortified by the greatest legal convictions, neither in the damned in hell nor sinners on earth—may not provoke God to take His Spirit from them even after He has proceeded the greatest length in a work of conviction? Who can say that God never is provoked to destroy some after He has brought them, as it were, through the wilderness, even to the edge of the land of rest? He slew some of the Israelites even in the plains of Moab.

Where is our warrant in Scripture to make use of any legal convictions, or any method or order of successive events in a work of the law and consequent comforts, as a sure sign of regeneration? The Scripture is abundant in expressly mentioning evidences of grace, and of a state of favor with God, as characteristics of true saints. But where do we ever find such things as these among those evidences? Or where do we find any other signs insisted on besides grace itself, its nature, exercises, and fruits? These were the evidences that Job relied upon. These were the things that the Psalmist everywhere insists upon as evidences of his sincerity, and particularly in the 119th Psalm, from the beginning to the end; these were the signs that Hezekiah trusted to in his sickness.

These are the characteristics of those who are truly happy given by our Savior in the beginning of His sermon on the mount. These are the things that Christ mentions as the true evidences of being His real disciples in His last and dying discourse to His disciples in John 14–16, and in His intercessory prayer in chapter 17. These are the things which the Apostle Paul often speaks of as evidences of his sincerity and sure title to a

crown of glory. And these are the things he often mentions to others in his epistles as the proper evidences of real Christianity, a justified state, and a title to glory. He insists on the fruits of the spirit—love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance—as the proper evidences of being Christ's and living in the Spirit (Galatians 5:22–25). It is that charity, or divine love, which is pure, peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy, and so on, that he insists on as the most essential evidence of true godliness. Without this, all other things are nothing.

Such are the signs which the Apostle James insists on as the proper evidence of a truly wise and good man. James 3:17: "The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy."

And such are the signs of true Christianity which the Apostle John insists on throughout his epistles. And we never have anywhere in the Bible, from the beginning to the end of it, any other signs of godliness given than such as these. If persons have such things as these apparently in them, it ought to be determined that they are truly converted without its being first known what method the Spirit of God took to introduce these things into the soul, which oftentimes is altogether untraceable.

All the works of God are, in some respects, unsearchable. But Scripture often represents the works of the Spirit of God as peculiarly so. Isaiah 40:13: "Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being His counselor hath taught Him?" Ecclesiastes 11:5: "As thou knowest not what is the way of the Spirit, nor how the

bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child, so thou knowest not the works of God, who maketh all." John 3:8: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

INFERENCE 6. It follows from my text and doctrine that it is no certain sign of grace that persons have earnest desires and longings after salvation. The devils, doubtless, long for deliverance from the misery they suffer, and from that greater misery which they expect. If they tremble through fear of it, they must necessarily earnestly desire to be delivered from it. Wicked men are, in Scripture, represented as longing for the privileges of the righteous when the door is shut, and they are shut out from among them. They come to the door and cry, "Lord, Lord, open to us." Therefore we are not to look on all desires that are very earnest and vehement as certain evidences of a pious heart. There are earnest desires of a religious nature, which the saints have, that are the proper breathings of a new nature, and distinguishing qualities of true saints. But there are also longings which unregenerate men may have which are often mistaken for marks of godliness. They think they hunger and thirst after righteousness, have earnest desires after God and Christ, and long for heaven, when, indeed, all is merely self-love. And so it is a longing which arises from no higher principles than the earnest desires of devils.

INFERENCE 7. It may be inferred that persons who have no grace may have a great apprehension of an external glory in things heavenly and divine, and of whatever is external pertaining to religion.

If persons have impressed strongly on their minds ideas obtained by the external senses—whether by the ear, as any kind of sound, pleasant music, or words spoken of excellent signification; words of Scripture, suitable to their case, or adapted to the subject of their meditations; or ideas obtained by the eye, as of a visible beauty and glory, a shining light, golden streets, gates of precious stone, a most magnificent throne surrounded by angels and saints in shining ranks; or anything external belonging to Jesus Christ, either in His humbled state, as hanging on the cross with His crown of thorns, His wounds open, and blood trickling down, or in His glorified state, with awful majesty, or ravishing beauty and sweetness in His countenance, His face shining above the brightness of the sun, and the like—these things are no certain signs of grace.

Multitudes who are now in hell will have ideas of the external glory that pertains to things heavenly far beyond whatever any have in this world. They will see all that external glory and beauty in which Christ will appear at the day of judgment, when the sun shall be turned into darkness before Him, which, doubtless, will be ten thousand times greater than ever was impressed on the imagination of either saints or sinners in this present state, or ever was conceived by any mortal man.

**INFERENCE 8.** It may be inferred from the doctrine that persons who have no grace may have a very great and affecting sense of many divine things on their hearts. The devil has not only great speculative knowledge, but he has a sense of many divine things, which deeply affects him, and is most strongly impressed on his heart. For example:

First, the devils and damned souls have a great sense

of the vast importance of the things of another world. They are in the invisible world, and they see and know how great the things of that world are. Their experience teaches them in the most affecting manner. They have a great sense of the worth of salvation, the worth of immortal souls, and the vast importance of those things that concern men's eternal welfare. The parable in the latter end of Luke 16 teaches this in representing the rich man in hell, entreating that Lazarus might be sent to his five brothers to testify unto them lest they should come to that place of torment. They who endure the torments of hell no doubt have a most lively and affecting sense of the vastness of an endless eternity, and of the comparative momentariness of this life, and the vanity of the concerns and enjoyments of time.

They are convinced effectually that all the things of this world, even those that appear greatest and most important to the inhabitants of the earth, are despicable trifles in comparison of the things of the eternal world. They have a great sense of the preciousness of time, of the means of grace, and the inestimable value of the privileges which they enjoy who live under the gospel. They are fully sensible of the folly of those who go on in sin, neglect their opportunities, make light of the counsels and warnings of God, and bitterly lament their exceeding folly in their own sins, by which they have brought on themselves so great and remediless misery.

When sinners, by woeful experience, know the dreadful issue of their evil way, they will mourn at the last, saying, "How I have hated instruction! How my heart has despised reproof, and has not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined my ear to those who

instructed me” (Proverbs 5:12–13)!

Therefore, however true godliness is attended with a great sense of the importance of divine things—and it is rare that men who have no grace maintain such a sense in any steady and persevering manner—yet it is manifest that those things are no certain evidences of grace. Unregenerate men may have a sense of the importance of eternity, the vanity of time, the worth of immortal souls, the preciousness of time, the means of grace, and the folly of the way of allowed sin. They may have such a sense of those things, as may deeply affect them and cause them to mourn for their own sins, and be much concerned for others. Though it is true, they do not have these things in the same manner, and in all respects from the same principles and views as godly men have them.

Second, devils and damned men have a strong and most affecting sense of the awful greatness and majesty of God. This is greatly made manifest in the execution of divine vengeance on His enemies. Romans 9:22: “What if God, willing to show His wrath, and to make His power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction?” The devils tremble before this great and terrible God, and under a strong sense of His awful majesty. It is greatly manifested to them and damned souls now. But it shall be manifested in a further degree in that day when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire to take vengeance upon them. Then they shall earnestly desire to fly and be hidden from the face of Him who sits on the throne (which shall be “because of the glory of His majesty,” Isaiah 2:10); and then they shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the

presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power. When Christ comes at the last day in the glory of His Father, every eye shall see Him in that glory (in this respect, they shall see His terrible majesty), and they also who pierced Him (Revelation 1:7). Both those devils and wicked men, who tormented and insulted Him when He appeared in meanness and ignominy, shall then see Him in the glory of His Father.

It is evident, therefore, that a sense of God's terrible majesty is no certain evidence of saving grace. For we see that wicked men and devils are capable of it. Yea, many wicked men in this world have actually had it. This is a manifestation which God made of Himself in the sight of that wicked congregation at Mount Sinai, which they saw, and with which they were deeply affected, so that all the people in the camp trembled.

Third, devils and damned men have some kind of conviction and sense of all attributes of God, both natural and moral, that is strong and very affecting.

The devils know God's almighty power. They saw a great manifestation of it when they saw God lay the foundation of the earth, and were much affected with it. They have seen innumerable other great demonstrations of His power, such as in the universal deluge, the destruction of Sodom, the wonders in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness, causing the sun to stand still in Joshua's time, and many others. They had a very affecting manifestation of God's mighty power on themselves in casting all their hosts down from heaven into hell, and have continual affecting experience of it in God's reserving them in strong chains of darkness, and in the strong pains they feel. They will hereafter have far more affecting experience of it when they shall

be punished from the glory of God's power with that mighty destruction in expectation of which they now tremble. So the devils have a great knowledge of the wisdom of God.

They have had unspeakably more opportunity and occasion to observe it in the work of creation, and also in the works of providence, than any mortal man has ever had. They have been themselves the subjects of innumerable affecting manifestations of it in God's disappointing and confounding them in their most subtle devices in so wonderful and amazing a manner. So they see and find the infinite purity and holiness of the divine nature in the most affecting manner, as this appears in His infinite hatred of sin, and in what they feel of the dreadful effects of that hatred. They know already by what they suffer, and will know hereafter to a greater degree, and far more affecting manner, that such is the opposition of God's nature to sin, that it is like a consuming fire which burns with infinite vehemence against it. They also will see the holiness of God as exercised in His love to righteousness and holiness, in the glory of Christ and His church, which also will be very affecting to devils and wicked men. And the exact justice of God will be manifested to them in the clearest and strongest, most convincing and most affecting light at the day of judgment, when they will also see great and affecting demonstrations of the riches of His grace in the marvelous fruits of His love to the vessels of mercy; when they shall see them at the right hand of Christ, shining as the sun in the kingdom of their Father, and shall hear the blessed sentence pronounced upon them, and will be deeply affected with it, as seems naturally implied in Luke 13:28–29.

The devils know God's truth, and therefore they believe His threatenings, and tremble in expectation of their accomplishment. And wicked men who now doubt His truth and dare not trust His Word will hereafter, in the most convincing, affecting manner, find His Word to be true in all that He has threatened, and will see that He is faithful to His promises in rewarding His saints. Devils and damned men know that God is eternal and unchangeable, and therefore they despair of there ever being an end to their misery. Therefore it is manifest that persons merely having an affecting sense of some, or even all, of God's attributes is no certain sign that they have the true grace of God in their hearts.

**OBJECTION.** Here, possibly, some may object against the force of the foregoing reasoning. They will argue that ungodly men in this world are in exceeding different circumstances from those in which the devils are, and from those which wicked men will be in at the day of judgment. Those things which are visible and present to these are now future and invisible to the other. And wicked men in this world are in the body, that clogs and hinders the soul, and are encompassed with objects that blind and stupefy them. Therefore it does not follow that because the wicked in another world have a great apprehension and lively sense of such things without grace, ungodly men in their present state may have the same.

**ANSWER.** It is not supposed that ever men in this life have all those things which have been mentioned to the same degree that the devils and damned have them. None supposes that ever any in this life have terrors of conscience to an equal degree with them. It is

not to be supposed that any mortal man, whether godly or ungodly, has an equal degree of speculative knowledge with the devil. And, as was just now observed, the wicked at the day of judgment will have a vastly greater idea of the external glory of Christ than ever any have in the present state. So, doubtless, they will have a far greater sense of God's awful greatness and terrible majesty, than any could subsist under in this frail state. So we may well conclude that the devils and wicked men in hell have a greater and more affecting sense of the vastness of eternity, and (in some respects) a greater sense of the importance of the things of another world than any here have. And they have also longings after salvation to a higher degree than any wicked men in this world.

Yet it is evident that men in this world may have things of the same kind with devils and damned men: the same sort of light in the understanding, the same views and affections, the same sense of things, the same kind of impressions on the mind and on the heart. The objection is against the conclusiveness of that reasoning which is the apostle's more properly than mine. The apostle judged it a conclusive argument against such as thought their believing there was one God to be an evidence of their being gracious, that the devils believed the same. So the argument is exactly the same against such as think they have grace, because they believe God is a holy God, or because they have a sense of the awful majesty of God. The same may be observed of other things that have been mentioned. My text has reference not only to the act of the understandings of devils in believing, but to that affection of their hearts which accompanies the views they have, as trembling is

an effect of the affection of the heart. This shows that if men have both the same views of understanding and also the same affections of heart that the devils have, it is no sign of grace.

And as to the particular degree to which these things may be carried in men in this world without grace, it does not appear safe to make use of it as an infallible rule to determine men's state. I know not where we have any rule to go by to fix the precise degree in which God, by His providence or His common influences on the mind, will excite in wicked men in this world, the same views and affections which the wicked have in another world. So it is manifest that the former are capable of as well as the latter, having the same faculties and principles of soul, and which views and affections, it is evident that they often are actually the subjects of in some degree, some in a greater and some in a lesser degree. The infallible evidences of grace which are laid down in Scripture are of another kind. They are all of a holy and spiritual nature, and therefore are things of that kind which a heart that is wholly carnal and corrupt cannot receive or experience (1 Corinthians 2:14). I might also here add that observation and experience, in very many instances, seem to confirm what Scripture and reason teaches in these things.

## Sermon 3

### *Hypocrites Deficient in the Duty of Prayer*

“Will he always call upon God?” Job 27:10

Concerning these words, I would observe:

1. Who it is that is here spoken of, the hypocrite, as you may see if you take the two preceding verses with the verse of the text: “For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul? Will God hear his cry when trouble cometh upon him? Will he delight himself in the Almighty? Will he always call up on God?” Job’s three friends, in their speeches to him, insisted much upon it that he was a hypocrite. But Job in this chapter asserts his sincerity and integrity, and shows how different his own behavior had been from that of hypocrite. Particularly he declares his steadfast and immoveable resolution of persevering and holding out in the ways of religion and righteousness to the end; you may see this in the first six verses. In the text, he shows how contrary to this steadfastness and perseverance the character of the hypocrite is who is not wont thus to hold out in religion

2. We may observe what duty of religion it is, with respect to which the hypocrite is deciphered in the text, and that is the duty of prayer, or calling upon God.

3. Here is something supposed of the hypocrite relating to this duty: he may continue in it for a while, and he may call upon God for a season.

4. There is something asserted: it is not the manner of hypocrites to continue always in this duty. "Will he always call upon God?" It is in the form of an interrogation; but the words have the force of a strong negation, or of an assertion, that however the hypocrite may call upon God for a season, yet he will not always continue in it.

**DOCTRINE: However hypocrites may continue for a season in the duty of prayer, yet it is their manner, after a while, in a great measure, to leave it off.**

In speaking upon this doctrine, I shall show:

1. How hypocrites often continue for a season to call upon God.
2. How it is their manner, after a while, in a great measure to leave off the practice of this duty.
3. Some reasons why this is the manner of hypocrites.

1. I would show how hypocrites often continue for a season in the duty of prayer.

(1) They do so for a while after they have received common illuminations and affections. While they are under awakenings, they may, through fear of hell, call upon God, and attend very constantly upon the duty of secret prayer. And after they have had some melting affections, having their hearts much moved with the goodness of God, or with some affecting encouragements, and false joy and comfort; while these impressions last they continue to call upon God in the duty of secret prayer.

(2) After they have obtained a hope, and have made profession of their good estate, they often continue for a while in the duty of secret prayer. For a while

they are affected with their hope: They think that God hath delivered them out of a natural condition, and given them an interest in Christ, thus introducing them into a state of safety from that eternal misery which they lately feared. With this supposed kindness of God to them, they are much affected, and often find in themselves for a while a kind of love to God, excited by his supposed love to them. Now, while this affection toward God continues, the duties of religion seem pleasant to them. It is even with some delight that they approach to God in their closets; and for the present it may be, they think of no other than continuing to call upon God as long as they live.

Yea, they may continue in the duty of secret prayer for awhile after the liveliness of their affections is past, partly through the influence of their former intentions. They intended to continue seeking God always; and now suddenly to leave off would therefore be too shocking to their own minds. This comes partly through the force of their own preconceived notions, and what they have always believed, that is, that godly persons continue in religion, and that their goodness is not like the morning cloud. Therefore, though they have no love to the duty of prayer, and begin to grow weary of it, yet, as they love their own hope, they are somewhat backward to take a course which will prove it to be a false hope, and so deprive them of it.

If they should all at once carry themselves so as to see, as they have always been taught, that this is a sign of a false hope, they would scare themselves. Their hope is dear to them, and it would scare them to see any plain evidence that it is not true. Hence, for a considerable time after the force of their illuminations and

affections is over, and after they hate the duty of prayer, and would be glad to have done with it, if they could, without showing themselves to be hypocrites; they hold up a kind of attendance upon the duty of secret prayer. This may keep up the outside of religion in them for a good while, and occasion it to be somewhat slowly that they are brought to neglect it. They must not leave off suddenly, because that would be too great a shock to their false peace. But they must come gradually to it, as they find their consciences can bear it, and as they can find out devices and salvos to cover over the matter, and make their so doing consistent, in their own opinion, with the truth of their hope. But,

2. It is the manner of hypocrites, after a while, in a great measure to leave off the practice of this duty. We are often taught, that the seeming goodness and piety of hypocrites is not of a lasting and persevering nature. It is so with respect to their practice of the duty of prayer in particular, and especially of secret prayer. They can omit this duty, and their omission of it not be taken notice of by others, who know what profession they have made. So that a regard to their own reputation doth not oblige them still to practice it. If others saw how they neglect it, it would exceedingly shock their charity towards them. But their neglect doth not fall under their observation; at least not under the observation of many. Therefore they may omit this duty, and still have the credit of being converted persons.

Men of this character can come to a neglect of secret prayer by degrees without very much shocking their peace. For though indeed for a converted person to live in a great measure without secret prayer, is very wide of the notion they once had of a true convert; yet

they find means by degrees to alter their notions, and to bring their principles to suit with their inclinations; and at length they come to that, in their notions of things, that a man may be a convert, and yet live very much in neglect of this duty. In time, they can bring all things to suit well together, an hope of heaven, and an indulgence of sloth in gratifying carnal appetites, and living in a great measure a prayerless life. They cannot indeed suddenly make these things agree; it must be a work of time; and length of time will effect it. By degrees they find out ways to guard and defend their consciences against those powerful enemies; so that those enemies, and a quiet, secure conscience, can at length dwell pretty well together.

Whereas it is asserted in the doctrine, that it is the manner of hypocrites, after a while, in a great measure to leave off this duty; I would observe to you,

(1) That it is not intended but that they may commonly continue to the end of life in yielding an external attendance on open prayer, or prayer with others. They may commonly be present at public prayers in the congregation, and also at family prayer. This, in such places of light as this is, men commonly do before ever they are so much as awakened. Many vicious persons, who make no pretense to serious religion, commonly attend public prayers in the congregation; and also more private prayers, in the families in which they live, unless it be when carnal designs interfere, or when their youthful pleasures and diversions, and their vain company call them; and then they make no conscience of attending family prayer. Otherwise they may continue to attend upon prayer as long as they live, and yet may truly be said not to call upon God. For such prayer,

in the manner of it, is not their own. They are present only for the sake of their credit, or in compliance with others. They may be present at these prayers, and yet have no proper prayer of their own. Many of those concerning whom it maybe said, as in Job 15:4, that they cast off fear and restrain prayer before God, are yet frequently present at family and public prayer.

(2) But they in a great measure leave off the practice of secret prayer. They come to this pass by degrees. At first they begin to be careless about it, under some particular temptations. Because they have been out in young company, or have been taken up very much with worldly business, they omit it once: After that they more easily omit it again. Thus it presently becomes a frequent thing with them to omit it and after a while, it comes to that pass, that they seldom attend it. Perhaps they attend it on Sabbath days, and sometimes on other days. But they have ceased to make it a constant practice daily to retire to worship God alone, and to seek his face in secret places. They sometimes do a little to quiet conscience, and just to keep alive their old hope; because it would be shocking to them, even after all their subtle dealing with their consciences to call themselves converts, and yet totally to live without prayer. Yet the practice of secret prayer they have in a great measure left off.

3. I come now to the reasons why this is the manner of hypocrites.

(1) Hypocrites never had the spirit of prayer given them. They may have been stirred up to the external performance of this duty, and that with a great deal of earnestness and affection, and yet always have been destitute of the true spirit of prayer. The spirit of

prayer is an holy spirit, a gracious spirit. We read of the spirit of grace and supplication. Zechariah 12:10: "I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and supplication." Wherever there is a true spirit of supplication, there is the spirit of grace. The true spirit of prayer is no other than God's own Spirit dwelling in the hearts of the saints. And as this spirit comes from God, so doth it naturally tend to God in holy breathings and pantings. It naturally leads to God, to converse with him by prayer. Therefore the Spirit is said to make intercession for the saints with groanings which cannot be uttered (Romans 8:26).

The Spirit of God makes intercession for them, as it is that Spirit which in some respect indites their prayers, and leads them to pour out their souls before God. Therefore the saints are said to worship God in the Spirit. Philippians 3:3: "We are the circumcision who worship God in the Spirit." And John 4:23: "The true worshippers worship the Father in spirit and in truth." The truly godly have the spirit of adoption, the spirit of a child, to which it is natural to go to God and call upon Him, crying to Him as to a Father.

But hypocrites have nothing of this spirit of adoption. They do not have the spirit of children; for this is a gracious and holy spirit, given only in a real work of regeneration. Therefore it is often mentioned as a part of the distinguishing character of the godly that they call upon God. Psalm 145:18–19: "The Lord is nigh to them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth. He will fulfill the desire of them that fear Him. He will also hear their cry and will save them." Joel 2:32: "It shall come to pass that whosoever calleth on the

name of the Lord shall be delivered.”

It is natural to one who is truly born from above to pray to God, and to pour out his soul in holy supplications before his heavenly Father. This is as natural to the new nature and life as breathing is to the nature and life of the body. But hypocrites do not have this new nature. Those illuminations and affections which they had went away and left no change of nature. Therefore prayer naturally dies in them, having no foundation for keeping it laid up in the nature of the soul. It is maintained (while it is maintained) only by a certain force put upon nature. But that force is not constant and, as it declines, a man's true nature will take its place again.

The spirit of a true convert is a spirit of true love to God, and that naturally inclines the soul to those duties wherein it is conversant with God, and makes it delight in approaching God. But a hypocrite has no such spirit. He is left under the reigning power of enmity against God, which naturally inclines him to shun the presence of God.

The spirit of a true convert is a spirit of faith in and reliance on the power, wisdom, and mercy of God—and such a spirit is naturally expressed in prayer. True prayer is nothing else but faith expressed. Hence we read of the prayer of faith in James 5:15. True Christian prayer is the faith and reliance of the soul breathed forth into words. But a hypocrite is without the spirit of faith. He has no true reliance or dependence on God, but is really self-dependent.

As to those common convictions and affections which the hypocrite had, and which made him keep up the duty of prayer for a while—they not reaching the

bottom of the heart, not being accompanied with any change of nature—a little thing easily extinguishes them. The cares of the world commonly choke and suffocate them, and often the pleasures and vanities of youth totally put an end to them. And these end their constant practice of the duty of prayer.

(2) When a hypocrite has had his false conversion, in his mind his wants are already supplied and his desires are already answered. So he finds no further business at the throne of grace. He was never sensible that he had any other needs but that of being safe from hell. And how that his is converted (as he thinks) that need is supplied. Why, then, should he still go on to resort to the throne of grace with earnest requests? He is out of danger; all that he was afraid of has been removed. He has enough to carry him to heaven, and what more should he desire?

While he was under awakenings, he had this to stir him up to go to God in prayer: he was in continual fear of hell. This put him to cry to God for mercy. But since, in his opinion, he is converted, he has no further business about which to go to God. And although he may keep up the duty of prayer in the outward form a little while, for fear of spoiling his hope, yet he will find a dull business of continuing it without any need or necessity; and so by degrees he will drop the practice. The work of the hypocrite is done when he is converted, and therefore he stands in no further need of help.

But it is far otherwise with the true convert. His work is not done; but he finds still a great work to do, and great wants to be supplied. He sees himself still to be a poor, empty, helpless creature, and that he still stands in great and continual need of God's help. He is

sensible that without God he can do nothing. A false conversion makes a man in his own eyes self-sufficient. He saith he is rich, and increased with goods, and hath need of nothing; and knoweth not that he is wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. But after a true conversion, the soul remains sensible of its own impotence and emptiness, as it is in itself, and its sense of it is rather increased than diminished. It is still sensible of its universal dependence on God for every thing. A true convert is sensible that his grace is very imperfect; and he is very far from having all that he desires. Instead of that, by conversion are begotten in him new desires which he never had before. He now finds in him holy appetites, an hungering and thirsting after righteousness, a longing after more acquaintance and communion with God. So that he hath business enough still at the throne of grace; yea, his business there, instead of being diminished, is, since his conversion, rather increased.

3. The hope which the hypocrite has of his good estate takes off the force that the command of God before had upon his conscience; so that now he dares neglect so plain a duty. The command which requires the practice of the duty of prayer is exceedingly plain. Matthew 26:41: "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." Ephesians 6:18: "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance, and supplication for all saints." Matthew 6:6: "When thou prayest enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret." As long as the hypocrite was, in his own apprehension, in continual danger of hell, he dared not disobey these commands. But since he is, as

he thinks, safe from hell, he has grown bold, and dares to live in the neglect of the plainest command in the Bible.

4. It is the manner of hypocrites, after a while, to return to sinful practices which will tend to keep them from praying. While they were under convictions, they reformed their lives and walked very exactly. This reformation continues for a little time, perhaps, after their supposed conversion, while they are much affected with hope and false comfort. But as these things die away, their old lusts revive and by degrees they return like the dog to his vomit, and as the sow that was washed returns to wallowing in the mire. They return to their sensual practices, to their worldly practices, to their proud and contentious practices like before. And no wonder this makes them forsake their closet prayers. Sinning and praying do not go together well. If a man is constant in the duty of secret prayer, it tends to restrain him from willful sinning. So, on the other hand, if he allows himself in sinful practices, it will restrain him from praying. It will give quite another turn to his mind, so that he will have no disposition to the practice of such a duty. It will be contrary to him. A man who knows that he lives in sin against God will not be inclined to come daily into the presence of God, but will rather be inclined to flee from His presence. When Adam had eaten of the forbidden fruit, he ran away from God and hid himself among the trees of the garden.

To keep up the duty of prayer after he has given a loose reign to his lusts would tend to greatly disquiet a man's conscience. It would give his conscience freedom to testify aloud against him. If he should come

from his wickedness into the presence of God immediately to speak to Him, his conscience would, as it were, fly in his face. Therefore hypocrites, as they by degrees admit their wicked practices, exclude prayer.

5. Hypocrites never counted the cost of perseverance in seeking God, and of following Him to the end of life. To continue in prayer with all perseverance to the end of life requires much care, watchfulness, and labor. Much opposition is made to prayer by the flesh, the world, and the devil, and Christians meet with many temptations to forsake this practice. He who would persevere in this duty must be laborious in religion in general. But hypocrites never count the cost of such labor; they were never prepared in the disposition of their minds to give their lives to the service of God and the duties of religion. It is therefore no great wonder if they are weary and give out after they have continued for a while, as their affections are gone and they find that prayer to them grows irksome and tedious.

6. Hypocrites have no interest in those gracious promises which God has made to His people of those spiritual supplies which are needful in order to uphold them in the way of their duty to the end. God has promised true saints that they shall not forsake Him. Jeremiah 32:40: "I will put My fear into their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me." He has promised that He will keep them in the way of their duty. 1 Thessalonians 5:23–24: "And the God of peace sanctify you wholly. And I pray God your spirit, soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it." But hypocrites have no interest in these, and such like, promises, and therefore are liable to fall away. If

God does not uphold men, there is no dependence on their steadfastness. If the Spirit of God departs from them, they will soon become careless and profane, and there will be an end to their seeming devotion and piety.

### *Application*

USE 1. I would exhort those who have entertained a hope of being true converts, and yet since their supposed conversion have left off the duty of secret prayer and ordinarily allow themselves in the omission of it to throw away their hope. If you have left off calling upon God, it is time for you to leave off hoping and flattering yourselves with an imagination that you are the children of God. Probably it will be a very difficult thing for you to do this. It is hard for a man to let go a hope of heaven, on which he has once allowed himself to lay hold, and which he has retained for a considerable time. True conversion is a rare thing, but men who are brought from a false hope of conversion once they are settled and established in it, and have continued in it for some time, is much more rare.

Those things in men which, if they were known to others, would be sufficient to convince others that they are hypocrites, will not convince themselves; and those things which would be sufficient to convince them concerning others, and to cause them to cast others entirely out of their charity, will not be sufficient to convince them concerning themselves. They can make larger allowances for themselves than they can for others. They can find ways to solve objections against their own hope when they can find none in the like case for

their neighbor.

But if your case is such as is spoken of in the doctrine, it is surely time for you to seek a better hope and another work of God's Spirit than ever you have yet experienced, something more thorough and effectual. When you see and find by experience that the seed which was sown in your hearts (though at first it sprang up and seemed flourishing) is withering away by the heat of the sun, or is choked with thorns, this shows in what sort of ground the seed was sown. This also shows that it is either stony or thorny ground; and therefore it is necessary that you should pass through another change whereby your heart may become good ground which shall bring forth fruit with patience.

I do not insist that you should throw away your hope because you had the judgment of others that the change of which you were the subject was not right. It is a small matter to be judged of man's judgment, whether you are approved or condemned, and whether it be by minister or people, wise or unwise. 1 Corinthians 4:3: "It is a very small thing that I should be judged of you or of man's judgment." If your goodness has proven to be as the morning cloud and early dew, if you are one of those who has forsaken God and left off calling upon His name, you have the judgment of God and the sentence of God in the Scriptures against you. And this is a thousand times more than to have the judgment of all the wise and godly men and ministers in the world in your favor.

Others, from your account of things, may have been obliged to have charity regarding you, and to think that, provided you were not mistaken, and in your account did not misrepresent things or express them by

wrong terms, you were really converted. But what a miserable foundation is this upon which to build a hope as to your eternal state!

Here I request your attention to a few things in particular which I have to say to you concerning your hope.

First, why will you retain that hope which by evident experience you find poisons you? Is it reasonable to think that a holy hope, a hope that is from heaven, would have such an influence? No, surely nothing of such a malignant influence comes from that world of purity and glory. No poison grows in the paradise of God. The same hope which leads men to sin in this world will lead them to hell hereafter. Why, therefore, will you retain such a hope of which your own experience shows you the ill tendency, in that it encourages you to lead a wicked life? For certainly that life is a wicked life wherein you live in the neglect of so well-known a duty as that of secret prayer, and in the disobedience of so plain a command of God as that by which this duty is enjoined. And is not a way of disobedience to God a way to hell?

If your own experience of the nature and tendency of your hope will not convince you of the falseness of it, what will? Are you resolved to retain your hope, let it prove ever so unsound and hurtful? Will you hold it fast till you go to hell with it? Many men cling to a false hope, and embrace it so closely that they never let it go till the flames of hell cause their arms to unclench and let go their hold of it. Consider how you will answer at the day of judgment when God shall call you to an account for your folly in resting in such a hope. Will it be a sufficient answer for you to say that you had the char-

ity of others, and that they thought your conversion was right?

Certainly it is foolish for men to imagine that God had no more wisdom, or could contrive no other way of bestowing comfort and hope of eternal life, than one which would encourage men to forsake Him.

Second, how is your doing as you do consistent with loving God above all? If you do not have a spirit to love God above your dearest earthly friends, and your most pleasant earthly enjoyments, the Scriptures are very plain and full that you are not true Christians. But if you had indeed such a spirit, would you thus grow weary of the practice of drawing near to Him, and become habitually so averse to it as in a great measure to cast off so plain a duty which is so much the life of a child of God? It is the nature of love to be averse to absence, and to love a near access to those whom we love. We love to be with them; we delight to come often to them, and to have much conversation with them. But when a person, who has heretofore been wont to converse freely with another, by degrees forsakes him, grows strange, and converses with him but little, and that in spite of the other's being importunate with him to continue their former intimacy, this plainly shows the coldness of his heart towards him.

The neglect of the duty of prayer seems to be inconsistent with supreme love to God upon another account, and that is that it is against the will of God so plainly revealed. True love to God seeks to please God in every thing, and universally to conform to His will.

Third, thus restraining prayer before God is not only inconsistent with the love of God, but also with the fear of God. It is an argument that you cast off fear,

as is manifest by Job 15:4: "Yea, thou castest off fear, and restrainest prayer before God." While you thus live in the transgression of so plain a command of God, you evidently show that there is no fear of God before your eyes. Psalm 36:1: "The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart that there is no fear of God before his eyes."

Fourth, consider how living in such a neglect is inconsistent with leading a holy life. We are abundantly instructed in Scripture that true Christians lead an holy life, that without holiness no man shall see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14), and that everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself even as Christ is pure (1 John 3:3). In Proverbs 16:17 it says that the highway of the upright is to depart from evil. In other words, it is the common, beaten road in which all the godly travel. To the like purpose is Isaiah 35:8: "A highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for those . . .", those redeemed persons spoken of in the foregoing verses. It is spoken of in Romans 8:1 as the character of all believers that they walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

But how is a life, which is in a great measure prayerless, consistent with a holy life? To lead a holy life is to lead a life devoted to God, a life of worshipping and serving God, a life consecrated to the service of God. But how does he lead such a life who does not so much as maintain the duty of prayer? How can such a man be said to walk by the Spirit and to be a servant of the Most High God?

A holy life is a life of faith. The life that true Christians live in the world, they live by the faith of the Son

of God. But who can believe that man lives by faith who lives without prayer, which is the natural expression of faith? Prayer is as natural an expression of faith as breathing is of life; and to say that a man lives a life of faith, and yet lives a prayerless life, is every whit as inconsistent and incredible as to say that a man lives without breathing. A prayerless life is so far from being a holy life that it is a profane life. He who lives so lives like a heathen who does not call on God's name; he who lives a prayerless life lives without God in the world.

Fifth, if you live in the neglect of secret prayer, you show your intention to neglect all the worship of God. He who prays only when he prays with others would not pray at all, were it not that the eyes of others are upon him. He who will not pray where none but God sees him manifestly does not pray at all out of respect to God, or regard to His all-seeing eye, and therefore in effect casts off all prayer. And he who casts off prayer in effect casts off all the worship of God, of which prayer is the principal duty. Now what a miserable saint is he who is no worshipper of God! He who casts off the worship of God in effect casts off God Himself. He refuses to own Him, or to be conversant with Him as his God. For the way in which men own God, and are conversant with him as their God, is the way in which they worship Him.

Sixth, how can you expect to dwell with God forever if you so neglect and forsake him here? This your practice shows, that you place not your happiness in God, in nearness to him, and communion with him. He who refuses to come and visit, and converse with a friend, and who in a great measure forsakes him when he is

abundantly invited and importuned to come, plainly shows that he does not place his happiness in the company and conversation of that friend. Now if this is the case with you respecting God, then how can you expect to have it for your happiness to all eternity to be with God, and to enjoy holy communion with Him?

Let those persons who hope they are converted, and yet have in a great measure left off the duty of secret prayer, and whose manner it is ordinarily to neglect it, seriously consider these things for their own sake. For what will profit them to please themselves with that which, while they live, will fail them at last and leave them in fearful and amazing disappointment?

It is probable that some of you who have entertained a good opinion of your state and have looked upon yourselves as converts, but have lately in a great measure left off the duty of secret prayer, will this evening attend secret prayer, and continue to do so for a little while after your hearing this sermon. And your end in doing so is that you may solve the difficulty and the objection which is made against the truth of your hope. But this will not hold. As it has been in former instances of the like nature, what you now hear will have such effect upon you only for a little while. The business and cares of the world shall again begin to crowd a little upon you, and the next time you go out into young company it is probable that you will again neglect this duty. The next time a frolic shall be appointed, to which it is proposed that you go, it is highly probable that you will neglect not only secret prayer, but also family prayer. Or at least, after a while, you will come to the same pass again as before in casting off fear and restraining prayer before God.

It is not very likely that you will ever be constant and persevering in this duty until you shall have obtained a better principle in your hearts. The streams which have no springs to feed them will dry up. The drought and heat consume the snow waters. Although they run plentifully in the spring, yet when the sun ascends higher with a burning heat they are gone. The seed that is sown in stony places, though it seems to flourish at present, yet, as the sun shall rise with a burning heat, will wither away. None will bring forth fruit with patience but those whose hearts have become good ground.

Without any heavenly seed remaining in them, men may, whenever they fall in among the godly, continue all their lives to talk like saints. They may, for their credit's sake, tell of what they have experienced, but their deeds will not hold. They may continue to tell of their inward experiences, and yet live in the neglect of secret prayer, and of other duties.

USE 2. I would take occasion from this doctrine to exhort all to persevere in the duty of prayer. This exhortation is much insisted on in the Word of God. It is insisted on in the Old Testament. 1 Chronicles 16:11: "Seek the Lord and His strength, seek His face continually." Isaiah 62:6: "Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence," that is, do not be silent as to the voice of prayer, as is manifest by the following words, "and give him no rest till he establish and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." Israel of old is reproved for growing weary of the duty of prayer in Isaiah 43:22: "But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob, thou hast been weary of me, O Israel."

Perseverance in the duty of prayer is very much in-

sisted on in the New Testament as well. Luke 18:1: "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint," that is, they ought not to be discouraged or weary of the duty, but should always continue in it. Luke 21:36: "Watch ye therefore, and pray always." We have the example of Anna the prophetess set before us in Luke 2:36. Though she had lived to be more than a hundred years old, she never was weary of this duty. It is said that "she departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers, night and day." Cornelius also is commended for his constancy in this duty. It is said that he prayed to God always, according to Acts 10:2. The Apostle Paul, in his epistles, insists very much on constancy in this duty. Romans 12:12: "Continuing instant in prayer." Ephesians 6:18-19: "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance." Colossians 4:2: "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same." 1 Thessalonians 5:17: "Pray without ceasing." To the same effect the Apostle Peter writes in 1 Peter 4:7: "Watch unto prayer." Thus abundantly the Scripture insists upon it that we should persevere in the duty of prayer. This shows that it is of very great importance that we should persevere. If the contrary is the manner of hypocrites, as has been shown in the doctrine, then surely we ought to beware of this leaven.

But here let the following things be particularly considered as motives to perseverance in this duty.

1. Perseverance in the way of duty is necessary to salvation, and is abundantly declared so to be in the holy Scriptures. Isaiah 64:5: "Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember Thee in Thy ways. Behold, Thou art wroth, for we

have sinned. In those is continuance, and we shall be saved." Hebrews 10:38–39: "Now the just shall live by faith. But if any man draw back, My soul hath no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul." Romans 11:22: "Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God. On them which fell, severity; but towards thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off." So it is in many other places.

Many, when they think they are converted, seem to imagine that their work is done, and that there is nothing else needful in order to their going to heaven. Indeed, perseverance in holiness of life is not necessary to salvation as the righteousness by which a right to salvation is obtained. Nor is actual perseverance necessary in order to our becoming interested in that righteousness by which we are justified. For as soon as a soul has believed in Christ, or has put forth one act of faith in Him, it becomes interested in His righteousness, and in all the promises purchased by it.

But persevering in the way of duty is necessary to salvation as a concomitant and evidence of a title to salvation. There is never a title to salvation without it, though it is not the righteousness by which a title to salvation is obtained. It is necessary to salvation as it is the necessary consequence of true faith. It is an evidence which universally attends uprightness, and the defect of it is an infallible evidence of the want of uprightness. In Psalm 125:4–5, such as are good and upright in heart are distinguished from such as fall away or turn aside: "Do good, O Lord, to those that are good, and to them that are upright in their hearts. As for

such as turn aside to their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity. But peace shall be upon Israel." It is mentioned as an evidence that the hearts of the children of Israel were not right with God that they did not persevere in the ways of holiness. Psalm 78:8. "A generation that set not their hearts aright, and whose spirit was not steadfast with God."

Christ gives as a distinguishing character of those who are His disciples indeed, and of a true and saving faith, that it is accompanied with perseverance in the obedience of Christ's word. John 8:31: "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, 'If ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed.' " This is mentioned as a necessary evidence of an interest in Christ in Hebrews 3:14: "We are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end."

Perseverance is not only a necessary concomitant and evidence of a title to salvation, but also a necessary prerequisite to the actual possession of eternal life. It is the only way to heaven, the narrow way that leads to life. Hence Christ exhorts the church at Philadelphia to persevere in holiness from the consideration that it was necessary in order to her obtaining the crown. Revelation 3:11: "Hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." It is necessary not only that persons should once have been walking in the way of duty, but that they should be found so doing when Christ comes. Luke 12:43: "Blessed is that servant whom his lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing." Holding out to the end is often made the condition of actual salvation. Matthew 10:22: "He that endureth to

the end, the same shall be saved.” And Revelation 2:10: “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”

2. In order to your own perseverance in the way of duty, your own care and watchfulness is necessary. For though it is promised that true saints shall persevere, yet that is no argument that their care and watchfulness is not necessary in order to it because their care to keep the commands of God is the thing promised. If the saints should fail to be careful, watchful, and diligent in persevering in holiness, that failure would itself be a failure of holiness. They who do not persevere in watchfulness and diligence do not persevere in holiness of life, for holiness of life very much consists in watchfulness and diligence to keep the commands of God. It is one promise of the covenant of grace that the saints shall keep God’s commandments (Ezekiel 11:19–20). Yet that is no argument that they have no need to take care to keep these commandments, or to do their duty. So the promise of God that the saints shall persevere in holiness is no argument that it is not necessary that they should take heed lest they fall away.

Therefore the Scriptures abundantly warn men to watch over themselves diligently, and to give earnest heed lest they fall away. 1 Corinthians 16:13: “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.” 1 Corinthians 10:12: “Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.” Hebrews 3:12–14: “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily while it is called today, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the be-

ginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end." Hebrews 4:1: "Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." 2 Peter 3:17: "Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness." 2 John 8: "Look to yourselves that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward."

Thus you see how earnestly the Scriptures press on Christians exhortations to take diligent heed to themselves that they fall not away. And certainly these cautions are not without reason.

The Scriptures particularly insist upon watchfulness in order to perseverance in the duty of prayer. "Watch and pray," said Christ, which implies that we should watch unto prayer, as the Apostle Peter says in 1 Peter 4:7. It implies that we should watch against a neglect of prayer as well as against other sins. The apostle, in places which have been already mentioned, directs us to pray with all prayer, watching thereunto with all perseverance, and to continue in prayer and watch in the same. Nor is it any wonder that the apostles so much insisted on watching in order to a continuance in prayer with all perseverance, for there are many temptations to neglect this duty; first, to be inconstant in it, and from time to time to omit it; then, in a great measure to neglect it. The devil watches to draw us away from God, and to hinder us from going to Him in prayer. We are surrounded with many tempting objects, businesses, and diversions. Particularly we meet with many things which are great temptations to a neglect of this duty.

3. To move you to persevere in the duty of prayer, consider how much you always stand in need of the help of God. If persons who have formerly attended this duty leave it off, the language of it is that now they stand in no further need of God's help, that they have no further occasion to go to God with requests and supplications, when indeed it is in God we live and move and have our being. We cannot draw a breath without His help. You need His help every day for the supply of your outward wants, and especially you stand in continual need of Him to help your souls. Without His protection they would immediately fall into the hands of the devil, who always stands as a roaring lion, ready, whenever he is permitted, to fall upon the souls of men and devour them. If God should indeed preserve your lives, but should otherwise forsake and leave you to yourselves, you would be most miserable. Your lives would be a curse to you.

Those who are converted (if God should forsake them) would soon fall away totally from a state of grace into a more miserable state than they were ever in before their conversion. They have no strength of their own to resist those powerful enemies who surround them. Sin and Satan would immediately carry them away like a mighty flood, if God should forsake them. You stand in need of daily supplies from God. Without God you can receive no spiritual light nor comfort, can exercise no grace and can bring forth no fruit. Without God your souls will wither and pine away, and sink into a most wretched state. You continually need the instructions and directions of God. What can a little child do in a vast howling wilderness without some one to guide it and to lead it in the right way? Without God

you will soon fall into snares, pits, and many fatal calamities.

Seeing therefore you stand in such continual need of the help of God, how reasonable is it that you should continually seek it from Him and perseveringly acknowledge your dependence upon Him by resorting to Him, to spread your needs before Him, and to offer up your requests to Him in prayer. Let us consider how miserable we would be if we should leave off prayer, and God at the same time should stop taking any care of us, or to afford us any more supplies of His grace. By our constancy in prayer, we cannot be profitable to God; and if we leave it off God will sustain no damage. He does not need our prayers. But if God ceases to care for us and to help us, we will immediately sink. We can do nothing; we can receive nothing without Him.

4. Consider the great benefit of a constant, diligent, and persevering attendance on this duty. It is one of the greatest and most excellent means of nourishing the new nature, and of causing the soul to flourish and prosper. It is an excellent means of keeping up an acquaintance with God, and of growing in the knowledge of God. It is the way to a life of communion with God. It is an excellent means of taking the heart off from the vanities of the world, and of causing the mind to be conversant in heaven. It is an excellent preservative from sin and the wiles of the devil, and a powerful antidote against the poison of the old serpent. It is a duty whereby strength is derived from God against the lusts and corruptions of the heart and the snares of the world.

It has a great tendency to keep the soul in a wakeful frame, to lead us to a strict walk with God, to a life that

shall be fruitful in such good works as tend to adorn the doctrine of Christ, and to cause our light so to shine before others that they, seeing our good works, shall glorify our Father who is in heaven And if the duty is constantly and diligently attended, it will be a very pleasant duty. Slack and slothful attendance upon it, and unsteadiness in it, are the causes which make it so great a burden as it is to some persons. Their slothfulness in it naturally has the effect to beget a dislike of the duty and a great indisposition to it. But if it is constantly and diligently attended, it is one of the best means of leading not only a Christian and amiable life, but also a pleasant one, a life of much sweet fellowship with Christ, and of the abundant enjoyment of the light of His countenance.

Besides, the great power which prayer, when duly attended, has with God is worthy of your notice. By it men become like Jacob who, as a prince, had power with God and prevailed when he wrestled with God for the blessing. See the power of prayer represented in James 5:16–18. By these things you may be sensible how much you will lose if you are negligent of this great duty of calling upon God, and how ill you will consult your own interest by such a neglect.

I conclude my discourse with two directions in order to constancy and perseverance in this duty.

First, watch against the beginnings of a neglect of this duty. Persons who have for a time practiced this duty, and afterwards neglect it, commonly leave it off by degrees. While their convictions and religious affections last, they are very constant in their closets, and no worldly business, company, or diversion hinders them. But as their convictions and affections begin to die

away, they begin to find excuses to neglect it sometimes. They are now so hurried; they have now such and such things to attend to; or there are now such inconveniences in the way that they persuade themselves they may very excusably omit it for this time. Afterwards it frequently so happens that they have something to hinder, something which they call a just excuse. After a while, a lesser thing becomes a sufficient excuse than was allowed to be such at first. Thus the person by degrees contracts more and more of a habit of neglecting prayer, and becomes more and more indisposed to it. And even when he does perform it, it is in such a poor, dull, heartless, miserable manner that he tells himself that he may as well not do it at all as do it so. Thus he makes his own dullness and indisposition an excuse for wholly neglecting it, or at least for living in a great measure in the neglect of it. After this manner Satan and men's own corruptions inveigle them to their ruin.

Therefore beware of the first beginnings of a neglect. Watch against temptations to it. Take heed how you begin to allow excuses. Be watchful to keep up the duty in the height of it; let it not so much as begin to sink. For when you give way, though it is but little, it is like giving way to an enemy in the field of battle: the first beginning of a retreat greatly encourages the enemy and weakens the retreating soldiers.

Second, let me direct you to forsake all such practices as you find by experience indispose you to the duty of secret prayer. Examine the things in which you have allowed yourselves, and inquire whether they have had this effect. You are able to look over your past behavior and may doubtless, on an impartial consideration, make a judgment of the practices and courses in which

you have allowed yourselves.

Particularly let young people examine their manner of company keeping, and the round of diversions in which, with their companions, they have allowed themselves. I only desire that you would ask at the mouth of your own consciences what has been the effect of these things with respect to your attendance on the duty of secret prayer. Have you not found that such practices have tended to the neglect of this duty? Have you not found that after them you have been more indisposed to it, and less conscientious and careful to attend it? Yea, have they not, from time to time, actually been the means of your neglecting it?

If you cannot deny that this is really the case, then, if you seek the good of your souls, forsake these practices. Whatever you may plead for them—as that there is no hurt in them or that there is a time for all things, and the like—yet if you find this hurt in the consequence of them, it is time for you to forsake them. And if you value heaven more than a little worldly diversion; if you set an higher price on eternal glory than on a dance or a song, you will forsake them.

If these things are lawful in themselves, yet if your experience shows that they are attended with such a consequence as I have now mentioned, that is enough. It is lawful in itself for you to enjoy your right hand and your right eye. But if by experience you find they cause you to offend, it is time for you to cut off the one and pluck out the other, as you would rather go to heaven without them than go to hell with them, into that place of torment where the worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.

# Sermon 4

## *A Warning To Professors of Religion*

or

the great guilt of those who attend on the ordinances  
of divine worship and yet allow themselves in any  
known wickedness

“That they have committed adultery, and blood is in their hands, and with their idols have they committed adultery, and have also caused their sons, whom they bare unto me, to pass for them through the fire to devour them. Moreover this they have done unto me: they have defiled my sanctuary in the same day, and have profaned my Sabbaths. For when they had slain their children to their idols, then they came the same day into my sanctuary to profane it; and, lo, thus have they done in the midst of mine house.” Ezekiel 23:37–39

### *Introduction*

Samaria and Jerusalem, or Israel and Judah, are here represented by two women, Aholah and Aholibah. And their idolatry and treachery towards their covenant God is represented by the adultery of these women. They forsook God, who was their Husband, and the guide of their youth, and prostituted themselves to others. The baseness of Aholah and Aholibah towards God their Husband is here pointed out by two things, adultery and bloodshed: “They have committed adultery, and

blood is in their hands.”

1. They committed adultery with other lovers, that is, with their idols: “With their idols have they committed adultery.”

2. They not only committed adultery, but they took the children that they bore to God and killed them for their lovers. Their hearts were quite alienated from God, their Husband, and they were so bewitched with lust after those other lovers that they took their own children, whom they had by their husband, and put them to cruel deaths to make a feast with them for their lovers. As it is said in verse 37: “And have also caused my sons, whom they bare unto me, to pass for them through the fire to devour them.”

But there is a twofold wickedness of those actions of theirs held forth to us in the words:

First, there is the wickedness of them considered in themselves. For who can express the horrid baseness of their treatment of God, their Husband?

Second, there is an additional wickedness, resulting from joining these actions with sacred things. Beside the monstrous wickedness of these actions in themselves considered, it exceedingly increased their guilt that on the same day they came into God’s sanctuary, or that they lived in such wickedness at the same time that they came and attended the holy ordinances of God’s house, pretending to worship and adore Him whom they all the while treated in such a horrid manner. And so herein they defiled and profaned holy things, as is seen in verses 38–39: “Moreover, this have they done unto Me; they have defiled My sanctuary in the same day, and have profaned My sabbaths. For when they had slain their children to their idols, then they came the

same day into My sanctuary, to profane it; and, lo, thus have they done in the midst of Mine house.”

**DOCTRINE: When those who attend ordinances of divine worship allow themselves in known wickedness, they are guilty of dreadfully profaning and polluting those ordinances.**

By a divine ordinance, when the expression is used in its greatest latitude, is meant anything of divine institution or appointment. Thus we call marriage a divine ordinance because it was appointed by God. So civil government is called an ordinance of God in Romans 13:1–2: “Let every soul be subject to the higher powers; for there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever, therefore, resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God.”

But the word is more commonly used only for an instituted or appointed way or mean of worship. So the sacraments are ordinances. So public prayer, singing of praise, the preaching of the Word, and the hearing of the Word preached are divine ordinances. Setting apart certain officers in the church, the appointed way of discipline, public confession of scandals, admonition, and excommunication are ordinances. These are called the ordinances of God’s house, or of public worship. And these are intended in the doctrine. It is the profanation of these ordinances that is spoken of in the text: “They came into My sanctuary to profane it; and, lo! thus have they done in the midst of Mine house, says God.

This doctrine seems to contain two propositions.

**PROPOSITION 1.** The ordinances of God are holy.

Divine ordinances are holy in the following respects:

- They are conversant wholly and immediately about God and divine things

When we are in attendance on the ordinances of divine worship, we are in the special presence of God. When persons come and attend on the ordinances of God, they are said to come before God, and to come into His presence. Jeremiah 7:10: "Come and stand before Me, in this house which is called by My name." Psalm 100:2: "Come before His presence with singing."

In divine ordinances, persons have immediate intercourse with God, either in applying to Him (as in prayer and singing praises) or in receiving from Him, waiting solemnly and immediately on him for spiritual good (as in hearing the Word), or in both applying to God and receiving from Him (as in the sacraments). They were appointed so that in them men might converse and hold communion with God. We are poor, ignorant, blind worms of the dust, and God did not see it meet that our way of intercourse with God should be left to ourselves. But God has given us His ordinances as ways and means of conversing with Him.

In these ordinances, holy and divine things are exhibited and represented. In the preaching of the Word, holy doctrines and the divine will are exhibited. In the sacraments are represented our faith, love, and obedience.

- The end of God's ordinances is holy. The immediate end is to glorify God. They are instituted to direct us in the holy exercises of faith and love, divine fear and reverence, submission, thankfulness, holy joy and sorrow, holy desires, resolutions, and hopes. True worship consists in these holy and spiritual exercises, and as these divine ordinances are the ordinances of wor-

ship, they are to help us, and to direct us in such worship as this.

- They have the sanction of divine authority. They are not only conversant about a divine and holy object, and designed to direct and help us in divine and holy exercises, but they have a divine and holy Author. The infinitely great and holy God has appointed them, the eternal Three in One. Each person in the Trinity has been concerned in their institution. God the Father has appointed them, and that by His own Son. They are of Christ's own appointment, and He appointed as He had received of the Father. John 12:49: "I have not spoken of Myself, but the Father which sent Me, He gave Me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak." The Father and Son more fully revealed and ratified them by the Spirit, and they are committed to writing by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

They are holy, in that God has hallowed them, or consecrated them. They are conversant about holy things, and God ordained them so that in them we might be conversant about holy things. They are for a holy use, and it is God who, by His own immediate authority, ordained them for that holy use, which renders them much more sacred than otherwise they would have been.

- They are attended in the name of God. Thus we are commanded to do all that we do, in word or deed, in the name of Christ (Colossians 3:17), which is to be understood especially of our attendance on ordinances. Ordinances are administered in the name of God. When the Word is preached by authorized ministers, they speak in God's name, as Christ's ambassadors, as co-workers together with Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:20:

“Now we are ambassadors for Christ.” Chapter 6:1: “We are workers together with Him.” When a true minister preaches, he speaks the oracles of God (1 Peter 4:11), and he is to be heard as one representing Christ.

So in administering the sacraments, the minister represents the person of Christ. He baptizes in His name, and in the Lord’s supper stands in His stead. In administering church-censures, he still acts, as the apostle expresses it, in the person of Christ (2 Corinthians 2:10). On the other hand, the congregation, in their addresses to God in ordinances, such as prayer and praise, act in the name of Christ, the Mediator, as having Him to represent them, and as coming to God by Him.

**PROPOSITION 2.** God’s ordinances are dreadfully profaned by those who attend on them, and yet allow themselves in ways of wickedness.

Persons who come to the house of God, into the holy presence of God, attending the duties and ordinances of His public worship, pretending with others, according to divine institution, to call on the name of God, to praise Him, to hear His Word and commemorate Christ’s death, and who yet, at the same time, are wittingly and allowedly going on in wicked courses, or in any practice contrary to the plain rules of the Word of God, therein greatly profane the holy worship of God, defile the temple of God, and those sacred ordinances on which they attend. The truth of this proposition appears by the following considerations:

- By attending ordinances, and yet living in allowed wickedness, they show great irreverence and contempt of those holy ordinances. When persons who have been committing known wickedness, as it were the same day,

as it is expressed into the text, and attend the sacred solemn worship and ordinances of God, and then go from the house of God directly to the like allowed wickedness—they hereby express a most irreverent spirit with respect to holy things, and in a horrid manner cast contempt upon God's sacred institutions, and on those holy things which we are concerned with in them.

They show that they have no reverence of that God who has hallowed these ordinances. They show a contempt of that divine authority which instituted them. They show a horribly irreverent spirit towards that God into whose presence they come, with whom they immediately have to do in ordinances, and in whose name these ordinances are performed and attended. They show a contempt of the adoration of God, of that faith and love, that humiliation, submission, and praise, which ordinances were instituted to express. What an irreverent spirit does it show that they are so careless after what manner they come before God; that they take no care to cleanse and purify themselves in order that they may be fit to come before God; yea, that they take no care to avoid making themselves more and more unclean and filthy!

They have been taught many a time that God is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity, and how exceedingly He is offended with sin; yet they care not how unclean and abominable they come into His presence. It shows horrid irreverence and contempt that they are so bold, that they are not afraid to come into the presence of God in such a manner, and that they will presume to go out of the presence of God, and from an attendance upon holy things, again to

their sinful practices. If they had any reverence for God and holy things, an approach into His presence and an attendance on those holy things would leave such awe upon their minds that they would not dare to go immediately from them to their ways of known wickedness.

It would show a great irreverence in any person towards a king if he did not care how he came into his presence, and if he came in a sordid habit and in a very indecent manner. How much more horrid irreverence does it show for persons willingly and allowedly to defile themselves with that filth which God infinitely hates, and so frequently come into the presence of God!

- By making a show of respect to God in ordinances, and then acting the contrary in their lives, they do but mock God. In attending ordinances, they make a show of respect to God. By joining in prayer, in public adorations, confessions, petitions, and thanksgivings, they make a show of high thoughts of God, and of humbling themselves before Him; of sorrow for their sins, of thankfulness for mercies, and of a desire of grace and assistance to obey and serve God. By attending upon the hearing of the Word, they make a show of a teachable spirit, and of a readiness to practice according to the instructions given. By attending on the sacraments, they make a show of faith in Christ, of choosing Him for their portion, and spiritually feeding upon Him. But by their actions, they all the while declare the contrary. They declare that they have no high esteem of God, but that they rather despise Him in their hearts. They declare that they are so far from repenting that they intend to continue in their sins. They

declare that they have no desire for that grace and assistance to live in a holy manner for which they prayed, and that they would rather live wickedly. This is what they choose, and for the present are resolved upon. They declare by their actions that there is no truth in what they pretend in hearing the Word preached, that they had a desire to know what the will of God is so that they might be directed in their duty. For they declare by their actions that they desire not to do the will of God, and that they do not intend any such thing, but intend, on the contrary, to disobey Him, and that they prefer their carnal interests before His authority and glory.

They declare by their actions that there is no truth in what they pretend in their attendance on the sacraments, that they desire to be fed with spiritual nourishment, to be conformed and assimilated to Christ, and to have communion with Him. They show by their practices that they have no regard for Christ, and that they would rather have their lusts gratified than to be fed with His spiritual food. They show that they desire no assimilation to Christ, but would rather be different than Him and of an opposite character to Him. They show that, instead of desiring communion with Christ, they are His resolved and avowed enemies, willfully acting the part of enemies to Christ, dishonoring Him, and promoting the interest of Satan against Him.

Now what can this be else but mockery to make a show of great respect, reverence, love, and obedience, and at the same time willfully to declare the reverse in actions. If a rebel or traitor should send addresses to his king, making a show of great loyalty and fidelity, and should all the while openly, and in the king's sight, carry on designs of dethroning him, how could

his addresses be considered as anything other than mockery? If a man should bow and kneel before his superior, and use many respectful terms to him, but at the same time should strike him or spit in his face, would his bowing and his respectful terms be looked upon in any light than as done in mockery? When the Jews kneeled before Christ and said, "Hail, King of the Jews," but at the same time spit in His face, and smote Him upon the head with a reed, could their kneeling and salutations be considered as anything other than mockery?

Men who attend ordinances, and yet willingly live in wicked practices, treat Christ in the same manner that these Jews did. They come to public worship, and pretend to pray to Him, to sing His praises, and to sit and hear His Word. They come to the sacrament, pretending to commemorate His death. Thus they kneel before Him, and say, "Hail, King of the Jews"; yet at the same time they live in ways of wickedness, which they know Christ has forbidden, of which He has declared the greatest hatred, and which are exceedingly to His dishonor. Thus they buffet Him and spit in His face. They do as Judas did, who came to Christ saying, "Hail, Master," and kissed Him, at the same time betraying Him into the hands of those who sought His life.

How can it be interpreted in any other light when men come to public worship, and attend ordinances, and yet will be drunkards and profane swearers, will live in lasciviousness, injustice, or some other known wickedness? If a man should pray to God to keep him from drunkenness, and at the same time should put the bottle to his own mouth and drink himself drunk, the absurdity and horrid wickedness of his conduct would

be manifest to every man. But the very same thing, though not so visible to us, is done by those who make profession of great respect to God, and pray to God from time to time to keep them from sin, yet at the same time have no design to forsake their known sins, but intend the contrary.

God sees men's designs and resolutions more plainly than we can see their outward actions. Therefore, for a man to pray to God to be kept from sin, and at the same time to intend to sin, is mockery as visible to God as if he prayed to be kept from some particular sin, which he was at the same time willingly and allowedly committing.

These persons are guilty of a horrid profanation of God's ordinances. For they make them occasions of a greater affront to God, the occasions of showing their impudence and presumption. For he who lives in willful wickedness, and does not enjoy the ordinances of God, is not guilty of so great presumption as he who attends these ordinances and yet allows himself in wickedness. This latter acts as though he came into the presence of God on purpose to affront Him. He comes from time to time to hear the will of God, and all the while designs disobedience, and goes away and acts directly contrary to it.

A servant would affront his master by willfully disobeying his commands in any wise. But he would affront him much more if he should, on every occasion, come to him to inquire his will, as though he were ready to do whatever his master would have him do, and then should immediately go away and do the contrary.

- They put the ordinances of God to a profane use. The ordinances of God are holy, as they are set apart of

God to a holy use and purpose. They are the worship of God, instituted for the ends of giving honor and glory to him, and to be means of grace and spiritual good to us. But those persons who attend these ordinances, and yet live in allowed wickedness, aim at neither of these ends. They, in their attendance on ordinances, neither aim to give honor to God, or to express any love, or esteem, or thankfulness. Nor do they sincerely seek the good of their own souls. It is not truly the aim of any such persons to obtain grace, or to be made holy. Their actions plainly show that this is not their desire. They choose to be wicked, and intend it.

It is not therefore to these purposes that they improve the holy ordinances of God, but they put them to another and profane use. They attend ordinances to avoid that discredit which a voluntarily and habitual absence from them would cause among those with whom they live, to avoid the punishment of human laws, or for their worldly advantage, to make up for other wickedness, or for some other carnal purposes. Thus they profane the ordinances of God by perverting them to profane purposes.

- When persons thus treat God's holy ordinances, it tends to beget a contempt of them in others. When others see sacred things commonly used irreverently, attended with such carelessness and contempt, and treated without any sacred regard; when they see persons bold with them and treating them without any solemnity of spirit; when they see God's holy ordinances thus commonly profaned, it tends to diminish their sense of their sacredness, and to make them seem not to be very awful things. In short, it tends to embolden them to do the like.

The holy vessels and utensils of the temple and tabernacle were never to be put to a common use, nor to be handled without the greatest care and reverence. For if it had been commonly otherwise, the reverence of them could not have been maintained. They would have seemed no more sacred than anything else. So it is in the ordinances of Christian worship.

### *A Call to Self-examination*

Let this doctrine put all upon examining themselves whether they do not allow themselves in known wickedness. You are such as enjoy the ordinances of divine worship. You come into the holy presence of God, attending on those ordinances which God, by sacred authority, has hallowed and set apart so that in them we might have immediate intercourse with Himself, so that we might worship and adore Him, and express to Him a humble, holy, supreme respect, and so that in them we might receive immediate communications from Him.

Here you come and speak to God, pretending to express your sense of how glorious He is, and how worthy that you should fear and love Him, humble yourselves before Him, devote yourselves to Him, obey Him, and have a greater respect to His commands and His honor than to any temporal interest, ease, or pleasure of your own. Here you pretend before God that you are sensible of how unworthily you have done by sins committed in times past, and that you have a great desire not to do the like in time to come. You pretend to confess your sins, and to humble yourselves for them. Here you pray that God would give you His Spirit to assist you against

sin, to keep you from the commission of it, enable you to overcome temptations, and help you to walk holy in all your conversation, as though you really had a great desire to avoid such sins as you have been guilty of in time past. And the like pretenses you have made in your attendance upon the other ordinances, such as in hearing the Word, in singing praises, and so on.

But consider whether you do not horribly defile and profane the public prayers and other ordinances. Notwithstanding all your pretenses, and what you seem to hold forth by your attendance on them, do you not all the while live in known wickedness against God? For all your pretenses of respect to God, of humiliation for sin, and desires to avoid it, have you not come directly from the allowed practice of known sin to God's ordinances, and did not at all repent of what you had done, nor at all sorry for it at the very time when you stood before God, making these pretenses, and even had no design of reformation, but intended to return to the same practice again after your departure from the presence of God? I say, has not this, on many occasions, been your manner of coming and attending on the ordinances of divine worship? Not only so, but is it not still your manner, your common way of attending upon these ordinances even to this very day? Do you not lie to God with your tongues when you pretend that He is a great God, and that you are poor, guilty, unworthy creatures, deserving His wrath because the sins of which you have been guilty? And when you pretend that you earnestly desire he would keep you from the like for time to come? Are you not guilty of horrid mockery of God in it, when at the same time you design no such thing, but the contrary?

Do you not even the same day that you come into God's house, and to his ordinances, allow yourselves in known sins? Do you not with consent and approbation think of the sinful practices, in which you allow yourselves, and in which you have been exercising yourselves in the week past? Do you not the very day in which you attend ordinances, allowedly please and gratify a wicked imagination? And are you not then perpetrating wickedness in your thoughts, and contriving the further fulfillment of your wickedness? Yea, are you not guilty of these things sometimes even in the very time of your attendance on ordinances, when you are in the immediate presence of God? And while others have immediate intercourse with God, and you likewise pretend to the same? Do you not, even in these circumstances, allow yourselves in wicked thoughts and imaginations, voluntarily wallowing in known wickedness?

Are not some of you guilty of allowedly breaking God's holy Sabbath, in maintaining no government of your thoughts, thinking indifferently about anything that comes next to mind; and not only thinking, but talking too about common, worldly affairs? And sometimes talking in such a manner, as is not suitable even on other days, talking profanely, or in an unclean manner, sporting and diverting yourselves in such conversation on God's holy day? Yea, it is well if some have not been thus guilty in the very time of attendance on the ordinances of worship.

Examine yourselves, how it has been with you. You all attend many of the ordinances of divine worship. You come to the house of God, attend public prayers, singing, and preaching of the Word. And many of you

come to the Lord's supper, that holy ordinance, instituted for the special commemoration of the greatest and most wonderful of all divine acts towards mankind, for the special and visible representation of the most glorious and wonderful things of our religion, for the most solemn profession and renewal of your engagement to God, and for special communion with Jesus Christ. Let such examine themselves whether they do not allow themselves in known sin, to the horrid profanation and pollution of his most sacred ordinance.

Examine and see whether you do not allow yourselves in some way of dealing with your fellow-men, which you have sufficient light to know to be evil; or whether you do not allow yourselves in a known evil behavior towards some person or persons of the families to which you respectively belong, as towards your husbands, your wives, your children, or servants; or your neighbors, in your spirit and behavior towards them, or in your talk of them.

Examine whether you do not some way willingly indulge an unclean appetite, in less or grosser acts of uncleanness, or in your discourse, or in your imagination. Or do you not give way to a lust after strong drink, or indulge yourselves in some vicious excess in gratifying some sensual appetite in meat or drink, or otherwise? Are you not willingly guilty of vanity, and extravagance in your conversation?

Do you not, for all your attendance on ordinances, continue in the allowed neglect of your precious souls, neglecting secret prayer or some known duty of private religion? Or do you not allow yourselves in Sabbath-breaking? In all these ways the ordinances of God's sacred worship are polluted and profaned.

Men are apt to act very treacherously and perversely in the matter of self-examination. When they are put upon examining themselves, they very often decline it, and will not enter into any serious examination of themselves at all. They hear uses of examination insisted on, but put them off to others, and never seriously apply them to themselves. And if they do examine themselves, when they are put upon it, they are exceedingly partial to themselves. They spare themselves. They do not search, and look, and pass a judgment according to truth, but so as unreasonably to favor and justify themselves. If they can be brought to examine themselves at all, whether they do not allow themselves in known wickedness, although they attend on divine ordinances, they will not do it impartially. Their endeavor will not be indeed to know the truth of their case, and to give a true answer to their consciences, but to blind themselves, to persuade and flatter themselves that they do not allow themselves in known sin, whether it be true or not. There are two things especially wherein persons often act very perversely and falsely in this matter.

1. Persons very often deal very perversely in pretending that the sins in which they live are not known sins. Nothing is more common surely, than for persons to flatter themselves with this concerning the wickedness in which they live. Let that wickedness be almost what it may, they will plead to their consciences, and endeavor to still them, that there is no evil in it. Men's own consciences can best tell how they are wont to do in this matter. There is hardly any kind of wickedness that men commit but they will plead thus in excuse for it. They will plead thus about their cheating and injus-

tice, about their hatred of their neighbors, about their evil speaking, about their revengeful spirit, about their excessive drinking, about their lying, their neglect of secret prayer, their lasciviousness, and their unclean dalliances. Yea, they will plead excuses for very gross acts of uncleanness, such as fornication, adultery, and what not. They have their vain excuses and carnal reasonings in favor of all their evil actions. They will say, "What harm, what evil is there in such and such an action?" And if there is a plain rule against it, yet they will plead that their circumstances are peculiar, and that they are exempted from the general rule, that their temptation is so great, that they are excusable. They will find something to plead.

If it is something upon which their lusts are much set, and about which they feel remorse of conscience, they will never leave studying and contriving with all the art and subtlety of which they are masters till they shall have found out some reason, some excuse, with which they shall be able in some measure to quiet their consciences. And whether after all they shall have made it out to blind conscience or not, yet they will plead that their argument is good and that it is no sin. Or, if it is a sin, it is only a sin of ignorance. Thus men will plead for the wickedness which they do in the dark. So, without a doubt, some very gross sinners plead to their consciences, as would appear if we could but look into their hearts. When indeed the strongest argument they have, that in such a thing there is no evil, is the strongest lust they have to it, the inordinate desire they have to commit it.

We all perish by lawful things, which is as much as to say that men commonly live wickedly and go to hell

in those ways which they flatter themselves to be sins of ignorance, and that they do not know them to be unlawful. Thus, I make no doubt, some will be apt to do in applying to themselves this use of examination, if they can be persuaded to apply it to themselves at all. Whether these things are true of you, let your own consciences speak, you who neglect secret prayer; you who indulge an inordinate appetite for strong drink; you who defraud or oppress others; you who indulge a spirit of revenge and hatred toward your neighbor. Here I desire you to consider three things.

First, not all sins, which one does not know with a certain knowledge to be sinful, are justly called sins of ignorance. Men often will excuse themselves for venturing upon a sinful action or practice with this: they do not know that it is sinful. This is at most true no otherwise than as they do not know it to be sinful with a certain knowledge, or with the evidence of absolute demonstration—although at the same time it is a sin against their light, and against great light. They have been so taught that they have had light enough to make them sensible that it is displeasing to God, and not warranted or allowed by Him. And they do (in their consciences) think it to be sinful. They are secretly convinced of it however they may pretend the contrary, and labor to deceive themselves, and to persuade themselves that they do not think there is any evil in it.

Those sins which are contrary to sufficient information and instruction, and contrary to the real dictates of their own consciences, or to the judgment of their own minds, whether there is certain or demonstrative knowledge or not, these are what I would be understood to mean when I speak of known sins. Such light

as this, whether there is absolutely certain knowledge or not, is sufficient to render the action utterly inexcusable, and to render it, when allowed, a horrible profanation and pollution of the holy ordinances of God.

Second, it is vain for persons to pretend that those are sins of ignorance which they have often and clearly heard testified against from the Word of God. It will be found to be so at last. It will be found to be a vain thing for persons who have lived under the light of the gospel, and where all manner of iniquity is testified against, if they live in immoral and vicious practices, to pretend that they are sins of ignorance unless the case is very peculiar and extraordinary.

Third, it is in vain for you to pretend that those are sins of ignorance of which you would not dare to proceed in the practice if you knew that your soul was to be required of you this night. Persons do many things for which they plead, and pretend they think there is no evil in them, who yet would as soon eat fire as do the same if they knew that they were to stand before the judgment seat of Christ within twenty-four hours. This shows that persons only prevaricate when they pretend that their sins are sins of ignorance.

2. Another way wherein men deal falsely and perversely in this matter is in pretending that they do not allow themselves in those sins which they practice. They either pretend that they do not know them to be sins, or, if they cannot own that, then they will say that they do not allow themselves in them. And so they hope God is not greatly provoked by them. They pretend this, though they make a trade of them. They go on repeating one act after another, without ever seriously repenting of past acts, or resolving against future ones. But

take heed that you do not deceive yourselves in this matter. For such pretenses, however they do something towards stilling your consciences now, will do nothing when you come to stand before your righteous and holy Judge.

Let me now address such persons as attend ordinances, and yet allow themselves in known sin.

Consider how holy and sacred the ordinances of God are. What mockery you are guilty of in making such a show, and such pretenses in attending ordinances, and yet voluntarily acting the reverse of what you pretend. Consider that there is no sort of sinners with whom God is so provoked, and who stand so guilty before him, as the profaners of his ordinances. The fire of God's wrath is kindled by none so much as by the polluters of holy things. They are represented as those who are especially guilty before God, in the third commandment: "The Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain." Why is this annexed to this command, rather than to any other of the ten, but because the breach of it especially renders a man guilty in the sight of God?

Taking God's name in vain includes the profanation and pollution of ordinances and holy things. They do, in a very dreadful manner, take God's name in vain who attend on His ordinances, and yet live in known sin. For as we have shown, they manifest the greatest irreverence for Him and contempt for divine things. They manifest a contempt of His authority, a contempt of the business and design of His ordinances, and a most careless and irreverent spirit in things wherein they have immediate converse with God. Ordinances, as

we have shown, are attended in the name of God. And therefore, by such an attendance on them, the name of God is greatly profaned. You who attend ordinances in such a manner take the name of God so much in vain that you use it only in mockery, and so as to expose it to contempt. Such a way of attending ordinances is a trampling of all that is sacred under foot.

We have in Scripture scarcely any such awful instances of the immediate and miraculous vengeance of God as on the profaners of holy things. How God consumed Nadab and Abihu for offering strange fire before Him! How He broke forth upon Uzzah for handling the ark with too much irreverence (2 Samuel 6:6–7)! And how He broke forth on the children of Israel at Bethshemesh for profaning the ark! “He smote of the people fifty thousand and threescore and ten men” (1 Samuel 6:19).

And God has threatened in the New Testament that if any man “defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy: for the temple of God is holy” (1 Corinthians 3:17). There is an emphasis in the expression. God will destroy all sinners, let it be what sin it will which they commit, and in which they continue. And yet it is said, “If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy,” as if it had been said that there is something peculiar in the case, and God is especially provoked to destroy such, and consume them in the fire of His wrath. And He will indeed destroy them with an especially dreadful destruction.

So God has declared in Galatians 6:7 that He will not be mocked. In other words, if anyone presumes to mock Him, they will find Him by experience to be no contemptible being. God will vindicate His holy

majesty from the contempt of those who dare to mock Him, and He will do it effectually. They shall fully find how dreadful a Being He is whose name they have daringly profaned and polluted. Defilers and profaners of ordinances, by known and allowed wickedness, provoke God more than the heathen who have no ordinances. Thus the wickedness of Judah and Jerusalem is said to be far worse than that of Sodom, though the inhabitants of Sodom were, as we have reason to think, some of the worst of the heathens (see Ezekiel 16:46-47). The sin of Sodom is here spoken of as a light thing in comparison to the sins of Judah. And what should be the reason, but that Judah enjoyed holy things which they profaned and polluted, which Sodom had no opportunity to do? For it is not to be supposed that Judah otherwise arrived at the same pass that Sodom had.

Consider, therefore, you who allow yourselves in known wickedness and live in it, who yet come to the house of God, and to His ordinances from time to time, without any serious design of forsaking your sins. On the contrary, you come with an intention of continuing in them, and frequently go from the house of God to your wicked practices. Consider how guilty you have made yourselves in the sight of God, and how dreadfully God is provoked by you. It is a wonder of God's patience that He does not break forth upon you and strike you dead in a moment; for you profane holy things in a more dreadful manner than Uzzah did when God struck him dead for his error. And whereas he was struck dead for only one offense, you are guilty of the same sin from week to week, and from day to day.

It is a wonder that God suffers you to live upon earth, that He has not, with thunderbolts of His wrath,

struck you down to the bottomless pit long ago. You who are allowedly and voluntarily living in sin, who have gone on hitherto in sin, are still going on, and do not design any other than to go on yet—it is a wonder that the Almighty's thunder lies still, and suffers you to sit in His house or to live upon earth. It is a wonder that the earth will bear you, and that hell does not swallow you up. It is a wonder that fire does not come down from heaven, or come up from hell, and devour you; that hell flames do not enlarge themselves to reach you, and that the bottomless pit has not swallowed you up.

However, that God yet bears with you is no argument that your damnation slumbers. The anger of God is not like the passions of men, that it should be in haste. There is a day of vengeance and recompense appointed for the vessels of wrath. And when the day shall have come and the iniquity shall be full, none shall deliver you out of God's hand. Then will He recompense, even recompense into your bosoms.

## Sermon 5

*Christians a Chosen Generation, a Royal Priesthood,  
a Holy Nation, a Peculiar People*

“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.” 1 Peter 2:9

The apostle in the preceding verses speaks of the great difference between Christians and unbelievers, on account of their diverse and opposite relations to Jesus Christ. The former have Christ for their foundation; they come to Him as a living stone, a stone chosen of God and precious; and they also, as living stones, are built up into a spiritual house. The Christian church is the temple of God, and particular believers are the stones of which that temple is built. The stones of Solomon’s temple, which were so curiously polished and well-fitted for their places in that building, were a type of believers. And Christ is the foundation of this building, or the chief cornerstone. On the contrary, to the latter, to unbelievers, Christ, instead of being a foundation on which they rest and depend, is a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense. Instead of being a foundation to support them and keep them from falling, He is an occasion of their stumbling and falling.

Again, to believers Christ is a precious stone. “Unto

you therefore which believe, He is precious." But to unbelievers He is a stone that is disallowed, rejected, and set at naught. They set light by Him, as by the stones of the street. They make no account of Him, and they disallow Him. When they come to build, they cast this stone away as being of no use, not fit for a foundation, and not fit for a place in their building. In the eighth verse the apostle tells the Christians to whom he writes that those unbelievers who thus reject Christ, and to whom He is a stone of stumbling and rock of offense, were appointed to this. "And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient, whereunto also they were appointed." It was appointed that they should stumble at the word that Christ should be an occasion not of their salvation, but of their deeper damnation. And then in our text he puts the Christians in mind how far otherwise God had dealt with them than with those reprobates. They were a chosen generation. God had rejected the others in His eternal counsels, but themselves He had chosen from eternity. They were a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and a peculiar people.

As God distinguished the people of Israel of old from all other nations, so He distinguishes true Christians. It is probable the apostle had in his mind some expressions that are used in the Old Testament concerning the people of Israel. Christians are said here to be a chosen generation, according to what was said of Israel of old. Deuteronomy 10:15: "Only the Lord thy God had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and He chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day." Christians are here said to be a royal

priesthood, a holy nation, and a peculiar people, agreeable to what was said of old of Israel in Exodus 19:5–6: “Now, therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.”

But there is something further said here of Christians than there was said of Israel. There it is promised to Israel that if they obey they shall be a kingdom of priests. But here Christians are said to be a priesthood of kings, or a royal priesthood. They are a priesthood, and they are also kings.

I propose to insist distinctly upon the several propositions contained in the words of the text.

### **True Christians are a chosen generation.**

Two things are here implied: first, that true Christians are chosen by God from the rest of the world to be His; and, second, that God’s people are of a peculiar descent and pedigree, different from all the world besides.

1. True Christians are chosen by God from the rest of the world. God does not utterly cast off the world of mankind. Though they are fallen and corrupted, and there is a curse brought upon the world, yet God entertained a design of appropriating a certain number to Himself. Indeed, all men and all creatures are His as well since as before the fall. Whether they are elect or not, they are His. God does not lose His right to them by the fall; neither does He lose His power to dispose of them. They are still in His hands. Neither does He lose

His end in creating them. God has made all things for Himself, even the wicked for the day of evil. It possibly was Satan's design, in endeavoring the fall of man, to cause that God should lose the creature that He had made by getting him away from God into his own possession, and to frustrate God of His end in creating man. But this Satan has not obtained.

Yet in a sense the wicked may be said not to belong to God. God does not own them. He has rejected them and cast them away. They are not God's portion, they are Satan's portion. God has left them, and they are lost. When man fell, God left and cast off the bulk of mankind. But He was pleased, notwithstanding the universal fall, to choose out a number of them to be His, whom He would still appropriate to Himself. Though the world is a fallen world, yet it was the will of God still to have a portion in it, and therefore He chose out some and set them apart for Himself. Psalm 4:3: "But know that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for Himself; the Lord will hear when I call unto Him." God's portion is His people, and Jacob is the lot of His inheritance (Deuteronomy 32:9). Those who are God's enemies, and to whom He is an enemy, are still His. But those who are His friends, His children, His jewels, who compose His treasure, are His in a very different manner. God has chosen the godly out of the rest of the world to be nearly related to Him, to stand in the relation of children, to have a property in Him, that they might not only be His people, but that He might be their God. He has chosen to bestow Himself upon these. He has chosen them from among others to be gracious to them, to show them His favor. He has chosen them to enjoy Him, to see His glory, and to dwell

with Him forever. He has chosen them as His treasure, as a man chooses out gems from a heap of stones, with this difference: the man finds gems very different from other stones, and therefore chooses; but God chooses them, and therefore they become gems, and very different from others. Malachi 3:17: “ ‘And they shall be mine,’ saith the Lord of hosts, ‘in that day when I make up My jewels; and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.’ ” Psalm 135:4: “For the Lord hath chosen Jacob unto Himself, and Israel for His peculiar treasure.” God has chosen them for a most noble and excellent use, and therefore they are called vessels unto honor, and elect vessels. God has different uses for different men. Some are destined to a baser use, and are vessels unto dishonor. Others are chosen for the most noble use, for serving and glorifying God, and that God may show the glory of divine grace upon them.

Several things may here be observed concerning this election of God, whereby he chooses truly godly persons.

(1) This election supposes that the persons chosen are found among others. The word “election” signifies “a choosing out.” The elect are favored by electing grace among the rest of mankind, with whom they are found mixed together as the tares and the wheat. They are found among them in the same sinfulness and in the same misery, and are alike partakers of original corruption. They are among them in being destitute of anything in them that is good, in enmity against God, in being in bondage to Satan, in condemnation to eternal destruction, and in being without righteousness. So that there is no distinction between them prior

to that which the election makes. There is no respect wherein the elect are not among the common multitude of mankind. 1 Corinthians 4:7: "For who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now, if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?" 1 Corinthians 6:11: "And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

(2) And therefore no foreseen excellency in the elect is the motive that influences God to choose them. Election is only from His good pleasure. Since God's election is the first thing that causes any distinction, there can be no distinction already existing, the foresight of which influences God to choose them. It is not seeing any amiability in them above others that causes God to choose them rather than the rest. God does not choose men *because* they are excellent, but He *makes* them excellent, and because He has chosen them. It is not because God considers them as holy that He chooses them, but He chooses them that they might be holy. Ephesians 1:4-5: "According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before Him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will." God does not choose them from the foresight of any respect they will have towards Him more than others. God does not choose men and set His care upon them because they love Him; for He has first loved us. 1 John 4:10: "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be

the propitiation for our sins." 1 John. 4:19: "We love Him because He first loved us."

It is not from any foresight of good works that men do before or after conversion. But, on the contrary, men do good works because God has chosen them. John 15:16: "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain; that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in My name, He may give it you." Nor did God choose men because He foresaw that they would believe and come to Christ. Faith is the consequence of election, not the cause of it. Acts 13:48: "And when the Gentiles heard this they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed."

It is because God has chosen men that He calls them to Christ, and causes them to come to Him. To suppose that election is from the foresight of faith is to place calling before election, which is contrary to the order in which the Scripture represents things. Romans 8:30: "Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified." It is not from the foresight of any moral or natural qualifications that God chooses men, nor because He sees that some men are of a more amiable make, and better natural temper or genius; nor is it because He foresees that some men will have better abilities, and will have more wisdom than others, and so will be able to do more service for God than others; nor is it because He foresees that they will be great and rich and possessed of greater advantages to serve Him. "But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to con-

found the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world, and things despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are" (1 Corinthians 1:27-28). Nor is it from any foresight of men's endeavors after conversion, because He sees that some whom He chooses will do much more than others to obtain heaven. But God chooses them, and therefore awakens them, and prompts them to strive for conversion. Romans 9:16: "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy."

Election in Scripture is everywhere referred to as God's own good pleasure. Matthew 11:26: "Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight." 2 Timothy 1:9: "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."

(3) True Christians are chosen of God from all eternity, not only before they were born, but before the world was created. They were foreknown of God, and chosen by Him out of the world. Ephesians 1:4: "According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before Him in love." 2 Timothy 1:9: "According to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."

(4) God in election set His love upon those whom He elected. Romans 9:13: "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." Jeremiah 31:3: "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, 'Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness

have I drawn thee.' ” 1 John 4:19: “We love Him because He first loved us.” A God of infinite goodness and benevolence loves those who have no excellency to move or attract that love. The love of men is consequent upon some loveliness in the object, but the love of God is antecedent to it, and the cause of it. Believers were from all eternity beloved both by the Father and the Son. The eternal love of the Father appears in that He, from all eternity, contrived a way for their salvation, chose Jesus Christ to be their Redeemer, and laid help upon Him. It is a fruit of this electing love that God sent His Son into the world to die; it was to redeem those whom he so loved. 1 John 4:10: “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” It is a fruit of the eternal, electing love of Jesus Christ that He was willing to come into the world and die for sinners, and that He actually came and died. Galatians 2:20: “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless, I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.” And so conversion and glorification, and all that is done for a believer from the first to the last, is a fruit of electing love.

(5) This electing love of God is singly of every particular person. Some deny a particular election, and say that there is no other election than a general determination that all who believe and obey shall be saved. Some also own no more than an absolute election of nations. But God did from all eternity singly and distinctly choose and set His love upon every particular person who ever believes, as is evident by Galatians 2:20, “Who loved me and gave Himself for

me." God set His love from eternity upon this and that person as particularly as if there were no other chosen than he. Therefore it is represented as though they were mentioned by name, that their names are written in the book of life. Luke 10:20: "Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven." Revelation 13:8: "And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship Him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."

(6) In election, believers were from all eternity given to Jesus Christ. As believers were chosen from all eternity, so Christ was from eternity chosen and appointed to be their Redeemer, and He undertook the work of redeeming them. There was a covenant respecting it between the Father and Son. Christ, as we have already observed, loved them before the creation of the world. Then He had their names, as it were, written in a book; and therefore the book of life is called the Lamb's book. Revelation 21:27: "And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." And He bears their names upon His heart, as the high priest of old did the names of the tribes of the children of Israel on his breastplate. Christ often calls the elect "those whom God had given Him." John 17:2: "As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him." Verse 9: "I pray for them. I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given Me; for they are Thine." Verse 11: "And now I am no more in the world, but these are

in the world, and I come to Thee. Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, as we are one.”

This part of the subject may suggest to us the following reflections.

- God’s thus electing a certain definite number from among fallen men from all eternity is a manifestation of His glory. It shows the glory of the divine sovereignty. God hereby declares Himself the absolute Disposer of the creature. He shows us how far His sovereignty and dominion extend in eternally choosing some, and passing by others and leaving them to perish. God here appears in a majesty that is unparalleled. Those who can see no glory of dominion in this act have not attained to right apprehensions of God, and have never been made sensible of His glorious greatness. And here especially is shown the glory of divine grace: in God’s having chosen His people to blessedness and glory long before they are born, in His choosing them out of the mass of mankind from whom they were not distinguished, and in His love to them being prior to all that they have or do, being uninfluenced by any excellency of theirs, by the light of any labors or endeavors of theirs, or any respect of theirs towards Him.

The doctrine of election shows that if those who are converted have earnestly sought grace and holiness, and in that way have obtained it, their obtaining it is not owing to their endeavors, but that it was the grace and mercy of God that caused them earnestly to seek conversion so that they might obtain it. It shows also that faith itself is the gift of God, and that the saints persevering in a way of holiness unto glory is also the

fruit of electing love. Believers' love to God is the fruit of God's love to them, and the giving of Christ, the preaching of the gospel, and the appointing of ordinances are all fruits of the grace of election. All the grace that is shown to any of mankind, either in this world or in the world to come, is comprised in the electing love of God.

- If believers are the chosen of God, here is a great argument for their love and gratitude towards Him. The consideration of the miserable condition in which God found you, and in which He left others, should move your hearts. How wonderful that God should take such thought of a poor worm from all eternity! God might have left you as well as many others, but it pleased the Lord to set His love upon you. What cause have you for love and thankfulness, that God should make choice of you and set you apart for Himself, rather than so many thousands of others!

God has chosen you not merely to be His subjects and servants, but to be His children, to be His particular treasure. He has chosen you to be blessed forever in the enjoyment of Himself, and to dwell with Him in His glory. He has given you from all eternity to His Son, to be united unto Him, to become the spouse of Christ. He has chosen you that you might be holy and without blame, that you might have your filth taken away, that you might have the image of God put upon you, and that your soul might be adorned, to be the bride of His glorious and dear Son. What cause for love is here!

- If believers are a chosen generation, let all labor earnestly to make their election sure. If true Christians are chosen of God, this should induce all earnestly to inquire whether they are true Christians. 2 Peter 1:5-7:

“And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity.”

True Christians are a distinct race of men. They are of a peculiar descent or pedigree, different from the rest of the world. This is implied in their being called a “generation.” There are three meanings of the word “generation” in the Scriptures.

Sometimes it means (as is its common meaning) a class of persons among a people, or in the world, that are born together, or so nearly together, that the time of their being in the different stages of the age of man is the same. They shall be young persons, middle aged, and old together. Or they shall be together upon the stage of action. All who are together upon the face of the earth, or the stage of action, are very often accounted as one generation. Thus when God threatened that not one of the Israelites of that generation should see the good land, it means all from twenty years old and upwards.

A second meaning is those who are born of a common progenitor.

A third meaning of the word in Scripture is a certain race of mankind, whose generation and birth agree not as to time, but as to descent and pedigree, or as to those persons from whom they originally proceeded. So it is to be understood in Matthew 1:1: “This is the book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the son of Abraham,” that is, this is the book that gives an account of his pedigree. And this meaning, that is, those who are of the same race and descent,

must be given to the word in the text. The righteous are often spoken of in Scripture as being a distinct generation. Psalm 14:5: "There were they in great fear: for God is in the generation of the righteous." Psalm 24:6: "This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob." Psalm 73:15: "If I say, 'I will speak thus:' behold, I should offend against the generation of Thy children."

That the godly are a distinct race appears evident since they are descended from God. They are a heavenly race, and they are derived from above. The heathen were wont to feign that their heroes and great men were descended from the gods, but God's people are descended from the true and living God without any fiction. Psalm 22:30: "A seed shall serve Him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation." That is, a seed, a posterity, shall serve Him, and it shall be accounted to the Lord for His posterity or offspring.

Now the people of God may be considered as descending from God, and as being His posterity, either remotely or immediately.

*God's people are remotely descended from God.* The church is a distinct race that originally came from God. Other men are of the earth—they are of earthly derivation, the posterity of men—but the church is the posterity of God. Thus it is said in Genesis 6:2 that "the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose." The sons of God were the children of the church, of the posterity of Seth. The daughters of men were those who were born out of the church, and of the posterity of Cain, and those who adhered to him.

It was God who set up the church in the world, and

those who were the first founders of the church were of God, and were called specially the sons of God. Seth was the seed that God appointed. Genesis 4:25: "And Adam knew his wife again; and she bare a son, and called his name Seth. 'For God,' said she, 'hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew.'" Adam, in Luke's genealogy of Christ (Luke 3:38: "Which was the son of Enos, which was the son of Seth, which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God.") is called the son of God, possibly, not only because he was immediately created by God, but also because he was from God, and was begotten by Him. He was a good man, and was the founder of the church of which Christ Himself became a son. He was the first in line of the church, and as such he was from God. When the church was almost extinct, God called Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees, and afterwards out of Haran.

Abraham was one immediately from God, and all God's people in all succeeding ages are accounted as the children of Abraham. God promised Abraham that his seed should be as the stars of heaven and as the sand on the seashore (meaning primarily not his posterity according to the flesh). John the Baptist said that God is able of the stones to raise up children unto Abraham. Those are the seed of Abraham, as we are taught in the New Testament, who are of the faith of Abraham. Christians as well as Jews are the seed of Abraham. Galatians 3:29: "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." So the church is the seed of Jacob, who is called God's son. Hosea 11:1: "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt." All God's people are called Israel, not only his posterity ac-

ording to the flesh, but proselytes of old, and Gentile Christians now under the gospel. The sincerely godly, and they only, are the true Israel.

So the people of God are descended from God the Father originally, as they are descended from Christ the Son of God. Christians are called the seed of Christ. Galatians 3:29: "And if ye be Christ's," etc. They are, as it were, His posterity. Christ calls them His children. Hebrews 2:13: "Behold I and the children which Thou hast given Me."

So that if we trace the pedigree of God's people to their origin, they will be found to be descended from God; they are of heaven, not of this world. Other men are of the earth, and are earthly; but these are heavenly, and are of heaven. The wicked are called the men of this world. Psalm 17:14: "From men which are Thy hand, O Lord, from men of the world which have their portion in this life, and whose belly Thou fillest with Thy hid treasure; they are full of children, and leave the rest of their substance to their babes." The first beginnings of the church were from God, the great Founder of the church. Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and those men, who under Him have been founders, were of God, and of Him. God chose them, called them, and created them for this purpose. Since then, God's people are descended one from another; the church is continued and propagated, as it were, by generation. If there were no ordinary and stated means made use of for the continuing and propagating the church, it would not be so. But God's people are made the instruments of one another's conversion by begetting one another's souls. The church is continued by itself instrumentally through all generations; the people of God are begot-

ten through the education, instruction, and endeavors of those who were God's people before. Therefore the church is represented in Scripture as being the mother of its members. Galatians 4:26: "But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all." Believers are the children of the church, as they are often called. Isaiah 49:20: "The children which thou shalt have, after thou hast lost the other, shalt say again in thine ears, 'The place is too strait for me; give place to me, that I may dwell.' " Isaiah 54:1: " 'Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child; for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife,' saith the Lord."

God's people are often, through their education and instruction, the spiritual parents of those of whom they are the natural parents. The ministers of the Word and ordinances are spiritual fathers. The apostle tells the Christian Corinthians that he had begotten them through the gospel.

*God's people are immediately begotten of God.* When they become saints, they are born again and have a new nature given to them. They have a new life begun, and they are renewed in the whole man by a new generation and birth wherein they are born of God. John 1:12-13: "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." They are born of the Spirit of God. John 3:8: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the

Spirit." God is said to have formed the church from the womb. Isaiah 44:2: "Thus saith the Lord that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, which will help thee: Fear not, O Jacob my servant; and thou, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen."

This truth also may suggest to us a few profitable reflections:

First, Christians ought to bear with one another. It appears from what has been said that they are all of one kindred, that they have a relation to other Christians which they do not have to the rest of the world, being of a distinct race from them, but of the same race one with another. They are descended all along from the same progenitors; they are the children of the same universal church of God; they are all the children of Abraham; they are the seed of Jesus Christ; they are the offspring of God. And they are yet much more alike than their being of the same race originally argues them to be: they are also immediately the children of the same Father. God has begotten all by the same Word and Spirit. They are all of one family, and should therefore love as brethren. 1 Peter 3:8: "Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another; love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous."

It is very unbecoming those who are God's offspring to entertain a spirit of hatred and ill will one towards another. It is very unbecoming to be backward in helping and assisting one another, and supplying each other's wants, much more to contrive and seek one another's hurt, to be revengeful one towards another.

Second, let Christians take heed so to walk that they may not dishonor their pedigree. You are of a very honorable race, more honorable by far than if you were

the offspring of kings and had royal blood in your veins. You are a heavenly offspring, the seed of Jesus Christ, the children of God. Those who are of noble race are wont to value themselves highly upon the honor of their families, to dwell on their titles, their coats of arms, and their ensigns of honor, and to recount the exploits of their illustrious forefathers. How much more careful should you be of the honor of your descent, so that you in nothing behave yourself unworthily of the great God, the eternal and omnipotent King of heaven and earth, whose offspring you are!

There are many things that are very base and too mean for such as you. Such things are giving way to earthly-mindedness, groveling like moles in the earth, suffering your soul to cleave to those earthly things which ought to be neglected and despised by those who are of heavenly descent, indulging the lusts of the flesh, suffering the soul to be immersed in filth, being taken up with mean and unworthy delights common to the beasts, being intemperate in the gratification of any carnal appetite whatsoever, or a being much concerned about earthly honor. It is surely a disgrace to them who are accounted to God for a generation to care much whether they are accounted great upon this dunghill. So it is unworthy of your noble descent to be governed by your passions; you should be guided by higher principles of reason and virtue, and a universal respect to the glory and honor of God.

But Christians should seek after those things which will be to the honor of their birth, after spiritual wisdom, and knowledge of the most worthy and noble truths. They should seek more and more an acquaintance with God, and to be assimilated to Him, their

great Progenitor, and their immediate Father, so that they may have the image of His excellent and divine perfections. They should endeavor to act like God, where they are capable of imitating Him. They should seek heavenly-mindedness, those noble appetites after heavenly and spiritual enjoyments, a noble ambition after heavenly glory, a contempt of the trifles and mean things of this world. They should seek after those delights and satisfactions that can be enjoyed by none but heavenly minds. They should exercise a spirit of true, universal, and disinterested love and confidence, and Christian charity. They should be much in devotion, and divine contemplation.

Third, we see here a reason why Christians are of so different a nature and temper from the rest of the world. The truly godly are very different in their disposition from others. They hate those things that the rest of the world loves, and love those things for which the rest of the world has no relish, insomuch that others are ready to wonder that they should place any happiness in a strict observance of the self-denying duties of religion. They wonder what delight they can take in spending so much time in meditation and prayer, and that they do not place happiness in those things which themselves do. 1 Peter 4:4: "Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you." But the reason is that they are of a different race, and so derive different dispositions.

It is ordinary to see those who are of different families be of a different temper. The natural temper of parents is commonly in some degree transmitted to their posterity. Indeed, all agree in many things, for all are of

the same blood originally. All are descended from the same Adam, and the same Noah. But Christians are born again of another stock, different from all the rest of the world. Therefore they are of a temper by themselves, wherein none of the rest of the world agree with them. Revelation 1:6: "And hath made us kings and priests unto God, and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion, forever and ever."

2. True Christians are a royal priesthood. The two offices of king and priest were accounted very honorable both among Jews and heathens. But it was not known under the law of Moses that the same person would sustain both these offices in a stated manner. While Moses himself is said to have been king in Jeshurun, yet his brother Aaron was the high priest. Those who were kings by divine appointment in Israel were of another tribe from the priesthood, the tribe of Judah. Before the giving of the law we have an instance of one who was both king and priest, that is, Melchizedek. Genesis 14:18: "And Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought forth bread and wine; and he was the priest of the most high God."

Therefore, in some of the prophecies of Christ, it is spoken of as a remarkable thing that He would be a priest after the order of Melchizedek. Psalm 110:4: "The Lord hath sworn and will not repent; Thou art a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek." The same is prophesied of as being a wonderful thing by Zechariah, that He would be a priest upon a throne. Zechariah 6:13: "Even he shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne; and the counsel of peace shall be between them both." In

this respect the gospel dispensation differs from the legal one in that it reveals the compatibility of the two offices. One person, Jesus Christ, is antitype of both kings and priests under the law. As it is the will of Christ, who became in all things like unto us, that His disciples should in many things become like Him, so it is in this among others. As Christ is the Son of God, so those who are Christ's are the children of God. As Christ is the heir of God, so, as Christ lives, it is His will that they should live also. As Christ rose from the dead, so it is the will of Christ that His saints should rise also. As Christ is in heaven in glory, so it is the will of Christ that they should be with Him where He is. So as Christ is both King and Priest, so shall believers be made kings and priests.

What is said in the text is either with respect to what they now are or what they shall be hereafter. The apostle says, "ye are a royal priesthood," that is, you have those honors in reversion. Christians are kings here as a king who is in his minority, who though the crown is his right has not yet come actually to reign. They are indeed in an exalted state while here, but not as they will be hereafter. Christians while here are indeed priests, but not as they will be. Christians are called kings and priests here, in this world. Revelation 1:6: "And hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father." But in Revelation 5:9-10 the saints in heaven speak of this as the consequence of their glory and exaltation: "And they sung a new song, saying, 'Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings

and priests; that we should reign on the earth.' ”

First, Christians are kings. When Christians are called kings, the Scriptures include both what they actually have in this world and what they have in a future state. The reward which our Lord Jesus promised to His disciples was a kingdom. Luke 22:29: “And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as My Father hath appointed unto Me.” Christians, having this promise, are therefore heirs of a kingdom here which they are hereafter to receive. James 2:5: “Hearken, my beloved brethren; hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him?”

The reward of the saints is represented as a kingdom because the possession of a kingdom is the height of human advancement in this world, and as it is the common opinion that those who have a kingdom have the greatest possible happiness. The happiness of a kingdom, or royal state, for which it is so much admired by mankind, consists in these things:

The honor of a kingdom.

The possessions of kings.

The government or authority of kings.

Now with respect to each of these, the happiness of the saints is far greater than that of the kings and greatest potentates in the world.

*True Christians will be advanced to honors far above those of earthly kings.* They will have a vastly higher dignity than any princes. If these are nobly descended, it is not so great an honor as to be the sons of God. If they are nobly educated, have their minds formed for government, and have princely qualifications, these qualifications are not so honorable as those with which God

endows His saints, whose minds He fills with divine knowledge, and gives them true and perfect holiness. Princes appear honorable from their outward enjoyment of honor and dignity, their royal robes, their stately palaces, and their splendid equipage. But these are not so honorable as those white robes, those inherent ornaments, with which the saints shall appear in heaven, with which they "shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." What is a king's palace to those mansions in heaven that Christ prepares for His saints? The honor of the creature consists in likeness and nearness to the Creator in heaven. The saints shall be like Him, for they shall see Him as He is. They shall be most near to Him, and shall be admitted to a most intimate fellowship.

*The saints shall have greater and more extensive possessions than any earthly monarch.* One reason for which the state of kings is admired is their wealth. They have the most precious things laid up in their treasures. We read of the peculiar treasure of kings in Ecclesiastes 2:8: "I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces. I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts" (that is, the peculiar treasure of other kings). David conquered and subdued many kings and spoiled their peculiar treasure, which fell to his son Solomon.

But the precious treasures of kings are not to be compared to those precious things which Christ will give His saints in another world: the gold tried in the fire that Christ has purchased with His own blood, those precious jewels, those graces and joys of His Spirit, and that beauty of mind with which He will en-

dow them. King's possessions are very extensive, especially were they thus when kings were generally absolute, and their whole dominions, their subjects and their fortunes, were looked upon as their possessions. But these fall short of the extensive possessions of the saints, who possess all things. They are the heirs of God, and all that is God's is theirs so far as it can contribute to their happiness. Revelation 21:7: "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son." 1 Corinthians 3:21-22: "Therefore let no man glory in men, for all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours."

*The saints shall also be advanced to the authority of kings.* Christ has appointed to them a kingdom, and in that kingdom they shall reign. It is promised, concerning the saints, that they shall reign. Revelation 5:10: "And hath made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth." Revelation 22:5: "And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun, for the Lord God giveth them light; and they shall reign forever and ever."

It is evident that they shall have a kingdom with respect to rule and government, as appears in Revelation 2:26-27: "And he that overcometh, and keepeth My words unto the end, to him will I give power over all nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers, even as I received of My Father." But we must see that we rightly understand this. They shall not be appointed by God as sovereigns of the world, without any superior to direct them. Neither shall they be properly deputies or

viceroys, as King Agrippa and some other kings were the deputies of the Roman emperors. But they shall reign in fellowship with Christ as joint heirs. They shall reign in the same kingdom with Him, and shall have the happiness of having things done according to their will as much as if their own wills were paramount. Christ wills their will. All things will be disposed in the best manner for them, and to promote their happiness. "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in my throne; even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne."

The reigning of the saints will consist partly in judging. For the saints shall judge the world, angels and men with Christ. Matthew 19:28: "And Jesus said unto them, 'Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.' " 1 Corinthians 6:2:3: "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? And if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? How much more things that pertain to this life!" How earnestly men seek a kingdom! What fatigues, what dangers, what bloodshed will they not encounter! In seeking conversion, you seek a kingdom. You who are poor, you who are children, have opportunity to obtain a kingdom, to advance yourselves to higher dignity, to more substantial honors, to greater possessions, to more precious treasures, to be clothed in robes of richer splendor, and to fill a loftier throne than those enjoyed by the greatest earthly monarchs. It is a crown that you are to run for, an incorruptible crown to be

given you by the Great King of heaven, and to be worn by you as long as His throne shall endure. What encouragement is here afforded to the saints under afflictions and reproaches! What are they to the worth and honor of a heavenly kingdom! When you shall have a crown of glory placed on your head, be seated on Christ's throne, shine forth as the light, and are seated at His royal banquet, then you will suffer no more forever. All trouble, all reproach, shall be driven away, and you will be too high to be reached by the malice of men and devils, and shall soon forget all your sorrows.

### **True Christians are priests of God**

The priesthood under the law was a very honorable and sacred office. Hebrews 5:4: "And no man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." It was on account of this honor that those proud men, Korah and his company, envied Aaron; and God asserted and vindicated Aaron's right to it by causing his rod to bud.

It was an honor which, before the giving of the law, when every particular family was wont to offer sacrifices for themselves, the firstborn used to claim; and therefore the birthright was so much esteemed and valued. Therefore Jacob had such a desire of having the birthright of his brother Esau; and Esau's despising of it is spoken of as a great instance of his profaneness. A priest is said to be a chief man among his people. Leviticus 21:4: "But he shall not defile himself, being a chief man among his people, to profane himself." Because the office of the priesthood was so honorable, it is noticed as a wicked contempt of it in several wicked kings that they made priests of the meanest of

the people. The office was so honorable that a king, Uzziah, coveted the honor of it; and it is mentioned as an instance of his pride that he did so. 2 Chronicles 26:16: "But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction; for he transgressed against the Lord his God, and went into the temple of the Lord to burn incense upon the altar of incense." It was a very sacred office, and was above all other offices. Therefore those things were forbidden the priest that were lawful for all others, such as to be defiled for the dead, or to take to wife one who was put away from her husband. The reason is given in Leviticus 21:6-8: "They shall be holy unto their God, and not profane the name of their God, for the offerings of the Lord made by fire, and the bread of their God, they do offer; therefore they shall be holy. They shall not take a wife that is a whore, or profane, neither shall they take a woman put away from her husband; for he is holy unto his God. Thou shalt sanctify him therefore, for he offereth the bread of thy God; he shall be holy unto thee, for I, the Lord, which sanctify you, am holy."

Jesus Christ is the only proper Priest who is to offer sacrifices and make atonement for sin under the New Testament. He was the Priest of whom all the priests of old were typical. But yet all believers are herein in a measure conformed to their Head, and assimilated to Him. The priesthood now is no longer confined to one family, to Aaron and his sons; but all the true Israel are priests. Every true Christian has a work and office that is as sacred as that of the priests was under the law; and everyone is advanced to a like honor, indeed, to a greater honor. But how every true Christian is a priest of God will appear in the following things.

1. Every true Christian is allowed as near an access to God, and as free a use of the sacred things, as the priests were of old. God under the law dwelt in the tabernacle and temple, which were the symbols of His presence, and those places were holy. The seed of Aaron might go into the holy place to minister before the Lord, but if any other came nigh he was to be put to death. Numbers 3:10: "And thou shalt appoint Aaron and his sons, and they shall wait on their priest's office: and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death."

But now all are allowed to come nigh; we are all allowed a free access to God, to come with boldness and confidence. God's people are not kept at such a distance now as they were under the law. The church then was in its minority; and the heir, while a child, differs nothing from a servant. The servant is not allowed the free access of a child; he is kept more at a distance with fear and dread. Agreeably to the nature of that dispensation, there were not those special discoveries of the grace and love of God that are now made, and which invite rather than forbid near access.

When God was wont to appear to the children of Israel, it was more with terror and manifestations of awful majesty, and not so much with the disclosures of grace as now. When God appeared on Mount Sinai, it was in flaming fire, with thunder, lightning, and earthquakes. But in how different a manner did He appear when He appeared in the person of Christ with mildness, gentleness, and love! There is much the same difference between us and them (with respect to the liberty of access to God) as there was between the liberty of access the children of Israel had at Mount

Sinai, and the liberty which Christ's disciples had to approach Him when He was upon earth. At Mount Sinai, only Moses, Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu were allowed to come up into the Mount, and none but Moses was to approach nigh. Exodus 24:1: "And he said unto Moses, 'Come up unto the Lord, thou and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel; and worship ye afar off.' " But if any other presumed to touch the Mount, God would break forth upon him.

But Christ's disciples conversed daily with Him, as with an intimate friend. Hebrews 12:18: "For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest." Yea, Christians are now allowed as near an approach unto God as the high priest himself, who was allowed a much nearer approach than any of the other priests. God's dwelling place was the temple, but more especially it was in the holy of holies, in the mercy seat between the cherubim. There was a veil which separated that part of the temple from the rest; and no one might ever enter that veil but the high priest, and that but once a year—not oftener upon pain of death. Leviticus 16:2: "And the Lord said unto Moses, 'Speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not at all times into the holy place, within the veil before the mercy seat, which is upon the ark, that he die not; for I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat.' " The way into the holiest of all was not as yet made manifest, but now it is. Hebrews 9:7-8: "But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people. The Holy Ghost thus signifying that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while

as yet the first tabernacle was standing.”

But now we are all allowed as near an access to God as only the high priest was under the law, and with more freedom; for he might approach but once a year. But Christians may approach boldly at all times through the blood of Christ, without any danger of dying. Hebrews 4:16: “Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” The throne of grace and the mercy seat are the same thing. “Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; and having a high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water” (Hebrews 10:19–22). That access into the holiest of all was allowed to all under the gospel, and at any time. It is signified by the rending of the veil upon the death of Christ, for then was that blood shed by which we have access. Matthew 27:50–51: “Jesus, when He had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent.”

But especially will the access of saints in another world be much more near and familiar than that of the high priest. They shall not only enter into the holy of holies, but shall dwell with God in it; for heaven is the holiest of all. They shall then dwell in God’s presence. They shall see His face, which no man can see and live.

In this world, though there is greater liberty of ac-

cess than there was of old, yet Christians are still kept at a great distance from God in comparison to what they will be in heaven, where they shall be admitted even to higher privileges than Moses was in the mount, when he sought God to show him His glory. They shall then see with open face, and shall know as they are known.

2. Christians are a priesthood with respect to their offerings to God. The principal part of the work of the priests of old was to offer sacrifice and burn incense. As the priests of old offered sacrifice, so the work of Christians is to offer up spiritual sacrifices to God. 1 Peter 2:5: "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." Mark it:

(1) Christians offer up their own hearts to God in sacrifice; they dedicate themselves to God. Romans 6:13: "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." The Christian gives himself to God freely as of mere choice. He does it heartily; he desires to be God's, and to belong to no other. He gives all the faculties of his soul to God. He gives God his heart, and it is offered to God as a sacrifice in two ways.

Of these, the first is when the heart is broken for sin. A sacrifice, before it can be offered, must be wounded and slain. The heart of a true Christian is first wounded by a sense of sin, of the great evil and danger of it, and is slain with godly sorrow and true repentance. When the heart truly repents, it dies unto sin. Repentance is compared unto a death in the Word of God. Romans 6:6-8: "Knowing this, that our old man is

crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Galatians 2:20: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." When Christ was offered, He was offered broken upon the cross. So there is some likeness to this when a soul is converted: the heart is offered to God slain and broken. Psalm 51:17: "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise."

The second way is when a Christian offers his heart to God flaming with love. The sacrifice of old was not only to be slain, but to be burnt upon the altar. It was to ascend in flame and smoke, and so to be a sweet savor to God.

That fire upon the altar was a type of two things: it was a type of the fire of the wrath of God, and it was also a type of the fire of the Spirit of God, or of divine love. The Holy Ghost is often compared to fire. With respect to the former, Christ alone is the sacrifice offered in the flame of God's wrath. But with regard to the latter, the hearts of the children of men are offered in the flame of divine love, and ascend up to God in that flame. This divine love is fire from heaven, as the fire upon the altar of old was. When a soul is drawn to God in true conversion, fire comes down from God out of heaven, in which the heart is offered in sacrifice, and

the soul is baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire.

In many of the sacrifices that were offered, only the fat about the inwards was burned upon the altar, which represented the offering of the soul. It is that which God looks at. It is that which must be offered in sacrifice to God. Especially hereafter, when the saints will be made priests in a more glorious manner than at present, will they offer up their hearts wholly to God in the flame of love. They shall, as it were, all be transformed into love, as burning oil is transformed into flame; and so, in that flame, shall they ascend up to God. Their souls will be as the angels, who are as a flame of fire not only for activity in God's service, but for love too. They shall be a flame ever burning, which shall burn longer than the fire upon the altar in Israel, that never went out from the time that fire came down out of heaven in the wilderness till the carrying away into Babylon.

(2) This spiritual priesthood offers to God the sacrifice of praise. Many of their sacrifices under the law were sacrifices of peace offerings, which were mostly for thanksgiving and praise. But the spiritual sacrifice of the hearty and sincere praises of a saint are more acceptable to God than all the bulls, rams, and he-goats that they offered. The heartfelt praises of one true Christian are of more account with God than all those two and twenty thousand oxen, and a hundred and twenty thousand sheep, which Solomon offered to God at the dedication of the temple as a sacrifice of peace offerings.

Praise is called a sacrifice. Hebrews 13:15: "By Him, therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name." Psalm 50:13-14: "Will I eat the flesh of bulls,

or drink the blood of goats? Offer unto God thanksgiving, and pay thy vows unto the Most High." Verse 23: "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me; and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God." Psalm 69:30-31: "I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify Him with thanksgiving. This also shall please the Lord better than an ox or bullock that hath horns and hoofs." Praises are therefore in Hosea called "calves of our lips," because they are like calves offered in sacrifice. Hosea 14:2: "Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto Him, 'Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously; so will we render the calves of our lips.' "

Only true Christians offer those sacrifices. However hypocrites pretend to praise God, and to offer thanksgiving to Him, yet they, being insincere, offer no sacrifices with which God is well-pleased. They offer no spiritual sacrifices, and therefore they are not of the spiritual priesthood. In heaven especially the saints are a holy priesthood upon this account, whose work it is forever to offer these sacrifices to God, who cease not day nor night to praise God and sing forth their ardent joyful hallelujahs. They sing a new song, a song that never will end, and never will grow old.

(3) The next sacrifice which is offered by this spiritual priesthood is obedience, sincere obedience. The sacrifices under the law did not only represent Christ's satisfying for sin by suffering, but they also represented Christ's obeying in suffering. For the sacrifices under the law were not only for propitiation, but they were for purchasing benefits, and so typified not only the satisfaction, but merit which was by obedience. Psalm 40:6-8: "Sacrifice and offering Thou didst not de-

sire; mine ears hast Thou opened; burnt-offering and sin-offering hast Thou not required. Then said I, 'Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of Me, I delight to do Thy will, O my God; yea, Thy law is within my heart.' " And though the obedience of saints has no merit, yet it is pleasing and acceptable to God. It is as a sweet-smelling savor, and is compared to sacrifices, and preferred before them. 1 Samuel 15:22: "And Samuel said, 'Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.' " Christians, by offering obedience to God in their lives and conversation, do what the apostle calls offering their bodies to be a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, as their reasonable service (Romans 12:1). They offer their bodies, that is, they dedicate their bodies to holy uses and purposes. They yield their members as instruments of righteousness unto holiness. The soul, while here, acts externally by the body. And in this Christians serve God. They yield their eyes, their ears, their tongues, their hands and feet, as servants to God, to be obedient to the dictates of His Word, and of His Holy Spirit in the soul.

(4) Another sacrifice which we shall mention as offered by this spiritual priesthood is charity, or expressions of Christian love in gifts to others. If the gift flows from a spirit of Christian love, although it is but a cup of cold water, it is an acceptable sacrifice to God. And, indeed, whatsoever is given for a pious use, if it is to promote religion and uphold the public worship of God, or to benefit a particular person, if it is done from a good spirit, it is a Christian sacrifice. Hebrews 13:16: "But to do good, and to communicate, forget not; for

with such sacrifices God is well-pleased.”

But sacrifices of this kind may principally be ranked under two headings:

*The first is liberality to ministers of the gospel.* The priests of old lived upon the sacrifices that were offered to God; and what is now offered to ministers for their comfortable and honorable support Christ looks upon as offered to Himself. “He that receiveth you, receiveth Me” (Matthew 10:40). Thus Paul says of those things that were sent him by his hearers that it was a sacrifice acceptable and well-pleasing to God. Philippians 4:14–18: “Notwithstanding ye have well done that ye did communicate with my affliction. Now, ye Philippians, know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God.”

*The second is bounty to the poor.* Christ accepts what is done to the poor as being done to Himself. Matthew 25:40: “And the King shall answer, and say unto them, ‘Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.’” God prefers this before the legal sacrifices. Hosea 6:6: “I desire mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings.”

(5) Another offering of this priesthood to God is the prayer of faith. Though this is rather compared to

incense in Scripture than to a sacrifice, yet it is equally an evidence of their priesthood. Incense was that sweet confection which we read of in Exodus 30:34: "And the Lord said unto Moses, 'Take unto thee sweet spices, stacte, and onycha, and galbanum; these sweet spices, with pure frankincense; of each shall there be a like weight.' " These they were wont to burn upon the censer as they offered it, which made a most fragrant smell. That incense is a type of the merits of Jesus Christ, and seems also to be a type of the prayers of God's people in faith of the former. It was the custom, when the priest in the temple was burning incense, for the people to be praying outside. Luke 1:10: "And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense." And gracious prayer is compared to incense in Psalm 141:2: "Let my prayer be set forth before Thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice." The prayer of faith is as a fragrant savor to God, through the merits of Him towards whom that faith is exercised.

### *Reflections*

1. Here are great motives for all earnestly to seek that they may become true Christians. It is a great honor to be priests of God. It was a great honor of old to be a priest under the law. It was greater in some respects than to be a king, because they were nearer to God, and they in their work were more immediately concerned with Him; it was a more holy and divine office. But it is more honorable to be of the spiritual priesthood. The access to God is nearer, and an infinitely greater privilege. Especially is the access to God

which they will have in another world, where they shall see God, and shall converse with Christ as a man with his friend. If ever a king was ambitious of the honor of the legal priesthood, surely you may well desire the spiritual, which is an eternal priesthood.

Consider that you are capable of receiving this priesthood. Of old, those who were not of the posterity of Aaron were incapable of the priesthood. It was in vain for them to seek it. But it is not in vain for you to seek this spiritual priesthood. Consider also that you have a call to it; you have warrant sufficient. It would be a dreadful presumption for you to seek this honor if you had no call to it. Hebrews 5:4: "No man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." But you are called, and now it would be presumption and profane contempt in you to refuse it, to refuse such an honor as God offers you. Take heed, therefore, that there is not among you any profane person such as Esau, who for a morsel of meat sold his birthright, and sold the priesthood that belonged to it. Take heed that you do not sell this spiritual priesthood for a morsel of meat or the trifles of this world, that you are not more concerned about a little worldly pelf or vain glory than about that which is so sacred and honorable.

For direction, that you may be one of this spiritual priesthood, seek of God His holy anointing, that is, that God would pour out His Spirit in His sanctifying influences upon you. The priests of old were consecrated by the holy anointing oil. Exodus 29:7: "Then shalt thou take the anointing oil, and pour it upon his head, and anoint him." Exodus 30:30: "And thou shalt anoint Aaron and his sons, and consecrate them that

they may minister unto Me in the priest's office." If you are here separated for this holy station and service, you must have that holy anointing of the Spirit of God, typified by the oil that was poured upon Aaron's head. The holy anointing oil of God must be upon you.

2. Let all who profess themselves to be Christians take heed that they do not defile themselves and profane their sacred character. There was great strictness required of old of the priests, lest they should defile themselves and profane their office; and it was regarded as a dreadful thing to profane it. So holy a God has threatened in the New Testament that "if any man defile the temple of God, him will God destroy" (1 Corinthians 3:17). As Christians are here called the temple of God, so it is said in 1 Peter 2:5: "Ye are a spiritual house, an holy priesthood." Avoid the commission of all immoralities, or things that have a horrid filthiness in them, things that will dreadfully profane the sacred name by which you are called, and the sacred station wherein you are set.

Take heed especially of lascivious impurities. Such things were looked upon as defiling the holy office of the priesthood of old, insomuch that if but a daughter of a priest was guilty of whoredom, she was to be burned. Remember Hophni and Phineas, how sorely God dealt with them for profaning their office by their impurities, and with good Eli, that he was no more thorough to restrain them. God brought a curse upon the whole family which never was removed. God took away the priesthood from him, and took away the ark of the covenant from him and from Israel, delivered it into captivity, and fulfilled his threat that there should not be an old man of his house forever.

Take heed of every sin; allowing any sin whatever is a dreadful presumption of your holy character.

3. See that you well execute your office. Offer up your heart in sacrifice. Get and keep a near access to God. Come with boldness. Offer up a heart broken for sin; offer it up flaming with love to God; offer praise to God. Praise God for His glorious excellency, and for His love and mercy. Consider what great things you have to praise God for: the redemption of Jesus Christ, His sufferings, His obedience, and the gift of that holiness, which makes you like unto God.

Be ready to distribute, willing to communicate, and do good. Consider it is part of your office thus to do that to which you are called and anointed, and as a sacrifice well-pleasing to God. Pity others in distress and be ready to help one another. God will have mercy and not sacrifice.

Be much in offering up your prayers to God, and see that all your offerings are offered upon the right altar, otherwise they will be abominable to God. Offer your hearts to God through Jesus Christ. In His name present the sacrifice of praise, obedience, charity, and of prayer on the golden altar perfumed with the incense of Christ's merits. Your reward will be to have this honor in heaven: to be exalted to that glorious priesthood, to be made a priest unto God forever and ever.

### **True Christians are a holy nation**

Here I shall show:

1. How they are a distinct nation.
2. How they are holy.
3. Christians are a distinct nation.

1. The saints are all of the same native country. Heaven is the native country of the church. They are born from above; their Father, of whom they are begotten, is in heaven. The principles that govern their hearts are drawn from heaven, since the Holy Ghost, whose immediate fruits those principles are, is from heaven. The Word of God, which is the seed by which they are begotten, is from heaven. The Bible is a book sent down from heaven, as it were. The saints in this world are not in their native country, but are pilgrims and strangers on the earth; they are near akin to the inhabitants of the heavenly world, and are properly of that society. Hebrews 12:22–23: “But ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.”

Heaven is a country that much better suits their natures than this earth, because it is their native climate. When they are in heaven, they breathe their native air; in heaven is their inheritance. Heaven is the proper country of the church, where the greater part of the church is, where they all will be, and where their settled abode. From thence all that are now upon earth are derived, and there they will return again. Though they are, for a little while, dwelling at a distance from their native country, yet they are of the same nation with those who now dwell there.

2. All Christians speak the same language. They all profess the same fundamental doctrines; they hold fast the form of sounds that was once delivered to the

saints. 2 Timothy 1:13: "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." They all use the same language to God in prayer and praise; they express the same humility and repentance in confessing their sins, the same adoration and admiring sense of God's glory and excellency, the same humble submission and resignation, and the same thankfulness. In like manner they show forth God's praises, expressing the same faith and humble dependence on the mercy of God, and the same love and longing desires after God. The saints in all ages speak the same language as David and the saints of old. The Spirit of God teaches the saints the same language in their prayers; their prayers are the breathings of the same Spirit.

Indeed, the saints, while in this world, are but learning the heavenly language, and therefore speak it but imperfectly, with a stammering tongue and with a pronunciation that in many things resembles their old language. The tongues of the saints are renewed in their conversion. Thus the conversion of the Gentiles is represented by their having a new language. Zephaniah 3:9: "For then will I turn to the people of a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve Him with one consent." And in this sense Isaiah 19:18 is to be understood: "In that day shall five cities in the land of Egypt speak the language of Canaan, and swear to the Lord of hosts; one shall be called 'the city of destruction.'" As it is said of the new song which the saints sing, that no man could learn that song but those who are redeemed from the earth, so no man can learn that language but those who are of this holy nation.

3. They are under the same government. The Christians are one society, one body politic; and therefore, as the church is here represented by a nation, so oftentimes it is called a city. They are subject to the same King, Jesus Christ. He is the Head of the Church. He is the head of this body politic. Indeed, all men are subject to the power and providence of this King; but those who are in His kingdom of grace all acknowledge the same King, own His rightful sovereignty over them, are willing to be subject to Him and to submit to His will, and yield obedience to His commands. Psalm 110:3: "Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning; thou hast the dew of thy youth."

They are all governed by the same laws, and all subject themselves to the same rules. The commands of God that are obeyed by the saints are the same all over the world. There is the same method of government; there are the same means of government, the same outward and visible means, the same officers, the same gospel and gospel ministers, in like manner appointed and sent forth by the Head of the church, the same visible order and discipline appointed for all.

And there are the same inward and special means of government. Christ governs His people in a peculiar manner. He immediately influences their wills and inclinations, and powerfully brings them to a compliance with God's commands and rules. They are a society united in the same public interest and concerns. It is by the same covenant and promises that they have their inheritance, and that they hold their title to their enjoyments as a people of the same nation hold their temporal rights by the same rule, and citizens hold

their rights by the same municipal laws. The prosperity of this society tends to the advantage of the interests of the particular parts. A Christian has the same reason to be concerned for the flourishing of the church and the advancement of religion as a particular subject has for the flourishing of the nation or kingdom. When the church is in flourishing circumstances, the souls of particular saints are likely to be flourishing; and when the church is in low, languishing circumstances, particular souls are generally the same. When iniquity abounds, the love of many waxes cold. As it is the interest of every subject to have the nation flourish, so it is the interest of every Christian to have the church to flourish.

Christians also have common enemies that seek their hurt and overthrow. He who is an enemy to one saint as a saint is an enemy to all. They are jointly called to resist the same powers of darkness; the church here upon earth is like an army that goes forth under Jesus Christ, the Captain of their salvation, to resist the common adversary.

Here let me add some further reflections based upon what has just been said.

*Be exhorted to join yourself to this nation.* In previous times, those who were of other nations—if they were brought to the acknowledgment of the God of Israel, and to the true religion, and if they were circumcised—were received as being of the nation of Israel, and were accounted as those who were descended from Abraham and Jacob. So now there is free liberty to any to come and join themselves to this nation, and they shall be received and admitted to the same rights and privileges, and be in all respects treated as the same people.

And especially those now under the gospel are invited to come. Let them be who they will, they may come and join this people and be welcome. There is no wall of partition to separate this people from others, to exclude those of other nations. The gates of the new Jerusalem are always open to receive all whose hearts incline them to come. And here consider:

First, there is no nation under so happy a government as this. The Lord Jesus Christ is their King, and He is a most glorious King. He is the eternal and infinitely glorious Son of God. He is a most wise Prince. He knows how to govern. He perfectly understands how best to promote the interest of His people. He is a most merciful and gracious King, who greatly loves His people, and most earnestly and faithfully seeks their interest. His people are redeemed with His own blood, and He will surely seek their welfare. And He is a most powerful Prince, who is able to defend His people against their enemies.

This nation is governed by most wise and righteous laws. As it was said of Israel of old in Deuteronomy 4:8—“What nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law which I set before you this day?”—so the law of God has been set forth to us in a far more clear and lovely light by the rules and precepts of the gospel. The manner of Christ’s government in the kingdom of His grace is most excellent, and different from that of all other kings; for he governs by the powerful influence of his Spirit upon the heart, whereby He sweetly inclines them to a willing and chosen subjection to Him.

This nation is a free people. The happy government under which they live is most consistent with freedom;

it does not in the least infringe upon the liberty of the subject, for there is nothing like slavery in the kingdom of God. The law of this nation is a law of liberty. Those who are sinners are slaves; they are slaves to their lusts, slaves to Satan, slaves to the cruelest of masters. But those whom the Son makes free are free indeed. The subjects of the heavenly King are all as free under His government as a man's children are in their father's house. The government is a paternal government; the King looks upon all His subjects as children.

Under so happy a government is this nation. Be persuaded, therefore, to join yourself to them and be of them. Psalm 144:15: "Happy is that people that is in such a case. Yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord." Psalm 33:12: "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, and the people whom He hath chosen for His own inheritance."

Secondly, there is no nation that dwells in such love and peace as this holy nation enjoys. The happiness of a people very much consists in its peace; a nation is never more miserable than when it is rent by civil wars or disturbed by internal broils. Nothing tends more to the happiness of the people than when they are all united as brethren, and with one heart seek the good of one another and the community.

But no nation enjoys so much happiness of this kind as this holy nation. The Lord Jesus Christ, who is the King of this people, is the Prince of peace. His kingdom is a kingdom of peace. Every member of this society has a principle of peace and love in his heart. Love is the bond of perfectness that unites the members of this society together. They all have a disposition to seek and promote each other's good.

Third, this nation has for its settled abode a most glorious land. The heavenly Canaan is their land; it is a land that God has desired, and that He has blessed above all lands. There is no land so fertile of excellent fruits, so full of delights. There grows the tree of life in plenty; there flows the river of the water of life. There is no curse, nothing that hurts or defends. This is a delightful garden, and it is the paradise of God. Hearken, therefore, and consider the blessedness of this people; is it not well to be one of them? I would invite you in the name of Christ, as Moses invited his father-in-law to join himself to that nation. Numbers 10:29: "And Moses said unto Hobab, the son of Raguel the Midianite, Moses's father-in-law, 'We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, "I will give it you." Come thou with us, and we will do thee good; for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel.' "

*Christians as a nation are holy.* Their holiness is relative, and it is also inherent.

First, Christians are a holy nation by a relative holiness, as they are set apart by God for a divine and holy use. So things are often called "holy" in Scripture. The utensils of the tabernacle and temple are in this sense called holy; the priests' garments are called holy, and the places of worship appointed by God in the Old Testament are called holy, because they were set apart by Him for a holy use and service.

Things thus set apart are said to be sanctified. Thus Jeremiah is said to have been sanctified before he came forth out of the womb. Jeremiah 1:5: "Before I formed thee in the belly, I knew thee, and before thou camest forth out of the womb, I sanctified thee; and I ordained thee as a prophet unto the nations." God sanctified

him (that is, God set him apart) for this holy use and service, to be a prophet to the nations. Paul said of himself in Galatians 1:15: "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace . . . ." So the people of Israel of old seem to be called a holy nation. Deuteronomy 7:6: "For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God; the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto Himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth." Not that they were a holy people by inherent holiness—for God often tells them that they are a stiff-necked people—but God had called and separated them from other nations to be the keepers of the sacred oracles, and for other purposes.

So the saints are a nation that God has set apart for a sacred use. He has set them apart to serve and glorify Him, and to show forth His praise, to be vessels for their Master's use, to see the manifestations of God's glory, and eternally to ascribe the glory due unto His name.

Second, they are holy by inherent holiness; by holiness of heart and by holiness of life.

#### 4. True Christians are God's peculiar people.

(1) True Christians are God's peculiar people with respect to the value which He sets upon them. He values one true Christian more than all the wicked in the world. God puts a high value upon His saints; they are His jewels. God's high value of them appears in all the ways wherein persons are wont to show the great regard which they have for any possession. God keeps them as the apple of His eye. He will by no means lose one of His saints. Not one of all the number shall fail. He will suffer no one to do them harm. His almighty

power is thoroughly engaged for them to defend them.

The life, the happiness, and the welfare of the saints are precious in God's sight. He shows the higher value that He sets upon the godly than others by giving the wicked for them, making them subservient to them, and destroying them when they stand in the way of the welfare of the godly. Proverbs 21:18: "The wicked shall be a ransom for the righteous, and the transgressor for the upright."

Whenever the life or welfare of the wicked stands in the way of the welfare of the righteous, God is wont to procure the welfare of His people, though it is at the expense of the lives and welfare of never so many. Proverbs 11:8: "The righteous is delivered out of trouble, and the wicked cometh in his stead." Thus God manifested how much He valued the patriarchs. Though there were but few very of them, yet even kings were rebuked for their sakes. Psalm 105:12-15: "When they were but a few men in number; yea, very few, and strangers in it. When they went from one nation to another, from one kingdom to another people. He suffered no man to do them wrong; yea, he proved kings for their sakes, saying, 'Touch not Mine anointed, and do My prophets no harm.' " So He showed how He valued in the children of Israel in that He gave nations for them. Isaiah 43:3-4: "For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Savior. I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee. Since thou wast precious in My sight, thou has been honorable, and I have loved thee; therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life."

When the Egyptians stood in the way of the welfare of the church, God brought plagues upon them one af-

ter another, wherein He sorely distressed them. When their lives stood in the way, God destroyed all the first-born of Egypt; when Pharaoh and his host sought their destruction, He drowned them in the Red Sea; and when the nations of Canaan stood in their way, God destroyed them miraculously by sending hailstones from heaven upon them. God will sooner at one blow destroy all the wicked of the world than that one of His saints should be lost. There are many great men in the world, kings and princes, men of great power and policy, men of noble blood and honorable descent, men of great wealth, men of vast learning and knowledge, who are honored and make a great figure, and great account is made of those in this world who are wicked men and reprobates. And all of them are not of such great value in God's sight as is one true Christian, however humble his birth or low his standing, however poor, ignorant, or unknown.

God has shown how highly He values His saints by several remarkable providences. He has often changed and intercepted the course of nature for their sakes. Nothing except God Himself is more constant and unchangeable than the course and laws of nature; but God values His saints so much that He did not think procuring their welfare was too slight an occasion for stopping the sun in its course.

But above all God has shown how great a value He sets upon the saints by the great price which He has paid for them, the blood of His own Son. God values every saint so highly that He bought Him with the blood of His own dear Son. There is no price of gold or silver that can be compared with the price of the blood of Christ.

(2) They are His peculiar people with respect to the mercy that He bestows upon them. God bestows many mercies upon ungodly men. He is kind to the evil and the good, to the just and the unjust. He is good to wicked men in preserving their lives, in providing for their subsistence, and in giving them many comforts. Wicked men receive a great deal of goodness from God which they have cause to admire and be thankful for every day, but few live any considerable time who are not the subjects of special influences of God's goodness to them in deliverance from trouble and danger. he heaps temporary good things upon them. He gives them wealth, ease, honor, and great prosperity. He distributes the world among them, and they show their ingratitude in that, notwithstanding all God's bounty to them, they will not learn righteousness. Isaiah 26:10: "Let favor be showed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness; in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord." Thus Samuel reprov'd Saul for his ingratitude, in that he took no more notice of the great kindness of God to him. 1 Samuel 15:17: "And Samuel said, 'When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast not thou made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the Lord anointed thee king over Israel?'" So there are many other wicked men who are advanced to the state of princes and nobles.

But God bestows more goodness upon one godly man than upon all the ungodly in the world. Put all their preservations, all their deliverances, all their wealth, all the comforts that have been heaped upon them by providence together, and those things are but trifles compared to what God bestows upon godly men. But those are peculiar blessings which He bestows on

the righteous; they are precious things that God has in reserve for His own favorites in comparison of which all earthly treasure is but dirt and dross. As for the saints, Christ has died for them; they have all their sins pardoned; they are delivered from a hell of eternal misery; they have a title to eternal life bestowed upon them; they have God's own image conferred on them; they are received into favor and will enjoy God's everlasting love.

(3) They are God's peculiar people with respect to the interest He has in them. God has a peculiar interest in godly men; they are His peculiar property; they are His since they are redeemed by Him, and since they have given themselves to Him. God has an interest in godly men's hearts; they have a true love and respect to Him; they have true honor to Him. God has a greater interest in their hearts than anything else, greater than the dearest friend on earth, greater than the world or any earthly enjoyment. They prefer God before all other things; they preserve the throne of their hearts for God; they are of a spirit to exalt Him as their greatest and highest, to love Him as the most excellent, and to praise Him as the most gracious and merciful.

God has no such interest in the hearts of natural men. Many of them seem to show respect to Him outwardly. The Pharisees of old pretended to an extraordinary devotion, to a great love for God. And many hypocrites in these times come before God as His people come; they seem as though they delight to draw near to God and make a high profession of religion—but God has indeed no interest in their hearts. They give Him the outward appearance; they give Him the words of their lips, but their hearts are far from Him. It is from

respect to something else, and not to Him. They do not have the least love for God.

But God does have an interest in the hearts of true Christians. However small and inconsiderable it is in comparison to what it ought to be, yet they are of a spirit to prefer God above all. He has an interest in them, and they offer up their bodies as a living sacrifice to Him. They serve and actively glorify Him with their bodies and with their spirits. God is glorified in wicked men since they are occasions of the manifestations of His glory, or since He glorifies Himself in them; but Christians devote themselves to serve and glorify God. Though it is but a small interest that God has in the hearts of Christians in this world in comparison to what ought to be, yet He has a greater interest in one godly man than in all the ungodly and hypocrites who are in the world.

(4) They are God's peculiar people with respect to the complacency which He has in them. God takes delight in His saints. Psalm 11:7: "For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness. His countenance doth behold the upright." God rejoices, as it were, over a convert. He delights in beholding that beauty, and those ornaments of mind which He has given him. God takes delight in the graces of a godly man's heart, and He delights in the good works and religion of the Christian. Psalm 37:23: "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and He delighteth in his way." God takes delight in the godly man's prayers. Proverbs 15:8: "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, but the prayer of the upright is His delight." He takes more delight in the sincere, humble devotion of one true saint than in all the moral virtue and outward reli-

gion of all the natural men in the world. If the wicked who are rich should offer God ten thousand sacrifices, or if they should devote ever so much of their substance to religious uses, if they should give all their goods to feed the poor, it would not be so acceptable to God as one cup of cold water given by a saint with a spirit of true charity. Ungodly kings may do much in many respects for religion: they may build stately churches for the worship of God; they may encourage religion in their dominions by their power and influence. Cyrus, a heathen prince, restored the people of God from captivity and restored the state of the Jews. But God has a greater delight in the sincere worship and love of one poor, obscure Christian than in all that is done throughout the globe by irreligious kings and princes.

Hence it may well be expected of such as profess hopes of their being true Christians that they should live after a peculiar manner and be devoted to God for His use. There should be a great difference between their way of living and that of other men. Godly men should not be hurried away by the general example. If any evil practice has become a custom, it may well be expected of those who profess themselves to be godly that they should stem the stream of common custom and example, though they are despised for it.

Men are often ready to plead for their neglect of such and such duties, and the commission of such evils, by saying that it is a "common custom." They say, "Who is there that does not do so? I would be singled out if I did otherwise." But if evil things are common, God may well expect of them that their way should be singular and peculiar, for Christians are a peculiar people. There should be a difference, and a great dif-

ference, between them and the generality of the world. If their neighbors, relations, and companions fall in with the common custom that is evil, yet they should be peculiar and stand alone.

It may well be expected that they should go further than other men in doing their duty and practicing the Christian religion. For instance, it is a common thing for men, when they are affronted or injured by their neighbors, to entertain a spirit of revenge, to drink in a spirit of ill will against their neighbor, and to wish him harm. But Christians should be peculiar; they should forgive those who injure them and not entertain any spirit of ill will to them upon that account.

It is common for men when injured to endeavor to retaliate upon those who injure them in some way or another, either by acting or talking against them. But those who call themselves godly should choose no kind of revenge. Matthew 5:38–39: “Ye have heard that it hath been said, ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.” The generality of men will love their friends and hate their enemies; it is very rare that it is otherwise. Men pretend that they do not hate their enemies, but they really do in their hearts. But Christians should be peculiar in this matter; their way should be different from the way of the world, for they are a peculiar people and should love their enemies from their hearts, doing good to those who hate them. However rare it is that there is any such thing, yet such a rare thing very well becomes God’s peculiar people. Matthew 5:43–45: “Ye have heard that it hath been said, ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy.’”

But I say unto you, love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you, that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven. For He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust.”

It is a rare thing for persons to accustom themselves to great self-denial. Many will indeed deny themselves something for the sake of their duty, but if it crosses their interests very much, there are few who will be steadfast in their duty. But it may well be expected that you should greatly deny yourself for the sake of God and Christ, and so be peculiar in this matter.

Self-interest governs the generality of men; they will mind their own interest rather than anything else. But it may well be expected of those who profess godliness that they should show themselves peculiar in this matter, and that they should sacrifice their private, separate interest to the glory and honor of God, and to the public good. Most men will content themselves and quiet their consciences by avoiding the more gross acts of sin, by avoiding an outward gratification of lusts. But it becomes Christians to distinguish themselves here, and avoid sinning so much as in their thoughts, not to indulge any lust so much as in their imagination.

It is a shame to professors of godliness that their light shines no brighter before men, that there is no more appearing in them of an amiable Christian spirit, that they do not seem to shine any brighter in their outward conversation than many other men who do not make the profession that they do. Many such men seem to be as exact and as careful to avoid sin, and to

deny themselves, as these professing Christians do. Yea, there are many, perhaps, who, for the outward practice of some particular virtues, shine brighter than they, are more liberal and kind, and more courteous and obliging in their behavior.

It is expected of those who are of this peculiar people that they should do more than others. Matthew 5:46–47: “For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the publicans so?”

### *Application*

1. Here is a powerful argument to persuade those of you who are impenitent to become godly, to persuade you that if you will forsake your sins and will all your heart turn to God, you shall become of the number of God’s peculiar people. You shall have the same privileges with those who have been mentioned; you will immediately, upon your conversion, become one of those upon whom God sets such a high value. If you are assured of your conversion, you may withal be assured that God, the supreme Lord of heaven and earth, sets a higher value on you than upon all the reprobates in the world, that God has set so high a value upon you that He has given the blood of His own Son for your ransom.

If you turn savingly to God, you will receive from God mercies and blessings greater in value than all the wealth and outward prosperity of all the ungodly men

in the world. Put all the honor and all the wealth of the great men of the world together; put all that the kings of the earth possess, their treasures and revenues, their dominions and power, their stately seats and palaces, their costly robes and dainties together, and they will not amount to such great things as God will bestow upon you.

If you will turn from your sins and come to Christ, the great God will accept you and delight in you. You will then have those spiritual ornaments that will be more amiable in the sight of God than all the learning, knowledge, and morality of all the ungodly men in the world.

If you continue on in a natural condition, God will make no account of you; instead of being His jewels, you will be esteemed as vile and refuse, fit for nothing but to be trampled underfoot; instead of being gold, you will be esteemed as dross. Jeremiah 6:30: "Reprobate silver shall men call them, because the Lord hath rejected them." Hereafter you will be thrown away as being good for nothing; you will be esteemed as worth nothing, as is represented in the parable found in Matthew 13:47-50: "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind, which, when it was full, they drew to shore and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." Yea, you shall not only be cast away as good for nothing, but shall be cast out as filth into the great receptacle of the filth of the world; you will be cast into a

furnace of fire, just as barren branches are gathered up and burned. John 15:6: "If any man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." Think of how barren trees are cut down and cast into the fire. Matthew 3:10: "And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees; therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire." As the tares were gathered together in bundles and burned, you will be looked upon as fit for nothing else but to be destroyed. 2 Peter 2:12: "But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not, and shall utterly perish in their own corruption."

Instead of bestowing such peculiar mercies upon you, in a little time you will be stripped of all mercy. God will not have mercy on you, but your miseries will be as dreadful as those mercies that God bestows on His saints are valuable. They are but trifles that wicked men have bestowed upon them while in this world in comparison to what the righteous shall have. The blessings of one righteous person are more in value than the enjoyments of all the wicked. But hereafter wicked men will not have those; they will have nothing but the fiery wrath and indignation of God for their portion.

While you are in a natural condition, instead of being God's peculiar ones (with respect to the interest which God has in your heart), the devil has the greatest interest in your heart. He has the government and possession there, and therefore you are, and will be, the devil's people, those whom he claims, and those who will certainly fall to his share, at least if you continue in such a condition. Instead of being one in whom God

has peculiar complacency, He will have no pleasure in you; when you pretend to worship Him, He will have no delight in your hypocritical prayers and services; they are rather an abomination to Him.

2. If you are true Christians, then let God be peculiar with you.

First, let God be your peculiar portion. If you are one of His peculiar people, He is your portion. All who are God's people have chosen Him for their God and portion. Do this more and more and more. Let all other things be set lightly by you with neglect compared to God.

Let God be the object of your particular value and esteem. If God has made you one of those on whom He sets a peculiar value, you who are a poor, worthless worm; if He has set such a value upon you as to purchase you with the price of the blood of His Son, who are in yourself a filthy, despicable creature, how much more reason is there that you should peculiarly value God, who is so great and glorious! It is fitting that this value should be mutual, and it is fitting that it should be in an answerable degree.

It will be but a little thing for you to esteem God above all in comparison to what it is for God so to prize His saints. See to it, therefore, that there is nothing that stands in any competition with God in your esteem. Value Him more than all riches; value His honor and glory more than all the world; be ready at all times to part with all other things and cleave to God. Let God be your peculiar Friend, and value His friendship more than the respect and love of all the world. When you lose other enjoyments, when you lose earthly friends, let this be a supporting, satisfying comfort to you, that

you have not lost God.

Second, let God be your peculiar confidence. There is great encouragement in this doctrine for you to make Him so, and reason to enforce it as your duty. God expects that those who are His peculiar people should put their trust in Him. And well may they do so, for God has a peculiar favor for them, and is peculiarly careful and tender of them. Be sensible, therefore, that it is unbecoming any, but especially those who are so near to God and so favored by Him, to trust in their own righteousness or in any arm of flesh. The peculiar people of God should not trust in themselves, they should not trust in friends, they should not trust in great men, they should not trust in their estates, or in any worldly enjoyment, expecting happiness from it, but in the Lord God alone. He ought to be their refuge and hiding place; in time of trouble, they should hide themselves under the shadow of His wings.

Third, make God the peculiar object of your praises. This doctrine shows what great reason you have to do so. If God so values you, sets so much by you, has bestowed greater mercies upon you than on all the ungodly in the world, it is too little a requital for you to make God the peculiar object of your praise and thankfulness? If God so distinguishes you with His mercy, you ought to distinguish yourself in His praises. You should make it your great care and study how to glorify God who has been so peculiarly merciful to you. And all the rather because there was nothing peculiar in you, distinguishing you from any other person, that moved God to deal this peculiarly by you. You were as unworthy to be set by as thousands of others who are not regarded by God, and are cast away by Him forever.

## Sermon 6

### *The Peace Which Christ Gives His True Followers*

“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you.” John 14:27

That peace which Christ, when He died, left as a legacy to all His true saints is very diverse from all those things which the men of this world bequeath to their children.

These words are a part of a most affectionate and affecting discourse that Christ had with His disciples the same evening in which He was betrayed, knowing that He was to be crucified the next day. This discourse begins with chapter 13:31, and is continued to the end of chapter 16. Christ began His discourse after He partook of the passover with them, after He had instituted and administered the sacrament of the supper, and after Judas was gone out, and none were left but His true and faithful disciples, whom he now addresses as His dear children. This was the last discourse that Christ had with them before His death. It was His parting discourse and, as it were, His dying discourse; so it is on many accounts the most remarkable we have recorded in our Bibles.

It is evident this discourse made a deep impression on the minds of the disciples, and we may suppose that it did so in a special manner on the mind of John, the beloved disciple, whose heart was especially full of love for Him, and who had just then been leaning on His

bosom. In this discourse, Christ told His dear disciples that He was going away, which filled them with sorrow and heaviness. The words of the text are given to comfort them, and to relieve their sorrow. He supports them with the promise of that peace which He would leave with them, and which they would have in Him and with Him when He was gone.

This promise He delivers in three emphatic expressions which illustrate one another:

“Peace I leave with you.” This is as much as to say, “Though I am going away, yet I will not take all comfort away with me. While I have been with you, I have been your support and comfort, and you have had peace in Me in the midst of the losses you have sustained, and troubles you have met with from this evil generation. This peace I will not take from you, but leave it with you in a more full possession.”

“My peace I give unto you.” By calling it His peace, Christ signifies two things,

First, that it was His own, that which He had to give. It was the peculiar benefit that He had to bestow on His children, now that He was about to leave the world (as to His human presence). Silver and gold He had none, for, while in His estate of humiliation, He was poor. The foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests, but the Son of man had nowhere to lay His head (Luke 9:58). He had no earthly estate to leave to His disciples who were, as it were, His family, but He had peace to give them.

Second, it was His peace that He gave them, as it was the same kind of peace which He himself enjoyed. The same excellent and divine peace which He ever had in God, and which He was about to receive in His exalted

state in a vastly greater perfection and fullness. For the happiness Christ gives to His people is a participation of His own happiness, agreeable to chapter 15:11: "These things have I said unto you, that My joy might remain in you." And in His prayer with His disciples at the conclusion of this discourse, chapter 17:13, He says, "And now come I to thee, and these things I speak in the world, that they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves." And verse 22: "And the glory which Thou gavest Me, I have given them."

Christ here alludes to men making their wills before death. When parents are about to leave their children by death, they are wont, in their last will and testament, to give them their estate, that estate which they themselves were wont to possess and enjoy. So it was with Christ when He was about to leave the world, with respect to the peace which He gave His disciples. There was this difference: when earthly parent die, though they leave the same estate to their children which they themselves heretofore enjoyed, yet when the children come to the full possession of it, they enjoy it no more. The parents do not enjoy it with their children. The time of the full possession of parents and children is not together. Whereas with respect to Christ's peace, He not only possessed it Himself before His death, when He bequeathed it to His disciples, but also afterwards more fully, so that they were received to possess it with Him.

The third and last expression is, "not as the world giveth, give I unto you." This is as much as to say, "My gifts and legacies, which I am now going to leave the world, are not like those which the rich and great men of the world are wont to leave to their heirs when they

die. They bequeath to their children their worldly possessions, and, it may be, vast treasures of silver and gold, and sometimes an earthly kingdom. But the thing that I give you is My peace, a vastly different thing from what they are wont to give, and which cannot be obtained by all that they can bestow, or their children inherit from them.”

**DOCTRINE:** That peace which Christ, when He died, left as a legacy to all His true saints is very different from all those things which the men of this world bequeath to their children when they die.

1. Christ, at His death, made over the blessings of the new covenant to believers, as it were, in a will or testament.

2. A great blessing that Christ made over to believers in this testament of His was His peace.

3. This legacy of Christ is exceedingly diverse from all that any of the men of this world ever leave to their children when they die.

1. At His death Christ made over the blessings of the new covenant to believers, as it were, in a will or testament.

The new covenant is represented by the apostle as Christ’s last will and testament. Hebrews 9:15–16: “And for this cause He is the Mediator of the New Testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator.” What men convey by their will or testament is their own estate. So Christ in the New Covenant conveys to believers His

own inheritance, so far as they are capable of possessing and enjoying it. They have that eternal life given to them in their measure which Christ Himself possesses. They live in Him and with Him, and by a participation of His life. Because He lives they live also. They inherit His kingdom, the same kingdom which the Father appointed unto Him in Luke 22:29: "And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto Me." They shall reign on His throne (Revelation 3:21). They have His glory given to them (John 17), and because all things are Christ's, so in Christ all things are the saints (1 Corinthians 3:21-22).

Men in their wills or testaments most commonly give their estates their children; so believers are in Scripture represented as Christ's children. Hebrews 2:13: "Behold, I and the children which God hath given Me." Men most commonly make their wills a little before their death; so Christ did, in a very special and solemn manner, make over and confirm to His disciples the blessings of the New Covenant on the evening before the day of His crucifixion in that discourse of which my text is a part. The promises of the New Covenant were never so particularly expressed and so solemnly given forth by Christ in all the time that He was upon earth as in this discourse. Christ promised them mansions in his Father's house (John 14:1-3). Here He promised them whatever blessings they would need and ask in His name (John 15:7 and 14:23-24). Here He more solemnly and fully than any where else gave forth and confirmed the promise of the Holy Spirit, which is the sum of the blessings of the covenant of grace (John 14:16 and 26, 15:26, and 16:7). Here He promised them His own and His Father's gra-

cious presence and favor (John 14:18, and 20–21). Here He promised them peace, as stated in the text. Here He promised them His joy (John 15:11). Here He promised grace to bring forth holy fruits (John 15:16), and victory over the world (John 16:33). And, indeed, there seems to be nowhere else so full and complete an edition of the covenant of grace in the whole Bible as in this dying discourse of Christ with His eleven true disciples.

This covenant between Christ and His children is like a will or testament also in this respect: it becomes effectual, and a way is made for putting it in execution, in no other way than by His death, as the apostle observed it is with a will or testament among men. “For a testament is of force after men are dead” (Hebrews 9:17). For though the covenant of grace indeed was of force before the death of Christ, yet it was of force no otherwise than by His death. So His death then virtually intervened, being already undertaken and engaged. As a man’s heirs come by the legacies bequeathed to them in no other way than by the death of the testator, so men come by the spiritual and eternal inheritance in no other way than by the death of Christ. If it had not been for the death of Christ, they never could have obtained it.

2. A great blessing that Christ in His testament has bequeathed to His true followers is his peace. Here are two things that I would observe particularly: Christ has bequeathed to believers true peace, and then the peace that He has given them is His peace.

First, our Lord Jesus Christ has bequeathed true peace and comfort to His followers. Christ is called the Prince of Peace in Isaiah 9:6. And when He was born into the world, the angels on that joyful and wonderful

occasion sang, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace"—because of that peace which He would procure for and bestow on the children of men, peace with God, peace one with another, and tranquillity and peace within themselves, which last is especially the benefit spoken of in the text. This Christ has procured for His followers, and has laid a foundation for their enjoyment of it in that He has procured for them the other two, peace with God and with one another. He has procured for them peace and reconciliation with God, and His favor and friendship in that He satisfied for their sins, laid a foundation for the perfect removal of the guilt of sin and the forgiveness of all their trespasses, and wrought out for them a perfect and glorious righteousness, most acceptable to God, and sufficient to recommend them to God's full acceptance, to the adoption of children, and to the eternal fruits of His fatherly kindness.

By these means true saints are brought into a state of freedom from condemnation, and all the curses of the law of God. Romans 8:34: "Who is he that condemneth?" And by these means they are safe from that dreadful and eternal misery to which naturally they are exposed, and are set on high out of the reach of all their enemies, so that the gates of hell and powers of darkness can never destroy them, nor can wicked men; though they may persecute them, they can never hurt them. Romans 8:31: "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Numbers 23:8: "How shall I curse whom God hath not cursed?" And then verse 23: "There is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel." By these means they are out of the reach of death. John 6:4 and 50–51: "This is the bread

which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die." By these means death, with respect to them, has lost its sting, and is no more worthy of the name of death. 1 Corinthians 15:55: "O death, where is thy sting?" By these means they have no need to be afraid of the day of judgment, when the heavens and earth shall be dissolved. Psalm 46:1-2: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." Yea, a true saint has reason to be at rest in the assurance that nothing can separate him from the love of God (Romans 8:38-39).

Thus he who is in Christ is in a safe refuge from everything that might disturb him. Isaiah 32:2: "And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." And hence they who dwell in Christ have that promise fulfilled to them, which we have in the 18th verse of that same chapter: "And My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places."

And the true followers of Christ not only have grounds of rest and peace of soul by reason of their safety from evil, but on account of their sure title and certain enjoyment of all that good which they stand in need of, living, dying, and through all eternity. They are on a sure foundation for happiness; they are built on rock that can never be moved; and they have a fountain that is sufficient and can never be exhausted. The covenant is ordered in all things and sure, and God has passed His Word and oath that "by two immutable

things in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us." The infinite Jehovah has become their God, who can do everything for them. He is their Portion, who has an infinite fullness of good in Himself. He is their "shield and exceeding great reward." As great a good is made over to them as they can desire or conceive of, and is made as sure as they can desire. Therefore they have reason to put their hearts at rest, and be at peace in their minds.

Besides, He has bequeathed peace to the souls of His people, since He has procured for them and made over to them the spirit of grace and true holiness, which has a natural tendency to give peace and quietness to the soul. It implies a discovery and relish of that which is suitable and sufficient. It brings a person into a view of divine beauty, and to a relish of that good which is a man's proper happiness—and so it brings the soul to its true center. The soul by this means is brought to rest, and ceases from restlessly inquiring, as others do, "Who will show us any good, who wander to and fro, like lost sheep seeking rest, and finding none?" The soul has found Him who is as the apple tree among the trees of the wood, and sits down under His shadow with great delight. His fruit is sweet unto his taste (Song of Solomon 2:3). And thus that saying of Christ is fulfilled from John 4:14: "Whoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst."

And besides, true grace naturally tends to peace and quietness, as it settles in the soul in the due order, sets reason on the throne, and subjects the senses and affections to its government, which before were uppermost. Grace tends to tranquillity, since it mortifies tu-

multuous desires and passions and subdues the eager and insatiable appetites of the sensual nature and greediness after the vanities of the world. It mortifies such principles as hatred, variance, emulation, wrath, envyings and the like, which are a continual source of inward uneasiness and perturbation. It supplies those sweet, calming, and quieting principles of humility, meekness, resignation, patience, gentleness, forgiveness, and sweet reliance on God. It also tends to peace since it fixes the aim of the soul to a certain end, so that the soul is no longer distracted and drawn by opposite ends to be sought, and opposite portions to be obtained, and many masters of contrary wills and commands to be served. But the heart is fixed in the choice of one certain, sufficient, and unfailing good; and the soul's aim at this, and hope of it, is like an anchor that keeps it steadfast, so that it should no more be driven to and fro by every wind.

Second, this peace which Christ has left as a legacy to His true followers, is His peace. It is the peace which He Himself enjoys. This is what I take to be principally intended in the expression. It is the peace that He enjoyed while on the earth in His state of humiliation. Though He was a man of sorrows, was acquainted with grief, was everywhere hated and persecuted by men and devils, and had no place of rest in this world, yet in God, His Father, He had peace. We read of His rejoicing in spirit (Luke 10:21). So Christ's true disciples, though in the world they have tribulation, yet in God have peace.

When Christ had finished His labors and sufferings, had risen from the dead and ascended into heaven, He entered into His rest, a state of most blessed, perfect,

and everlasting peace, delivered by His own sufferings from our imputed guilt, acquitted and justified of the Father on His resurrection. Having obtained a perfect victory over His enemies, He was received by His Father into heaven, the rest which He had prepared for Him, there to enjoy His heart's desire fully and perfectly to all eternity. And then were those words in the first six verses of Psalm 21, which have respect to Christ, fulfilled. This peace and rest of the Messiah is exceeding glorious. Isaiah 11:10: "And His rest shall be glorious." This rest is what Christ has procured by His death not only for Himself, but also for His people. He has bequeathed it to them so that they may enjoy it with Him imperfectly in this world, and perfectly and eternally in the next.

That peace which has been described, and which believers enjoy, is a participation of the peace which their glorious Lord and Master Himself enjoys by virtue of the same blood by which Christ Himself has entered into rest. It is in a participation of this same justification, for believers are justified with Christ. As He was justified when He rose from the dead, and as He was made free from our guilt, which He had as our surety, so believers are justified in Him and through Him as being accepted by God in the same righteousness. It is in the favor of the same God and heavenly Father that they enjoy peace. "I ascend to My Father and your Father, to My God and your God." It is in a participation of the same Spirit, for believers have the Spirit of Christ. He did not have the Spirit given to Him by measure, and of His fullness do they all receive, and grace for grace. As the oil poured on the head of Aaron went down to the skirts of his garments, so the Spirit poured

on Christ, the Head, descends to all His members. It is as partaking of the same grace of the Spirit that believers enjoy this peace (John 1:16).

It is being united to Christ, and living by a participation of His life, like a branch lives by the life of the vine. It is partaking of the same love of God. John 17:26: "That the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them." It is having a part with Him in His victory over the same enemies, and also having an interest in the same kind of eternal rest and peace. Ephesians 2:5-6: "Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together, and hath made us sit together in heavenly places."

3. This legacy of Christ to His true disciples is very diverse from all that which the men of this world ever leave to their children when they die. The men of this world, many of them, when they are about to die, have great estates to bequeath to their children, an abundance of the good things of this world, large tracts of ground, perhaps in a fruitful soil, covered with flocks and herds. They sometimes leave to their children stately mansions, and vast treasures of silver, gold, jewels, and precious things, fetched from both the Indies, and from every side of the globe of the earth. They leave them wherewith to live in a fine state and magnificence, to make a great show among men, to fare very sumptuously, and swim in worldly pleasures. Some have crowns, scepters, palaces, and great monarchies to leave to their heirs. But none of these things are to be compared to that blessed peace of Christ which He has bequeathed to His true followers. These worldly things are such as God commonly, in His providence, gives His worst enemies, those whom He hates and despises

most. But Christ's peace is a precious benefit which He reserves for His peculiar favorites. These worldly things, even the best of them, that the men and princes of the world leave for their children are things which God in His providence throws out to those whom He looks on as dogs. But Christ's peace is the bread of His children.

All these earthly things are but empty shadows, which, however men set their hearts upon them, are not bread and can never satisfy their souls. But this peace of Christ is a truly substantial, satisfying food (Isaiah 55:2). None of those things, if men have them to the best advantage and in never so great abundance, can give true peace and rest to the soul, as is abundantly manifest not only in reason, but experience; it has been found in all ages that those who have the most of them commonly have the least quietness of mind.

It is true that there may be a kind of quietness, a false peace in their enjoyment of worldly things. Men may bless their souls, think themselves the only happy persons and despise others, and may say to their souls, as the rich man did in Luke 12:19, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." But the peace which Christ gives to His true disciples vastly differs from the peace that men may have in the enjoyments of the world in the following respects:

First, Christ's peace is a reasonable peace and rest of soul. It has its foundation in light and knowledge, in the proper exercises of reason, and a right view of things, whereas the peace of the world is founded in blindness and delusion. The peace that the people of Christ have arises from their having their eyes open

and seeing things as they be. The more they consider, and the more they know of the truth and reality of things, the more they know what is true concerning themselves, the state and condition they are in; the more they know of God, and the more certain they are that there is a God. The more they know what manner of being He is, the more certain they are of another world and future judgment and of the truth of God's threatenings and promises; the more their consciences are awakened and enlightened and the brighter and the more searching the light is that they see things in, the more is their peace established.

On the contrary, the peace that the men of the world have in their worldly enjoyments can subsist in no other way than by being kept in ignorance. They must be blindfolded and deceived, otherwise they can have no peace. Do but let light in upon their consciences, so that they may look about them and see what they are, and what circumstances they are in, and it will at once destroy all their quietness and comfort. Their peace can live nowhere but in the dark. Light turns their ease into torment. The more they know what is true concerning God and concerning themselves, the more they are sensible of the truth concerning those enjoyments which they possess. The more they are sensible what things now are, and what things are likely to be hereafter, the more their calm will be turned into a storm. The worldly man's peace cannot be maintained but by avoiding consideration and reflection. If he allows himself to think, and properly to exercise his reason, it destroys his quietness and comfort. If he would establish his carnal peace, it concerns him to put out the light of his mind, and turn beast as

fast as he can. The faculty of reason, if at liberty, proves a mortal enemy to his peace. It concerns him, if he would keep his peace alive, to contrive all ways that may be to stupefy his mind and deceive himself, and to imagine things to be otherwise than they are.

But with respect to the peace which Christ gives, reason is its great friend. The more this faculty is exercised, the more it is established. The more they consider and view things with truth and exactness, the more firm is their comfort, and the higher their joy.

How vast a difference there is between the peace of a Christian and the worldling! How miserable they are who cannot enjoy peace in any other way than by hiding their eyes from the light and confining themselves to darkness. Their peace is stupidity. It is as the ease that a man has who has taken a dose of stupefying poison, and the ease and pleasure that a drunkard may have in a house on fire over his head, or the joy of a distracted man in thinking that he is a king, though he is really a miserable wretch confined in bedlam. The peace which Christ gives His true disciples, however, is the light of life, something of the tranquillity of heaven, the peace of the celestial paradise, that has the glory of God to lighten it.

Second, Christ's peace is a virtuous and holy peace. The peace that the men of the world enjoy is vicious. It is a vile stupidity that depraves and debases the mind, and makes men brutish. But the peace that the saints enjoy in Christ is not only their comfort, but it is a part of their beauty and dignity. The Christian's tranquillity, rest, and the joy of real saints, are not only unspeakable privileges, but they are virtues and graces of God's Spirit wherein the image of God in them partly con-

sists. This peace has its source in those principles that are in the highest degree virtuous and amiable, such as poverty of spirit, holy resignation, trust in God, divine love, meekness, and charity. The exercise of such blessed fruits of the Spirit are spoken of in Galatians 5:22–23.

Third, this peace greatly differs from that which is enjoyed by the men of the world with regard to its exquisite sweetness. It is a peace so much above all that natural men enjoy in worldly things that it surpasses their understanding and conception (Philippians 4:7). It is exquisitely sweet and secure because it has so firm a foundation, the everlasting rock that never can be moved; because it is perfectly agreeable to reason; because it rises from holy and divine principles that, as they are the virtue, so they are the proper happiness of men; and because the greatness of the objective good that the saints enjoy is no other than the infinite bounty and fullness of that God who is the fountain of all good. The fullness and perfection of that provision that is made for it in Christ and the new covenant is a foundation laid for the saints' perfect peace, and this hereafter they shall actually enjoy. And though their peace is not now perfect, it is not owing to any defect in the provision made, but to their own imperfection, sin, and darkness. As yet, they partly cleave to the world, and seek peace from thence, and do not perfectly cleave to Christ. But the more they do so, and the more they see of the provision there made, and accept it, and cleave to that alone, the nearer they are brought to perfect tranquillity (Isaiah 26:3).

Fourth, the peace of the Christian infinitely differs from that of the worldling in that it is unailing and

eternal peace. That peace which carnal men have in the things of the world is according to the foundation upon which it is built, of short continuance like the comfort of a dream (1 John 2:17; 1 Corinthians 7:31). These things, the best and most durable of them, are like bubbles on the face of the water. They vanish in a moment (Hosea 10:7). But the foundation of the Christian's peace is everlasting. It is what no time, no change, can destroy. It will remain when the body dies. It will remain when the mountains depart and the hills shall be removed, and when the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll. The fountain of this comfort shall never be diminished, and the stream shall never be dried. Christ's comfort and joy is a living spring in the soul, a well of water springing up to everlasting life.

### *Application*

The use that I would make of this doctrine is to improve it as an inducement unto all to forsake the world, no longer seeking peace and rest in its vanities, and to cleave to Christ and follow Him. Happiness and rest are what all men pursue. But the things of the world, wherein most men seek it, can never afford it. They are laboring and spending themselves in vain. But Christ invites you to come to Him, and offers you this peace which He gives his true followers, which so vastly excels all that the world can afford (Isaiah 55:2-3).

You who have hitherto spent your time in the pursuit of satisfaction in the profit and glory of the world, or in the pleasures and vanities of youth, have this day an offer of that excellent and everlasting peace and blessedness which Christ has purchased with the price

of His own blood. As long as you continue to reject those offers and invitations of Christ, and continue in a Christless condition, you never will enjoy any true peace or comfort, but will be like the prodigal, who in vain endeavored to be satisfied with the husks that the swine ate. The wrath of God will abide upon, and misery will attend you wherever you go, which you never will be able to escape.

Christ gives peace to the most sinful and miserable who come to Him. He heals the broken in heart and binds up their wounds. But it is impossible that they should have peace while they continue in their sins (Isaiah 57:19–21). There is no peace between God and them; for since they have the guilt of sin remaining in their souls, and are under its dominion, so God's indignation continually burns against them—and therefore there is reason why they should travail in pain all their days. While you continue in such a state, you live in a state of dreadful uncertainty of what will become of you, and are in continual danger. When you are in the enjoyment of things most pleasing to you, where your heart is best suited and most cheerful, yet you are in a state of condemnation. You hang over the infernal pit with the sword of divine vengeance hanging over your head, having no security one moment from utter and remediless destruction. What reasonable peace can anyone enjoy in such a state as this, even though you clothe such a one in gorgeous apparel, or to set him on a throne, or at a prince's table, and feed him with the rarest dainties the earth affords? How miserable is the ease and cheerfulness that such have! What a poor kind of comfort and joy is it that such take in their wealth and pleasures for a moment, while they are the prison-

ers of divine justice, and wretched captives of the devil! They have none to befriend them, being without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world!

I invite you now to a better portion. There are better things provided for the sinful, miserable children of men. There is a surer comfort and a more durable peace: comfort that you may enjoy in a state of safety, and on a sure foundation, a peace and rest that you may enjoy with reason, and with your eyes open. You may have all your sins forgiven, your greatest and most aggravated transgressions blotted out as a cloud, and buried as in the depths of the sea, so that they may never be found again. And being not only forgiven, but accepted to favor, you become the objects of God's complacency and delight. Being taken into God's family and made His children, you may have good evidence that your names were written on the heart of Christ before the world was made, and that you have an interest in that covenant of grace that is well ordered in all things and sure, wherein is promised no less than life and immortality, an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and a crown of glory that does not fade away. Being in such circumstances, nothing shall be able to prevent your being happy to all eternity, having for the foundation of your hope that love of God which is from eternity to eternity, and his promise and oath, and his omnipotent power: things infinitely firmer than mountains of brass. The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, yea, the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, yet these things will never be abolished.

In such a state as this you will have a foundation of peace and rest through all changes, and in times of the greatest uproar and outward calamity you will be defended from all storms and dwell above the floods (Psalm 32:6–7). You shall be at peace with everything, and God will make all His creatures throughout all parts of his dominion to befriend you (Job 5:19–24). You need not be afraid of anything that your enemies can do unto you (Psalm 3:5–6). Those things that now are most terrible to you—death, judgment, and eternity—will then be most comfortable, the sweetest and most pleasant objects of your contemplation. At least there will be reason that they should be so.

Hearken therefore to the friendly counsel that is given you this day. Turn your feet into the way of peace, forsake the foolish and live, forsake those things which are nothing other than the devil's baits, and seek this excellent peace and rest of Jesus Christ, that peace of God "which passeth all understanding." Taste and see: never was any disappointed who made a trial of it (Proverbs 24:13–14). You will not only find those spiritual comforts that Christ offers you to be of a surpassing sweetness for the present, but they will be to your soul as the dawning light that shines more and more to the perfect day. The issue of all will be your arrival in heaven, that land of rest, those regions of everlasting joy, where your peace and happiness will be perfect, without the least mixture of trouble or affliction, and will never be interrupted nor have an end.

## Sermon 7

*True Saints, When Absent from the Body,  
are Present With the Lord*

(A sermon preached upon the death of David Brainerd)

“We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.”

2 Corinthians 5:8

The apostle is here giving a reason why he went on with so much boldness and immovable steadfastness through such labors, sufferings, and dangers of his life in the service of his Lord, for which his enemies, the false teachers among the Corinthians, sometimes reproached him as being beside himself, and driven on by a kind of madness. In the latter part of the preceding chapter, the apostle informs the Christian Corinthians that the reason why he did this was that he firmly believed the promises that Christ had made to His faithful servants of a glorious future eternal reward, and knew that these present afflictions were light and but for a moment compared to that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. The same discourse is continued in this chapter, wherein the apostle further insists on the reason he had given of his constancy in suffering, and exposing himself to death in the work of the ministry, even the more happy state he expected after death. In the subject of the text may be observed:

1. The great future privilege which the apostle hoped for, that of being present with Christ. The words in the original properly signify dwelling with Christ, as in the same country or city, or making a home with Christ.

2. When the apostle looked for this privilege, that is, when he would be absent from the body—not to wait for it till the resurrection, when soul and body should be united again. He signifies the same thing in his epistle to the Philippians, chapter 1:22-23: “But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labor. Yet what I shall choose, I wot not. For I am in a strait between two; having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ.”

3. The value the apostle set on this privilege. It was such that, for the sake of it, he chose to be absent from the body. He was willing, rather, or, as the word properly signifies, it would be more pleasing to him, to part with the present life and all its enjoyments for the sake of being possessed of this great benefit.

4. The present benefit which the apostle had by his faith and hope in this future privilege, that is, that hence he received courage, assurance, and constancy of mind, agreeable to the proper import of the word that is rendered “we are confident.” The apostle is now giving a reason of that fortitude and immovable stability of mind with which he went through those extreme labors, hardships, and dangers which he mentions in this discourse. So that, in the midst of all, he did not faint, nor was he discouraged, but had constant light, and inward support, strength, and comfort in the midst of all, which is agreeable to verse 16 of the foregoing chapter: “For which cause, we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day

by day.” And the same is expressed more particularly in the verses 8–10 of that chapter: “We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.” And in the next chapter, verses 4–10: “In all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in watchings, in fastings, by pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.”

Among the many useful observations that might be raised from the text, I shall at this time only insist on that which lies most plainly before us in the words: The souls of true saints, when they leave their bodies at death, go to be with Christ.

The souls of true saints go to be with Christ, in the following respects:

1. They go to dwell in the same blessed abode with the glorified human nature of Christ.

The human nature of Christ is yet in being. He still continues, and will continue to all eternity, to be both God and man. His whole human nature remains—not

only His human soul, but also His human body. His dead body rose from the dead, and the same that was raised from the dead is exalted and glorified at God's right hand; that which was dead is now alive and lives forevermore.

And therefore there is a certain place, a particular part of the external creation, to which Christ is gone, and where He remains. And this place is that which we call "the highest heaven," or "the heaven of heavens," a place beyond all the visible heavens. Ephesians 4:9-10: "Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens." This is the same which the apostle calls "the third heaven" in 2 Corinthians 12:2, reckoning the aerial heaven as the first, the starry heaven as the second, and the highest heaven as the third. This is the abode of the holy angels: they are called "the angels of heaven" in Matthew 24:36, "the angels which are in heaven" in Mark 13:32, and "the angels of God in heaven" in Matthew 22:30 and Mark 12:25. They are said "always to behold the face of the Father which is in heaven" in Matthew 18:10. And they are elsewhere often represented as before the throne of God, or surrounding His throne in heaven, sent from thence, and descending from thence with messages to this world.

There it is that the souls of departed saints are conducted when they die. They are not reserved in some abode distinct from the highest heaven—a place of rest which they are kept in till the day of judgment, such as some imagine, which they call the hades of the happy—but they go directly to heaven itself. This is the saints' home, being their Father's house; they are pil-

grims and strangers on the earth, and this is the other and better country to which they are traveling (Hebrews 11:13–26). This is the city they belong to. Philippians 3:20: “Our conversation (or, as the word properly signifies, citizenship) is in heaven.” Therefore this undoubtedly is the place the apostle has respect to in my text when he says, “We are willing to forsake our former house, the body, and to dwell in the same house, city or country, wherein Christ dwells,” which is the proper import of the original. What can this house, city, or country be but that house which is elsewhere spoken of as their proper home, their Father’s house, the city and country to which they properly belong, and where they are traveling all the while they continue in this world, and the house, city, and country where we know the human nature of Christ is? This is the saints’ rest; here their hearts are while they live, and here their treasure is. The inheritance that is incorruptible and undefiled, that does not fade away, that is designed for them, is reserved in heaven” (1 Peter 1:4), and therefore they never can have their proper and full rest till they come here.

So undoubtedly their souls, when absent from their bodies (when the Scriptures represent them as in a state of perfect rest), arrive hither. Those two saints that left this world to go to their rest in another world without dying (Enoch and Elijah) went to heaven. Elijah was seen ascending up to heaven, as Christ was. And to the same resting place, there is all reason to think that those saints go who leave this world by death. When Moses died on the top of the mount, he ascended to the same glorious abode with Elijah, who ascended without dying. They are companions in another world, as they appeared together at Christ’s transfiguration. They

were together at that time with Christ in the mount, when there was a specimen or sample of His glorification in heaven. And doubtless they were also together afterwards with Him when He was actually and fully glorified in heaven. And there undoubtedly it was that the soul of Stephen ascended when he expired. The circumstances of his death demonstrate it as we see in Acts 7:55–59: “He being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, ‘Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man [i.e., Jesus in His human nature] standing on the right hand of God.’ Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, and cast him out of the city, and stoned him. And they stoned Stephen, who was calling upon God, and saying, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.’ ” Before his death he had an extraordinary view of the glory that his Savior had received in heaven, not only for Himself, but also for all His faithful followers, that he might be encouraged by the hopes of this glory, cheerfully to lay down his life for his sake. Accordingly he dies in the hope of this, saying, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” Doubtless he meant, “receive my spirit to be with Thee in that glory wherein I have now seen Thee, in heaven, at the right hand of God.”

And there it was that the soul of the penitent thief on the cross ascended. Christ said to him, “Today shalt thou be with Me in paradise.” Paradise is the same as the third heaven, as appears by 2 Corinthians 12:2–4. There what is called “the third heaven” in the second verse is in the fourth verse called “paradise.” The departed souls of the apostles and prophets are in heaven,

as is manifest from Revelation 18:20: "Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets." The church of God is distinguished in Scripture, from time to time, into these two parts: that part of it that is in heaven, and that which is in earth. Ephesians 3:14-15: "Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." Colossians 1:20: "And having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things to Himself by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven." Now what things in heaven are they for whom peace has been made by the blood of Christ's cross, and who have by Him been reconciled to God, but the saints in heaven? In like manner we read in Ephesians 1:10 of God's gathering together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in Him. The spirits of just men made perfect are in the same city of the living God, and heavenly Jerusalem, with the innumerable company of angels, and Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, as is manifest by Hebrews 12:22-24. The church of God is often in Scripture called Jerusalem, and the apostle speaks of the Jerusalem which is above, or which is in heaven, as the mother of us all. But if no part of the church is in heaven, or none but Enoch and Elijah, it is not likely that the church would be called the Jerusalem which is in heaven.

2. The souls of true saints, when they leave their bodies at death, go to be with Christ, as they go to dwell in the immediate, full, and constant sight or view of Him.

When we are absent from our dear friends, they are out of sight, but when we are with them we have the opportunity and satisfaction of seeing them. So while

the saints are in the body, and are absent from the Lord, He is in several respects out of sight (1 Peter 1:8: "Whom having not seen, ye love: in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing," and so on). They have indeed, in this world, a spiritual sight of Christ, but they see through a glass darkly, and with great interruption; but in heaven they see Him face to face (1 Corinthians 13:12). "The pure in heart are blessed, for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8). Their beatific vision of God is in Christ, who is that brightness or effulgence of God's glory, by which His glory shines forth in heaven to the view of saints and angels there, as well as here on earth.

This is the Sun of righteousness that is not only the light of this world, but is also the sun that enlightens the heavenly Jerusalem, by whose bright beams it is that the glory of God shines forth there to enlighten and make happy all the glorious inhabitants. "The Lamb is the light thereof; and so the glory of God doth lighten it" (Revelation 21:23). None sees God the Father immediately, who is the King eternal, immortal, invisible. Christ is the image of that invisible God, by which He is seen by all elect creatures. The only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him and manifested Him. None has ever immediately seen the Father but the Son; and no one else sees the Father in any other way than by the Son's revealing Him. And in heaven, the spirits of just men made perfect behold His glory. They see the glory of His divine nature, consisting in all the glory of the Godhead, the beauty of all His perfections: his great majesty, almighty power, infinite wisdom, holiness, and grace. They see the beauty of His glorified human nature, and the glory which the Father has given Him as God-man and Mediator. For

this end, Christ desired that His saints might be with him, that they might behold His glory (John 17:24). And when the souls of the saints leave their bodies to go to be with Christ, they behold the marvelous glory of that great work of redemption, and of the glorious way of salvation by Him, which the angels desire to look into. They have a most clear view of the unfathomable depths of the manifold wisdom and knowledge of God, and the most bright displays of the infinite purity and holiness of God which appear in that way and work, and see in another manner than the saints do here what is the breadth and length, and depth and height, of the grace and love of Christ appearing in His redemption.

And as they see the unspeakable riches and glory of the attribute of God's grace, so they most clearly behold and understand Christ's eternal and unmeasurable dying love to them in particular. In short, they see everything in Christ that tends to kindle, enflame, and gratify love, and everything that tends to satisfy them, and that in the most clear and glorious manner, without any darkness or delusion, without any impediment or interruption. Now the saints, while in the body, see something of Christ's glory and love, as in the dawning of the morning, we see something of the reflected light of the sun mingled with darkness. But when separated from the body, they see their glorious and loving Redeemer as we see the sun when risen, and showing His whole disk above the horizon by His direct beams in a clear hemisphere and with perfect day.

3. The souls of true saints, when absent from the body, go to be with Jesus Christ, as they are brought into a most perfect conformity to and union with Him.

Their spiritual conformity is begun while they are in the body. Here beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, they are changed into the same image. But when they come to see Him as He is in heaven, then they become like Him in another manner. That perfect sight will abolish all remains of deformity, disagreement, and sinful unlikeness, as all darkness is abolished before the full blaze of the sun's meridian light. As it is impossible that the least degree of obscurity should remain before such light, so it is impossible the least degree of sin and spiritual deformity should remain with such a view of the spiritual beauty and glory of Christ, as the saints enjoy in heaven when they see that Sun of righteousness without a cloud. They themselves shall not only shine forth as the sun, but shall be as little suns, without a spot. For then comes the time when Christ presents His saints to Himself in glorious beauty; "not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing," and having holiness without a blemish.

Then the saints' union with Christ is perfected. This also is begun in this world. The relative union is both begun and perfected at once, when the soul, first being quickened by Him, closes with Christ by faith. The real union, consisting in the vital union of hearts and affections, is begun in this world and perfected in the next. The union of the heart of a believer to Christ is begun when it is drawn to Him by the first discovery of divine excellency at conversion. Following this drawing and closing of his heart with Christ is established a mutual vital union with Christ whereby the believer becomes a living branch of the true vine, living by a communication of the sap and vital juice of the stock and root, and a member of Christ's mystical body, liv-

ing by a communication of spiritual and vital influences from the head, and by a kind of participation of Christ's own life.

But while the saints are in the body, there is much remaining distance between Christ and them. There are remainders of alienation, and the vital union is very imperfect, and so consequently are the communications of spiritual life and vital influences. There is much between Christ and believers to keep them asunder, much indwelling sin, much temptation, a heavy-molded frail body, and a world of carnal objects, to keep off the soul from Christ, and hinder a perfect coalescence. But when the soul leaves the body, all these clogs and hindrances shall be removed; every separating wall shall be broken down, and every impediment taken out of the way, and all distance shall cease. The heart shall be wholly and forever attached and bound to Him by a perfect view of His glory. And the vital union shall then be brought to perfection. The soul shall live perfectly in and upon Christ, being perfectly filled with His Spirit and animated by His vital influences, living, as it were, only by Christ's life, without any remainder of spiritual death, or carnal life.

4. Departed souls of saints are with Christ, as they enjoy a glorious and immediate intercourse and converse with Him.

While we are present with our friends, we have opportunity for that free and immediate conversation with them which we cannot have in absence from them. And therefore, by reason of the vastly more free, perfect, and immediate intercourse with Christ, which the saints enjoy when absent from the body, they are fitly represented as present with Him.

The most intimate intercourse becomes that relation which the saints stand in to Jesus Christ, and especially becomes that most perfect and glorious union they shall be brought into with Him in heaven. They are not merely Christ's servants, but His friends (John 15:15), His brethren and companions (Psalm 122:8), yea, they are "the spouse of Christ." They are espoused or betrothed to Christ while in the body; but when they go to heaven they enter into the King's palace; their marriage to Him has come, and the King brings them into His chambers indeed. They then go to dwell with Christ constantly, to enjoy the most perfect converse with Him.

Christ conversed in the most friendly manner with His disciples on earth. He allowed one of them to lean on His bosom, but they are allowed much more fully and freely to converse with Him in heaven. Though Christ is there in a state of glorious exaltation—reigning in the majesty and glory of the sovereign Lord and God of heaven and earth, angels and men—yet this will not hinder intimacy and freedom of intercourse, but will rather promote it. For He is thus exalted not only for Himself, but for them. He is instated in this glory of head over all things for their sakes, that they might be exalted and glorified. When they go to heaven where He is, they are exalted and glorified with Him, and shall not be kept at a more awful distance from Christ, but shall be admitted nearer and to a greater intimacy. For they shall be unspeakably more fit for it, and Christ in more fit circumstances to bestow on them this blessedness. Their seeing the great glory of their friend and Redeemer will not awe them to a distance, and make them afraid of a near approach, but on the con-

trary will most powerfully draw them near, and encourage and engage them to holy freedom. For they will know that it is He who is their own Redeemer, their beloved Friend and Bridegroom, the very same who loved them with a dying love, and redeemed them to God by His blood. Matthew 14:27: "It is I; be not afraid." Revelation 1:17-18: "Fear not. I am He that liveth, and was dead." And the nature of this glory of Christ which they shall behold will be such as will draw and encourage them. For they will not only see infinite majesty and greatness, but infinite grace, condescension, mildness, gentleness and sweetness, equal to His majesty. For He appears in heaven not only as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, but as "the Lamb in the midst of the throne" (Revelation 5:5-6). He shall be their shepherd, to "feed them, and lead them to living fountains of water" (Revelation 7:17), so that the sight of Christ's great kingly majesty will be no terror to them, but will only serve the more to heighten their pleasure and surprise.

When Mary was about to embrace Christ, being full of joy at the sight of Him alive again after His crucifixion, Christ forbade her to do it for the present because He was not yet ascended. John 20:16-17: "Jesus saith unto her, 'Mary.' She turned herself, and saith unto him, 'Rabboni,' which is to say, 'Master.' Jesus saith unto her, 'Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren, and say unto them, "I ascend unto My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God." ' ' " It is as if He had said, "This is not the time and place for that freedom your love to Me desires; that is appointed in heaven after My ascension. I am going there, and you, My true disciples, shall, as My

brethren and companions, soon be there with Me in My glory. And then there shall be no restraint. That is the place appointed for the most perfect expressions of complacency and endearment, and full enjoyment of mutual love.”

Accordingly, the souls of departed saints with Christ in heaven shall have Christ, as it were, unbosomed unto them, manifesting those infinite riches of love towards them that have been there from eternity. They shall be enabled to express their love to Him in an incomparably better manner than ever they could while in the body. Thus they shall eat and drink abundantly, swim in the ocean of love, and be eternally swallowed up in the infinitely bright and infinitely mild and sweet beams of divine love, eternally receiving that light, eternally full of it, eternally compassed round with it, and everlastingly reflecting it back again to the fountain of it.

5. When the souls of the saints leave their bodies at death, they go to be with Christ; they are received to a glorious fellowship with Christ in His blessedness.

As the wife is received to a joint possession of her husband's estate, and as the wife of a prince partakes with him in his princely possessions and honors, so the church, the spouse of Christ, when the marriage comes and she is received to dwell with Him in heaven, shall partake with Him in His glory. When Christ rose from the dead and took possession of eternal life, this was not done as a private person, but as the public head of all His redeemed people. He took possession of it for them as well as for Himself, and they are “quickened together with Him, and raised up together.” And when He ascended into heaven, and was exalted to great glory

there, this also was done as a public person. He took possession of heaven not only for Himself, but for His people, as their forerunner and head, that they might ascend also “and sit together in heavenly places with Him” (Ephesians 2:5–6). “Christ writes upon them His new name” (Revelation 3:12), that is, He makes them partakers of His own glory and exaltation in heaven. His new name is that new honor and glory that the Father invested Him with when He set Him at His own right hand, as a prince, when he advances anyone to new dignity in his kingdom, gives him a new title. Christ and His saints shall be glorified together (Romans 8:17).

The saints in heaven have communion, or a joint participation, with Christ in His glory and blessedness in heaven, in the following respects more especially.

First, they partake with Him in the ineffable delights He has in heaven in the enjoyment of His Father. When Christ ascended into heaven, He was received to a glorious and peculiar joy and blessedness in the enjoyment of His Father, who in His passion hid His face from Him—such an enjoyment as became the relation He stood in to the Father, and such as was a fitting reward for the great and hard service He had performed on earth. Then God showed Him the path of life, and brought Him into His presence, where is fullness of joy, and to sit on His right hand, where there are pleasures for evermore (Psalm 16:11). Then the Father made Him most blessed forever. He made Him exceeding glad with His countenance (Psalm 21:6). The saints, by virtue of their union with Christ, and being His members, in some manner partake of His childlike relation to the Father, and so are heirs with Him of His happi-

ness in the enjoyment of His Father, as seems to be intimated by the apostle in Galatians 4:4–7. The spouse of Christ, by virtue of her espousals to that only-begotten Son of God, is, as it were, a partaker of His filial relation to God, and becomes the king's daughter (Psalm 45:13), and so partakes with her divine Husband in His enjoyment of His Father and her Father, His God and her God. A promise of this seems to be implied in Christ's words to Mary in John 20:17.

Thus Christ's faithful servants "enter into the joy of their Lord" (Matthew 25:21–23), and Christ's joy remains in them, which is agreeable to Christ's words in John 15:11. Christ from eternity is, as it were, in the bosom of the Father, as the object of His infinite complacency. In Him is the Father's eternal happiness. Before the world was, He was with the Father, in the enjoyment of His infinite love, and had infinite delight and blessedness in that enjoyment; this He declares of himself in Proverbs 8:30: "Then I was by Him, as one brought up with Him; and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him." And when Christ ascended to the Father after His passion, He went to Him, to the enjoyment of the same glory and blessedness in the enjoyment of His love, agreeable to His prayer the evening before His crucifixion. John 17:5: "And now, O Father, glorify Me with Thine own self, with the glory I had with Thee before the world was."

And in the same prayer He manifests it to be His will that His true disciples should be with Him in the enjoyment of that joy and glory which He then asked for Himself. John 17:13: "That My joy might be fulfilled in them." And verse 22: "And the glory which Thou gavest Me, I have given them." This glory and joy of

Christ, which the saints are to enjoy with Him, is that which he has in the enjoyment of the Father's infinite love to Him, as appears by the last words of that prayer of our Lord in John 17:26: "That the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them." The love which the Father has to His Son is great indeed. The Deity does, as it were, wholly and entirely flow out in a stream of love to Christ, and the joy and pleasure of Christ is proportionably great. This is the stream of Christ's delights, the river of His infinite pleasure, which He will make His saints to drink of with Him, agreeable to Psalm 36:8-9: "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of Thy house. Thou shalt make them drink of the river of Thy pleasures. For with Thee is the fountain of life; in Thy light shall we see light."

The saints shall have pleasure in partaking with Christ in His pleasure, and shall see light in His light. They shall partake with Christ of the same river of pleasure, shall drink of the same water of life, and of the same new wine in the Father's kingdom (Matthew 26:29). The new wine spoken of is especially that joy and happiness that Christ and His true disciples shall partake of together in glory, which is the purchase of Christ's blood, or the reward of His obedience unto death. Christ, at His ascension into heaven, received everlasting pleasures at His Father's right hand, and in the enjoyment of His love, as the reward of His own death, or His obedience unto death. But the same righteousness is reckoned to both Head and members. Both shall have fellowship in the same reward, each according to their distinct capacity.

That the saints in heaven have such a communion

with Christ in His joy, and do so partake with Him in His own enjoyment of the Father, greatly manifests the transcendent excellency of their happiness, and their being admitted to a vastly higher privilege in glory than the angels. That is the first point.

Second, the saints in heaven are received to a fellowship or participation with Christ in the glory of that dominion to which the Father has exalted him.

The saints, when they ascend to heaven as Christ ascended, and are made to sit together with Christ in heavenly places, and are partakers of the glory of His exaltation, are exalted to reign with Him. Through Him they are made kings and priests; they reign with Him, and in Him, over the same kingdom. As the Father has appointed unto Him a kingdom, so He has appointed to them that kingdom. The Father has appointed the Son to reign over His own kingdom, and the Son appoints His saints to reign in His. The Father has given to Christ to sit with Him on his throne, and Christ gives to the saints to sit with Him on His throne, agreeable to Christ's promise in Revelation 3:21. Christ, as God's Son, is the heir of His kingdom, and the saints are joint heirs with Christ, which implies that they are heirs of the same inheritance, to possess the same kingdom, in and with Him, according to their capacity. Christ in His kingdom reigns over heaven and earth. He is appointed the Heir of all things, and so all things are the saints', "whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come," all are theirs because they are Christ's, and united to Him (1 Corinthians 3:21-23).

The angels are given to Christ as a part of His dominion. They are all given to wait upon Him as minis-

tering spirits to Him. So also they are all, even the highest and most dignified of them, "ministering spirits, to minister to them who are the heirs of salvation." They are Christ's angels, and they are also the saints' angels. Such is the saints' union with Christ, and their interest in Him, that what He possesses they possess, in a much more perfect and blessed manner than if all things were given to them separately, and by themselves, to be disposed of according to their discretion. They are now disposed of, in every respect, to be most blessed by an infinitely better discretion than their own, and are disposed of by their Head and Husband, between whom and them there is the most perfect union of hearts, and the most perfect union of wills.

As the glorified spouse of this great King reigns with and in Him in His dominion over the universe, so more especially does she partake with Him in the joy and glory of His reign in His kingdom of grace, which is more peculiarly the kingdom that He possesses as Head of the church, and it is that kingdom wherein she is more especially interested. It was especially to reign in this kingdom that God the Father exalted Him to His throne in heaven. He set His King on His holy hill of Zion, especially that He might reign over Zion, or over His church, in His kingdom of grace, and that He might be under the best advantages to carry on the designs of His love in this lower world. And therefore, undoubtedly, the saints in heaven are partakers with Christ in the joy and glory of the advancement and prosperity of His kingdom of grace on earth, and the success of His gospel here, which He looks on as the peculiar glory of His reign.

The good shepherd rejoices when He finds but one

sheep that was lost, and His friends and neighbors in heaven rejoice with him on that occasion. The part of the family that is in heaven is surely not unacquainted with the affairs of that part of the same family that is on earth. They who are with the King, and the royal family that dwells in His palace, are not kept in ignorance of the affairs of His kingdom. The saints in heaven are with the angels, the King's ministers, by which He manages the affairs of His kingdom, and who are continually ascending and descending from heaven to the earth, and one or another of them is daily employed as a ministering spirit to each individual member of the church below.

To this we may add the continual ascending of the souls of departed saints from all parts of the militant church. On these accounts the saints in heaven must be under a thousand times greater advantage than we here for a full view of the state of the church on earth, and a speedy, direct, and certain acquaintance with all its affairs in every part. And that which gives them a much greater advantage for such an acquaintance than the things already mentioned is their being constantly in the immediate presence of Christ, and in the enjoyment of the most perfect intercourse with Him, who is the King who manages all these affairs and has an absolutely perfect knowledge of them. Christ is the Head of the whole glorified assembly. They are (mystically) His glorified body, and what the Head sees, it sees for the information of the whole body, according to its capacity. What the Head enjoys is for the joy of the whole body. The saints, in leaving this world and ascending to heaven, do not go out of sight of things appertaining to Christ's kingdom on earth. But, on the

contrary, they go out of a state of obscurity, and ascend above the mists and clouds into the clearest light, to a pinnacle in the very center of light, where everything appears in clear view. They have as much a greater advantage to view the state of Christ's kingdom, and the works of the new creation here than while they were in this world, as a man who ascends to the top of a high mountain has a greater advantage to view the face of the earth than he had while he was in a deep valley or thick forest below, surrounded on every side with those things that impeded and limited his prospect.

Nor do they view these things as indifferent or unconcerned spectators, any more than Christ Himself is an unconcerned spectator. The happiness of the saints in heaven consists very much in beholding the glory of God appearing in the work of redemption. For it is by this chiefly that God manifests His glory—the glory of His wisdom, holiness, grace, and other perfections—to both saints and angels, as is apparent by many Scriptures. And therefore, undoubtedly, their happiness consists very much in beholding the progress of this work in its application and success, and the steps by which infinite power and wisdom bring it to its consummation. And the saints in heaven are under unspeakably greater advantage to take the pleasure of beholding the progress of this work on earth than we are, since they are under greater advantages to see and understand the marvelous steps that divine wisdom takes in all that is done, and the glorious ends He obtains, the opposition Satan makes, and how he is baffled and overthrown. They can better see the connection of one event with another, and the beautiful order of all things that come to pass in the church in different

ages which to us appear like confusion.

Nor do they only view these things, and rejoice in them, as a glorious and beautiful sight, but as persons interested, as Christ is interested, as possessing these things in Christ, and reigning with Him in this kingdom. Christ's success in His work of redemption—in bringing home souls to Himself, applying His saving benefits by His Spirit, and the advancement of the kingdom of grace in the world—is the reward especially promised to Him by His Father in the covenant of redemption, for the hard and difficult service He performed while in the form of a servant, as is manifest by Isaiah 53:10–12.

But the saints shall be rewarded with Him. They shall partake with Him in the joy of this reward, for this obedience that is thus rewarded is reckoned to them since they are His members. This was especially the joy that was set before Christ for the sake of which He endured the cross and despised the shame.

And His joy is the joy of all heaven. They who are with Him in heaven are under much the greatest advantages to partake with Him in this joy. For they have a perfect communion with Him through whom, and in fellowship with whom, they enjoy and possess their whole inheritance, all their heavenly happiness: as much as the whole body has all its pleasure of music by the ear, and all the pleasure of its food by the mouth and stomach, and all the benefit and refreshment of the air by the lungs. The saints while on earth pray and labor for the same thing that Christ labored for: the advancement of the kingdom of God among men, the prosperity of Zion, and flourishing of religion in this world. And most of them have been made partakers

with their Head in His sufferings, and have filled up (as the apostle expresses it) that which is lacking of the sufferings of Christ. And therefore they shall partake with Him of the glory and joy of the end obtained, Romans 8:17: "We are joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together." 2 Timothy 2:12: "If we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him."

When Christ's sufferings were past, and He left the earth and ascended into heaven, He was so far from having done with kingdom in this world that it was as if it were but then begun. He ascended for the very end that He might more fully possess and enjoy this kingdom, that He might reign in it, and be under the best advantages for it. In like manner, the saints are not done with Christ's kingdom on earth when they ascend into heaven. "Christ came (i. e., ascended) with clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and was brought near before him, to the very end, that he might receive dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him" (Daniel 7:13-14). This shall be eminently fulfilled after the ruin of Antichrist, which is especially the time of Christ's kingdom. And the same is the time when "the kingdom, and dominion, and greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the most high God" (verse 27). It is because they shall reign in and with Christ, the Most High, as seems to be intimated in the words that follow: "whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him." This is true not only of the saints on earth, but also the ones in heaven.

Hence the saints in heaven, having respect to this

time, do sing (Revelation 5:10), "We shall reign on the earth." Agreeably hereto, it is afterwards represented that when the forementioned time comes, the souls of those who in former ages had suffered with Christ do reign with Him, having, as it were, given to them new life and joy in that spiritual blessed resurrection, which shall then be of the church of God on earth. Thus we read in Matthew 5:5: "The meek (those who meekly and patiently suffer with Christ, and for His sake) shall inherit the earth." They shall inherit it, and reign on earth with Christ. Christ is the Heir of the world, and when the appointed time of His kingdom comes, His inheritance shall be given to Him. Then the meek, who are joint heirs, shall inherit the earth.

The place in the Old Testament from whence the words are taken leads to a true interpretation of them. Psalm 37:11: "The meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace." That there is reference in these latter words, "the abundance of peace," to the peace and blessedness of the latter days, we may be satisfied by comparing these words with Psalm 72:7: "In His days shall be abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth." Jeremiah 33:6: "I will reveal to them the abundance of peace and truth." (See also Isaiah 2:4; Micah 4:3; Isaiah 11:6-9, and many other parallel places.)

The saints in heaven will be as much with Christ in reigning over the nations, and in the glory of His dominion at that time, as they will be with Him in the honor of judging the world at the last day. That promise of Christ to His disciples found in Matthew 19:28-29 seems to have a special respect to the former of these. In verse 28, Christ promises to the disciples that

hereafter, "when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of His glory, they shall sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." The saints in heaven reigning on earth in the glorious latter day, is described in language accommodated to this promise of Christ. Revelation 20:4: "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them; and judgment was given them. And they reigned with Christ." And the promise of Matthew 19:29 seems to have its fulfillment at the same time: "And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or fathers, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life." That is, in the time when the saints shall inherit the earth, and reign on earth, the earth, with all its blessings and good things, shall be given in great abundance to the church, to be possessed by the saints. This shall they receive in this present world, and, in the future, everlasting life.

The saints in heaven shall partake with Christ in the triumph and glory of those victories that He shall obtain, in that future glorious time, over the kings and nations of the world, represented by His ruling them with a rod of iron and dashing them in pieces as a potter's vessel. To which doubtless there is a respect in Revelation 2:26-27: "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: as the vessel of a potter shall they be broken to shivers; even as I received of My Father." And Psalm 149:5-9: "Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds" (i.e., in their separate state after death. Compare this with Isaiah 57:1-2). "Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in

their hand; to execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron, to execute upon them the judgment written; this honor have all the saints.”

Accordingly, when Christ appears riding forth to His victory over Antichrist (Revelation 19), the hosts of heaven appear going forth with Him in robes of triumph (verse 14). When Antichrist is destroyed, the inhabitants of heaven, and the holy apostles and prophets, are called upon to rejoice (Revelation 18:20). And the whole multitude of the inhabitants of heaven on that occasion appear to exult and praise God with exceeding joy (Revelation 19:1–8 and 11:15). They are also represented as greatly rejoicing on occasion of the ruin of the heathen empire, in the days of Constantine (Revelation 12:10). And it is observable, all along in the visions of that book, that the hosts of heaven appear as much concerned and interested in the events pertaining to the kingdom of Christ here below as the saints on earth. The day of the commencement of the church’s latter-day glory is eminently “the day of Christ’s espousals; the day of the gladness of His heart, when as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so He will rejoice over his church.” And then all heaven will exceedingly rejoice with Him; therefore they say at that time (Revelation 19:7), “Let us be glad, and rejoice, and give glory to Him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come.”

Thus Abraham enjoys these things, when they come to pass, which were of old promised to him, and which he saw beforehand, and rejoiced in. He will enjoy the fulfillment of the promise of all the families of the

earth being blessed in his seed when it shall be accomplished. All the ancient patriarchs, who died in faith of promises of glorious things that should be accomplished in this world, "who had not received the promises, but saw them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them," actually enjoy them when fulfilled. David actually saw and enjoyed the fulfillment of that promise, in its due time, which was made to him many hundreds of years before, and was all his salvation and all his desire. Thus Daniel shall stand in his lot at the end of the days pointed out by his own prophecy. Thus the saints of old who died in faith, not having received the promises, are made perfect, and have their faith crowned by the better things accomplished in these latter days of the gospel (Hebrews 11:39-40), which they see and enjoy.

Third, the departed souls of saints have fellowship with Christ in His blessed and eternal employment of glorifying the Father.

The happiness of heaven consists not only in contemplation, and a mere passive enjoyment, but consists very much in action, particularly in actively serving and glorifying God. This is expressly mentioned as a great part of the blessedness of the saints in their most perfect state. Revelation 22:3: "And there shall be no more curse; but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and His servants shall serve Him." The angels are as a flame of fire in their ardor and activity in God's service. The four animals in Revelation 4 (which are generally supposed to signify the angels) are represented as continually giving praise and glory to God, and are said not to rest day or night (verse 8). The souls of departed saints have, doubtless, become as the an-

gels of God in heaven in this respect. And Jesus Christ is the Head of the whole glorious assembly—as in other things appertaining to their blessed state, so in this of their praising and glorifying the Father. When Christ, the night before He was crucified, prayed for His exaltation to glory, it was that He might glorify the Father. John 17:1: “These words spake Jesus, and lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said, ‘Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son that Thy Son also may glorify Thee.’ ” And this He does, no doubt, now that He is in heaven, not only in fulfilling the Father’s will in what He does as Head of the church and Ruler of the universe, but also in leading the heavenly assembly in their praises.

When Christ instituted the Lord’s Supper, and ate and drank with His disciples at His table (giving them therein a representation and pledge of their future feasting with Him, and drinking new wine in His heavenly Father’s kingdom), at that time He led them in their praises to God in a hymn they sang. And so, doubtless, He leads His glorified disciples in heaven. David was the sweet psalmist of Israel, and he led the great congregation of God’s people in their songs of praise. Herein, as well as in innumerable other things, he was a type of Christ, who is often spoken of in Scripture by the name of David. And many of the psalms that David penned were songs of praise that he, by the spirit of prophecy, uttered in the name of Christ, as Head of the church, and leading the saints in their praises. Christ in heaven leads the glorious assembly in their praises to God, as Moses did the congregation of Israel at the Red Sea, which is implied in its being said that “they sing the song of Moses and the Lamb” (Revelation 15:2–3). In Revelation 19:5, John tells us

that he heard a voice come out of the throne, saying, "Praise our God, all ye His servants, and ye that fear Him, both small and great." Who can this voice out of the throne be but the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne, calling on the glorious assembly of saints to praise His Father and their Father, His God and their God? And what the consequence of this voice is we have an account of in the next words: "And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, 'Alleluia; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.' "

### *Application*

The use that I would make of what has been said on this subject is one of exhortation. Let us all be exhorted hence earnestly to seek after that great privilege, so that when we are absent from the body, we may be present with the Lord. We cannot continue always in these earthly tabernacles; they are very frail, and will soon decay and fall, and are continually liable to be overthrown by innumerable means. Our souls must soon leave them and go into the eternal world. Oh, how infinitely great will the privilege and happiness of such be who at that time shall go to be with Christ in His glory, in the manner that has been represented! The privilege of the twelve disciples was great in being so constantly with Christ as His family, in His state of humiliation. The privilege of those three disciples was great who were with Him in the mount of transfiguration, where was exhibited to them some little semblance of His future glory in heaven, such as they might behold in the pre-

sent frail, feeble, and sinful state. They were greatly entertained and delighted with what they saw, and were for making tabernacles to dwell there and return no more down the mount. Great was the privilege of Moses when he was with Christ on Mount Sinai, and beseeched Him to show him His glory. Moses saw His back parts as He passed by, and proclaimed His name. But how infinitely greater is the privilege of being with Christ in heaven, where He sits on the right hand of God, as the glory of the King and God of angels, and of the whole universe, shining forth as the great light, the bright sun of that world of glory; there to dwell in the full, constant and everlasting view of His beauty and brightness; there most freely and intimately to converse with Him, and fully to enjoy His love as His friends and spouse; there to have fellowship with Him in the infinite pleasure and joy He has in the enjoyment of His Father! How transcendent a privilege to there sit with Him on His throne, to reign with Him in the possession of all things, and partake with Him in the joy and glory of His victory over His enemies, and the advancement of His kingdom in the world, and to join with Him in joyful songs of praise to His Father and their Father, to His God and their God, forever and ever! Is not such a privilege worth seeking after?

But here, to especially enforce this exhortation, I would improve that dispensation of God's holy providence, which is the sorrowful occasion of our coming together at this time, the death of that eminent servant of Jesus Christ in the work of the gospel ministry, whose funeral is this day to be attended, together with what was observable in him, living and dying.

In this dispensation of Providence, God puts us in

mind of our mortality, and forewarns us that the time is approaching when we must be absent from the body, and “must all appear (as the apostle observes in the context) before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one of us may receive the things done in the body, according to what we have done, whether it be good or bad.”

And in the one whose death we are now called to consider and improve, we have not only an instance of mortality, but an instance of one who, being absent from the body, is present with the Lord, as we have all imaginable reason to conclude. And that is the case whether we consider the nature of the operations he was under from the time he dates his conversion, the nature and course of his inward exercises from that time forward, his outward conversation and practices in life, or his frame and behavior during the whole of that long season wherein he looked death in the face.

His convictions of sin, preceding his first consolations in Christ (as appears by a written account he has left of his inward exercises and experiences), were exceedingly deep and thorough. His trouble and exercise of mind, through a sense of guilt and misery, very great and long-continued, yet sound and solid, consisting in no unsteady, violent, and unaccountable hurries and frights, and strange perturbations of mind, but arising from the most serious consideration and proper illumination of the conscience to discern and consider the true state of things. The light let into his mind at conversion, and the influences and exercises that his mind was subject to at that time, appear very agreeable to reason and the gospel of Jesus Christ. The change was very great and remarkable, without any appearance

of strong impressions on the imagination, sudden flights and pangs of the affections, and vehement emotions in animal nature, but were rather attended with proper intellectual views of the supreme glory of the Divine Being, consisting in the infinite dignity and beauty of the perfections of His nature, and of the transcendent excellency of the way of salvation by Christ. This was about eight years ago, when he was about twenty-one years of age.

Thus God sanctified and made meet for His use that vessel which he intended to make of eminent honor in His house, and which He had made of large capacity, having endowed him with very uncommon abilities and gifts of nature. He was a singular instance of a ready invention, natural eloquence, easy flowing expression, sprightly apprehension, quick discerning, and a very strong memory, and yet was of a very penetrating genius, close and clear thought, and piercing judgment. He had an exact taste. His understanding was quick, strong and distinguishing.

His learning was very considerable, for which he had a great taste, and applied himself to his studies in so close a manner when he was at college that he much injured his health, and was obliged on that account for a while to leave his studies and return home. He was esteemed one who excelled in learning in that society.

He had an extraordinary knowledge of men as well as things, had a great insight into human nature, and excelled most that ever I knew in a communicative faculty. He had a peculiar talent at accommodating himself to the capacities, tempers, and circumstances of those whom he would instruct or counsel.

He had extraordinary gifts for the pulpit. I never had

opportunity to hear him preach, but have often heard him pray. I think his manner of addressing himself to God, and expressing himself before Him, in that duty, was almost inimitable, such (so far as I may judge) as I have very rarely known equaled. He expressed himself with that exact propriety and pertinency, in such significant, weighty, pungent expressions, with that decent appearance of sincerity, reverence, and solemnity, and great distance from all affectation, as forgetting the presence of men, and as being in the immediate presence of a great and holy God, that I have scarcely ever known paralleled. And his manner of preaching, by what I have often heard from good judges, was no less excellent, being clear and instructive, natural, nervous, forcible, and moving, and very searching and convincing. He rejected with disgust an affected noisiness and violent boisterousness in the pulpit, and yet much disrelished a flat, cold delivery, when the subject of discourse, and matter delivered, required affection and earnestness.

Not only did he have excellent talents for the study and the pulpit, but also for conversation. He was of a sociable disposition and was remarkably free, entertaining, and profitable in ordinary discourse, and had much of a faculty of disputing, defending truth and confuting error.

As he excelled in his judgment and knowledge of things in general, so especially in divinity. He was truly, for one of his standing, an extraordinary divine, but especially, above all, in matters relating to experimental religion. In this, I know I have the concurring opinion of some who have had a name for persons of the best judgment. And according to what ability I have to judge

things of this nature, and according to my opportunities, which of late have been very great, I never knew his equal, of his age and standing, for clear, accurate notions of the nature and essence of true religion, and its distinctions from its various false appearances, which I suppose to be owing to these three things meeting together in him: the strength of his natural genius, the great opportunities he had of observing others in various parts, both white people and Indians, and his own great experience.

His experiences of the holy influences of God's Spirit were not only great at his first conversion, but they were so in a continued course, from that time forward, as appears by a private journal which he kept of his daily inward exercises from the time of his conversion until he was disabled by the failing of his strength a few days before his death. The change which he looked upon as his conversion was not merely a great change of the present views, affections, and frame of his mind, but also the beginning of that work of God on his heart, which God carried on from that time to his dying day. He greatly abhorred the way of such as live on their first work, as though they had now gotten through their work, and are thenceforward, by degrees, settled in a cold, lifeless, negligent, worldly frame. He had an ill opinion of such persons' religion.

His experiences were very diverse from many things that have lately obtained the reputation with multitudes of the very height of Christian experience. About the time that the false religion, which arises chiefly from impressions on the imagination, began first to make a very great appearance in the land, he was for a little while deceived with it, so as to think highly of it. And

though he knew he never had such experiences as others told of, he thought it was because others' attainments were beyond his, and so coveted them and sought after them, but could never obtain them. He told me that he never had what is called an impulse, or a strong impression of his imagination, in things of religion, in his life. But he owned that during the short time that he thought well of these things, he was tinged with that spirit of false zeal that is wont to attend them. But he said that then he was not in his element, but as a fish out of water. And when, after a little while, he came clearly to see the vanity and perniciousness of such things, it cost him an abundance of sorrow and distress of mind, and to my knowledge he afterwards freely and openly confessed the errors in conduct that he had run into, and laid himself low before them whom he had offended. And since his conviction of his error in those respects, he has ever had a peculiar abhorrence of that kind of bitter zeal, and those delusive experiences that have been the principal source of it.

He detested enthusiasm in all its forms and operations, and abhorred whatever in opinion or experience seemed to verge towards antinomianism, as the experiences of those whose first faith consists in believing that Christ died for them in particular, and their first love, in loving God because they supposed they were the objects of his love. Their assurance of their good estate was from some immediate testimony or suggestion, either with or without texts of Scripture, that their sins are forgiven, that God loves them, etc. and the joys of such as rejoiced more in their own supposed distinction from others, in honor, and privileges, and high experiences, than in God's excellency and Christ's

beauty: the spiritual pride of such laymen who are for setting up themselves as public teachers, and cry down human learning and a learned ministry.

He greatly disliked a disposition in persons to much noise and show in religion, and affecting to be abundant in publishing and proclaiming their own experience. Though he did not condemn, but approved of, Christians speaking of their experiences on some occasions, and to some persons, with modesty, discretion, and reserve, he abominated the spirit and practice of the generality of the Separatists in this land. I heard him say, once and again, that he had been much with this kind of people, and was acquainted with many of them, in various parts, and that by this acquaintance he knew that what was chiefly and most generally in repute among them, as the power of godliness, was entirely a different thing from that vital piety recommended in the Scripture, and had nothing in it of that nature. He never was more full in condemning these things than in his last illness, and after he ceased to have any expectation of life, particularly when he had the greatest and nearest views of approaching eternity, and several times, when he thought himself actually dying, and expected in a few minutes to be in the eternal world, as he himself told me.

As his inward experiences appear to have been of the right kind, and were very remarkable as to their degree, so was his outward behavior and practice agreeable. In his whole course he acted as one who had indeed sold all for Christ, had entirely devoted himself to God, made His glory his highest end, and was fully determined to spend his whole time and strength in his service. He was lively in religion—in the right way:

lively, not only nor chiefly with his tongue, in professing and talking, but lively in the work and business of religion. He was not one of those who are for contriving ways to shun the cross, and get to heaven with ease and sloth, but was such an instance of one living a life of labor and self-denial, and spending his strength and substance in pursuing that great end, and the glory of his Redeemer, that perhaps is scarcely to be paralleled in this age in these parts of the world. Much of this may be perceived by anyone who reads his printed journal, but much more has been learned by long intimate acquaintance with him, and by looking into his diary since his death, which he purposely concealed in what he published.

And as his desires and labors for the advancement of Christ's kingdom were great, so was his success. God was pleased to make him the instrument of bringing to pass the most remarkable things among the poor savages—in enlightening, awakening, reforming, and changing their disposition and manners, and wonderfully transforming them—that perhaps can be produced in these latter ages of the world. An account of this has been given the public in his journals, drawn up by order of the Honorable Society in Scotland that employed him, which I would recommend to the perusal of all such as take pleasure in the wonderful works of God's grace, and would read that which will peculiarly tend both to entertain and profit a Christian mind.

No less extraordinary than the things already mentioned of him in life was his constant calmness, peace, assurance, and joy in God during the long time he looked death in the face, without the least hope of recovery, continuing without interruption to the last

while his distemper very sensibly preyed upon his vitals, from day to day, and often brought him to that state in which he looked upon himself, and was thought by others, to be dying. The thoughts of approaching death never seemed in the least to dampen him, but rather to encourage him and exhilarate his mind. The nearer death approached, the more desirous he seemed to be of it. He said, not long before his death, that "the consideration of the day of death, and the day of judgment, had a long time been peculiarly sweet to him." And at another time he said that "he could not but think of the meetness there was in throwing such a rotten carcass as his into the grave." It seemed to him to be the right way of disposing of it.

He often used the epithet "glorious," when speaking of the day of his death, calling it "that glorious day." One sabbath day morning, September 27, feeling an unusual appetite for food, and looking on it as a sign of approaching death, he said that he would look on it as a favor if this might be his dying day, and that he longed for the time. He had before expressed himself as desirous of seeing his brother again, whose return had been expected from the Jerseys, but then (speaking of him) he said, "I am willing to go, and never see him again. I care not what I part with, to be forever with the Lord." Being asked that morning, how he did, he answered, "I am almost in eternity. God knows, I long to be there. My work is done. I have done with all my friends; all the world is nothing to me." On the evening of the next day, when he thought himself dying, and was apprehended to be so by others, and he could utter himself only by broken whispers, he often repeated the word "eternity," saying, "I shall soon be

with the holy angels. He will come, He will not tarry." He told me one night, as he went to bed, that he expected to die that night, and added, "I am not at all afraid. I am willing to go this night, if it be the will of God. Death is what I long for." He sometimes expressed himself as having "nothing to do but to die," and being "willing to go that minute, if it was the will of God." He sometimes used the expression, "Oh, why is His chariot so long in coming?"

He seemed to have remarkable exercises of resignation to the will of God. He once told me that he had longed for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit of God, and the glorious times of the church, and hoped they were coming; and would have been willing to have lived to promote religion at that time, if that had been the will of God. "But," said he, "I am willing it should be as it is. I would not have the choice to make myself for ten thousand worlds."

He several times spoke of the different kinds of willingness to die, and spoke of it as an ignoble, mean thing to be willing only to get rid of pain, or to go to heaven only to get honor and advancement there. His own longings for death seemed to be quite of a different kind, and for nobler ends. When he was first taken with something like a diarrhea, which is looked upon as one of the last and most fatal symptoms in a consumption [tuberculosis], he said, "Oh, now the glorious time is coming! I have longed to serve God perfectly; and God will gratify these desires." And at one time and another, in the latter part of his illness, he uttered these expressions: "My heaven is to please God, and glorify Him, and give all to Him, and to be wholly devoted to His glory. That is the heaven I long for. That

is my religion, and that is my happiness, and always was, ever since I supposed I had any true religion. All those that are of that religion shall meet me in heaven. I do not go to heaven to be advanced, but to give honor to God. It is no matter where I shall be stationed in heaven, whether I have a high or low seat there, but to love, and please, and glorify God. If I had a thousand souls, if they were worth anything, I would give them all to God; but I have nothing to give, when all is done. It is impossible for any rational creature to be happy without acting all for God. God Himself could not make me happy any other way. I long to be in heaven, praising and glorifying God with the holy angels; all my desire is to glorify God. My heart goes out to the burying place, it seems to me a desirable place. But O to glorify God! That is it! That is above all! It is a great comfort to me to think that I have done a little for God in the world. It is but a very small matter; yet I have done a little. and I lament that I have not done more for Him. There is nothing in the world worth living for but doing good and finishing God's work, doing the work that Christ did. I see nothing else in the world that can yield any satisfaction besides living to God, pleasing Him, and doing His whole will. My greatest joy and comfort has been to do something for promoting the interest of religion, and the souls of particular persons."

After he came to be in so low a state that he ceased to have the least expectation of recovery, his mind was peculiarly carried forth with earnest concern for the prosperity of the church of God on earth, which seemed very manifestly to arise from a pure, disinterested love to Christ, and a desire for His glory. The

prosperity of Zion was a theme he dwelt much upon, and of which he spoke much, and more and more the nearer death approached. He told me when near his end that he never, in all his life, had his mind so led forth in desires and earnest prayers for the flourishing of Christ's kingdom on earth as since he was brought so exceedingly low at Boston. He seemed much to wonder that there appeared no more disposition in ministers and people to pray for the flourishing of religion through the world. And particularly, he several times expressed his wonder that there appeared no more forwardness to comply with the proposal lately made from Scotland for united, extraordinary prayer among God's people for the coming of Christ's kingdom, and sent it as his dying advice to his own congregation that they should practice agreeably to that proposal.

A little before his death he said to me, as I came into the room, "My thoughts have been employed on the old dear theme, the prosperity of God's church on earth. As I waked out of sleep I was led to cry for the pouring out of God's Spirit, and the advancement of Christ's kingdom, which the dear Redeemer did and suffered so much for; it is that especially makes me long for it." But a few days before his death, he desired us to sing a psalm concerning the prosperity of Zion, which he signified his mind was engaged in above all things. At his desire we sang a part of Psalm 102. And when we had done, though he was then so low that he could scarcely speak, he so exerted himself that he made a prayer, very audibly, wherein, besides praying for those present, and for his own congregation, he earnestly prayed for the reviving and flourishing of religion in the world. His own congregation especially lay much

on his heart. He often spoke of them, and commonly, when he did so, it was with extraordinary tenderness, so that his speech was interrupted and drowned with weeping.

Thus I have endeavored to represent something of the character and behavior of that excellent servant of Christ, whose funeral is now to be attended. Though I have done it very imperfectly, yet I have endeavored to do it faithfully, and as in the presence and fear of God, without flattery, which surely is to be abhorred in ministers of the gospel when speaking as messengers of the Lord of Hosts. Such reason have we to be satisfied that the person spoken of, who now is absent from the body, is present with the Lord, and now wearing a crown of glory, of distinguished brightness.

And how much is there in the consideration of such an example, and so blessed an end, to excite us, who are yet alive, with the greatest diligence and earnestness, to improve the time of life so that we also may go to be with Christ when we forsake the body! The time is coming, and will soon come, we know not how soon, when we must take leave of all things here below, to enter on a fixed, unalterable state in the eternal world. Oh, how well is it worth the while to labor and suffer, and deny ourselves, to lay up in store a good foundation of support and supply against that time! How much is such a peace as we have heard of worth at such a time. And how dismal would it be to be in such circumstances, under the outward distresses of a consuming, dissolving frame, and looking death in the face from day to day, with hearts uncleansed, and sin unpardoned, under a dreadful load of guilt and divine wrath, having much sorrow and wrath in our sickness, and nothing

to comfort and support our minds: nothing before us but a speedy appearance before the judgment seat of an almighty, infinitely holy, and angry God, and an endless eternity in suffering his wrath without mercy! The person we have been speaking of, had a great sense of this. He said, not long before his death, "It is sweet to me to think of eternity: the endlessness of it makes it sweet. But, oh, what shall I say to the eternity of the wicked! I cannot mention it, nor think of it! The thought is too dreadful!" At another time, speaking of a heart devoted to God and His glory, he said, "Oh, of what importance is it to have such a frame of mind, such a heart as this, when we come to die! It is this now that gives me peace."

How much is there, in particular, in the things that have been observed of this eminent minister of Christ, to excite us, who are called to the same great work of the gospel ministry, to earnest care and endeavors, that we may be in like manner faithful in our work, that we may be filled with the same spirit, animated with the like pure and fervent flame of love to God, and the like earnest concern to advance the kingdom and glory of our Lord and Master and the prosperity of Zion! How amiable did these principles render this servant of Christ in his life, and how blessed in his end! The time will soon come when we also must leave our earthly tabernacles, and go to our Lord who sent us to labor in His harvest, to render an account of ourselves to Him. Oh, how it concerns us so to run as not uncertainly, so to fight, not as those that beat the air! And should not what we have heard excite us to depend on God for His help and assistance in our great work, and to be much in seeking the influences of His Spirit, and success in

our labors by fasting and prayer, in which the person spoken of was abundant? This practice he earnestly recommended on his deathbed, from his own experience of its great benefits, to some candidates for the ministry who stood by his bedside. He was often speaking of the great need ministers have of much of the Spirit of Christ in their work, and how little good they are likely to do without it, and how, "when ministers were under the special influences of the Spirit of God, it assisted them to come at the consciences of men, and (as he expressed it) as it were to handle them with hands; whereas, without the Spirit of God, said he, whatever reason and oratory we make use of, we do but make use of stumps, instead of hands.

Oh, that the things that were seen and heard in this extraordinary person—his holiness, heavenliness, labor, and self-denial in life, his so remarkably devoting himself and his all, in heart and practice, to the glory of God, and the wonderful frame of mind manifested in so steadfast a manner under the expectation of death, and the pains and agonies that brought it on—may excite in us all, both ministers and people, a due sense of the greatness of the work we have to do in the world, the excellency and amiability of thorough religion in experience and practice, the blessedness of the end of such a life, and the infinite value of their eternal reward, when absent from the body and present with the Lord, and effectually stir us up to endeavors so that, in the way of such a holy life, we may at least come to so blessed an end. Amen.

# Sermon 8

## *The Portion of the Righteous*

“But glory, honor, and peace to every man  
that worketh good.” Romans 2:10

Glory, honor, and peace is the portion that God has given to all the godly.

The apostle in the preceding verses declared what is the portion of wicked men: indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish; in this verse he declares what is the portion assigned to good men. In the words of the text we should observe:

1. The description of a good man: he is the “man that worketh good.” Such men are here described by the fruit which they bring forth. Christ has taught us that the tree is known by its fruit. Paul here describes them by that which most distinguishes them—not by the external privileges which they enjoy, or the light under which they live, but by the fruits which they bring forth. For, as the apostle says in verse 13, “Not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of it shall be justified.” That which distinguishes good men from bad is not that they hear good, profess good, or intend good, but that they do good. They are workers of good.

2. The reward of such a man: “glory, honor, and peace.” Here are mentioned three sorts of good that are assigned to them as their portion. First is their moral good, expressed by the word “glory.” Glory shall be

given them; i.e., they shall be made excellent and glorious. They shall be endued with those excellent and glorious qualifications which will render them beautiful and lovely. They shall have the image of God, and be partakers of His holiness. Thus the word "glory" is used by Paul in 2 Corinthians 3:18, where he says that We are changed into "the same image from glory to glory." Second is their relative good: honor. They shall be in most honorable circumstances. They shall be advanced to great dignity, receive a relation to God, Christ, and the heavenly inhabitants, and God shall put honor upon them. Third is their natural good: peace. This word, as it is used in the Scriptures, signifies happiness; and includes all comfort, joy, and pleasure.

I shall endeavor to show from the text that glory, honor, and peace are the portion which God has given to all good men. In describing their happiness, I shall consider the successive parts of it, both here and hereafter.

First, I propose to discuss their happiness in this world. Those who are truly good men have been the subjects of a real, thorough work of conversion, and have had their hearts turned from sin to God. Of such persons it may be said that they are truly blessed. They are often pronounced blessed by God. He is infinitely wise, and sees and knows all things. He perfectly knows who are blessed and who are miserable. He has said, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly." "Blessed is he whose sins are forgiven." "Blessed is the man that maketh the Lord his trust." "Blessed are the poor in spirit, the meek, the merciful, and the pure in heart."

In considering the happiness of the righteous in

this world, I shall pursue the method which the text obviously points out, and shall consider:

- The excellency;
- The honor; and
- The peace and pleasure which God bestows upon them in the present life.

1. The excellency or glory. The sum of this consists in their having the image of God upon them. When a person is converted, he has the image of God stamped on him. Colossians 3:10: "And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him who created him." Ephesians 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." They have their eyes opened, and are led into such a sight of God and thorough acquaintance with Him as changes the soul into the image of God's glory.

What can render a creature more excellent than to have the very image of the Creator? And how blessed a change is that which is wrought in conversion, which brings a man thus to be in the image of God! For though the image of God in Christians in this world is very imperfect, yet it is real. The real image of God is most excellent, though it is imperfect.

Hence, "the righteous is more excellent than his neighbor," and "the saints are the excellent of the earth." The image of God is their glory, and it may well be called glory, for, imperfect as it is, it renders them glorious in the eyes of the angels of heaven. The image of God is a greater beauty in their eyes than the brightness and glory of the sun in the firmament.

Indeed, the saints have no excellency, as they are, in

and of themselves. In them, that is, in their flesh, dwells no good thing. They are in themselves poor, guilty, vile creatures, and see themselves to be so. But they have an excellency and glory in them because they have Christ dwelling in them. The excellency that is in them, though it is but as a spark, is yet something ten thousand times more excellent than any ruby, or the most precious pearl that ever was found on the earth; and that because it is something divine, something of God.

This holy heavenly spark is put into the soul in conversion, and God maintains it there. All the powers of hell cannot put it out, for God will keep it alive; and it shall prevail more and more. Though it is but small, yet it is powerful; it has influence over the heart to govern it, and brings forth holy fruits in the life, and will not cease to prevail till it has consumed all the corruption that is left in the heart, and till it has turned the whole soul into a pure, holy, and heavenly flame; till the soul of man becomes like the angels, a flame of fire, and shines as the brightness of the firmament.

2. I would consider the honor to which Christians are advanced in this world; and the sum of this is that they are the children of God. This is an excellent and glorious degree of honor and dignity to which they are admitted, and that because the Being to whom they are related is an infinitely glorious Being, a Being of incomprehensible majesty and excellency; and also because the relationship between them is so near and honorable.

It is a great honor to be the servant of God. John the Baptist said of Christ that he was not worthy to stoop down to loose the latchet of Christ's shoes. But

Christians are not only admitted to be the servants of God, but His children; and how much more honorable in a family is the relation of children than that of servants! Galatians 4:7: "Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." Romans 8:16–17: "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together." 1 John 3:1: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!"

The honor appears all the greater if we consider how Christians are brought into their relationship to God—and that is by Christ. They become the children of God by virtue of their union with the only begotten and eternal Son of God. They are united to Him as His spouse and members of His body, as His flesh and His bones, and as one spirit. And therefore, as Christ is the Son of God, so they are sons. Therefore they are joint heirs with Christ because they are joint sons with Him. To this end God sent forth His Son: so that they might through Him also be sons. Galatians 4:4–5: "But when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth His Son made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." Therefore they partake of the relationship of the Son; and so they are also of the spirit of the Son, as follows in verse 6: "and because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, 'Abba, Father.' "

Herein Christians are the children of God in a more honorable way than the angels themselves; for the an-

gels are the sons of God by virtue of that relationship which they have to God, as they are in themselves singly and separately. But Christians are the children of God, as partaking with Christ, the only begotten Son, in His sonship, whose sonship is immensely more honorable than that of the angels. And Christians, being the children of God, are honored of God as such.

They are sometimes owned as such by the inward testimony of the Spirit of God. For, as it is found in the verse already cited from Romans, "the Spirit beareth witness with our spirits that we are the children of God." They are treated as such in the great value God puts upon them, for they are His jewels, those jewels which He has set apart for Himself; and He is tender of them as of the apple of His eye. He disregards wicked men in comparison of them. He will give kings for them, and princes for their life. He is jealous for them. He is very angry with those who hurt them. If anyone offends them, it would be better for them that a millstone were cast about their neck, and they were drowned in the depths of the sea. He loves them with a very great and wonderful love. He pities them as a father pities his children. He will protect them, defend them, and provide for them as a father provides for his children. This honor have all those who fear and love God, and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

3. Peace and pleasure are also the portion of Christians in this world. Their peace and joy in God begin in the present life, and are no less excellent than the glory with which He invests them, and the honor to which He advances them. We ought here to consider, first, what foundation they have for peace and joy, and, second, what peace and joy they actually have.

First, their foundation for peace and joy is in their safety and their riches.

(1) They have ground for peace because of their safety. They are safe in Jesus Christ from the wrath of God and from the power of Satan. They who are in Christ shall never perish, for none shall pluck them out of His hand. They are delivered from all their dreadful misery, that indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, which shall come on ungodly men. They were naturally exposed to it, but they are delivered from it; their sins are all forgiven them. The handwriting against them is eternally blotted out. Their sins are all done away with; God has cast them behind His back, and buried their sorrows in the depths of the sea; and they shall no more come into remembrance. They are most safe from misery, for they are built on Christ, their everlasting Rock. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God. They have the faithful promise of God for their security, that is established as a sure witness in heaven. They have an interest in that covenant that is well-ordered in all things and sure. Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate them from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus.

(2) They have a foundation of unspeakable comfort and joy because of their riches. They have true and infinite riches. They are the possessors and heirs of something real and substantial, and that is worthy to be called by the name of "riches." The things they possess are excellent, more precious than gold and rubies; all

the desirable things of this world cannot equal them, and they have enough of it. The riches that they have given to them by God are inexhaustible. It is sufficient for them; there is no end of it.

They have a fountain of infinite good for their comfort, contentment, and joy; for God has given Himself to them to be their Portion, and He is a God of infinite glory. There is glory in Him to engage their contemplation forever and ever, without ever being satiated. And He is also an infinite fountain of love; for God is love, yea, an ocean of love without shore or bottom! The glorious Son of God is theirs; that lovely One who was from all eternity God's delight, rejoicing always before Him. All His beauty is their portion, and His dying love is theirs. His very heart is theirs, and His glory and happiness in heaven are theirs, so far as their capacity will allow them to partake of it; for He has promised it to them, and has taken possession of it in their name.

The saints are also rich in the principle that is in them. They have inward riches which they carry about with them in their own hearts. They are rich in faith. James 2:5: "Hearken, my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him?" They have the grace of God in their hearts, which is a most excellent treasure, and a good foundation of joy; for it is the seed of joy. Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. And the seed that is sown in their hearts is the grace of God there. That grace is a seed that, however it lies hidden, will certainly in due time spring up, put forth itself, will bud and blossom, and will bring forth rich fruit. These riches are the true riches. This is the

good which God reserves for His friends. God distributes silver and gold and such like things among his enemies because He slights them and does not regard them. They are contemptible things in His eyes, as we throw husks to swine. But He has reserved better things for His children, of which no ungodly man, though a prince or monarch, shall partake.

This is the ground which Christians have of peace and pleasure in this world. However, the saints cannot always take comfort, and do not always taste the sweetness that there is in store for them, by reason of the darkness and clouds that sometimes interpose. But though they may walk in great darkness for a long time, yet they are happy notwithstanding.

Second, they sometimes in this world have the actual enjoyment of peace and pleasure that are most excellent. Sometimes the clouds that are in the way are removed, and Christians are enabled to behold the grounds they have for rejoicing. Though God's glory and love are often hidden from them, as it were, with a veil, or, at least, so as to hinder a clear view of it, yet God sometimes is pleased to remove the veil, to draw the curtain, and to give the saints sweet visions. Sometimes there is, as it were, a window opened in heaven, and Christ shows Himself through the lattice. They have sometimes a beam of sweet light breaking forth from above into the soul. And God and Christ the Redeemer sometimes come to them and make friendly visits, and manifest themselves to them. Sometimes Christians have seasons of light and gladness for some considerable period, and at other times their views are more transient. Sometimes their light and joy arise in reading the Holy Scriptures, sometimes in hearing the

Word preached, sometimes at the Lord's table, sometimes in the duty of prayer, sometimes in Christian conference, sometimes in meditation when they are about their occupations, as in the time of more set and solemn meditations, and sometimes in the watches of the night.

Those spiritual joys and pleasures which believers possess in this world, are chiefly of three sorts.

The first sort is the joy which they have in a sense of their own good estate; in the sense they have of the pardon of their sins, and their safety from hell; and a sense of the favor of God, and in the hope they have of eternal life.

The second sort is the joy and delight which they have in the apprehension and view of God's excellency and love. The joy of a Christian does not consist merely in the sense of his own good estate, as natural men often are ready to imagine, but there is an excellent, transcendent, soul-satisfying sweetness that sometimes fills the soul in the apprehension of the excellency of God. The soul dwells upon the thought, fixes on it, and takes complacency in God as the greatest good, the most delightful object of its contemplation. This pleasure is the sweetest pleasure that a Christian ever feels, and is the foretaste of the pleasures of heaven itself. Herein sometimes the saints boast of the cluster of Canaan. This sort of joy is evidence of sincerity above any other joy, a more sure evidence than rejoicing in our own good estate. From the joy which the Christian has in the view of the glory and excellency of God, the consideration of the love of God to him cannot be excluded. When he rejoices in God as a glorious God, he rejoices in Him more because He is his God, and in considera-

tion of there being a union between him and this God. Otherwise, if there were a separation, the view of God's excellency, though it would raise joy one way, would proportionally excite grief another. God is sometimes pleased to manifest His love to the saints, and commonly at those times, when a Christian has the greatest views of God's excellency, he has also great views of His love. The soul is spiritually sensible of God being present with it, and as manifesting and communicating Himself; it has sweet communion with God, tastes the sweetness of His love, and knows a little what is the length, breadth, depth, and height of that love which passes knowledge.

The third kind of joy is found in doing that which is to the glory of God. The true love of God makes this sweet and delightful to the soul. The joy of a Christian not only arises in knowing and viewing, but also in doing; not only in apprehending God, but also in doing for God. For he loves God not only with a love of complacence, but with a love of benevolence also. And as a love of complacence delights in beholding the object loved, so a love of benevolence delights in doing things for the beloved object. The peace and pleasure which the Christian has in these things is far better more desirable than pleasures that this world can afford, and especially more than the pleasures of wicked men, and that on the following accounts.

- There is light in this pleasure. The peace and pleasures of wicked men have their foundation in darkness. When wicked men have any quietness or joy, it is because they are blind and do not see what is their real condition. If it were not for blindness and delusion, they could have no peace or comfort in anything.

There needs nothing but to open a wicked man's eyes, and let him look about him and see where he is, and it would be enough to destroy all the quietness and comfort of the most prosperous wicked man in the world. But on the contrary, the peace of a godly man is a peace that arises from light. When he most sees things as they are, then he has the most peace; and the distress and trouble which he sometimes feels arise from clouds and darkness. When a godly man is in the greatest fear and distress, if he did not know what a happy state he were in, he would at the same time rejoice with unspeakable joy; so that his pleasure is not founded, like that of wicked men, in stupidity, but in sensibleness; not in blindness, but in light, sight, and knowledge.

- There is rest in this pleasure. He who has found this joy finds a sweet repose and acquiescence of the soul in it. It sweetly calms the soul and allays its disappointments. Christ says in Matthew 11:28: "Come unto Me, all ye that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." There is a sweet contentment in it; the soul that tastes it, desires no better pleasure. There is a satisfaction in it. The soul that has before been wandering, when it comes to taste of this fountain, finds in it that which satisfies its desires and cravings, and discovers that in it which it needs in order to its happiness. John 4:14: "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." It is quite otherwise with the pleasures of ungodly men. There is no true rest in them; they are not enjoyed with inward quietness; there is no true peace enjoyed within, neither do they afford contentment. But those wicked men who have the most worldly

pleasures are yet restlessly inquiring, "Who will show us any good?" The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. Wicked men, in the midst of their enjoyment of pleasure, have no true rest, neither do their reflections on it afford rest, but only remorse of conscience and disquietude of soul under the guilt that is contracted. But the pleasures of the godly afford rest in the enjoyment, and rest and sweetness in the reflection. It oftentimes calms and refreshes the soul to look on past comforts.

- There is life in it. It is a pleasure that strengthens, nourishes, and preserves the soul, and gives it life, and does not corrupt and destroy and bring it to death as do sinful pleasures. The pleasures of the wicked are poison to the soul: they tend to enfeeble it, to consume it, and kill it. But the pleasures of the godly feed the soul and do not consume it; they strengthen and do not weaken it; they exalt and do not debase it; they enrich and do not impoverish it. Death and corruption are the natural fruit of the pleasures of sin, but life is the fruit of spiritual pleasures. Galatians 6:8: "For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." The life in which this joy consists, and to which it tends, is the most excellent life, and the only life worthy of the name; it is spiritual, and the beginning of eternal life. This pleasure is a fountain springing up to everlasting life (John 4:14).

- There is substance in it. This pleasure is not a mere shadow, an empty delight, as earthly pleasures are, but it is substantial joy. The pleasures of sin last but a little season; they are the crackling of thorns under a pot, or as the blazing meteors of the night, that appear

for a moment and then vanish. But this pleasure is like the durable light of the stars or the sun.

Worldly pleasures are easily overthrown. A little thing will spoil all the pleasures of a king's court. Haman, in the midst of all his prosperity and greatness, could say, "Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate." But the joys of the saints are such as the changes of time cannot overthrow. If God lifts up the light of His countenance, this will compose and rejoice the heart under the saddest tidings. They joy in affliction. Their enemies cannot overthrow this joy. The devil, and even death itself, cannot overthrow it; but oftentimes it lives, and is in its greatest height in the midst of the valley of the shadow of death. In the most tormenting death, how often have the martyrs sung in the midst of the flames, and under the hands of their cruel tormentors! Job 35:10: "But none saith, 'Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night?' "

- There is holiness in it. It is the excellency of these joys that they are holy joys. They are not like the polluted stream of sinful pleasures, but they are pure and holy. Revelation 22:1: "And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." These pleasures do not defile the soul, but purify it; they do not deform, but beautify it; they not only greatly delight the soul, but render it more excellent. They impart something more of God, more of a divine disposition and temper, dispose to holy actions, and cause the soul to shine as Moses's face did when he had been conversing with God in the mount, and as Stephen's face, which was as the face of an angel, when he saw heaven opened, and

the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. Thus these pleasures make the soul more excellent, and more divine, as well as more happy.

- There is sometimes glory in it. God sometimes unveils His face, and lets in light more plentifully. This is a delight and joy, the excellency, and sweetness, and admirableness of which cannot be expressed. It is a kind of glory that fills the soul. So excellent is its nature that the sweetness of earthly delight vanishes into nothing, and appears as base and vile as dross and dirt, or as the mere mire of the street. It is as bright above all that is earthly as the sun is brighter than the glow-worm. Of this the apostle takes notice in 1 Peter 1:8: "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

I now proceed to consider the happiness of the saints in death. It seems a mystery to the world that men should be happy in death (which the world looks upon as the most terrible of all things), but thus it is to the saints. Their happiness is built upon a rock and will stand the shock of death. When the storms and floods of death come with their greatest violence, it stands firm, and neither death nor hell can overthrow it.

1. Death is rendered no death to them. It is not worthy of the name of death. As the life of a wicked man is not worthy of the name of life, so the death of a godly man is not worthy of the name of death. It is not looked upon as any death at all in the eyes of God, who sees all things as they are; nor is it called death by him. Hence Christ promises that those who believe in Him shall

not die. John 6:50–51: “This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread he shall live forever; and the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.” It is no death to the saints because it is no destruction to them. The notion of death implies destruction, or perishing, in it; but the godly are not destroyed by death, for death cannot destroy them. Christ says that they shall never perish. John 3:15: “Whosoever believeth in Me shall not perish, but have eternal life.”

When a godly man dies, he in no wise perishes. There is no end put to his life as a Christian, for that is a spiritual life that remains unquenched by death.

When a wicked man dies, he dies indeed, because then an end is put to all the life which he has, since he has no other life but temporal life. But the life of a Christian is hidden with Christ, and safely laid up with Him in heaven; and therefore death cannot reach his life because it cannot reach heaven. Death can no more reach the believer’s life than Christ’s life. No death can reach Christ, our life, now though he died once. But now He has forever sat down at the right hand of God. He says, for the comfort of his saints, in Revelation 1:18, “I am He that liveth and was dead; and behold, I am alive forevermore, amen, and have the keys of hell and death.”

Death not only cannot destroy a Christian, but it cannot hurt him. Christ carries him on eagle wings aloft on high, out of the reach of death. Death, with respect to the Christian, is disarmed of its power. And every Christian may say, “Oh, death, where is thy sting?”

Death was once indeed a terrible enemy, but now it has become weak. Death spent all its strength on Christ; in killing Him, it killed itself; it was conquered then, and has now no power to hurt His followers. Death is now but the shadow of what it would have been if Christ had not conquered it.

Death was once a lion, but now it is but a lamb. A good man may indeed be harassed with fears of death, and may be much terrified when going through the valley of the shadow of death, but that is no just ground of any terror; and if the saints are terrified it is only through their infirmity and darkness. As a child is frightened in the dark where there is no danger, because he is a child, so a good man may be frightened at the terrible looks of death. But he will find this awful appearance to be only a shadow, that can look terrible but can do nothing terrible.

Death may, through the weakness of the saints, trouble them, and exercise them, but it cannot destroy the ground they have for comfort and support. When death comes to a wicked man, all those things on which he built his comfort fail, and his foundation is overflowed with a flood (Job 22:16). But the foundation of the peace and comfort of the godly man is not shaken at such a time.

Oftentimes the saints are actually carried above all the fears and terrors of death; they see that it is but a shadow and are not afraid. Not only their foundation of comfort remains, but that peace and comfort itself is undisturbed; the light shines through the darkness, and the lamb-like nature of death appears through the shadow of the lion. The godly have God to stand by them when they come to die, in whose love and favor

they may shelter themselves, in whose favor is life, yea, life in death; and they have a blessed Savior to be with them, to uphold them with the right hand of His righteousness. These are the friends they have with them when they are going to take their leave of all earthly friends. God will be with them when their flesh and heart fails. God will be the strength of their heart when they are weak and faint and nature fails. God will put His everlasting arms underneath them to support them, and will make their bed for them in their sickness. Psalm 37:37: "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace."

2. Death is not only no death to them, but it is a translation to a more glorious life, and is turned into a kind of resurrection from the dead. Death is a happy change to them, and a change that is by far more like a resurrection than a death. It is a change from a state of perfect light, and holiness, and joy. When a saint dies, he awakes, as it were, out of sleep. This life is a dull, lifeless state. There is but a little spiritual life, and a great deal of deadness. There is but a little light, and a great deal of darkness. There is but a little sense, and a great deal of stupidity and senselessness. But when a godly man dies, all this deadness, and darkness, and stupidity, and senselessness are gone forever, and he enters immediately into a state of perfect life, and perfect light, and activity, and joyfulness. A man's conversion is compared to a resurrection, because then a man rises from spiritual death. Ephesians 2:1: "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." But through spiritual life is then begun, yet there are great remains of spiritual death after this, and but little life. But when a godly man dies, he rises from all

remains of spiritual death, and comes into a state of perfect life. This body is like a prison to the holy soul: it exceedingly clogs, hinders, and cramps it in its spiritual exercises and comforts. But when a saint dies the soul is released from this prison, this grave, and comes into a state of glorious freedom and happiness. So that death is not only deprived of its sting, but is made a servant to the saints to bring them to Christ in heaven, who is their life. And their ground of comfort does not only last when they are going out of the world, but it is in some respects increased, for then their perfect happiness draws nigh. It is "far better to depart and be with Christ" than to continue here.

And when the saints are enabled to see their own happiness in death, they are enabled exceedingly to rejoice in the midst of the valley of the shadow of death, and to triumph joyfully over the king of terrors. Death to the saints is always a passage or avenue, leading out of a world of vanity, sin, and misery into a world of life, light, and glory. But though often a dark avenue, it is at times full of light; the darkness all vanishes away, and the light shines out of that glorious city into which they are entering. It shines through the darkness and fills the soul, and the clouds of death vanish before it. The awful appearance of death is but a mask or disguise that death wears. It is not terrible, but joyful in reality, and this light of the new Jerusalem sometimes so clearly shines that it shines through the frightful disguise and shows the saints that death is but a servant.

Yea, sometimes it is so when death has on the most terrible disguise that it ever wears, and comes in its most dreadful forms, as when the saints are burnt at the stake, and put to all kinds of cruel and tormenting

deaths. It is often times joyful to dying saints to think that they are now going into the glorious presence of God, to enjoy God and Christ to the full. The joyful expectation sometimes makes them ready to cry out, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!" and "Why is His chariot so long in coming?"

Let us consider next the happiness of the saints, in their state of separation from the body.

1. When the soul departs from the body, it is received by the blessed angels and conducted by them to the third heaven. On the eve of its departure there is a guard of angels standing round the dying bed; and the devils, though eager to seize upon it as their prey, shall by no means be suffered to come nigh. The holy angels shall be a guard to the soul, to keep off all its enemies. We are taught that this is part of the office in which God employs them. Psalm 34:7: "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them." Psalm 91:11: "For He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways." Just so it was with Daniel in the lion's den. Daniel 6:22: "My God hath sent His angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me; forasmuch as before Him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt."

As soon as the soul is loosed from the body, it shall be kindly and courteously received by those bright and blessed ones, to be conducted by them in to Christ's glorious presence. For the angels are all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them who shall be the heirs of salvation. This is one way in which they shall minister—to guard and conduct the departed spirits of

the saints—which we are plainly taught in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. Luke 16:22: “And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom; the rich man also died, and was buried.” These spirits of holiness and love, when they have received the soul, shall conduct it along through the aerial and starry heavens to the most glorious part of the universe: the highest part of the creation, the place of God’s most holy residence, the city and palace of the most high God, where Christ is.

There are some who say that there is no such place as heaven; but this is evidently a mistake, for the heaven into which the man Christ Jesus entered with His glorified body is certainly some place. It is absurd to suppose that the heaven where the body of Christ is is not a place. To say that the body of Christ is in no place is the same thing as to say that He has no body. The heaven where Christ is is a place; for He was seen ascending, and will be seen descending again; and the heaven where the departed souls of the saints are is the same heaven where Christ has ascended. Therefore Stephen, when he was departing this life, saw heaven opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. And he prayed to that same Jesus who he saw, that He would receive his spirit; i.e., that He would receive it to Him, where he saw Him, at the right hand of God.

The Apostle Paul signifies that if he should depart, he would be with Christ. Philippians 1:23: “For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better.” 2 Corinthians 5:8: “We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.” Besides, there are some of the saints there already with

their bodies, such as Enoch and Elijah. Therefore there is some place where God gloriously manifests Himself, where Christ is, where saints and angels dwell, and where the angels carry the souls of the saints when they depart from their bodies—and this place is called “Paradise,” and “the third heaven” (2 Corinthians 12: 2–4). The aerial heaven is the first heaven; the starry heaven is the second; and the blessed abode of Christ and saints and angels is the third, because it is above the other two. And so Christ is said to be made “higher than the heavens.” Hebrews 7:26: “For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens,” i.e., higher than the visible heaven.

This heaven is far above the stars. So it is said that Christ ascended far above all heavens. Ephesians 4:10: “He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things,” i.e., far above all the heaven that we see. This is Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and hither the angels conduct the souls of the saints when they leave their earthly tabernacles. When they come there, they shall be received with a joyful welcome; the doors of this glorious city are opened to them, and they shall have entrance given to them into heaven as an inheritance to which they have a right. Revelation 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.” And then shall be open to their view that glorious world, that beautiful city, and delightful paradise, which they had often before heard of, thought of, and desired. Then they shall see it and possess it as their own. There

they shall be welcomed and joyfully received by that glorious company that dwell there, by the angels and saints who went to heaven before them. There was joy among them at their conversion, and now also will there be joy among them when they are brought home to glory. To have one who was dear to them before—because a child of the same family and a disciple of the same Lord—brought home from a strange country to come and dwell with them forever, how will their fellow citizens and brethren in heaven be glad for them, rejoice with them, and embrace them, when they come there to join them in their praises of God and the Lamb!

And then they shall be conducted unto the Lord Jesus Christ in His glory, and shall be presented to Him perfectly free from sin, and without spot, wrinkle, or any such thing. He will also abundantly welcome them to His glory, and to the blessed enjoying of His love. And then shall their good Shepherd rejoice, when He shall not only have brought home the soul that was lost to a saving close with Him, but home to Him in his heavenly Father's house. The Savior shall then rejoice when He shall receive a soul that He loved before the foundation of the world, for which He laid down His life, and endured such dreadful sufferings. This was the joy that was set before Him, to redeem and make happy the souls of His elect; and He will rejoice, therefore, when He sees this accomplished.

He will bid them welcome, and make them welcome, and they shall be received into the full enjoyment of His love. The Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and He shall present them also to God His Father, having redeemed them to Him by

His blood, who shall also abundantly welcome them there. Then the soul shall behold that glory, and taste that pleasure, which it long hoped for, and thought of with delight, and the thoughts of which were wont to be such a support to it when on earth. Then shall it know by experience what the joys of heaven are; then shall the great and precious promises of the gospel be fulfilled; then shall faith be turned into vision and hope into fruition; then shall all sin be eternally left behind. There shall be no more indwelling corruption, wicked thoughts, or sinful dispositions to torment them. Whatever sorrow and affliction they underwent on earth, God shall now wipe away all tears from their eyes; and though they have lately passed through death, yet there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain, because the former things shall be passed away (Revelation 21:4).

If they have lived hardly in this world, and suffered hunger and thirst, there shall be an end of it all; and they who have suffered persecution, and have had their raiment stained with their own blood, shall now suffer no more. "And he said unto me, 'These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple; and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, not any heat; for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes'" (Revelation 7:14-17). Though they had many enemies

to conflict with while on earth, yet now shall they obtain the victory over them; now shall they triumph and sing, being forever out of the reach of all Satan's temptations, and of all his power to afflict or molest them. Now shall they appear on Mount Zion with the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palms in their hands (Revelation 7:9).

2. They shall remain there in a state of exceeding glory and blessedness till the resurrection. They shall remain there in the enjoyment of God, dwelling with Jesus Christ in a state of perfect rest, without the least disturbance or molestation. Revelation 14:13: "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, 'Write, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth." ' 'Yea,' saith the Spirit, 'that they may rest from their labors, and their works do follow them.' " There they shall dwell in habitations of sweet delight and pleasure in paradise; there they shall drink of those rivers of pleasures for evermore. There they shall dwell in perfect light and perfect love. There they shall see and converse with God and Christ, and with angels and glorious spirits, and shall contemplate the wonderful love of God to men in sending His only Son. There shall they contemplate the glorious love of God for them, the love He had for them before the foundations of the world. There shall they see and know what love Christ had to them that influenced Him to lay down His life for them, and shall behold the beauty and excellency of Christ, and see face to face, and know even as they are known (1 Corinthians 13:12). There they shall sweetly meditate on the wonderful dealings of God with them while in this lower world, in preserving them, in granting to them to live under means of grace

when many thousands and millions of others never had these privileges. They shall contemplate the wonderful mercy of God to them in striving with them by His Spirit, in convincing them of sin, in stirring them up to seek salvation, in converting them, and in bringing them out of darkness into marvelous light.

The mercy and grace of God in converting them will then appear otherwise to them than it now does. They shall then contemplate the manifold mercies of God to them through the whole course of their lives. They shall see how God has protected them and guided them by His counsel, and led them all along. They shall see the wonderful wisdom and mercy of God towards them in these and other dispensations that now appear most dark to them; they shall see the meaning of those that were difficult to them, and shall see how all things wrought together for their good. These will be sweet meditations to them, and doubtless will be subjects of the saints' conversation with each other. How sweet it will be for the saints to look back and see how God carried them along through the wilderness, through all the storms of this world, and all its dangers, temptations, and enemies after they have come to their resting-place; and how sweet it will be for them to converse together about these things, and what ardent praises it will occasion!

Then also they shall see the wisdom of God in the government and ordering of the affairs of His church all along; the scheme of divine providence shall be opened to them, and the admirable wisdom of it shall be unfolded; and they shall also see how God brings His purposes and promises to pass in His providence towards His church here on earth. They shall see and

rejoice at it when the kingdom of God flourishes in the world. We are told that there is joy in heaven if but one sinner repents. Then doubtless the saints of the Old Testament, after their entrance into heaven, saw and rejoiced when Christ came into the world. And therefore two of them, Moses and Elijah, came down to converse with Christ at His transfiguration. Abraham, Moses, David, the prophets Isaiah and Daniel, and all the prophets, doubtless saw the fulfillment of the glorious things foretold in their prophecies with exceeding rejoicing. They saw that glorious enlargement of the church that was produced by the preaching of the prophets. And thus also the apostles and evangelists in heaven, and other primitive Christians and martyrs, saw the glorious flourishing and prevailing of the kingdom of Christ after their death, till the utter downfall of heathenism and the establishment of Christianity throughout the Roman empire.

The holy martyrs beheld with joy the destruction of those pagan powers that persecuted the church of God. Revelation 6:9–11: “And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the Word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a loud voice, saying, ‘How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?’ And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.” Therefore they rejoiced when they saw it accomplished.

The saints who died in former ages without doubt

beheld and rejoiced greatly at the time of the resurrection from popery in the days of Luther and Calvin and other reformers. Doubtless the saints who went to heaven before this recent remarkable outpouring of the Spirit on this town, and other neighboring towns, especially those who went to heaven from hence, have seen this work and greatly rejoiced at it. And the saints who die before the glorious days that are coming at the downfall of antichrist and the calling of the Jews will rejoice at the conversion of the world to Christianity.

We are ready to lament that we shall not probably live to see those times. But if we die and go to heaven, we shall see them nevertheless, and rejoice in them not the less for not being in this world. But we shall rejoice more, for we shall see and understand more of the glory of God in such a work, and have more love to God, and therefore shall rejoice more at the advancement of His kingdom. Thus when the Apostle John had visions of the glorious things that would be brought to pass for the advancement of the kingdom of Christ, he from time to time mentions the visions he also had of the hosts of heaven rejoicing at it. Revelation 11:15–17: “And the seventh angel sounded, and there were great voices in heaven, saying, ‘The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign forever and ever.’ And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces and worshipped God, saying, ‘We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because Thou hast taken to Thee Thy great power, and hast reigned.’ ” When the spiritual Babylon, the church of Rome, falls, the holy apostles and prophets, though dead many ages before,

are called upon to rejoice. Revelation 18:20: "Rejoice over her, thou heavens, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her." The multitude of the heavenly hosts is described as rejoicing and as singing hallelujahs on that occasions; and all heaven is full of praise. Revelation 18:1-3: "And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, 'Alleluia, salvation, and glory, and honor, and power, unto the Lord our God; for true and righteous are His judgments; for He hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hast avenged the blood of His servants at her hand.' And again they said, 'Alleluia.' And her smoke went up forever and ever." These things may give us some notion how the spirits of just men made perfect do employ themselves.

3. They remain in a joyful expectation of their more full and complete blessedness at the resurrection. As the wicked do not have their full punishment until after the resurrection, so neither do the saints have their complete happiness. Though they have attained to such exceeding glory, yet they have not yet arrived at its highest degrees, for that is reserved for their final state. The reward which the saints receive after the resurrection is often spoken of as their chief reward. This is the reward that Christ has promised. John 6:40: "And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day." This is the chief reward that the saints seek and wait for. Romans 8:23: "And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan earnestly within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to

wit, the redemption of our body." Philippians 3:11: "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." Hebrews 11:35: "Women received their dead raised to life again; and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection." So the happiness that shall be given at Christ's second coming is spoken of as the principal happiness. Titus 2:13: "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ."

This the saints will be in joyful expectation of in heaven: they shall rest in sweet repose on God's promise that it shall be so, their desires of it bringing no uneasiness; they rejoice in it most in the consideration that it will be in God's time, in the fittest and best time.

I shall next consider the glory, honor, and peace which the godly shall receive at the resurrection and the day of judgment.

1. When the appointed time comes, notice shall be given of it in heaven, which will be to their exceeding joy. God has, in His own eternal counsels, fixed the time, but now it is kept secret. It is not only not known by any on the earth, but neither is it known in heaven by either saints or angels there, and the man Christ Jesus Himself, in His state of humiliation, did not know it. Matthew 24:36: "But of that day and hour knoweth no man; no, not the angels in heaven." They have a joyful expectation of it, but they know not when it is; but when the time comes, God's eternal counsels concerning it shall be made known; the joyful tidings shall be proclaimed through all heaven, that all may prepare to

attend the Lord Jesus Christ in His descent to the earth.

2. They shall descend with Christ from the highest heaven towards the earth. When notice is given to the heavenly host, they shall all gather themselves together to attend on this most joyful and glorious occasion; and then the glorious Son of God shall descend, and the holy angels with Him; and not only the angels, but the souls of the saints shall come with Christ, we are told in 1 Thessalonians 4:14: "For if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." Christ shall descend with the glory of His Father. He shall appear in a glory becoming the Supreme Lord and Judge of heaven and earth. Now heaven will, for a time, be left empty of its inhabitants; those glorious and blessed abodes will be deserted by those who dwelt there to attend the judging of the world.

3. The saints on earth shall behold this glorious sight of their Savior coming in the clouds of heaven, with all His holy angels with Him. The first notice that shall be given of this descent shall be in heaven, but soon after there shall be notice of it on earth. Christ shall be seen coming while He is yet at a great distance; every eye shall see Him of both good and bad persons.

It will be the most joyful sight to the saints that ever they saw. The first notice of it will cause their hearts to overflow with joy and gladness; it will fill the hearts of the godly as full of joy as it will the wicked with terror and amazement. If the saints are then wakened out of their sleep at midnight with this sound, that Christ appears in the clouds of heaven coming to judgment, it will be joyful news to them. It is probable that many of the saints at that time will be found suffering persecu-

tion, for there are several things in Scripture which seem to declare that the time when Christ is coming shall be a time when wickedness shall exceedingly abound, and the saints shall be greatly persecuted—but this shall set them at liberty. Then they may lift up their heads out of prisons and dungeons, and many out of galleys and mines, and shall see their Redeemer drawing nigh. This sight will drive away their persecutors; it will put an end to all their cruelties, and set God's people at liberty.

Then, when all the kindreds of the earth shall wail at the sight of Christ in the clouds of heaven, and wicked men everywhere shall be shrieking and crying with terrible amazement, the saints shall be filled with praise and transport. We read that when Christ ascended into heaven, the disciples stood steadfastly looking on as He went up. But the saints then on earth shall view Christ with more steadfastness as He descends in His heavenly and exceeding glory. They shall feed and feast their eyes with this majestic sight, beholding in what solemn and glorious pomp their own blessed Redeemer descends. This sight shall put a final end to all sorrow, and their everlasting joy and glory will commence from it. The hope of the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ is said to be a blessed hope. Titus 2:13: "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ." But when it comes it will be a more blessed sight.

4. The dead in Christ shall arise at the sound of the last trumpet with glorified bodies, and the living saints shall see them. The holy and blessed souls of saints who descended from heaven with Christ shall then be

reunited to those bodies that shall be prepared by infinite wisdom and skill to be fit organs for a holy and happy soul. The body shall not rise as it was before; there shall be a vast difference in it. 1 Corinthians 15: 42-44: "It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body."

The glory of that body with which the saints shall rise we now cannot conceive of. It shall not be such a dull and heavy-molded thing as it is now. It shall be active and vigorous as a flame of fire fit for the use of a glorified soul. It will be no clog or hindrance to the soul as it is now, but an organ in every way fit for the use of a glorious spirit. It shall not be weak, infirmed, and frail as it is now; for, though it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power.

Now the body is in need of food and sleep continually to replenish itself, but it shall not be so then. Now the body is subject to weariness and diseases, but it shall not be so then. Now if God lets in any great matter of divine light into the soul, the body is ready to sink under it, but it shall not be so then. The glorified body of the saints shall not then fail or flag at all by the most powerful exercises of mind. Now none can see God and live, but the body shall not fail at all by the immediate beholding of God. Now the saints can see but little. When God reveals Himself a little, as He does at times, the saints are forced to beseech God either to strengthen them to see it, or to stay His hand. But then the body shall be so vigorous and spiritual that the constant and everlasting view of the glory of God shall

in no way overcome it, or cause it in the least to fail.

The body shall not only be raised in an exceeding strength, but in wonderful beauty, for we are told that their bodies shall be like Christ's glorious body. The greatest beauty that ever any human body appeared in this world is vile and base in comparison. The beauty of the bodies of the saints shall not only consist in the most lovely proportion of the features of their countenance and parts of their bodies, but in a semblance of the excellencies of their minds, which will appear exceedingly in their countenance. Their air and mien will be such as will naturally result from the wisdom, purity, and love of the soul, and shall denote and hold forth an inexpressible sweetness, benevolence, and complacency.

If I may speak what appears probable to me, and what seems to be authorized by the Scriptures, their bodies shall be, as it were, clothed with garments of light. The prophet Daniel, speaking of the resurrection, says in Daniel 12:2-3, "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever." And Christ, speaking of the end of the world, says in Matthew 13:43, "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." And there is nothing to hinder our understanding this literally of their bodies, and especially when this shining of the saints is spoken of from time to time as what shall be at the resurrection, and not of their souls in a separate state.

Moses's face shone when he had been conversing

with God on the mount. Much more may it be expected that the bodies of the saints shall shine when they shall converse a thousand times more intimately with God, not on Mount Sinai, but in heaven. We read that when Christ's body was transfigured, to teach us what the body of Christ should be in its glorified state, His face shone as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light (Matthew 17:2). But we are told that the bodies of the saints shall be made like Christ's glorious body. Therefore there seems to be much ground to think that at the resurrection the bodies of the saints shall shine with a glorious light, and that they shall be, as it were, clothed with light. Thus the departed saints shall arise with glorious bodies; they shall lift up their heads out of their graves with joyful and glorious countenances. And at the same time the bodies of the living shall in a moment be changed into the same strength, activity, incorruptibility, and beauty and glory with which those who were dead shall arise. 1 Corinthians 15:51-53: "Behold, I show you a mystery, we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump (for the trumpet shall sound); and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality."

5. Then all the saints shall mount up, as with wings, to meet the Lord in the air, and to be forever with Him. After the dead in Christ are risen, and the living saints changed, then they will be prepared to go to Christ, and to meet the bridegroom. The world will be about to be destroyed, and the wicked shall be in dreadful amazement, but the saints shall be delivered. Daniel

12:1: "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of Thy people, and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that same time; and at that time Thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." They shall take an everlasting farewell of this evil world where there is so much sin, and where they have met with so much trouble; and they shall be caught up in the clouds, and there they shall meet their glorious Redeemer; and a joyful meeting it will be. They shall go to Christ, never again to be separated from Him. 1 Thessalonians 4: 16-17: "For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we, which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

6. Then shall the good works which the saints have done be declared to their peace and glory. We are often told that every man shall be judged according to his works, and Christ keeps a book of remembrance of the good works of the saints as well as of the sins of the ungodly. And however mean and polluted that which the saints do is in itself, yet all the pollution that attends it is hidden, and everything they do for God that has the least sincerity in it is precious in God's eyes. Through His infinite grace it shall in no wise lose its reward, neither shall it in any wise lose its honor. At the day of judgment they shall receive praise and glory in reward for it. Christ will declare all the good they have done to their honor: what they did secretly and

the world knew it not, and when they did not let their left hand know what their right had done. Then shall they receive praise and honor for all their labor, for all their self-denial, and all their suffering in the cause of Christ. Those good works of theirs that were despised, and for which they were condemned and suffered reproach, shall now be set in a true light. And however they were reproached and slandered by men, they shall receive praise of God in the sight of angels and men. 1 Corinthians 4:5: "Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall every man have praise of God."

Those righteous men who have been condemned here before unjust judges shall be acquitted and honored then before the righteous Judge of heaven and earth. Hebrews 6:10: "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which ye have showed towards His name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister." Then will be the time when their Lord and Master will say unto them, "Well done, good and faithful servants." Thus, in the description of the day of judgment in Matthew 25, Christ rehearses the good works of the saints: "For I was an hungered, and ye gave Me meat. I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink. I was a stranger, and ye took Me in: naked, and ye clothed me. I was sick, and ye visited me. I was in prison, and ye came unto Me." And though the saints there reply, "Lord, when saw we Thee an hungered, and fed Thee? or thirsty, and gave Thee drink? When saw we Thee a stranger, and took Thee in? or naked, and clothed Thee? Or when saw we Thee sick,

or in prison, and came unto Thee?” Though they thought that nothing that they had done was worthy to be so accounted of as it was by Christ, yet Christ, of His grace, esteemed it highly, and highly honored them for it, as follows in verse 40: “And the King shall answer and say unto them, ‘Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.’ ” And if the sins of the saints shall be rehearsed, it shall not be for their shame, but for the glory of divine grace, to give opportunity to them to plead the atonement of that Savior who will be the Judge, to give occasion to them to produce Christ’s righteousness, which will surely be accepted by himself.

7. The saints shall sit on thrones with Christ, to judge wicked men and devils. Christ will put that honor upon them on that day. He will cause them to sit on His right hand as judges with Him, and so the saints shall judge the world. Matthew 19:28: “And Jesus said unto them, ‘Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.’ ” 1 Corinthians 6:2–3: “Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? And if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? How much more things that pertain to this life?” They shall judge kings and princes who were their persecutors, and the devils who were their tempters.

8. At the finishing of the judgment Christ shall pronounce the blessed sentence upon them, “Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for

you from the foundation of the world.”

This blessed sentence Christ shall pronounce on them with inexpressible manifestations of grace and love. Every word of it will be ravishing to them, and will cause raptures of joy in their hearts, that this glorious Person, though He orders with such indignation the wicked to depart from Him, yet will so sweetly invite them to come with Him, and that He should refer to them in such a manner as “ye blessed of My Father.” Christ will pronounce them blessed in the sight of men and angels, and blessed indeed, because they are blessed by His Father. There will not only be a manifestation of Christ’s love to them in this sentence, but a declaration of the Father’s love, for they are declared to be blessed by Him.

Christ shall invite them to come with Him, and for no less a purpose than to inherit a kingdom. Christ gives them a glorious kingdom. The wealth to which He invites them is the wealth of a kingdom, and the honor He gives them is the honor of kings. And what yet adds to the blessedness is that it is a kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world. God loved them from all eternity, and therefore He has prepared a kingdom for them. God had respect to them in the creation of the world, and then prepared this glorious kingdom for them out of love to them. They have therefore a right to it, and now therefore they are invited to come to possess it; and not only to possess it, but to inherit it, that is, to possess it as heirs, as those who have a right to the kingdom by virtue of their being His children.

Thus having considered what glory, honor, and peace the saints have in this life, at death, in a separate state, and at the day of judgment, I now proceed to consider their consummate state of happiness after the day of judgment. Here I would consider their entrance into this happiness, and its nature, its degree, and some of the circumstances which attend it.

First, I will consider their entrance into this state of consummate happiness.

1. When the judgment has ended they shall ascend with Christ in a triumphant and glorious manner into heaven. Christ, once He has passed sentence, shall then return again. He shall pass beyond these aerial heavens and shall ascend towards the highest heaven, together with ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands of glorious spirits, and of the saints with their glorified bodies. They shall leave this lower world, and all the wicked, to be burnt in everlasting fire; and as they are ascending shall look back and see it all in one vast conflagration. Then shall be fulfilled in the most remarkable manner the prophecy in Psalm 47:4-5: "He shall choose our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob, whom He loved. God is gone up with a shout, the lord with the sound of a trumpet." That will be the most joyful procession that ever will be seen. And when they are come to heaven they shall enter in with joy into that new Jerusalem where they are to dwell forever—and this will be the most joyful day that ever was in heaven. It is probable that when Christ ascended into heaven after His death and resurrection, it was the most joyful day in heaven that ever had been seen till then. But this second ascension will be a more glorious and joyful day than that.

2. When they have come to heaven, they shall be there actually instated by God and Christ in their ultimate and consummate happiness, and then they shall have complete redemption. To illustrate this, observe:

(1) They shall be perfectly happy in the whole man, both body and soul. Before, their souls only were happy, while the body lay in a state of putrefaction in the grave. Now they shall be in that state which is natural to the human soul, which is a state of union with the body. It is natural for the soul to act by a body, and to make use of such an organ, and the soul is not complete without the body. Then both body and soul shall be glorified together.

(2) Then the body of Christ will be perfect and complete. Then it shall have all its members, no one wanting. Now the body of Christ is incomplete, and many members are wanting; but then it will be perfected, having every member. Now the body of Christ is in a growing state, but then it shall have come to its perfect state, to receive no more addition. Then the body of Christ shall be perfect, not only as it shall have every member, but every member shall be in its perfect state. Now as there are many of the members of Christ's body wanting, so there are many that are imperfect. Many who are engrafted into Christ have great infirmity and great remains of corruption, and many of His members are now under affliction. But then every member shall be perfectly freed from all sin and sorrow, and there never will be any more either sin or sorrow in any member of the body of Christ.

Then also the body of Christ will be complete because those who are brought to a perfect state are wholly brought home. Before only the soul was brought

home to glory, while the body that was also to be united to Christ lay in the grave. The body of Christ will then also be in its complete state, because then all the parts will be together; and this is one end of Christ's coming into the world: that He might gather together all in one (Ephesians 1:10). Before they were scattered, some in heaven and some on earth, some mixed with wicked men, as wheat with tares, and as lilies among thorns. The church, therefore, then being made complete, will exceedingly rejoice. And Christ, having His mystical body complete, will rejoice in the completeness of His church, and the church will rejoice in its own completeness.

(3) Then the Mediator will have fully accomplished the work for which He came into the world. Then He will have perfected the work of redemption, not only in the impetration of it, but also in the application. Then all whom God has given Him will be actually and fully redeemed, their bodies as well as souls. Then He will have conquered all His enemies, and will triumph over them all. Then He will have put down all authority and power. 1 Corinthians 15:21–25: "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the first-fruits; afterwards they that are Christ's, at His coming. Then cometh the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power. For He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet."

Then Christ will surely have obtained the joy that was set before Him. Then He shall have perfected the

full design that was upon His heart from all eternity. And then Christ will rejoice, and all His members must rejoice with Him. Christ shall triumph over His enemies, and the saints shall then triumph over all their enemies, and the joys of the triumph shall last forever.

(4) Then God will have obtained the end of all the great works which He has been doing from the beginning of the world. Then will be the consummation of all things. The deep designs of God will be unfolded. His marvelous contrivances, and His hidden, intricate, and inexplicable works will appear. The end being obtained, as all things are from God, so will they then all be to Him, and will issue in His glory. His power appeared in the beginning of them, and His glory will be manifested in the end and consummation of them. Then will it be seen that all the revolutions and changes which have existed from the beginning of the world are for God's glory. Then it will appear how all the wheels of His providence have conspired together to bring about the glory of God and Christ, and the happiness of His people. And this will cause an exceeding accession of happiness to the saints who behold it. Then will God have fully glorified Himself, and glorified His Son, and glorified His elect. Then He will see that all is very good, and will rejoice in His own works, which will be the joy of all heaven. Then will God rest and be refreshed, and thence forward will all the inhabitants of heaven keep an eternal Sabbath of rest and praise, such as never was kept before.

(5) Then will be the marriage of the Lamb. When the church is completely purified and beautified, nothing wanting, and all the parts of the body in their due proportion and joyful state, then may the Lamb's

wife be said to have made herself ready. Then will she be as a bride prepared for her Husband. And when the church is thus prepared by Christ at such great cost, at the shedding of His own blood, it will be brought to a more glorious union to Christ than ever before, to a more intimate communion with Him, and to a more high enjoyment of His excellency and love. Then will be the highest accomplishment of the joy spoken of in Revelation 19:7-9: "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to Him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come; and His wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And He saith unto me, 'Write, "Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.'" And He saith unto me, 'These are the true sayings of God.'" It will be the day of the gladness of Christ's heart; the feast, pomp, holy mirth, and joy of this marriage day will be continued to all eternity.

(6) Then will Christ present His church to his Father. The Father sent forth Christ into the world to redeem a vast number of the children of men, and to bring them home to God, from whom they had apostatized, to bring them back to Him, the great Creator and Father of all things, and the Fountain of all good. Christ, having accomplished this, will bring them to God, and present them to Him; and then may Christ say, as in Hebrews 2:13 and John 17:12, "Here am I, and the children which Thou hast given Me; none of them is missing . . . of those that Thou hast given Me, I have lost nothing." We read that when Christ shall have accomplished the work which the Father sent Him to do, He shall deliver up the kingdom to the Father.

1 Corinthians 15:24: "Then cometh the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power." And as He shall deliver up the kingdom, He shall present the subjects of the kingdom; and what He has obtained by ruling, He shall present as the fruits of His reign.

(7) Then will God make a still more abundant manifestation and communication of Himself. God shall be all in all. And the glory of God and the glory of His Son shall be displayed in heaven in a more abundant manner than ever before. He will put forth His Spirit more plentifully, and will make answerable additions to the glory of the saints, such as will be becoming the commencement of the ultimate and most perfect state of things, and such as will become the joyful occasion of the marriage of the Lamb.

Second, I shall now describe the nature and degree of the consummate and eternal glory and blessedness of the saints. I would first begin with the lowest part of it, the glory of the place. We have already observed that heaven is a place. They shall dwell in the most glorious part of the whole creation of God. It is called "paradise" in Luke 23:43: "And Jesus said unto him, 'Verily I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with Me in paradise.'" 2 Corinthians 12:4: "How that He was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for man to utter." Revelation 2:7: "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God."

The word "paradise" signifies a most pleasant and

delightful garden, of which the garden of Eden was a type. The garden of Eden was without doubt a place delightful beyond what we can easily conceive. But if this earthly paradise was so delightful, how pleasant and glorious may we conclude the heavenly paradise to be, that was not made merely to be the residence of some of the innocent creatures of God during their time of probation, as Eden was, but was prepared by infinite wisdom and skill for the everlasting dwelling place of the great King of heaven and earth, and of His Son Jesus Christ, the place where they might show their glory, wisdom, and love forever, and which is to be the habitation of confirmed saints and angels!

When God made the universe, He made many parts of it for inferior uses, in which He displayed marvelous skill. Then He made the earth, the sun, moon, stars, and the visible heavens, which appear truly glorious; but there was one part of the creation that God made more especially for Himself, to be His own dwelling-place, the place of His glorious rest—and we may conclude that this is, beyond all comparison, more glorious than the other parts of it. If some parts of the visible world are so glorious, such as the sun, moon, and stars, how glorious may we conclude the highest heavens to be! This is the heavenly Mount Zion, the royal city of the great God. It has been the ambition of earthly monarchs to make the cities where they dwell to be exceedingly magnificent. Thus the king of Babylon boasted, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" (Daniel 4:30). Kings, especially will have their own palaces to be most magnificent. But if some of those earthly cities and

palaces are so glorious, which are for the habitation of worms, how glorious may we think that to be which is for the glorious habitation of God Almighty!

As the third heaven is higher than the earth, so we may expect that it is proportionately more glorious than any earthly garden, city, or palace. Heaven is not only the city of God, but His palace; not only His palace, but His throne. Isaiah 66:1: "Thus saith the Lord, 'Heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool; where is the house that ye build unto Me, and where is the place of My rest?' " We read in 1 Kings 10: 18–20 how magnificent Solomon's throne was: "Moreover, the king made a great throne of ivory, and overlaid it with the best of gold. The throne had six steps, and the top of the throne was round behind; and there were stays on either side of the place of the seat, and two lions stood beside the stays. And twelve lions stood there on the one side and on the other upon the six steps: there was not the like made in any kingdom." But what is the throne of a glowworm?

God does not lack the skill to make His palace and throne glorious enough to become the majesty and glory of Him whose house and seat it is . The builder is God, and there is no want of skill in the architect. How glorious and magnificent was the temple of Solomon, which was built only to be the place of the special symbols of God's presence on earth among His people Israel! How much more glorious is that heavenly temple which God Himself has built to be the place of His glorious presence among glorified saints and angels throughout all eternity! This is a place contrived purposely to show the boundless riches of God's grace and love. And therefore, God has not spared as to the de-

lights and glories with which He has adorned the place. God is rich enough to make the place transcend all created glory. Earthly kings build their houses and palaces, and make them magnificent, according to their wealth and ability. But God is infinitely rich. He does not spare the cost of the treasures to be laid out in adorning heaven through fear of impoverishing Himself.

The glory of His residence is what we cannot conceive of, and this is one of those things spoken of in 1 Corinthians 2:9: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." Therefore in the descriptions that are given of it in the Scriptures, the images made use of to shadow it forth to us are the most glorious with which we are conversant in the world. Such is the glorious description of it by John, as represented to him in the apocalyptic vision. Revelation 21:10–11, 18–23: "And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God; and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper-stone, clear as crystal. And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. And the foundations of the wall of the city was garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second sapphire; the third a chalcedony; the fourth an emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several

gate was of one pearl; and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. And I saw no temple therein, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.”

Heaven is here represented by a city whose very walls were made of precious stones. The foundations were also all precious stones, the gates were each a single pearl, and the very streets of the city were of pure gold; yet it was something so excellent, as it appeared to John, that his comparing it to pure gold did not represent the excellency of it. It had also the beautiful transparency of clear glass. The apostle could find nothing on earth excellent enough to adequately represent its surpassing beauty: “The streets of the city were pure gold, like unto clear glass.” He goes on with the description in Revelation 22:1–2, 4–5: “And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light, and they shall reign for ever and ever.”

This glorious place shall be the residence of the saints forever. They shall dwell with Him in their Father’s house; they shall dwell in this house, for it is Christ’s house. He is the heir and owner of it because He is the only-begotten Son of God. The church shall dwell in it with Christ because she is the Lamb’s wife.

God has made heaven to be His own peculiar dwelling place, and the dwelling place of His children. When He made the world, He made heaven for them; and therefore Christ says to them at the close of their trial, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34).

Second, the glory of the bodies of the saints. But this need not be insisted on here, since I have considered it already when speaking of the resurrection. I would only observe that however great the glory of the place is, the glory of their bodies will doubtless be far greater. For the place is made to be a dwelling place for their glorious bodies, and the inhabitants will doubtless be more glorious than the habitation that is made for them, as the end is of greater value than the means. However bright heaven itself shall shine, the bodies of the saints themselves will shine far brighter, and appear far more beautiful.

Third, the glory and beauty which God will put upon their souls will as far exceed the beauty of their bodies, as the beauty of their bodies will far exceed the beauty of the place. Here will be their principal ornament, and if their bodies shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father, how bright will their souls shine in the glorious image of God, made perfect in them! When they shall be presented to Christ, perfectly free from sin, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; then they shall appear holy and without blemish; their bodies shall not only be made like Christ's glorious body, but their souls shall be like His holy and glorified soul. They shall then shine with the glory of Christ reflected from them without anything to

obscure the bright image. Their souls shall be made glorious in wisdom and knowledge; their faculties shall be exceedingly strengthened and enlarged, their eyes made perfectly clear, and divine light shall fill the soul, so that there shall be no darkness within, and perfect love shall reign in the heart. Divine love shall be strong; all the soul shall be, as it were, love. This love shall be exceedingly great in its principle, and shall always be in its highest exercise. Then shall humility also be brought to perfection. None can now express or conceive how pure and holy will be the disposition of the soul of a glorified saint, which shall be, as it were, all love, all sweetness, and all humility. The ornament of a meek and quiet spirit is said to be, in the sight of God, of great price in this world. But how precious will such spiritual ornaments be in heaven when they shall be thus perfected! The souls of the saints are God's jewels; and how bright will God make those his jewels shine in heaven when He has polished them, and fitted them to be gems in His own crown of glory! The soul of man, being spiritual and rational, is capable of incomparably greater beauty than the body, because the soul is capable of receiving the image of God, of which the body is not. And the souls of the saints, when God has perfected them, shall appear as the very image of God Himself; and in the graces in which they shall shine shall be seen the glory of the divine workmanship in its perfection. And so lovely will they be that there will be more loveliness and beauty in the soul of one saint than in all the glory and beauty of the place put together.

Fourth, they shall have great delight in the society and enjoyment of one another. We now do not know

what enjoyment they will have in conversing together, and in communicating with each other—but doubtless it will be far more perfect than any we have now. The saints in heaven shall all be one society; they shall be united together without any schism; there shall be a sweet harmony, and a perfect union. There the saints shall see and converse with Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Isaiah, Paul, and all the holy martyrs; and they shall freely converse with them.

It will be a most blessed society. There shall be no jars or contentions, nor breaking out among them; no manner of strife, nor envy, nor jealousy; no ill will, but perfect peace and perfect love throughout the whole society. Each one shall love every other one with a most endeared and strong affection. Each one will be perfectly excellent and lovely, and will appear so in every other's eyes. They will be exceedingly delighted in that lovely and perfect image of God which each one shall see in every other one. They shall manifest their love to each other in the most becoming and amiable manner, without anything ever to disturb or interrupt the peace of that blessed society.

There shall be no mixture of wicked men among them, as it is here in this world, to defile or dishonor their company. Here the visible churches of Christ are often defiled and dishonored by one wicked man or another, but that church above shall always be perfectly pure. Revelation 21:27: "And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie, but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." This blessed family, being all united in one body, as having many members, shall all serve and contribute to each other's

happiness, as do the members of a body that is in perfect health. They shall delight to assist each other in their contemplations, communicating their glorious contemplations one to another. How sweetly will they converse together of the glories of God and Christ, and of God's glorious works of power, and wisdom, and mercy! And how will they convey the bright conceptions and the raptures of joy from one soul to another, imparting to each other the sweet communications which they themselves receive from the glorious King of heaven! How they will help one another in their praises to God and Christ, each one bearing his part in the heavenly melody, extolling the Most High! And what a glorious harmony of celestial voices without number will that be when the whole assembly of the upper world shall together lift up the praises of God on high! John had this represented to him at a great distance, and tells us of it in Revelation 14:2: "I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder; and I heard the voice of harpers, harping with their harps." So ardent were they, and so great a multitude! And how will they rejoice in their numbers to see so great a multitude all united, all perfectly holy, all full of mutual love, all fellow-citizens, all brethren!

QUESTION. When the saints go to heaven, do they have any peculiar comfort in meeting with those who were their pious friends on earth? I answer in the affirmative, and I think it is evident from 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18: "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them

also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”

Here it is evident:

- That what the apostle mentions, as a matter of comfort to Christians respecting their departed Christian friends, is that they shall meet them, and see them again. It is not only that their departed friends, though dead, are happy, but they shall see them, and be with them again. This is here plainly asserted. “Mourn not for them,” says the apostle, “as those that have no hope; for when Christ comes, God shall bring them again, and we which are alive shall be caught up with them; and so shall we be ever with the Lord together. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.” The apostle therefore must be understood to mean that they should comfort one another when they are mourners, with the consideration that they should hereafter be with their departed friends again in a glorious and happy state, and never part more.

- That there will be something else that will give comfort in meeting them in a future state than in seeing other saints. Otherwise why did the apostle mention for their comfort that they would see them again, rather than other saints whom they had not seen or

heard of? The apostle's speaking thus to the Thessalonians might give them just ground to expect that the peculiarly strong affection which they had cherished for their departure would be again gratified by meeting them again. For this crossing of that affection was the ground of their mourning. If the Thessalonians knew that to see their friends again in another world would be no gratification to the affection which they had for them as their friends, and did in no way think or conceive of it as such, then to think of seeing them would be no more comfort to them or remedy to their sorrow than to think that they should see any other saint that lived or died in another country, or in a past age—and that because it would be no remedy to the ground and foundation of their mourning: the crossing their affection to them as their friends. And if it would be no remedy to their mourning to think thus respecting it, it never would have been mentioned to them by the apostle as a ground of comfort, or reason why they need not mourn. What they mourned for was that they would not have their affections towards them satisfied by seeing them, and conversing with them again.

That for which the heathen mourned excessively, here spoken of as those who have no hope, was that they would never have that affection gratified again. It follows then that the special affection which the saints have in this world to other saints who are their friends will in some respects remain in another world. There is no reason why we should suppose that saints who have dwelt together in this world, and have showed kindness to each other, who have been affectionate to each other's true happiness, should not love one another with a love of gratitude for it in another world.

There is no reason why good ministers whom God has made the instruments of salvation to others should not have special joy in meeting their converts in heaven. 2 Corinthians 1:14: "As also ye have acknowledged us in part that we are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours, in the day of the Lord Jesus." 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20: "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For ye are our glory and joy." I see no reason why those who love one another with a virtuous love, and from such a love have shown kindness one to another, should not love one another the better for it in another world. There is no reason to think that the friendship contracted here on earth between saints will be rooted out in another world. All natural affections, so far as founded in animal nature of the infirmity of the present state, will cease in another world, or that, with respect to any affection that the godly have had to the finally reprobate, the love of God will wholly swallow it up and cause it wholly to cease. But I see nothing that argues that one saint in glory may not have a special respect to another, because God made use of that other as an instrument to bring him into being, and thus made him the remote occasion of his happiness; or that, when pious parents lose pious children, they may not comfort themselves with the thought that they shall go to them, as probably David did when he said concerning his child (2 Samuel 12:23), "But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me." Or that even a former acquaintance with persons and their virtues may not occasion a particular respect in another world. They may go to

heaven with a desire to see them upon that very account. The impressions which they have of their amiable qualifications in consequence of their acquaintance with them here may yet remain in another world.

Fifth, the saints in heaven shall see and converse with Christ. They shall see Christ in a twofold sense.

(1) They shall see Him with their bodily eyes as appearing in His glorified human nature, and this will be a most glorious sight. The loveliness of Christ as thus appearing will be a most ravishing thing to them; for though the bodies of the saints shall appear with an exceeding beauty and glory, yet the body of Christ will without doubt immensely surpass them as much as the brightness of the sun does that of the stars. The glorified body of Christ will be the masterpiece of all God's workmanship, the whole material universe. There shall be in His glorious countenance the manifestations of His glorious spiritual perfections: His majesty, His holiness, His surpassing grace, love, and meekness. The eye will never be wearied with beholding this glorious sight. When Christ was transfigured on the mount, Peter was for making three tabernacles, so that Christ, Moses, and Elijah might remain there, and that the heavenly vision might never come to an end.

Job had respect to this sight of Christ, and comforted himself with the thoughts of it when he said, "For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me" (Job 19:25-27). This will be the most glorious object that the saints will ever see with

their bodily eyes. And there will be far more happiness redounding to the beholders from this sight than from any other; yea, the eyes of the glorified body will be given chiefly so that the saints may behold this sight.

(2) They shall see him with the eye of the soul. It is said that they "shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2). And that they shall know even as they are known (1 Corinthians 13:12). They shall have a clear understanding of Christ as Mediator, how He has undertaken from all eternity to accomplish their salvation. They shall understand the glorious covenant of redemption between the Father and the Son. They shall see the eternal love Christ had to them before the foundation of the world. They shall, in all probability, understand the mystery of His incarnation. They shall know and understand the gloriousness of the way of salvation by Christ, "which things the angels desire to look into." They shall have a full understanding of the infinite wisdom of God in contriving the plan of salvation. They shall comprehend the height, depth, length, and breadth of the love of Christ to sinners in undergoing for them the agony of the garden, and the more overwhelming agonies of the cross.

Now the heart is dull in the contemplation of such things. How often are they heard of by the saints on earth with but little affection! How often, when they see them set forth in the Lord's Supper, are they cold and lifeless! But then it shall not be so. Then the wonderful works of God, and the love of Christ in the work of redemption, will appear as they are. Then there will constantly be, without any interruption, a most lively and full sense of it, without any deadness or coldness. Everything in the work of redemption will appear in its

true glory; the understanding shall be wonderfully opened, and it shall be perpetually like the clear hemisphere with the sun in the meridian; there shall never come over one cloud to darken the mind.

Then the saints shall see fully how the excellence and loveliness of Christ appear in all that He did and suffered. They shall see the liveliness of those excellencies that appeared in Christ's human nature when on earth: His wonderful meekness and humility, His patience under suffering, and His perfect obedience to the Father. Then shall they also see the beauty that appears in Christ's human nature in its glorified state, wherein the excellencies of it shine without a veil. They shall also see the excellence of the divine nature of Christ. They shall behold clearly and immediately His divine majesty, and His divine and infinite holiness, grace, and love. They shall see Christ as the perfect image of God, an image wherein all the glory of the divine nature is fully expressed. They shall behold Him as the brightness of His Father's glory, and they shall see that bright and perfect image of God which the Father beheld, and was infinitely happy in beholding from all eternity. But this sight of the glory of Christ in His divine nature belongs to that beatific vision, of which I would speak more particularly hereafter.

They shall not only see this glorious Person as at a distance, but they shall be admitted to be near Him and converse with Him. This sight of His glory and loveliness will fill them with the most exalted love which love will cause them to desire conversation; and they shall be admitted to it to the fullest of their desires, and that at all times.

Observe two things concerning this converse with

Christ, to which the saints shall be admitted in heaven:

One, it shall be most free and intimate. There shall be nothing to forbid them or deter them. Though Christ is so glorious a Person, in so exalted a state in heaven, being Lord of heaven and earth, yet He will treat them as brethren, and they shall converse with Him as friends. He will also honor them and advance them to the dignity of kings, that they may be fit to converse with so glorious a King. Revelation 1:6: "And hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever, Amen." Christ, when on earth, treated His disciples with great familiarity and freedom. He treated them as friends. John 15:15: "I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth; but I call you friends, for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you." So in heaven He will not keep them at a greater distance, but will admit them nearer because they shall be fitted to be nearer to Him, and to converse more intimately with Him. Oh, how happy will it render them to have so great and honorable a person treating them with such grace and condescension!

Though they shall see the awful majesty of Christ, that sight will not make them afraid, because they will see His love, grace, and condescension, equal to His majesty.

Two, this converse shall be most full and satisfying. This is evident from that most emphatic expression of the church being "the bride, the Lamb's wife." He will open the infinite and eternal fountain of his love to them, and will pour forth that fountain into their hearts. This love will be as a pure river of water of life, a

river of pleasures, constantly flowing into the souls of the saints, that shall be in them as rivers of living water. And they shall also in their converse with Christ manifest their love to Him. Their hearts shall flow out in an unceasing stream, or ascend continually in a rapturous transport of love. Of those things we can say but little now; yet sometimes when God helps us we can conceive of them a little, but it is but a little at the most.

Three, the saints in heaven shall see God. They shall not only see that glorious city, and the saints there, the holy angels, and the glorified body of Christ, but they shall see God Himself. This is promised to the saints in Matthew 5:8: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." 1 Corinthians 13:12: "For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known." This is what divines call "the beatific vision," because this is that in which the blessedness of the saints in glory chiefly consists. This is the fountain, the infinite fountain of their blessedness. The sight of Christ, which has already been spoken of is not here to be excluded, for He is a divine person; the sight of Him in His divine nature therefore belongs to the beatific vision. This vision of God is the chief blessing of heaven, and therefore I would speak of it a little more particularly.

### *The Beatific Vision*

1. As to the faculty that is the subject of this vision, it is no sight of anything with the bodily eyes, but is an intellectual view. The beatific vision of God is not a sight with the eyes of the body, but with the eyes of the

soul. There is no such thing as seeing God properly with the bodily eyes, because He is a Spirit. One of His attributes is that He is invisible. 1 Timothy 1:17: "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory for ever and ever." Colossians 1:15: "Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature." Hebrews 11:27: "By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible."

This highest blessedness of the soul does not enter in at the door of the bodily senses. This would be to make the blessedness of the soul dependent on the body, or the happiness of man's superior part to be dependent on the inferior part. The beatific vision of God is not any sight with the bodily eyes, because the separate souls of the saints, and the angels which are mere spirits, and never were united to body, have this vision. Matthew 18:10: "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven."

It is not in beholding any form or visible representation, or any shape, color, or shining light in which the highest happiness of the soul consists, but it is in seeing God, who is a Spirit, spiritually, with the eyes of the soul. We have no reason to think that there is any such thing as God's manifesting Himself by any outward glorious appearance, that is, the symbol of His presence in heaven, any otherwise than by the glorified body of Christ. In the Old Testament God oftentimes manifested Himself by an outward glory, sometimes in an outward shape or the form of a man. But when God manifested Himself thus, it was by Christ. It was the

second Person of the Trinity only that was wont thus to appear to men in an outward glory and human shape. John 1:18: "No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him."

But since Christ has actually assumed a human body, there is no need of His assuming any aerial form or shape anymore. The Deity now became visible to the bodily eyes in a more perfect manner by His having a real body. The saints who shall see Christ in heaven in His glorified body much more properly see Christ than if they only saw an assumed shape or some outward glorious appearance as the symbol of His presence. For now that which they see is not only a glorious appearance by which Christ is represented, but the real Christ; it is His own body.

Seeing God in the glorified body of Christ is the most perfect way of seeing God with the bodily eyes that can be. For in seeing a real body, which one of the persons of the Trinity has assumed to be His body, and in which He dwells forever as His own, the divine majesty and excellency appear as much as it is possible for them to appear in outward form or shape. The saints actually see a divine person with bodily eyes, and in the same manner as we see one another. But when God showed Himself under outward appearances and symbols of His presence only, that was not so proper a sight of a divine person; and it was a more imperfect way of God's manifesting Himself, suitable to the more imperfect state of the church under the Old Testament. But now Christ really subsists in a glorified body. Those outward symbols and appearances are done away, being needless and imperfect. This more imperfect way there-

fore is altogether needless, seeing Christ there appears as a glorified body.

This seems to be one end of God's assuming a human body, so that the saints might see God with bodily eyes; that they may see Him not only in the understanding, but in every way of seeing of which the human nature is capable; that we might see God as a divine person as we see one another. And there is no need of God the Father's manifesting Himself in any other glorious form, for he who sees the Son sees the Father (John 14:9), and that is because He is the image of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15). Hebrews 1:3: "Who, being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."

But if there is any outward symbol by which God the Father represents Himself in heaven, seeing that symbol is not the beatific vision, for that is a far more imperfect way of seeing God than seeing Him with the eye of the soul. The soul is capable of apprehending God in a thousand times more perfect and glorious manner than the eye of the body is. The soul has in itself those powers whereby it is sufficiently capable of apprehending spiritual objects without looking through the windows of the outward senses. The soul is capable of seeing God more immediately, and more certainly, and more fully and gloriously, than the eye of the body is.

2. The act of vision will, first, be an immediate sight; it will be no apprehension of God's excellency by acquiring it from His works. Neither will it be such a spiritual sight of God as the saints have in this world, seeing Him in His Word and making use of His ordi-

nances, which is called "seeing through a glass darkly." Then they shall see Him "face to face," according to 1 Corinthians 13:12. They shall not only see the glory of God as reflected from other things, but they shall see Him as we see the sun, by His own light in a clear hemisphere. It will be an intuitive view of God. What knowledge the saints have of God in this world is like the twilight before the sunrise; it is not the direct light of the sun, but the light of the sun reflected, and it is comparatively a dim light. But hereafter the saints shall enjoy the perfect day; they shall see God as we immediately behold the sun after it has risen above the horizon, with no cloud or vapor in the heavens to hinder its sight.

Second, it shall be, according to men's capacity, a perfect sight. It shall not be a perfectly comprehensive sight, because it is impossible that a saint's mind should comprehend God; yet it shall be perfect in its kind; it shall be perfectly certain, without any doubt or possibility of doubt. There shall be a view of God in His being, and in His power, wisdom, holiness, goodness, love, and all-sufficiency, that shall be attended with intuitive certainty, without any mixture of unbelief, and with much greater certainty than any sight with the bodily eye. And then it shall be perfectly clear without any view of darkness. Now, how much darkness is there mingled with that spiritual sight which the saints have of God's glory in this world! But then there shall be no obscurity, nothing to cloud the understanding or hinder the clearness of the view. God shall be hidden with no veil, neither shall there be any veil in the heavens. And this sight shall be most enlarged. They shall see vastly more of the glory of God than any of the saints do

in this world; the souls of the saints shall be like the angels in extensiveness of understanding.

3. The object of this vision brings these observations:

One, they shall see everything in God that tends to excite and inflame love, i. e., everything that is lovely, everything that tends to exalt their esteem and admiration, to warm and endear the heart. They shall behold the infinite excellency and glory of God, shall have a blessed-making sight of His glorious majesty and of His infinite holiness, shall see as those angels do, of whom we read in Isaiah 6:3 that, standing before the throne, they cry, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts." They shall behold the infinite grace and goodness of God. Then shall that glorious fountain and ocean be opened fully to their view. Then shall they behold all its excellency and loveliness; they shall have a clear sight of His immense glory and excellency.

Two, they shall see everything in God that gratifies love. They shall see in Him all that love desires. Love desires the love of the beloved. So the saints in glory shall see God's transcendent love to them. God will make ineffable manifestations of His love to them. They shall see as much love in God towards them as they desire. They neither will nor can crave any more. This very manifestation that God will make of Himself that will cause the beatific vision will be an act of love in God. It will be from the exceeding love of God for them that He will give them this vision, which will add an immense sweetness to it. When they see God so glorious, and at the same time see how greatly this God loves them, what delight will it not cause in the soul!

Love desires union. They shall therefore see this

glorious God united to them, and see themselves united to Him. They shall see that He is their Father, and that they are His children. They shall see God gloriously present with them—God with them and God in them, and they in God.

Love desires the possession of its object. Therefore they shall see God, even as their own God. When they behold this transcendent glory of God, they shall see Him as their own. When they shall see that glory, power, and wisdom of God, they shall see it as altogether engaged for them. When they shall see the beauty of God's holiness, they shall see it as their own, for them to enjoy forever. When they see the boundless ocean of God's goodness and grace, they shall see it to be all theirs.

4. The manner in which they shall see and enjoy God is having communion with Christ therein. The saints shall enjoy God as partaking with Christ in His enjoyment of God; for they are united to Him, and are glorified and made happy in the enjoyment of God as His members. As the members of the body partake of the life and health of the head, so the saints in glory shall be happy as partaking of the blessedness of the Son of God. They, being in Christ, shall partake of the love of God the Father to Christ. And as the Son knows the Father, so they shall partake with Him in His sight of God, as being, as it were, parts of him. As He is in the bosom of the Father, so are they in the bosom of the Father. As He has immense joy in the love of the Father, so have they, every one of them in their measure, the same joy in the Father's love.

Herein they shall enjoy God in a more exalted and excellent manner than man would have done if he had

never fallen; for doubtless that happiness that Christ Himself partakes of in His Father's bosom is transcendently sweet and excellent. And how happy therefore are they who are admitted to partake of that portion of delight with Him!

5. The agent by whom this vision of God shall be communicated is the Holy Spirit. As it is by the Holy Spirit that a spiritual sight of God is given in this world, so it is the same Holy Spirit by whom the beatific vision is given of God in heaven. The saints in heaven are as dependent on God for all their happiness, all their holiness, and all their light, as those on earth. There all is from God by His Holy Spirit, just as it is here. They shall have the beatific vision of God because they will be full of God, filled with the Holy Spirit of God. The Holy Ghost is the pure river of water of life that proceeds from the throne of God and the Lamb, spoken of in Revelation 22:1.

6. The effects of this vision are that the soul shall be inflamed with love and satisfied with pleasure.

One, it shall be inflamed with love. The soul shall not be an inactive spectator, but shall be most active, and in the most ardent exercise of love towards the object seen. The soul shall be, as it were, all eyes to behold, and yet all act to love. The soul shall be as full of love as it shall be of light, and of both it shall be as full as it can hold. The understanding will be in its most perfect act in loving. This love will be perfectly such as it ought to be. It shall be perfectly humble; the soul shall be in its place at all times adoring at God's feet, and yet embraced in the arms of His love. This love shall excite them to praise. And therefore, singing praises and hallelujahs shall be that in which they shall

unweariedly be employed.

Two, this sight of God shall satisfy the soul with pleasure. So great will the joy be that the soul will desire no greater. It shall be as full of grace as the large desires of the soul can receive. So sweet shall it be that the soul will desire nothing sweeter. So pure and excellent will it be that the soul will desire nothing better. Psalm 17:15: "As for me, I shall behold Thy face in righteousness. I shall be satisfied when I awake with Thy likeness." When the soul beholds the glory and love of God, it shall receive satisfying pleasure, for it shall receive God. God will communicate and, as it were, pour forth Himself into the soul. And with what inexpressible sweetness and complacency will the soul open itself to be thus filled, as the flowers open before the sun to be filled with His light and pleasant influences!

Next, having thus considered wherein the eternal happiness of the saints consists, I proceed next to consider some circumstances of it.

- It will add sweetness to the happiness of heaven that it is all the fruit of free grace and the dying love of Christ. The saints in this world are of that spirit that they choose the way of salvation by free and sovereign grace. And salvation in this way seems better and sweeter by far than if they could have it by their own works. Much more will this exceedingly heighten the sweetness of their happiness when they are in heaven, when their love, and their humility will be perfect, when they will be abundantly more sensible than they are now what vile creatures they were in this world. And when they consider to what exceeding glory God has advanced them, what a sweet admiration will it excite in

them of the free and boundless grace of God! And what a sweetness will it add that all this glorious blessedness which they possess is not of themselves, but is the fruit of the love of that glorious Person whom they shall then see in His glory, the fruit of His dying love, that it was bought by His own precious blood! It adds greatly to the value of a gift if we receive it from a dear friend as a token of His love. But how greatly then will heaven be the more prized by the saints when they consider it as the fruit of His love who is so glorious and excellent, and who is so exceedingly beloved by them!

- It will give them a greater sense of their own blessedness when they contemplate the misery of those who are finally lost, and consider how exceedingly different is their own state. The saints will witness the misery of the wicked; they shall see their state at the day of judgment; they shall see them at the left hand with devils, shall hear the sentence pronounced, and see it executed. This shall greatly heighten the sense of their own happy state when they consider how different their own state is, how differently God has dealt with them from what he has done with the wicked; when they see how dreadful the misery is from which they are delivered, and which they must have unavoidably suffered, had not God graciously redeemed them; when they consider that they deserved this misery as well as those who suffer it, but that Christ has, of His free grace, redeemed them. This will give exalted thoughts of the free grace of God, and cause them exceedingly to admire it, and will greatly heighten their exercises of love to Him who has been so gracious to them—and consequently this will heighten their joy in His love. As the damned contemplate the happiness of the saints in

heaven and find their own misery aggravated, so when the saints in heaven contemplate the misery of the damned in hell they will feel a greater sense of their own happiness.

- There are different degrees of happiness and glory in heaven. As there are degrees among the angels—thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers—so there are degrees among the saints. In heaven are many mansions, and of different degrees of dignity. The glory of the saints above will be in some proportion to their eminency in holiness and good works here. Christ will reward all according to their works. He who gained ten pounds was made ruler over ten cities, and he who gained five pounds over five cities (Luke 19:17). 2 Corinthians 9:6: “He that soweth sparingly, shall reap sparingly; and he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.” And the Apostle Paul tells us that, as one star differs from another star in glory, so also it shall be in the resurrection of the dead (1 Corinthians 15:41).

Christ tells us that he who gives a cup of cold water unto a disciple in the name of a disciple shall in no wise lose his reward. But this could not be true, if a person should have no greater reward for doing many good works than if he did but few. It will be no damp to the happiness of those who have lower degrees of happiness and glory that there are others advanced in glory above them. For all shall be perfectly happy; every one shall be perfectly satisfied. Every vessel that is cast into this ocean of happiness is full, though there are some vessels far larger than others.

There shall be no such thing as envy in heaven, but perfect love shall reign through the whole society.

Those who are not so high in glory as others will not envy those who are higher, but they will have so great, so strong, and so pure a love for them that they will rejoice in their superior happiness. Their love to them will be such that they will rejoice that they are happier than themselves; so that, instead of being a damp to their own happiness, it will add to it. They will see it to be fitting that they who have been most eminent in works of righteousness should be most highly exalted in glory. And they will rejoice in having that done which is most fitting to be done.

There will be a perfect harmony in that society; those who are most happy will also be most holy, and all will be both perfectly holy and perfectly happy. Yet there will be different degrees of both holiness and happiness according to the measure of each one's capacity, and therefore those who are lowest in glory will have the greatest love to those who are highest in happiness because they will see most of the image of God in them. And, having the greatest love to them, they will rejoice to see them the most happy and the highest in glory. On the other hand, those who are highest in glory, as they will be the most lovely, will be most full of love. As they will excel in happiness, they will proportionally excel in divine benevolence and love to others, and will have more love for God and for the saints than those who are lower in holiness and happiness. And besides, those who will excel in glory will also excel in humility. Here in this world, those who are above others are the objects of envy because others conceive of them as being lifted up with it. But in heaven it will not be so; rather, those saints in heaven who excel in happiness will also in holiness, and consequently in hu-

mility. The saints in heaven are more humble than the saints on earth, and still the higher we go among them the greater humility there is. The highest orders of saints, who know most of God, see most of the distinction between God and them, and consequently are comparatively least in their own eyes, and so are more humble. The exaltation of some in heaven above the rest will be so far from diminishing the perfect happiness and joy of the rest who are inferior that they will be the happier for it. Such will be the union in their society that they will be partakers of each other's happiness. Then will be fulfilled in its perfection that which is declared in 1 Corinthians 12:26: "If one of the members be honored, all the members rejoice with it."

- This happiness of the saints shall never have any interruption. There will never be any alloy to it; there never will come any cloud to obscure their light; there never will be anything to cool their love. The rivers of pleasure will not fail, the glory and love of God and of Christ will forever be the same, and the manifestation of it will have no interruption. No sin or corruption shall ever enter there; no temptation to disturb their blessedness. The divine love in the saints shall never cool; there shall be no inconsistency in any of them. The faculties of the saints shall never flag from exercise; and they will never be cloyed; their relish for those delights will forever be kept up to its height; that glorious society shall not grow weary of their hallelujahs. Their exercises, though they are so active and vigorous, will be performed with perfect ease. The saints shall not be weary of loving, praising, and fearing, as the sun is never weary of shining.

- To sum up this whole description, there shall

never be any end to their glory and blessedness. Therefore is it so often called “eternal life,” and “everlasting life.” We are told that at the day of judgment, when the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment, the righteous shall enter into life eternal (Matthew 25:46). The pleasures which there are at God’s right hand are said to be forevermore (Psalm 16:11). And that this is not merely a long duration, but an absolute eternity, is evident from that which Christ has said, that those who believe on Him shall not die (John 6:50; Revelation 22:5). In the description of the new Jerusalem it is said, “And they shall reign for ever and ever.” The eternity of this blessedness shall crown all. If the saints knew that there would be an end to their happiness, though at never so great a distance, yet it would be a great damp to their joy. The greater the happiness is, so much the more uncomfortable would the thoughts of an end be, and so much the more joyful will it be to think that there will be no end. The saints will surely know that there will be no more danger of their happiness coming to an end than there will be that God will come to an end. As God is eternal, so their happiness is eternal. As long as the fountain lasts, they need not fear but they shall be supplied.

### *Application*

1. Hence we learn how great a mercy conversion is, because it confers upon him who is exposed to eternal misery a right to all this blessedness. Man, as he is naturally, is very far from this blessedness. We came into the world wretched, miserable, undone creatures, in

cruel bondage to sin and Satan, under guilt and under wrath, and at enmity against God, the Fountain of blessedness, and in a state of condemnation to everlasting destruction. But when a man is converted a great change is made in his state: he is that day passed from death to life; he is brought out of that state of woe and misery into a sure title to glory, honor, and peace forever. Once a man is converted, all this blessedness that we have heard of is his. He has an absolute right to it. God's word has passed for it, and His faithful promise is given. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but that promise of God shall not fail, but shall be fulfilled. Their witness is in heaven, and their record on high.

On the day a man is converted, he enters into a blessed state; he is sure to be a blessed person as long as he lives. And he has a right to all that blessedness we have heard of at death, in a state of separation, and at the day of judgment, and to that glory which the saints have in their state of consummate glory and blessedness. This teaches how great and how blessed a change conversion is in its consequences, and what cause have they who have good ground to think that they have been the subjects of it, to bless, praise, and extol the name of God when they consider what a situation they were once in, and what a happy state they are now in. Bringing them out of that miserable state into so glorious a state is owing only to free and sovereign grace. 1 Corinthians 4:7: "Who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now, if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as it thou hadst not received it?"

2. Hence we may learn the folly of those who are cold and slack in seeking salvation, seeing that the

glory and happiness of those who are saved is so exceedingly great. How unreasonable is it to expect to obtain that which is so great without effort! Men will seek worldly riches and honors that are worth so little and cannot make them happy, and which will soon vanish away, with great and indefatigable labor and diligence. And shall men expect to obtain such eternal glory and blessedness in a slack and cold way of seeking it? How unlike the nature and importance of this blessedness do men treat it who seek it in a cold and careless manner! And can it be expected that God will also treat it so unlike its value as to bestow it upon such seekers?

3. Hence we may solve the difficulty of some Christians meeting with so much affliction and darkness in the world. Some godly persons are the subjects of very great outward afflictions, and some are the subjects of great spiritual darkness. Some truly godly persons spend a great part of their lives in the dark, in exercising doubts, anxious thoughts, and distressing fears. And oftentimes God's people make this an argument against themselves. They argue that if God loved them, and had made them His children, He would never leave them in such darkness and distress. He would give them more of the light of his countenance. They are ready to say with themselves, "If God loves me, why does He not give me more comfort? Why does He see me in such darkness, and yet does not comfort me?" But what we have heard may solve all the difficulty. If their happiness throughout all eternity is so great, of how little consequence is it what may be their condition for the short moment they continue in this world! What if they are in the dark? What if they walk in darkness and are exercised with great trouble? How

little difference will it make, though it is cast into the scales, when weighed against that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory! It will prove lighter than vanity. If God gives eternal happiness to them, that is evident proof of His love, and all the darkness and sorrow they can meet with in this world is not worthy to be mentioned. All this darkness, however long it continues, if we compare it with future glory, vanishes into nothing.

4. This subject furnishes solid ground of consolation to the righteous. What can be matter of greater joy and comfort to any person than to consider that he is entitled to such eternal blessedness? Here is sufficient consolation under all adversity; whatever changes we meet with in the world, this may be matter of abundant comfort under the greatest and heaviest trials. In these things a Christian may well rejoice, though the fig tree should not blossom, and there should be no fruit in the vine. Having this firm support and consolation, a Christian will not fear though the earth be removed, and the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.

Let these things, therefore, comfort you who fear and love God, and trust in Christ. What a glorious hope, and what an incorruptible, undefiled, and never-fading inheritance, are reserved in heaven for you!

Hence I would answer an objection or two that unbelief in the saint may be ready to make against what has been said.

**OBJECTION 1.** This glory and blessedness are so great and wonderful that it seems too great to be given to such creatures as men are. It seems almost incredible that God should so exalt and advance worms of the dust.

ANSWER. The death and suffering of Christ made everything credible that belongs to this blessedness. If God has not thought His own Son too much for us, what *will* He think too much for us? If God did not spare Him, but gave Him even to be made a reproach, and a curse, and a victim to death for us, no blessedness, however great, can be incredible which is the fruit of this. Romans 8:32: "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" If God would so contrive to show His love in the manner and means of procuring our happiness, nothing can be incredible in the degree of the happiness itself. If nothing is too much to be given to man, and to be done for man in the manner of procuring his happiness, nothing will be too much to be given to him as the happiness procured, and no degree of happiness too great for him to enjoy. If all that God does about it is consistent, His infinite wisdom will also work to make their happiness and glory great in the degree of it.

OBJECTION 2. Some Christians may still be ready to object, "It is not too great to be bestowed on others, yet it seems to me too great to be bestowed on such an unworthy creature as I. It seems incredible that God should ever give such glory to such an one as I am, who is so low, so worthless and vile. I not only was once unworthy, but I am so unworthy still. I am so blind. I have so much sin, and so little goodness. I commit so much sin and do so little good that it appears incredible that I should have a title to such blessedness. I can far more easily think that others will possess it than myself."

ANSWER. It is in no way incredible that infinite grace should bestow it on the lowest and most unwor-

thy person. God's design is to glorify His free grace, and this is one way by which free grace is glorified: by bestowing such great blessedness on the most unworthy. This is of a piece with the rest. Everything in the work of redemption is wonderful, and therefore one of the names by which Christ is called is "Wonderful." As grace is wonderful in the means of procurement (giving Christ to die), and wonderful in the degree of happiness procured, so it is wonderful with respect to the subjects of it, that they are in themselves so lowly and unworthy.

5. This subject furnishes ground of solemn exhortation to natural men earnestly to seek this blessedness. And here you may well consider, first, how poor you are who have no heaven but this world! In this exceeding and eternal glory of which you have heard, you have no lot or portion. You have nothing but a little part of this clod of earth. And what is all that you have worth? If you have a little more land than some of your neighbors, or if you are in a way to make more money than others, if your accommodations are better than others, and you have more worldly conveniences and pleasures than others, or if you are promoted a little higher among men than some others are, what a poor portion is this. And how miserable are you who have no better happiness that you can call your own! How happy do these things make you? What great satisfaction do they yield to you? Are such things as these the rivers of pleasure that you choose for your portion? Oh, how miserable are you who have your portion in this life! When a few days are passed you must go to the grave and into eternity, and then your glory shall not descend after you. And how wretched are they of whom it may be said,

when they have done with worldly enjoyments, that they have received their consolation (Luke 6:24).

Second, to what misery you are exposed! You not only have no lot in this happiness and glory, but you are hanging over endless misery, and are in danger every day of being irrecoverably lost.

Third, you have now an opportunity to obtain this blessedness. It is true that now you are exposed to this misery, yet this glory is offered to you. The time is not past wherein the offer is made. You have yet an opportunity to be made happy forever. The opportunity you now have to obtain the happiness of another world is worth ten thousands of this world.

QUESTION. What must I be brought to in order to get to heaven?

ANSWER 1. You must be brought entirely to renounce all hope of obtaining heaven by anything that you can do by your own strength, that you cannot do it either directly or indirectly. Many are sensible that they cannot get to heaven by their own strength directly, but yet they hope to do it indirectly; they hope by their own strength to bring themselves to a disposition to close with Christ, and accept Him as a Savior. They are hoping to bring themselves to a compliance with the terms of salvation. You must be brought off from all confiding in your own strength, and you must also be brought to renounce your own righteousness as the price of heaven. The consideration of what has been said of the glory and happiness of the saints may show us the exceeding folly of those who think to purchase so great happiness by their own righteousness. What a vain thought have men of their performances to think them a sufficient price to offer to God to purchase such glory

from Him! How would God dishonor Himself, and dishonor such riches of His own goodness, if He should bestow them on men for their righteousness, and should accept their miserable performances as the price of them!

ANSWER 2. Your heart must be brought to close with Him who has purchased heaven. Renouncing all other ways, your heart must entirely close with Him, and adhere to Him as the way, the truth, and the life. Your heart must be drawn to Him, and it must be pleasing and sweet to you to have heaven as a free gift, as the fruit of mercy and saving grace. You must assuredly believe that Christ is a sufficient Savior, and your soul must acquiesce in the way of salvation by Him, by His blood and His righteousness, as a wise, holy, sufficient, and excellent way. Your heart must incline to Jesus Christ as a Savior above your own righteousness and all other ways. Your delight must be in this holy way of salvation.

ANSWER 3. You must choose the God of heaven for your portion. You must be of the same temper and disposition as the psalmist, who says in Psalm 73:25, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And there is none on earth whom I desire besides Thee." You must esteem and relish the enjoyment of Him far above all other things. You must be brought to see that there is that in the enjoyment of God and communion with Him that is far better than all the profits or pleasures of the world. It must be so with you, that if you could have your choice of all kinds of happiness you could devise, and have which you would, and in what degree you would, to all eternity, this would be what you would far prefer.

ANSWER 4. Your heart must be brought sincerely to

close with the employments of heaven. In heaven persons are not idle, but they are continually employed, and their employments are holy employments. They spend their time wholly in holy exercises: in contemplating on God, in praising and serving Him. Revelation 22:3: "And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and His servants shall serve Him." If ever you go to heaven, your heart must be brought beforehand to such a temper as freely to choose such employments; you must have a relish of them, and must account them excellent and delightful employments.

ANSWER 5. You must be pure in heart and clean in hands. The pure in heart alone shall see God (Matthew 5:8). They who shall ascend into God's holy hill are those who are of pure hearts and clean hands (Psalm 24:4). You must hate and abhor all sin, and allow none in your life. Sin must become to you a great burden. You must loathe yourself for it, and fight and strive against it, to purge yourself more and more from it; striving more and more to mortify sin, earnestly desiring and seeking to be more holy, more conformed to the will of God, and to walk more becoming a Christian.

ANSWER 6. You must be brought to sell all for heaven (Matthew 13:44-46). Heaven must be to you like the treasure hidden in a field, or like the pearl of great price. If you would have heaven, you must take it as your whole portion. You must in your heart part with all other things for it, and it must be your manner actually to part with them whenever they stand in the way of your getting forward towards heaven. If you would have heaven, you must sell your worldly profit and your

credit, the good will of your neighbors, your worldly pleasures and conveniences, and whatever stands in your way. Many flatter themselves that they shall obtain heaven without this, and think they have a right to heaven, though they were never brought to this; but they are sure to find themselves disappointed.

ANSWER 7. You must never expect to go to heaven in any other than a strait and narrow way. Some expect to get to heaven who are not walking in a narrow way. The way they are walking in is a way of indulging their ease, and of shifting off the hard and difficult parts of religion. It is not the ways of self-denial, toil, and laboriousness, but they walk in a broad way, a way wherein they are not pinched, but can go on without labor, watchfulness, or bearing the cross. But such as these, let their hopes be what they may, and their profession what it may, and their pretenses to experiences what they may, are not likely to get to heaven. To some, the way that the Scripture has laid out is too narrow and strait. Therefore they are endeavoring to get to heaven in a broad way; but it is in vain for you to contrive this. If you can find out any way of getting to heaven that is not a strait and narrow way, it will be a way that you are the first inventor of. If you go there, you must go in the way of the footsteps of the flock. If you would go to heaven, you must be content to go there in the way of self-denial and sufferings; you must be willing to take up the cross daily and follow Christ, and through much tribulation to enter into the kingdom of heaven.

6. This subject furnishes ground of solemn exhortation to the godly to strive earnestly after holiness of life. What manner of persons ought you to be in all holy conversation and godliness, who have received such in-

finite mercy of God, and entertain such glorious hopes! Seeing God has admitted you to such happiness, earnestly labor that you may walk in some measure answerably; seeing God has admitted you to the happiness of children, walk as children. Ephesians 5:1: "Be ye therefore followers of God as dear children." Imitate your heavenly Father; be ye holy, for He is holy. Seeing that you are admitted to the blessedness of disciples and friends of Jesus, walk as the friends of Christ; imitate your glorious Lord and Head.

Here consider several things: particularly:

First, what great love God has bestowed upon you in choosing you to such unspeakable blessedness before the foundation of the world. How wonderful was the love of God in giving His Son to purchase this blessedness for you, and how wonderful was the love of the Son of God in shedding His own blood to purchase such glory for you! How ought you therefore to live to God's glory! Let me therefore beseech, by those great mercies of God, that you give yourself up a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. Give the utmost diligence, that you may keep all the commandments of God. Study that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God. Study that in all things you may be found approved. Seeing that God has so loved you, see that you love one another; let love be without dissimulation. Be kindly affectioned one with another with brotherly love. Be of the same mind one towards another, in honor preferring one another; have fervent charity among yourselves. Seeing God has mercy on you, be merciful as your Father who is in heaven is

merciful. Look not every one on his own things. Be pitiful; be courteous; be ready to distribute, willing to communicate; be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another. Christ has thus loved you while you were an enemy; therefore recompense to no man evil for evil, but contrariwise blessing. Do good to those who do evil to you. Such things as these become those who are the heirs of the glory that we have heard of.

Second, consider how much above the world that blessedness is which God has given; how therefore ought you to live above the world. God has redeemed you out of the world, and therefore do not live as though you had your portion in this life. Live as pilgrims and strangers, as those who are not at home, as fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God. "Be ye not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:1). How dishonorable will it be to you that God had so advanced and entitled you to such glory, to set your heart upon the dust of the earth. How you dishonor the grace of God in giving you such blessedness; and how will you dishonor the blessedness that God has given, no more to set your heart on it, and to set it so much on the world!

Third, consider what a vast difference has God made between you and other men, how vastly different is your relative state from theirs, how much more has God done for you than for them. Seek therefore those things which are above, where God is. Will it not be a shame if one who is entitled to such glory conducts no better than a child of the devil? Consider it seriously; and let it not be asked with reference to you what is asked in Matthew 5:47: "What do ye more than others?"

Other men love those who love them; other men do good to those who do good to them. Walk worthy of the vocation to which you are called. And let it appear that you are of a more excellent spirit than your neighbor; manifest more love, more meekness, and more humility, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love. Walk worthy of the Lord to all pleasing, strengthened with all might according to His glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering. Put on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, gentleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one another, forgiving one another; and let your light so shine before men, so that they, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father who is in heaven. Seeing God has given you so much, God and men may well expect of you that you should be greatly distinguished in your life from other men.

