

THE HAPPINESS OF ENJOYING AND MAKING
A TRUE AND SPEEDY
USE OF CHRIST

THE HAPPINESS OF ENJOYING AND MAKING
A TRUE AND SPEEDY
USE OF CHRIST

Alexander Grosse

Edited by Joel R. Beeke



Reformation Heritage Books
Grand Rapids, Michigan

The Happiness of Enjoying and Making a True and Speedy Use of Christ
© 2015 by Reformation Heritage Books

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews. Direct your requests to the publisher at the following address:

Reformation Heritage Books
2965 Leonard St. NE
Grand Rapids, MI 49525
616-977-0889 / Fax 616-285-3246
orders@heritagebooks.org
www.heritagebooks.org

Printed in the United States of America
15 16 17 18 19 20/10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Grosse, Alexander, 1596?-1654.

The happiness of enjoying and making a true and speedy use of Christ / Alexander Grosse.

pages cm

Originally published: London : Printed by Robert Young, for John Bartlet, 1640.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-60178-405-6 (hardcover : alk. paper) 1. Christian life—Early works to 1800. I. Title.

BV4501.3.G767 2015

248.4f859—dc23

2015027891

For additional Reformed literature, request a free book list from Reformation Heritage Books at the above regular or e-mail address.

Contents

Publisher's Preface	vii
Preface	xv
1. Showing the Transcendency of Christ's Fullness above All Created Fullness and Opening the Scope of the Words	1
2. Declaring the Vanity of Joining Human Observations to Christ Jesus	6
3. Disclosing the Folly of Not Cleaving to and Contenting Ourselves with Christ, but Instead Going Aside to Vain Inventions	13
4. Setting Forth the Beauty of All Divine and Heavenly Fullness in Christ.	21
5. Setting Forth the Folly of Neglecting Christ and Seeking Fullness Elsewhere	29
6. Discovering the Folly of Not Coming Fully Home to Christ, in Whom Is All Fullness	38
7. Showing How Christ Is to Be Valued and Esteemed above All.	49
8. Persuading to Come to and Get a Saving Interest in Christ	57
9. Teaching How to Make Use of Christ	68
10. Persuading to Full and Constant Yielding to Christ. .	72
11. Declaring the Inseparable Union of Christ's Two Natures in One Person	76
12. Showing That Man's Choicest Excellency Consists in Union with God	84

13. Declaring the Perfection and Fullness of Christ
above the Fullness of All Creatures 88

14. Setting Forth the Superlative Excellency of Christ
above All Creatures 94

15. Opening the Blessed and Happy Condition of
Them That Are Partakers of Christ 103

16. Ascribing Perfection in Christ to Such Alone
That Are Truly Blessed 111

17. Outlining Four Grounds of the Saint’s Perfection . . 118

18. Evidencing the Fullness of the Saints by Four
Characteristics or Marks, with Four Motives to
Labor for Fullness 125

Appendix 1. The Dolefulness and Danger of Neglecting
Christ, and the Opportunity of Grace 131

Appendix 2. The Lord Jesus: The Soul’s Last Refuge . . . 163

Appendix 3. Saint Paul’s Legacy 182

Publisher's Preface

Alexander Grosse (c. 1596–1654) was a zealous Puritan divine.¹ Though largely forgotten today, Grosse was the author of several Reformed experiential books prized in his time. He was the son of William Grosse, a husbandman, or farmer, of a small property in Christow, Devon (southwest England). Alexander studied under a Mr. Periman for five years at a school in Exeter and then at age twenty-two was admitted sizar to Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, under the oversight of Mr. Kidman. He then transferred to Trinity Hall, where he received his BA in 1622. He married Pascow, with whom he had at least one son, also named Alexander. A decade after graduating from Cambridge, Grosse returned to school at Exeter College, Oxford, where his son would later enroll in 1638, and received his MA and BD (1633), hearing the lectures of John Prideaux, Regius Professor of Divinity, a Reformed theologian loyal to the episcopacy and the king.

Grosse served several parishes in Devon, the first being Plympton St. Mary, a parish of more than five hundred adult men, thus probably consisting of approximately two thousand

1. On the biography of Alexander Grosse, see Stephen Wright, "Grosse, Alexander (1595/6–1654)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 24:78–79; John Venn, *Biographical History of Gonville and Caius College, 1349–1897, Volume 1, 1349–1713* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1897), 240; Anthony A. Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses: An Exact History of All the Writers and Bishops Who Have Had Their Education in the University of Oxford*, new ed. (London: F. C. and J. Rivington, et al., 1817), 3:358–59.

people in all.² His influence radiated beyond Plympton, for he was called upon to preach two funerals for a magistrate and a minister in 1631 at Plymouth, a few miles away. The sermons were published as *Death's Deliverance and Elijah's Fiery Chariot*.³

The leaders of Plymouth, a town of more than fourteen hundred men, attempted to bring Grosse to serve among them.⁴ On September 12, 1632, the common council of Plymouth elected Grosse “minister and preacher of God’s word, to be the next incumbent of the vicarage of Plymouth.”⁵ Town records speak of a “covenant and bond by Grosse with the Mayor and Commonalty” (May 27, 1633),⁶ suggesting that Grosse was already employed as a lecturer for Plymouth, that is, serving them as a hired preacher without being the local vicar—a common arrangement by Puritans to promote biblical preaching when the settled clergy failed to provide it. King Charles I prodded Bishop Joseph Hall to remove Grosse from the lectureship and prevent him from becoming vicar, resulting in a legal battle between the town and church hierarchy that went on for years.

During these troubled times, Grosse took up ministry in 1639 at Bridford. It was a small town of approximately one

2. “Plympton St. Mary,” Devon County Council, accessed July 10, 2015, <http://www.devon.gov.uk/historicplymptonstmary>. In 1641–1642, 533 adult men in Plympton St. Mary signed the Protestation Returns affirming their fidelity to Protestantism as required by Parliament.

3. Alexander Grosse, *Deaths Deliverance and Elijahs Fiery Charet* (London: by J. D[awson] for J. Boler, 1632). This treatise was reprinted in 1640.

4. “Plymouth,” Devon County Council, accessed July 10, 2015, <http://www.devon.gov.uk/historicplymouth>. In Plymouth, 1,440 men signed the Protestation Returns, which are lists of English males over the age of eighteen who took, or did not take, an oath of allegiance to live and die for the true Protestant religion, the liberties and rights of subjects and the privilege of Parliaments. Such lists help determine the population of a town or city.

5. Richard N. Worth, *Calendar of the Plymouth Municipal Records* (Plymouth, 1893), 44.

6. Worth, *Calendar of the Plymouth Municipal Records*, 251.

hundred men, about thirty-five miles northeast of Plymouth.⁷ While there, he published *The Happiness of Enjoying and Making a True and Speedy Use of Christ* (1640, reprinted 1647), which he dedicated to the people of his first ministry, Plympton St. Mary.⁸ In 1642 he also published *Sweet and Soule-Persuading Inducement Leading to Christ, The Mystery of Self-Denial, and Man's Misery without Christ*.⁹ When the English Civil War erupted, Grosse took the side of Parliament against King Charles I. He continued to preach occasionally at Plymouth, such as at the funeral of John Caws, a town magistrate, on March 29, 1645. This message was published as *Christ the Christian's Choice* (1645).¹⁰

While at Bridford, Grosse published what was to become his most popular work, a catechism titled *A Fiery Pillar of Heavenly Truth* (1641).¹¹ The catechism covers personal soteriology in an experiential manner, touching the doctrines of sin, election, redemption, vocation, justification, sanctification, and glorification. It was reprinted many times in England, the seventh edition appearing in 1652 and the tenth in 1663. It was also printed in Scotland (1645), where it was reprinted into the late eighteenth century.¹² The *Fiery Pillar* was even translated

7. "Bridford," Devon County Council, accessed July 10, 2015, <http://www.devon.gov.uk/historicbridford>.

8. Alexander Grosse, *The Happiness of Enjoying, And Making a True and Speedie Use of Christ* (London: by Robert Young, for John Bartlet, 1640).

9. Alexander Grosse, *Sweet and Soule-Persuading Inducements Leading unto Christ* (London: by G. M. for John Bartlet, 1632 [1642]); *The Mystery of Self-Denyall: Or, the Cessation of Mans living to himself: And the Inchoation of Christs living in Man* (London: by G. M. for John Bartlet, 1642); *Mans Misery without Christ* (London: by G. M. for John Bartlet, 1642). These three books were bound together with continuous pagination.

10. Alexander Grosse, *Christ the Christians Choice* (London: by R. B. for John Bartlet, 1645).

11. Alexander Gross, *A Fiery Pillar of Heavenly Truth: Shewing, The Way to a Blessed Life* (London: for John Bartlett, 1641).

12. Alexander Grosse, *A Fiery Pillar of Heavenly Truth* (Glasgow: James Duncan, 1735); *A Fiery Pillar of Heavenly Truth* (Falkirk: Daniel Reid, 1782).

into Dutch and published in the Netherlands in 1651, bound together with a Dutch translation of *The Pathway to Prayer and Pietie* by Robert Hill (d. 1623).¹³

On December 9, 1647, Grosse was nominated to be vicar of Ashburton, a market town enriched by the trade of tin and textiles.¹⁴ He remained there for the rest of his life. While serving there, he placed his name second on the list of *The Joint-Testimonie of the Ministers of Devon* (1648), an outcry against theological errors in the spirit of the Solemn League and Covenant.¹⁵ Thus, as Anthony Wood said, Grosse was “a zealous and mighty man in a Presbyterian way.”¹⁶

Grosse died in his late fifties and was buried in Ashburton on April 10, 1654, leaving his property to his widow. After his death, his exposition of John 3:22–36 was published as *Buddings and Blossomings of Old Truths* (1656).¹⁷ In its epistle to the reader, fellow Devon minister John Weldon commended his deceased colleague as a “skillful, a powerful dispenser of the Word” who preached twice a Sabbath for years and whose “ministry was very effectual, many being converted by him.”¹⁸

13. Robert Hill and Alexander Grosse, *Twee geestelycke tractaten: Het eerste Den wegh tot het ghebedt ende tot de godtsaligheyt*, trans. Theodorum ab Eybergen (Arnhem: Jan Jacobsz., 1651). See the entry in the online catalog of the Universiteitsbibliotheek Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (<http://cat.uvu.vu.nl/webopac/>). Robert Hill translated and edited some of the works of William Perkins and Girolamo Zanchi for publication in English.

14. “Ashburton,” Devon County Council, accessed July 10, 2015, <http://www.devon.gov.uk/historicashburton>.

15. *The Jointe-Testimonie of the Ministers of Devon, whose names are subscribed; with the Reverend Brethren the Ministers of the Province of London, unto the truth of Jesus* (London: by William Du-gard for Ralph Smith, 1648).

16. Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses*, 3:359.

17. Alexander Grosse, *The Buddings and Blossomings of Old Truths* (London: by W. Bentley for Andrew Crook, 1656).

18. John Welden, “Epistle to the Reader,” in Grosse, *Buddings and Blossomings of Old Truths*, A3v.

According to Weldon, Grosse's reputation was sterling. He was a true Christian and faithful minister, known for his freedom and clarity in preaching, richness of scriptural exposition, strength of memory (though writing sermon notes, he seldom used them in the pulpit), heavenly prayers, earnest contending for biblical truth against both superstitious tradition and novelty, and consistency of "doctrine and life"—"as he was a preacher of holiness, so he was a practicer of holiness." He poured out his life for God, and shortly before his death he preached on the text "Whom have I in heaven but thee" (Ps. 73:25) with so much ardor that one of his listeners felt sure that such a person could not remain much longer on the earth, and so it was.¹⁹

The writings of Grosse are buried treasure. The book reprinted here appears to be the first of Grosse's treatises published in over two centuries. Though titled *The Happiness of Enjoying and Making a True and Speedy Use of Christ*, it could well be called "the fullness of Christ," since most of the treatise is an exposition and application of Colossians 2:9–10, "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power." Reading this in context of the admonition of verse 8, Grosse called his readers not to trust in human philosophies and religious novelties but to rest their faith in the word of Christ alone as given us in the Holy Scriptures. Grosse delighted to exalt the sufficiency of Christ and spared no language to warn against the foolishness of seeking life outside of Him.

With surgical precision, Grosse opens the soul of the unbeliever to reveal the spiritual diseases that keep him from coming to Christ. He urgently calls men to trust in Christ and exhorts believers to make use of Christ in daily life. Grosse

19. Weldon, "Epistle to the Reader," in Grosse, *Buddings and Blossomings of Old Truths*, A3v–A4v.

writes, "Some men live by their intelligence; some by their lands; and some by their trades. The Christian lives by his Christ."²⁰

Grosse gloried in a theology of *union*. The union of God and man in Christ's incarnation was the rock-solid foundation upon which all our salvation was built. The whole ministry of the gospel of Christ aims to bring men "to the fruition and enjoyment of God, and to union and communion with God."²¹ This is the longing and life of God's people, for no one in all creation can compare to the excellence of God's Son in whom the fullness of God dwells. Grosse found the names and titles of Christ to be like many stars shining with celestial glory.

The divine fullness of Christ calls us to give Him divine honor. Grosse wrote,

Let us again contemplate Christ as God dwelling in our flesh and fear Him and obey Him above all commanders. Let us exalt Him above all men and angels; love Him above all creatures; rest upon Him in all distresses; consecrate ourselves to His service; celebrate Him as the author and worker of all our welfare and happiness; and comfort and content ourselves in and with Him as the fountain of all fullness.²²

Only insofar as we honor Christ as the fullness of deity in bodily form will we experience what it means to be filled with His fullness: "They alone who live to Christ enjoy Christ."²³ This is the excellence of God's children and the promise of their future glory.

With Grosse's treatise on enjoying the fullness of Christ we have printed three sermons that appeared in both editions (1640 and 1647). First, *The Danger of Neglecting Christ* presents

20. Grosse, *Happiness of Enjoying*, ch. 9 (page 69 below).

21. Grosse, *Happiness of Enjoying*, ch. 12 (page 85 below).

22. Grosse, *Happiness of Enjoying*, ch. 15 (pages 109–10 below).

23. Grosse, *Happiness of Enjoying*, ch. 16 (page 113 below).

the compassion of Jesus over lost sinners and His rebuke to those who reject His gospel (Luke 19:41–42). Second, *The Lord Jesus the Soul's Last Refuge* reflects upon the believer's longing for Christ to "come" with the full measure of His blessings (Rev. 22:20). Third, *Saint Paul's Legacy* reminds us that after preachers have lovingly labored to sow the Word, their hearers must labor to bring forth good fruit and grow in maturity as a unified body (2 Cor. 13:11). This may have been Grosse's farewell sermon to the people of Plympton.²⁴

We have lightly edited Grosse's seventeenth-century style for the modern reader. Some Latin phrases have been translated, and the English grammar and punctuation are smoothed out in places according to current standards. Scripture quotations are conformed to the King James Version. However, the sense and meaning of Grosse has been retained throughout.

Laurena Quist, my former administrative assistant who has since passed away, transcribed this book from the 1647 edition. Thanks to Ryan Hurd for assisting me in editing it, and to Paul Smalley for helping out with the preface. I also thank Linda den Hollander for typesetting it.

May the Lord take the words of a man regarded as a "light and lamp of heaven"²⁵ for his ministry 350 years ago and use them to illuminate many today.

—Joel R. Beeke

24. The sermon opens, "Every communion among men on earth has its separation," and his closing prayer is for the people of "Plympton" (*Saint Paul's Legacy*, pages 186 and 216 below).

25. Grosse, *Buddings and Blossomings of Old Truths*, title page.

Preface

To my most dearly beloved, and much honored friends (howsoever dignified or distinguished), the inhabitants of Plympton St. Mary, the increase of all saving grace and everlasting bliss.

Love among the Ancients was portrayed and shadowed out by and under the image of a woman clothed in a green garment, having written on her forehead “Distant and near”; on her breast, “Death and life”; in the hem of her garment, “Winter and summer”; and on her side, “An open wound” through which her heart within might be seen. My love to you (far from me be all base flattery and self-commendation) has been very fervent, *like the love of women*; green, and never withering, always fresh and flourishing; not only while I was present with you, but since I have been absent from you, the sense of my love has been more abundant toward you. Such has been my love to you, that *you were in my heart to live and die with you*. I could willingly in winter and summer, in all changes, have continued your servant, *as Jacob served Laban’s flock in the heat and in the cold*. My heart is open to you, as a bridegroom’s heart and house is open to receive the bride; and had your former been like the last manifestations of your love toward me, I am assured all the proffers and persuasions of the world should never have drawn me from you. Great is the power and strength of affection with which faithful ministers love the Lord’s people—as grace is more powerful than nature, so is their love stronger than

the love of nature: "I love you no less," says Ambrose, "whom I have begotten by the gospel, than if I had begotten you in matrimonial conjunction, because grace hath more energy and vehemency in the way and work of love than nature." And in my unfeigned love, and as a pledge and testimony of my never-dying love, I have sent you these papers, part of which is the last legacy I had to bestow upon you at the time of my departure from you. It is very useful for all Christians to renew the memory of the past labors of God's messengers.

Every good child desires a copy of his father's will to see his father's love, to know his father's gift, to remember and observe his father's charge and counsel. Children within some few days after their father's death expect the receipt of their parent's legacy and bequeath; and loving children are every very glad to accept and very careful to keep their parent's last gift, though of slender worth—the last words of God's ministers, our spiritual parents, do commonly (like the words of dying men) take the deepest impression in their hearers. True Christians think often and put great price upon the last labors of God's ministers. I therefore here present unto you that which I published as my last ministerial will and testament among you, with some part of my poor labors since bestowed on others, desiring you, like loving children, to accept it, like provident and careful children, to make the humble, true and best use of it. A small gift well used proves many times an instrument of great enrichment.

Though I cease to be your minister and am now no more your instructor, yet I cannot cease to be your true, though weak and unworthy, perhaps despised friend—and *as ointment and perfume* (according to Solomon) *rejoice the heart*, so would I gladly, by hearty counsel, distill on you the drops of some friendly, some Christian and spiritual sweetness to the rejoicing and revivement of your souls. And *as iron sharpens*

iron, so am I willing by some words of admonition, exhortation, and excitation to sharpen and quicken your affections.

Let me therefore, as a constant lover of your souls and a careful remembrance of your welfare, entreat and persuade you all, first, to grow in the sight and sense of your sin. Beware of hardness; keep your hearts soft and contrite; nourish and maintain all tenderness in your consciences. Sense of misery sweetens mercy; the feeling of sin breeds both the loathing and leaving of sin. Man's fight of his own vileness makes Christ very precious and breeds a low opinion of all worldly excellencies. The hart, seeing within him the operation of the serpent's poison, goes from the thorns and thickets and passes over the green and pleasant pastures, desires nothing but the fountain. Sense of the venom of sin and uncleanness makes man go from the thorns and thickets of worldly cares and riches and pass from green meadows of carnal pleasures, the soul being restless until it comes to Christ Jesus, the fountain of all spiritual refreshments.

Secondly, take heed; deceive not yourselves with shews and shadows instead of substance, with a form instead of the power of godliness—as the Poets fable it of *Ixion* embracing a cloud instead of *Juno*; or as mothers in haste sometimes catch at the swaddling clothes and leave the child behind them. It is very dangerous to stay and applaud ourselves in the ceremony of religion and godliness, not taking with us the Lord Jesus, as sometimes *Mary and Joseph went on with the multitude for company, and left Christ behind them*. All religious observations prove complemental, frivolous, and fruitless if in them we see not, taste not, receive not, enjoy not Christ. Religious exercises are lost labors to the soul that gains not the Lord Jesus.

Thirdly, be truly meek and humble; be emptied of all opinion of your own worth and wisdom. This will make you wise to salvation. He that is in the low pits and caves of the

earth sees the stars in the firmament, when they who are on the top of the mountains discern them not. He that is most humble sees most of heaven: Good (says Bernard) is the way of humility, whereby truth is searched out, charity is obtained, and the generations of wisdom are perceived. Humility exalts; he that is most humble is, and shall be, most honorable. Moses was the meekest man on earth, and God made him the most honorable, calling him up unto Himself in the Mount and making him the leader of His people. Gideon was very little in his own eyes, *the least of his father's house* in his own apprehension, and God incredulously exalted him, making him the deliverer of Israel. A man's pride is attended with infamy; so is man's meekness waited on with glory. Will you be great? Begin from below, says the Father. As the roots of the tree descend, so the branches ascend. This makes the soul capable of grace, as the low ground of water and the broken earth of seed. God gives grace to the humble, as men pour liquor into an empty vessel. The altar under the law was hollow to receive the fire, the wood, and the sacrifice. The heart of man under the gospel must be humble, empty of all spiritual pride and self-conceit, to receive the fire of the Spirit and Jesus Christ, who offered Himself a sacrifice for our sins. This keeps the soul free from many darts of Satan's casting and snares of his spreading, as the low shrubs are free from many violent gusts and blasts of wind which shake and rend the taller trees. I have read of one, who seeing in a vision many snares of the Devil spread upon earth, he sat down and mourned, and said within himself, "Who shall pass through these?" Whereunto he heard a voice answering, "Humility shall pass through them." The Devil has least power to fasten a temptation on him that is most humble. He that has a gracious measure of meekness is neither affected with Satan's proffers, nor terrified with his threatenings. This makes man peaceable in conversing with his brethren,

fruitful in well doing, cheerful in suffering, comfortable in every condition, constant in hold walking. This makes a man precious in the eyes of God, as a humble servant in the eyes of his Master. Gregory said, "He that is little in his own account, is great in God's esteem." This makes the way and work of man acceptable unto God and also sweetens and increases man's communion with God. If ever therefore you intend to enjoy God's glorious and blessed presence, labor for this humility and meekness.

Fourthly, be fervent and unfeigned in your love to God, His truth, and His children. This will make your language very gracious. Chrysostom said, "Lovers know not how to keep silence; lovers of God are very full of gracious expression." This will make you liberal; you shall give yourselves to God and the service of His saints, as the men of Macedonia did. This will make you patient in suffering, as Jacob in his service for Rachel. This will make you frequent the house of God with all alacrity, frequency, and diligence, as children their father's house and table. This will make you joyful in hearing the word of God, as the bride in hearing the voice of the bridegroom. This will make you careful, free, and full in the observation of God's statutes, as loving children in the observation of their father's precepts. This will make you diligent and rich in all good works. The more man loves God, the more he strives in all well-doing to glorify God. Love, like fire, is not idle, but operative. "The love of God says he is never idle; for if it is, it works great things; but if it refuse to work, it is not love," says Gregory. Love makes the yoke of God easy and His work delightful. It is only want of love that makes the commandment a burden. "A good work so much the more delights, by how much the more God the chiefest and unchangeable good is loved," says Augustine.

Love among some of the Ancients was resembled to and represented by the sun. The sun enlightens the world; the more love, the more light. Knowledge and love, like water and ice, beget each other. Man loves God by knowing, and knows God by loving. God dwells in love, and where God is there is light. That man's light is darkness which is not attended with the love of God and His testimonies. The sun makes the earth fertile; he that love God cannot be barren, his love makes him fruitful in all well-doing. The sun is swift and constant in its motion. Love makes man cheerful, speedy, and unwearied in running the race which God has set before him. The sun is impassable; love is patient and invincible, it endures all things; *no floods can drown it; no waters can quench it*. Want of love and affection is the main cause of man's apostasy and backsliding. The sun casts its beams upward and downward, to the east and to the west, to the north and to the south. Christian love causes its beams to ascend to God above and to descend to man beneath; to our friends on the right hand; to our enemies on the left hand; to them that are in the state of grace before us; to them that are in the state of corruption behind us. Love which is not in this sense universal is corrupt and carnal. The sun beginning to ascend in its circle never goes back until it comes to the highest degree thereof. True love abhors apostasy, ascends to more perfection, and ceases not until, like Elijah's fiery chariot, it has carried the soul to heaven. If ever you mean to see and enjoy the God of love, labor for this love.

Fifthly, be very serious, studious, circumspect, and careful in all your walkings. Ponder the path of your feet, like careful travelers. Consider and weigh all your doings. Let all your waves of the heart within and work without be ordered aright, according to the rule of God's Word. Every motion of the soul is a step to life or a step to death, a step toward heaven or toward hell. Man's labor and service is temporal; his wages and

recompense, eternal. Therefore, as Zeuxis, that famous limner, being demanded why he was so exact and serious, so long, so careful and curious in his workmanship, answered, "I am long in painting, because I paint unto eternity." We all paint unto eternity; every one of our actions tends to an eternity of joys or sorrows. All our temporal actions are as seeds of eternity sown by us—a temporal seed an eternal harvest. We speak, we hear, we write, we read, we pray, we sing, we confer, we work, we think unto eternity. How exact and serious should we be in our short walking, the end whereof is eternal! "The intention is through all our works to be weighed with vigilant care, that in the things which it does, it may desire nothing temporal, but wholly fasten itself on that which is eternal," says Gregory. He that walks not circumspectly deprives himself of an eternity of felicity and casts himself into an eternity of misery. Better live strictly for a time than live miserably forever; no, be assured that even for the present, there is more comfort in one day's strict walking with God than in a thousand days loose conversing with men. Did men know the peace, joy, sweetness, boldness, honor, and triumph of holy walking, they would instantly and forever abandon all dissolute living. Heaven is the paradise of all joys. He that in his holy walking comes nearest unto heaven is doubtless of all men the most joyful. O say not then, as a man of noble blood and acute wit, but profane life, once did, when being demanded what he thought of the austere life of the godly, and licentious life of the wicked, answered, "I had rather live with the latter, I had rather die with the former." But as you desire to die the death of the righteous, so be very solicitous and studious, very vigilant and industrious to live the life of the righteous. Never promise yourselves a blessed death without a holy life.

Lastly, be steadfast in adhering to the truth. Be not like children carried to and fro with every vain persuasion nor like

ships without anchor, tossed up and down with the wind of every empty doctrine. But be constant in following in the truth, as the wise men did the star, until you come home to Christ; and as the Israelites did the fiery pillar, until you come to the heavenly Canaan. "*Buy the truth,*" says Solomon, "*and sell it not.*" You can never overbuy it whatsoever you give for it. You can never sufficiently sell it, if you have all the world in exchange for it. It is said of Caesar, he had greater care of his books than of his royal robes; for swimming through the waters to escape his enemies, he carried his books in his hand above the waters, but lost his robe. What are Caesar's books to God's Book, and his learning to God's truth, more than a glowworm to the sun? Be you therefore more careful of the gospel than of any earthly possession. Though you be driven into the deep waters of affliction and there lose all your worldly fullness, yet hold fast the gospel of Christ Jesus. You shall find infinitely more worth and comfort in the gospel than in all the treasure of the world.

It is reported of Alexander the Great that he had always Homer's *Iliads* under his pillow, and preferred them above his most precious and costly gold. What are Homer's *Iliads* to Christ's gospel? Or Darius's gold to the invaluable treasure which is in Christ? Have therefore the Book of God ever with you, when you lie down, when you rise up, when you walk abroad. Have it in your understandings, to know it; in your imaginations, to think and meditate upon it; in your memories, to remember it; in your hearts, to love it, to rejoice and delight yourselves in it, to solace, refresh, and comfort your souls with it; in your tongues, to speak of it, to edify and strengthen one another by it. Give it preeminence above the choicest worldly substance. The loss of all cannot make man miserable as long as he sincerely and fully adheres unto and enjoys the gospel.

Make this therefore your constant and perpetual light to guide you; your heavenly manna, to feed you; your celestial

treasure, to enrich you; your spiritual wellspring, to refresh and fill you; your firm and sure anchor, to sustain and stay you; your holy and gracious school, to edify you in the knowledge, faith, and love of Christ, to ravish your souls with the apprehension of Christ's beauties, to fill you more and more with Christ's fullness, and to prepare you a sweet and entire communion of everlasting continuance with the Lord Jesus—which He most unfeignedly desires, whoever remains.

Most entirely devoted to your spiritual service,
Alexander Grosse

Chapter 1

Showing the Transcendancy of Christ's Fullness above All Created Fullness and Opening the Scope of the Words

In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.
And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all
principality and power.

—COLOSSIANS 2:9–10

Of all fullness, divine and heavenly fullness is the choicest. The nearer any person comes to God and the more he participates in the fullness of God, the greater is the perfection and the more excellent is the fullness thereof. There is a fullness of light in the sun, a fullness of water in the sea, a fullness of strength in the rocks, and a fullness of riches in the earth. “The earth,” the psalmist said, “is full of thy riches. So is this great and wide sea, wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts” (Ps. 104:24–25). Yet, of all this fullness in comparison to the fullness of those who are filled with the fullness of Christ, we may say, as Gideon once said of the vintage of Abiezer, “Is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer?” (Judg. 8:2). So the gleaning, even the smallest gatherings of the fullness of Christ, is better, more excellent, more satisfactory, and more permanent than the full and greatest vintage of the world. This is a fullness like God, endearing to God, leading to heavenly and sweet communion with God. The least of Christ is better

than the greatest abundance of the earth. There is fullness of wisdom and purity and a fullness of strength and insight in the angels; there is a fullness of holiness and righteousness in the Lord's faithful servants. Yet their fullness in comparison to Christ's fullness is as no fullness, as the fullness of the star is as no fullness in comparison to the fullness of the sun, and the fullness of the vessel as no fullness in comparison with the fullness of the fountain. Their fullness is a derivative, a borrowed fullness. It is in them by participation, as the moon has her light from the sun, rivers their waters from the fountain, and the eye her sight from the soul. But it is in Christ originally, naturally, and of Himself. Their fullness is in them by measure according to the gift of God; in Christ it is infinite and above measure (John 1:16; Eph. 4:7). The moon is full of light, but the sun is more full. The rivers are full of waters, but the sea is more full. Their fullness is not communicable to others. They cannot transmit their graces to others. But Christ, as a head and fountain, imparts His fullness to others; and therefore the apostle said here of Him, "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in Him, which is the head of all principality and power" (Col. 2:9-10).

The apostle dissuaded them from listening to, receiving, and embracing the doctrines, traditions, devices, and inventions of men, as from empty lamps in which is no light to discover sin, to reveal God in Christ, or to make man wise to salvation; as from wooden swords gilt beautifully and flourishing, but having no edge, no power to penetrate the heart, to hew down sin, or to cast down the holds of ungodliness; as from broken cisterns, which have no pure and living water to refresh the soul or to satisfy the thirst thereof; as from chaff, wherein there is no nourishment to strengthen the inward man; and as from wrong medicine, wherein is no virtue to heal the breaches of the soul or to cure the wounds of the conscience. Having dissuaded

from this by an argument drawn from the vanity, emptiness, idleness, unprofitableness, and deceitfulness of such doctrines and observations, Paul here persuades by another argument drawn from the perfection and fullness of Christ.

In Christ is the height of all perfection—such perfection that no more can be added to Him. In Him is the fullness of all perfections, as of beams in one sun, lines in one center, and rivers in one ocean. Whatever fullness or perfection can be mentioned, desired, or imagined, it is to be found in Him. It is absurd to run to a rotten cistern for water, having beside us a full and living fountain, or to go to a glowworm for light, having the sun to guide us. It is a great folly to take recourse to human traditions, philosophical doctrines, and vain and empty ceremonies when we have Christ in whom dwelleth the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and in whom we are complete.

In the words of our text [Col. 2:9–10], we have a double capacity or fullness: the first of Christ (v. 9); the second of His members (v. 10). The first is original, absolute, and independent; the second, communicated, derivative, and borrowed. The first is the fountain; the second the stream. The first is the root; the second, the branch. The first is of the Head; the second is of the members. The first is like the fullness of the sun; the second is like the fullness of the stars. The first is like the fullness of a relation; the second like the fullness of a subject. The former is like the fullness of the lord and master of the house; the latter like the fullness of a servant in the house. For in Christ dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and we are complete in Him who is head of all principality and power.

First, of the former of these, we see the bounty and fullness of Christ: “For in him dwelleth the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” In these words we have first a term or note of coherence. The word *for* has much meaning. It gives the

reason for the previous sentence: “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit” (v. 8). Be not a scholar in their school; understand not, believe not, and adore not their doctrines. There is no need of resorting to them. You have all in Christ, for in Him is the fullness of the Godhead; all fullness pertaining to life and blessedness is to be found in Christ Jesus.

Secondly, here is a subject: “in him”—in Christ, in His person as He is the Son of God by eternal generation; as He is God and man in one person; and as He is Mediator, a middle person between God and man by divine ordination by His office of mediation. In Christ is such perfection that no addition is needed.

Thirdly, here is the act: “dwelleth”—an act of duration. Christ’s human nature and His Godhead are never separated.

Fourthly, here is the matter which is in Christ, and that is a “fullness”—a perfection, the highest perfection, the greatest fullness. The fullness of anything is the excellency of the thing. Fullness of corn in the ear; fullness of branches and fruit on the tree; fullness of children in the house, as of arrows in a quiver; fullness of light in the sun; fullness of precious substance in a pearl—these are the excellency of the ear, the tree, the house, the sun, and the pearl. Divine and incomprehensible fullness is the excellency of Christ Jesus above others. Such is Christ’s fullness that in comparison the fullness of all creatures is but emptiness.

Fifthly, here is the quality or condition of Christ’s fullness: “the fullness of the Godhead,” a fullness communicable to no creature. In saints and angels there is a finite fullness of divine qualities. In Christ there is an infinite fullness of the divine essence, a fullness by which “he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they” (Heb. 1:4). He who partakes

of God above others is more excellent than others; the Lord Jesus is far exalted above all creatures.

Sixthly, here is the way in which this fullness dwells in Christ: "bodily," not seemingly, but really, truly, and indeed; not figuratively and in shadow, as He dwelt in the temple, but *completely*; and not by power and efficacy, as He dwells in all creatures, nor by grace, as in the saints, nor by glory, as in the blessed in heaven, but *essentially, substantially*, the human nature being assumed into union with the person of the Word. Great is the difference between the dwelling of the Godhead in Christ and in His members. The presence of the fullness of the Godhead in Christ is such that He is abundantly able to fill all that come to Him.

Chapter 2

Declaring the Vanity of Joining Human Observations to Christ Jesus

First, note the term of connection: the particle *for*, which identifies the reason why we should abstain from all foreign and strange guides to direct us, from all the rotten pillars of human inventions to support us, and from the broken cistern of all the traditions and observations of men to fill us, to perfect us, and to promote the welfare of our souls. *For*, or *because* in Christ there is all fullness, therefore there is no cause, no need of stepping out from Christ, of casting our eyes abroad on other lights, of joining other things to Christ, or of mixing and mingling other things with Christ.

From this we learn that Christ's fullness is such that men should not join to Him other doctrines and observations to further their eternal blessedness. The fullness of the light of the sun is such that the traveler does not need to join a candle of his own to it to help him travel. The fullness of light issuing from the fiery pillar was such that the Israelites did not need the light of any other lamp to guide them in their journeys to the land of Canaan. Such a fiery pillar and such a bright and shining sun is Christ that we need no other light to guide us in all our doings in all our progress to the heavenly Canaan, but only Christ, shining in the sacred Scriptures and in the labors of His faithful ministers.

Therefore we are sent to Him, as to the only Master (Matt. 23:10), who has both authority and wisdom to command and instruct us. This was commanded by the voice from heaven, “Hear ye him” (Matt. 17:5). It is as if the Lord said, “I desire that you do not depend on any other, whether Moses or Elijah, but Christ.” Moses and Elijah vanished; Christ remained. The ceremonies of the law were abolished; the predictions of the prophets were fulfilled. Christ alone remains, and Him we must hear—as a scholar his teacher, receiving all instruction from Him; and as a servant his lord, yielding full and constant obedience to Him. We must hear Him in His Word, as a king in his proclamation; in His ministers, as a king in his ambassadors; and as a bridegroom, in his friends. Him we must hear.

In His precepts we are obeying Him; in His promises believing Him; in His judgments fearing Him; and in His mercies drawing nigh to Him and rejoicing in Him—every way consoling and contenting ourselves with Him. And for this cause He is called our prophet—a prophet like unto Moses (Deut. 18:15, 18) in nature and office, being a man and a mediator as Moses was, though more excellent and in a more singular sort. Moses was as a servant; Christ is as a Son and Lord of His church (Hebrews 3). He is as a prophet revealing the counsel of His Father concerning our redemption, and as a prophet giving power to His word to work for our conversion. As He called Lazarus by His voice and raised him by His power, so He calls us by His word and converts and raises us by His grace. And as the eyes of Israel were on the fiery pillar to guide them, and as it moved they moved, so must our eyes be on Christ, conforming our motion to Christ’s prescription.

All other doctrines are excluded. We may not hearken to them or embrace or entertain them. “If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine”—the doctrine of Christ, but his own doctrine—“receive him not into your house”

(2 John 10). Have no acquaintance with him; give him no audience; and give him no reception, “neither bid him God speed.” Salute him not; allow him no speech; wish him no success; shut your ears to him; and withdraw yourselves from him. “But though we, or an angel from heaven,” Paul said. Whoever he is, whether he be ever so famous for his learning or renowned for his holiness, even if he speak or live in external appearance as an angel, yet if he preach another gospel or another doctrine “than that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed” (Gal. 1:8). Let him be vile and abominable in your eyes, and odious and abominable in your apprehension.

Look to Christ. Cleave to Christ, and turn not aside from Him. Look for no other instructor to make you wise to salvation. “Look,” said Chrysostom, “for no other Master. Thou hast the words of God; no man can so teach thee.” “And I,” our Savior said of Himself, “am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Will you walk? I am the Way. Will you not be deceived? I am the Truth. Will you not die? I am the Life.” In Christ there is such fullness that we have no cause to go to others or to join other doctrines and observations to Christ Jesus.

With regard to the perfection of Christ, “it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell” (Col. 1:19): fullness of wisdom to direct; fullness of power to defend; fullness of worthiness to satisfy God’s justice and to merit man’s salvation; fullness of righteousness to justify; fullness of holiness to sanctify; fullness of mercy to pardon; and fullness of sufficiency to satisfy. He is called a *rock* because of His strength to support us; a *counselor* because of His wisdom to guide us; and a *fountain opened* because of His readiness and preparedness to wash away our uncleanness. He is called a *tree of life bearing twelve sorts of fruit every month* because of the abundance and perpetuity of joy and gladness and other fruits of the Spirit which He ministers to true believers. He is called a *river of*

living water, clear as crystal because of that ineffable purity, perfection, comfort, and satisfaction which Christ ministers to the souls of His children. He is called a *precious pearl* because of His worth, and a *storehouse* because of His fullness of all spiritual treasure. Oh, the happiness of the soul that enjoys Christ! He who has the Lord Jesus need not look elsewhere for any perfections. "Having Christ we have all," Ambrose said. He may say as Jacob did, "I have enough." The woman, the spouse of Christ, is described as one "clothed with the sun...and upon her head a crown of twelve stars" (Rev. 12:1); and in Him "are hid all the treasures of wisdom" (Col. 2:3). Surely no man ever knew, ever saw, and ever apprehended Christ's fullness who cherishes foreign doctrines or who admires human inventions.

With regard to the vanity of all human doctrines and observations, they are a "vain vision" (Ezek. 13:7), a vision composed of "vain and foolish things" (Lam. 2:14). They are an empty lamp where there is no light. They do not reveal the sin of man's heart; they do not reveal God in Christ. They do not shine into the heart; they do not make wise unto salvation. They are a school where men are "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Tim. 3:7). He who is most devoted to human observations is commonly most ignorant of the mystery of godliness.

As long as Paul was a scholar in this school, he remained ignorant of his own estate. He still beheld himself in a deceitful mirror. "For I was alive without the law once," said Paul (Rom. 7:9). He knows little of the law of God who makes men's traditions a law to direct him in the service of God. No light discloses the heavens but that which shines from heaven. No doctrine shows forth God and the way to heaven but only that which God Himself has given.

Of all other doctrines, we may say as Job did of his friends, "Ye are all physicians of no value" (Job 13:4). They neither point

out nor cure the disease of the soul. And as the Lord once said of the Egyptians—“For the Egyptians shall help in vain, and to no purpose.... Their strength is to sit still” (Isa. 30:7)—so all human and carnal doctrines: they help in vain and to no purpose. They can do nothing by way of mortification of sin, by way of testament against Satan’s temptations, or by way of pacification in quieting the conscience. In such cases, their strength is to sit still; they do not profit the receivers of them. It is but the sowing of chaff that brings forth no fruit, or feeding on husks that increases no strength—a labor which does not profit (Jer. 2:8). He who looks beyond Christ for light to direct him, his labor is altogether unprofitable.

With regard to the foolishness of man to step aside from Christ and cleave to human observations, every man considers it a foolish thing for a man who has a full fountain to seek water out of an empty pit, or for him who has the sun shining upon him to light a candle to guide him. It was great folly for the men of Shechem to refuse the vine, the olive, and the fig tree, and choose the bramble, and to leave the sons of Jerubbaal and choose Abimelech to reign over them (Judges 9). What is Christ but a living fountain, a bright and shining sun, a vine, an olive, a fig tree, full of all light and furnished with the greatest fullness of all divine and heavenly fruit? And what are human doctrines and observations but an empty pit, a snuffed candle that gives no light, and a barren bramble that bears no fruit?

Man never manifests his foolishness more than when he leaves the Lord Jesus. “Hath a nation,” the Lord said, “changed their gods, which are yet no gods? but my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit. Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the LORD. For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water” (Jer. 2:11–13).

Who is the fountain of living waters but God and His Christ? What are the broken cisterns but human inventions which have no water of life in them? Who is reproached in the parable as a fool, but he who left the rocks and built upon the sand? Who is the rock but Christ? What is the sand but the vain and idle observations of men? And who is so foolish as he who leaves the former and builds his faith and salvation upon the latter? The man who leaves Christ is certainly, in God's account, a man of no understanding, for Christ is He in whom are hidden all the treasures of true wisdom.

With regard to peril, it is very dangerous to leave Christ and adhere to false doctrines and empty devices. It is dangerous for the sheep to leave the shepherd and join himself to the wolf, and for the sick to leave the wise and faithful physician and put himself into the hands of him who is both ignorant and deceitful. What are the teachers of corrupt doctrine but wolves in sheep's clothing (Matt. 7:15), and false physicians who heal the disease of the daughter of God's people deceitfully (Jer. 6:14)? The men of Israel exposed themselves to great danger when they left David, their true king, and followed Sheba, who blew the trumpet of rebellion (2 Sam. 20:1–2).

The man who leaves Christ and follows them who blow the trumpet of vain, idle, carnal, and unsound doctrine exposes his soul to the danger of infection, seduction, and utter ruin. Unsound doctrines are instruments of great enmity to their receivers. They are the bait by which Satan, like a fowler, allures them, and the snare in which, like a hunter, he entangles and takes them. The prince of darkness has no such agents for deceitful teachers. He advances his kingdom more and brings greater ruin to the souls of the people by bad feeds-men than by the men of anyone calling besides them. A lying speck out of the mouth of an old prophet (1 Kings 13:8, 19) prevails and draws to disobedience more than a king's persuasion. Satan

ordinarily works the greatest mischief by being a “lying spirit in the mouth of” some prophet (1 Kings 22:22). The state of man’s soul which does not stick close to Christ Jesus is very perilous.

Chapter 3

Disclosing the Folly of Not Cleaving to and Contenting Ourselves with Christ, but Instead Going Aside to Vain Inventions

This discloses the vanity of their minds, the folly of their hearts, and the peril of their souls, who cleave not to Christ—those who rest not, quiet not, and content not themselves in Christ and His fullness, but rather step out, go aside, and turn away from Christ to vain doctrines, human devices, and carnal observations. They are like the “two hundred men out of Jerusalem, that were called,” who turned aside from David and after Absalom (2 Sam. 15:11–12). As “they went in their simplicity” of their hearts, so these go in the folly of their souls. As “they knew not any thing,” so these know not anything truly and savingly of God or of Christ, or of the deceit of Satan and of the danger of their estate and doing. As they took to themselves Ahithophel, a counselor of David, so these take to themselves some teacher or some minister who by calling is one of God’s counselors, one who should plead God’s cause and open God’s counsel. And as their conspiracy was strong against David, so is these men’s conspiracy strong against God, against His truth, and against the good of their own souls.

He who cleaves to corrupt doctrine conspires against Christ and his own salvation. And why is it that falsehood is more welcome than truth? Is a man who comes “in his own name” (John 5:43) more acceptable than he who comes in

God's name, but, first, from the dominion and fullness of corruption? A deformed face pleases itself in a deceitful mirror. The criminal rejoices to hear of a corrupt judge. Some diseased stomachs desire to feed on ashes. A rotten heart and a rotten doctrine are very compatible.

Ahab, having sold himself to commit wickedness (1 Kings 22), was very attentive to the false prophets. "Men," our Savior said, "loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved" (John 3:19–20). Job said of thieves, "For the morning is to them even as the shadow of death: if one know them, they are in the terrors of the shadow of death" (Job 24:17). To men who rob God by their ungodliness, the morning—the truth which shines forth like the morning star (2 Peter 1:19)—is as the shadow of death. If one knows them, if the minister detects and lays open their sin and their profane and evil estate, it is a great terror to them. It troubles them, as the star did Herod and the men of Jerusalem (Matt. 2:2–3). Man can never take pleasure in that fullness of light which shines from Christ Jesus until he has emptied himself of the fullness of his corruptions.

Secondly, regarding the lack of love for the truth, the woman who lacks love for her husband readily prostitutes herself to strangers. The soul which loves not Christ and His truth easily opens itself to corrupt and deceitful doctrines, "because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie" (2 Thess. 2:10–11). Corrupt and carnal doctrine is very welcome where the love of the truth is wanting. He who receives not the truth into his affections, as well as into his judgment, will soon be drawn from it. Under the law, it was usual for a man who married a

woman, if he did not love her, to give her a bill of divorcement and send her out of his house (Deut. 24:1). It is common with men under the gospel who, in regard to external covenant and profession, are married to the truth, yet afterward through their lack of love they give the truth a bill of divorce and become strangers to it. It is love for the truth that causes man to continue constantly with it. Love it, and you will never depart from it (Song 8:6–7).

Thirdly, out of a desire for novelty, men naturally desire new things. As they desire new fashions of apparel for their bodies, so they desire new doctrines for their souls. The eye is little amazed at the sun because it shines every day, but it greatly admires a shooting star because it is but seldom seen. Things of greatest worth, when they are common, are little esteemed. Vain and empty things, because they are new, are much regarded. Paul tells Timothy, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears” (2 Tim. 4:3). Men having the itch delight in scratching. Men covered with the loathsome scab of unclean lusts desire to be soothed, daubed, and flattered in their sins, and to have their ears tickled and pleased with some new and strange things—with “smooth things” (Isa. 30:10) and deceits, with the “enticing words of man’s wisdom” (1 Cor. 2:4).

The Israelites loathed manna and lusted after the onions of Egypt (Num. 11:5–6). Men of corrupt hearts after a while loathe the pure and plain preaching of Christ, and they fall to lusting after philosophical, superstitious, and vain doctrines. No man so desires change of new and strange doctrines as he who does not aim to change his conduct. Were the hearts of men truly changed, the true and common doctrines of Christ would be very pleasant; the soul would never grow weary of them.

Fourthly, due to their estrangement from Christ, they do not discern Christ's beauties; they do not taste Christ's sweetness; they do not feel Christ's goodness. There is no suitableness between Christ and their hearts; they have not learned Christ as the truth is in Him (Eph. 4:21). They have not learned the wisdom of Christ to be guided by Him; the authority of Christ to subject themselves to Him; the beauties of Christ to admire Him; the love of Christ to delight themselves in Him; the death of Christ to mortify their lusts; the resurrection of Christ quickening them to a new life; the power of Christ to depend upon Him; the holiness of Christ to imitate Him; or the all-sufficiency of Christ to content themselves with Him. Christ is to them a "hidden manna" (Rev. 2:17) whom they taste not. They see nothing in Him for which they should desire Him (Isa. 53:2).

It is recorded of Agesilaus, coming to help the king of Egypt in his distress, that, for the unattractiveness of his body and the commonness of his clothing, he was held in contempt among the men of that nation who hoped to have seen a Spartan king, such as the king of the Persians, most handsomely adorned in his body. So Christ, coming to help us in our distress—for the lack of external pomp in His ordinances, worldly glory in His ministers and members, and the splendor of human eloquence in His doctrines—is despised by the men who frame and form to themselves a Christ like one of the mighty monarchs of the earth. He who discerns not the spiritual beauty of Christ in his doctrine easily degenerates into human superstition.

Fifthly, noting the disagreement between them and Christ's doctrine, there is no proportion, no likeness, and no obligation between their hearts and this doctrine. They are darkness, and this is light; they are carnal, and this is spiritual; they are from beneath, and this is from above. Their ways are contrary to it; their hearts are full of enmity against it; they hate

it as Ahab hated Micaiah because he never prophesied good to him (1 Kings 22:8). Such is the brightness, the holiness, and the power of it, that they cannot endure it. They despise and refuse being searched and having their sin discovered, as Rachel when she sat upon her idol, unwilling to be reproved. They are fiercely reluctant to have their lusts mortified, as David was to have Absalom put to death, and therefore he charged the captains of his army to deal gently with the young man (2 Sam. 18:5). The rough handling of profane men's vices makes them weary of God's ordinances and moves them to seek out some more gentle and easy doctrines.

But, brethren, as Solomon once "said of laughter, It is mad: and of mirth, What doeth it?" (Eccl. 2:2), so let me say to you of this rotten, deceitful, and pleasant doctrine: it is mad; the words of wisdom and soberness are not in it. And of all human observations and philosophical principles in the school of Christ, what do they do? Why surely they do not discover sin (Isa. 8:20). They search as Laban did, not as the master in Jonah did. They are but a key made of straw—they cannot open the door of the heart, and they leave man ignorant of God and himself. No doctrine can show us God but that which is from God.

Secondly, they do not humble the soul. As Zebah and Zalmunna said of Jether, "For as the man is, so is his strength" (Judg. 8:21), so, as the doctrine is, such is its strength. The Devil regarded not Sceva's sons' solemn charge (Acts 19:15); his beliefs are never cast down by a human doctrine.

Thirdly, they do not nourish. The prodigal was likely to starve before he returned to his father's house (Luke 15). He who feeds on the husks of foreign and strange doctrines will starve his soul if he return not to God, his Father's house where there is enough heavenly bread. Man may feed on these

plentifully, and yet like Pharaoh's lean cows, after eating up the fat, they are still as lean as ever (Genesis 41).

Fourthly, they do not pacify. Like Job's friends, they are miserable comforters (Job 16:2). "They comfort in vain" (Zech. 10:2). The woman in the gospel spent all upon the physicians (Mark 5:26), and yet could not be cured until she came to Christ. There is no cure for wounded consciences unless they come to Christ Jesus.

Fifthly, they deceive (2 Cor. 11:3), as the serpent deceived our first parents—and as Rabshakeh (2 Kings 18) would have deceived Hezekiah's subjects.

Sixthly, they allure and draw to sin, as the harlot allured the young man (Proverbs 7).

Seventhly, they impoverish the soul, as by the means of a whorish woman, a man is brought to a morsel of bread.

Eighthly, they captivate and bring the soul into bondage. They make man the servant of men, the servant of corruption—as Delilah by her singing caused Samson to sleep, and she cut off his locks.

Ninthly, they adulterate the true doctrine of God's ministers, as tares corrupt the wheat, and as a little leaven seasons the whole lump.

Tenthly, they detract from the dignity and honor of Christ.

Eleventhly, they deny Christ's authority by making men their lords and masters.

Twelfthly, they deny Christ's wisdom by setting up other rules to direct us, as if Christ had not wisdom enough to guide us. Oh then, hold fast that form of doctrine which Christ has taught you. Walk in that light which He has set up to guide you, and beware of making the doctrines of men the rule of faith or life. Do not feed on them lest they poison you; do not build on them lest they sink under you; do not lean on them lest they pierce you; do not walk after them lest they deceive

you; but take all your direction from Christ Jesus, in whom is all fullness.

This must teach us to allow ourselves in all things to be guided by Christ, to wait upon Him, and to take all our direction from Him. As Moses received the whole pattern of the tabernacle from the Lord and accordingly built it, so let us receive the whole pattern of our faith and life from Christ and accordingly believe and walk, repent, and obey. Let us wait upon Him and receive our commission from Him, as Ahimaaz once waited upon Joab and ran when he bid him (2 Samuel 18). Let us feel Christ in His fullness shining in our hearts as the sun in the fullness of his strength shines into the air, filling us with such divine and heavenly light that we may see our own vileness as a man in a mirror beholds his spots; that we may discern the things that differ, as in the day men discern colors; and that we may be humbled in the apprehension of our own unworthiness, as Paul fell on the ground when the light shone about him. Let us feel Christ in His fullness that we may know and feel the vanity and emptiness of the creature, as the children of the nobles knew the emptiness of the pits (Jer. 14:3) when they came and found no water in them, and as Jacob knew the vanity of Laban, having changed his wages ten times. Let us feel Christ in His fullness that we may see the undeniable need we have of Christ, as the elders of Gilead saw the need they had of Jephthah, and the Gibeonites their need of Joshua; that we may behold God in Christ as a Father regenerating us, as a king of mercy pardoning us and as a gracious friend coming near to us, bestowing all heavenly gifts upon us and enriching us with all blessings in Christ Jesus. May we also feel Christ in His fullness that we may have a clear apprehension of Christ's beauties, and be thereby drawn to value Him above all treasures, to love Him above all friends; to honor Him above all commanders; to desire Him above all

riches; to comfort ourselves in Him, as in the paradise of all our comforts; to stay upon Him in all distresses; to include Him in all our undertakings; and to meditate upon Him in all seasons, receiving daily more and more of the fullness of His grace, that at length we may reign with Him in the fullness of His glory.

Chapter 4

Setting Forth the Beauty of All Divine and Heavenly Fullness in Christ

The second thing in these words is the subject in which all fullness dwelleth—and that is, *in Him*. It is in Christ, in the person of Christ as God and man in one person, in the human nature assumed into the unity of the Second Person in the body of Christ, as in a temple, Augustine said. Cyrill said, “The body of Christ is truly a temple, for in it would all the fullness of the Godhead dwell bodily.” From this we learn that:

All divine and heavenly fullness is to be found in Christ Jesus. All the fullness of the land of Egypt was to be found with Joseph. All the fullness of God, of grace, of peace, of glory, is found with Christ. “For it pleased the Father,” said Paul, “that in him should all fulness dwell” (Col. 1:19). The fullness of wisdom, righteousness, holiness, and of all good things have their abode and dwelling in Christ. In Him they are found in their complete perfection, and Christ is said to fill all in all (Eph. 1:23). The sun fills all the stars with light. The sea fills all the rivers with waters. Christ fills all the creatures with a natural fullness. Christ fills all the children of God with a spiritual and heavenly fullness. And of His fullness they are said to receive—as streams from the fountain, branches from the root, and members from the head—“grace for grace” (John 1:16): the grace of the New Testament for the grace

of the Old; permanent for shadowy grace; or rather, *grace upon grace*, one grace of the Spirit after another, the Spirit of Christ daily pouring a new increase of grace upon us. Such is Christ's fullness that He more and more fills the souls of His servants.

And this fullness of Christ is sometimes expressed by comparing Christ to a storehouse, in which is all treasure, "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom" (Col. 2:3); to a tree (Rev. 22:2), on which grows all variety and fullness of fruit; and to a king (Rev. 19:16), for the fullness of His majesty, glory, dignity, and excellency. All creatures are but beggars in comparison to Christ Jesus, who keeps His house open to communicate His fullness, freeness, and readiness to hungry souls. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price" (Isa. 55:1). Sometimes Christ is compared to a fountain, in whom is plenty of water; sometimes to the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valleys (Song 2:1), for the surpassing beauty and transcendent excellency of graces in Himself, and for the sweet and plentiful, pleasant, and delightful communication of Himself to the souls of His people. Sometimes He is compared to the apple tree among the trees of the wood, for His dignity, worth, and excellency above other persons. As the apple tree excels over the other trees of the forest in comfortableness of shadow, sweetness of smell, and pleasantness and abundance of fruit, so the spouse, describing the height, fullness, and perfection of the excellencies of Christ her Bridegroom, said of Him, "My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand" (Song 5:10). He is *white*, for His innocency in Himself, for His victory, peace, joy, and comfort in His God, and for His administration of grace and mercy to penitent and believing sinners; *ruddy*, for the imputation of our sin to Him, for His

suffering, and for His justice to punish His enemies; and *the fairest of ten thousand*, for His beauty, majesty, authority, worth, and fullness, surpassing all men and angels.

The Lord Jesus is exceedingly glorious in the eyes of His genuine friends and lovers. He is indeed beautiful only in the eyes of those who love Him. The more a man loves Him, the more clear and comfortable is his apprehension of that fullness which is in Him. This perfection and fullness of Christ was foreshadowed by the high priest who was washed with water and anointed with holy oil (Ex. 29:7), signifying Christ's sanctity and His unction with the oil of gladness above His fellows. The high priest had his loins covered with clean linen, his body gloriously appareled, and a holy crown upon his head (Ex. 28:2), signifying the clothing of Christ's humanity with true holiness, the adorning of it with perfect righteousness, and the crowning thereof with majesty, as King of His chosen. This was likewise pictured by the temple that was a stately and glorious edifice, full of light. In it was the ark. There God appeared and filled it with His glory. So is the fabric of Christ's human nature, immaculate and spotless, full of heavenly knowledge—the full treasure of true wisdom, grace, and knowledge being hidden in Him—the Godhead dwelling there personally (John 1:14) and filling Him with all grace and glory. This was also signified in Joseph (Gen. 39:6). Joseph was a beautiful person; Christ is fairer than the sons of men. In his day, there was none like Joseph in understanding and wisdom, in whom the Spirit of God was, as it was in Christ. There is none comparable to Christ in wisdom; men and angels are His students. Joseph was set over the whole land in general and over the king's house in particular. Christ is Lord of the whole earth, but chiefly over God's church. Joseph had the custody of the king's storehouse, and with that fed all Egypt and other nations. Christ has all the fullness of God and with

this feeds Jew and Gentile, the believers of all nations; and such fullness of Christ was requisite.

In regard to the dignity of His person, as the Second Person He was the Son of God by eternal generation, and as man, He was the Son of God by grace of hypostatic union. Christ is nearer to God than saints or angels. And by the amount that He comes nearer to God than all creatures, by the same amount He participates in more of God's fullness. Christ is the Son of God in a more high and eminent way than others. He is the Son of God by eternal generation; others are the sons of God by regeneration. Christ is the Son of God by natural generation; we are the sons of God by voluntary dispensation. Christ is the Son of God begotten of the essence of the Father, very God of very God; we are the sons of God begotten not of His essence, but by the operation of His Spirit. Christ is the proper and only begotten Son of the Father; we are the adopted sons of God, not born sons by nature but made sons by grace. "Many of us," Hilary said, "are the sons of God, but this Son is not such. For this Son is a true and proper Son, by original, not by adoption; by truth, not by declaration; by birth, not by creation." And who inherits His Father's fullness, but the Son—the beloved Son, the only begotten Son, the Son of the Father's delights? "Thou art My Son," says God the Father to Christ, "this day have I begotten Thee"—there is His eternal generation. "Ask of Me, and I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for Thy possession"—there is the fullness of the gift communicated to Him.

Joseph gave portions to all his brethren, but he gave to Benjamin a portion five times as much as what he gave the others. God gives blessed and liberal portions to all His adopted sons, but Christ's portion far exceeds theirs. Their receivings are from and through Him; He is the heir of all

(Heb. 1:2), more excellent than the angels, having obtained a more excellent name than they (Heb. 1:4)—as the name of a son is more excellent than the name of a servant, and the name of a king more excellent than the name of a subject. Christ is both Son and King, far above men and angels in all divine fullness, “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” (Heb. 1:3).

With regard to divine ordination, God has appointed to convey all fullness of grace by Christ to His chosen. God has ordained to convey all fullness of light to the air by the sun, and therefore has put a great fullness of light into the sun. He has ordained to convey all fullness of nourishment to the branches by the roots, and therefore has put a fullness of juice into the roots. Likewise He has appointed to communicate all gracious and heavenly fullness to the souls of men by Christ. He “gave him to be the head over all things to the church” (Eph. 1:22). The Head is above the members, rules the members, and communicates feeling and movement to the members. Christ has preeminence above all the members of His church. He rules and guides them, communicates spiritual sense and motion to them, and the Father, John said, “hath committed all judgment unto the Son” (John 5:22). He rules in judgment of administration and government of all things, the judgment of ruling and guiding His chosen—in absolving their sins and in breathing all His graces into them that He may live in them and they in Him, preserving them safe unto life eternal. God has made Him the great and high steward, and the church His house, to whom Christ, like a steward—or rather Son—dispenses all the fullness which His Father has committed to Him, being faithful as a Son

over His house (Heb. 3:6). And as God dispenses all fullness by Him, so of necessity all fullness must be placed in Him. As Ambrose has said, "Christ is made all things to all men" (cf. 1 Cor. 1:30).

With regard to Christ's office and undertaking in behalf of God's church and chosen, this is an undertaking so difficult that without the fullness of God it cannot be accomplished. For first, such is the disease and malady of the souls of men that without the fullness of the Godhead, Christ cannot cure them. They are so dead in sin, that without an almighty power He cannot raise them. If He were not the Lord of life, He could not quicken them. If He did not have life in Himself originally, absolutely, and infinitely (John 5:26), He could not minister life to them. Christ shows no less power in raising the souls of men than He did in raising the body of Lazarus (John 11:44). Their blindness is such that were not Christ the true Light that comes from above (John 1:9), He could never shine into their hearts. If He did not have the treasures of all wisdom, He could never make them wise to salvation. If He did not have the keys of David, which open and no man shuts (Rev. 3:7), He could never open the eyes of their understanding. The obstinacy and hardness of their hearts is such that the hammer of the Word, without the almighty hand of God, could never break nor bruise them. The distance and difference between God and the souls of men is such that were not Christ a person of infinite worth, He could never make any satisfaction and never work a reconciliation. No hand can cure man's miseries but that which has an infinite fullness.

Secondly, the opposition made by Satan against this office and undertaking of Christ is such that without the fullness of the Godhead there could be no conquest. He is a lion so strong and so greedily set upon His prey, that if Christ,

a Shepherd, were not infinitely strong, He could not deliver the souls of men, as David delivered the sheep from the lion (1 Sam. 17:35). He is a man of war (Luke 11:21), so sharp and shrewd and so fortifying His holds in the hearts of men, that if it were not for the power of Christ Almighty, He could never vanquish and cast him out. Liberty from Satan's bondage and temptations comes altogether from Christ's fullness.

Thirdly, the wisdom and depth of the mystery of godliness is such that if Christ did not have a spiritual and heavenly fullness—were He not in the “bosom of the Father” (John 1:18) and knew all things—He could never show us the Father. He could never open the book “sealed with seven seals” (Rev. 5:1), which no creature can open. He could never open our hearts and fill us, who are darkness (Eph. 5:8), with a marvelous light. The enlightening of man's understanding is an almighty work. He can be no less than God who gives us the spirit of wisdom and revelation to know God and the riches of His goodness toward the saints.

Fourthly, such are the afflictions of Christ's members whom Satan so besieges and assaults, as once the Amorite princes did to the Gibeonites (Josh. 10:6), that, if Christ were not filled with the fullness of all power, He could never give them deliverance. Freedom comes to God's children from the assaults of their enemies only by the mighty power of Christ Jesus. He is the ark which keeps them from drowning in the deluge of affliction. It is He who walks with them and keeps them so that the fiery furnace of troubles does not burn and consume them, as He once walked with the three children and preserved them (Daniel 3).

Fifthly, the perfection that God requires in His people is such that, were not the fullness of the Godhead in Christ, He could not clothe them with righteousness. He could not purge out their corruptions, as the river Jordan purged Naaman.

He could not present them without spot and blemish (Eph. 5:27) in God's presence. It is the mighty power of Christ that prepares and keeps God's children to salvation. And thus you see the necessity and truthfulness of there being all divine and heavenly fullness in Christ Jesus.

Chapter 5

Setting Forth the Folly of Neglecting Christ and Seeking Fullness Elsewhere

This identifies the folly of those who neglect Christ, leave Christ, and step out and go aside from Christ and seek for fullness elsewhere. These are like the men of Shechem in Jotham's parable who left the vine, the olive, and the fig tree and addressed themselves to the bramble and hid themselves under the shadow thereof (Judg. 9:8–15). All that is without and besides Christ is but a bramble in comparison to Christ, ministering no safety, no defense, and no sure and comfortable shadow of refreshment to them who have recourse to it.

It is our greatest foolishness to leave the Lord Jesus to seek out other props and pillars to support us—an evil very common and popular to the souls of men, an evil of which our Savior complains, “And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life” (John 5:40). You will not come to Me; you will not believe in Me; you will not subject yourselves to Me; you will not comfort and delight yourselves in Me; and you will not quiet and content yourselves with Me. You will not come to Me, as students to their teacher, to be taught of Me, to learn of Me, “as the truth is in” Me (Eph. 4:21). You will not come to Me, as sick men to their physician, to be healed and cured by Me, or as they who sit in darkness come to the light, to be ruled and guided by Me who is the true Light. You

will not come to Me, like the poor to the rich, to be fed and clothed by Me; as the thirsty to the fountain, to be refreshed and filled by Me; or as the servant to his lord, to fear and serve Me and to honor and exalt Me. You will not thus come to Me. There is in the souls of men a very strong hesitancy to come to the Lord Jesus, to come fully and freely away from all others to Christ, as the wife leaves her own people and her father's house (Ps. 45:10) to live and abide with her husband, to set her love on him, and to comfort herself with him. There is again in the souls of men a very strong and marvelous inclination to decline to go from earthly vanities to Christ.

Some leave Christ and seek for fullness in other outward and common things, but the fullness of God is not in them but in Christ. All others are full of vanity. Christ alone is the subject of all sufficiency. Without Christ the whole creation is but an empty vessel, as Job once said of wisdom: "But where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding? Man knoweth not the price thereof; neither is it found in the land of the living. The depth saith, It is not in me: and the sea saith, It is not with me" (Job 28:12-14). So may we say of fullness: Where will fullness be found? And where is the place of all-sufficiency? Man does not know the price thereof, neither is it found in the land of the living. Honors and high places, fleshly delights, and carnal pleasures say, "It is not *in us*." Riches, strength, beauty, art, and intelligence say, "It is not *with us*." Man is exceedingly deceived who leaves the Lord Jesus and seeks for fullness in other things, for:

First, that which is without Christ is an empty thing, like a lamp without oil or a bone without marrow. The house without the husband seems empty to the wife; the throne without the king appears empty to the subject; without the Lord Jesus the soul meets with emptiness in the greatest worldly fullness. It is Christ that "filleth all in all" (Eph. 1:23). He puts a fullness into

all the things of His servants—a fullness into their possessions, that they rest contented; a fullness into their low estates, that they rejoice in it; a fullness into their cup, whereby their thirst is quenched; a fullness into their bread, whereby their hunger is removed; a fullness into their dinner of green herbs, satiating them as an ox with much feed; and a fullness into all His ordinances, making them instruments to fill the souls of His servants with all saving graces. It is not the abundance of these matters, but Christ Jesus who ministers the fullness. Christ is the marrow and fatness of the feast. With Christ there is satisfaction in the slenderest portion; without Christ there is nothing but emptiness in the greatest fullness (Hag. 1:6). Without Him man can never have enough (Isa. 56:11). He who does not gain Christ earns nothing; he who drinks not of this fountain increases his thirst by drinking (Eccl. 5:10).

Secondly, those things without Christ are feeble and weak, as a tree without roots—like Jeroboam’s withered arm (1 Kings 13:4). Without Christ the strength thereof is motionless and immovable (Isa. 30:3)—like Pharaoh’s chariots when the wheels were smitten off—it cannot carry us out of the waters of distress; it can do nothing. Gehazi with his master’s staff could bring no life nor heat into the child until his master came (2 Kings 4). All can do nothing for us if it is not attended with Christ’s power and presence.

Thirdly, the things of life without Christ are troublesome: a bed of thorns, and not of feathers; a tempestuous sea, and not calm waters; bread of sorrows, and not of peace; and poison, and not pleasant wine. Augustine said, “Gold torments him most that hath most; it allows him to enjoy nothing of his possession, who pursues it with an inordinate affection.” Sooner or later life is possessed with much torment if we do not enjoy Christ in and with it; as the possession, so the trouble increases if we do not have Christ to sanctify it. Like

the waters of Marah without the tree, they that possess them cannot drink a comfortable draught of them.

Fourthly, all things without Christ will subject the soul to bondage and authority over the soul, causing it to bow down, as Gideon's soldiers to the waters (Judg. 7:5). This takes away all the liberty thereof, enthralls it to the world, and subjects it to the command thereof, as the soldiers to the command of the centurion (Matt. 8:9). Men who will not serve the Lord Jesus become slaves to the creature. God makes those shamefully to serve the creature who will not joyfully serve Christ their Lord and Master. Man's denial of obedience to Christ gives the creature dominion over him. The creature is ever that man's master who will not be Christ's servant (Matt. 6:24). This is as the Lord threatened the children of Israel, saying, "Because thou servedst not the LORD thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things; therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies which the LORD shall send against thee, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things: and he shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, until he have destroyed thee" (Deut. 28:47–48). Thus man who will not serve the Lord with joy and gladness, with sincerity and singleness, the Lord gives over to serve other things with hunger and thirst, with tormenting care and distraction, and with much grief and labour, in great distress in the midst of his sufficiency—these things putting an iron yoke upon his neck, making him such a wretched slave to the world that he has no power to eat of what he does possess (Eccl. 6:2). Chrysostom said, "He who serves money is bound with present and prepared for future fetters"—so chained that he cannot come to God, and so bowed down that he cannot look up to God. God is not in all his thoughts; He is altogether a stranger to him.

Fifthly, the things of this world are transient, like a servant who changes many masters. He ebbs and flows like the sea and waxes and wanes like the moon. There is a steadfastness in Christ. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb. 13:8). There is mutability in other things, constant only in alteration. They go and come like the soldiers at the command of the centurion—like Jonah’s gourd that came up over Jonah to be a shadow over his head to deliver him from his grief, and Jonah was exceeding glad (Jonah 4:6). But when the morning arose, a worm smote the gourd and it withered, and the wind and sun beat down on Jonah’s head, so that he fainted (Jonah 4:7–8). The things of this world, like a gourd, are today a shade to us and we much rejoice in it; tomorrow they are withered, and we have much discomfort. The joy of these things usually turns to sorrow. They minister more grief in their loss than they ever gave joy in their possession. And upon this Solomon dissuades man away from the things of this world: “Labour not,” he said, “to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom. Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven” (Prov. 23:4–5).

Sixthly, things of the world are very deceptive. Laban changed Jacob’s wages ten times. Many are their changes who serve these things. The psalmist said of them that they “go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters.... They mount up to the heaven; they go down again to the depths: their soul is melted because of trouble” (Ps. 107:23, 26). We may say the same of them that go down to the creature and seek for great things and do great business in the sea of this world. They mount up in honor, in wealth, and in favor; they go down again in poverty, disgrace, contempt, and hatred, and their soul even melts with trouble. Never did man trust in other things, but was deceived—his soul smarted for it. When

the promises are greatest, the deceit is most dangerous. As Diogenes sometimes styled flattering speech “a honey snare,” such a snare are the honey-sweet promises of the creature. This, like a Delilah, sings us to sleep, makes us secure, shaves off our locks, robs us of our spiritual strength, and delivers us into Satan’s bondage.

When Absalom feasted, and Amnon’s heart was merry with wine, it was then Absalom’s servants fell on Amnon and murdered him. When the world feasts man, and the heart of man is merry with the world’s wine, drunken with the fullness of the world, it is then that honors, riches, and pleasures—the world’s servants—fall on man, betray man, murder the soul of man, frustrate the expectation of man, and prove “a deceitful bow” (Hos. 7:16) and a sandy foundation to man. And the folly of man is made manifest in seeking fullness in the things of this world. Thus, without Christ Jesus, the soul of man meets with nothing but emptiness, weakness, bondage, changes, and deceitfulness. All is vain without Christ—a thing of nothing, a very nullity. Like Job’s friends—“physicians of no value” (Job 13:4)—they cannot cure us, help us, ease us, or fill us; they can do nothing for us.

Some seek for fullness in themselves; they please themselves with themselves. They do not go out of themselves. They do not look beyond or above themselves for anything to fill them, to enrich them, and to make them happy. They suppose they have enough water in their own well and enough treasure in the storehouse of their own souls. Goliath presumed he had enough fullness of strength in his own arm and in his own weapon, and he looked out for no other fullness to assist him in the conflict with David. A vain and corrupt man supposes he has enough fullness in himself: enough fullness of wisdom to guide him; of liberty to convert himself; of power to vanquish the adversaries of his soul; of righteousness to justify himself

in the sight of God; and of merit to procure salvation at the hands of God. And therefore he does not go out of himself. He does not address himself to Christ; he does not seek to be filled with the fullness of Christ. They trust in themselves who are righteous in themselves (Luke 18:9). They look for no righteousness but their own—for no armor to defend them, but that which is framed and made at home of their own metal. They are rich and full and want nothing (Rev. 3:17), in their own opinion. They are wise in their own eyes and lean on their own understanding (Prov. 3:5); and they do not trust the Lord, do not look to Him, and have no care to be filled with His knowledge, with His power, and with His goodness. He that has the highest thoughts of his own fullness does ever give the least regard to the fullness of Christ. He is ready to say to Christ, leaving to Him His fullness, as Esau did to Jacob sending him a present, “I have enough, my brother; keep that thou hast unto thyself” (Gen 33:9).

It is sad to consider how men’s ignorance and insensibleness of their own wants cause them to undervalue the fullness of Christ. Oh, how little do they who have high thoughts of their own fullness discern or taste of Christ’s fullness! And what is man without Christ, that he should seek for fullness in himself, but as an empty house wherein dwelleth no good (Rom. 7:18)? Or a dead man, in whom is no life; a blind man, in whose soul is no light; and a loathsome leper in whom is no beauty? As the world without the sun, the flock without a shepherd, the members without a head, the swamp without mud, and the flag without water, as Job once said? As the field of the slothful without a diligent hand to dress it is overgrown with thorns and nettles, so and such is the soul of man without Christ. If man would see his own emptiness and vileness without Christ, he would never be at rest till he were filled with Christ’s fullness.

Some seek for fullness in the naked presence and bare use of God's ordinances, never laboring to see Christ, to taste Christ in them, to receive Christ and His fullness through them, and to be brought to the enjoyment of Christ by them. Asa promised himself a fullness of health from the physicians. He did not look beyond and through them to the Lord; he did not seek to strive after the Lord, but after the physicians (2 Chronicles 16). God's ordinances are the medicine; His ministers the physicians. Some look to the ordinances, stay in them, and promise themselves fullness of health from them. They do not seek; they do not come home to the Lord by them; they do not partake of Christ and His fullness in them.

The Jews promised themselves fullness of defense, safety, victory, and salvation from the naked presence of the temple (Jer. 7:4), without amendment of their doings and without obedience to the God who dwelled in the temple. Micah persuaded himself of the fullness of all blessing because he had a Levite as his priest (Judg. 17:13), though he still retained his idol and learned not from his priest how to serve God rightly, from whom comes all blessing. How many men do turn the means of salvation into the means of destruction, not learning God in them and not being led home to God by them!

Man's inattentive use of God's ordinances is fruitless, until he both sees and enjoys Christ and His fullness in them. As therefore the Shunammite woman thought it not enough that Gehazi was sent with his master's staff, but laid hold upon the prophet (2 Kings 4:30) and would not go till he himself went with her, so think it not enough that you have Christ's servant and Christ's staff, or Christ's minister and Christ's Word, but lay hold of Christ, cleave to Christ, and carry Christ with you. You come to the ministry for little purpose if you carry not home with you Christ Jesus, if you are not filled with His fullness.

Some seek for fullness in human observations, in serving God after their own fancies, or in the doctrines of men in offering sacrifices with strange fire, in a false worship, and in a devised religion (Gen. 11; Lev. 10:2; Jer. 2:12; 23:28). These seek fullness of water in a broken cistern; for fullness of light in an empty lamp; for fullness of bread in a heap of chaff; and for fullness of figs upon a thistle. These, like they who built Babel, build to their own confusion. These are like men running from the sun and seeking light in a glowworm—like the prodigal who ran from his father’s house where there was fullness of bread and sought his meals among the swine (Luke 15), to whom I may say, as once the angel did to the woman, “Why seek ye the living among the dead?” (Luke 24:5). So why do you seek life, salvation, and spiritual fullness among the dead, vain, and empty ceremonies? The diseased woman sought in vain for health among the physicians until she came to Christ (Mark 5), and man seeks in vain for fullness until he comes to the Lord Jesus. Therefore as Peter once said to Christ, “Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life” (John 6:68). So, brethren, let me say to you: Brethren, where will you go? On what rock will you build? What guide will you follow? What friend will you choose? What treasure will you seek? Christ and none else has the fountain of all fullness. Oh, therefore leave all and come to Him, that He may fill you with His grace first and with His glory last.

Chapter 6

Discovering the Folly of Not Coming Fully Home to Christ in Whom Is All Fullness

This lays open the folly of those who stand aloof from Christ, continue as strangers, and come not fully home to Christ, in whom all fullness is to be found, by whom the Lord has ordained to minister all fullness to the souls of men, and without whom there is an utter emptiness of grace in them. Yet as Jephthah, whose brethren rejected him (Judg. 11:2) though the Lord had appointed no other to deliver them, in like sort many refuse Christ and keep a great distance from Christ. They will not come to Him, receive Him, and lay hold on Him, though the Lord has appointed no other helper and no other deliverer—given no other name whereby they may be saved (Acts 4:12).

It is usual for men to put the lowest price on that which God has ordained to be the means of their greatest good. Men are commonly very evil choosers and very unhappy refusers in matters concerning their everlasting happiness. Christ, the evangelist John said, “came unto his own, and his own received him not” (John 1:11). He came among His own by incarnation, taking our nature upon Him, appearing in the form of a servant—but they refused His service. He came in the ministry of the gospel as an ambassador, publishing the tidings of salvation, but they plugged their ears and would not

hearken to Him; and He came as a glorious and shining sun, but they shut their eyes and would not behold Him. He came as a physician to heal them, but they regarded not His medicine. He came as a shepherd to gather them home into His Father's fold, but they would not be gathered by Him. He came as a full and living fountain to fill them, but they would neither draw nor drink of the wells of salvation which He opened to them. They received Him not by knowledge as their counselor to instruct them; nor by faith as their garment of righteousness to clothe and cover them; nor as their rock to support them; nor by love as their Bridegroom to marry their souls to Him; nor by fear as their prince to subject themselves to Him.

Christ's blessed, free, and gracious offer of eternal happiness is very slightly esteemed and very ungratefully refused by many persons. Ordinarily nothing is more unwelcome than that which most concerns man's salvation. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" (Matt. 23:37). Christ, like a hen to her chickens, showed His love to them, His care for them, His willingness to gather them home to Himself, His readiness to hide and protect them under the wings of His power—His grace and fullness—from the Devil and other instruments of cruelty which, like kites in the air, fought to make a prey of them; but they would not. They would not come to Him; they would not believe in Him; they would not embrace and receive Him.

The souls of men are great enemies to their own happiness, very profanely refusing Christ's choicest mercies, highly valuing the emptiness of the world, and disgracefully prizing Christ's fullness. Diogenes noted the folly of the men of his time because they would buy precious things cheap and

sell worthless things at a dear rate, and because they valued a statue at three thousand dollars and sold a measure of corn for two pennies—though the life of man had no need of a statue, but could not live without corn. Thus may we justly rate the folly of men for undervaluing Christ, the most precious of all things, and for overvaluing the world, which is but dung and dross (Phil. 3:8) in comparison to Christ—also for selling their liberty, peace, comfort, and even their very souls for the world, and for being unwilling to part with anything for the enjoyment of Christ, when yet the world is but even a dumb statue, a dead idol which can do little or nothing for them, and Christ is the true manna, the bread of life (John 6:35) come down from heaven. He gives life to all who believingly come to Him—without whom men have no life of God within them—for “he that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life” (1 John 5:12).

And why is it that men are so slow to come to Christ, to entertain Christ, to receive of Christ’s fullness, to eat of His bread and drink of His wine which He has mingled (Prov. 9:5), and to partake of all the good things which God the Father has given Him to communicate and bestow upon the souls of men?

It is first from their ignorance of Christ. The world does not know Christ (John 1:10). As the blind man does not know the sun though it shine upon him, no more does the carnal and worldly man know Christ though He shine upon him in the gospel, for “the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not” (John 1:5). Such is man’s ignorance that as the light shining in Goshen did not pierce the darkness where the Egyptians sat (Exodus 10), no more does the light of the gospel penetrate their souls, but they sit in darkness and the shadow of death. At the noonday (Isa. 59:10) of the

gospel they are in the midnight of ignorance. Our Savior said to such, "Ye neither know me, nor my Father" (John 8:19).

They know not the beauties of Christ. They see no comeliness in Him for which they should desire Him (Isa. 53:2). He is no more to them than another beloved. They do not know the power of Christ in softening their hearts, as the ground knows the power of the dew in supplying it; in quickening their souls, as Lazarus knew the power of Christ in raising his body; and in restoring them to spiritual liberty, as Peter knew the power of the angel who struck off the fetters and set him free from Herod's prison.

They do not know the death of Christ, as the members know the death of the head, and the branches the death of the root in withering and dying with it. They do not so know His death, that their "old man is crucified with him" (Rom. 6:6), that the body of sin is destroyed, and they no more serve sin.

They do not know the resurrection of Christ, coming forth from the grave of their sin, as the dead knew the resurrection of Christ, their bodies coming out of the grave with Him.

They do not know the gracious presence and inhabitation of Christ in their souls, as Obededom knew the presence and dwelling of the ark in his house, causing all that he had to prosper (2 Sam. 6:11), making their souls flourish in all saving graces.

They do not know the love of Christ, as the bride in the bridechamber knows the love of the bridegroom, as the guests in the banqueting house know the love of the master of the feast, or as David knew the love of Jonathan. To them Christ is not like Jonathan to David, very pleasant to their souls. His love is not wonderful to their sense and feeling, passing the love of women (2 Sam. 1:26).

They do not know Christ in His gospel, as a friend in his letters; as a king in his ambassadors of peace; as a musician

in his musical instruments, making a joyful sound in their ears; or as the lame man knew the angel in Bethesda healing diseases (John 5:4–5).

They do not know Christ's fullness as the seeing eye knows the fullness of light in the sun, or as the thirsty palate knows the fullness of water in the fountain. And because they do not know Him, they do not make it a point to come to Him. Ignorance is a great impediment in coming to Christ Jesus. Hagar did not come to the well until her eyes were opened to see the well (Genesis 21). No man embraces Christ until his understanding is enlightened to see and discern Christ rightly. Men through ignorance have very disgraceful opinions of Christ, remain great strangers to Christ, and are very injurious against Christ.

Second is because they have no sense of their need of Christ. Plato had a law that no man could draw water out of his neighbor's well until he had dug to the clay in his own court. It is a law in nature that man never comes to Christ and never endeavors to partake of His fullness until he has tried and knows his own emptiness—until he discerns his want of Christ. The Gibeonites did not send for Joshua until they saw themselves besieged by the Amorite princes (Josh. 10:6). The elders of Gilead hated Jephthah, expelled him out of their father's house, and came no more to him until they were in distress (Judges 11)—when they saw their need of him, plainly perceiving that no one else could help them. Man's opinion of his own fullness makes him undervalue the fullness of Christ. Christ is never precious in the eyes of man until man feels his want of Him. As man is more or less sensible of his want of Christ, so he is more or less industrious in approaching Christ. The full stomach regards not the honeycomb. The full soul loathes Christ, who is sweeter than the honey or the honeycomb

(Proverbs 27). Christ is ever most precious to the soul that knows his own emptiness (Matt. 9; John 9:41; Rev. 3:17).

Third is their unwillingness to endure the cost of coming to Christ. Though Christ offers Himself freely, yet man must receive some cost, or he cannot come to Christ; he cannot enjoy Christ. Jacob could not come to Bethel unless he put away his idols (Gen. 35:2). Moses could not come near the burning bush unless he took off his shoes from his feet (Ex. 3:5). Man cannot come near to God and Christ unless he purge his heart and cleanse his hands (James 4:8). The merchant in the parable sold all that he had to buy the precious pearl (Matt. 13:46), to make that his own. Man who will come to Christ and make Christ his own must sell all that is his own. Man must first come out of himself before he can come to Christ. "If any man," says Christ, "will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke 9:23). He who will come to Christ must deny his own wisdom and be as a fool (Rom. 7:18; 1 Cor. 3:18) in his own apprehension. He must deny his own fullness and be as an empty house in his own estimation and feeling. He must deny his own righteousness and be as a naked man in his own understanding. He must deny his own reputation in the eyes of men and be content to have his name cast out (Luke 6:22), as David for dancing before the ark. He who will have Christ and His fullness to be all in all to him must be willing to be in the world as nothing. Men are opposed to experiencing this cost, and therefore do not come to Christ. The young man who came to Christ, hearing he must sell all and follow Him, went away sorrowful (Matt. 19:21–22). He who carries the love of the world in his heart will faint by the way and never come to Christ.

The overvaluing of the world makes the doctrine of the gospel a sorrowful doctrine, and man's endeavor to come to Christ remains unfruitful. Many among the chief rulers

believed on Christ and made some steps toward Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him—they did not come boldly, freely, and fully home to Christ, lest they should be put out of the synagogue (John 12:42). He who cannot esteem all as nothing for Christ, and as dung and dross in comparison to Christ, will never really and in reality come to Christ. He is but as a man who is cheap and buys not because he will not pay the price.

Fourth is their subjection under the things of this world. They are under the power and command of the world. It is fastened on them like tar on the wings of a bird so that they cannot mount up to Christ. They are entangled in this, as the feet in snares and fetters, so that they cannot move nor come to Christ. As Pharaoh said of the children of Israel, “They are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in” (Ex. 14:3). So may we say of many men: they are entangled in created things; the world has shut them in and so shut them up so that they cannot come to Christ. It has so shut up their understanding that they cannot discern Christ; their wills, that they cannot embrace Christ; their imaginations, that they cannot meditate upon Christ; and their affections, that they cannot fear, trust, love, nor rejoice in Christ. As the five kings (Joshua 10) were hid in a cave, and Joshua rolled great stones upon the mouth of the cave and set men by it to keep them that they might not come forth, so worldly men are shut up in the cave of the world and hardness of heart, like a great stone is rolled upon them. Honors, riches, and pleasures, like so many keepers, do so assail them that they cannot come forth. They are held and kept under these things as a servant under his master (Matt. 6:24), as an adulterer under the harlot (James 4:4), and as Issachar under his burdens (Gen. 49:14). The world’s employments keep them under Pharaoh’s taskmasters, like the Israelites (Ex. 1:11). These, like Delilah (Judges 16),

shave off their locks and make them weak, and so, like Samson, they cannot go forth; they cannot come to Christ.

This withheld the guests in the parable from coming to the marriage feast of the king's son. This made the Pharisees despise Christ's doctrine. This frustrates all holy instruction and gracious persuasion, as the thorns make the sowing of the seed unfruitful (Matt. 13:22). This extinguishes the love of Christ, as a strange lover in the bosom of the wife puts out the love she should have for her husband.

The soul which is not divorced from the world cannot marry Christ. Christ is never precious in man's apprehension, as long as the world seems glorious to him. Bernard said, "As we begin to relish sweetness in Christ, so the world begins to be bitter to us." The more sweetness we taste in the one, the more bitterness we taste in the other. If the world be as a pleasant feast, Christ is but as an empty dish. And these are the main grounds of man's neglecting of Christ, standing aloof from Christ, and refusing to come freely and fully home to Christ.

And this is a very great folly of man. For what is man who is not coming to Christ and not partaking of Christ in whom is all fullness, but (1) an *empty* man, a broken cistern, wherein is no water of grace, and an empty vine (Hos. 10:1-2), whereon grows no good fruit, no sweet grape? (2) Is he not a *dead* man in whom is no life of God, a withered branch separate from the vine? As Lazarus remained dead in the grave till Christ came and raised him (John 11:44), so does man remain in the grave of sin until Christ comes to him and he to Christ—for "he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (1 John 5:12). (3) He is a *barren* man (Heb. 6:7-8), as a woman who abides without a husband. All our fruit is but as an illegitimate birth until we are married to Christ. If we come not to Christ as to a husbandman to fertilize us or as to a cloud to water us, we are but as a barren wasteland. (4) He is a *blind* man. As he

who comes not to the sun sits in darkness, so he who comes not to Christ has no good knowledge—for “no man knoweth the Son, but the Father...and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him” (Matt. 11:27). Without the knowledge of God and Christ Jesus, man’s greatest knowledge is but ignorance. (5) He is a *bound* man, as Peter, till the angel came and smote off his fetters. Spiritual freedom comes to God’s children only by Christ (John 8:36). None brings the soul a discharge from Satan’s bondage besides the Lord Jesus. (6) He is a *sick* man, an unclean and a loathsome man. Naaman continued as a leper until he came to the Jordan (2 Kings 5). The woman plagued by the bloody issue had her flow of blood running on her until she came to Christ (Mark 5). None but Christ Jesus purges the leprosy of sin (1 John 1:7) and the flow of ungodliness from the soul of man. If we do not come to Him, we continue unclean. (7) He is a *poor* man—not one ounce of spiritual riches in his soul and not one rag of righteousness to cover him. The Assyrian led away the Egyptians “naked and barefoot” (Isa. 20:4). Without Christ, the prince of darkness leads man captive, poor, blind, naked, miserable, and wretched (Rev. 3:17). (8) He is a *foul* man, a dishonorable man. He is foul from his birth, being of the Devil; foul in his condition, the slave and servant of a thousand lusts and vanities; foul in his quality, groveling like a swine upon the earth and delighting himself in nothing, but, like a foul worm, in the slime and mud of the world; and foul in the whole way and work he undertakes, having foul thoughts, foul purposes, and foul intentions. Very great is man’s foulness when he is without the Lord Jesus who is the only crown and glory of man. (9) He is a *perplexed* man, a stranger to all spiritual and heavenly peace. The soul without Christ is like a chased hart without the water brooks (Ps. 42:1). The dove found no rest for the sole of her foot until she returned to the ark (Genesis 8).

The soul never meets with true rest until it comes to Christ, but like the disciples in the ship were tossed with the storm and had no rest until they came to Christ—until they cried to Christ, and Christ awakened and rebuked the winds and waves and made the seas calm (Matt. 8:26). Thus the souls of men are as a tossed sea until Christ speaks peace to them. He is “The Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6), and peace is a privilege belonging to the subjects of His kingdom. He is called “our peace” (Eph. 2:14). By way of declaration He reveals it; by way of merit He has purchased it; by way of communication He ministers it; and by way of preservation He maintains and perfects it. The nearer man comes to Christ, the more he enjoys of Christ, and the sweeter and stronger is his peace. The more man is estranged from Christ, the further he is from true peace. (10) He is a *discontent* man—a man unsatisfied. All fullness is in Christ; the world cannot fill the soul that is not filled with Christ. The soul which feeds not on Christ, but on the world—like Pharaoh’s lean cows that fed upon the fat (Genesis 41) and did eat them all up, and yet they were still lean and ill-favored—so this, after long feeding upon all the fat of the world, they are yet as hungry and greedy as ever. The more he eats, the more he hungers. He is ever discontent. Nothing pleases him for long; nothing fully answers him. The eye that does not see Christ “is not satisfied with seeing” (Eccl. 1:8); the ear that does not hear Christ is never satisfied with hearing; and the palate which does not relish Christ is never satisfied with tasting. Nothing is sweet and full without Christ, as Augustine once, having read Cicero’s works, commended them for their eloquence but passed this sentence upon them: “They are not sweet because the name of Jesus is not in them.”

Without Christ, the bed is a bed of thorns, the bread is full of gravel, and the cup is full of gall. Nothing fills, and nothing satisfies; but everything vexes, displeases, and leaves a

sting behind it. And the heart, like a blood-sucking leech, ever cries, "Give, give" (Prov. 30:15), and never can have enough. And here is the misery of man without Christ, the folly of man that will not come to Christ—without whom he must starve—as the prodigal without his father's house (Luke 15). Without his father he must continue robbed of all his sustenance and wounded and half dead in his body—like he that lay robbed and half dead between Jericho and Jerusalem before the Samaritan came and cured him (Luke 10). Without help he must continue besieged, assaulted, and vexed with temptations, fears, troubles, and distractions, as Gibeon with the Amorite princes before Joshua came and removed them (Josh. 10:6), without whom they would certainly perish, as the old world that came not to the ark. It is man's greatest folly and madness to estrange himself from Christ Jesus.

Chapter 7

Showing How Christ Is to Be Valued and Esteemed above All

Is all divine and heavenly fullness in Christ? Then let us value and esteem Christ above all. Things are usually valued and prized according to their fullness. The sun for its fullness of light is prized above all other lights; the apple tree for its fullness of fruit above all the trees of the wood; and the pearl for its fullness of precious substance is valued above all other metal. The fullness of Christ is the most eminent, transcendent, and superlative fullness—a fullness surpassing the fullness of all men and angels. Him, therefore, we should prize above all others, as the king above the subjects, the master above the servants, the sun above the candles, and as the fountain above the bottle. As the people esteemed David above themselves, saying, “Thou art worth ten thousand of us” (2 Sam. 18:3), so should we esteem Christ worth all the ten thousands of the earth, whether riches, honors, pleasures, or whatever else.

As the women said of Ruth to Naomi, that she loved her and was “better to thee than seven sons” (Ruth 4:15), so should Christ who loves us be better to us than seven sons. He should be of more esteem with us than all sons and daughters, than all fathers and mothers, than all wives and husbands, than all friends and acquaintances, and than all the dearest and

choicest possessions. Unless we thus value Him, we cannot be His disciples; we cannot discern Him rightly; we do not learn Him as the truth is in Him. "If any man come to me," said Christ, "and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26). He who does not esteem Me above all friends, above all possessions, and above himself and his very life cannot be My disciple. He cannot learn My will; he can have no communication with Me and no interest in Me. God's people have valued Him above their profit, above their friends, and above their ease, their credit, and their lives. Matthew left the receipt of custom (Matt. 9:9); James and John their ship, their nets, and their father and followed Him (Matt. 4:22); and many for His sake loved not their lives to death (Rev. 12:11).

Nothing should be so dear and precious to us as the Lord Jesus. Him let us value in our *knowledge*, above all art and learning. As the light of the sun is sweet to the eye, and the eye esteems it above all other light, so let the light of Christ, the knowledge of Christ, be most pleasant and of choicest esteem with us. Him let us study and learn as the truth by whom we must be guided, as to the way in which we must walk, and as the life by whom we must live (Eph. 4:21–22). In Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom (Col. 2:3). Among wise men He is the choicest who knows most of Christ Jesus. There is no fullness—no divine excellency—in that man's knowledge who knows not Christ.

Secondly, Him let us prize above all in our *choice*. Him let us select and take out to ourselves above all other things. As a woman among many men selects and singles out one to be her husband—on whom she sets her love, to whom she intends to give herself, whom she purposes to make the guide of her youth and the stay of her old age, and with whom she intends

perpetual comfort—thus must we in our choice assume to ourselves Christ as the husband of our souls, as the guide of our youth, as the staff of our old age, and as the most sweet and everlasting companion of our souls. Pharaoh, finding that such wisdom and the Spirit of God (Genesis 39) was not so in any man as in Joseph, chose him out from among all the remnant and set him over all his land. Man, discerning that wisdom and the Spirit of God are neither in man nor angel as they are in Christ, must choose Christ and set Christ over all—as a King to command, as a Counselor to guide, as a friend to comfort, and as a pearl to enrich. It is man’s wisdom to take Christ, whatsoever he lose. He who chooses Christ will never have cause to repent of his choice. With Mary, then, let us choose Christ as being the best part (Luke 10:42).

Thirdly, Him let us prize in our *love*, as the wife prizes the husband in her love above all other persons, and the rich man his jewel above other substances. Let us love Him as Jonathan loved David, with a love surpassing the love of women (2 Samuel 1), and as Jacob loved Rachel, with love making us cheerful in serving and patient in suffering for Him. He alone is the friend of Christ Jesus who loves Him above himself and all other creatures.

Fourthly, Him let us prefer in our *trust*, as the builder trusts the rock above all other foundations; as the chickens, the wings of the hen above all other places of refuge. To Him let us address ourselves as they who were in distress, in debt, and in discontent addressed themselves to David (1 Sam. 22:2). Let us make Him our captain to fight for us, our Shepherd to defend us, our rock to support us, and our shield to cover us. Let us wait on Him solely (Ps. 62:5), and on no other. On Him let us trust fully, with all our heart and with all our soul. Let us rest wholly on Christ—on His power to sustain us; on His wisdom to guide us; on His merit to justify and procure all

good things for us; on His mercy to forgive us; on His love to comfort us; and on His fullness to satisfy us. On Him let us trust constantly in our prosperity, as being the strength of all our fullness, and in our adversity, as being all-sufficient in the absence of all helpers. On Him let us stay when we are in darkness and have no light (Isa. 50:10); in sickness and have no health; in heaviness and have no joy; in desertion and have no friend; and in want and have no supply. Man's firm dependence upon Christ in all conditions and in all changes demonstrates the truth and strength of man's confidence.

Fifthly, let us prefer Him in our *fear*, above all commanders; as the subject his sovereign, above all beggars, and as the servant his master, above his fellow servants. As His authority is highest to command, His power greatest to protect, and His goodness fullest to recompense, so let Him have preeminence in our obedience and service. As the sun, moon, and eleven stars in Joseph's vision bowed down to him (Gen. 37:9), so let all the faculties of our souls—all the members of our bodies, and all our temporal, natural, moral, and spiritual abilities—do obeisance to Christ, and be made subject and serviceable to Him.

Sixthly, Him let us prefer in our *joy*. As David preferred Jerusalem above his chiefest joy (Psalm 137), making it and the welfare thereof the top, head, and flower of his joy, so let us make Christ our chiefest joy—the head and crown of our joy. In Him let us rejoice, as the wise men in the star which guided them (Matt. 2:10); as old Jacob in the wagons which carried him to Egypt (Gen. 45:27), where there was fullness of bread in the famine; and as the Israelites in the ark, from whose presence they promised themselves victory over the Philistines (1 Sam. 4:5). In Him let us rejoice, as the traveler rejoices in the sun which guides him; as the sick rejoices in the physician who heals him; as the captive in the ransomer who

frees him; and as the poor in the rich who feeds and clothes him. As Christ is the original and fountain of all our comforts, so let Him be the supreme object of all our rejoicings. All joy besides this is but sadness. Bernard said, "That is true and high joy which is not conceived of the creature, but of the Creator; which when thou shalt receive, no man shall take it from thee; whereunto compared, all other joy is sorrow, all sweetness grief, all that is sweet is bitter, every comely thing is filthy, and lastly, whatsoever may delight is troublesome." All joy in comparison with joy in Christ is but a cloud to this sun, a midnight to this morning, a bramble to this vine, and gall and vinegar to this precious nectar. Therefore in all things value Christ, and give Him preeminence above all others according to His fullness.

Let not the plainness of His doctrine, the mediocrity of His messengers, the simplicity and lack of external pomp in His religion and service, or the poverty of many of His followers cause us to undervalue and despise Christ—as it was once disputed by the Romans in their counsel, who used it to deify great men, whether Christ having done many wonderful works should be received into the number of gods. The historian said: "It was at last concluded that He should not be received among the gods because He had no worshippers, and because He preached poverty which the world despised." How many stumble and take offense at Christ and disregard and undervalue Christ because of the small number and low estate of His followers, and for that humility, meekness, and spiritual poverty which the gospel teaches! But let not us undervalue Christ for this, but rather admire the fullness of Christ in putting such power into the plain preaching of His Word, and such efficacy into the labors of His despised messengers as thereby to convince and convert the hearts and raise the souls of men—and by using weak things, poor things, and things

which are not to confound the things that are. The weakness of the instrument commends the power of the supreme agent. The more we look upon the emptiness of the instruments which Christ uses, the more cause we will have to admire the fullness which He communicates.

Four things there are among many in Christ which we should very highly prize: first, the knowledge of Christ. The wisdom of Solomon was so great that the queen of the south considered his men blessed that they might daily stand before him to hear his wisdom. As Christ is greater than Solomon, so is their blessedness greater who may stand before Him and hear His wisdom. It is Christ who puts a fullness into our knowledge, as the shining of the sun in the air puts a fullness of light into the eye. Therefore Paul made *Christ crucified* the center and circumference of his knowledge, determining to know nothing among them but Christ crucified (1 Cor. 2:2). This he made the breadth, length, depth, and height (Eph. 3:18) of his knowledge. This was the full latitude of his knowledge: to know Christ. And this is excellent knowledge (Phil. 3:8) for the instrument, author, matter, subject, fruits, and effects of it. It is saving knowledge (John 17:3).

Secondly, we should highly prize the love of Christ Jesus. It is better than wine (Song 1:2). Nothing so comforts, revives, and cherishes the soul, nothing is sweet, and nothing is satisfactory without it. Absalom would not be content that he was recalled from exile and had his dwelling at Jerusalem unless he might also “see the king’s face” (2 Sam. 14:32). The presence of all things is as nothing unless man sees the King’s face and feels the love of Christ. This is the life of a good man’s life, as Solomon said of the light of the King’s countenance: “In the light of the king’s countenance is life; and his favour is as a cloud of the latter rain” (Prov. 16:15). Christ’s love is life-quickening, a cloud watering and abundantly refreshing

the souls of all who enjoy Him. Therefore esteem the love of Christ above the love of all else, as men esteem the love of the king above the love of the beggar.

Thirdly, we should highly value the communion and provision of Christ. The sun fills the air with light; the head fills the body with sense and motion; the school fills the brain with art and learning; the goldmine fills the storehouse with treasure; the feast fills the hungry with food; and the clouds fill the earth with fruit. And all these are esteemed for their provision and filling. But Christ has a more excellent administration. He fills with better light than the sun, with better art and learning than the school, with better sense and motion than the head, with better food than the feast, and with better fruit than the cloud. He filled the hungry with good things (Luke 1:53), with spiritual and heavenly good things: saving knowledge, lively faith, fervent love, Christian patience, and true humility and meekness—even with the whole treasury of all spiritual good things, and even such good things as carnal eye has not seen, nor have entered into the unregenerate heart of man (1 Cor. 2:9). These things Christ reveals and communicates by His Spirit. And in this provision stands the happiness, glory, and comfort of man: Christ becoming their fullness, and filling all in all (Eph. 1:23), by being the fullness of their knowledge, of their faith, of their love, of their peace, and of their possession; without whom all knowledge, faith, love, and whatever else is but an empty thing. Give then preeminence to Christ's provision, above the provision of all others, like the provision of corn above chaff and of gold above dross. Oh, prize the gift of Christ above all the gifts of the world!

Fourthly, we should highly prize the blessed, sweet, and gracious presence of Christ, as a good subject does the presence of his king in his house above all other friends, and as a wife

does the presence of her husband above all other neighbors. We must not so esteem the presence of riches, honors, friends, or any other endowments, as we do the presence of Christ. This Christ has promised to His children, as their staff and stay, crown and glory, and prerogative and comfort: "Lo," He says, "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28:20). He is with you as a King among His people, as a Father among His children, as a Shepherd with His flock, and as a teacher among His students. This was foreshadowed by the fiery pillar that was present with Israel as a guide, which they followed throughout their several camps, and as a defense between the camps of Israel and the Egyptians. So is Christ present with us as a guide to direct us in our journeys and as a protector to defend us from all our enemies. The pillar was a cloud by day and a fire by night to Israel. So is Christ a cooling refreshment to His children in the scorching day of trouble, and He is a comfortable lamp of light to direct them in the night of this world. In the fire and in the cloud God was seen by Israel. In Christ, God is seen and known by His children as a Father of mercies; and this presence of Christ with us should we highly esteem, as the traveler does the presence of the sun. This encourages, comforts, strengthens, and satisfies, and should accordingly be highly prized. And thus let us value, prize, and prefer Christ according to His fullness, that Christ may value us as students of His school, as subjects of His kingdom, as lovers of His truth, and as members of His body; and that He might daily more and more fill us with His divine and heavenly fullness.

Chapter 8

Persuading to Come to and Get a Saving Interest in Christ

As all divine and heavenly fullness is in Christ, so it should move and persuade all men to come to Christ, to get a saving interest in Christ, and to seek for all fullness in Him. As Hagar went to the full well and filled her empty bottle, so let us come to Christ, the true and living fountain, and fill our empty souls with the fullness of His grace. Fullness is the common desire of all persons. The ambitious person desires fullness of honors; the covetousness, fullness of riches; the licentious, fullness of pleasures. They are very greedy and can never have enough of this fullness (Isa. 56:11). Much more should Christians desire the fullness of Christ, the only true and desirable fullness. As David's mighty men in the day of David's thirst broke through the Philistine army and drew water out of the well at Bethel, so let us in the day of our thirst after Christ, in the time of our want, break through all impediments—all armies of trouble and opposition raised against us—and come to Christ, the well from which come the waters of salvation.

To this Christ Himself invites us, "Come unto me" (Matt. 11:28). Come unto Me, as the sick to the physician, to heal you of all your sinful maladies. Come unto Me, as the traveler to the sun, to fill you with all divine and heavenly light and to guide you in all your goings. Come unto Me, as the thirsty

to the living fountain, to supply all your wants, to fill all your desires. Come unto Me, as the sheep to the shepherd, to lead you beside the still waters and to feed you in the green pastures. Come unto Me, as the chicken to the hen, to hide you under the wings of My protection. Come unto Me, as the poor to the rich, as the buyer to the merchant's shop, and buy of Me—not for price, but by prayer—"gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed...and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see" (Rev. 3:18). The command of the Lord by the prophet is the same: "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth" (Isa. 45:22). Look unto Me with eyes of faith, believing in Me and My promises; with the eyes of godly sorrow, mourning for your sins and offenses; with the eyes of love, embracing Me as the husband of your souls; and with the eyes of obedience, fearing and obeying Me above all commanders. Thus look unto Me, and be ye saved: saved from sin, that it sway not over you; saved from Satan, that he rule not within you; saved from affliction, that it will not swallow you; and saved from the law, that it will not condemn you. Christ ministers salvation to them who by a lively faith come to Him. This is the end and fruit of Christ's coming by His Word and Spirit to the souls of men.

"My beloved," the spouse said, "spake, and said unto me," outwardly by His Word and ministers and inwardly by His Spirit, "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away" (Song 2:10). Rise up from the death of sin, as the dead rose up from the grave. Rise from the disease of sin—ignorance, unbelief, and impenitency—as the sick rise up from their disease and return to health; from the sleep and slumber, and the reign and rule of sin, as Peter arose from his sleep, his fetters, and the two soldiers, and came forth from Herod's prison; and from communion and fellowship with corrupt

and carnal men, as Lazarus rose out of his grave from the fellowship of the dead. Rise up and come away from the world, carnal acquaintances, and fleshly delights, as the bride comes away from her own people and her father's house (Ps. 45:10) to the bridegroom, and as Abraham came away from his own country, and from his kindred, and from his father's house to a land which the Lord showed him (Gen. 12:1). Rise up and come away from all sinful pleasures, as Samson arose from Delilah's lap, burst his bonds asunder, and came away from her. Rise and come away from all corrupt and carnal doctrine, as the prodigal arose from the husks and the swine and came to his father's house to eat his father's bread. Rise up and come away even from yourself by self-denial, and put off the old man, as Lazarus rose up, put away his grave clothes, and left them behind him. Thus rise up and come to Christ. That man alone comes to Christ Jesus who rises up from the world, himself, and his own corrupt affections. And to Him let us come as the lame man came to Bethesda, that we may be healed; as the elders of Gilead came to Jephthah, that we may be preserved, protected, and delivered; and as the thirsty come to the full fountain, that we may be filled and have all our wants supplied.

So that you will more effectually be moved and persuaded to come to Christ, fasten your hearts and thoughts seriously upon these three things.

First, fasten your heart on man's necessity of Christ and his misery without Christ. Man is spiritually dead, and none but Christ can raise him. The life of the soul is hid in Christ, as the life of the branch in the root. Gehazi had Elisha's staff, but without Elisha himself he could not restore the Shunammite woman's child to life (2 Kings 4). The minister, having the word of Christ, and yet without Christ concurring and working with him, cannot quicken the soul that is dead in sin. All the instruments and means of grace leave the soul

still graceless unless Christ, the author and fountain of grace, joins His blessing to their endeavors: “The Son quickeneth whom he will” (John 5:21). He that eats not the flesh of the Son of man, and drinks not His blood, and he that comes not to and that believes not in Christ crucified, has no life in him (John 6:53)—no life of God, no life of grace here, and no life of glory hereafter.

The life of man without faith in Christ is as no life, but a very death. Man is dangerously diseased; no balm can heal him, and no physician can cure him. The skill and labor of all physicians for the diseased woman in the gospel were fruitless, until she came to Christ Jesus (Mark 5). The pool at Bethesda cured no man unless the angel moved it. The ordinance of God cures not, unless Christ moves in it and works together with it. He alone is the Sun of Righteousness that has healing in His wings, curing the wounds which are given by sin and Satan.

Man is possessed by an unclean spirit, and none but Christ can eject him. The soul of man is an unclean dwelling until Christ takes possession within him. He rebukes the Devil and causes him to depart whom the disciples cannot cast out (Matt. 17:19, 21). David overthrew Goliath with whom no Israelite dared to enter combat (1 Samuel 17). Christ overthrows the Devil who, without the power of Christ, is invincible. Man of himself can no more overcome him and no more deliver himself from him than the sheep under David’s custody was able to deliver itself from the bear and the lion. Man is blind, in darkness and under the shadow of death—and no sun but Christ can enlighten him. Man is naked, and no garment but Christ can clothe and cover him. All other garments are but rotten rags and fading leaves, like Adam’s fig leaves, a poor and shoddy covering. Man is poor, and no treasure but Christ can enrich him; all is but dung and dross besides Christ. Man is indebted, and none but Christ can make satisfaction for him.

A thousand rams and ten thousand rivers of oil (Micah 6)—nay, even ten thousand worlds—if man were lord and owner of them, these were an insufficient price for the least sin of man. None but Christ, a price infinite and invaluable, is the price of man's redemption. Man is empty, and none but Christ can fill him. The world is a feast; the more man feeds upon it, the more his hunger is increased. Like the man who has dropsy,¹ the more he drinks the more he thirsts. Christ alone satisfies; He gives water so that whosoever drinks will thirst no more (John 4:14).

Not the creature, but the Lord Jesus, is man's fullness. Man is distressed, perplexed, and tormented, and none but Christ can comfort him. He casts out the tormenting spirit; He stills the stormy tempest; He calms the violent and surging waves and waters. He leads him through the sea of affliction to a rock that is higher than man (Ps. 61:2) to an estate and condition secure and safe from all opposing power. Endless and ceaseless are the soul's perplexities which come not to Christ Jesus. As Bernard once said, "He labors in vain in the acquisition of virtues, that seeks them elsewhere than in Christ." Thus man labors in vain who seeks peace, safety, or comfort anywhere except in Christ. And what is man who does not have Christ, but a body without a head; a dead and idle, loathsome lump; a house without a foundation which cannot stand; a field without dew which withers; and a branch without root, abiding barren and hastening to the fire? Behold then, oh man, your necessity of Christ and your misery without Christ, and give your soul no rest until you have come home to Christ.

Second, fasten your thoughts upon the vanity of all things without Christ. What is worldly fullness to him who comes not

1. Modern equivalent: edema, a condition characterized by excess water collecting in bodily tissues.

to Christ Jesus but “vanity and vexation of spirit” (Eccl. 2:11)? It is a bed of thorns on which he cannot sleep without terror; a way of snares in which he cannot walk without stumbling, bruising, and hurting himself; and a cup of gall of which he cannot drink with any comfort. Like the waters of Marah to Israel without the tree, burdens, oppressions, chains, fettering, sounding arrows, tossing seas, and shaking winds—all are worldly possessions to them who possess not Christ Jesus. What was Paradise to Adam when he had deprived himself of the Tree of Life by eating of the tree of forbidden fruit, but as a wilderness of thorns and briars and a place of extreme torture and disquiet? The world’s choicest paradise proves at length to be full of bitterness to him who has deprived himself of Christ Jesus. Augustine said, “What does that profit the rich man which he has, if he has not God which gave all?” What avails one who has the cistern without the fountain? Possession of all things is as nothing if man have not Christ with them. Blessed is the man who so looks upon the world’s emptiness who is thereby stirred up to seek Christ and His fullness.

Third, fasten your heart upon the excellency and worth of Christ. They said that David was better and more worthy than all the thousands of the world (2 Sam. 18:3). They said of the centurion that he was worthy “for whom [Christ] should do this” thing (Luke 7:4). Much more may I say of Christ: He is worthy that you should come to Him. In Him are all the loadstones [magnets] of virtue, power, beauty, and whatever else can be said, to move and draw the soul of man toward Him. In Him is wisdom surpassing the brightness of the sun, even all the treasures of wisdom hidden (Col. 2:3). In Him is power excelling the strength of all rocks; He is not only strong, but strength itself (Ps. 18:1). In Him is honor, transcending all the kings of the earth; for He is “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS” (Rev. 19:16). He is clothed with

honor and majesty and covered with light as with a garment (Ps. 104:1–2). In Him is beauty excelling the “rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys” (Song 2:1). He is the fairest of ten thousand (Song 5:10), fairer than all the flowers of the field, than all the precious stones of the earth, than all the lights in the firmament, and than all saints and angels in the highest heavens. In Him are riches (Eph. 3:8) above all the riches of the world, as in the pearl above the dross.

All worldly wealth is but poverty compared to the riches which are in Christ. In Him are pleasures excelling all earthly pleasures, more than paradise ever excelled the barren wilderness (Ps. 16:11). All pleasures are but sorrows and tortures compared to the pleasure which the soul finds in Christ. Surely, all wisdom is folly, all power is weakness, all honor ignominy, all beauty deformity, all riches poverty, all pleasures anguish, and all fullness emptiness in comparison to the wisdom, power, glory, beauty, riches, pleasures, and fullness that are in Christ Jesus.

Oh, therefore come to Christ that you may be enlightened, strengthened, honored, enriched, protected, and comforted and that your souls may be in every way filled! Oh, come as the queen of the south came from afar to Solomon (1 Kings 10:1–2), that you may learn His wisdom! Oh, come as the stones in the building to the head cornerstone (1 Peter 2:6), that He may support you. Come as the subjects come to the king’s court, that He may advance and honor you. Come as poor men to a goldmine, that He may enrich you. Come as Naaman came to the Jordan (2 Kings 5), that He may sanctify and cleanse you. Oh, come as the prodigal came to his father’s house (Luke 15), that Christ may kill the fatted calf for you and feed you with His ordinances, with Himself, and with His graces, and that He may put the robe of righteousness upon you. Oh, come as a despairing man comes to his friend, that Christ may comfort

you with the sweetness of His presence, the sense of His love, and all the comforts of His Spirit. Oh, come as the chicken to the hen, that His wings may hide and shadow you.

Under the wings of Christ, Bernard said, four benefits are bestowed upon us: “Here we are hidden and protected, here we are refreshed, here the scorching heat of affliction is repelled, and here we are fed and nourished.” “Christ,” Jerome said, “is all things, that he who for Christ hath let go all, may find one for all, and may freely say, ‘The Lord is my portion.’” For, as Ambrose said, “We have all in Christ and Christ is all things in us; if thou dost desire to be cured of thy wound, He is a physician; if thou dost burn with fevers, He is a fountain; if thou art burdened with iniquity, He is righteousness; if thou wantest help, He is strength; if thou dost fear death, He is life; if thou dost fly from darkness, He is light; if thou desirest heaven, He is the way; if thou seekest food, He is nourishment.” Therefore to Him let us come as sheep to their shepherd, as captives to their ransomer, and as children to their father.

To Him let us come first, *speedily*, without any delay, as eagles to the carcass. As the Shunammite woman saddled her donkey and made haste to the man of God for the recovery of her dead child (2 Kings 4), so let us make haste to Christ for the recovery of our poor souls. Let us come to Him while He may be found and call upon Him while He is near at hand. As the angel hastened and thrust Lot out of Sodom and bid him haste to Zoar to escape there (Genesis 19), so let us hasten our souls out of the Sodom of sin to Christ. Oh, let us with all speed escape to Christ from the world and our corruption. Of all undertakings, man must use utmost speed and diligence to come to Christ Jesus.

Secondly, let us come *fully* to Christ regarding the term from where we come—from the world and all the vanities thereof. As Abraham left his donkey and all his servants at

the foot of the hill behind him and went up to offer his son Isaac to the Lord (Gen. 22:5), so let us leave all the vanities of the world behind us and come and offer ourselves to Christ. Let us come away from all sin. When a captive woman joined herself in wedlock to an Israelite soldier, she had to change her apparel, “shave her head, and pare her nails” (Deut. 21:12–13), and so come to be joined in wedlock to her husband. He who will come to Christ must change his apparel, putting off the old man; shave his head, removing the ignorance and error of his understanding; and trim his nails, reforming all his outward ways. And so he must come to Christ.

To Christ let us come *fully* regarding the affection with which we come—with all our hearts and with all our souls. Let us come with our understanding to know Him; with our wills to choose Him; with our imaginations to think upon Him; and with our affections to fear, trust, love, and rejoice in Him.

To Christ let us come *fully* regarding the way by which we come, even in the use of all the ordinances of God. Let us come with respect to the term whereunto we come, even to the whole Christ: to the wisdom of Christ, to be guided by it; to the power of Christ, to depend upon it; to the righteousness of Christ, to be justified by it; to the merit of Christ, to receive all good things through it; to the promises of Christ, to believe them; and to the commandments of Christ, to obey them. He who comes not fully comes deceitfully to Christ and departs without profit from Christ. He alone enjoys Christ who comes universally [comprehensively] to Christ.

Thirdly, let us come to Christ *holily*. The stranger under the law who came to the Passover was first circumcised (Ex. 12:48). He who comes to Christ must circumcise the foreskin of his heart. There is no acceptable appropriation of Christ Jesus without true holiness.

Fourthly, to Christ let us come *hungrily*, as a thirsty man to the waters (Isa. 55:1). No man is welcome to Christ, but he who comes with a holy hunger and thirst. He sends the rich away empty and fills the hungry with good things (Luke 1:53).

Fifthly, to Christ let us come *humbly*, with a lively sense and feeling of our wants, in godly sorrow and true repentance, as the servants of Benhadad came to the king of Israel with ropes about their necks and sackcloth about their loins (1 Kings 20).

Sixthly, to Christ let us come *lovingly*, as the bride to the bridegroom; *strongly*, as the waters to the sea; *joyfully*, as the rich man to his treasure; and *constantly*, coming more and more, and daily drawing nearer and nearer to Christ, and to a more full and perfect participation and attainment of Christ and His fullness.

Toward the end that we may all come to Christ, and for the better disposing and fitting of our hearts thus to come to Christ, we must first be sensible of our emptiness without Christ. We must feel our souls as an empty stomach where there is no meat, as an empty lamp where there is no light, and as an empty or withered arm where there is no strength. The people in the famine being sensible of the emptiness and lack of corn at home came to Joseph, with whom was all the fullness of Egypt. He alone truly prizes Christ's fullness who feels his own emptiness. The sons of Jacob went not out of their own country down to Egypt for bread until they found the lack thereof at home. Man never goes out of himself to Christ till he knows the vanity and emptiness of his own heart. He who knows this will hasten his soul to Christ, as Jacob hastened his sons to Egypt.

Secondly, we must see and consider how Satan besieges and assaults us; how, like a man of war, he sets upon us; and how, like a roaring lion, he goes up and down, seeking to devour us. The Gibeonites, seeing themselves besieged by the Amorite

princes, sent to Joshua to help them. Paul, being sensible of the buffetings of Satan, addressed himself to God by fervent and frequent supplication (2 Cor. 12:7–8). The soul of man who feels Satan’s buffetings is restless until he comes fully home to Christ Jesus. He flies to Christ as a sheep to the shepherd driven by the dog, and as a chafed and wounded hart to the water brooks (Ps. 42:1).

Thirdly, we must be experienced in the insufficiency and inability of all others to help us, to satisfy us, or to make us happy. Noah knew that the waters would overflow the earth and that there would be no resting place there for his foot. Therefore, he entrusted himself to the ark and entered into it (Genesis 7). Man’s experience of the vanity and insufficiency of all other things, feeling that there is no rest nor stay for his foot there, entrusts himself to Christ, looks to Him, seeks for his privileges in Him, and expects all safety from Him.

Fourthly, we must have anguish in our hearts for sin, be out of love with ourselves, and be discontented with the wickedness of our hearts. The people who were in debt, in distress, and discontent came to David and made him their captain (1 Sam. 22:2). Man takes no pleasure in Christ till he is displeased with himself. Spiritual distress and anguish make Christ precious. He who knows the greatness of his soul’s debt comes to Christ to make payment. The more bitterness man tastes in sin, the more sweetness he finds in Christ. This makes Christ very delightful and precious and very satisfactory and joyous; and it fills the soul with such longing after Him that, as Naomi said of Boaz, “The man will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing this day” (Ruth 3:18). No more is man in any rest until he has finished this thing: until he has brought home his soul to Christ, as a mariner the ship to the haven of all peace and safety, and of all satisfaction and tranquility.

Chapter 9

Teaching How to Make Use of Christ

Is all divine and heavenly fullness in Christ? Is it all placed there? Then we must make use of Christ, as the child makes use of full breasts and as those who are thirsty of a full vessel. Christ's fullness is nothing to one who makes no use of Christ. There is a price, Solomon said, in the hand of a fool, but he has no heart to use it (Prov. 17:16). There is a transcendent fullness in Christ, and He is the choicest of all prices and is even put into the hands of men; but many have not heart to make use of Him, and therefore He does not profit them. What is the fullness of the sun to the blind who do not see it? Or the fullness of the fountain to him who does not drink it? The fullness of the feast to him who does not feed upon it? And what is the fullness of Christ to him who makes no use of Christ? How is a man any better with a lock, if he has not a key to use it? It is not a trade, but a trade well followed; it is not land, but land well tilled that maintains men—that makes men rich. It is not Christ, but Christ well used that maintains the soul and that makes the soul rich. "Behold," Solomon said, "that which I have seen: it is good and comely for one to eat and to drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labour that he taketh under the sun all the days of his life, which God giveth him: for it is his portion. Every man also to whom God hath given riches

and wealth, and hath given him power to eat thereof, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labour; this is the gift of God” (Eccl. 5:18–19).

Christ is a rarer portion than all wealth and than all meat and drink. It is a rarer gift of God to make use of Christ and to enjoy the good of Christ all the days of his life. This is the portion of a Christian, of a gracious and sanctified soul indeed. As therefore the healthy man makes use of his meat and is strengthened; the sick man makes use of medicine and is healed; the soldier makes use of his weapon and overcomes; the merchant makes use of his trade and grows rich by it—thus let us make use of Christ that our souls may be healed, strengthened, made victorious, and spiritually enriched.

Some men live by their intelligence; some by their lands; and some by their trades. The Christian lives by his Christ. Of Christ therefore let us make use in our understandings, to fill us with the knowledge of God’s will in all wisdom and to receive all our direction from Him, as the traveler makes use of the sun to guide him. Of Him let us make use in our meditations. Think upon Him as the bride in her thoughts makes use of the bridegroom. Let the thought of Christ be frequent and precious and the meditation of Christ sweet to us (Ps. 104:34). Of Him let us make use by our faith, depending upon Him as the house upon the rock, casting ourselves, our cares, and burdens on Him. As the child upon the parent, let us hide ourselves under the shadow of His wings. As the chicken under the wings of the hen, let us rest upon Him for the supplying of all our wants and for a deliverance in all distresses, making Him instead *all* in the absence of all helpers, deriving and drawing more and more from His fullness, as the thirsty draw water out of the well by the bucket and as the branches draw nourishment from the roots.

Of Him let us make use by our love, loving Christ as the Father who begot Him. Let us love Him as the ransomer redeeming, the physician healing, the husband marrying, and the treasurer enriching our souls. Of Him let us make use in our joy, rejoicing in Him as the wise men in the star, with an exceedingly great joy (Matt. 2:10). Of Him let us make use in our peace and prosperity, looking on Him as the author of all our happiness, as the Sun that puts a fullness into all the lights of our comforts, like the sun puts a fullness into the stars. Without Christ all is empty, as a withered branch without the root. Without Him all is bitter, as the waters of Marah without the tree.

Of Him let us make use in our hearing, preaching, praying, and conversing. Him let us hear; Him let us learn; of Him let us speak; Him let us set forth. Bernard said: "All the food of the soul is dry if it be not put into this oil; it is unsavory if it be not seasoned with this salt. If thou writest, it doth not relish with me unless I read JESUS there; if thou dost dispute or confer, it doth not relish well with me, unless JESUS is found there." If we make not use of Christ Jesus, our use of God's ordinance is fruitless.

Let us make use of Christ in our distresses. Let us use Him as Noah made use of the ark in the deluge—to support us; as the Gibeonites made use of Joshua in the siege—to help us and to deliver us; as Hagar made use of the well when her bottle was empty—to fill us. Oh, let not Christ be to us as Jether's sword was to him (Judg. 8:20). He neither drew it nor used it. Let not Christ be to us like wealth is to many to whom God gives not power to eat, or as a sweet wine to him who does not receive it, or as a garment to him who does not put it on. But let us in every way make use of Christ. Let us make use of His wisdom to guide us; of His power to uphold us; of His dominion to awe us; of His majesty to humble us; and of

His purity to make us vile in our own eyes, to shame us for our uncleanness, and to work us to holiness. Let us make use of Christ's justice to drive us from sin; of His righteousness to clothe us and cover our sins; of His mercy to pardon us; of His love to comfort us; of His presence to encourage us; and of His fullness to satisfy us. Let us make use of His Word to feed us; of His sacraments to confirm us; of His death to mortify our lusts; of His resurrection to quicken our souls; of His sufferings to suffer with patience; and of His intercession to settle us in the assurance of the pardon of our sins and establishment of the love of God in our souls. Let us make use of His commandments as of a spur to quicken us in His service and as of a bridle to restrain us from what is forbidden. Let us make use of His promises as a rock to sustain us; as a magnet to draw us; as a light in darkness to comfort us; and as a spring in the day of drought to refresh and fill us.

Excellent is the use of Christ Jesus to the souls of all true Christians. It eliminates all cares; dispels all fears; evacuates from the mind distracting thoughts and disturbing passions; sweetens all estates; mitigates all sorrows; facilitates all burdens; and exhilarates the whole man. Very great is the soul's blessedness which makes a true, full, and constant use of Christ Jesus.

Chapter 10

Persuading to Full and Constant Yielding to Christ

As there is all fullness in Christ, so all Christians must work their hearts to a holy, gracious, full, and constant yielding to Christ—to stay on Christ and to quiet and content themselves in and with Christ, never declining from Christ and never stepping out nor going aside from Christ to any other helper. As the eye resigns itself to the fullness of the light of the sun and looks for no other light, and the builder who contents himself with the strength of the rock and looks out for no other foundation to build upon, so let us satisfy ourselves with Christ and look for no other guide, no other helper, no other comforter, and no other Savior.

As old Jacob once said of Joseph, “It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him” (Gen. 45:28), so let us say, “It is enough. Christ lives; Christ reigns; Christ has fullness. We will go to Him, stay on Him, and satiate and delight our souls in Him.” This the Lord requires: He that walks in darkness and has no light, let him stay upon the Lord and trust in the name of his God (Isa. 50:10). As the house in the parable stayed upon the rock when the winds blew and the waves beat (Matthew 7), thus in the winds and waves of trouble, let us stay on Christ without wavering. To this the Lord gives many sweet encouragements: “Trust in the LORD,” with a full, quiet,

composed, and resolved mind, and do good. Live graciously, walk holily, and keep close to God—"so shalt thou dwell in the land." You will not be dismayed with any fears, nor grow impatient with troubles, nor be overcome with sorrows, nor be removed from your station, but "verily thou shalt be fed" (Ps. 37:3). You will enjoy every necessary good thing with a settled, quiet, and content mind.

"Delight thyself also in the LORD" (v. 4), as a child in his father, as a wife in her husband, and as a rich man in his treasury. Delight yourself in the commandment of God as in the light which guides you; in the promise of God, as in the staff which sustains you; in the favor of God, as in the warmest sun that ever shone upon you; and in the attributes of God, as in the branches shadowing and the streams refreshing you. Thus delight yourself in the Lord, and He will give you your heart's desire.

He will fully answer all your holy and gracious desires when you have thus fully committed yourself to Him and gratified yourself with Him: "Commit thy way unto the LORD" (v. 5). Receive all your direction from Him; do all according to His prescription. Leave the issue of all to His disposition, and He will bring it to pass and give it such an outcome as will be greatly for your comfort.

"Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him" (v. 7). Though you suffer many evils, do not fret, and do not limit nor prescribe God. Do not step aside from God to any forbidden helps. Suppress the trembling of your heart and wait, as Noah did, for the abatement of the waters and the coming of the dove. Soothe yourself with Christ. Look upon the authority of Christ to dispense all as He pleases; upon the wisdom of Christ, to make a way for your soul to escape; and upon the power of Christ, to deliver you. Look upon the presence of Christ to minister encouragement to you; upon the love of

Christ, to sweeten the bitterest experience to your soul; and upon the faithfulness of Christ, never to forsake you. Look upon the blessedness of cleaving close to Christ, though all the world oppose you. Gaze upon the abundant fullness that Christ is to your soul when all other things are taken from you, and you will solace and stay yourself upon Christ's fullness with a full submission.

From the fullness of the Lord Jesus flows a full fountain of consolation to the souls of all believers—consolation against all external wants. He cannot be poor who has Christ, in whom is all fullness. When he is spoiled of all, he has an abiding substance. Christ is the sun in whom is all light; the pearl in whom is all worth; and the tree on whom grows all fruit. The soul which is espoused to the heir of all things has no cause to complain of the want of riches. He who enjoys Christ and yet distracts himself about worldly things knows not his own blessedness. He undervalues the portion which God has given him—having a feast of fat things, a rich jewel, a living spring, and a glorious sun at home. He seeks abroad for husks to feed him, dross to enrich him, a glowworm to warm him, and a ditch and dirty water to quench the thirst that is within him. What is the vintage of Abiezer to the gleanings of Ephraim? The onions and garlic of Egypt to the grapes of Canaan? Is Pharphar like Jordan? Is the broken cistern like the fountain? The fullness of the world compared to the fullness of Christ is nothing. He who has Christ has the richest portion, though he have nothing besides Him. Here is consolation against the want of carnal friends, earthly peace, and worldly comforts.

Saul cannot be merry without a fiddler; Ahab, without Naboth's vineyard; and Haman, without Mordecai's courtesy. A man who has Christ has that which makes him cheerful without all these. If Plato could tell the musicians that philosophers knew how to eat and drink without them, much more they

who enjoy Christ's fullness know how to refresh themselves in the absence of earthly comforts. Here is consolation against all opposing powers. In Christ is all fullness. He is a shepherd able to deliver His flock from the bear and the lion; He is a wall of fire able to defend His citizens and burn their enemies. He is a husband able to rescue His spouse and destroy them who make war on her, as David rescued his wives and destroyed the Amalekites that carried them away captives. Here is consolation against all soul infirmities. In Christ is all fullness—fullness of mercy to pity and pardon us, fullness of power to strengthen us, fullness of grace to heal us, fullness of love to solace us, fullness of peace to quiet us, and the fullness of all goodness to perfect us.

The Lord's servants should not be so much dejected with the thought of their own emptiness and weakness as revived and cheered with the mediation of Christ's fullness.

Chapter 11

Declaring the Inseparable Union of Christ's Two Natures in One Person

The third thing in these words is an act: *dwelleth*. This is an act of permanency and duration, expressing the inseparable union between the two natures of Christ in one person, the divine dwelling in the human. Man dwells in Christ and God (John 6:56) by faith as by an instrument, and by love as by a witness of his society and communion with God and Jesus Christ (1 John 4:16). God and Christ dwell in men by grace and heavenly effects, regenerating the hearts of men, enlivening the souls of men, graciously reigning and ruling within them, and plentifully ministering all spiritual and heavenly gifts to them. “He that sitteth on the throne,” said John, “shall dwell among them” (Rev. 7:15). They will enjoy His grace and favor here and His glory hereafter. But the Godhead dwells in the human nature of Christ by personal and perpetual union of both natures; and this is the dwelling here spoken of.

Thus we see that *Christ is God and man in one person by an inseparable union*. The pillar which conducted Israel was a fire and a cloud, yet both were but one pillar. Christ, the great conductor and guide of God's Israel, is God and likewise man. Yet in both He is but one person, and therefore called *Immanuel* (Isa. 7:14), God with us—or God made flesh, noting the union of His two natures in one person and His office

of mediation between God and man, being the author of salvation both temporal and eternal to the soul and body of man. The temple was a type of Christ, stone without and gold within. Christ was flesh without, according to His human nature, and full of resplendent glory and divine majesty within, in respect to His divine nature. In the temple the glory of God appeared. The temple was filled with it. In the flesh of Christ the Godhead inhabits, most gloriously replenishing it. "And the Word," John said, "was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). The Word was made flesh, not by bare and naked inhabitation in the flesh, presence with the flesh, affection to the flesh, or grace and dignity conferred on the flesh, nor by conversion of the Word into flesh or a mixture of the Word with the flesh. But it was by the assumption of the flesh into the unity of His person, the hypostasis or subsistence of the Son, being made the hypostasis or the subsistence of the flesh assumed, the flesh subsisting in the person of the Word.

The apostle makes mention of the Son thus, speaking to the Father, "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me" (Heb. 10:5). "This is by incarnation and by uniting it to My person," He says. And this union is not a union of two persons in one Christ, but of two natures in one person. The subsistence of the Word is so communicated to the flesh, that the Word and flesh are one person, the natural properties and operations of both natures remaining distinct and without confusion. The divine and human natures are both united. The human nature is assumed; the divine nature is that which assumes—not the person, but the nature of man. Not man, but the humanity is taken by Christ into the unity of His person; otherwise He would not be one but two persons, and not one but two Christs. The Scripture therefore calls

Him David's son and David's Lord (Matt. 22:45) because He is both God and man in one person. And this union is without mutation of the divine person, nor with division, confusion, or separation of the natures. The union is everlastingly permanent. Of this, Christ's appearing to the fathers of old in the shape of man was like a musical prelude—a symbol. And this was also typified by the tabernacle of Moses in the desert, that being a type of Christ's assuming our flesh and dwelling among us as in a tabernacle. The tabernacle was a testimony of God's presence with His people. God by His Son made flesh testifies Himself to be graciously present with us (Luke [1:18, 78]). The people came to the tabernacle to worship, to entreat, and to offer their sacrifice to God. God will not be entreated and adored by man, but in and through Christ manifested in the flesh of man.

And it was necessary that Christ should be God and man in one person with regard to the exaltation of the human nature of Christ above all creatures—all men and angels. Saints and angels are one with God and Christ by gracious qualities, consent of will and opinion, and mystical conjunction. The human nature of Christ is one with His divine person by a more transcendent, eminent, and immediate conjunction, being assumed into the unity of His person. Joseph was exalted above his brethren and above all the nobles in the court of Pharaoh. Christ, even according to the flesh, is exalted above men, yes even above all the angels, who are the choicest nobles of him that is the King of kings. From this personal union is derived an incomprehensible communication of all divine and heavenly gifts to the human nature of Christ. It is an unction above all His fellows (Ps. 45:7), like that of Joseph to Benjamin—five times as good and many degrees more excellent than that which is bestowed on His brethren, whether angles or men, the Spirit being given to Him above

measure (John 3:34), and He having all heavenly fullness, like the fullness of light in the sun or waters in the sea. From this union the human nature obtains the honor of adoration, yet not of the flesh as flesh, but of the Godhead in the flesh, the Godhead and the manhood making but one person in the Son. And He is said to be set down at the right hand of God, “being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they” (Heb. 1:4)—the angels being servants, but Christ a Son, both by eternal generation and hypostatical union.

With regard to man’s salvation, such was man’s requirement of Christ’s incarnation—of His assuming man’s flesh into the unity of His person—that he could not be saved but by such a redeemer as was both God and man in one person. First, the majesty of God, the poverty and indecency of man, the greatness of the evil to be removed, and the greatness of the good to be restored—these required that man’s redeemer should be God. Such is the majesty of God that none could intercede for himself but He that is one with the Father. The angels could not—they themselves have need of a mediator of union and confirmation (Col. 1:16–17). They themselves, compared with God, are not pure in His sight (Job 15:15), and therefore they cover their faces (Isa. 6:2). How much less can man do it, when not one of them is righteous (Rom. 3:10). The evil to be taken away—sin and the consequence of sin, the wrath of God, the power of Satan, and death both temporal and eternal—is a disease of such difficulty that none can cure it. It is a fire that none can stand under but He who is omnipotent. For by whose suffering can the offense of an infinite majesty be expiated, but by His who is also infinite? By whose intercession can the wrath of God be appeased, but by His who is the best beloved Son of God? By whose strength can Satan with all the powers of darkness be vanquished, but

by His who is stronger than all the devils? Who can overcome death, but He who has the power of death?

The good things to be restored are perfect righteousness, adoption, the image of God, the gifts of the Spirit, life eternal, and the like. Now who can make man righteous but He who is righteousness itself? Who can make men the sons of God by grace but He who is the Son of God by nature? Who can restore us to the image of God but He who is the invisible image of God? Who can give us the Spirit but He from whom the Spirit of God proceeds? And who can give man eternal life but He who is life itself? And thus it necessitates man's redeemer to be God.

Secondly, the justice of God (which, as it leaves not sin unpunished, so it punishes it not but in that nature which has sinned) required that He should be man. And thus "he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Cor. 5:21). And He must be God and man in one person, that He might be a middleman between God and man, and do the things which were to be performed with God (Heb. 5:1) and also with men. And thus there was a necessity that the fullness of the Godhead should dwell in the human nature of Christ, and that He should be God and man in one person.

Does Christ dwell in man's flesh? Has He assumed man's nature into the unity of His person? Then behold the honor of man—how wondrously Christ has exalted the nature of man! Man, who by his sin has made himself extremely vile and shameful, is exceedingly honored by Christ Jesus, even above all the rest of the creatures, for "he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham" (Heb. 2:16). He often used the angels as His ministers and instruments, but He took them not into the unity of His person. They have indeed a near and sweet communion with

Him, but the nature of man alone has the prerogative and glory of being one with Christ personally. Ambrose said, "God, the Son of God has given this honor and dignity to the human nature—that God and man should be one person." Great is the honor which comes to man by Christ's incarnation. It is only the Lord Jesus who makes man honorable and glorious. The sun is the glory of the world; the head is the glory of the body; the crown is the glory of the king; and the flower is the glory of the garden. "Children's children are the crown of old men; and the glory of children are their fathers" (Prov. 17:6). But when all is said and done, the glory of a Christian is Christ Jesus. He who comes nearest to Christ and is most entirely united to Him is of all persons the most honorable and glorious. These are "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people...called...out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

Women suppose it a great glory to be taken into wedlock by rich men and nobles. Men count it a high honor to be received into the favor and fellowship of princes. Servants have high thoughts of their being made companions of their lords and masters. But true glory, full and abiding glory, comes to man by his being received of Christ—by his having union and communion with Christ. He alone is truly honorable and everlastingly noble who has Christ graciously dwelling in him. He has the honor of a son of God (John 1:12) by regeneration and adoption. He has the honor of a friend of God (John 15:15) because of God's familiar and full imparting of His mind and secrets to him. He has the honor of a conqueror (Rom. 8:37) because of the victory which Christ gives him over the Devil, the world, and his own corruption. He has the honor of a spouse (Eph. 5:31) because of Christ's spiritual wedlock with him; the honor of an heir (Rom. 8:17) because of his free participation of all the good things of his heavenly

Father; and the honor of a king (Rev. 1:6) because of the spiritual dominion which he has over himself and the world.

If man comprehended the honor that comes by the participation of Christ Jesus, he would never so strive for worldly honors nor entertain such dishonorable thoughts of the ways of Christ and His servants. The state of that man who thinks to dignify himself without Christ at the end proves most dishonorable and vulgar.

Joseph brought his brethren and presented them to Pharaoh, king of Egypt. He accepted them, bade them dwell in the best of the land, and commanded that the active men among them should be rulers over his cattle (Gen. 47:6). Through Christ we come nigh to the great King of heaven and earth. He accepts us; He bestows His best blessings upon us and makes us spiritual rulers over all worldly vanities and our own affections. Very great is the honor that God dispenses to man through Christ His Son.

And oh, how great should the care of man be who is thus honored by Christ! He should not dishonor himself by wallowing like a pig in the mire and filth of sin; by bowing down to the world—as Gideon's thousands to the waters (Judges 7); or by riveting himself to the Devil and his own lusts—as Delilah once cut off Samson's locks (Judges 16) and made him a slave to the Philistines.

Oh man, do not dishonor that nature of yours which Christ has so honored. Do not debase that which Christ has exalted. Do not unite and join yourself in communion with the Devil and the dung and dross of the world, Christ having taken man's nature into the unity of His person as a pledge of their future exaltation. Do not bow down your soul and exalt your lust, as Solomon saw servants on horseback and princes walking on foot (Eccl. 10:7).

But, as Christ has honored you, so maintain your dignity and spiritual glory by purging yourself from sin, as a living spring purges itself from pollution. Do this by contending mightily against all the oppositions of grace, as a soldier in the day of battle; and by being industrious in the works of holiness, as he who labors for great wages. A Christian's labor is his honor. Maintain your dignity and spiritual honor also by shining as the sun with light; by being full as the tree with fruit; and by abounding as the sea with waters. As the nature which Christ has assumed abides unchangeably united to the person of the Son, so abide with Christ (John 15:7) in attendance on His ordinances, in faith in His promises, in love to His truth, and in obedience to His precepts. As the assumed nature is ascended from the earth to heaven, so raise your thoughts and affections from the things below to the things above (Col. 3:2). Ascend continually by meditation, by faith, and by love and longing for the things which are spiritual. As the assumed nature has no subsistence but in the person of the Son, so may you have no dependence upon anything but on Christ alone. Let Him be all in all (Ps. 73:15; Eph. 1:23). And as the assumed nature is filled with the fullness of the Godhead, so labor more and more to be filled with the fullness of all grace and holiness. And so you will maintain that honor to which Christ has exalted your nature.

Chapter 12

Showing That Man's Choicest Excellency Consists in Union with God

This shows us wherein the choicest excellency of man consists. It is even in being united to God, in having God dwelling in his heart. Wherein stands the excellency of Christ as man but in having the Godhead dwelling in his flesh—in being assumed into the unity of the Second Person? And wherein stands the excellency, the glory, and the blessedness of man, but in being reconciled and brought nigh to God—in being entered into a sweet and gracious communion with God? Is it not the excellency of the branches to be united to the vine? Of the members to be united to the head? Of the wife to have communion with the husband? And of the children to have communion with the parent? And what is the excellency—the joy and comfort of the soul—but sweet and gracious communion with God in Christ?

Jerusalem—even the joy of the whole earth!—pleased not Absalom unless he saw the face of his father David (2 Sam. 14:32). The paradise of the world is but a wilderness to the child of God unless he can see the face and enjoy the comfortable presence of God his Father. Whom does the psalmist pronounce blessed? He who has communion with princes in their courts, with nobles in their honors, with valiant men in their victories, with rich men in their wealth, or with

fleshly men in their pleasures? Or he who has communion with his God in His ordinances and in his spiritual comforts? “Blessed,” David said, “is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee” (Ps. 65:4). It is he whom Thou choosest, embracing him with Thy love, adopting him for Thy son, and making him a member of Thy church. Thou causest him to approach to Thee, as a student to Thy school, as a friend to Thy house, as a child to Thy table, and as a bride into the bosom of Thy love—all to know Thy will, to believe Thy truth, to receive Thy grace, to feel Thy love, and to be satisfied with the goodness of Thy house, even of Thy holy temple.

What is the fruit and end of all the labor of God’s ministers but to work and draw home the souls of men to God—to the fruition and enjoyment of God, and to union and communion with God? All the labor of Eleazar was to bring home Rebecca to Isaac, to espouse her to Isaac. And all the labor of God’s ministers, His servants, is to bring men home to Christ, to espouse them to Christ—as Paul said, “I have espoused you to one husband” (2 Cor. 11:2). This is the sum of all: to gather men home to God and Christ—as chickens to the hen, as sheep to the shepherd, and as children to the parent—that they may be reconciled to God (2 Cor. 5:19), made one with God, and have the blessed enjoyment of God as their highest excellency and chiefest good.

And what are the longings of the souls of holy men who have discerned God’s beauties and who have tasted God’s lovingkindnesses, but the fruition of God in His ordinances and in His graces? “My soul,” David said, “thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?” (Ps. 42:2). And again, “My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times” (Ps. 119:20). Very vehement and laborious are the desires of God’s servants after Him and His testimonies—desires which do even consume

and wear out the strength and vigor of their souls. They are desires of perseverance, longing at all times, in prosperity and adversity. The soul of a good man is restless until it has the enjoyment of God and Jesus Christ. Nothing else can content and answer it. Herein stands the excellency, the glory and comfort of it—and until it attains this the soul is not quiet.

Union and communion with God makes the soul flourish, as the branches by union with the vine. They that are planted in the house of the Lord who draw nigh to God are they who conscientiously frequent His Word and are engrafted into Christ. They will “flourish in the courts of our God” (Ps. 92:13), as a watered garden or a tree planted by the water’s side. This fills the soul with spiritual life, with heavenly sense and motion, as the members which are united to the head. “He that hath the Son hath life” (1 John 5:12)—power and strength, and a blessed fullness of holy and heavenly life. He spiritually moves, eats, walks, works, and rejoices like a living man. This makes him as strong as the house that stood upon the rock (Matthew 7); neither winds nor waves of trouble can beat him down. This makes him as strong as Christ is strong, to bear afflictions and to run, like a strong man, the race of God’s commandments. This sustains him in all worldly desertions. This is light when he is in darkness and wealth when he is poor. Union and communion with God answer all things. Oh, be assured then that the top and flower of the soul’s happiness consists in union with God and Christ Jesus!

And as the fullness of the Godhead dwelleth in the human nature of Christ bodily and substantially, so labor to feel God in Christ dwelling in your soul spiritually. Feel Him dwelling there by illumination, as the sun dwells in the air; by administration, as the vine to the branches; by powerful and gracious governing, as a centurion in the army, a master in the house, and a king in his courts; and by spiritual and holy

inclination, bowing, bending, and framing the heart to do the will of God.

As the pilot at the stern steers the ship toward the haven, and as the spirit of the living creatures in Ezekiel's vision were in the wheels—wherever the Spirit moved they moved (Ezek. 1:20)—so you feel the Spirit of Christ in your soul, so possessing, sanctifying, and framing it, that there be a disposition and readiness within you to move as God in His Word prescribes, and, whatsoever you lose, to hold fast your communion with God. As Joseph left his cloak and fled from his mistress to preserve his chastity, so let go of your cloak—all the bodily coverings of wealth, honor, and whatever else. Flee from sin, and keep communion with your God as the choicest excellency of your soul.

Chapter 13

Declaring the Perfection and Fullness of Christ above the Fullness of All Creatures

The fourth thing in these words is the matter which dwells in Christ—and that is *all fullness*. And the fifth thing is the condition or quality of this fullness—the fullness *of the Godhead*. In saints and angels dwells a fullness of divine qualities, but in Christ it is the fullness of divine essence. And herein Christ, as man, is manifested to be far more excellent than others, to come nearer to God and to participate in more of the fullness of God than all creatures.

Hence we learn that Christ's perfection and fullness infinitely surpass the fullness of all creatures. As the fullness of the sea surpass the fullness of small vessels, and as Saul was head and shoulders in stature above the people (1 Samuel 10), so is Christ in heavenly stature and fullness far above all men and angels. Therefore is He called the head of all principality and power (Eph. 1:21) because of His complete dominion over all creatures; the Prince of the kings of the earth (Rev. 1:5) to show His power over all kings, tyrants, and whatever enemies; and the heir of all things (Heb. 1:2), having interest in and dominion over all creatures in heaven and earth—the whole world is His inheritance. Such is Christ's riches that all the fullness of the world is but poverty in comparison to Him; and all the strength of the creature is but weakness compared with

the power that is in His arm. For God, the apostle said, “raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come” (Eph. 1:20–22). He is set above the name of kings because of His dominion; above the names of rich men because of His wealth; above the name of conquerors because of His victory; and above the name of saints and angels because of His purity, wisdom, and most exquisite and absolute perfection.

And this is demonstrated by the excellency of Christ’s original nature: He is the Second Person in the Trinity; He is begotten of His Father by an eternal generation—very God of very God. As man, He is the Son of God by hypostatical union, His humanity subsisting in the person of the Son. Of Christ therefore the apostle says that He is the “brightness of his [Father’s] glory, and the express image of his person... being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they” (Heb. 1:3–4). He is the brightness of His Father’s glory, as the beams are the glory of the sun; and the express image of His person, as the print of the seal on the wax is the express image of the seal itself. And He is more excellent than the choicest creatures, being the express and living image of His Father, the Maker of all by His power. He is the heir of all by His birth; the supporter of all by His providence; the revealer of all mysteries by His wisdom; the cleanser of all sins by the sacrifice of Himself; and head King and ruler of all by His abidance at the right hand of God. And thus He has a more excellent name than the angels. This is, according to His divinity, by eternal generation of His Father, being the natural Son of God, coessential with the Father; according to His flesh, by a temporal birth of the virgin Mary and operation of

the Holy Ghost, the flesh being assumed of the Son into the unity of His person. The same Son is both God and man, not two Sons but one—and that not by adoption, but by union. He is not made a Son, but born a Son, the flesh being assumed into the unity of the person of the natural Son. As Christ has His being from and union with the Father more naturally, intimately, and entirely than any of the creatures, so He excels all others. He who is most fully of God by regeneration and comes nearest to God by gracious union and communion is the most excellent of many people.

This can be demonstrated from the comparison of His humiliation and His exaltation. He was abased and humbled below others. He appeared in “the form of a servant” (Phil. 2:7). He was of no reputation, rejected, reproached, persecuted, accused, blasphemed, spat upon, put to the shameful death of the cross, and His soul was sorrowful to the death. And as He was humbled and abased below others, so it is fit He should be exalted above others. “Being found,” the apostle said, “in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name” (Phil. 2:8–9). God will honor such people as men dishonor for their well-doing. The good man’s future glory will fully answer his present shame. David was set behind the lambs; his brethren were preferred above him. The Lord took David from the lambs and made him king over Israel. Joseph was brought lower than any of his brethren, cast into prison and fetters put upon him; yet from there he came to the second place next to the king in Egypt. Christ’s humiliation was deepest; Christ’s glory is highest. Let no man for any disgrace decline the way of godliness—the harshest cross will turn to their most glorious crown for those who suffer for well-doing.

This is manifested by the subjection of all things under Him. All things are put under His feet (Eph. 1:22). All things high and low, great and small, visible and invisible, and present and to come are put under Christ's feet. Even as He is man, men and angels are put under Him as subjects under their sovereign and as nobles under their prince. The saints and faithful servants of God are put under Him as sheep under their shepherd, as the bride under the bridegroom, and as the members under their head. All troubles and afflictions are put under Him, as soldiers under the centurion (Matt. 8:9). All devils are put under Him, as captives under their conqueror. As Joshua trod upon the necks of the kings of Canaan, so He tramples down and triumphs over all the princes of darkness. All sins and transgressions are put under Him as the offenses of a land under a king, Christ having authority to forgive them; as diseases under a physician, Christ having ability to heal all the diseases of the soul; as the clouds under the sun, Christ being able to dispel and blot them out, as the sun the clouds; and as debts under a rich man, Christ being able to make full satisfaction. Death and hell are put under Him, as the opening and shutting of the house are under him who has the keys of the house (Rev. 1:18). Absolute, universal, and irresistible is Christ's jurisdiction, having all power both in heaven and earth given Him (Matt. 28:18).

In this, behold those who are filled with the chiefest and choicest fullness. This is the excellency of Christ, that He is filled with all the fullness of the Godhead. And this is the excellency of the soul to be filled with the fullness of the Spirit. Of all fullness, heavenly fullness is the choicest. Christ of all creatures comes nearest to God, and His fullness is the fullness of the divine essence. Among men that are most near and most dear to God, their fullness is a fullness of heavenly gifts and graces. God often fills His enemies with earthly

abilities (Ps. 17:14; Job 21:7), as Abraham filled the hands of Ishmael with earthly possessions, as men fill pigs with husks and acorns. But His friends He fills with spiritual gifts, as Abraham gave the inheritance to Isaac, and Elkanah a worthy portion to Hannah.

Spiritual fullness is a portion of the highest price, of the sweetest and choicest use, and with this fullness we must all strive to be filled. “Be not drunk,” Paul said, “with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit” (Eph. 5:18)—with the wisdom of the Spirit, with the holiness of the Spirit, with the power of the Spirit, and with the joy and peace of the Spirit. Spiritual and heavenly fullness is proper to the Lord’s servants. Let the covetous, like the rich man in the parable, fill his barns with corn; let the drunkard, like they in the book of Isaiah (Isa. 56:12), fill themselves with strong drink; let the ambitious, like Haman, fill himself with worldly honors; but let the Christian fill himself with the graces of the Spirit. For this let us pray, hear, contend, and strive to be “filled with all the fulness of God” (Eph. 3:19), with the highest measure of spiritual perfection that we can attain.

This fullness is the most excellent fullness, and is therefore designated the fullness of God. God is infinitely more excellent than the earth, and this fullness far excels all worldly fullness. As Bathsheba¹ said of the virtuous woman, “Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all” (Prov. 31:29), so may we say of this fullness, however excellently other fullnesses may be in their place and kind, yet this fullness of grace excels them all.

This fullness is permanent. It abodes as the sun in the firmament, as the waters in the sea, and as the fire upon the

1. Grosse believed, as did some others in his day, that Bathsheba may have written Proverbs 31.

altar, even when other fullnesses fail, like the waters of Tema vanished like a vapor.

This is a growing fullness, like the waters coming out under the temple, rising higher and higher, shining like the light more and more to the perfect day.

This is an honorable fullness. It is a crown and a diadem to him who has it; it makes man an excellent man indeed. To excel in virtue is man's choicest excellency.

It is a sweet and comfortable, and a satisfactory and contenting fullness—a feast of marrow and fat things, and of well-refined wine; and a river that fills and makes glad the soul. Oh, then, above all other fullness, highly prize, diligently seek, and earnestly hunger after the fullness of God. Care not for the fullness of gold, fullness of lands, fullness of honor, or fullness of carnal satisfaction; but care for the fullness of God. This will make you strong against temptations, patient in afflictions, joyful in sufferings, holy in thought, gracious in speech, fruitful in action, humble in prosperity, confident in adversity, fervent in prayer, profitable in hearing, godly in conversation, and graciously assured of future fullness of an eternity of all bliss and happiness.

Chapter 14

Setting Forth the Superlative Excellency of Christ above All Creatures

Here, as in a glass, we may behold the transcendent and superlative excellency of Jesus Christ above all the creatures. David was better than ten thousand of the people (2 Sam. 18:3); Christ is more excellent than all the thousands of men and angels. “His name alone is excellent” (Ps. 148:13)—for His divinity, for His union of two natures in one person, and for the mighty works which have been wrought by Him. God has “given him a name which is above every name” (Phil. 2:9)—for His dignity, majesty, authority, power, and most complete perfection, as the name of kings is above the name of subjects; the name of an heir above the name of servants; the name of a centurion above the name of soldiers; and the name of ransomer above the name of redeemed captives. He excels over all the creatures, as the tallest cedars the lowest shrubs; the most glorious sun, the weakest lights; the deepest sea, the smallest drops; the highest prince, the poorest beggars; and the richest jewel, the most common stone. The apostle said of the glory of the law in comparison to the glory of the gospel, “that which was made glorious had no glory...by reason of the glory that excelleth” (2 Cor. 3:10). Thus the glory and excellency of all creatures is as no glory and excellency with respect to the surpassing glory and excellency of Christ Jesus.

Full of divine and heavenly, sweet and soul-ravishing excellency are the names given in sacred Scripture to Christ, such as *Immanuel* (Isa. 7:14), God with us with regard to His person—being God and man in the unity of His person—and with regard to His office—being with us by intercession with His Father for us; by protection against all enemies; and by provision in all adversities. Christ’s being made one with us is the fountain of all our happiness. Sometimes He is called *Jesus* (Matt. 1:21). Sometimes He is called a *Savior*, not a typical but a proper, true, and spiritual Savior; and not mediate, but an immediate Savior. He is a Savior by merit, obtaining salvation by His perfect obedience and satisfaction; a Savior by efficacy, applying all His benefits by the operation of His Word and Spirit; and a Savior with regard to the *terminus a quo* [point of origin] of the perfect righteousness, favor of God, and life eternal which He brings us. Christ is the complete and perfect author of salvation to all God’s children. Full of heavenly sweetness is the name of Jesus to all true believers—honey in the mouth, music in the ear, and a jubilee in the heart, Bernard said. Superlatively sweet and excellent is that salvation which Christ brings to all who sincerely receive Him.

Sometimes His name is called “Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6). He is called *Wonderful* for the admirable union of two natures in one person and for His wonderful conception and birth of a virgin; and *Wonderful* for the administration of His kingdom, wonderfully saving His servants, and wonderfully destroying His enemies. He is called *Counselor* for the wisdom which He reveals and counsel which He gives the elect by the gospel, making them wise unto salvation. He is called *the mighty God* for the miracles He wrought, the giving of the Spirit, and the regeneration of God’s chosen; and *the everlasting Father*, for the life of grace and glory which He administers to all

true believers. And He is called *the Prince of Peace* for the peace which He makes between God and His chosen, for the peace which He works between God's children, and the heavenly tranquility which He puts into the consciences of contrite and brokenhearted sinners.

The names of the Lord Jesus are qualities full of wonders in the eyes of all believers, and the beams ministering the heavenly light of wisdom and consolation to all who come to Him. Sometimes He is figuratively called *the Head* (Eph. 1:22) for the excellency, dignity, and eminency of His condition above others, as the head is the most noble and eminent above all the members; for His mystical union with true believers, and His direction, governing, and protection which He gives to them; and for the communication of all spiritual life, sense, motion, and every good thing to God's children.

Sometimes He is called *a Rock* (1 Cor. 10:4) and *the chief corner stone* (1 Peter 2:6) for His joining of Jew and Gentile in one church, and for His might in sustaining all such as have by a lively faith built a spiritual house upon Him.

Sometimes He is called *a Lion*, "the Lion of the tribe of Judah" (Rev. 5:5), for His principality and eminence, as the lion is the king of all beasts; and for His vigilance, as the lion sleeps with his eyes open. Christ is a keeper who never sleeps. He is called *a Lion* for His power and efficacy in plucking us out of the mouth of the roaring lion, the Devil; for His custody, keeping us as the lion keeps his cubs; for the terror He casts upon the hearts of His enemies by the preaching of His Word, as the lion by his voice makes all the beasts to tremble; and for the raising of His chosen to life, as the lion by his cry awakens his young which sleep.

Sometimes he is called *the Sun* (Mal. 4:2). The sun is the prince of the stars; Christ is the Prince of the kings of the earth. The sun is the eye of the world; Christ of the church.

The sun confers light with its beams; Christ confers the light of knowledge, faith, and all grace to the soul. The sun is in the midst of the planets; Christ is a middle person between God and man. Christ gives the light of glory to the saints above, and the light of grace to believers here beneath. The sun warms the earth; Christ warms the heart with His divine love. The sun makes the earth fertile; Christ makes the soul fruitful. The sun casts its light upon the poor man's cottage as well as on the king's palace; Christ shines as clearly and comfortably into the heart of the poorest as that of the richest Christian.

Sometimes He is called *a Bridegroom* and *a Husband* (2 Cor. 11:2) for His dominion over, arrangement and engagement with, and singular affection to His spouse, the church; for His protection, nutrition, and communication of honor to the children of God; and for His entire union with and acquisition of His spouse. Samson and David obtained their brides by shedding the blood of their enemies; Christ obtained His spouse by shedding His own blood and dissolving the works of the Devil, His and their adversary. Most excellent authority, dignity, majesty, and power is the beauty, wisdom, love, and chiefest goodness shining forth to the souls of God's servants, in and through the names of Christ Jesus.

Let us therefore lock and fasten the eyes of our faith, first, upon the excellency of Christ's dominion. Behold Him reigning as King of kings and Lord of lords, and that we fall down and bow to Him. As Pharaoh put all the people of his land—from the lowest to the highest—under Joseph, because none were as excellent as Joseph, so let us put all the faculties of our souls and all the members of our bodies—the whole man—under Christ. Let all be subject and serviceable to Christ; let all be ruled and guided by Christ. Christ has absolute and most excellent authority over us. And therefore, as all who travel in the day are guided by the sun; as all Israel

was guided by the pillar; and as all the members of the body are guided by the head, so let us in all things be guided by Christ. Let us come and go (Matt. 8:9) at Christ's command, as the soldiers did at the command of the centurion. All man's goings are aberrations if he be not guided by Christ Jesus. Nothing is done well but that which follows Christ's direction. They who walk after their own hearts walk in darkness.

It is written of the wheels in Ezekiel's vision, that when the living creatures went, the wheels went; and when the living creatures stood still, the wheels stood still. When the living creatures were lifted up, the wheels were lifted up over against them, for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels (Ezek. 1:19–20). Thus let our motion and station be according to Christ's direction, having, as the psalmist said, the law of God in our hearts (Ps. 40:8). And as Christ has excellent dominion, so let us feel Him reigning and ruling within us by illumination, as the sun rules the day by filling the air with light; by subjugation, and putting under all our unruly lusts, as Joshua ruled in Canaan by treading upon the necks of the kings of Canaan and putting them to death; and by direction and guidance of our souls to move rightly in the ways of God, as the pilot guides the ship. Let us also feel Him reigning and ruling with us by love, as the husband rules the wife; by inhabitation and possession, as the resident rules the house; by gracious and heavenly influence, as the hand guides the pen and the magnet turns and draws the iron toward it. It is the glory of man's heart to become the throne of Christ—that the honor of man's life be wholly subject to Christ. It is a far greater honor to be Christ's gracious servant than to be the world's profane commander. He who is most spiritually subject is most truly excellent. Of all men he has the choicest dominion who yields to Christ most ready and free subjection. Everything will serve him who readily serves the Lord in all things.

Look upon the excellence of Christ's power. Behold Him as one to whom power belongs—power of creating and making all, power of dispensing and administering all, power of supporting in the greatest weakness, and power of dissolving the greatest forces. Look upon Him as on the rock which never sinks, as on the captain who ever prevails, and as on one whose arm is never shortened. And when building upon Him, as the wise man built his house upon the rock, your soul will never sink. Hide yourself under the shadow of His wings, as the chicken under the wings of the hen, and the infernal vultures will never make a prey of you. And as Christ has excellent power, so strive to feel this power of Christ inwardly in your heart and soul, in dissolving the works of Satan (1 John 3:8), and in casting down his kingdom and mighty holds within you (2 Cor. 10:4–5)—as Peter felt the power of the angel in smiting off his fetters and bringing him forth from Herod's prison (Acts 12:7). Strive to feel it as they who were demon possessed felt the power of Christ in casting out the Devil. Labor to feel this power healing all your spiritual sicknesses, as the diseased woman felt the virtue of Christ curing her sickness (Mark 5); sustaining you in all afflictions, as the ark sustained Noah in the deluge (Gen. 7:17); and restraining all the fiery darts of Satan, as He restrained the fiery furnace from hurting the three young men (Daniel 3). Also labor to feel this power filling your soul with all spiritual and heavenly might (Col. 1:11), making you strong in knowledge as sun in light; strong in faith as the tree in roots; strong in love as a fire of much wood in heat; and strong in motion and coming home to God as a river of much water is strong in coming home to the ocean. The man who feels Christ's gracious power and virtue is the man who discerns Christ's excellency. Christ is nothing in man's apprehension until man has experience in this His powerful and mighty working. When Israel saw the mighty work

of David in overthrowing the great Goliath (1 Samuel 17), then David was much noted. Man's experience of Christ's might and gracious working makes Christ very precious to him.

Look upon the excellency of Christ's love. See Him loving and embracing the humble and penitent souls of men, as the bridegroom his sad and sorrowful bride. See Him binding up the broken hearts of men, as the tender and careful physician the wounds of them that are diseased—with ladies' hands, with singular tenderness and compassion. Behold Him gathering to Himself, bearing in the bosom of His love and comforting with the promises of His Word the wounded in spirit and afflicted in conscience, as the careful shepherd gathers and carries the weak and feeble sheep (Isa. 40:11). Behold Him like Jacob in his love serving in the heat and in the cold for Rachel (Gen. 29:27), serving in manifold afflictions from His cradle to His cross for our sakes to make a spouse to Himself. See Him in His sympathy and commiseration, afflicted in all the affliction of His people (Isa. 63:9), as a head with the affliction of the members and as a nurse with the affliction of her child. Look on Him and see Him in love stripping Himself of His glory, dignity, and life itself for us (Phil. 2:7), as Jonathan in his love stripped himself of his sword and garment and gave them to David. Look upon this excellent love of Christ; prize it more highly than the thirsty man prizes wine (Song 1:2), than the worldly man his corn and oil (Joel 2:19), or the living man his life (Ps. 63:3).

Of all possessions the love of Christ is most precious; nothing is as sweet as Christ's lovingkindness to the souls of God's servants. Nothing can make man miserable or his condition uncomfortable when he has the feeling of Christ's love within him. Christ at the marriage in Cana turned water into wine (John 2). The marriage of the soul with Christ—having the love of Christ—turns the clouds of sorrow into a

sun of comforts, the dust of disgrace into a crown of honor, the tempest of trouble into a calm of peace, and the empty cistern into a full fountain. Oh, how sweet, how honorable, how full, and how well pleasing does the love of Christ make the condition of those who have the beams of His countenance shining upon them!

Look upon the excellency of Christ's consolations which water and refresh the soul, as the rivers did the garden of Eden; which revive the heart and make the inward man to flourish after a long winter of affliction, as the beams of the sun do the earth in the spring season—consolations external in the ministry and doctrine of the gospel, and internal in the sweet and peaceable operation of the Spirit. Thus you may hear Christ comforting His spouse after her long troubles: "Lo," He says, "the winter is past, the rain is over and gone" (Song 2:11). The troubles and grievances raised by the malice of the world—fears, terrors, and sorrows of soul caused by sin and raised like a tempest by the sense of God's wrath—are gone, appeased, and put away by the sweet, gracious, and comfortable coming of Christ into the soul, as the winter by the returning of the sun. The flowers appear; the graces and consolations of the Spirit appear again, adorning and sweetening the soul and making it look with a joyful face, as the flowers do the earth. The time of the singing of birds is come; the hour of the saints' consolation is come. Christ makes them joyful with the feeling of His Word and Spirit, and they with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs do sing and make melody in their hearts unto the Lord (Eph. 5:19).

The Lord Jesus ever ministers sweet refreshments after long afflictions to the souls of His servants. He gives them water out of the rock and honey out of the lion. He makes their heaviness a matter of rejoicing and their sufferings an occasion of triumph and exaltation. Now He comforts them

as a haven comforts the sailor after a long storm, becoming to them a place of refuge and a shield from the storm and from the rain. Now He comforts them with the assurance of the pardon of their sin (Isa. 4:1; Job 33:24; Ezra 9:8), as a king does the criminal with a pardon, after much sorrow and long supplication. Now He revives them with the light of His countenance, as David after many days let Absalom see his face. Now He cheers them with His presence, as a bridegroom cheers the bride after long absence. Now He quiets them as He did the stormy waters, and gave a calm to His disciples (Matt. 8:26). Now He sends His Spirit with a certificate of peace to their consciences (Rom 8:16), as the dove came to Noah with an olive branch. Now He lets them see the end of their fears and sorrow, as Noah after many days saw the dry land appear. Christ is very wise and wonderful in the dispensing of comforts to His afflicted servants. He ever takes the most suitable opportunities both to sweeten and remove men's miseries. When the overflowing flood of worldly comforts proves an empty pit and broken cistern, then Christ's comforts appear as a living spring that never fails.

And in this is the excellency of Christ's consolations, that they are first, *seasonable*, as light in darkness, as the well was to Hagar when her bottle was empty; secondly, that they are *full* consolations, their latitude equal to man's miseries; thirdly, that they are *strong* consolations, overcoming man's distractions and distresses; and fourthly, *everlasting*, abiding to the end with Christ's members. And oh, how should this excellency of Christ Jesus fill us with high and excellent thoughts of Christ; with strong and excellent faith in Christ; with fervent and excellent love to Christ; with humble, hearty, and excellent subjection under Christ; and with full, constant, and most excellent contentment with Christ, having Him in whom is fullness infinitely surpassing the fullness of all creatures!

Chapter 15

Opening the Blessed and Happy Condition of Them That Are Partakers of Christ

This declares the singular happiness and blessed condition above all other persons of those that are partakers of Christ. They have Him in whom is fullness, infinitely surpassing the fullness of all creatures. Man's having spiritual right and privilege in Christ Jesus is man's greatest happiness. It is the happiness of a traveler to have the sun in which is fullness of light, to guide him; therefore when the sun appears, he leaves all other lights and contents himself with this, as having enough in this. It was the happiness of the merchant in the parable to have the precious pearl. He sold all (Matt. 13:44) to possess himself of that, assuring himself that having that, he had enough. He needed no other treasure to be added. Christ is a glorious sun in whom is all light and a precious pearl in whom is all treasure. He who has Him needs nothing else to make him happy. He who has all things, without Christ, is poor, despicable, and miserable. He who has Christ in the absence of all other things is rich, full, and honorable. As Augustine one said of the knowledge of other things and the ignorance of God: "Unhappy is he that knows all things, and knows not Thee; but he that knows both Thee and them is happy; not for them, but for Thee alone." So in this case: unhappy is he who possesses all things and has not Christ, but

he who has both Christ and them is happy—not for them, but for Christ alone. Listen, whom does the Spirit of God declare happy? “Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance” (Ps. 33:12). Blessed is the nation which has God for their Lord—in His ordinances, as a teacher instructing them; in His love, as a Father regenerating and embracing them; in His care, as a Shepherd watching over them; and in the operation of His grace, as a physician healing them, and as a gardener pruning, dressing, and watering them. To have God in His love, mercy, and saving graces is man’s blessedness. And again, “Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in who there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish. Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the LORD his God” (Ps. 146:3–5). Here the psalmist shows the vanity of all external excellencies and the folly of them who trust in them and that magnify themselves in the presence of them, being things that are perishing and suddenly changing. For as Mimus said of fortune, “It is glassy, when it shines it breaks,” so is the greatest worldly fullness but a glass—when it shines, it breaks; when it flourishes, then it withers. On the other hand, the psalmist sets forth the singular blessedness of them who have the God of Jacob for their God, and who, by knowledge, choice, faith, love, obedience, and delight, have Him for their God, their guide, their rock, their crown, and their portion. They are happy; they are blessed. They are in a most honorable and sweet condition.

Great is the happiness of man in having Christ, as David said of Goliath’s sword, “There is none like that” (1 Sam. 21:9). He who has Christ has, first, a wise guide, able to direct him, as the fiery pillar guided Israel and the star the wise men. Christ has all the treasures of wisdom; he who has most of Christ is

the wisest man in the world. He who has the sun has more light than he who has all other lights and does not have the sun.

Secondly, he who has Christ has a faithful friend—a sure friend, a sweet friend, and an able and everlasting friend. There is a friend, Solomon said, “that sticketh closer than a brother” (Prov. 18:24). Such a friend is Christ. When father and mother forsake us, Christ takes us up. “Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so doth the sweetness of a man’s friend by hearty counsel” (Prov. 27:9), said the wise man. Such a friend is Christ. His instruction, His presence, and His love are better than ointment and perfume, filling the soul with all joy in believing. “A friend loveth at all times” (Prov. 17:17). Such a one is Christ. Whom He loves once, He loves to the end. Have Christ for your friend, and you need not be dismayed at all the hatred of the world.

Thirdly, he who has Christ has a sure rock to sustain him and a firm shield to defend him. Christ, like Noah’s ark, will bear him up in the deepest deluge of affliction. Like a firm anchor, He will stay the ship of his soul in the stormy tempest of all troubles. Like a wall of fire (Zech. 2:5), He will defend him and consume all that rise against him. Great is that man’s safety who has Christ for his keeper (Psalm 3). There is more safety with Christ in the calm waters (Isa. 32:2). That soul is invincible which has Christ for his castle and his captain.

Fourthly, he who has Christ has the highest honor. The woman joined in wedlock with the king is more honorable than all the other women of the land. Esther obtained more grace and favor in the sight of Ahasuerus than all the virgins, and the king set the royal crown upon her head (Esth. 2:17). He who has Christ obtains more grace and favor with God than all the men on earth besides him, and is as “a crown of glory in the hand of the LORD, and [as] a royal diadem in the hand of thy God” (Isa. 62:3). All who have Christ are

sons of God (John 1:12), heirs of heaven (Rom. 8:17), and spiritual kings (Rev. 1:6). He is most honorable and glorious who comes nearest to Christ, who receives most of Christ. It is not natural birth, but new birth, and not worldly abundance, but heavenly fullness that honors man in God's presence. "The only freedom with God," Jerome said, "is not to serve sin; and with God to excel in virtue is the highest nobility." Most honorable and gracious is the description of the church represented by "a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars" (Rev. 12:1). That man's condition is without question the most honorable, who has the Sun of Righteousness clothing him, the star of God's Word guiding him, and all the things of the earth put under him.

Fifthly, he who has Christ has all. She who is wedded to the master of the house has all the house. Man by his spiritual wedlock with Christ has the right to all the things of this great house of the world. Of those that have Christ, the apostle said, "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; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's" (1 Cor. 3:21-23). All things are yours. All the creatures here below are yours as your servants to do service to you, as all the servants of the house are under the mistress of the house.

The angels are also yours to minister to you, as the nobles of the land are the queen's to attend and wait upon her. All things are appointed for your good and for your edification, support, and comfort. Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, all the ministers of God from the highest to the lowest are yours as lights to guide you; as pastors to feed you with knowledge and understanding; as shepherds to gather you home to Christ; as physicians to heal you; as builders to carve and shape you; as husbandmen to make you fruitful and prune you; and as

the friends of the Bridegroom to woo you, to persuade and betroth you to Christ. All the ordinances of God are yours as a school to instruct you; as a banqueting house to feed you; as an armory to furnish you with spiritual armor; and as a pool of Bethesda to heal you. All these are for your sakes for your good. The world is yours, as a house for you to dwell in and a country for you to live in for a season.

All the goods of the world are yours to use. As the things of the house are for the wives to use, they are all sanctified to you. All the malice and opposition of the world is yours to wean you from the earth, to drive you home to Christ, to exercise your graces, and to sweeten to you Christ Jesus. The fullness, pomp, and glory of the world is yours to test your sobriety, humility, vigilance, and moderation in all things.

Not only are all things yours, but all conditions, whether life or death. Life is yours. The time of life is yours to learn and know God to get assurance of another life. The prosperity of life is yours to be thankful to God for it. The troubles of life are yours to learn to bear the cross with patience. All the various estates and conditions of life are yours, in each of them to show your subjection and obedience to God. Death is also yours, to put an end to all your miseries, as a physician to cure all your diseases and as a haven of peace after all tempests. Death is yours as a place of rest after all labors, as the Red Sea was to Israel, drowning all sins, ending all sorrows, and giving entrance into endless joys; and as the Red Sea drowned Pharaoh and the Egyptians and proved a safe passage to the Israelites and gave them opportunity for great triumph and exultation.

Things present and things to come are yours. Present things are yours. Present good things are yours, to behold God in them, to praise God for them, to serve God with them, and to do good to others by them. Present afflictions are yours to try you, to humble you, to purge you, and to sweeten

the meditation of Christ and heaven to you. Present sins are yours to make you vile in your own apprehension, to drive you out of yourselves, and to let you see the necessary use of God's ordinances and the necessity of Christ Jesus. Things to come are yours. Afflictions to come are yours to prepare for them; sins to come are yours to prevent them; and heaven and happiness to come are yours to sustain and comfort yourselves with the thought and belief of them. All things, of whatever kind or nature, are yours, and you are Christ's: Christ's servants to obey Him; Christ's spouse to love Him; and Christ's members receiving all from Him and possessing all in Him. And Christ is God's subordinate to God as man and mediator between God and man.

Here is the whole breadth of a Christian's riches, his having all things in Christ Jesus. Let the proud man, with Nebuchadnezzar, bless himself in his stately palace. Let the mighty man, with Goliath, boast himself in his tall stature and strong armor. Let the valiant man, with Sennacherib, magnify himself in his victories. And let the covetous bless himself with him in the parable, in having his barns full. But let the Christian pronounce himself happy—only happy, truly happy, fully happy, and everlastingly happy—in his having Christ; for Christ Jesus is man's sole and joyful, constant, and most glorious happiness, because in Him dwells all fullness, even the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

The last thing in this verse is the manner in which the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Christ—and that is *bodily*, in the body or human nature assumed. In that, the fullness of the Godhead dwells. "All fullness of the divine nature," Jerome said, "dwells in His body." And the apostle added this word *bodily*, first, to put a distinction between the dwelling of the Godhead in the human nature assumed and in the saints. In them the Godhead dwells by the communication of virtue, but

in this the Godhead dwells personally by the communication of the person of the Son to the human nature. Secondly, the apostle added this to show that Christ, according to His human nature, is Head of the church by reason of the personal inhabitation of the Godhead in the flesh. Thirdly, to declare the full and open manifestation of God in Christ, God did often manifest Himself to men in shadows and in powerful and mighty works. But in Christ He has manifested Himself most fully, dwelling in the flesh assumed personally, so Christ in our flesh is true God and true man. He who has the Son of God has the Father. He who enjoys Christ enjoys God, because the Godhead dwells in our human nature personally.

By this we see that Christ dwelling in our flesh is true God. Christ, the Son of God, dwelling in our flesh, is truly and essentially God. Nothing is lacking in Christ that belongs to God, that pertains to the divinity. Whatever the Father does, the Son does in our flesh, though not by the power of the flesh, but by His Godhead dwelling in the flesh. The names of nature and of ordination; the titles of honor, love, office, and labor which are given to Christ; and the attributes of eternity, of immutability, immortality, omnipresence, omniscience, and omnipotence which are ascribed to Christ, together with the miraculous and mighty works wrought by Christ—all these do give an ample, clear, and invincible testimony of Christ's Godhead.

Let us therefore look upon the Godhead of Christ in our flesh and admire His goodness in coming so near to us. Let us strive by faith and love to come to Him and through Him to God—Christ reconciling God and man, as Jacob's ladder joined heaven and earth together; and God dispensing all to men by Christ and accepting men through Christ, as the angels descended and ascended by the ladder in Jacob's vision. Let us again contemplate Christ as God dwelling in our flesh and

fear Him and obey Him above all commanders. Let us exalt Him above all men and angels; love Him above all creatures; rest upon Him in all distresses; consecrate ourselves to His service; celebrate Him as the author and worker of all our welfare and happiness; and comfort and content ourselves in and with Him as the fountain of all fullness.

Chapter 16

Ascribing Perfection in Christ to Such Alone That Are Truly Blessed

And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power.

—COLOSSIANS 2:10

In the preceding verse the fullness of Christ is opened; in this verse the fullness of His members is proposed. Christ is very free and full and gracious in His sustenance to His servants. As there is a fullness in the vine, so there is a fullness in the branches; and as there is a fullness in the sea, so there is a fullness in the rivers. Likewise, as there is a fullness in Christ, so there is a fullness in His members. They are complete in Him which is the head of all principality and power.

These words contain a third argument used by the apostle to warn men against resorting to human traditions, philosophical doctrines, and vain and needless ceremonies, and from seeking perfection or fullness in such empty lamps, broken cisterns, and barren trees. Considering they have perfection nearer home and in themselves being in Christ, members of Christ, and incorporated into Christ in whom is all fullness, they need not look elsewhere for perfection, for they are complete in Him.

In the words we have two things in general: (1) the saints' perfection—"And ye are complete in him"—and (2) Christ's

exaltation—“which is the head of all principality and power.” First, of the saints’ perfection: “And ye are complete in him.” Here we may take notice, first, of the subject *ye*—not *all*, but *ye*: you who are effectually called from the death of sin to the life of grace, as Christ called Lazarus from the death of the grave to the life of nature (John 11:44); you who are savingly enlightened, as the eyes of him who was born blind were opened (John 9); and you who are spiritually purged and cleansed from sin, as Naaman was washed from his leprosy in the Jordan (2 Kings 5). You are complete in Him who have put off the old man and put on the new (Eph. 4:22, 24), as Joseph had his prison garments taken off and vestures of fine linen put upon him and a golden chain about his neck (Gen. 41:14, 42); you from whom all old things are put away and to whom all things are become new (2 Cor. 5:17). You are complete in Him.

Such alone who are truly holy and blessed are complete and perfect in Christ Jesus. Such alone are living branches in this vine; a spiritual bride to this Husband; endowed with God’s image; interested in God’s promise; separated from worldly vanities and the power of uncleanness; clothed with Christ’s righteousness; and filled with Christ’s fullness.

Profane and worldly people are far from all spiritual perfection as the dead are far from life, the blind far from sight, and slaves far from freedom. Unregenerate and unblessed persons have no saving knowledge of Christ Jesus; no participation in His fullness; no interest in His benefits; and no taste of the sweetness of His mercies. Christ to them is a hidden manna whom they taste not; an eclipsed sun whom they see not; and a sealed well of whom they drink not, like the tree of life to Adam who was expelled out of the garden of Eden (Genesis 3). Christ is one to whom they come not, of whose fruit they feed not. Reigning impurity deprives the soul of all benefits and comforts of the Lord Jesus.

Such alone are truly blessed who are filled with Christ's fullness, discern Christ's excellencies, and are refreshed with the sweetness of His mercies. They alone who live to Christ enjoy Christ, are made perfect by Christ, and have the promise of eternal life in and through Christ. "Oh Christ," Bernard said, "he is plainly worthy of death who refuses to live to Thee; and he that is not wise for Thee, is foolish. And he who cares to be, unless he be for Thee, goes for nothing, and is nothing." "Oh God," Bernard said, "Thou hast made all things for Thyself, and he that will be for himself and not for Thee begins in the midst of all things to be nothing." Without Christ, man's greatest fullness is nothing else other than emptiness. He who seeks himself and not Christ loses both himself and Christ. He who strives to be happy without Christ involves himself in the snare and casts himself into the gulf of the greatest misery. To live to the Lord Jesus in true holiness is the only way to everlasting happiness. He who, for Christ, can make himself nothing will find the perfection of all things in Christ. Labor then to be of that number who are truly holy and blessed that you may be complete and perfect in Christ Jesus.

Secondly, here is the benefit: *complete*, or full, entire, and perfect. They are complete in the imputation of Christ's righteousness; in the very beginning of all saving gifts and graces; in their entitlement to all God's promises; and in the acceptance of their persons and services in and for Christ—Christ being the Beloved in whom they are accepted (Eph. 1:6).

Hence we learn that there is a spiritual and heavenly perfection and fullness in God's faithful servants. There is a fullness of inception but not of consummation, as there is a fullness of light begun in the air in the dawning of the day. There is a fullness of parts but not of degrees, as there is a fullness of members in an infant as well as in a man with

respect to parts, though not in respect of full growth. There is a fullness of truth and uprightness though not of absoluteness. The least ounce of gold and drop of water are as truly gold and water as all the gold in the king's treasure, or all the water in the deep sea. There is a fullness with respect to intention though not of acquisition. They set perfection as a mark before them; they press toward it, though they have not yet fully attained (Phil. 3:12). There is a fullness of duration though not of fruition. They do not fail and fall like Hazeal by the way, but like good travelers they go from strength to strength until they appear before the Lord in Zion (Ps. 84:7), though they do not yet enjoy the end of their calling. There is a fullness in respect to extension: they mortify all lusts, and they depart from every evil way. They allow themselves no sin, though they cannot wholly abolish any sin; they look carefully to all God's precepts and walk in all God's ordinances, though they limp and halt a little, as Jacob did in his travel after he had obtained the blessing.

This perfection and fullness of God's saints and servants was foreshadowed in the ark of the covenant, as it was a type of the church. The ark had a crown of gold about it (Ex. 25:10–11). The church, the faithful servants of the Lord, is crowned with diverse gifts and graces here and will be crowned with the crown of glory hereafter. The ark had four symmetric dimensions. And so the faithful servants of Christ have the depth of faith, the height of hope, the latitude of charity, and the longitude of perseverance, "abound[ing]," as the apostle said, "in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love" (2 Cor. 8:7). The candlestick in the sanctuary had seven lamps and many branches, adorned with bowls, knops, and flowers (Ex. 25:31, 37). The church and faithful servants of God are furnished with the fullness of divine and heavenly light, and they are beautified with

the gracious works of the Spirit. This was prophesied: “The earth”—the faithful people of God on earth—“shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD” (Isa. 11:9). They will be full as the waters cover the sea, abundantly furnished with all the gifts of God. And this the Lord signified by the mouth of the psalmist, saying, “There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon: and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth” (Ps. 72:16). This was a prophecy of the plentiful preaching of the gospel, abundant communication of divine and saving gifts to men, a large increase of the number of believers, and sweet consolations arising in the souls of men upon their freedom from the power of Satan and their own corruption under Christ’s kingdom.

This perfection and fullness of the servants of God is expressed sometimes by the beauty of the lilies of the valley (Song 2:1); sometimes by the brightness of the sun, the moon, and the morning (Song 6:10); sometimes by the glory and rich attire of a queen clothed with gold of Ophir and a needle-wrought garment (Ps. 45:9, 13–14); and sometimes by a body washed with water and anointed with oil, clothed with embroidered work, shod with a badger’s skin, girded about with fine linen, covered with silk, and decked with ornaments, having bracelets upon the hands and a chain on the neck (Ezekiel 16), signifying the riches, fullness, splendor, beauty, and admirable excellency of those graces with which the Lord adorns the souls of His servants—grace and holiness making God’s children surpassingly beautiful. That soul is most comely and beautiful which has the greatest measure of sanctification. This is likewise symbolized by the waters coming forth under the threshold of the temple (Ezek. 47:1), rising higher and higher, until they grew so deep that a man could swim in them. And for this, the children of God are

called a flock of sheep “even shorn, which came up from the washing; whereof every one bear twins, and none is barren among them” (Song 4:2). For this they are described as a garden enclosed; a spring shut up; a fountain sealed; an orchard of pomegranates with pleasant fruits (Song 4:12–13); a tree planted by the waters, whose leaf does not fade; and as trees bearing more fruit in their old age (Ps. 92:14).

It is the mark of God’s children to grow to more perfection. Their corruptions, like the house of Saul, grow weaker and weaker (2 Sam. 3:1); and their graces, like the house of David, wax stronger and stronger. The Scripture speaks of them plainly, testifying that they are full of goodness (Rom. 15:14), as the stars are full of light and good trees full of good fruit. They are full of piety toward God; full of charity toward man; full of knowledge in God’s will; full of faith in God’s promises; full of godly sorrow for their offenses; full of humility and meekness for their low opinion of themselves; and full of readiness to put their necks under the yoke of God’s precepts. Scripture testifies that they are full of the fruits of righteousness (Phil. 1:11), as the fields are full of all sorts of fruit in the day of harvest, and that they are perfect and full in the will of God (Col. 4:12) and in the knowledge and observance of it, as a good servant is full in knowing and obeying his master’s will and as a good traveler is full in knowing his way and going on fully in it with all his strength, with all cheerfulness and with all steadfastness. Yes, they are “filled with all the fulness of God” (Eph. 3:19), not with the fullness of His essence, but of His operations and communications of His grace to the souls of men. They are filled with the fullness of His will, being “filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding” (Col. 1:9); and with the fullness of His promises, believing them and drawing waters of consolation from them with the bucket of faith, as from so

many wells of comfort. They are filled with the fullness of His love, feeling the love of God shed abroad in their hearts, as the child is filled with the love of the parent. They are filled with the fullness of His gifts, as the air is full of the light of the sun. Each is filled with the fullness of his Christ who fills all things in all men (Ephesians 1). And thus we see there is a spiritual and heavenly fullness in the Lord's servants.

Chapter 17

Outlining Four Grounds of the Saint's Perfection

First, let us survey the believer's perfection with regard to the grounds of his union with and incorporation into Christ. They are united to Christ as branches to the vine. The vine is of the same nature as the branches, and so is Christ, as man, of the same nature as believers. The branches have their origin in the vine; believers are born again by Christ to a lively hope. The branches are supported, nourished, and filled by the vine; so are all true believers by Christ. They are united to Christ, as members to the head (Rom. 12:5). The head communicates sense and motion to all the members of the body; Christ communicates spiritual life, sense, and motion and also a heavenly fullness of all good things to the members of His mystical body. They are united to Christ as the bride to the bridegroom; they are betrothed to Him forever (Hos. 2:19). The wife by her marriage partakes in the name, honor, dignity, and earthly fullness of her husband. The church, likewise, by spiritual wedlock with Christ, partakes of the name, honor, dignity, and heavenly fullness of Christ. As a husband and wife are one matrimonial flesh, so are Christ and His members one mystical Christ (1 Cor. 12:12).

Second, let us outline the saint's perfection with regard to the grounds of proportion. There is a natural proportion

and likeness between the head and the members, between the parent and the child, and between the sun and the air enlightened by the sun. Thus there is a spiritual proportion between Christ and all those that, like living members, are enlivened by Him—like children are born of Him and savingly enlightened by Him as the sun enlightens the air. There is a grace-filled harmony and bond between Christ and all God's faithful servants, as between the sun and the stars in the firmament, as between the king and the queen in the court, and as between the father and the children in the family. They are holy as He is holy (1 Peter 1:16), in proportion, in imitation, and in quality, but not in parity, degree, and quality. They are conformed to Christ (Rom. 8:29) in sanctification and in suffering. Christ has fullness *above* measure; they have fullness *in* measure. In Christ is fullness as in the fountain; the fullness that is in them is as in the cistern.

Third, note the saint's perfection with regard to the grounds of communication. The sun communicates light to all the stars, and the sea supplies the water to all the rivers. Christ has not received for Himself alone, but for all His members. Joseph did not have the fullness of Egypt for himself alone, but for all the people of the land, to dispense to them according to their many needs. God has put all fullness into Christ, and through Christ He dispenses the same to us. God, Paul said, "blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. 1:3)—with knowledge, justification, remission, adoption, sanctification, and all spiritual riches in Christ. God dispenses all His fullness by Christ Jesus to His servants. As the angels came down by Jacob's ladder, so do all the gifts of God come down to the soul of man by Christ. "Of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace" (John 1:16). "I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me," Christ said (John 17:8)—the words of precept to direct

them, the words of promise to sustain them, the words of life to quicken them, and the words of peace to comfort them. He says, “What Thou hast revealed and given to Me, as Mediator, have I revealed and communicated unto them as their teacher and Savior.”

Fourth, see the saint’s perfection with regard to the grounds of imputation. Christ with all His benefits is imputed to believers: their sins are imputed to Him, and His righteousness is imputed to them. “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2 Cor. 5:21)—not our righteousness, but the righteousness of God; not in us, but in Christ. As Joshua the high priest had his filthy garments taken from him (Zechariah 3) and was clothed with change of raiment, so is our sin put from us like a filthy garment, and we are clothed with Christ’s righteousness, as with a rich and royal robe. And we are to put on Christ to justification through faith being clothed and covered with Christ, with His perfect innocency and holiness of nature and actions, as with a garment to appear holy and unblamable without spot or wrinkle before God. And we are also said to put on Christ to sanctification (Romans 13), being decked and adorned with the gifts and fruits of His Spirit, as with jewels and ornaments. “Ye are of God,” Paul said—elected, called, and regenerated by His Spirit. All things are of God by creation; elect believers are by the grace of adoption and regeneration. “Ye are of Him in Christ”—elected in Christ before the foundation of the world. You are in Christ, who is made unto us of God wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption (1 Cor. 1:30)—made unto us of God, not by creation, but by ordination. Made unto us wisdom, that is, the author and teacher of wisdom, revealing to us the counsel of His Father concerning our salvation and making us wise by giving us the

Spirit of illumination. Christ is made unto us righteousness, our justifier, making us righteous through His righteousness imputed to us. He is made unto us sanctification, our sanctifier, regenerating and renewing us by the work of His Spirit. He is made unto us redemption by His merit and efficacy, freeing us from the power of Satan, the dominion of our corruption, and death eternal. He is our wisdom as a prophet, our justification and sanctification as a priest, and our redemption as a king. He is our righteousness imputed, by way of imputation; He is our wisdom, sanctification, and redemption effectively, by way of inherent and gracious operation. "Christ," Bernard said, "is made unto us Wisdom in preaching, Righteousness in the absolution of sin, Sanctification in conversation, and Redemption in His passion." "Christ," Theophylact said, "maketh us wise, freeing us from error; He maketh us just by forgiveness of sins; He sanctifieth us by His Spirit the Comforter." And thus He imparts to us perfect redemption or deliverance from all evils; and hence it appears that there is a spiritual and heavenly perfection and fullness in all the Lord's servants.

This shows what great strangers they are to Christ and how far they are from the number of God's faithful servants who are empty of all saving grace—whose souls, like the foolish virgins' lamps, are empty of all spiritual and heavenly oil (Matthew 25). They are also those whose hearts are an empty house, where there dwells no divine and saving good (Rom. 7:18), and whose lives are, as the prophet said of Israel, "an empty vine" (Hos. 10:1), bringing forth to themselves—to the flesh, but not to God. This also shows what great strangers they are to Christ who are empty of the knowledge of God, as the eyes of the blind are of light, having no wisdom to discern the things which differ any more than a blind man can discern of colors; and those who are empty of faith, as Jeroboam's withered hand was empty of strength, having no

power to believe, to lay hold on Christ and the promise of eternal life; and those who are empty of love, as a dead man is empty of heat.

It is said of David that he was old and stricken in years, and they covered him with clothes, but he could not be warmed. There are many who are so old in sin and have spent so many years in the way of the world and in the works of the flesh that though they have much means to warm them—many sermons, many admonitions, and instructions—yet they are never warmed; no love burns within them. Their souls remain like an empty chimney where there is no fire. They are empty of all the fruits of righteousness, as a withered branch is empty of grapes. Such men have nothing of Christ in them, as the empty cistern has nothing in it of the fountain. Such men can do nothing to resist Satan, no more than an empty hand can withstand the enemy in the battle.

The unclean spirit, when he found the house empty, entered in with seven others worse than himself (Matt. 12:44–45). Such are unprofitable to others in their spiritual distresses, like the pits which were empty when the children of the nobles came to them in their thirst (Jer. 14:3); and as an empty lantern that gives no light to him who travels in the dark, like the fig tree which bore no fruit when Christ came to it in His hunger. Such men do not know how to comfort themselves nor how to sustain and stay themselves in their own distress. They have nothing of God and Christ at home within themselves in their own hearts; but, as Hagar's bottle was empty and had no water in it (Genesis 21), neither did she know which way to look for water to refresh her, but sat down and wept—so are their souls empty. And when trouble comes upon them, they do not know which way to look for comfort. They have no anchor to keep them in the storm, but are, as the psalmist said, as the sailors in the tempest, even “at their

wit's end" (Ps. 107:27). Such men are a dishonor to the gospel and a shame to the Christian profession, as an empty student who has no knowledge in him is a disgrace to the school, or a barren tree is a discredit to the orchard. To such men it may be spoken, as Archidamus once spoke to his son who was foolishly conflicting with the Athenians and wanting strength to make himself suitable against them, "Either add to thy strength or take from thy boldness," so must these men either add more power of godliness in their walk of life or cease from their confession. For as in war, audaciousness without strength is dangerous, so in religion, confession without strength is dangerous, and, further, confession without practice is scandalous. And what is the end of such empty and barren Christians? It is as the tree that had leaves without fruit, which was cursed, and the withered branches, which were cast into the fire and burned. So the curse and everlasting burning will be these men's last portion (Matt. 21:19; John 15).

This likewise shows how far they are from Christ who, instead of spiritual and heavenly fullness, have a fullness of sin and uncleanness within them. Some are full of worldly-mindedness and of distracting cares and thoughts, as the sluggard's field was full of thorns and briars (Prov. 24:31). Some are full of idolatry and superstition and full of error, heresy, and corrupt opinions, as Baal's house was full of idolaters from one end to the other (2 Kings 10:21). Some are full of fraud and deceit, as a cage full of birds (Jer. 5:27); some are full of disorder, tumults, and contentions, as the sea is full of storms (Isa. 22:2). Some are full of hypocrisy and full of many disgusting and filthy lusts, as the Pharisees' sepulchers were white on the outside, but full of dead men's bones within (Matt. 23:27). Some are full of malice, wrath, and rage, as the serpents are full of deadly poison (James 3). Some are full of cursing, swearing, and evil speaking, as the

woman upon the scarlet-colored beast was full of the names of blasphemy and the golden cup in her hand was full of abominations and filthiness (Rev. 17:3–4). And what attends this fullness of impiety and profaneness, but fullness of shame, fullness of woes, and fullness of everlasting tortures? Fullness of vengeance ever waits upon the fullness of ungodliness.

Chapter 18

Evidencing the Fullness of the Saints by Four Characteristics or Marks, with Four Motives to Labor for Fullness

This may teach us then to diligently examine the state of our souls and to labor for clear and comforting evidence of this spiritual and heavenly fullness.

The presence of this fullness will be discerned first, by the fullness of man's resisting and withstanding every temptation, every opposition, and every obstruction of the Devil, the world, and the flesh, as a castle full of armor, full of men, full of fortification, and full of all provision abides all assaults, and as a tree full of roots abides and holds out against all the gusts and blasts of winds. Noah's ark, though tossed all about, was full of strength, and therefore it endured all the tossings of the deluge. The man in whom dwells this fullness is, in the midst of all oppositions, "as a man made all of fire walking stubble," as Chrysostom said of Peter. He overcomes and consumes all opposition. All difficulties only serve to sharpen his resolve. All Satan's temptations are but a torch cast into the water. All the criticisms of the world are to him but as the barking of dogs to a traveler. All the offers of the world are corrupt and detestable. The very reproach of Christ is, in his eyes, greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt (Hebrews 11). The horse neighs at the trumpet, and the leviathan laughs at the spear. Such is the man that is filled with Christ—he counts it all joy

to fall into manifold temptations (James 1:2). He is ready to go through fire and water; he carries his life in his hand. He says to father and mother, "I know you not," and to carnal counselors and friendly enemies, "Get you behind me, Satan."

Second, the presence of this fullness is seen by the fullness of obligation to the whole law and will of God. Where there is fullness of grace, the whole man is put into a holy frame. There is a readiness to obey every precept, as the centurion's soldiers were ready for every command to go and come (Matt. 8:9), to do this and to do that. There is a readiness to believe every promise, as there is a readiness in the hand to receive every gift. There is a readiness to embrace every edifying admonition, as there is a readiness in the eye to receive light from every star, a readiness in the ground to receive rain from every cloud, and a readiness with diligence to follow every good work (2 Tim. 2:21)—like there is a readiness in the hand of a good scribe to write every letter in his copy.

Third, the presence of this fullness is discerned by the fullness of liberty and freedom from the rule and power of every sin. As Joshua put all the Canaanites under, so does fullness of grace put down every lust. It suffers no sin to reign. As Asa deposed his own mother (2 Chronicles 15), so does the fullness of grace to the mother sin of the soul—the sin that is most dear. If the eye offends, it plucks it out; if the hand offends, it cuts it off (Matthew 5). It does not work halfheartedly as Saul did, but destroys all as Samuel did (1 Samuel 15). It restores the whole man to liberty: the understanding to know, as Christ restored the blind man to sight; the will to embrace Christ, as the man whose hand was withered had it made whole to receive any gift; and the imagination and affections to think and meditate upon and to love and delight in the things which are above, as Christ healed the woman that had a spirit of infirmity, making her able to walk upright. It makes

the whole man free to move and come to Christ, as the rivers move toward the sea. This the psalmist called an enlarging of the heart to run the way of God's commandments (Ps. 119:32)—“and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty,” said the apostle (2 Cor. 3:17).

Fourth, the presence of this fullness is seen by the fullness of man's application of himself to Christ. The more fully man receives from Christ, the more fully he applies himself to Christ. The more the river receives from the sea, the more strongly, speedily, and fully it returns again and empties itself into the sea. Man's motion to Christ is in accordance to his blessed receivings from Christ. Where there is fullness of grace, Christ is apprehended as a king for His authority; as a most precious pearl for His worth; as a ransom for His purchase which He has made of us; and as a bridegroom for His love to us and union with us. And as the wife who receives the husband gives herself again to the husband, thus the soul which receives Christ gives itself again to Christ. Saint Paul said of the Macedonians, “[They] gave their own selves to the Lord” (2 Cor. 8:5) as to their counselor to direct them; as to their shepherd to feed them; as to their king to honor Him; as to their lord and master to serve Him; and as to their husband to love Him and to rejoice and delight in Him and bring forth fruit to Him. And this is termed a yielding up of ourselves to God (Rom. 12:1) and a living to God (2 Cor. 5:15). Man's subjection to God and Christ always corresponds to the power and dominion of grace within him.

This should persuade and move all men to labor for spiritual and heavenly fullness—to abound as the Corinthians did in everything, and to abound in knowledge (2 Cor. 8:7), as good scholars in learning and as the stars in light. They must labor to grow in knowledge (2 Peter 3:18): in the knowledge of ourselves, to be abased; in the knowledge of the law of God, to

be reformed by it and conformed to it; in the knowledge of the majesty, purity, and perfection of God, to be humbled in the understanding of it; in the knowledge of the authority and dominion of God, to fear to offend Him; and in the knowledge of the power of God, to hide ourselves under Him. It should persuade men to abound in the knowledge of the promises of God to build upon them; in the knowledge of the bounty of God to be thankful; in the knowledge of the love of God to be cheerful; and in the knowledge of the gracious working of God to ascend to more spiritual perfection. They must labor also to grow in the knowledge of the death of Christ, attaining to a greater measure of mortification; in the knowledge of the resurrection of Christ, being more and more quickened by Him; and in the knowledge of the fullness of Christ, drawing nearer to Him and receiving more and more from Him—more and more comforting, stilling, and contenting of our souls in and with Him.

Let us labor for fullness of faith, as the tree increases in the fullness of its roots. Labor toward being rooted and built up in Christ and established in the faith, abounding therein with thanksgiving (Col. 2:7). Let us strive to be full of love—as a fire with much wood is full of heat, and as the bride is full of love, even sick of love toward the bridegroom. Let us strive to be full of joy with the light of God’s countenance—as the beloved is full of joy with the king’s countenance, the light of the king’s countenance being to her as life and his favor as a cloud of the latter rain. Oh, let us endeavor to be full of the Holy Ghost—full of the fruits of the Spirit, as a good orchard is full of all sorts of fruit! And, in order to better provoke our souls to this, let us meditate upon these things:

The fullness of that power which opposes the welfare of our souls.
There is a fullness of sin, a fullness of Satan, and a fullness of worldly vanities which, without a fullness of grace, we can

never withstand, subdue, and cast down. When the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon Samson, he tore the lion (Judges 14). When the Spirit of the Lord comes mightily in the fullness of His grace upon us, then Satan, the roaring lion, is put to flight. It is then his works are dissolved. Then the strongholds of sin are cast down, and the soul prevails. Therefore the apostle charges us to “be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.” He commands, “Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Eph. 6:10–11).

The sweet affection which will rise from this fullness between our hearts and the Word of God. This will make the commandment an easy yoke and a plain path. This will make the Word sweet and pleasant, as the light to a clear eye, wine to a thirsty man, meat to a healthy and hungry stomach, or the voice of the bridegroom to the bride when her heart is full of love toward him.

This satisfaction and contentment which this fullness of grace will minister to the soul. It will be as a living spring (John 4:14), as floods of water within us, quenching our thirst and taking away all our longings from the world (John 7). It will be to us as the pearl to the merchant in the parable (Matt. 13:45) in place of all worldly treasure. It will content us in every occasion and be, instead of all else, satisfaction to our souls.

The joy arising from this fullness. Fullness of grace brings fullness of joy—strong joy dispelling all sorrow and sadness, as the sun dispels the clouds. Full joy makes the understanding joyful in the knowledge of God, and it makes the will joyful in the choice and embracing of God—in the sincere, free, and full knowledge of God and the glory of God. And this full joy makes the imagination joyful in the meditation and thought of God. This fullness of joy makes the memory joyful in the remembrance of God and His Word and works;

makes all the affections joyful in the trusting, fearing, and loving of God; and makes all the members of the body joyful in the performance of their many duties and services to God. This fills with all joy and peace: with the joy of children for our adoption; with the joy of brides for our spiritual union; and with the joy of friends for our knowledge of God's secret counsel. This fills with the joy of rich men for our treasure and interest in all things; with the joy of heirs for our claim and title to God's kingdom; with the joy of nobles for our dignity and exaltation; with the joy of conquerors for our victory over all opposition; with the joy of free men for our spiritual rights and freedom; and with the joy of kings for our holy and blessed dominion. It fills us with the beginning of all joys in this life and the consummation and perfection of endless joy hereafter in heaven.

Appendix 1

The Dolefulness and Danger of Neglecting Christ, and the Opportunity of Grace

And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.

—LUKE 19:41-42

The more men abound in true grace and saving goodness, the more they grieve at other men's impieties, and the more they are affected with other men's miseries. According to the measure of their grace is their detestation of sin; their indignation against sin; their sorrow for the dishonor brought to God by sin; their sense and feeling of their brethren's present affliction; and their apprehension of the future calamities likely to fall upon them. Good men mourn not only for their own corruptions, but also for other men's transgressions. They sorrow not only for their own troubles, but also for other men's miseries. When Nehemiah heard how the walls of Jerusalem were broken down, their gates burned with fire, and the people in great affliction and reproach, he sat down and wept (Neh. 1:3-4). David, a man after God's own heart, when he considered the obstinacy and rebellion of the people, his eyes gushed out with tears (Ps. 119:136). And here the Lord Jesus wept, whose soul, whose work, and whose way was as the sun in which there is no spot; a garden in which is no weed; a tree where there were neither superfluous, barren, nor withered

branches, nor fading leaves; and in whom, as it is said of Absalom's beauty, was no blemish from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, from the first instant of His conception to the last moment of His passion. In Him was a singular, sweet, full, and perfect converging and collection of all graces, as of lines in one center, beams in one sun, and rivers in one ocean. This glorious and matchless pattern of all perfection—considering and beholding the present rebellion, the ensuing desolation of Jerusalem—caused His bowels to ache within Him. Tears came from Him, commiseration on the one side and indignation on the other side wrought powerfully with Him, for: “And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.”

The words are a narration of our Savior's affection toward the people of Jerusalem, in which we have two things: first, our Savior's compassion (v. 41); and second, His chastising of them (v. 42).

Our Savior's Compassion

In His compassion, we have the occasion, preparation, or impulsive causes of it. Though He was transcendent, He came near. Christ as God is everywhere, not locally, but is free from all motion and change. He comes near His creatures as an almighty maker by His works, presenting His deity and almighty power. He comes near by His ministers, as a king by his ambassadors, proposing His dominion over us and offering conditions of peace to us. He comes near by assuming our flesh, as a mediator, a brother, declaring His mercy and lovingkindness. He comes near by His ordinances, as a king enacting laws to his subjects; as a nurse offering her breasts to her children; as a friend revealing himself to his intimate

acquaintance; and as a lover wooing—He is our Bridegroom betrothing Himself to us. But here He came near by His bodily presence; and coming near, His bowels yearned. We are usually most affected with the miseries of our brethren when we are present with them.

After His coming near, as a second occasion He continues inspection—*He beheld*. He beholds all things, as God, with the eye of His counsel with regard to purpose and preordination. He sees first toward the inside (*ad intra*), and accordingly He works toward the outside (*ad extra*). He neither begs nor borrows knowledge from the creature. He beholds all things with the eye of His general providence with regard to governing and limitation. He beholds His children with the eye of special care and tender affection and with a powerful and gracious disposition over all to work for the best to them. He beholds all things with the eye of His wisdom: all the deep things of God with regard to revelation, and all the deep things of men with regard to detection. Here He beheld with the eye of His body, as man—and He wept. The serious view of other men's miseries is very strong in moving our affections.

The last thing in this verse is the expression of His affection—*He wept*. As God, He was free from all passion. As man, He took upon Him our affections and infirmities, which divines call miserable things (*miserabiles*), such as sorrow, hunger, and thirst, but not those which are detestable (*detestabiles*), such as sin or sickness. Christ, as man, had sympathy for their miserable condition. As the Holy One of God, He was much troubled to see their rebellion, and as Mediator, He was grieved to see His labor to bring them to salvation frustrated. And therefore He wept, and did not only weep, but rebuked them for their ignorance and ingratitude, speaking out of the ardency of His affection in a heartrending manner to them, “If you would have known! You are the head

city of Judah, the habitation of God with regard to His temple, a holy city with regard to your profession, and the lamp and light of the church with regard to the residence of the priests and prophets in that place. And yet you knew not the things belonging to her peace.”

Much common knowledge is often attended with damnable and damning ignorance. They had often been punished, wasted, in bondage, and again restored. Christ came, preached, and offered salvation, but they knew not Christ as the Son of God, as the Prince of Peace, to reverence Him. But rather they despised Him as one that had no form nor comeliness (Isa. 53:2). They did not know Him as “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6) by a lively faith to lay hold upon Him; as the prophet from whom they were to receive instruction; as their husband with regard to love and affection; and as their Lord and master with regard to subjection. And because they did not so know, acknowledge, or receive Him, the things belonging to their peace were hidden from them.

Many things might here be noted; but their unprofitableness, ingratitude, rebellion, even under such great opportunities given them—being that for which our Savior Christ did chiefly lament and weep over them and for which especially He rebuked them—you may then see, that the estate of that person or people is very doleful who continue barren and unprofitable under the plentiful and powerful means of salvation. Whether it be a public nation, a private congregation, or a particular person who does not thrive under the means of life, their estate is much to be lamented. This is manifested by our Savior’s rebuke, “Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.... It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you” (Matt. 11:21–22). Where God

has most abounded in His goodness, He will be most severe in His punishments if the people remain unfruitful. Abused mercy is the forerunner of the greatest misery.

The impure lifestyle of the people; the heavy judgments ready to surprise them for their barrenness, disobedience, and the promiscuous kind of life under the plentiful means of grace ministered to them—all these caused the prophet to wish that his head were full of tears and his eyes a fountain to weep day and night for the daughter of his people (Jer. 9:1). And for this another prophet cried out, “Woe is me! for I am as when they have gathered the summer fruits, as the grape gleanings of the vintage: there is no cluster to eat.... The good man is perished out of the earth: and there is none upright among men” (Mic. 7:1–2). And thus the Lord expressed, by way of typology, by a girdle which was bought and wrapped about the prophet’s loins and afterwards was marred by the river Euphrates (Jer. 13:1–7) and so cast away as good for nothing. This was so Israel might see how God had brought them out of Egypt, exalted them above all nations, and joined them near to Himself, as a girdle about His loins. But in the multitude of their rights and privileges, they corrupted themselves, grew obstinate, and were rejected by the Lord. Surely the estate of such people is very doleful.

First, with regard to frustration, they have frustrated the labors of God’s faithful ministers. All the work of their ministry with regard to any saving good to their souls has been as the pouring of water upon the rock, the sowing of seed upon the sand, and the lighting of a candle to the blind. As David said of his labor and care about Nabal, “In vain have I kept all that this fellow hath in the wilderness” (1 Sam. 25:21), so may the Lord say: “In vain have I set My ministers as watchmen upon their walls. In vain have they, like husbandmen, planted, fertilized, and watered the souls of the people, and there is no

fruit.” Thus Isaiah, the chief of the prophets, speaking as the person of Christ Jesus, complained of old, “I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nought” (Isa. 49:4).

Secondly, with regard to inexcusableness, they have no cloak for their sin. They cannot say as Abimelech did in another case to Saul, “Thy servant knew nothing of all this, less or more” (1 Sam. 22:15). The presence of the means of grace among them was a great aggravation of their corruption. Their sin without the means was not simply, but comparatively, no sin. As the glory of the law, though very glorious, had no glory (John 15:22)—as the apostle speaks, in this respect, “by reason of the glory [of the gospel] that excelleth” (2 Cor. 3:10)—so that which was sin before, though very great sin, yet was no sin in comparison to their sin which now joined malice and willful obstinacy to their ignorance.

Thirdly, with regard to perversion, they are by accident as it were made the worse by the means of life. As some diseased eyes are made even more blind through the brightness of the light, and some stomachs are made more sick by good medicine, so accidentally, through the great strength and power of their corruption, the Word is made the savor of death to death to some. As Plutarch relates of tigers, “If anyone should sound a drum, they go mad, and it attacks itself and in the end, is mangled.” And thus many people of a savage disposition are disquieted, perplexed, and enraged to hear the sweet and heavenly music which the Word makes.

Fourthly, with regard to desertion, the Lord will leave such a people as a physician does the sick which are incurable (Jer. 51:9), and as the husbandman the field (Isa. 5:3–4) which after much cost, pain, care, and labor still remained barren. The Lord will leave such to Satan to blind and harden them; to deceivers to seduce them; to the allurements of the world to

ensnare them; to their own lusts to rule over them; and finally to hell at last to swallow them.

Fifthly, with regard to condemnation, these will have the greatest condemnation—the more favors there are, the more torments. Capernaum was exalted to heaven temporally (Matt. 11:23), exceeding all the cities of Galilee in greatness, nobleness, and worldly fullness. It was exalted to heaven spiritually with regard to Christ's bodily presence, His preaching, and miracles which He wrought there. But for her ingratitude, obstinacy, and abundance of all profaneness, it was brought down to hell with regard to temporal devastation and everlasting destruction.

This, by way of humiliation, must teach every one of us to acknowledge and lament our barrenness, obstinacy, and disobedience under the plentiful means of grace which God ministers to us, and we must then learn to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God for it. Hannah was much grieved in great bitterness of soul (1 Sam. 1:10) when she considered the barrenness of her womb. She prayed and wept sorely. Let us in like manner consider and be thoroughly affected with the barrenness of the kingdom in which we are subjects, of the congregation of which we are members, and of the families in which we are fathers, mothers, husbands, wives, sons, daughters, servants, and residents. Let us be in bitterness of soul and pray and weep sorely for this barrenness of soul, as ever Hannah did for the barrenness of her body. The Lord has done great things for us, as for Jerusalem. He has separated us to Himself, set up His tabernacle among us, and been a wall of fire round about us. He has caused the clouds of heavenly doctrine to pour down their sweet and comfortable dew upon us. He has given us pastors after His own heart to feed us with knowledge and understanding (Jer. 3:15). And yet we are unfruitful. The men of the city of Jericho said: "The situation of this city is pleasant...but the water is

naught, and the ground barren” (2 Kings 2:19). So may we truly say of ourselves that the Lord has seated us in a pleasant place, in a fruitful land, and in a paradise of all temporal and spiritual plenty. Yes, the waters, the ordinances of God, and the means of life are also good, sweet, savory, and completely fitted to minister comfort to the souls of the people, but our hearts are for the most part useless, and our lives are barren of the good fruit which should grow upon them.

We are, first, such fallow ground and such strangers to a contrite and broken spirit that the Word is to many of us like seed sown on ground uncultivated. Secondly, our hearts are so grown over with the thorns and briars of worldly cares that the seed of the Word is choked in the greatest number of us. Thirdly, our souls are so overspread with weeds and drowned in the waters of sensual pleasures, carnal lusts, and vain delights that the means of life are not to a few as seed sown in watery ground, where it prospers not. Fourthly, many of us do so please ourselves with a formal profession that we are but as women travailing with a false birth. We so flatter ourselves with nakedly having God’s ordinances, with the glorious name of Christians, that we regard not the nature, life, power, or fruit of godliness, but remain universally barren. Our understandings are like a lamp without oil; our memories are like a piece of paper whereon nothing is written; our hearts are like an altar on which no fire burns. Our faith is like Jeroboam’s withered arm; our affections are like the lame man’s feet that could not walk. Our whole man is like a garden in which every tree is barren and a house of which every room is empty. The greatest part of us, like foolish soldiers, thinks it enough to draw forth and flourish our weapons, never wounding our enemies, but supposing we have done as much as is required when we attend upon the ordinances of God, though we never make any particular and effectual application thereof.

Aristotle was accustomed to say of the Athenians that they discovered two things: crops and laws (crops were useful, but laws were not). And for this may we be no less justly reprov'd, that God, having given us the fruits of the earth and the law of life and salvation, we use only the former but neglect the latter. Is it not amazing to see how industrious the husbandman is to improve his ground—taking a barren land to make a fruitful land? How the merchant uses his knowledge to work to improve his trade? How married persons long to see their children stand like olive branches around their table? How every person, yes, every creature, in his way and after his kind, strives to be fruitful? And will the Christian, the most excellent piece of the workmanship of God, be contented to remain barren and unprofitable? Do you not hear how the husbandman complains, like the men of Jericho, if the field is barren? How the merchant droops and hangs down his head if his ship miscarries, his trade fails, and poverty comes upon him? Do you not hear how the husband, like Isaac, prays for the fruitfulness of his wife when there is no conception? And how the barren wife cries with an impatient spirit, “Give me children, or else I die” (Gen. 30:1)? And will we not complain, bow down, and humble ourselves for our barrenness in grace? Will we not study, strive, labor, pray, and cry to the Lord our God to open our hearts that are shut up, to enlarge our souls, and to fill us with all goodness? And to induce us to this, consider the accompanying fruits of this spiritual barrenness, which are of very great force.

First, barrenness reproaches (1 Sam. 1:6). It was a reproach to a mother in Israel to be barren. Barrenness disgraced fields, trees, cattle, and reasonable and unreasonable creatures. And barrenness of grace in like manner disgraces us in the eyes of God and in the eyes of God’s children. It provides opportunity for insults by the adversaries of religion, as the

bodily barrenness of Hannah gave Peninnah opportunity to insult her. This causes our profession to be maligned and the name of God to be blasphemed (Rom. 2:24).

Second, barrenness is unprofitable. A barren tree brings no profit; it but obstructs the ground (Luke 13:7). So barren Christians are unserviceable to God. They pester and impede the church in which they live.

Third, barrenness grieves. The barren wife grieves her husband; the barren tree grieves the keeper of the orchard. A barren people grieve the faithful and painstaking minister whom the Lord has set as a shepherd over them. This pained Paul, as a woman in travail (Gal. 4:19). It brought Jeremiah, through the anguish and trouble of his spirit, to curse the day of his birth (Jer. 20:14), and it afflicted so forcibly Elijah that he grew weary of his life and wished for death rather than life (1 Kings 19:4).

Fourth, barrenness spoils the soul of much sweet and heavenly peace, boldness, comfort, and confidence. Does the Master smile or frown upon the unprofitable servant? Can such a servant come before his Master with confidence, with assurance of acceptance? Does he not hang his head? Is he not ashamed? Is not his confidence removed far from him? When Adam was naked, he ran from the presence of the Lord (Genesis 3). When the souls of men within are naked of grace and the lives of men without are naked of good works, they have no courage, no comfort, and no boldness to present themselves before the Lord.

Fifth, barrenness provokes. The barren field angers the husbandman; the barren tree mentioned in the gospel displeased our Savior when He sought fruit and found none on it (Matt. 21:18–19). Christ hungered and desired much to taste of the sweet grapes of faith, repentance, love, and thankfulness which should have been brought forth by the

Jews, a vine of His Father's own planting—and once a vine of many goodly branches, as the patriarchs, Moses, and the prophets. They were a vine laden with many sweet grapes, but now there was nothing but leaves on it. They made a glorious profession, a formal performance of religious duties, and offered much flaunting and boasting that they were the children of Abraham. But they were barren; they did not the works of Abraham. They had neither the faith nor followed in the steps of Abraham, and therefore our Savior cursed the fig tree: (1) as a witness (*in testimonium*), to show His deity and His absolute authority and dominion over all creatures; (2) as a declaration (*in declarationem*), to show His anger against the Jewish people; and (3) as a type (*in typum*), thereby to show what the end of that people should be.

Sixth, barrenness ruins. The barren tree is cut down, and the barren ground is burned (Heb. 6:8). A barren people the Lord will forsake, remove, and cast out of His sight. This is fully expressed by our Savior in the parable of the householder (Matt. 21:33–34), in which the householder is God; the vineyard is, generally, the church, and, particularly, the people of the Jews; and the hedges are the Mosaic laws, compared to a hedge for distinction and for preservation. The people of the Jews by them were distinguished from other people and preserved from wasting, as a field by a hedge. The winepress was their ministry of the word, compared to a winepress with regard to preparation, fitting them to offer to God the pleasant wine of obedience and holy and fervent prayers. The watchtower was the kingdom, priesthood, and temple, compared to a tower because of the ornament, honor, and glory which it ministered. The husbandmen to whom he let it out were the priests and Levites, compared to husbandmen for their labor in and watchfulness over the Lord's vineyard. And the Lord is compared to one going into

a far country, not for the disappearance of His presence, but by the cessation of miracles—the immediate manifestation of Himself among them—leaving His vineyard to their charge. The servants who were sent were the prophets whom they beat, imprisoned, killed, and stoned. At last He sent His own Son, whom they crucified, and for their ingratitude and barrenness the vineyard has been long let out to others. This our Savior threatened, “How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate” (Matt. 23:37–38). And for this likewise He threatened the removing of the candlestick from the church of Ephesus (Rev. 2:5), and for this we have great cause to humble ourselves.

But, some may ask, What real need is there to humble ourselves? We have God’s ordinances. We have plenty of learned, zealous, and godly preachers. We have multitudes of professors. Our church is garnished with bright and shining stars; our garden is decked with many sweet and beautiful flowers; our orchard is set with a variety of pleasant and fruitful trees; our land is enriched with great abundance of all things. These should be much cause for rejoicing, but what cause for humiliation?

Beloved, Israel had the ark and rejoiced much in the presence of it, yet she fell before the enemy (1 Sam. 4:10). They had the temple of the Lord; they gloried not a little in it (Jer. 7:4). And yet they were destroyed.

We have many learned, diligent, and able ministers. Blessed be the great Shepherd of our souls who sends them, and may the Lord daily increase the number of them. We may say indeed with the psalmist that the Lord “hath not dealt so with any nation” (Ps. 147:20). Yet this was a privilege to which Jerusalem was not a stranger. All the prophets were set as watchmen upon her walls (Isa. 62:6). John the Baptist also, who excelled all the other prophets, and the Son of God Himself and all the

apostles were sent to them. Yet, after all this, even then was Jerusalem destroyed. The more laborers in the vineyard, the closer it is to burning if it continues unfruitful.

We have plenty of all things, and so also Jerusalem had a land flowing with milk and honey. Babylon sat as a queen and no widow (Isa. 47:7). And many who open their mouths against heaven, as the psalmist said, have more than their heart could wish (Ps. 73:9) and yet have been set in slippery places. The more we have received, the more we ought to be humbled when we do not make the best use of it. It is not the presence but the good use we make of our temporal fullness which proves us to be God's servants.

We have many professors, men diligent in attending God's ordinances and in the performance of holy duties. So also were there in the days of our Savior, but they undertook their profession upon false grounds for outward things (John 2:22; 6:26), and therefore our Savior would not commit Himself to them. There were many beasts in the ark, but not all were clean. Four sorts of ground received seed, but only one was good. Profession without practice is odious in God's presence. Such of all people are in God's eye most hateful, to God's name most dishonorable, and to God's religion most scandalous as they "profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate" (Titus 1:16). As we look on what we have and are comforted, so let us look on what we want and be humbled. Thus consider the following things.

First, how many ignorant, idle, covetous, corrupt, unprofitable, carnal, and careless ministers we have, who either do not do God's work at all, or at least are very careless in the performance of it, leaving their congregations as candlesticks without a candle, children without a nurse, families without a steward, and ships without a pilot. Some foxes there are

among the shepherds, and some drones among the bees. Thus of old, some were covetous, looking for their gain from every quarter (Isa. 56:11); some daubed with untempered mortar; some cried peace, when there was no peace (Ezek. 13:10); and some strengthened the hands of the wicked (Jer. 23:14). Thus of old, and thus now; and thus we have cause of humiliation.

Secondly, how are the painstaking and faithful ministers of the Word received? Are they not for the most part hated, mocked, and made as men of contention to the whole earth (1 Kings 22:8; 2 Chron. 32:16)? Do not the men of the world handle them as Hanun's servants did David's men when they shaved off half of their beards and cut off their garments to the buttocks (2 Sam. 10:4)? They load them with reproaches, deprive them of their maintenance, fill them with manifold discomforts (Jer. 15:10), and esteem powerful and plain preaching, with the men of Athens, as no better than babbling (Acts 17:18).

Thirdly, how do we for the most part profit by the labors of God's ministers? Where is our repentance, reformation, and new life? Are not a great number of us like Micah the idolater who pronounced himself blessed because he had a Levite as his priest (Judg. 17:13), though he still kept his idol? And thus a great number bless themselves in having the bare ministry of the Word, though they still retain their idol, their covetousness, drunkenness, pride, and malice—like the women of whom the apostle speaks, who were always learning and yet never came to the knowledge of the truth (2 Tim. 3:7). A story is told of Augustus, how in his solemn feasts he gave gifts, giving to some gold and to others trifles. So God in His banqueting house, in the use of His ordinances with which He feasts and feeds the souls of His servants, gives to some gold—indeed, the saving graces of His Spirit which are more precious than gold. To

others He gives trifles—common knowledge, historical faith, and other matters—and with this they rest content.

Fourthly, how great is the number of profane, carnal, and ignorant people? Are they not—with regard to them who show forth the power of godliness in their daily walk—as the Midianite army to Gideon's three hundred soldiers and as the tares overgrowing the wheat? The people who truly fear God are to the rest but as Lot among the Sodomites. They are one of a city and two of a tribe, the prophet said (Jer. 3:14). Straight is the gate, and narrow is the way which leads to life, and few, Christ said (comparatively few), there be that find it (Matt. 7:14). Among the great number of impenitent transgressors, there is not one swearer, drunkard, adulterer, or idolater but his sin becomes the sin of the country, congregation, place, and family where he lives, he being a member thereof, as the sin of Achan became the sin of the whole army (Josh. 7:12). And thus it continues unless we humble ourselves for it, see pardon, stop the course, and labor for the removal thereof, as the sailors removed Jonah so that the stormy tempest might be appeased (Jonah 1).

Fifthly, what discomfort do those bring upon themselves who, conscious of their ways, still do not refuse to run with others into the same excessive rioting? Do not the hearts of men rise against them, their tongues reproach them, and their hands oppress them? Does not he that departs from iniquity make himself a prey (Isa. 59:15), as the sheep to the lion and the dove to the raven? Has not our Savior foretold that for this their names will be cast out as abominable (Luke 6:22)?

Sixthly, what weariness men have of holy duties and religious exercises, as in the days of the prophet when they complained of the length of the Sabbaths (Amos 8:5)? How unpleasant to many persons is the doctrine of the gospel! It is become like the manna to Israel (Num. 11:6–7), a light

bread—they find no sweetness in it. God’s ordinances are too many; as Saul’s armor was for David, they cannot walk in them.

Seventhly, what reformation have the punishments inflicted upon us brought? Have we come forth from these as gold out of the fire? Naaman out of Jordan? No, may not the Lord say of many of us as He did of Israel, they “revolt more and more” (Isa. 1:5)? What effect have the punishments inflicted on other nations made on us? Have we feared by the sight of their punishments? Have we learned to beware of their harms? Are we not still secure? Do we not tread the same path? Do we not run our usual race? Has not the Lord lost His labor with regard to any reformation on behalf of the greatest number of people? Oh, let us think on these things, lay them to our hearts, be affected with them, turn our laughter into mourning, and humble ourselves in the sight of the Lord (James 4:9–10). Humble yourselves and mourn inwardly in your souls by grieving, as the church did. Lament (Lamentations 1); humble yourselves outwardly by sincere confession of the sins of your own souls and the sins of the church, country, congregation, town, and family where you live (Daniel 9). Humble yourselves publicly in the congregation, as Ezra did (Ezra 10:1). Humble yourselves privately; let your souls mourn in secret. Weep as Christ wept over Jerusalem. Weep, oh ministers, over your congregations; weep, oh rulers, over your people; weep, oh masters of families, over your wives, sons, daughters, and servants, that the Lord may have mercy upon you, pardon your barrenness, and make you more fruitful in all goodness in the days to come.

This must cause us to strive under the means and in the use of the means to be fruitful in all holiness and rich in all grace, as the sea is full of waters and the stars in the firmament are full of light. This the Lord requires—He who by His power created us and by His hand supports us; the Lord who has all jurisdiction over us and all interest in us, and before

whose dreadful and glorious tribunal every soul must shortly make his appearance. “Grow,” the Lord said by the apostle, “in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18). Grow in knowledge, as students in learning and craftsmen in skillfulness in the mysteries of their trade. Grow in all grace, as willows by the waters (Isa. 44:4) and as children by the milk sucked from their nurses (1 Peter 2:2). This is the one special end of our Savior’s incarnation, passion, and resurrection: to “purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works” (Titus 2:14). This is a prime and singular fruit of the ministry. The clouds are appointed for the watering and making of the earth fruitful, and the builders for the perfecting of the house. Likewise, the ministers are for the making of us rich in grace and perfect to every good work (Eph. 4:11, 13). This is the fervent prayer and ardent desire of God’s faithful ministers. As the husbandman desires that the field may be fruitful, and the nurse that the child may grow, so do the spiritual husbandmen of God’s vineyard—the nurses of God’s children—pray that they may be fruitful in every good work (Col. 1:10). This is the proper and gracious operation of the Word in the hearts of the Lord’s people (Matthew 13). And therefore, I beseech you, give all diligence to make your calling and election sure and to abound in all goodness. Make the inward and the outward man like the tree bearing twelve sorts of fruit every month (Rev. 22:2). Be furnished with all sorts of spiritual fruits, and that in all seasons.

Be fruitful in your understandings, enriched in all knowledge (1 Cor. 1:5). Know the efficacy of the Word of God, discovering your sin as a two-edged sword dividing between the bone and marrow (Heb. 4:12). Know the power of it awakening your conscience (Acts 2:37), as a trumpet awakens the sleepy. Know the value of it, healing the wounds of your soul, as a patient knows the value of the medicine; as Naaman knew by

experience the value of the Jordan washing him; and as he who is cold knows the heat of the fire warming him. Know the Lord as a servant knows his master with regard to reverence and subjection, as a friend with regard to communion, and as a father with regard to trust and childlike affection.

Be fruitful in your memories by treasuring up the testimonies of the Lord, as gold, silver, and precious jewels in a rich storehouse, and by carrying home the waters which are drawn out of the wells of salvation, as in firm and sure vessels. Be fruitful in your memories by engraving them upon your hearts as letters written with an iron pen or a diamond stylus that they may never be blotted out. Ruminare and meditate upon these day and night, writing them upon the tables of your hearts, keeping them as the apple of your eye, and binding them as jewels and precious stones upon your fingers (Prov. 7:2–3) with regard to your affection for them, your high estimation, careful preservation, and continual remembrance of them, and your singular delight in them. Let them be to you as sisters and mothers for your daily commemoration of them and your familiar communion and acquaintance with them.

Be fruitful in your affections. Let your love grow as the waters which flowed out under the temple (Ezek. 47:1), and as the cloud which was at first no bigger than a man's hand and at last grew so great that it covered the whole heavens (1 Kings 18:44–45). Let your affections grow to a great love like a flaming and a burning fire—a fire so strong that no floods will be able to quench it. Let your affections increase to a love like Jonathan's love to David, a love surpassing the love of women to their children. "O love the LORD, all ye his saints" (Ps. 31:23), the psalmist said. Love Him with a child's love, a friend's love, and a wife's love. Love Him with all manner of love; love Him purely with regard to the spring from which your love arises. Love Him sincerely for the quality of His love;

love Him fervently for the measure; love Him continually and constantly for the time; and love Him universally for the extent. Love Him in His attributes as a God of power supporting, a God of wisdom guiding, and a God of mercy forgiving. Love Him as an almighty maker of His creatures. Love Him in His Word as a king prescribing laws of obedience and as a friend revealing His counsels and declaring the riches of His mercies. Love Him as the fountain of all grace and sanctification in His children.

Be fruitful in all your sufferings. Like spices—the more bruised they are, the more fragrant they become—so you be. Resemble the fire in Nymphaeus, which, if we give credit to Pliny, “came to burn more brilliantly.” Let all your sufferings be as schoolmasters teaching, fires purging, trumpets awakening, spurs quickening, and winds driving nearer to God. May you come forth from the furnace of affliction as gold out of the fire (Zech. 13:9) and be able to say out of experience—to Satan tempting and to the world hating, traducing, and persecuting—as Joseph said to his brethren, “Ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good... as it is this day” (Gen. 50:20).

Be fruitful in your callings: ministers in teaching, rulers in governing, and every man in his particular calling. As every member in the body—the head, eyes, hands, and feet—are all profitable in their places, so should each of us be fruitful in the station in which the Lord has set us. Every wheel in the clock has its motion and does its part. Every star in the firmament sends forth its influence and gives its light. So must every person, in whatever political or ecclesiastical sphere where God has placed him, abide and be fruitful (1 Cor. 7:24).

Be fruitful in all your actions: in your hearing, as fields receiving good seed; and in your prayers, drawing some water out of God’s well. Do not let your prayer return empty, but like

Noah's dove with an olive branch, may it bring some comfort. When you fellowship, "consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works" (Heb. 10:24). When you speak, let your tongue be like choice silver (Prov. 10:20–21). May it be like a fruitful pasture for the purity, sincerity, profitableness, and enrichment of others—that is, feeding, filling the hungry, rejoicing the sorrowful, and strengthening the weak by your gracious communication as by a spiritual banquet. In your families, let every man and wife like Zacharias and Elizabeth walk in all the ordinances of God and be blameless (Luke 1:6). Let every master, like Abraham, command his people to keep the way of the Lord (Gen. 18:19). Let every servant, like Joseph in Potiphar's house, be so religious toward God, so observant of his master, and so faithful in his calling that all his undertakings may be prosperous. Let every son and daughter be so attentive to the parents' instruction and so full of grace and godliness that they may gladden the hearts of their parents and be an ornament to their families, as the flowers to the garden. Let every citizen be so loyal, faithful, and dutiful to his ruler that he proves both an honor and strength to the kingdom. Let every household, like Philemon's house, be a church of God (Philemon 2), with regard to holy instructions there delivered and religious duties there observed, as well as with regard to the lively faith and holy life of such as live in it. Thus let us endeavor to be fruitful. Thus let us grow in grace.

Listen carefully, beloved, how Paul persuades you: "We beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more" (1 Thess. 4:1). Consider, dear Christians, how Peter impresses you to, "giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness" (2 Peter 1:5–6).

And toward the end that you may be fruitful under the means, you must be (1) careful in preparing. A prepared field is made fruitful by the seed, and a prepared soul receives much benefit from the ordinances of the Lord. You must put iniquity far away from you (Job 11:13–14). Desert it; detest it; decline every occasion leading to the flesh. Joseph's brethren washed their feet, made ready their present when they were to come before him, and bowed themselves to the earth (Gen. 43:24–26). It was then that Joseph made them eat and drink, and they were merry with him. Thus when we come before our greater Joseph, our God and our Christ, we must wash and be clean (Isa. 1:16). We must make our ear ready to hear and our heart to pray, and we must present our petition before the Lord, and then the Lord Jesus will sup with us (Rev. 3:20). Then He will feast and feed us and make us merry and joyful with Him in His ordinances (Isa. 56:7).

(2) We must be diligent in frequenting the house of God, the place where the means are. We must wisely order all our business that we be not hindered and use our time well that we may have time to spare for good duties. Cleanthes carried water by night that he might not be hindered from studying the liberal sciences by day. Thus should we rather work by night than be absent from the house of Christ by day. It is a rotten shame that shops, bars, marketplaces, and even the house of Baal should be full (2 Kings 10:20–21), and the house of God empty. If you desire to be fruitful, you must attend on the ministers of the Lord, as Lydia did on Paul (Acts 16:14), and the lame man at Bethesda. You must be as the suitors and clients wait day by day and hour by hour at the gates of princes and counselors to have their suits heard, causes favored, and petitions granted. Thus must we wait daily upon the posts of the Lord's house, and then we will be blessed (Prov. 8:34).

(3) We must have holy, fervent, and frequent prayer. Pray for a powerful and faithful ministry, for a zealous and godly government in every corporation and congregation in the country, and for a universal reformation in every particular family. Hannah was in bitterness of spirit and prayed (1 Sam. 1:10), and her barren womb was opened and made fruitful. Thus fervent prayer is an instrument of great power to move God to make your own soul and the soul of others abundantly fruitful in all saving graces. Elijah prayed; the clouds poured down their rain, and the barren ground became fertile. Instant and earnest supplication causes the doctrine of life to drip upon the soul, like the dew upon the plant and the latter rain upon the mown grass. Therefore, pray always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, that utterance may be given to the ministers, that they may open their mouths boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel (Eph. 6:19–20). The people gave a shout, and then the walls of Jericho fell at the sounding of the ram’s horn. The priests sounded, and the people shouted. And then the work was effected, and victory was obtained (Josh. 6:20). As Joshua fought, so Moses prayed, and then the Amalekites were subdued (Ex. 17:11). The blessed success and comfortable operation of all the rest of God’s ordinances are very much dependent on our holy and fervent supplications.

(4) We must give careful attention and care to hiding the Word in our hearts. As Benhadad’s servants watched what Ahab would speak (1 Kings 20:33), so must we watch with all carefulness what the Lord speaks to us in His Word and by His ministers. We must carefully mark and thoroughly view it. We must, with Cornelius, hear with attention, diligence, vigilance, and reverence what the Lord says to us (Acts 10:33). What Serbidius Scevola has said of the civil law—“civil law is written for the vigilant, not the dormant”—may much more truly be spoken

of the spiritual law and holy Word of God. And as we must be vigilant, wary, and watchful in hearing, so we must be careful to hide the Word in our hearts (Ps. 119:11)—as the wise merchant hid his pearl (Matt. 13:45)—that it may warm us as fire hidden in a pile of wood; that it may strengthen us as meat digested in the stomach and fertilize as seed hidden in the ground; and that it may restrain us, as a bridle, from sin, quicken us as a spur to every good duty, and readily dispose, fit, and frame us for every religious and holy performance (2 Tim. 3:17).

(5) In order that we may be fruitful, we must have spiritual elevation of the heart to a higher and more heavenly frame and spirit. The soul must be released of the burden of worldly cares and earthly distractions. The seed does not prosper where the thorns remain rooted fast in the ground (Matt. 13:22). It is an axiom among the mathematicians, “The higher a sail is affixed above the evil of the wind, the faster the ship advances.” And they render the reason, “Because energy involves movement, if anything is removed from the center, the more rapidly and powerfully it advances.” So in this case, the more the mind, thoughts, and affections of a Christian are raised up, the more strong, speedy, and cheerful he is in his spiritual motion and the more fruitful in every religious and holy undertaking. Therefore, according to the words of the apostle, “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth” (Col. 3:1–2).

Our Savior’s Chastising

Thus we have explained what we are to gather from the first branch of this text, our Savior’s compassion. Next follows His chastising of them, from which we may see, first, the reason that our Savior chastised them: their ignorance—they knew not. They had historical knowledge, but not mystical

knowledge; they had speculative cognition, but not affectionate knowledge; they had knowledge of apprehension, but not experiential knowledge. Thus they knew not Christ. With regard to affection, He was a stranger whom they loved not. With regard to trust, He was as a withered reed on whom they leaned not. With regard to fear, He was as a carpenter's son, a poor man whom they revered not. With regard to joy and estimation, He was to their eye as a face in which is no beauty or comeliness. Thus were they ignorant.

Second, here is the matter of which they were ignorant: the things belonging to their peace, happiness, and everlasting welfare. *Peace* comes from a word signifying perfection, and it comprises in a large sense the whole welfare of soul and body. Peace, with regard to the subject where it resides, is either carnal or spiritual. With regard to the object or parties with whom we embrace it, it is either civil—between man and man; or Christian—between God's children; or divine and heavenly—between God and the soul of man. With regard to the adjunct, it is either public of the church or commonwealth, private between ourselves and our neighbors, or secret between each particular person and his own conscience. The peace here spoken of is a spiritual and heavenly peace between God and souls. It is a peace with regard to the fountain flowing originally from God the Father. The cause meriting it is Christ's sufferings; the instrument revealing and working it, the gospel; the medium by and through which it is revealed, the Son of God the Mediator; the efficient cause, the Holy Spirit; and the subject receiving it, the heart sanctified. They knew that true peace consisted in having perfect communion with God, but they did not know that the preaching of the gospel was the instrument and that Christ was the procuring cause of it. And for this they were chastised.

Third, here is the amplification of their ignorance, which is taken from the season: “in those days” (Matt. 3:1). *Day* generally signifies time, especially a natural or artificial day (Josh. 11:9), but usually in Scripture *day* is taken three ways. First, there is the day of life (*dies vitae*): as the day is short, full of changes, and accompanied by the night, so is the life of man of small continuance, subject to many changes, and ever waited on by death (Ps. 90:9). Secondly, there is the day of teaching (*dies doctrinae*): the day is joyous, discovering things hidden (1 Cor. 3:13). Such is the nature and such is the effect of the Word of God. Thirdly, there is the day of grace (*dies gratiae*). This is the day that is here mentioned. It is a time in which God offered mercy to them, properly resembling the day with regard to revelation—that is, without the gospel, it is all night; all is darkness (Rom. 13:12). With regard to adornment, the gospel, the means of grace, is the crown, honor, and beauty of a place or people, as the day is the glory of the world. With regard to consolation, the day is pleasant. It is a pleasant thing to the eye to see the light (Eccl. 11:7). So are the means and time of grace pleasant and comforting to the souls of the people. With regard to distinction, the day distinguishes one thing from another. And so under the means of grace, the precious are separated from the vile (Jer. 15:19) and the chosen from the reprobate. With regard to speedy completion, a day is soon gone. So the means of grace are soon removed, and a night of uncomfortable darkness brought upon us, if we do not make use of the means when we have it.

This latter idea is the fourth and last thing which we observe: the taking away of the means of grace. The things belonging to their peace were hidden from their eyes. This was the punishment of their former ignorance, contempt, rebellion, barrenness, and ingratitude: they were left in their blindness. From the exclamation and amplification of our

Savior chastising them for their ignorance and thus depriving them of the means of life for their barrenness, blindness, and disobedience under it, we may then learn that it is very dangerous and fearful for any people or person to neglect the means and times of grace which God offers them.

There was a law in the days of Moses that when they came to fight against a city peace must be proclaimed. If they would not accept the peace offered and become subjects, then they could besiege it, and when the Lord had delivered it into their hands, they should smite every male with the edge of the sword (Deut. 20:10–13). In like manner, the Lord, by the ministry of the Word, lays siege to our souls and offers conditions of peace. But if we refuse peace when He offers it, and if we will not be reconciled and will not become subject to Him but rather deny to Him the tribute of love above all creatures, the tribute of obedience before all persons, the tribute of dependence in all estates and conditions, the tribute of contrition and confession for all offenses, the tribute of humiliation at the apprehension of our present vileness, and the tribute of thankfulness for all received mercies—if we refuse this, the Lord will besiege us with an army of fearful plagues and punishments. He will at length miserably destroy us. He will have no pity and no compassion upon us.

Read what the Lord for this purpose has spoken by Solomon in Proverbs 1:23. There God's invitation is strengthened by the consideration of past and present corrections and the promise of future kindness (vv. 24–25). There is their refusal, obstinacy, and rebellion against Him—their abusing of God's counsels and weariness under His corrections (vv. 26–28). There is laid open the misery of their condition, the wrath of God against them, and the bitter fruits of their rejection of that mercy which God offered to them. For this, God threatened to leave the people in their sin, "because I have purged thee,

and thou wast not purged,” the Lord said to Jerusalem. “Thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more, till I have caused my fury to rest upon thee. I the LORD have spoken it: it shall come to pass, and I will do it; I will not go back, neither will I spare, neither will I repent” (Ezek. 24:13–14). In the same way, note that declaration of our Savior against the false prophetess and soul-seducing Jezebel: “I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not” (Rev. 2:21). There we see our Savior’s patience, mercy, and longsuffering. “Behold,” Christ said, “I will cast her into a bed”—a bed of affliction—“and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds” (v. 22). Some, the apostle said, when they had heard, provoked the Lord; and upon this the Lord swore they should not enter into His rest (Heb. 3:16, 18).

The estate of such people is very dangerous and fearful because it is uncertain, first, whether God will continue the means of grace. If a man knocks for a long time at a door and none open, he departs. Our Savior knocked (Song of Solomon 5) by His Word instructing and inviting; by His rod chastising; by His Spirit moving; and by His mercies and long-suffering alluring. He waited long in the dew and in the rain (Song 5:2–3), enduring many sorrows, troubles, and afflictions in Himself and in His ministers. But because His spouse refused the offers of His love, He withdrew Himself. He shut His ear; He would not hear her in her distress.

Second, it is uncertain whether our life will continue. Our life is but a vapor (James 4:14), and we do not know what will be on the morrow. As Seneca said, “For no one has the gods as friends such that he can promise himself another day.” And as Gregory said, “Who can promise pardon to the repentant if he cannot promise the sinner another day?”

Third, if both means and life continue and we for the present refuse to make use of it, it is very uncertain whether God will give His blessing to make the means effectual. God may leave us under His ordinances as rocks in the midst of rivers and as blind men under the sun at noonday (Isa. 59:10). He may allow His Word to prove the savor of death unto death (2 Cor. 2:16) and make what should have been for our welfare to be an occasion hastening our ruin.

It is not in our power to repent and turn to God when we want. David in his lifetime complained of the sons of Zeruiah that they were too strong for him (2 Sam. 3:39). And we may truly complain of Satan and his sons—his cursed birth within us (I mean our corruptions)—that they are too strong for us. We may imagine, as Samson in another case, that we have power to awake, rise up, and go forth from the servitude of sin and Satan when we please. But it will be at last with us as with Samson—our strength will fail us, and the Philistines will be upon us and prevail against us. We could sooner turn the stony rock into soft ground (Ezek. 36:26–27), raise the dead (Eph. 2:1) out of the grave, and make the brambles bear figs (Matt. 7:16) as by our own power raise ourselves to a new life, turn our stony heart into a soft and tender heart, and bring forth the sweet figs and pleasant grapes of godly sorrow, true repentance, a lively faith, fervent love, and sincere obedience. This is a work suited to none but God's finger. He who raised the dead (John 11:44), who turned the barren wilderness into a fruitful field (Isa. 35:5–6), who fetched water out of the stony rock (Ex. 17:6)—He alone can change the heart and make us fruitful in the saving grace of His Spirit. Paul plants and Apollos waters, but the Lord gives the increase (1 Cor. 3:6). It is God who opened the heart of Lydia (Acts 16:14) when Paul preached. The Lord is a free agent; He communicates His grace when and where He pleases (John 3:8).

Sin will grow strong and Satan will fortify his holds if the means of grace are neglected and the reformation of our ways procrastinated. A disease that is neglected grows incurable; an enemy left alone becomes invincible; and sin gathers much strength by continuing in it. It blinds the understanding, dulls the affections, hardens the heart, sears the conscience, and makes a person incapable of holy counsel and unfit for every godly undertaking. As Gregory said, “It is difficult to break off a habit; it is difficult to cut off the familiar.” “Can the Ethiopian,” the prophet said, “change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil” (Jer. 13:23).

This serves as a sharp reproof of those that procrastinate in their repentance, shut their ears to present invitations, and close their eyes against the present light which shines upon them. Such do not give regard to the day of their visitation and seek not the Lord while He may be found (Isa. 55:6). But, like the sluggard they cry, “A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands” (Prov. 6:10) upon the bed of sin—until sin, Satan, and hell come like armed men upon them, and they are found unable to resist them. Thus the old world neglected their day while Noah was preaching and preparing the ark till the flood came upon them. The foolish virgins slumbered (Matt. 25:5) till the bridegroom came, entered in, and shut them out, having no oil in their lamps. Some, out of the strength of their love to sin and after many warnings, relax themselves in her lap, as Samson did in Delilah’s lap till she delivered him into the hands of the Philistines. Some hinder themselves out of hope to repent hereafter or in hope of better leisure (Acts 24:25). Some do so out of the hardness of their hearts (Rom. 2:5); some out of their unbelief (Ps. 95:10); some out of their atheistic and vile prides of a religious and godly life (Job 21:14–15); some out of self-conceit, out of thoughts

of self-sufficiency and present fullness (Rev. 3:17); and some through too much worldly business (Luke 14:18). Some, by the persuasions of carnal friends, are hindered from attending the means of grace from the reformation of their ways, as the Levite was so long detained by his father-in-law (Judg. 19:4–9) that he lost his concubine by the way—she came short of home. Thus many of us are so entertained by the world, so detained from day to day, that we lose our souls by the way. We come short of heaven and eternal happiness at last. It is marvelous to consider how in all matters of this life we take the time to make use of opportunities. If the body is diseased, we go immediately to the doctor. With the Shunammite woman, we saddle the horse and ride in all haste (2 Kings 4). If fire is kindled in the house, we instantly run for water to quench it. If a city is besieged, like the men of Gibeon (Josh. 10:6), we quickly send for strength to remove it. If we are robbed, we instantly yell and shout that the thief may be apprehended. Husbandmen for the earth, sailors for the sea, merchants for the market—every smith strikes while the iron is hot. And is it not a shame! We whose souls are so dangerously diseased, an infernal fire burning within us, an army of unclean spirits laying siege against us, and many thieves robbing us of the best among all jewels—and yet we do not move, stir, or strive for deliverance? We have the best seed to sow and the richest voyage to make the chiefest merchandise to buy, and yet we regard not our day, esteem not the time of our visitation, and entertain not the offer which God makes of His free and abundant mercy.

Oh, beloved, consider first how just it will be for God not to hear us in our misery if we refuse to hear Him inviting us in the multitude of His mercy! Will the master hear the servant requesting if the servant does not regard the master requiring? Remember the words of a dying man—of a dying king, a holy, wise king, a man after God’s own heart—the words of King

David to his son Solomon: “Thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever” (1 Chron. 28:9).

Secondly, does not our refusal of mercy when it is offered cut off all hope of mercy hereafter? Does not the rejecting of an offered pardon turn the king’s favor into anger against the criminal? Did not this give Christ occasion to withdraw His mercy from Jerusalem? “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate” (Matt. 23:37–38).

Thirdly, will not our continuing in sin make our repentance, if ever we do repent, so much more grievous and full of terror, vexation, and anguish? Where trees have grown long and the roots are deep, the earth is very much ruptured and torn before the tree is plucked up. Does not the traveler who has walked long and far out of his way, go back with much sorrow, sadness, and grief of heart?

Fourthly, will God be pleased that we spend all the flower and strength of our time in Satan’s service, and then when we are old and can serve sin no longer, we crowd and thrust ourselves into His service?

Fifthly, do not we thus lose great spiritual riches, blessed communion and acquaintance with God, and comforting assurance of joy and glory in the heavens—that comfort, peace, pleasure, rejoicing, and contentment which infinitely surpasses all the contentment in the world? Oh, therefore let us not delay any longer our conversion, put off our repentance, and

neglect the day of our visitation. Let us not be like Jerusalem, strangers to the things belonging to our peace, but let us think on the Lord's pathetic and manifold protests, asking, "How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?" (Prov. 1:22). Let us think upon His questioning also with His people: "Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions.... Make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" (Ezek. 18:30-31). Call to mind also and think seriously on the Lord's free and gracious invitations, bidding us by the prophet, "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings" (Jer. 3:22); and again, "Turn ye unto me...and I will turn unto you" (Zech. 1:3); and, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28).

Think on this and "remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth" (Eccl. 12:1). Remember Him as a maker to depend upon Him, as a father to love Him, as a master to fear Him, as a king to obey Him, as a friend to rejoice in Him, as a shield to defend you, and as a storehouse to minister all fullness to you. And as the angel charged Lot, "Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed" (Gen. 19:17). So let me charge, exhort, entreat, and persuade every person who values his own everlasting peace, glory, and comfort: hasten out of the Sodom of sin, to escape from his uncleanness! Do not look back with love or desire upon any way which God has forbidden, lest His consuming wrath seize upon him. But shine more and more like the sun unto the perfect day. Go forward like a good traveler. Be filled with all goodness, as the sea with waters, and you will have a resting place in Zion. Drink of the rivers which will fill your souls with the choicest pleasures, and be more glorious than the sun forever in the heavens.

Appendix 2

The LORD JESUS *The Soul's Last Refuge*

Come, Lord Jesus.

—REVELATION 22:20

The coming of the sun brings joy to him who has long been in darkness. The coming of the dove with an olive branch was comforting to Noah after he had been tossed many days by the deluge. The reappearing of the star to the wise men made them exceedingly joyful. And such is the coming of the Lord Jesus to the souls of His servants when they have sat in darkness and have had no light, and when they have been tossed by the deluge of many troubles and have had no footing for their souls and no haven where they may rest themselves when they have wandered like travelers in this earthly wilderness without a guide. Then their souls have longed after Christ Jesus, the Sun of Righteousness who appeared with healing in His wings (Mal. 4:2); that Star of Jacob (Num. 24:17) who gives light to them that are in darkness; and that Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6) who brings the olive branch of peace to souls that are perplexed. A sense of distresses marvelously sweetens the Lord Jesus to the soul and fills it with longings after the attainment of His favors. When the Gibeonites were besieged with the Amorite princes, they sent to Joshua, saying, "Slack not thy hand from thy servants; come up to us quickly, and save us, and help us" (Josh. 10:6). When our souls are besieged with an army of troubles, tossed upon the tempest of

manifold afflictions, and when no captain can fight for us, no anchor can hold us, no friend can comfort us, no shield and buckler defend us, and no physician heal us—then we long for Christ’s gracious presence. Then we make earnest pleas for His powerful assistance. Then we say, “Come, Lord Jesus.”

These words are almost the last words of the whole Word of God, and they are the last words which I have heard uttered by this deceased person. This gave me occasion at this time—being the last office we are to perform for him—to speak on them and to commend them to your consideration to better prepare all of you for your last reckoning and to fit you for the day of your passing. Let me commend these words to better persuade and move you to labor for such faith, such love, such repentance, and such capacity of all saving graces that at the hour of your departure out of this earthly pilgrimage you may be able as friends and servants, as the spouse and bride, and as sons and daughters of God and Christ Jesus, to say, “Come, Lord Jesus.”

The words are a holy and fervent wish and desire, an entreaty and prayer of John the Evangelist. He speaks in his own name and in the name of all the faithful for the speedy, gracious, and glorious coming of the Lord Jesus. John the Evangelist was Christ’s beloved disciple (John 13:23), one who in the days of his flesh had rest himself in Christ’s bosom, and here he desires Christ’s coming. To the degree of the closeness of our communion we have now with Christ by grace and holiness, by so much the more His second coming is desired by us. Grace and holiness place us in the relationship of sons and daughters to God the Father and in the relationship of bride and spouse to Christ Jesus. And this entitles us to all God’s promises, sweetens all God’s testimonies, and makes all God’s ordinances the savor of life unto life for us. It settles us in the sense of God’s lovingkindness and in the assurance of

the forgiveness of all our sins and offenses, and so it makes the second coming of Christ most desirous. Lack of holiness deprives the souls of men of all the sweet and heavenly comforts arising from the second coming of Christ Jesus. The unsanctified man who says, "Come, Lord Jesus," prays to God to hasten his eternal vengeance. He who is without grace and prays for Christ's coming begs for his own speedy and final destruction. Labor therefore in the days of your life for holiness, that you may with comfort in the hour of your death say, "Come, Lord Jesus."

John the Evangelist had seen in a vision the church's affliction and the adversaries' insults—the future blessedness prepared for the one, and the future calamity provided for the other, and Christ made glorious in both. Therefore John prays, "Come, Lord Jesus." No man rightly desires Christ's coming but he who has assurance of the good and benefit of His coming. To them the day of Christ is as the day of harvest to the husbandman, as the day of deliverance to the prisoner, as the day of coronation to the king, and as the day of wedlock to the bride—a day of triumph and exaltation, a day of freedom and consolation, and a day of rest and satisfaction. To them the Lord Jesus is all sweetness, as wine to the palate, and "ointment" to the nostril, Solomon said (Song 1:2–3). "Honey in the mouth," Bernard said, "music in the ear, and a jubilee in the heart." Get assurance of Christ's coming as a ransom to redeem you, as a conqueror to subdue all your enemies under you, as a friend to comfort you, as a king to honor you, as a physician to heal you, and as a bridegroom to marry you; and then will you with confidence and boldness, with joy and gladness, and with vehement and holy longings, say, "Come, Lord Jesus."

In the words there is first, a motion, and secondly, a mover. The motion is "Come," and the mover is "Lord Jesus."

The Motion: “Come”

First, we will outline the manner or mode of the motion—John utters these words by way of decision, wish, and supplication; and then we will note the kind of motion, “Come.”

The Manner of Motion

The evangelist desires Christ to come. Christ as God is everywhere, and with regard to His essence neither goes nor comes, His divine essence being free from all motion and mutation. Yet as God He comes by His ministers and as a king by His ambassadors. By His ordinances He comes as a prince by His laws; and by His gifts and graces, as the sun by His beams and light. By His discipline and afflictions He comes as a man of war by His armies; and by His favors and blessings, as a friend by His love tokens. As man He came once by incarnation, taking our flesh upon Him, and will come at last as the glorious and dreadful judge to render to every man according to his work. And in this respect principally the Evangelist here desires Him to come: as the judge to subvert antichrist, to subdue the kingdom of sin and Satan, and to render to all ungodly men according to their doing. He wants Him to come as Redeemer, to bring a full and final deliverance from all evils to all believers, to all contrite and brokenhearted sinners, and to confer upon them all peace and bliss, all glory and happiness. This is the desire and prayer of all the faithful—of all who have received the spirit of adoption. We may hence learn, that:

It is the sincere desire of God’s faithful servants to have the full realization of Christ Jesus. Absalom so desired to see the face of David the king, his father, that he valued it above life (2 Sam. 14:32). The Lord’s servants desire the same way to see the face of Christ their King and Redeemer and to have the full enjoyment of His comforting and glorious presence.

Nothing is more precious in their apprehensions. It is valued and esteemed by them above the dearest earthly possessions; above the choicest worldly comforts; above wine which makes glad the heart (Song 1:2); above the increase of corn and wine (Ps. 4:7), the joy of the rich; and above life than as the choicest pearl (Ps. 63:3) and dearest treasure in nature's closet. If the dawning of the day be so joyous, how much more pleasant is the sun's rising? If the first fruits be so acceptable, how much more abundantly joyful is the full vintage? If a glimpse of God's face be so much desired, how much more desirable is the fullness of God's countenance reserved for us in the heavens? The psalmist illustrates this by a comparison taken from the chased hart: "As the hart"—the hart chased, heated, frightened, and vexed by the hounds and hunters—"panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" (Ps. 42:1-2)—before God in His holy temple, in the assembly of His saints and servants, in the use of His ordinances, in the sense of His lovingkindness, and in the full enjoyment of His face in the highest heavens.

And this the apostle expresses by a metaphor taken from the naked who have no garment to cover them and no house to hide them. As they with great diligence see and with much earnestness long for a covering, so do the faithful servants of God long for heaven, their house and habitation, and for the full fruition of Jesus Christ whose righteousness is their rich and royal robe, their pure and spotless garment to cover them. "In this," the apostle said, "we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven" (2 Cor. 5:2). As he that is in darkness longs for the light, so the souls of God's children in the darkness of the world do long for Jesus Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, and heaven and that heavenly city which God has provided for them where there

is “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” (Rev. 21:23). As the bride longs for the coming of the bridegroom, so the spiritual bride longs for the coming of the heavenly Bridegroom, Christ Jesus, being sick of love (Song 5:6, 8) and full of longings after Him. As “the mother of Sisera looked out at a window, and cried through the lattice, Why is his chariot so long in coming? why tarry the wheels of his chariots?” (Judg. 5:28), so does the spouse of Christ here in this life look out through the window of God’s ordinances and through the lattice of her faith and cry, “How long, Lord Jesus, how long?” (Rev. 6:10). “Thou art my help and my deliverer; make no tarrying, O my God” (Ps. 40:17). And the apostle for the mitigating of their sorrows, assuaging of their troubles, quieting of their consciences, and to aid in staying their souls and persuading them to wait assures them of the speedy coming of Christ, saying, “Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry” (Heb. 10:35–37).

And thus have God’s servants expressed their desires. I desire, Paul said, to depart—as a prisoner from his fetters and as a captive from his bondage—and to be with Christ, “which is far better” (Phil. 1:23). And, we groan, he said (speaking in the name of all the faithful), longing to be clothed, that mortality might be swallowed up of immortality. And, we are willing to be absent from the body and present with the Lord (2 Cor. 5:4, 8). And this the apostle commended in the Thessalonians, that they would be “turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for his Son from heaven” (1 Thess. 1:9–10), as servants wait for the coming of

their lord and master. And this Peter calls a “looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God” (2 Peter 3:12).

First, the reason for this call relates to their remaining sin and corruption. This is to them as a disease to the sick, as fetters to the prisoner, as a burden to the traveler, as a mote to the eye, as shackles to the hands, as chains to the feet, and as aches to the bones. As the sons of Zeruiah to David—they were adversaries to him (2 Sam. 19:22), being too strong for him—so are their corruptions adversaries to their souls, to their peace, to their communion with God, and to their present and everlasting welfare. Sometimes their corruptions are too strong for them, leading them captive (Rom. 7:23; 1 Peter 2:11) as a tyrant does to the soldiers whom he has taken in the battle, making continual war against them, as the house of Saul did against the house of David (2 Sam. 3:1). They are as pricks in their eyes and thorns in their sides as the Canaanites were to Israel (Judg. 2:3) as heavy burdens upon their backs, burdens too heavy for them to bear (Ps. 38:4), and as dead members in their body, very cumbersome and occasions of great trouble (Rom. 7:24). And therefore, as the nobleman went to Christ and “besought him that he would come down, and heal his son: for he was at the point of death” (John 4:47), so do the faithful servants of God go to Christ and say, “Come, Lord Jesus,” that there may be a thorough healing of all their infirmities.

Second, this is also because of Satan’s subtle, assiduous, and violent temptations. As the Amorite princes besieged Gibeon (Joshua 10), so the prince of darkness besieges the souls of God’s people. As Pharaoh imposed heavy burdens upon the children of Israel—he set cruel taskmasters over them, and, when they were going forth from Egypt, raised an army and pursued them—so Satan lays heavy burdens upon God’s people, great and grievous things to their charge; sets many merciless and bloody-minded men against them; and

raises an army of evil thoughts within to distract them and an army of afflictions without to molest them. He is as a roaring lion to God's flock (1 Peter 5:8), as a man of war to the city of their souls, making their passage through life very stormy and turbulent. And, therefore, as the woman of Canaan came to our Savior and cried to Him saying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.... Lord help me" (Matt. 15:22, 25), so do God's children address themselves to Christ and cry, "Have mercy upon us, Thou Son of David, for our souls are sore vexed with the Devil. Lord, help us!" Oh come, Lord Jesus, and bring us a full and final deliverance from all infernal adversaries.

Third, this is also due to the evil and offensive life of worldly men. Their language, their practice, their profaneness, and their distressfulness are to God's children a great grief and a means of very much anxiety. They are as the daughters of Heth to Rebekah (Gen. 27:46), who made her life a burden. Also the presence of disobedient Jonah made the sea tempestuous and the navigation very perilous to the sailors (Jonah 1). This filled them full of complaints. "Woe is me," David said, "that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!" (Ps. 120:5). "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law," David said (Ps. 119:136). And Lot was "vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked," Peter said, "(for that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds)" (2 Peter 2:7-8). And therefore, as he who dwells among thorns, briars, and scorpions (Ezek. 2:6) desires to change his dwelling, so do God's servants say, "Come, Lord Jesus," that they may have full freedom from the life of sinful men.

Fifth, this call is one caused by their love to Christ. Their love to Him, like the love of Jonathan to David, is wonderful (2 Sam. 1:26). They love Him with all manner of love: with a

creature's love, as He is their Maker; with a servant's love, as He is their Lord and Master; with a subject's love, as He is their King and Ruler; with a ransomed man's love, as He is their Redeemer; with a friend's love, as He is their Comforter; with a child's love, as He is their everlasting Father; with a kinsman's love, as He is their Brother; and with a bride's love, as He is the Bridegroom of their souls. They are sick of love (Song 2:5), and love breeds longing, and longing breeds desire for fruition. And as love constrains the wife to desire the presence of the husband, so love causes the spouse of Christ to long for the presence of Christ and to say, "Come, Lord Jesus," looking for "that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13).

Sixth, this is in consideration of the complete and perfect restoration of God's image in their souls. The day of Christ's coming will be the day of their full freedom and perfect redemption in which they will be a garden without weeds and a tree without barren branch, superfluous bough, or fading leaf. As Absalom with regard to bodily perfection was without blemish from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot (2 Samuel 15), so will God's servants upon the coming of Christ be free from all blemish and be glorious in soul and body, like the sun in the firmament (Matt. 13:43). This is called the day of their redemption (Luke 21:28). It is as captives desire the coming of Christ our blessed Redeemer, and therefore they say, "Come, Lord Jesus," so they may have the full possession of all joy and glory in heaven.

The Kind of Motion

This opens and unfolds the estate and condition of man, even of the holiest and best men in this life. They are ever in a state of distance and separation in part from Christ. Their desire of Him, their longing after Him, and their crying, "Come, Lord

Jesus”—all this shows they do not enjoy Christ Himself in His greatest fullness. Here, like Israel on the way to Canaan, they have a few grapes, a little taste of the goodness of the land of heaven (Num. 13:23), but the full vintage is reserved till their bodily dissolution, till Christ’s second coming. Now they are absent from the Lord. They behold Him as a friend afar off. “Whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord,” the apostle said (2 Cor. 5:6)—absent from the perfection of God’s image, from the fullness of the light of God’s countenance, and from the perfect and complete fruition of His presence and the glory He has provided for us. “For now we see through a glass, darkly” (1 Cor. 13:12). In the works of God, as in a mirror, we see the general wisdom, power, and goodness of God. In the word and sacraments we see, as in a mirror, the command and precept, the will and counsel, and the love and mercy of God in Christ Jesus. Hereafter we will see all this face-to-face, truly without error, clearly without darkness, and fully without the mixture of all imperfections. Now we are as runners in a race: the prize is not yet won. Therefore, “so run, that ye may obtain,” Paul said (1 Cor. 9:24). Now we are as soldiers in the battle fighting. The trading post is not yet fully gotten; therefore, “be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life” (Rev. 2:10). We are now travelers; our journey is not yet ended. Therefore, we must go from strength to strength, until we appear before the Lord in Zion (Ps. 84:7), for he that continues to the end will be saved (Matt. 24:13). Now we are as pilgrims and strangers. We do not have yet the possession of our heavenly dwelling. And therefore, as pilgrims and strangers, let us “abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul” (1 Peter 2:11). We halt like Jacob in our walking; our goings are not absolutely perfect. Our lives are like Jacob’s flock, spotty and colored (Gen. 30:32, 35)—a mixture of grace and vice is in them.

Our souls, like Rebekah's womb (Gen. 25:24), carry in them an Esau and a Jacob, the flesh lusting against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh, as Esau against Jacob and Jacob against Esau.

In the commonwealth of Israel there was continual war between the house of Saul and David (2 Sam. 3:1). In the commonwealth of a regenerate soul there is continual war between God and Satan, between grace and corruption. And, therefore, we must labor in the work of grace, like the house of David, to grow stronger and stronger, and to make sin, like the house of Saul, grow weaker and weaker, still pressing to more perfection and ever saying with the evangelist, "Come, Lord Jesus"—come as a guide to direct us, a physician to heal us, and a man of war to overcome us.

This should wonderfully endear to us the Lord Jesus. He is the desire of the souls of all believers. To Him we must go; Him we must seek; and on Him we must call. When distress comes, when sickness visits, and when death approaches, then we will be constrained to cry, "Come, Lord Jesus." As the woman of Tekoah in a purported distress came to David and cried, "Help, O king" (2 Sam. 14:4), then so will we in the real distress of our souls be constrained to cry, "Help, O Christ." When we will see Satan casting all his fiery darts at us, setting with all his forces, like an armed man, upon us and bringing all our sins, like a subtle accuser, against us; when we will apprehend death, as a sergeant, arresting, hurrying, and drawing us before the Lord's tribunal; and when we will see the arms of all earthly helpers broken, the lamp of all worldly lights put out, and the tongues of all our friends according to the flesh made dumb and silent—it is then that our souls must take hold of Christ, or there will be no remedy. We must say, "Come, Lord Jesus."

And therefore this should make Christ very precious in our eyes now. This should inflame our hearts with singular and fervent love to Him for the present, investing ourselves in Him above all things, and making Him our chiefest and choicest and our dearest and only friend. This should so sweeten to us the Lord Jesus that we should say with Bernard, “Jesus is sweet in voice, sweet in face, sweet in name.” The name *Jesus* is sweet, being consecrated from eternity, published by the angel, and prophesied by the oracle of Solomon who said, “Thy name is as ointment poured forth” (Song 1:3). We should so select Him, so admire Him, so adhere to Him, and so set our hearts upon Him that we should say with the psalmist, “Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee” (Ps. 73:25). So glorious, so precious, and so infinitely transcendent let Him be in our thoughts, in our judgments, and in our estimation and affections, that we love and treasure Him and exalt and prefer Him as the King above all commanders, as the Sun above all lights, as the spring above all cisterns, as the pearl above all treasure, and as the husband of our souls above all friends. Let Him be as a paradise of all pleasures, a haven of rest from all tempests, and the refuge of our souls in all troubles. Let our faith be such in Him, our hope so settled on Him, our love so strong toward Him, and our subjection so much under Him that we may be able at all times and seasons and in all estates and conditions to say, “Come, Lord Jesus.”

See in this the honor, profit, advantage, and comfort which a bodily dissolution brings to the righteous, to all true believers! They desire the full fruition of Christ, and this brings them home to Christ. To them, “to die is gain” (Phil. 1:21): gain of liberty from the burden of all corruption, from all the assaults of Satan, and from the servitude of the world and all affliction; gain of perfect holiness with regard to God’s image;

gain of complete victory with regard to all enemies; gain of most sweet communion with regard to their fellowship with God, Christ, the glorious angels, and all the saints of God; and gain of absolute honor with regard to their glorious condition in heaven. As death to the righteous is a tree of many fruitful branches and a messenger of many comfortable tidings, so the Spirit of God has given it many names.

Sometimes death is called a sleep (Matt. 9:24). Sleep possesses only the outward members and senses; the soul does not sleep. So in death only the body dies; the soul is carried in Abraham's bosom (Luke 16:22). Sleep gives rest to the body—they who die in the Lord “rest from their labours” (Rev. 14:13). Sometimes it is called a gathering to our fathers (Gen. 25:8). By death the righteous are separated from the wicked, gathered as wheat into God's storehouse, and their souls are “bound in the bundle of life” (1 Sam. 25:29). Sometimes it is called a way—“the way of all the earth” (Josh. 23:14). Like the way in which we come to our home or to our father's and to our friend's house, so by death we come to our heavenly home, to God the Father and the Lord Jesus. Sometimes it is called a going forth as a prisoner goes forth from the prison and Israel went forth from the bondage of Egypt. Likewise, when the body dies, the soul goes forth as out of a prison and enters into the land of the living. Sometimes it is called an end (Matt. 10:22) because in death there is an end of all sin, of all sorrow, and of all labor and trouble, as in the waters of the Red Sea the Israelites' Egyptian bondage ended. Sometimes it is termed a sowing (1 Cor. 15:44). The seed which is sown springs forth again into a blade (John 12:24); the body in the resurrection will flourish like the grass. Death, like a physician, cures all their diseases. Like a key, it opens the prison, restores them to a blessed freedom, and brings them to the full fruition of Jesus Christ, the desire of their souls. And this is the sweetest and fullest

gain of a Christian. Augustine has said, "It is profitable to avoid the growth of sin, profitable to flee wickedness, profitable to pass on to the good."¹ Cyprian also said, "The Christian counts it his greatest profit that at present he is not ensnared; that at present he is held liable for no sins and weaknesses of the flesh; he is exempted from crushing anxieties, set free from the poisonous jaws of the devil, and as Christ calls him, advances toward the happiness of everlasting salvation."

This must persuade and move us to work our hearts to a holy longing and earnest desire after the coming of the Lord Jesus, desiring it as the husbandman does the coming of the harvest, the sick man the coming of the day of health, or as the young man desires the day of his full age. It must also persuade us to look for the "new heavens and a new earth" (2 Peter 3:13) and to love the appearing of the Lord Jesus (2 Tim. 4:8). And for that end there must be, first, godly sorrow for sin. Christ's coming is comforting to such as are truly sorrowful. He who is weary of his corruptions truly longs for the coming of Christ Jesus. Joseph spoke to his brothers kindly and entertained them courteously when he saw they were grieved for the injury offered him (Gen. 45:4-5). The prodigal's day of humiliation was the day in which his father graciously received him (Luke 15). Christ will be found a sweet and merciful Jesus to all truly penitent sinners (Isa. 61:1-2; Matt. 11:28).

Second, there must be a thorough removal of sin, an effectual reformation of all our ways. Jacob went not up to Bethel before he purged his house of idols (Gen. 35:2). It is in vain for man to say, "Come, Lord Jesus," if there is not a conversion of the soul to Jesus. To such the prophet speaks, "Woe unto you that desire the day of the LORD! to what end is it for you? the day of the LORD is darkness, and not light. As if

1. It appears that it was actually Ambrose who said this.

a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him. Shall not the day of the LORD be darkness, and not light? even very dark, and no brightness in it?" (Amos 5:18–20). What the voice of God was to Adam upon the eating of the forbidden fruit, what the coming of the flood was to the profane men of the old world, what the waters of the Red Sea were to Pharaoh, what the fire from heaven was to the captains which came up against Elijah, what the burning furnace was to them who cast in Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—as all of these, the same will be the coming of the Lord Jesus to all unholy persons. Oh therefore, away with your sins! May every soul of man reform his ways (Job 11:14), that you may lift up your faces with boldness and that you may with great joy and comfort say, "Come, Lord Jesus."

Third, get into your hearts the precious pearl of a lively faith. This will quench all Satan's darts (Eph. 6:16), silence all the accusations of conscience, and make you look on Christ as on a friend to comfort you, an advocate to plead for you (Rom. 8:31), and a redeemer to save you. Like Elijah's fiery chariot, this will carry your souls aloft and bring you with gladness into the presence of the Lord Jesus.

Fourth, make a good use of your talent. Be wise, diligent, faithful, holy, and humble in the employment of it, and Christ shall come with comfort and will entertain you with a sweet and comforting declaration of approval: "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord" (Matt. 25:23). And let us be excited and stirred up to work our hearts to this longing for Christ's coming, considering first the gratification of our estate in heaven. There is a tree bearing twelve sorts of fruit (Rev. 22:2), youth without old age, health without sickness, fullness without

loathing, liberty without bondage, beauty without deformity, feelings without grief, abundance without want, peace without trouble, security without fear, knowledge without ignorance, glory without disgrace, and joy without sorrow (Rev. 21:4). Secondly, considering the security of that estate, no enemy can reach us. It is a city never besieged and a haven never bothered. There is no death, neither of sin nor of misery nor of nature. Thirdly, the pleasantness of it: a day without clouds, a paradise without thorns, and fullness of joy (Psalm 16)—true joy without deceit, sincere joy free from the mixture of sorrow, and constant joy, a sun that never sets. Of this, we may say as Augustine, “O joy above joy, overcoming all joy, without which there is no joy! when shall I enter into thee, that I may see my God who dwelleth in thee?” Here is joy above us, in the vision of God; joy within us, in the glorification of our soul and bodies; joy about us, in our communion with saints and angels; and joy beneath us, in our evasion and escape of hell and everlasting darkness. Here is to the souls of all believers joy concerning Christ, as the author of our welfare; in Christ, as He is the Head and we the members; with Christ, as coheirs with Him of the same inheritance; after Christ, every soul joying according to proportion; by Christ, being reconciled to God by Him and beholding God with joy through Him; for Christ, He being exalted above all creatures and having purchased all things. Oh, let these things sweeten the thought of Christ Jesus to us, enflame our souls with longing after Him, and make us all say, “Come, Lord Jesus.”

The Mover: “Lord Jesus”

Thus from the motion we pass to the mover: “Lord Jesus”—two titles of the blessed Son of God. The one is a title of authority to command us, and the other is of mercy to comfort us. Love and justice are sweetly knit together in Christ Jesus. As Lord,

He requires obedience to His precepts. As Jesus, He calls for faith in His promises. Faith and obedience must never be divided in God's servants. He who calls Him Lord without obedience, dishonors Him. He who calls Him Jesus without faith, receives no benefit by Him. He is called first Lord and then Jesus. If Christ be not our Lord and Master first, He will never be our Savior at last. He that will not have Christ to be his Lord in his life will not have Him for his Jesus at the hour of his death. Oh therefore serve Him, honor Him, and obey Him as your Lord. Believe Him, love Him, and rejoice in Him as your Jesus now so that you may be able upon all occasions to say, "Come, Lord Jesus." Come, Lord Jesus, as a counselor to guide us, as a rock to support us, as a friend to comfort us, and as a fountain to supply us. Come, Lord Jesus, in the day of fullness, and make us thankful; in the day of want, and make us content; in the day of our sin, and make us penitent; in the day of affliction, and make us patient; in the day of temptation, and make us confident; in the day of sorrow, and make us joyful; in the day of health, and make us mindful of the day of sickness; in the day of life, and make us watchful against the day of death; in the day of sickness, and assure us of the blessed issue of our earthly pilgrimage; and in the day of death, and translate our souls into a glorious life. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

And now concerning this presentation of mortality here before us, what will I say to you? How will I from this instruct you? It will be only in two things in general: first, by way of premonition; and second, by way of commemoration. Let me note by way of premonition so you may in this object of death be admonished, first, of the transitory nature of man's pilgrimage. His life is as a vapor soon vanishing, a race soon run, and a candle quickly gone out. He has no continuing city here but must seek for one that is to come (Heb. 13:14). Secondly, be

admonished of the vanity of all earthly abundance. It is a first shot in the day of battle and a rotten anchor in the stormy tempest. We see that verified in Solomon by daily experience: "Riches profit not in the day of wrath: but righteousness delivereth from death" (Prov. 11:4). The righteousness of Christ imputed and the righteousness of a well-ordered life give comfort and deliverance from the second death when soul and body are dissolved. Thirdly, whatever extravagancies or aberrations we see in others, let us not thereby take occasion to insult them or pass any rash or final sentence upon them. This is the worst use of other men's offenses; this is to thrust God out of His office, for every man stands or falls to his own master (Rom. 14:4). But what we see amiss in others, let us correct in ourselves. By the sight of their spots let us wash our own garments and be thankful to God who preserves us, for no man stands by his own strength. Let us be watchful over ourselves and desire God to keep us, lest Satan and our own corruption draw us into the same or greater evils. The sin of one man would be the sin of every man, if God did not restrain him.

Secondly, by way of commemoration, I may tell you, first, how man professes much sorrow for his sins. Man's sin ever proves to be man's sorrow. It is the shame of man to commit sin. It is the honor of man to confess and forsake his sin. Though sorrow that is constrained and carnal is always unacceptable, yet true and godly sorrow is ever available to salvation: "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy" (Ps. 126:5).

Secondly, man often promises reformation and greater strictness of life if God were pleased to lengthen his days. Though the vows of man's adversity are often forgotten in the days of his prosperity, yet resolutions truly righteous are as welcome to God as the very performance.

Thirdly, man speaks of a great change which God of late had wrought in him. He who is not changed by the gracious

hand of God in this life is never received by the merciful hand of God in the next life. The procrastination of repentance is ever very perilous; yet God is free in the dispensations of His mercies and not limited to times and seasons.

Fourthly, the rehearsal of God's mercies, upon condition of true repentance, seems often to much affect man. As he is cursed that turns the grace of God into wickedness, so is he blessed who by God's mercies is led to true repentance.

And let all this admonish us to labor for timely and true repentance, to vow amendment and perform it, and to feel our hearts truly changed, powerfully drawing our souls to obedience, all by fervent prayer increasing our communion with God, enriching our souls more and more with all heavenly gifts and graces so that we may at last with great comfort and much assurance say, "Come, Lord Jesus."

Appendix 3

Saint Paul's Legacy

Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.

—2 CORINTHIANS 13:11

Every communion among men on earth has its separation. Even if it is never so entire, full, or delightful, yet at length there comes a separation. The sweetest fellowship and the society which is most intimate has cords and chains which at length are dissolved. Communion with God is everlasting; communion with man is transitory and temporal. The ark was transportable, being removed from place to place until it came to Solomon's temple. Such is man's condition—subject to continual change and motion—until he comes to heaven where God's people will have an endless and unchangeable communion.

The fellowship between Abimelech and the men of Shechem was very strong and intimate. They were bone of bone and flesh of flesh, yet at length there came an evil spirit between them, and they were divided (Judg. 9:23). Great is the enmity of Satan against men's sweet and blessed communion.

Abraham and Lot sweetly communed and dwelt for many days together, yet at length they parted. Their substance was so great that they could not dwell together (Gen. 13:6). Much sweet communion and association between God's people is often hindered by the fullness of the world.

Singular was the friendship and pleasant was the fellowship between Jonathan and David. Their love was wonderful,

passing the love of women (2 Sam. 1:26). Yet by an arrow in the battle Jonathan fell, and their sweet association was ended. Death dissolves all human fellowship.

Elijah and Elisha enjoyed many days of most blessed and gracious communion together; yet at length it came to pass that as they went and talked, there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire, and it parted them both (2 Kings 2:11). God often removes the dearest friends and comforters of His servants to teach them to depend alone upon Christ Jesus. God sometimes takes away the guides and teachers of His people to let them see that the choicest instruments of man's happiness are not of everlasting continuance. Paul had been for many days a preacher to the men of Corinth, preaching to them many powerful and heavenly sermons, delivering to them many sound and wholesome doctrines, and writing also a first and second epistle. Yet his ministry was not for eternity, nor his presence of everlasting continuance. A time of separation came, and his labors grew to an end; and thus in these words he takes his last leave and farewell of them: "Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you" (2 Cor. 13:11).

The apostle Paul had in this whole epistle sharply rebuked the Corinthians for opposing his doctrine and for slighting and despising his admonition. And now, that they might not think he either spoke or wrote out of hatred or meanness of spirit, many arguments and evidences of his great and singular love are intermixed. He did this chiefly in this conclusion, mitigating all the severity and bitterness which he seemed to use toward them. He concludes and closes it all in a holy, sweet, and gracious expectation, or a wish of all perfection, consolation, peace, concord, and communion with God to them: "Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good

comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.”

The Lord who gave some to be apostles; some, prophets; some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers, all for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, and for the edifying of the body of Christ (Eph. 4:11–12); the Lord who gives His people pastors according to His own heart, to feed them with knowledge and understanding (Jer. 3:15)—this Lord has, in the course of His gracious providence, made me for more than fifteen years an undershepherd of your souls. As His weak, frail, feeble, and unworthy instrument, I have been the Lord’s and your servant, endeavoring—though neither with such diligence and energy as I should, nor with that blessed and plentiful success which I desire and wish—to open God’s counsel, to propose and set forth Christ before your eyes, to make Him glorious in your apprehension, to humble your souls, to convert your hearts, and to draw you by faith and love to Christ, the complete and only author of your everlasting welfare. And now, as Paul said once to the men of Ephesus in Acts 20:25, so say I: Behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have here stood preaching the kingdom of God, will after this day in all likelihood behold my face in this place no more. I am now to you as a dying man whose last breath is going forth; as a star setting and rising no more in this horizon; and as a lamp going out and shining no more in this your house of sacred meeting. As a man dying, and loath to die, I will in the ardency of my love and great anguish of my spirit, in the words and wish of Paul, take my last leave and departure. “Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.”

In which words we may take notice first, of the form of conclusion: “Finally.” Secondly, we may note the title of

appellation: “brethren.” And, thirdly, note the term of valediction and farewell and, fourthly, of a vote of expectation or wishing: “Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace be with you.” In this Paul, like a testator or parent who makes his last will and testament, bestows these five gifts as five legacies to the Corinthians, his children in Christ. They are like the five changes of raiment which Joseph gave to Benjamin (Gen. 45:22) for the spiritual warmth and ornament which they ministered to the souls of God’s children. They are like the five men who brought good tidings to their brethren, encouraging them to arise and enter into the land (Judges 18:9), for the comforting news which they bring to the souls of men, encouraging them to enter into God’s service and to set their feet into the ways of peace and holiness. They are like the five loaves of bread which David asked of the priest (1 Sam. 21:3) for the nourishment, refreshment, and strength which they minister to the souls of God’s servants. And these I will, being now as a dying man to you, bestow to you as a legacy of the choicest worth to adorn you, of the greatest strength to support you, of the best nourishment to feed you, and of sweetest peace to comfort you. “Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect.”

The Form of Conclusion: “Finally”

The branches growing on this tree are many; the streams issuing from this fountain are diverse. But having but one day to gather the fruit here, I will but briefly touch upon and give you a taste of each of them. First then the form of conclusion: “Finally,” lastly, or, as touching that which remains, that is, after I have done my office and have instructed you by the Word, threatened you by the judgments, and entreated you by the mercies of God, having used all means to move you to repentance and to draw you to Christ—finally, or what

remains more to be done now, but that you do your duty, that you believe, repent, reform, be perfect, and draw home to Christ with all your soul and might? This is that which now remains, which is now expected on your behalf.

Hence you see that the minister's long and frequent preaching must be attended with much perfection in the people. After the minister's long and frequent instruction, it is then that faith, repentance, and true conversion must show itself forth in the people. When the minister has done his duty toward men, men must do their duty toward God. The rock gushed out water after Moses' striking it (Ex. 17:6). After the priests went around the walls of Jericho seven times and blew their rams' horns, the walls fell to the ground (Josh. 6:20). After the prophet laid himself upon the Shunammite woman's child, the flesh of the child grew warm, and he sneezed and opened his eyes (2 Kings 4:34–35). After the minister smites often our hearts with the hammer of the word, often sounding the trumpet of the gospel in our ears and rightly dividing and applying of the word to our hearts, then our stony hearts should be softened and send forth the waters of godly sorrow. The strong and mighty holds of sin should be cast down. Our souls should be enlivened, and the eyes of our understanding most clearly and savingly opened. After the shining of the sun, the air is enlightened. After the distilling of the dew and the plentiful influence of the heavens, the earth becomes fruitful. After the long shining of the light of the gospel and the frequent distilling and dropping down of the dew of heavenly doctrine, men's understandings should be filled with knowledge. As the air with light, their lives are replenished with all spiritual and heavenly fruit. This the Lord expects. "What could have been done more to my vineyard" says the Lord, "that I have not done in it?"—with regard to the external means. "Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes" (Isa. 5:4)—that like

a vineyard long and well dressed, it should bring forth good grapes of knowledge, faith, repentance, and the like.

This is the property of God's children. As good ground receiving good seed, they bring forth much fruit (Matt. 13:23). As living and healthy children nursing at their mothers' breasts, they grow by the sincere milk of the word of God (1 Peter 2:2). This fruit has followed the labors of God's ministers. Peter testified and exhorted, and his word was gladly received, and about three thousand souls were added to the church (Acts 2:40–41). Paul preached, and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed (Acts 13:48). The apostle preached at Ephesus, and many that believed came and confessed and showed forth their deeds. And so mightily grew the word of God and prevailed (Acts 19:18, 20). Joshua fought; Moses prayed; and Israel prevailed over Amalek (Ex. 17:11). When the minister preaches and prays, God's Israel must prevail over Satan and their corruption. Peter cast his net the second time into the sea, and a multitude of fish were taken into it (John 21:11). At the minister's first and second and frequent and often preaching, many souls should, by the net of the gospel, be drawn out of the gulf and sea of sin and the world—and all that with regard to the end of the minister's long and frequent preaching!

“The sun ariseth,” said the psalmist, “they [the wild beasts] gather themselves together, and lay them down in their dens. Man goeth forth unto his work and to his labour until the evening” (Ps. 104:22–23). The gospel like the sun arises; and all the lusts of men, which like so many wild beasts walk forth and make their prey upon the souls of men in the night of their ignorance, must now lie themselves down by humiliation, mortification, and true repentance. And man must arise from the bed of sin and go forth out of himself, as out of his house, to his work and to his labor, working out his salvation with fear

and trembling (Phil. 2:12), and never ceasing from the work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thess. 1:3)—all until the evening, until the sun of his life be wholly gone down and set.

This the apostle presses from the end of the appearing of the gospel: “The night is far spent” (Rom. 13:12). The time and state of ignorance and blindness is far gone, and the light is near at hand. The day of the gospel breaks forth, and the light of illumination appears. Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, as men cast off their bedclothes in the morning. And let us put on the armor of light, as men put on their day clothes, and so let us walk. For the grace of God, Paul said to Titus, has appeared, teaching men to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present evil world (Titus 2:11–12). And I, Christ said to Paul,

have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. (Acts 26:16–18)

With regard to God’s expectation, the husbandman after the long fertilizing of the field looks for fruit from the field. Who is the householder in the parable which planted a vineyard? Is it not the Lord (Matthew 21)? What is the vineyard but the church? And what are the vines but the several members of the church? Who are the servants, but the ministers whom God sends to dress His vineyard? And what is the fruit which God there expects, but knowledge, faith, and repentance—the fruit of His ministers’ labors in the

souls of His servants? The shepherd looks for increase from the flock which he watches, feeds, conducts, and defends. The husband looks for children from the wife whom he marries. They are the fruit of his wedlock. And God, the husband and shepherd of our souls, looks for fruit from us, over whom by His ministers He watches, and whom by their labors He feeds, conducts, defends, and espouses to Himself. The teacher expects learning from his student. "Herein," says Christ, "is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples" (John 15:8).

With regard to honoring and glorifying the word and the ministers thereof, the fruitfulness of the field is the glory of the seed sown in it and of the husbandman which sowed it. The wife is as the vine by the sides of the house, and the children stand like olive plants round about the table (Ps. 128:3). They both are the glory of the house and husband. Blessed is he that has his quiver full of them, the psalmist said. He "shall not be ashamed" (Ps. 127:5). When there is fruitfulness in the people, when the congregation is full of spiritual fruit—like a vine growing by the side of the house, and the several members thereof are fat and flourishing in grace, like olive plants—then the word is glorified. Then the minister is honored. Blessed is that messenger of God that has his quiver, the house of his ministry, full of them. It is said of the Gentiles that they heard and glorified the word of the Lord, and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed (Acts 13:48). They glorified the word of God by acknowledging the truth of it, by believing the promises of salvation proposed in it, by submitting themselves to the power and authority of it, and by walking as ones accountable to it. Man's obedience is the glory of God's ordinance. The fruitfulness of the hearers is the crown of God's messengers.

With regard to peace and consolation to their own souls, the good effects of medicine make the patient joyful. The production of the word in the heart of man makes the soul of man comforted. When the gospel comes, not in word only, but in power also (1 Thess. 1:5)—in power converting and changing the heart of man, working and perfecting grace in the inward man—then the soul of man is filled with joy in the Holy Ghost. Then the word is the joy and rejoicing of the heart. Then the fruit of the lips is peace (Isa. 57:19)—spiritual, inward, universal, plentiful, and perpetual peace; peace with God; peace with man; peace with the conscience; a paradise of heavenly comforts; and a river of peace, which no understanding can fathom. And therefore it must be the care of men to see that they grow to much spiritual perfection after the minister's long and frequent preaching.

This therefore reproveth those who after the long and frequent preaching of the gospel continue barren and unfruitful, like the grounds about Jericho, which were not made fertile (2 Kings 2:19), but rather remained barren by the waters which did flow upon them. The waters drawn out of the wells of salvation are upon them as waters poured upon the rock which brings forth no fruit. Also from those whom the sounding of the trumpet of the gospel and the constant cry of God's watchmen, like the call and cry of Baal's worshipers from the morning to the evening upon Baal (1 Kings 18:26), has no voice nor answer of faith in God's promises, of obedience to God's precepts, nor of godly sorrow for men's transgressions. They minister their complaint to God, provoking the fire of God's indignation against their souls. "I have spread out my hands all the day," says the Lord, "unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts; a people that provoketh me to anger continually to my face" (Isa. 65:2-3). They minister cause of great complaint to God's

messengers, causing them to say with the prophet Isaiah, “Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?” (Isa. 53:1). They cause God’s messengers to mourn and wish with Jeremiah: “Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people! Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of wayfaring men; that I might leave my people, and go from them! for they be all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men” (Jer. 9:1–2). Great is the grief arising in the souls of God’s ministers when men continue barren under their labors. And when men thrive not, ascending not to perfection in grace by the care and industry of God’s watchmen, they lose that knowledge, the presence whereof is more pleasant than the sun (Prov. 2:10). They lose that faith, the enjoyment whereof is more precious than all gold (1 Peter 1:7). And they lose that peace which is more comforting and delightful than any paradise—than the garden of Eden itself. And they lose communion with God, in comparison of which the sweetest communion with men is but a banishment. They continue instead their souls under the dominion of sin which is more loathsome and full of torment than any sickness, and under that bondage of Satan, which is infinitely worse than captivity under any mortal tyrant, provoking God at length to leave them and making their last account, for all the sermons which they have heard, most dreadful and most distressing.

Therefore let it be our care after the long and frequent preaching of the gospel and after the due and faithful discharge of the minister’s duty toward us to discharge our duty also toward him. The Lord has caused the star of His gospel a long time to shine among you and has made the dew of His doctrine to drop for many years upon you. He has shown you His statutes and His testimonies. He has not dealt so with every people. He has not shown such mercy to every

congregation. Therefore, as the tree, which had much soil cast about it, brings forth much fruit, and as the servant, which had five talents, brought much advantage to his lord and master, so strive to bring a measure of glory to God, answerable to the measure of the means He has afforded you. The Lord has sown much and looks to reap much. The harvest must answer the seed. Be therefore filled with all heavenly graces, as the sea with waters. Be strong in faith, as the tree grows deep in the roots. Be fervent in love, as a fire of much wood. Abound in all the fruits of the Spirit, like the tree which bare twelve sorts of fruit (Rev. 22:2).

The more you abound in grace under the gospel, the longer the gospel will be continued. The more sweetness your souls will taste in it, and the nearer will you draw to God by it. The more effectually the pardon of your sin will be sealed up through it. And the more encouraging account will you render to God at last. For all the labors of His ministers, of which God has made you partakers, the more assured I will again behold your faces at our last general appearance, and the more blessed account I will make to Christ, my great Lord and Master, of this my ministerial service. I will the more joyfully for the present, in the words of the apostle here, this day take my last leave of you, and say, "Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace be with you."

A Title of Appellation: "Brethren"

"Finally, *brethren*." This is a title used as an appellation, the second branch of this tree. There are brethren by nature, brethren by condition, and brethren by profession and participation of one Christ. The last of these are the brethren here mentioned. The apostle here terms them as brethren with regard to their origin, having one God for their Father with

them; with regard to their relation, being knit to Christ by one bond of saving faith and one golden chain of unfeigned love among themselves, with Paul the apostle; and with regard to true and fervent love, the apostle loving them as his brethren. And this the apostle chiefly intends here, it being his purpose now to manifest his love to them.

Hence we learn that there is in all God's faithful ministers a very fervent and unfeigned love to their hearers—a brotherly love, a love like that of Jonathan to David, a love surpassing the love of women (2 Sam. 1:26), being dear to them, as the apple of their eye, as the signet upon their finger, or as the bride to the bridegroom. Therefore are the ministers called husbandmen, shepherds, watchmen, parents, and nurses. As the husbandman loves the vineyard which he has planted, the shepherd the flock which he keeps, the watchman the city which he watches, the father the children which he begets, or the nurse the child to which she draws forth her breast and feeds, so God's ministers love their hearers, the vineyard which they plant, the flock which they keep, the city over which they watch, the children which they ministerially beget and nurse. Thus the people are called also by names expressing the minister's high prizing of them, great delight in them, and singular love to them, as his children (Isa. 8:18), hope, joy, crown of rejoicing, glory, and joy. The apostle, putting on the kind affection of a father in the strength and passion of his love, so calls them and speaks thus to them: "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" (1 Thess. 2:19–20). And Paul, speaking of his love to the Corinthians, called it a more abundant love (2 Cor. 2:4)—that is, a high, a strong, a transcendent love, such love that he said that his mouth was open to them and his heart was enlarged (2 Cor. 6:11). His whole man was open to them (as a

bridegroom's house is opened to the bride) to entertain them, to love them, to rejoice in them, and to communicate himself to the utmost to them, as the open sun sends forth its light and the open cloud pours out its rain—nay, they were in his heart to live and die with them (2 Cor. 7:3).

And who can doubt the love of God's faithful ministers toward their hearers? Who will but look upon their labors to save the souls of their hearers? They are instant in season and out of season (2 Tim. 4:2), taking all opportunities. They sow in the morning and withhold not their hand in the evening. They have no rest. They hold not their peace day nor night (Isa. 62:1). As Naomi said of Boaz, "The man will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing this day" (Ruth 3:18), such is the love of God's ministers. They are at no rest until they have finished the work of grace in their hearers, consummating the marriage between them and Christ.

Upon their sorrows, sadness, sighs, and tears, to behold the people's barrenness under their labors, obstinacy against their persuasions, and the danger into which they thrust their souls—no father is more grieved to see the depravity of his child. Jeremiah's soul wept in secret for his people (Jer. 13:17). Isaiah's bowels "sound like a harp for Moab" (Isa. 16:11). Paul had continual sorrow for the Jews. He was pained as a woman in travail for the Galatians, and out of much affliction and anguish of heart he wrote with many tears to the Corinthians, that they might know the love which he had more abundantly to them (Rom. 9:2; Gal. 4:19; 2 Cor. 2:4). You may read God's ministers' love expressed in bold letters by their tears and sorrows for the people's disobedience. The greatness of the ministers' grief for the people's misery testifies of the strength of their desire to make them happy.

Upon their sufferings for their hearers, they suffer reproach in their names, being made a spectacle to men and

angels (1 Cor. 4:9). They suffer loss of goods, loss of peace, loss of liberty, and loss of life, all that they may be faithful in their calling, finish the course of their ministry (Acts 20:24), and be used to save the souls committed to them. The sufferings of faithful ministers are a clear and unmistakable evidence of their love to their hearers. God's ministers do often sustain great temporal losses for other men's everlasting gain and advantage.

This love of God's ministers will move and work our hearts in many ways. First, it will bring us to frequent and diligent attendance on their labors, as we cheerfully hearken to their voice who love us. We will be as children coming cheerfully to the banquet which their parents provide for them.

Second, it will move us to humble submission and obedience to their doctrines, seeing they do all in singular love for the salvation of our souls. These we should follow, as Israel the fiery pillar. These we should readily put in practice, as Ahimaaz ran as soon as Joab gave him a commission (2 Samuel 18). The love of God's ministers should work the hearers to a ready and singular observance of their doctrines.

Third, this should breed in us reverence to their persons, as obedient children to their loving parents, receiving and honoring their doctrines as the word of God, and not of man (1 Thess. 2:13). Men must make their reverence proportional to the love and labor of God's messengers. The more they endeavor our salvation, the more honorably we should think of them.

Fourth, this should make us unwilling to be deprived of them, as children of a loving nurse, the wife of a kind and careful husband, or the wife of Phinehas of the ark (1 Sam. 4:21-22). It should grieve us less to be deprived of all earthly abilities than of God's faithful ministers. The gain of the world cannot recompense the loss of the gospel. He never

clearly discerned nor truly tasted Christ in the doctrine of God's messengers who is not exceedingly grieved at the loss of their labors.

Fifth, this should draw love from us again to them, causing us to hold them in singular love for their work's sake (1 Thess. 5:13). The more we love them, the more readily we will receive their instructions, the more fully we will subject ourselves to their admonitions, the more beauty we will see in their doctrines, the more sweetness we will taste in their labors, and the more feelingly and effectually will the minister wish and endeavor our peace and everlasting welfare, speaking peace to us and praying for all good things at the hands of God for us, saying at last with Paul: "Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace be with you."

A Word of Valediction: "Farewell"

The third thing in these words is a word of valediction: "farewell." This is a word commonly used in the conclusion and end of the epistles, in which the apostle wishes to them all happiness, joy, tranquility, comfort, and even all manner of welfare. He had been long their teacher, watchman, and monitor, yet at length he bids them farewell and takes his leave of them.

The labors of God's choicest ministers are not everlasting, but of a short continuance. After a while the brook Cherith, of which Elijah drank, was dried up (1 Kings 17:7), and he was commanded to go to Zarephath to look out for another place of support. After a while the minister, whose doctrine has been as a river to refresh and water us, is taken from us. The brook of his doctrine is dried up, and we must seek out some other brook from which to drink, or else our souls must starve and perish.

It should be therefore men's wisdom to keep and continue with them the faithful minister of God while they have him, and not delight in change of ministers, as men do in change of horses, lest they be deceived at last. "Thine own friend, and thy father's friend," said Solomon, "forsake not" (Prov. 27:10). As friends, so ministers. They are not like houses and garments—commendable to be desired only for their newness. Rather, they are like wives; for their long continuance and experience we have their faithfulness and labors.

And since the continuance of able ministers is so uncertain, it should be our care to make our best use of them while we do enjoy them. Men buy while the market lasts. Men walk while the light shines. Men enter while the gate is open. And every man should strive to furnish his soul, to draw nigh to God, and to enter into Christ while God allows an able minister to guide and bring him home to Christ Jesus. But this word, *valete*, is commonly expounded by another word, *gaudete*, or, *rejoice ye*, and then the meaning is this: if it be that you follow the counsel which has been taught you and conform yourselves to the rules which have been prescribed to you, then you will have matter and cause of great joy.

Hence note that the full and thorough conforming of ourselves to the doctrine of God's messengers grants great joy and gladness, though they depart from us. The Israelites had great joy in that they had followed the fiery pillar, though at length it left them. It brought them into the land of Canaan. The wise men had matter of great joy in the star (Matt. 2:10)—though at length it was no more a light to them—because before it left them, it brought them to Christ. The traveler has great joy in the guide—though at length he ceases to be a guide to him anymore—because before he forsook him, he brought him to his home, or at least led him far in his way and showed him how to walk rightly to his journey's end.

Man, who thoroughly conforms himself to the doctrine of God's faithful minister, has reason for great joy within him, though the minister of God at length should leave him. This is because before he leaves him, he has presented and opened Christ to him and brought him home to Christ by working faith and love in him. He has brought him into the state of grace, sown a seed in his heart which will never die, kindled a light in his soul which will never go out, and set his feet in that way from which he will never wander but rather walk on until he comes to his blessed and everlasting home. And this is that which indeed gives cause of joy and gladness to the people, even their full and effectual comforting of themselves to the minister's doctrine, their observing his counsel, their obeying his admonition, and their feeling the power of his ministry in working a blessed and gracious change in them. The eunuch feeling faith wrought in him by Philip's sermon and being baptized by him, having his incorporation into Christ sealed up to him—it is said, "The Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing" (Acts 8:39). It is said of them that believed upon Paul and Barnabas's preaching, though the people persecuted Paul and Barnabas and expelled them out of their coasts, yet the disciples, such as were converted by their ministry, were filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost (Acts 13:48, 52). And though the departure of God's faithful ambassadors brings matters of great grief and sorrow to the souls of all true believers, as once the men of Ephesus wept sorely and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him (sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more [Acts 20:37–38]), yet the fruit of their ministry which remains and the presence or succession of other able ministers to edify and bring them to further perfection afford them matter of much and sweet rejoicing. Though Paul departed from Jerusalem to Tarsus,

yet the churches were edified and, walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied (Acts 9:31). God's hand is not shortened. If one helper fails, He can raise a second. If all fail, the Lord is all sufficient. He who truly profits by the word when the Lord allows it will never be destitute of all spiritual comfort. Whether the ministry fail or be continued, he has a daystar risen within him which will give him a glimpse of sweet and heavenly consolation. The soul of him who conforms himself to the doctrine of God's faithful ministers will never meet with some matter of true joy and gladness.

With regard to the blessed presence of God's grace and Spirit within them, there appears a daystar (2 Peter 1:19) of regeneration, which makes them joyful, as the star did the wise men. They feel in their hearts that kingdom of God, that work of righteousness and peace which is attended with joy in the Holy Ghost (Rom. 14:17). They discern that presence and operation of faith which fills them with all joy in believing (Rom. 15:13). And they behold that Spirit of God dwelling in them, which is the true Comforter (John 14:16), the author and fountain of all consolation.

With regard to the subjugation of Satan and their own corruption, they perceive, by the effect and fruit of the ministry which they have enjoyed, how Satan is trodden under their feet (Rom. 16:20), as Joshua stepped on the necks of the kings of Canaan (Josh. 10:24). They see how their corruption is subdued as strongholds are cast down by warlike instruments (2 Cor. 10:4). They observe how the minister of the Lord has put the Devil and all his works to flight, as David once overthrew Goliath and made all the Philistine army flee (1 Samuel 17). And as Israel had great joy to see Pharaoh and his host drowned in the waters of the sea (Ex. 15:1), so they have matter of great joy to see Satan and all their lusts cast down.

With regard to communion with God, whatsoever be taken from them, yet their communion with God is not dissolved. Walking in the light and conforming themselves to the doctrine of God's messengers, they have fellowship with God by prayer (1 John 1:6), as petitioners with the great master of requests; by faith and love, as the bride with the bridegroom; by subjection, as the subjects with their sovereign; by meditation, as the rich men with their treasure; and by desire, as pilgrims with their own country. And this is the joy of all joys to God's servants, even communion with God their Father and with Christ their Husband and Savior.

Oh then, while you enjoy God's ministers, conform yourselves to their doctrines, observe their counsels, embrace and follow their instructions, and be renewed and become new creatures. Then whether they go or stay, live or die, you will have matter of joy and gladness. You will have the word of God dwelling in you to direct and guide you, to strengthen and sustain you, and to comfort and encourage you. You will have the grace of the Spirit shining like a lamp in the house of your souls, even when others are in darkness, as Israel had the light shining in Goshen when the Egyptians had no light to shine upon them but rather thick darkness covered them (Ex. 10:23). You will have faith embracing Christ and filling you with Christ's fullness when others are strangers and have no acquaintance with Christ Jesus. You will have the love of God shed abroad in your hearts (Rom. 5:5), which will gladden you more than wine the thirsty (Song 1:2)—more than corn and oil rejoice the rich (Ps. 4:7), or life itself the living (Ps. 63:3), though it is the dearest earthly possession. You will have the peace of God (Col. 3:15), even that peace which passeth all understanding, reigning within you. So shall it be also whenever the minister of God departs from you to God, bestows a blessed legacy upon you, and with Paul's heart

and words and joy and gladness takes his last leave of you, and says, “Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.”

A Word of Expectation: “Be Perfect”

And thus are we come to the fourth branch of this text, Paul’s expectation or wish: “Be perfect, be of good comfort.” He does not wish them earthly honors, worldly riches, or carnal pleasures, but perfection of grace, spiritual comfort, mutual love, unity, agreement among themselves, and most sweet and sure communion with God. Heavenly and saving graces are the best gifts which any man can wish or desire for others. These are the surest pledge of God’s love, the choicest ornament of man’s soul, the sweetest ambassadors of peace to man’s heart, the treasure of greatest worth to enrich man, the gift of highest honor to ennoble man, the staff of greatest strength to sustain man, the companion of most pleasant communion to solace and delight man, and the wellspring of most plentiful and lasting waters to fill and to content man. Such are a star of everlasting brightness, which will never set nor leave us. And therefore Paul wishes this for the Corinthians. These he commends to them, wishes for them, and bestows upon them as the best legacy he had to give them, the best possession he could think of to leave behind among them.

And these gifts or legacies of his, you have heard, are five—the full opening and handling of which requires no less than five days’ discourses. But as my glass is almost run and my ministerial breath is now expiring and going out, I will but briefly open them and leave them to your long and lasting consideration.

A Legacy of Perfection

The first is a legacy of perfection: “Be ye perfect.” Fill ye up that which is wanting; increase, abound, and go forward. Be good students in Christ’s school and thriving trees in God’s orchard. Be more and more perfect.

Hence observe that it is the duty and must be the care of God’s children to strive to more spiritual perfection. As the house of David grew stronger and stronger in victory over the house of Saul (2 Sam. 3:1) and full possession of the kingdom, so they must grow stronger and stronger in victory over their corruption and in the full possession of Christ and His kingdom. It is God’s charge, “Grow in grace” (2 Peter 3:18), as rich men in wealth and as trees in height. “But be filled with the Spirit” (Eph. 5:18), as the sea with waters and as the air with light. It is the property and practice of the Lord’s servants, like good branches, to grow and bear more fruit (John 15:2); to grow up in Christ which is the Head (Eph. 4:15), as the members in the body grow up under the head; and to follow after, to press toward the mark, to reach forth to the things which are before, to apprehend that for which they are apprehended of Christ Jesus (Phil. 3:12–13). As they who run in a race are swift and put to it with all their strength and cease not, so the runners in the race of godliness are swift, put to it to the utmost, and cease not until they have fully apprehended Christ. They run on and faint not; they mount up like the eagles (Isa. 40:31) and come nearer and nearer to Christ, as the eagles fly nearer and nearer and cease not until they come to the carcass. Grace is of a growing and increasing nature. It rises higher and higher, like the waters which came forth under the threshold of the temple (Ezek. 47:1). It shines more and more like the light to the perfect day (Prov. 4:18).

God, where He begins a good work, continues the same to perfection (Phil. 1:6). Here is a king who once has begun to

make war against the Devil and the lusts of men, goes on and ceases not until He has obtained a full and perfect conquest. He is a builder who, having once laid the foundation of grace in the heart of man, gives not over until He has finished the house, and made the house of man a perfect temple for His Spirit to dwell in.

True and saving grace once felt and tasted is most highly prized and most earnestly desired (1 Peter 2:2–3). As the love of money grows according to the growth of money, so does the love of grace in accord with the growth of grace. The more a man has of it and the more his soul thirsts and longs after it, the more he desires to be filled with it. The thirst of a man with dropsy increases by drinking. He who has the least grace puts the lowest price upon it. No man is more sensible of the want of grace than he who has the greatest measure of grace; no man more desires the increase of grace than he who has the greatest fullness of grace.

Take heed then of apostasy and backsliding. Be not like Gideon's soldiers whose hearts fainted. Be not like the builder in the gospel that began to build but could not make an end (Luke 14:30). Do not with the pig return again and wallow in the mire of sin (2 Peter 2:22). Return not to your old lusts and profaneness, but as Noah, having a pattern from the Lord, began to build and ceased not until he had finished his ark and was preserved when the deluge came (Gen. 6:14, 22), so you, having had a pattern of faith and life set before you and having begun to build according to it, cease not until the work is finished that your souls may be saved when the deluge comes. Be not like the sun in Ajalon that stood still. Nor be like the sun in the dial of Ahaz that went back (2 Kings 20:11). But be like the sun mentioned by the psalmist, coming forth as a bridegroom out of his chamber and rejoicing as a mighty man to run his race (Ps. 19:5). Where is your faith in Christ

if, like withered branches, you fall away from Christ or sink like the house built on the sand? Where is your love to Christ if you give Him a bill of divorce and hold not out with Him to the end? Where is the fruit of your long attendance upon God's ordinances? What avails the sowing of all this seed if you fall away before the harvest? Where is the crown you look for if you faint before the conquest?

Oh then, take heed, hold out, let your works be more at last than at the first. Be constant in your profession; be fruitful in all well-doing. Be filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are to the praise and glory of God in the day of Christ Jesus (Phil. 1:11). So will the Lord take pleasure in you. So will you honor the gospel, adorn religion, shame the adversary, glorify the ministry, and fill your own conscience with much peace and quietness, and give the minister good and just occasion to speak to you with comforting language—to bid you with Paul to be of good comfort.

A Legacy of Consolation

The second legacy which the apostle here bestows is a legacy of consolation: "Be of good comfort." Though many changes come, many troubles arise, and many afflictions be endured for the name and cause of Christ, yet do not faint. Be not disheartened, but be of good comfort. Console and comfort yourselves in the Lord and His Word.

Hence learn that God's children ought to be very comforted, though many changes and afflictions do attend them. The lily is fresh and beautiful and looks pleasant, though growing among the thorns. Such must be the affection and disposition of God's children though compassed about with the thorns and briars of many troubles. "Count it all joy," James said, "when ye fall into divers temptations" (James 1:2). "We glory in tribulations," Paul said, "knowing that tribulation worketh

patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed” (Rom. 5:3–5). And, “believing,” Peter said, “ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory” (1 Peter 1:8). God’s children have great cause for comfort.

With regard to the author of their afflictions. They come from God as a father (Heb. 12:7). They are not a rod in an enemy’s, but a Father’s, hand. They are all sent in mercy. They are as a serpent which has lost its sting—the venom is gone.

With regard to their end. They are not for punishment, but for chastisement; not for destruction, but for reformation, humiliation, and excitation—as David sent forth his army against Absalom, not to destroy him (2 Samuel 18), but to humble and amend him.

With regard to the comforts mixed with them. It is bitter medicine lapped up in sugar. Like Samson’s lion, they have a honeycomb within them. There is sweet coming out of the sower, and meat coming out of the eater (Judges 14).

With regard to the fruit and conclusion of them. Like the waters of the Red Sea, which did not drown Israel but rather the enemies which pursued them (Exodus 14), no more do these destroy God’s children, but destroy the corruption which is within them which hangs like a heavy weight about them and like an enemy pursues and follows them.

Oh then, be of good comfort, all you that love the Lord, that embrace His Christ, and that delight in His service. Keep yourselves from sin, and whatsoever comes let your hearts be joyful. The Lord will give you comfort. God will comfort you as a king comforts his subjects, dispensing all for your good by His gracious providence, and as a father his children, by making all provision for you. Christ will comfort you as a friend by his presence, and as a bridegroom by his love. The Spirit will comfort you as a witness by his evidence. The Word will comfort you as a light guiding you and as a feast feeding

you. The minister will comfort you as an interpreter, an angel of God, one of a thousand bringing the tidings of peace to you. The creature will comfort you as a servant ministering all his service to you. The servants of God will comfort you as companions with you. Your conscience will comfort you as a blessed inmate dwelling under the same roof with you, and as a chaste and loving wife who lodges in your bosom day and night. You will have comfort and be of one mind.

A Legacy of Consent

The third legacy bestowed by Paul to the Corinthians is a legacy of consent and unity in matter of doctrine, religion, study, and practice of all godliness, teaching us that there must be unity and consent among God's children in matter of doctrine and religion. All who built Noah's ark built it by one pattern. All Israel traveled to the land of Canaan by the light of one fiery pillar. All the passengers in a ship row by one compass. All who intend to build themselves a spiritual house to God must build by one rule of God's Word. All who will travel to the heavenly Canaan must make one Word of God the light of their feet and the lantern of their path to guide them. All who will come to the haven of eternal peace must have one testimony of the Lord to direct them. "Let us walk," the apostle said, "by the same rule, let us mind the same thing" (Phil. 3:16). And again, "Being of one accord, of one mind" (Phil. 2:2).

We have one spiritual and heavenly King, and we must observe one law. We have one God and must worship by one rule. We have one Shepherd and must be commanded by one voice. We have one Head and must follow one direction.

He who dissents from true doctrine makes his religion an abomination. He who rends himself from the church of Christ in Christ's worship and service here will be rent from

Christ and the church forever hereafter. As we therefore are members of one body and students in one school, let us learn one lesson and follow one guide, that we may know rightly, believe rightly, and preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, living both with God and among ourselves in a sweet and blessed peace.

A Legacy of Mutual Unity, Peace, and Agreement

The fourth legacy which Paul here bequeaths is a legacy of mutual unity, peace, and agreement among themselves. He thereby teaches us that there must be a mutual, sweet, and entire peace and affection among God's people. As there was a fitness among the stones in Solomon's temple (they were so fitted and disposed that there was no noise heard in the building thereof), such a sweet conjunction of affections should there be between the people of God, that no noise and no clamor nor cries should be heard among them. Peace is a jewel which we are charged to seek: "Seek peace, and pursue it," the psalmist said (Ps. 34:14). "Be at peace among yourselves" (1 Thess. 5:13), and "Let brotherly love continue" (Heb. 13:1), the apostle said. This is an honor, crown, and ornament (Col. 3:12) to man, as the garment to the body and as the flower to the garden. This is a necessary ingredient in all our services (1 Cor. 16:14) and a salt seasoning all our actions. This sweetens all our possessions and all our afflictions, as the tree sweetened the waters of Mara (Ex. 15:25). With this, the fullness of the world is uncomfortable. With this, the greatest affliction is made very tolerable. This qualifies and fits us for communion with God, as communion with the children prepares a man for communion with the parent.

Remember then, your God is the God of peace; your Jesus is the Prince of Peace; your calling the calling of peace; and

your way the way of peace. And, therefore, so live in peace, that the God of love and peace may be with you.

A Legacy of Sweet and Gracious Communion with God

The fifth and last legacy here bestowed: sweet and gracious communion with God, whom Paul calls the God of peace and love because He is the author and fountain of all love and peace. He desires and promises them communion with God as a thing in which consisted their supreme and choicest good.

Sweet and comfortable communion with God is man's choicest good. Wherein stands the happiness of a child, but in communion with his father? Absalom's life was but a burden when he might not see his father's face (2 Sam. 14:32). Wherein stands the comfort of a wife but in communion with her husband? And wherein consists the happiness and comfort of the soul of man but in having fellowship and communion with God, his heavenly Father and Husband? For this the souls of God's people have most vehemently longed. This they have most highly prized. In the fruition of this, they have pronounced themselves most blessed. And for this Christ's apostles have prayed on the behalf of others, as for that gift and blessing which of all others is most desirable.

Oh, therefore, humble your souls, remove your sins, and return to God speedily, fully, and unchangeably. Attend His ordinances, believe His promises, walk in the ways of His commandments, and grow up in Christ Jesus. You will then have that communion with God which will encourage you against all fears, comfort you in the midst of all sorrows, sustain you in all distresses, satisfy you in the absence of all abilities, be an abundant recompense for all losses, and be a beginning of that eternity of communion which you will have forever with God in heaven.

And now, brethren, the star of my ministry is here set, and the candle of my labors is gone out, no more to be lighted (as I conceive) in this place. I am now no more, no longer a watchman to admonish you, a guide to conduct you, or a shepherd to feed you. The God that sent me and set me here among you has now again called me from you and placed another over you to be, I trust, an instrument of greater good than I have been to you.

Of myself, brethren, I can say nothing, but as Gideon said of himself, “My family is poor [the meanest] in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father’s house” (Judg. 6:15). So may I say that my talent is (of many) the meanest, and I am the least, the weakest, and unworthiest of many thousand ministers in God my Father’s house. I am but a wooden vessel; the treasure is the Lord’s. I am but as a worm, and no man; I am nothing; it is the Lord who has done all that little good which has been done by me in this function. Let me therefore for the time to come, be reputed as nothing, forgotten like a dead man out of mind, and like a broken vessel, and if any soul has benefited under my labors, let all the glory be given to Christ Jesus.

For myself I have something to say, but not much. I have now served you more than two apprenticeships, wherein, I trust, I have so served you, that I may say, as Paul did to the men of Ephesus, “I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God” (Acts 20:26–27)—all that, I mean, which God has made known to me, according to my weak and poor abilities. I have disclosed all. I have kept back nothing from you. In the work of my ministry I have had no respect of persons. I never shunned the declaration of any truth, nor spared the reprehension of any vice for fear of any man’s greatness. Neither did favor nor fear ever make me false in the discharge of my office. As Elihu once said, “I have not accepted any man’s person,

nor given flattering titles to any man: for I knew not to give flattering titles, because in so doing my Maker would take me away” (Job 32:21–22). I have truly desired the salvation of your souls, and that is my comfort. I should have done more than I have done, and that is my shame. More labor has been bestowed than profit yet appears, and that is your sin and my discomfort. My service has been long among you. The longer I served you, the more I loved you, and the more unwilling I was to leave you. I can truly say to you what Paul said to the Corinthians, “You were in my heart to live and to die with you, my mouth was open to you, and my heart was enlarged. Ye were not straitened in me, but ye were straitened in your own bowels” (2 Cor. 6:11–12). Had your hearts (at least according to your present outward expression) been toward me as mine was toward you, I am persuaded nothing but death would have parted us, as once Ruth said to Naomi. I should have valued your love, your company, and the enjoyment of your presence above the chiefest and most abundant worldly abilities. I should have chosen rather to have lived with you in the lowest outward condition than elsewhere in the greatest fullness of the world. So unwilling was I to leave you, that if occasion had required, I would have relinquished all rather than any prejudice should have come to you by my departure from you. But God has so disposed and framed it that no impediment to my departure hence has been offered. It is the hand of God that has done it—whether in judgment to me or in mercy to you, ensuing time will manifest.

Three things there are that are very memorable concerning God’s goodness in this place toward me, which I cannot pass in silence.

First, in all this time of my service, I was never hindered one Lord’s Day by sickness from my ministerial labors. The

Lord who set me over you gave me health and strength to do His work among you.

Second, I was never suppressed nor restrained from the liberty and use of my ministry by any opposition, though there have been adversaries both political and powerful.

Third, though in this place I have had neither certainty nor competency to sustain me and my family, yet the Lord has elsewhere raised means to uphold me and to enable me to continue the labors of my ministry among you. I can truly speak to you in Paul's language to the men of Ephesus, "I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel." Yes, you yourselves do, or at least may, know how these hands have, after a sort, "ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me" (Acts 20:33-34). (I speak not this to disparage you, nor to undervalue the kindness which I have received from you. I am very mindful and very sensible of your favors, from the highest to the lowest. And though I am not [very] complimentary, yet be assured your courtesy and kindness will rest with me, as a strong and inviolable obligation to bind me to your everlasting service, even to the very utmost of my slender abilities, to my power, and beyond my power, if ever, and as often as occasion will require it or you manifest your desire of it.) And what will I say of these things, or how will I express myself toward my God for these His great mercies toward me, but in the words of the psalmist: "Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men!" (Ps. 31:19).

And now, brethren, having no more time nor place nor calling to instruct and teach you, to admonish and warn you, oh, let me, as a lover of your souls, a helper of your joy, a promoter of your peace, and a well-wisher of your everlasting welfare, I say, with burning love in my heart, with melting sorrow in my soul, with tears of grief in my eyes, and with the

language of a faithful friend in my tongue—let me entreat you and persuade and beseech you to remember what you have heard, to practice what you have learned, and to bring forth the fruits of the seed which has been here sown. And before I go, let me bless you as Moses blessed the twelve tribes before he died:

Let the men of this place, O Lord, live and not die. Let them live the life of grace and not die the second death. And let not the men thereof be few. Hear, Lord, the voice of Plympton when they pray, and bring them in peace and holiness to their own people. Let their hands be sufficient for them. Teach Thou their hands to war and their fingers to fight, and gird Thou them with strength to battle against sin, Satan, the world, and all the enemies of their salvation. Be Thou their helper in all dangers, their strength against all oppositions (Deut. 33:6–7).

Let Thy Thummim and Thy Urim, Thy perfections and Thy lights, be with Thy holy one whom Thou will set over this congregation. Let him prefer his duty and function above all natural affection and have no respect of persons. Let him teach this people Thy judgments and Thy law by his doctrine. Let him appease Thy wrath and procure Thy favor and blessing for them by prayer and supplication. Bless, Lord, his substance. Furnish and fill him with all inward and outward endowments and prosper all his godly labors.

Let this people, Lord, as Thy beloved, dwell in safety by Thee, and cover them under the wings of Thy protection all the day long, and forever dwell, oh Lord, between their shoulders. Establish and settle with them Thine ordinance. Make this place Thy habitation and Thy rest forever.

The Lord bless your land with the precious things of heaven, with the influence and moisture from above, and make it fertile. The Lord bless your souls with all heavenly

graces and make you spiritually fruitful, for the good will of him that dwelt in the bush. Let the blessing, even all good things, speedily, fully, sweetly, and constantly come upon your heads, that all may see and observe it and learn how good it is to serve the Lord through the observation of it.

The Lord make your glory like the firstling of a bullock, for your joy and gladness, for your excellency and amiableness in the eyes of all beholders, and for your growth in all spiritual gifts and graces. May He make your horns like the horns of an unicorn for your strength and prevailing over all opposing powers.

The Lord make you to rejoice in your going out and in your tents. The Lord bring you to His holy mountain and make you there to offer the sacrifice of righteousness. The Lord enlarge you in dissolving all your sins, in dispelling all your sorrows, in removing all your troubles, and in filling you with all temporal and heavenly fullness. And may He make you like a lion for your victory over all your adversaries, for your vigilance and watchfulness, and for your resolution and courage in all godly undertakings. The Lord satisfy you with His favor. The Lord fill you with His blessing and make you acceptable in His eyes and in the eyes of your brethren.

And let me charge you now, brethren, before my ministerial breath expire, as David a little before his death charged his son Solomon: And you, my brethren, know ye the God of your fathers, and serve Him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind, “for the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever” (1 Chron. 28:9).

Let me now, before I leave you and in the conclusion of my ministry, pray for you, as Peter did for the people in the conclusion of his epistle: “The God of all grace, who hath

called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you” (1 Peter 5:10). And being now to leave you, as once Paul left Ephesus, let me commend you to God in the words of Paul: “And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified” (Acts 20:32). And as I this day begun, so let me this day forever conclude: “Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.”