**A Call to the Unconverted!**

Richard Baxter, 1657

***~~To all unsaved people who shall read this book—especially my hearers in the Parish of Kidderminster.~~***

Men and brethren,
The eternal God, who made you for life everlasting, and has redeemed you by his only Son, when you had lost it and yourselves, being mindful of you in your sin and misery, has indited the gospel, and sealed it by his Spirit, and commanded his ministers to preach it to the world—that pardon being freely offered you, and Heaven being set before you, he might call you off from your fleshly pleasures, and from following after this deceitful world, and acquaint you with the life that you were created and redeemed for, before you are dead and past remedy.

He sends you not prophets or apostles, who receive their message by immediate revelation; but yet he calls you by his ordinary ministers, who are commissioned by him to preach the same gospel which Christ and his apostles first delivered. The Lord sees how you forget him and your latter end, and how light you make of everlasting things—as men that understand not what they have to do or suffer. He sees how bold you are in sin, and how fearless of threatenings, and how careless of your souls, and how the works of *infidels*are in your lives—while the belief of *Christians*is in your mouths. He sees the dreadful day at hand, when your sorrows will begin, and you must lament all this with fruitless cries in torment and desperation. Then the remembrance of your folly will tear your hearts—if not truly converted in this life.

In compassion of your sinful miserable souls, the Lord, who better knows your case than you can know it, has made it our duty to speak to you in his name, 2 Corinthians 5:19, and to tell you plainly of your sin and misery, and what will be your end, and how sad a change you will shortly see—if yet you go on a little longer in sin. Having bought you at so dear a rate as the blood of his son Jesus Christ, and made you so free and general promise of pardon, and grace, and everlasting glory—he commands us to offer all this to you, as the gift of God, and to entreat you to consider of the necessity and worth of what he offers.

He sees and pities you—while you are drowned in worldly cares and pleasures, and eagerly following childish toys, and wasting that short and precious *time*for vanities—in which you should make ready for an everlasting life. Therefore he has commanded us to call after you, and tell you how you lose your life, and are about to lose your souls, and to tell you what greater and better things you might certainly have—if you would hearken to his call, Isaiah 55:1-3.

We believe and obey the voice of God; and come to you on his message, who has charged us to preach, and be instant with you in season and out of season, and to lift up our voice like a trumpet, and show your transgressions and your sins, Isaiah 8:1. 2 Timothy 4:1, 2. But alas! to the grief of our souls and your own undoing, you stop your ears, you stiffen your necks, you harden your hearts, and send us back to God with groans, to tell him that we can do no good on you, nor scarcely get a sober hearing.

Oh! that our eyes were a fountain of tears, that we might lament our ignorant, careless people—who have Christ before them, and pardon, and life, and Heaven before them, and who have not hearts to know or value them! They might have Christ, and grace, and glory—as well as others, if it were not for their willful negligence and contempt! O that the Lord would fill our hearts with more compassion to these miserable souls, that we might cast ourselves even at their feet, and follow them to their houses, and speak to them with our bitter tears! Long have we preached to many of them in vain. We study *plainness*to make them understand, and many of them will not understand us. We study serious, piercing words, to make them feel—but they will not feel.

If the *greatest*matters would work with them—we would awaken them.

If the *sweetest*things would work with them—we would entice them and win their hearts.

If the most *dreadful*things would work—we would at least affright them from their wickedness.

If *truth*and *certainty*would work with them—we would soon convince them.

If the God who made them, and the Christ who bought them, might be heard—the case would soon be altered with them.

If *scripture*might be heard—we would soon prevail.

If *reason*, even the best and strongest reason, might be heard—we would not doubt but we would speedily convince them.

If *experience*might be heard, even their own experience, and the experience of all the world—the matter would be mended.

Yes, if the *conscience*within them might be heard—the case would be better with them than it is.

But if nothing will be heard—then what then shall we do for them? If the dreadful God of Heaven is slighted—then who shall be regarded? If the inestimable love and blood of a Redeemer is made light of—then what then shall be valued? If Heaven has no desirable glory with them, and everlasting joys are worth nothing, if they can jest at Hell, and dance about the bottomless pit, and play with the consuming fire—and that when God and man warn them of it—then what shall we do for such souls as these?

Once more, in the name of the God of Heaven, I shall teach the message to you which he has commanded us, and leave it in these standing lines to convert you or to condemn you; to change you, or to rise up in judgment against you, and to be a witness to your faces, that once you had a serious call to turn.

Hear, all you who are drudges of the world, and the servants of flesh and Satan! Hear, all you who spend your days in looking after prosperity on earth, and drown your consciences in drinking, and gluttony, and idleness, and foolish sports, and know your sin—and yet will sin, as if you set God at defiance, and bid him do his worst and spare not! Hearken, all you who mind not God, and have no heart to holy things, and feel no favor in the Word or worship of the Lord, or in the thoughts or mention of eternal life, who are careless of your immortal souls, and never bestow one hour in inquiring what case they are in, whether sanctified or unsanctified, and whether you are ready to appear before the Lord! Hearken, all you who, by sinning in the light, have brought yourselves into infidelity, and do not believe the Word of God. He who has an ear to hear, let him hear the *gracious*and yet the *dreadful*call of God!

His eye is all this while upon you! Your sins are registered, and you shall surely hear of them again. God keeps the book now; and he will write it all upon your consciences with his terrors; and then you also shall keep it yourselves. O sinners, that you knew but *what*you are doing—and *whom*you are all this while offending! The sun itself is darkness before that Majesty, which you daily abuse and carelessly provoke. The sinning angels were not able to stand before him, but were cast down to be tormented devils. And dare such *silly worms as you*so carelessly offend, and set yourselves against your Maker!

O that you did but a little know what case that wretched soul is in, which has engaged the living God against him! The words of his mouth, who made you—can unmake you! The frown of his face will cut you off and cast you out into utter darkness. How eager are the devils to be tempting you—they do but wait for the word from God to take and use you as their own—and then in a moment you will be in Hell!

If God is against you—then all things are against you. This world is but your prison, for all you so love it—you are but reserved in it to the day of wrath, Job 21:30. The Judge is coming—and your soul is even going. Yet a little while, and your friend shall say of you, "He is dead!" And you shall *see*the things that you now despise, and *feel*that which now you will not believe. Death will bring such an argument as you cannot answer—an argument that shall effectually confute your cavils against the words and ways of God, and all your self-conceited foolishness. And then how soon will your mind be changed? Then be an unbeliever if you can—stand then to all your former words, which you were accustomed to utter against a holy and a heavenly life. Make good that cause then before the Lord, which you were accustomed to plead against your teachers, and against the people that feared God. Then stand to your old opinions and contemptuous thoughts of the diligence of the saints.

Make ready now your strongest reasons, and stand up then before the Judge, and plead like a man for your fleshly, your worldly, and ungodly life. But know that you will have One to plead with, that will not be outsmarted by you—nor so easily put off as we your fellow-creatures.

O poor soul! there is nothing but a slender veil of flesh between you and that amazing sight, which will quickly silence you, and turn your tone, and make you of another mind! As soon as death has drawn this curtain—you shall see that which will quickly leave you speechless.

And how quickly will that day and hour come! When you have had but a few more merry hours, and but a few more pleasant draughts and morsels, and a little more of the honors and riches of the world—then your portion will be spent, and your pleasures ended, and all is then gone that you set your heart upon. Of all that you sold your Savior and salvation for, there is nothing left but the *heavy reckoning*.

As a thief, who sits merrily spending the money in an alehouse which he has stolen, when men are riding in post-haste to apprehend him—so it is with you. While you are drowned in cares or fleshly pleasures, and making merry with your own shame—death is coming in post-haste to seize upon you, and carry your souls to such a place and state as now you little know or think of.

Suppose, when you were bold and busy in your sin, that a messenger were but coming post from London to apprehend you and take away your lives. Though you saw him not—yet if you knew that he was coming, it would mar your mirth, and you would be thinking of the haste he makes, and hearkening when he knocked at your door.

O that you could but see what haste death makes—though yet he has not overtaken you! No post so swift! No messenger more sure! As sure as the sun will be with you in the morning, though it has many thousand and hundred thousand miles to go in the night—so sure will death be quickly with you! And then, where is your sport and pleasure? Then will you jest and brave it out? Then will you jeer at those who warned you? Then is it better to be a believing saint—or a sensual worldling? "And then whose shall all these things be" that you have gathered? Luke 12:19-21.

Do you not observe that days and weeks are quickly gone, and nights and mornings come apace, and speedily follow each other? You sleep, "but your damnation slumbers not!" You linger, "but your judgment this long time lingers not!"—to which "you are reserved for punishment!" O that you were wise to understand this, and that you considered your latter end!" "He who has an ear to hear—let him hear the call of God in this day of his salvation."

O careless sinners—that you did but know the love that you unthankfully neglect, and the preciousness of the blood of Christ which you despise! O that you did but know the riches of the gospel! O that you did but know, a little know, the certainty, and the glory, and blessedness, of that everlasting life, which now you will not set your hearts upon, nor be persuaded first and diligently to seek! Did you but understand the endless life with God which you now neglect—how quickly would you cast away your sin—how quickly would you change your mind and life, your course and company, and turn the streams of your affections, and lay your care another way! How resolutely would you scorn to yield to such temptations as now deceive you and carry you away! How zealously would you bestir yourselves for that most blessed life! How earnest you would be with God in prayer! How diligent you would be in hearing, and learning, and inquiring! How serious you would be in meditating on the laws of God! How fearful of sinning in thought, word, or deed; and how careful to please God and grow in holiness you would be! O what a changed people you would be!

And why should not the certain Word of God be believed by you, and prevail with you—which opens to you these glorious and eternal things?

Yes, let me tell you, that even here on earth, you little know the difference between the life which you refuse—and the life which you would choose. The sanctified are conversing with God, when you dare scarcely think of him, and when you are conversing with but earth and flesh. Their conversation is in Heaven, when you are utter strangers to it, and your belly is your God, and you are minding earthly things! They are seeking after the face of God—when you seek for nothing higher than this poor world. They are busily laying out for an endless life, where they shall be equal with the angels—when you are taken up with a vain *shadow,*and a *transitory*things of earth. How base is your earthly, fleshly, sinful life—in comparison of the noble, spiritual life of true believers!

Many a time have I looked on such men with grief and pity, to see them trudge about the world, and spend their lives, and care, and labor—for nothing but a little food and clothing, or a little fading vanity, or fleshly pleasures, or empty honors—as if they had no higher things to mind. What difference is there between the lives of these men and of the beasts that perish—who spend their time in working, and eating, and living, but only that they may live? They taste not of the inward heavenly pleasures which believers taste and live upon.

I had rather have a little of their comfort, which the fore-thoughts of their heavenly inheritance afford them, though I had all their scorns and sufferings with it—than to have all your pleasures and treacherous prosperity. I would not have one of your secret gripes and pangs of conscience, and dark and dreadful thoughts of death and the Hell to come—for all that ever the world has done for you, or all that you can reasonably hope that it should do. If I were in your unconverted carnal state, and knew but what I know, and believed but what I now believe—methinks my life would he a fore-taste of Hell! How often would I be thinking of the terrors of the Lord of the dismal day that is hastening on! Surely death and Hell would be still before me. I would think of them by day, and dream of them by night. I would lie down in fear, and rise in fear, and live in fear—lest death should come before I were converted. I would have small felicity in anything that I possessed, and little pleasure in any company, and little joy in anything in the world, as long as I knew myself to be under the curse and wrath of God. I would be still afraid of hearing that voice, "You fool! This night shall your soul be required of you!" And that fearful sentence would he written upon my conscience, "There is no peace for the wicked!"

O poor lost sinners! You might have eternal life—if you were but truly willing to hearken to Christ, and come home to God. You might then draw near to God, with boldness, and call him your Father, and comfortably trust him with your souls and bodies. If you look upon the *promises*, you may say, "They are all mine!" If upon the curse, you may say, "From this I am delivered!" When you read the law, you may see what you are saved from! When you read the gospel, you may see him who has redeemed you, and see the course of his love, and holy life, and sufferings—in the work of your salvation. You may see *death*conquered, and *Heaven*opened, and your *resurrection*and *glorification*provided for—in the resurrection and glorification of your Lord.

If you look on the *saints*—you may say, "They are my brethren and companions." If on the unsanctified you may rejoice to think that you are saved from that dreadful state. If you look upon the heavens, the sun, and moon, and stars innumerable—you may think and say, "My Father's face is infinitely more glorious! He has prepared higher matters for his saints—yonder is but the outward court of Heaven. The *blessedness*that he has promised us is so much higher that flesh and blood cannot behold it."

If you think of the *grave*—you may remember that the Holy Spirit, a living Savior, and a loving Father—have all so near relation to your dust—that it cannot be forgotten or neglected, but more certainly revive than the plants and flowers in the spring, because that the soul is still alive, which is the root of the body; and Christ is alive, which is the root of both.

Even *death*, which is the king of fears, may be remembered and received with joy, as being the day of your deliverance from the remnants of sin and sorrow, and the day which you believed, and hoped, and waited for, when you shall *see*the blessed things which you had heard of, and shall find, by present joyful experience, what it was to choose the better part, and to be a sincere believing saint.

What do you say, Sir? Is not this a more delightful life, to be assured of salvation, and ready to die—than to live as the ungodly who have their hearts weighed down with carousing and drunkenness and the cares of this life, and so that day comes upon them unawares? Might you not live a comfortable life, if once you were made the heirs of Heaven, and sure to be saved when you leave the world? O look about you then, and think what you are doing, and cast not away such hopes as these for vanity and nothing. The flesh and world can give you no such hopes or comforts.

And besides all the misery that you bring upon *yourselves*—you are the troublers of *others*as long as you are unconverted. You trouble magistrates to rule you by their laws. You trouble ministers by resisting the light and guidance which they offer you. Your sin and misery are the greatest grief and trouble to them in the world. You trouble the commonwealth, and draw the judgments of God upon you. It is you who most disturb the holy peace and order of the churches, and hinder our union and reformation, and are the shame and trouble of the churches where you intrude, and of the places where you are.

Ah! Lord, how heavy and sad a case is this—that even in England, where the gospel abounds above any other nation in the world, where gospel teaching is so plain and common, and all the helps we can desire is at hand; when the sword has been hewing us, and judgment has run as a fire through the land; when deliverances have relieved us, and so many admirable mercies have engaged us to God, and to the gospel, and a holy life; that after all this, our cities, and towns, and countries, shall abound with multitudes of unholy men, and swarm with so much sensuality, as everywhere, to our grief, we see!

One would have thought, that after all this light, and all these blessings, and all these judgments and mercies of God—the people of this nation would have joined together, as one man, to turn to the Lord, and would have come to their godly teacher, and lamented all their former sins, and desired him to join with them in public humiliation, to confess them openly, and beg pardon of them from the Lord, and would have craved his instruction for the time to come, and be glad to be ruled by the Spirit within, and the ministers of Christ without, according to the Word of God.

One would think that, after such reason and scripture-evidence as they hear, and after all these means and mercies—there would not be an ungodly person left among us, nor a worldling, nor a drunkard, nor a hater of reformation, nor an enemy to holiness—to be found in all our towns or countries.

If we are not all agreed about some ceremonies or forms of government, one would think that, before this—we would have been all agreed to live a holy and heavenly life, in obedience to God, his Word, and ministers, and live in love and peace with one another. But alas! how far are our people from this course! Most of them, in most places, set their hearts on earthly things, and seek "not first the kingdom of God and his righteousness"—but look at holiness as a needless thing! Their families are prayerless, or else a few heartless lifeless words must serve instead of hearty, fervent, daily prayers; their children are not taught the knowledge of Christ, nor are they brought up in the nurture of the Lord, though they firmly promised all this in their baptism.

They do not instruct their servants in the matters of salvation—but only care that their work is done well. There are more railing speeches in their families—than gracious words that tend to edification.

How few are the families that fear the Lord, and inquire at his word and ministers how they should live, and what they should do, and are willing to be taught and ruled, and that heartily look after everlasting life! And those few whom God has made so happy—are commonly the by-word of their neighbors. When at the same time, we see some live in drunkenness, and some in pride and worldliness, and most of them have little care of their salvation, though the cause be gross and past all controversy—yet will they hardly be convinced of their misery, and more hardly recovered and reformed. But when we have done all that we are able to save them from their sins—we leave the most of them as dull as we find them.

And if, according to the law of God, we cast them out of the communion of the church, when they have obstinately rejected all our admonitions—they rage at us as if we were their enemies, and their hearts are filled with malice against us, and they will sooner set themselves against the Lord and his laws, and church, and ministers—than against their deadly sins.

This is the doleful case of England: we have magistrates who countenance the ways of godliness, and a happy opportunity for unity and reformation is before us, and faithful ministers long to see the right ordering of the church and of the ordinances of God; but the power of sin in our people frustrates almost all. Almost nowhere can a faithful minister set up the unquestionable *discipline*of Christ, or put back the most scandalous impenitent sinners from the communion of the church and participation of the sacraments—but the most of the people rail at them and revile them; as if these ignorant careless souls were wiser than their teachers, or than God himself.

And thus in the day of our visitation, when God calls upon us to reform his church, though magistrates seem willing, and faithful ministers seem willing—yet are the multitude of the people still unwilling, and have so *blinded*themselves, and *hardened*their hearts, that, even in these days of light and grace, they are the *obstinate enemies*of light and grace, and will not be brought by the calls of God to see their folly, and know what is for their good. O that the people of England "knew at least in this their day, the things that belong unto their peace—before they are hidden from their eyes!"

O foolish miserable souls! Who has bewitched your minds into such madness, and your hearts into such deadness—that you should be such mortal enemies to yourselves, and go on so obstinately towards damnation—that neither the Word of God, nor the persuasions of men, can change your minds, or stop you, until you are past remedy!

Well, lost sinners! this life will not last always. God's patience will not always wait upon you. Do not think that you shall abuse your Maker and Redeemer, and serve his enemies, and debase your souls, and trouble the world, and wrong the church, and reproach the godly, and grieve your teachers, and hinder reformation—and not be punished. You know not yet what this must cost you—but you must shortly know, when the righteous God shall take you in hand, who will handle you in another manner than the sharpest magistrates or the plainest-dealing pastors did—unless you prevent the everlasting torments by a sound conversion, and a speedy obeying of the call of God. "He who has an ear to hear, let him hear," while mercy has a voice to call.

One objection I find most common in the mouths of the ungodly, especially of late years—they say, "We can do nothing without God, we cannot have grace if God will not give it us; and, if he will, we shall quickly turn; if he has not predestined us, and will not turn us—then how can we turn ourselves or be saved? It is not in him who wills nor in him who runs." And thus they think they are *excused*.

I have answered this formerly—but let me now say this much.

1. Though you cannot cure yourselves—you can hurt and poison yourselves. It is God that must sanctify your hearts—but who has corrupted them? Will you willfully take poison—because you cannot cure yourselves? Methinks you should the more forbear it. You should the more take heed of sinning, if you cannot mend what sin mars.

2. Though you cannot be converted without the special grace of God—yet you must know that God gives his grace in the use of his holy means which he has appointed to that end. Common grace may enable you to forbear your gross sinning (as to the outward act) and to use those means. Can you truly say that you do as much as you are able to do? You are not able to go by an alehouse-door, or to forbear the company that hardens you in sin. Are you not able to hear the word, and think of what you heard when you come home, and to consider with yourselves of your own condition and of everlasting things? Are you not able to read good books from day to day, at least the Lord's-day, and to converse with those who fear the Lord? You cannot say you have done what you are able.

3. And therefore you must know that you can forfeit the grace and help of God by your willful sinning or negligence—though you cannot, without grace, turn to God. If you will not do what you can—then it is just with God to deny you that grace by which you might do more.

4. As for *God's decrees*, you must know that they do not separate the end and means, but tie them together. God never decreed to save any but the sanctified—nor to damn any but the unsanctified. God does as truly decree whether your land, this year, be barren or fruitful, and just how long you shall live in the world—as he has decreed whether you shall be saved or not; and yet you would think that man but a fool that would forbear ploughing and sowing, and say, "If God has decreed that my ground shall bear corn, it will bear, whether I plough and sow or not. If God has decreed that I shall live, I shall live, whether I eat or not; but if he has not, it is not eating that will keep me alive."

Do you know how to answer such a man, or do you not? If you do, then you know how to answer yourselves; for the case is alike God's decree is as peremptory about your bodies as your souls. If you do not, then try first your conclusions upon your bodies, before you venture to try them on your soul. See first whether God will keep you alive without food or clothing, and whether he will give you corn without tillage and labor, and whether he will bring you to your journey's end without a carriage. And, if you speed well in this—then try whether he will bring you to Heaven without your diligent use of means, and sit down and say, "We cannot sanctify ourselves."

Well, Sirs, I have but three requests to you, and I am done.

**First**, That you will seriously read over this small Treatise; (and, if you have such as need it in your families, that you would read it over and over to them; and if those who fear God would go now and then to their ignorant neighbor, and read this or some other book to them on this subject, they might be a means of winning of souls). If we cannot entreat so small a labor of men, for their own salvation, as to read such short instructions as these—they set little value of themselves, and will most justly perish.

**Secondly**, When you have read over this book, I would entreat you to go alone, and ponder a little what you have read, and bethink, as in the sight of God, whether it is not true, and do not nearly touch your souls, and whether it is not time to look about you. And also entreat you, that you will upon your knees beseech the Lord that he will open your eyes to understand the truth, and turn your hearts to the love of God, and beg of him all that saving grace which you have so long neglected, and follow it on from day to day, until your hearts be changed. And withal, that you will go to your pastors, (that are set over you, to take care of the health and safety of your souls, as physicians do for the health of your bodies), and ask them to direct what course to take, and acquaint them with your spiritual estate, and that you may have the benefit of their advice and ministerial help.

Or, if you have not a faithful pastor at home, make use of some other in so great a need.

**Thirdly**, When by reading, consideration, prayer, and ministerial advice, you are once acquainted with your sin and misery, with your duty and remedy—then delay not, but presently forsake your sinful company and courses, and turn to God, and obey his call. As you love your souls, take heed that you go not on against so loud a call of God, and against your own knowledge and consciences, lest it go worse with you in the day of judgment than with Sodom and Gomorrah.

Inquire of God, as a man that is willing to know the truth, and not be a willful cheater of his soul. Search the holy scriptures daily, and see whether these things be so or not. Try impartially whether it is safer to trust Heaven or earth, and whether it is better to follow God or man, the spirit or the flesh, and better to live in holiness or sin, and whether an unsanctified estate is safe for you to abide in one day longer. And when you have found out which is best, then resolve accordingly, and make your choice without any more ado.

If you will be true to your own souls, and do not love everlasting torments—then I beseech you, as from the Lord, that you will but take this reasonable advice. O what happy towns and countries, and what a happy nation might we have, if we could but persuade our neighbors to agree to such a necessary motion! What joyful men would all faithful ministers be—if they could but see their people truly heavenly and holy! This would be the unity, the peace, the safety, the glory, of our churches—the happiness of our neighbors, and the comfort of our souls. Then how comfortably would we preach pardon and peace to you! And with what love and joy might we live among you! At your death-bed how boldly might we comfort and encourage your departing souls! And at your burial, how comfortably might we leave you in the grave, in expectation to meet your souls in Heaven, and to see your bodies raised to that glory!

But, if still the most of you will go on in a careless, ignorant, fleshly, worldly, or unholy life—and all our desires and labors cannot so far prevail as to keep you from the willful damning of yourselves—then we must then imitate our Lord, who delights in those few who are his jewels, and in the little flock that shall receive the kingdom, when the most shall reap the misery which they sowed.

In nature excellent things are few. The world has not many suns or moons. Only a little of the earth is gold or silver. Princes and nobles are but a small part of the sons of men—and it is no great number that are learned, judicious, or wise, here in the world. And therefore, if the gate being strait and very narrow, there are but few that find salvation—yet God will have his glory and pleasure in those few. And when Christ shall come with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on those who know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ—his coming will be glorified in his saints, and admired in all true believers, 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10.

Reader, I have done with you, (when you have perused this book), but *sin*is not yet done with you, (even those sins that you thought had been forgotten long ago), and *Satan*is not yet done with you, (though now he be out of sight) and *God*is not yet done with you, because you will not be persuaded to be done with the deadly reigning sin. I have written you this persuasive as one who is going into another world, where the things are seen which I here speak of—and as one that knows you must be shortly there yourself. As ever you will meet me with comfort before the Lord who made us; as ever you will escape the everlasting plagues prepared for the final neglectors of salvation; and for all who are not sanctified by the Holy Spirit, and love not the communion of the saints; and as ever you hope to see the face of Christ the judge, and of the majesty of the Father, with peace and comfort, and to be received into glory when you are turned naked out of this world—I beseech you, I charge you, to hear and obey the call of God, and resolvedly to turn that you may live.

But, if you will not, even when you have no true reason for it but because you will not—then I summon you to answer it before the Lord, and require you there to bear me witness that I gave you warning, and that you were not condemned for lack of a call to turn and live—but because you would not believe it and obey it; which also must be the testimony of,

Your serious Monitor,
Richard Baxter, December 11, 1657

Ezekiel 33:11. "Say to them: As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, O house of Israel?"

It has been the astonishing wonder of many a man, as well as myself, to read in the holy Scripture, how *few*will be saved; and that the greatest part, even of those that are called, will be everlastingly shut out of the kingdom of Heaven, and be tormented with the devils in eternal fire! Infidels do not believe when they *read*it, and therefore they must *feel*it. Those who do believe it are forced to cry out with Paul, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

But nature itself does teach us all to lay the blame of evil works upon the doers—and therefore, when we see any heinous thing done, a *principle of justice* provokes us to inquire after him who did it, that the evil of the work may return the evil of shame upon the author. If we saw a man killed and cut in pieces, we would presently ask, "Oh! who did this heinous deed?" If the town was willfully set on fire, you would ask, "Oh! what wicked wretch did this?"

In the same way, when we read that most will be firebrands of Hell forever—we must needs think with ourselves, how comes this to pass? Whose fault is it? Who is it that is so cruel as to be the cause of such a thing as this?

We can meet with few that will own the guilt. It is indeed confessed by all that *Satan*is the cause—but that does not resolve the question, because he is not the principal cause. He cannot *force*men to sin, but merely tempt them to it—and leaves it to their own wills whether they will do it or not. He does not carry men to an alehouse and force open their mouths, and pour in the drink; nor does he bind them that they cannot go to God's service; nor does he force holy thoughts from their hearts. It lies therefore between God himself and the sinner; one of them must needs be the principal cause of all this misery, whichever it is—for there is no other to cast it upon. God disclaims it—he will not take it upon him. The wicked disclaim it usually, and they will not take it upon them. And this is the controversy that is here managed in my text.

The Lord complains of the people—and the people think it is the fault of God. The same controversy is handled in Ezekiel chapter 18, verse 25, where they plainly say, "that the way of the Lord is not equal!" And God says, "it is their ways that are not equal." So they say, "If our transgressions and our sins be upon us, and we pine away in them—how shall we then live?" As if they should say—if we must die, and be miserable, how can we help it? As if it were not their fault, but God's. But God in my text clears himself of it, and tells them how they may help it if they will, and persuades them to use means—and if they will not be persuaded, he lets them know that it is their own fault; and, if this will not satisfy them, he will not therefore forbear to punish them. It is he who will be their judge, and he will judge them according to their ways; they are no judges of him or themselves, as lacking authority, and wisdom, and impartiality. Nor is it the caviling with God, which shall serve their turn, or save them from the execution of justice, at which they murmur.

The words of this verse contain:

1. God's clearing of himself from the blame of their destruction. This he does not by disowning his judgments and execution according to that law, or by giving them any hope that the law shall not be executed—but by professing that it is not their death that he takes pleasure in, but their returning rather, that they may live. And this he confirms to them by his oath.

2. An express exhortation to the wicked to return, wherein God does not only command, but persuade and condescend also to reason the case with them: Why will they die? The direct end of his exhortation is, that they may turn and live.

The secondary or reserved ends, upon supposition that this is not attained, are these two:

First, to convince them by the means which he used, that it is not the fault of God if they are everlastingly miserable.

Secondly, to convince them from their manifest wilfulness in rejecting all his commands and persuasions—that it is the fault of themselves; and they die, because they will die.

The substance of the text lies in these observations following.

Doctrine 1. It is the unchangeable law of God, that wicked men must turn or die.

Doctrine 2. It is the promise of God, that the wicked shall live, if they will but turn.

Doctrine 3. God takes pleasure in men's conversion and salvation; but not in their death or damnation. He had rather they would turn and live, than go on and die.

Doctrine 4. This is a most certain truth, which because God would not have men to question it—he has confirmed it to them solemnly by his oath.

Doctrine 5. The Lord does redouble his commands and persuasions to the wicked to turn

Doctrine 6. The Lord condescends to reason the case with them, and asks the wicked: Why they will die?

Doctrine 7. If after all this the wicked will not turn, it is not the fault of God that they perish—but of themselves; their own willfulness is the cause of their damnation; they therefore die, because they will die.

Having laid the text open before your eyes in these plain propositions, I shall next speak somewhat of each of them in order, though briefly.

 ***~~Doctrine 1. It is the unchangeable law of God, that wicked men must turn or die.~~***

If you will believe God—then believe this: there is but one of these two ways for every wicked man—either conversion or damnation. I know the wicked will hardly be persuaded either of the truth or equity of this. It is no wonder if the guilty quarrel with the law. Few men are apt to believe that which they would not have to be true, and fewer would have that to be true, which they apprehend to be against them. But it is not quarreling with the law, or with the judge—that will save the malefactor. Believing and regarding the law, might have prevented his death—but denying and accusing it will but hasten it. If it were not so, a hundred would bring their reasons against the law, for one that would bring his reason to the law. And men would rather give their reasons, why they should not be punished—than to hear the commands and reasons of their governors which require them to obey. The law was not made for you to judge—but that you might be ruled and judged by it.

But, if there are any so blind as to venture to question either the truth or the justice of this law of God—I shall briefly give you that evidence of both, which methinks should satisfy a reasonable man.

And first, if you doubt whether this is the Word of God or not, besides a hundred other texts, you may be satisfied by these few.

"Truly I say unto you, except you be converted and become as little children, you cannot enter into the kingdom of Heaven."

"Truly, truly, I say unto you, except a man is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new."

"Without holiness no man shall see God."

"So, then those who are in the flesh cannot please God."

"Now if any man has not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

"For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision avails anything nor uncircumcision, but a new creature."

"According to his abundant grace he has begotten us to a lively hope."

"Being born again not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which lives and abides forever."

"The wicked shall be turned into Hell, and all the nations that forget God."

"The Lord loves the righteous, but the wicked his soul hates."

As I need not stop to open up these texts, which are so plain—so I think I need not add any more of that multitude which speak the like. If you are a man who believes the Word of God, here is already enough to satisfy you—that the wicked must be converted or condemned. You are already brought so far, that you must either confess that this is true, or say plainly you will not believe the Word of God. And, if once you come to that pass, there are but small hopes of you—look to yourselves as well as you can, for, it is likely you will not be long out of Hell. You would be ready to fly in the face of him who should give you the lie—and yet you dare give the lie to God? But if you tell God plainly you will not believe him—then blame him not if he never more warns you—or if he forsakes you, and gives you up as hopeless. For to what purpose should he warn you, if you will not believe him?

Should he send an angel from Heaven to you, it seems you would not believe. For an angel can speak but the Word of God; and, if an angel should bring you any other gospel, you are not to receive it, but to hold him accursed (Galatians 1:8). And surely there is no angel to be believed before the Son of God, who came from the Father to bring us this doctrine. If he is not to be believed—then all the angels in Heaven are not to be believed. And if you stand on these terms with God, I shall leave you until he deals with you in a more convincing way.

God has a voice that will make you hear. Though he *entreats*you to hear the voice of his gospel, he will *make*you hear the voice of his condemning sentence, without entreaty! We cannot make you *believe*against your will—but God will make you *feel*against your will.

But let us hear what reason you have, why you will not believe this Word of God, which tells us that the wicked must be either converted or condemned. I know your reason; it is because that you judge it unlikely that God should be so unmerciful—you think it cruelty to damn men everlastingly for so small a thing as a sinful life. And this leads us to the second thing, which is, to*justify the equity of God in his laws and judgments.*

1. And first, I think you will not deny but that it is most suitable to an immortal soul to be ruled by laws that promise an eternal reward and threaten an endless punishment. Otherwise the law should not be suited to the nature of the subject, who will not be fully ruled by any lower means than the hopes or fears of everlasting things. As it is in case of temporal punishment—if a law were now made, that the most heinous crimes shall be punished with a hundred years captivity, this might be of some efficacy, as being equal to our lives. But, if there had been no other penalties before the flood, when men lived eight or nine hundred years, it would not have been sufficient, because men would know that they might have so many hundred years impunity afterwards. So it is in the present case.

2. I suppose that you will confess, that the promise of an endless and inconceivable *glory*is not so unsuitable to the wisdom of God, or the case of man. And why then should you not think so of the threatening of an endless and unspeakable *misery?*

3. When you find it in the Word of God that so it is, and so it will be—do you think yourselves fit to contradict this Word? Will you call your Maker to the bar, and examine his Word upon the accusation of falsehood? Will you judge him by the law of your conceits? Are you wiser, and better, and more righteous than he? Must the God of Heaven come to you to learn wisdom? Must infinite wisdom learn from folly? Must infinite Holiness be corrected by a selfish sinner who cannot keep himself an hour clean? Must the Almighty stand at the bar of a worm? O! horrid arrogance of senseless dust! Shall every mole, or clod, or dunghill—accuse the sun of darkness, and undertake to illuminate the world? Where were you when the Almighty made these laws, that he did not call you to his counsel? Surely he made them before you were born—without asking your advice! You came into the world too late to reverse them. If you could have done so great a work, you should have stepped out of your nothingness, and have contradicted Christ when he was on earth, or Moses before him, or have saved Adam and his sinful progeny from the threatened death, that so there might have been no need of Christ! And what if God withdraws his patience and sustenance, and lets you drop into Hell while you are quarreling with his Word? Will you *then*believe that there is no Hell?

4. If sin be such an evil that it requires the death of Christ for its expiation—then it is no wonder that it deserves our everlasting misery.

5. And if the sin of the *devils*deserved endless torment—then why not also the sin of *man?*

6. And methinks you should perceive, that it is not possible for the best of men, much less for the wicked—to be competent judges of the desert of sin. Alas! We are both blind and partial. You can never know fully the *desert*of sin—until you fully know, the *evil*of sin; and you can never fully know the evil of sin—until you fully know,

1 The excellency of the soul, which it deforms.

2. And the excellency of holiness, which it obliterates.

3. And the reason and excellency of the glory which it violates.

4. The excellency of the glory which it despises.

5. The excellency and office of reason, which it treads down.

6. No, nor until you know the infinite excellency, almightiness and holiness, of that *God*—against whom it is committed.

When you fully know all these, you shall fully know the desert of sin. Besides, you know that the *offender*is too partial to judge the law or the proceedings of the judge. We judge by feeling, which blinds our reason. We see, in common worldly things, that most men think that their own cause is right; and that all is wrong that is done against them. Let the most wise, or just impartial friends attempt to persuade them to the contrary, and it is all in vain. There are few children but think the father is unmerciful, or deals harshly with them, if he whips them. There is scarcely a thief or murderer that is hanged, but would accuse the law and judge of cruelty, if that would serve his turn.

7. Can you think that an unholy soul is fit for Heaven? Alas! they cannot love God there, nor do him any service which he can accept. They are contrary to God. They loathe that which he most loves—and love that which he abhors! They are incapable of that imperfect communion with him, which his saints here partake of. How then can they live in that perfect love of him, and full delight and communion with him, which is the blessedness of Heaven?

You do not accuse yourselves of unmercifulness—if you do not make your enemy your bosom Counselor. Yet you will blame the absolute Lord, the most wise and gracious Sovereign of the world—if he condemns the unconverted to perpetual misery.

 ***~~USE.~~***

I beseech you now, all who love your souls, that instead of quarreling with God and with his Word—you will presently stoop to it, and use it for good. All you who are unconverted in this assembly, take this as the undoubted truth of God: You must before long be converted, or condemned; there is no other way, but to turn or die. When God who cannot lie has told you this; when you hear it from the Maker and Judge of the world, it is time for him who has ears to hear.

By this time you may see what you have to trust to. *Unless you are converted, you are but dead and damned men!*Should I tell you otherwise, I should deceive you with a lie. Should I hide this from you, I should undo you, and be guilty of your blood, as the verses before my text assure me: verse 8, "When I say to the wicked, O wicked man, you shall surely die, if you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at your hand." You see then, though this is a rough and unwelcome doctrine, it is such as we must preach, and you must hear.*It is easier to hear of Hell, than feel it.*If your necessities did not require it, we would not gall your tender ears with truths that seem so harsh and grievous.*Hell would not be so full, if people were but willing to know their case, and to hear and think of it.*

The reason why so few escape it is, because they strive not to enter in at the strait gate of conversion, and go the narrow way of holiness while they have time in. They strive not, because they are not awakened to a lively feeling of the danger they are in. They are not awakened, because they are loathe to hear or think of it, and that is partly through foolish tenderness and carnal self-love, and partly because they do not really believe the word that threatens it. If you will not thoroughly believe this truth, methinks the weight of it should force you to remember it; and it should follow you, and give you no rest, until you are converted.

If you had but once heard this word, by the voice of an angel, "You must be converted, or condemned. Turn, or die!" would it not stick in your mind, and haunt you night and day, so that in your sinning you would remember it, as if the voice were still in your ears, "Turn, or die!" O happy were your souls if it might thus work with you, and never be forgotten or let you alone until it have driven home your heart to God. But if you will cast it out by forgetfulness or unbelief, how can it work to your conversion and salvation? Take this with you to your sorrow, *though you may put this out of your minds, you cannot put it out of the Bible*; but there it will stand as a settled truth, which you shall experimentally know forever, that there is no other way but, turn, or die!

O what is the matter then, that the hearts of sinners be not pierced with such a weighty truth! A man would think now, that every unconverted soul that hears these words should be pricked to the heart, and think with themselves, this is my own case, and never be quiet until they found themselves converted.

Believe it, Sirs, this drowsy careless temper will not last long. Conversion and condemnation are both of them awakening things. I can foretell it as truly as if I saw it with my eyes, that either grace or Hell will shortly bring these matters to the quick, and make you say, "What have I done? What a foolish wicked course have I taken?" The scornful and the stupid state of sinners will last but a little while. As soon as they either turn or die, the presumptuous dream will be at an end, and then their wits and feeling will return.

But I foresee there are two things that are likely to harden the unconverted, and make me lose all my labor, except they can be taken out of the way: and that is, the misunderstanding on those two words: *the wicked*and *turn*.

Some will think to themselves, it is true, the *wicked*must turn or die; but what is that to me? I am not wicked, though I am a sinner, as all men are.

Others will think, "it is true that we must turn from our evil ways; but I am turned long ago: I hope this is not now to do." And thus, while wicked men think they are not wicked, but are already converted, we lose all our labor in persuading them to turn. I shall therefore, before I go any farther, tell you here who are meant by the wicked, and who they are that must turn or die; and also what is meant by turning, and who they are that are truly converted. And this I have purposely reserved for this place, preferring the method that fits my end.

And here you may observe, that, in the sense of the text, a *wicked*man and a *converted*man are contraries. No man is a wicked man that is converted, and no man is a converted man that is wicked; so that to *be a wicked man, and to be an unconverted man, is all one*. And therefore in opening one, we shall open both.

Before I can tell you what either wickedness or conversion is, I must go to the bottom, and fetch up the matter from the beginning.

It pleased the great Creator of the world to make three sorts of living creatures.

*Angels*he made pure spirits, without flesh, and therefore he made them only for Heaven, and not to dwell on earth.

*Beasts*were made flesh, without immortal souls, and therefore they were made only for the earth, and not for Heaven.

*Man*is of a middle nature between both, as partaking of both flesh and spirit, so is he made for earth, but as his passage or way to Heaven, and not that this should be his home or happiness. The blessed state that man was made for was to behold the glorious majesty of the Lord, and to praise him among his holy angels; and to love him, and to be filled with his love forever. And as this was the end that man was made for, so God gave him means that were fitted to the attaining of it. These means were principally two:

First, the right disposition of the mind of man.

Secondly, the right ordering of his life.

For the **first**, God suited the disposition of man unto the end; giving him such knowledge of God as was fit for his present state, and a heart inclined to God in holy love. But yet God did not fix or confirm him in this condition; but, having made him a free agent, he left him in the hands of his own free will.

For the **second**, God did that which belongs to him: that is, he gave man a perfect law, requiring him to continue in the love of God, and perfectly to obey him. By the willful breach of this law, man did not only forfeit his hopes of everlasting life, but also turned his heart from God, and fixed it on these lower fleshly things, and hereby did blot out our spiritual image of God, from the soul. So that man did both fall short of the glory of God, which was his end, and put himself out of the way by which he should have attained it—and this both as to the frame of his heart, and of his life.

The holy inclination and love of his soul to God, he lost, and instead of it, he contracted an inclination and love to the pleasing of his flesh, or carnal self, by earthly things; growing strange to God, and acquainted with the creature. The course of this life was suited to the inclination of his heart; he lived to his carnal self, and not to God, he sought the creature, for the pleasing of his flesh, instead of seeking to please the Lord.

With this nature, or corrupt inclination, we are all now born into the world; for, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" Job 14.4. As a lion has a fierce and cruel nature before it devours; and an adder has a venomous nature before she stings—so in our infancy we have those sinful natures, or inclinations, before we think, or speak, or do amiss—hence springs all the sin of our lives. And not only so, but when God has of his mercy provided us a remedy, even the Lord Jesus Christ to be the Savior of our souls, and bring us back to God again, we naturally love our present sinful state, and are loathe to be brought out of it, and therefore are set against the means of our recovery. And, though custom have taught us to thank Christ for his good will—yet carnal self persuades us to refuse his remedies, and to desire to be excused when we are commanded to take the medicines which he offers, and are called to forsake all and follow him to God and glory.

I pray you read over this page again, and mark it; for in these few words you have a true description of our natural state, and consequently of a wicked man. For every man that is in this state of corrupted nature is a wicked man, and in a state of death and damnation.

By this also you are prepared to understand what it is to be CONVERTED; to which end you must farther know, that the mercy of God, not willing that man should perish in his sin, provided a remedy, by causing his Son to take our nature, and being in one person God and man, to become a mediator between God and man; and, by dying for our sins on the cross, to ransom us from the curse of God and the power of the devil. Having thus redeemed us, the Father has delivered us into his hands as his own. Hereupon the Father and the Mediator do make a new law and covenant for man—not like the first covenant of *works*, which gave life to none but the perfectly obedient, and condemned man for every sin. But Christ has made a covenant of *grace*, or a promise of pardon and everlasting life to all, that, by true repentance and by faith in Christ, are converted unto God. Like an act of oblivion which is made by a prince to a company of rebels, on condition they lay down their weapons and come in, and be loyal subjects for the time to come.

But, because the Lord knows that the heart of man is grown so wicked, that for all this men will not accept of the remedy if they are left to themselves; therefore that Holy Spirit has undertaken it as his office, to inspire the apostles, and seal up the scriptures by miracles and wonders, and *to illuminate and convert the elect.*

So that by this much you see, that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, have each their several works, which are eminently ascribed to them.

The FATHER'S works were to *create*us, to rule us as his rational creatures, by the law of nature, and judge us thereby, and in mercy to provide us a Redeemer, when we were lost, and to send his Son, and accept his ransom.

The works of the SON for us were these; to ransom and redeem us by his sufferings and righteousness, to give out the promise or law of grace, and rule and judge the world as their Redeemer, on terms of grace, and to make intercession for us, that the benefit of his death may be communicated, and to send the Holy Spirit, which the Father also does by the Son.

The works of the HOLY SPIRIT for us are these; to indite the holy scriptures, by inspiring and guiding the prophets and apostles, and sealing the word by his miraculous gifts and works; and the illuminating and exciting the ordinary ministers of the gospel, and so enabling them and helping them to publish that word; and, *by the same word, illuminating and converting the souls of men.*

So that, as you could not have been reasonable creatures if the *Father*had not created you; nor have had any access to God if the *Son*had not redeemed you; so neither can you have a part in Christ, or be saved, except the *Holy Spirit*sanctifies you.

So that by this time you may see the several causes of this work:

The *Father*sends his Son;
the *Son*redeems us, and makes the promise of grace;
the Holy Spirit inspires and seals this gospel;
the *apostles*are the secretaries of the Spirit to write it;
the *preachers*of the gospel to proclaim it, and persuade men to obey it;
the *Holy Spirit*makes their preaching effectual, by opening the hearts of men to receive it; and all this to repair the image of God upon the soul, and to set the heart upon God again, and take it off the creature and carnal self to which it is revolted; and so turn the current of the life into a Heavenly course, which before was earthly, and all this by the receiving of Christ by Faith, who is the physician of the soul.

By what I have said, you may see what it is to be wicked, and what it is to be converted; which I think will yet be plainer to you, if I describe them as consisting of their several parts; and, for the first, *a wicked man may be known by these three things:*

*FIRST*, he is one who places his chief happiness on earth, and loves the creature more than God, and his fleshly prosperity above the Heavenly felicity. He favors the things of the flesh, but neither discerns nor savors the things of the spirit. Though he will say, that Heaven is better than earth—yet does not really so esteem it to himself; if he might be sure of earth, he would let go of Heaven, and had rather stay here than be removed there. A life of perfect holiness in the sight of God, and in his love and praise forever in Heaven, does not find such liking with his heart, as a life of health, and wealth, and honor, here upon earth.

And though he falsely professes that he loves God above all—yet indeed he never felt the power of divine love within him, but his mind is more set on the world, or fleshly pleasures than on God. In a word, whoever loves earth above Heaven, and fleshly prosperity more than God—is a wicked unconverted man.

On the other hand, a converted man is illuminated to discern the loveliness of God; and so far believes the glory that is to be had with God, that his heart is taken up to it, and set more upon it, than anything in this world. He had rather see the face of God and live in his everlasting love and praises, than have all the wealth or pleasures of the world. He sees that all things else are vanity, and nothing but God can fill the soul, and therefore, let the world go which way it will—he lays up his treasures and hopes in Heaven, and for that he resolves to let go all.

As the fire mounts upwards, and the needle that is touched with the magnet turns to the north—so the converted soul is inclined to God. Nothing else can satisfy him, nor can he find any content and rest but in his love. In a word, all that are converted do esteem and love God better than all the world; and the Heavenly felicity is dearer to them than their fleshly prosperity.

*SECONDLY*, a wicked man is one that makes it the principal business of his life to prosper in the world, and attain his fleshly ends. And though he may read and hear, and do much in the outward duties of religion, and forbear disgraceful sins—yet this is all but secondary, and he never makes it the principal business of his life to please God, and attain everlasting glory, and puts off God with the leavings of the world, and gives him no more service than the flesh can spare; for he will not part with all for Heaven.

On the contrary, a converted man is one that makes it the principal care and business of his life to please God, and to be saved, and takes all the blessings of this life but as accommodations in his journey towards another life, and uses the creature in subordination to God. He loves a holy life, and longs to be more holy. He has no sin but what he hates, and longs, and prays, and strives to be rid of. The drift and bent of his life is for God. If he sins, it is contrary to the very bent of his heart and life, and therefore he rises again and laments it, and dares not willfully live in any known sin. There is nothing in this world so dear to him but he can give it up to God, and forsake it for him, and the hopes of glory.

*THIRDLY*, the soul of a wicked man never truly discerned and relished the mystery of redemption, nor thankfully received an offered Savior; nor is he taken up with the love of the Redeemer, nor willing to be ruled by him as the physician of his soul, that he may be saved from the guilt and power of his sins, and recovered unto God. His heart is insensible of this unspeakable benefit, and is quite against the healing means by which he should be recovered. Though he may be willing to be carnally religious, yet he never resigns up his soul to Christ, and to the motion and conduct of his word and Spirit.

On the contrary, the converted soul having felt himself undone by sin, and perceiving that he has lost his peace with God, and hopes of Heaven, and is in danger of everlasting misery—thankfully receives the tidings of redemption; and, believing in the Lord Jesus as his only Savior, resigns up himself to him for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. He takes Christ as the life of his soul, and lives by him, and *uses him as a salve for every sore*, admiring the wisdom and love of God in this wonderful work of man's redemption.

In a word, Christ does even dwell in his heart by faith, and the life that he now lives is by faith in the Son of God, who has loved him, and gave himself for him; yes, it is not so much he who lives, as Christ lives in him.

You see now in plain terms, from the Word of God, who are the wicked and who are the converted. Ignorant people think that if a man is no swearer, nor curser, nor railer, nor drunkard, nor fornicator, nor extortioner, nor wrong any body in their dealings, and if they come to church, and say their prayers, receive the sacrament, and sometimes extend their hands to the relief of the poor—that these cannot be unconverted men.

Or if a man, that has been guilty of drunkenness, or swearing, or gambling, or the like vices, only forbear them for a time—they think that this is a converted man.

Others think, if a man, that has been an enemy and scorner at godliness, does but approve it, and join himself with those that are godly, and be hated for it by the wicked, as the godly are, that this must needs be a converted man.

Some are so foolish as to think that they are converted by taking up some new opinion. Others think, if they have but been affrighted by the fears of Hell, and had conviction and tortures of conscience, and thereupon have purposed and promised amendment, and take up a life of moral behavior and outward religion, that this must needs be true conversion.

These are the poor deluded souls who are likely to lose the benefit of all our persuasions; and, when they hear that the wicked must turn or die, they think that this is not spoken to them; for they imagine that are not wicked, but are turned already. Therefore it is that Christ told some of the rulers of the Jews who were graver and more moral than the common people, that "publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of Christ before them," Matthew 21.31. Not that a harlot or gross sinner can be saved without conversion, but because it was easier to make these gross sinners perceive their sin and misery, and the necessity of a change, than *the more moral sort delude themselves by thinking that they are converted already, when they are not*.

O sirs, conversion is another kind of work than most are aware of! It is not a small matter to bring an earthly mind to Heaven, and to show man the amiable excellencies of God—until he is taken up in such love to him, that can never be quenched; to break the heart for sin—and make him fly for refuge to Christ, and thankfully embrace him as the life of his soul; to have the very drift and bent of the heart and life changed—so that a man renounces that which he took for felicity, and places his felicity where he never did before, and lives not to the same end, and drives not on the same design in the world, as he formerly did.

In a word, he who is in Christ is a new creature: "old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new." (2 Corinthians 5.17). He has a new *understanding*, a new *will*and *resolution*, new *sorrows*, and *desires*, and *love*, and *delight*; new *thoughts*, new *speech*, new *company*, (if possible) and new *conversation*.

*Sin*, which was before a jesting matter with him, is now so odious and terrible to him, that he flies from it as from death!

The *world*, which was so lovely in his eyes, now appears but as vanity and vexation!

*God*, who was before neglected, is now the only happiness of his soul. Before he was forgotten, and every lust preferred before him—but now he is set first in the heart, and all things must give place to him, and the heart is taken up in the attendance and observance of him, and is grieved when be hides his face, and never thinks itself well without him.

*Christ*himself, who was accustomed to be slightly thought of, is now his only hope and refuge. He lives upon him as on his daily bread; he cannot pray without him, nor rejoice without him, nor think, nor speak, nor live without him.

*Heaven*itself, that before was looked upon but as a tolerable reserve which he hoped might serve his turn better than Hell, when he could not stay any longer in the world—is now taken for his home, the place of his only hope and rest, where he shall see, and love, and praise that God that has his heart already.

*Hell*, that before did seem but as a bugbear to frighten men from sin, does now appear to be a real misery, that is not to be ventured on, nor jested with.

The *works of holiness*, which before he was weary of—are now both his recreation, and his business, and the trade that he lives upon.

The *Bible*, which was before to him but almost as a common book, is now as the law of God, as a letter written to him from Heaven, and subscribed with the name or the eternal Majesty. It is the rule of his thoughts, and words, and deeds; the *commands*are binding, the *threats*are dreadful, and the *promises*of it speak life to his soul.

The *godly*, who once seemed to him but like other men, are now the most excellent and happiest on earth.

And the *wicked*who were his play-fellows, are now his grief; and he, that could laugh at their sins, is readier now to weep for their sin and misery.

In short, he has a new end in his thoughts, and a new way in his endeavors, and therefore his heart and life are new. Before, his carnal self was his end. His pleasure and worldly profits, and popularity were his way. Now God and everlasting glory are his end. Christ, and the spirit, and word, and ordinances, holiness to God, and righteousness and mercy to men—these are his way.

Before, *self*was the chief ruler, to which the matters of God and conscience must stoop and give place. Now God in Christ, by the spirit, word and ministry, is that chief ruler, to whom both self and all the matters of self must give place.

This is not a change in one, or two, or twenty points, but in the whole soul, and in the very end and bent of the life. A man may step out of one path into another, and yet have his face the same way, and be still going towards the same place. But it is another matter to turn quite back again, and take his journey the contrary way, to a contrary place.

So it is here: a man may turn from drunkenness to thriftiness, and forsake his wicked friends, and other gross disgraceful sins; and set upon some duties of religion—and yet be still going to the same end as before, intending his carnal self above all, and giving it still the government of his soul.

But when he is converted, this self is denied and taken down, and God is set up, and his face is turned the contrary way. He who before was addicted to himself, and lived to himself—is now by sanctification devoted to God, and lives unto God. Before, he asked himself what he should do with his time, his abilities, and his money, and for himself he used them. Now he asks God what he shall do with them, and uses them for him.

Before, he would please God so far as might stand with the pleasure of his flesh and carnal self, but not to any great displeasure of them. But now he will please God, let flesh and self be ever so much displeased. *This is the great change that God will make upon all who are saved.*

You can say that the Holy Spirit is our sanctifier; but do you know what sanctification is? Every man and woman in the world must have sanctification, or be condemned to everlasting misery. They must turn or die.

Do you believe all this, or do you not? Surely you dare not say, you do not; for it is past a doubt or denial. These are not controversies, where one learned pious man is of one mind, and another of another mind; where one party says this, and another says that; every denomination among us that deserve to be called Christians are all agreed in this that I have said; and, if you will not believe the God of truth, and that in a case where every party do believe him, you are utterly inexcusable.

But, if you do believe this, *how does it come to pass that you live so quietly in an unconverted state?*Do you know that you are converted? Can you find this wonderful change upon your souls? Have you been thus born again, and made anew? Are not these strange matters to many of you—and such as you never felt upon yourselves? If you cannot tell the day or week of your change, or the very sermon, that converted you—yet, do you find that the work is done; that such a change indeed there is, and that you have such hearts as before described?

Alas! The most follow their worldly business, and little trouble their minds with such thoughts; and, if they are but restrained from scandalous sins, and can say, "I am no whoremonger, nor thief, nor curser, nor swearer, nor drunkard, nor extortioner. I go to church, and say my prayers"—they think that this is true conversion, and they shall be saved as well as any.

Alas, this is foolish cheating of yourselves; this is too much contempt of an endless glory, and too gross neglect of your immortal souls. *Can you make so light of Heaven and Hell?* Your corpse will shortly lie in the dust, and angels or devils will presently seize upon your souls, and every one of you all will shortly be among other company, and in another case than now you are.

You will dwell in those houses but a little longer. You will work in your shops but a little longer. You will sit in these seats, and dwell on this earth, but a little longer. You will see with those eyes, and hear with those ears, and speak with those tongues, but a little longer—until the resurrection day. Can you forget all of this?

O what a place will you be shortly in—of joy, or torment!

O what a sight will you shortly see—in Heaven, or Hell!

O what thoughts will shortly fill your hearts—unspeakable delight, or horror!

What work will you be employed in—to praise the Lord with saints and angels, or to cry out in unquenchable fire with devils!

All this will be endless, and sealed up by an unchangeable decree.

***~~ETERNITY, ETERNITY! will be the measure of your joys, or sorrows!~~***

And can this be forgotten? All this is true, most certainly true.

When you have slept and awakened a few more times—you will be dead and gone, and find all that I now tell you to be absolutely true. And yet can you now so much forget it? You shall then remember that you heard this sermon, and that this day, from this place, you were reminded of these things; and perceive them matters a thousand times greater than either you or I could have conceived; and yet shall they now be so much forgotten?

Beloved friends, if the Lord had not awakened me to believe and to lay to heart these things myself, I would have remained in a dark and selfish state, and have perished forever. If he has truly made me sensible of them, it will constrain me to compassionate you as well as myself.

If your eyes were so far opened as to see Hell, and you saw your neighbors who were unconverted, dragged there with hideous cries, though they were such as you accounted moral people on earth, and feared no such matter by themselves, such a sight would make you go home and seriously ponder it; and think again, and make you warn all about you as that damned worldling in Luke 16 would have had his brethren warned, lest they come to that place of torment. Why, faith is a kind of sight; it is the eye of the soul, the evidence of things not seen. If I believe God, it is next to seeing; and therefore I beseech you to excuse me, if I be half as earnest with you about these matters as if I had seen them.

If I were to die, and it were in my power to come back from the eternal world and tell you what I had seen—would you not be willing to hear me? Would you not believe and regard what I would tell you? If I might preach one sermon to you after I am dead, and have seen what is done in the eternal world—would you not have me plainly speak the truth and would you not crowd to hear me? Would you not lay it to heart?

But this cannot be; God has his appointed way of teaching you by scripture and ministers, and he will not humor unbelievers so far as to send men from the dead to them, and to alter his established way. If any man quarrels with the sun, God will not humor him so far as to set up a clearer light.

Friends, I beseech you, regard me now as you would do if I would come from the dead to you; for, I can give you as full assurance of the truth of what I say to you, as if I had been there and seen it with my eyes! For, it is possible for one from the dead to deceive you; but Jesus Christ can never deceive you. The Word of God delivered in scripture, and sealed by the miracles and holy workings of the Spirit, can never deceive you. Believe this, or believe nothing. Believe and obey this, or you are eternally undone.

Now, as ever you believe the Word of God, and as ever you care for the salvation of your souls—let me beg of you this reasonable request, and I beseech you to deny me not: that you would, without any more delay, when you are gone from hence, remember what you heard, and enter into an earnest search of your hearts, and say to yourselves,

Is it so indeed?
Must I turn, or die?
Must I be converted, or condemned?

It is time for me then to look about me, before it is too late.

O why did not I look after this until now?

Why did I recklessly put off so great a business?

Was I awake, or in my wits?

O blessed God, what a mercy it is that you did not cut off my life all this while, before I had any certain hope of eternal life! Well, God forbid that I should neglect this work any longer. What state is my soul in? Am I converted, or am I not? Was ever such a change or work done upon my soul? Have I been illuminated by the word and spirit of the Lord to see . . .
the odiousness of *sin*,
the need of a *Savior*,
the love of *Christ*, and
the excellencies of God and glory?

Is my heart broken and humbled within me for my former life?

Have I thankfully received my Savior and Lord who offered himself with pardon and life for my soul?

Do I hate my former sinful life, and the remnant of every sin that is in me?

Do I fly from them as my deadly enemies?

Do I give up myself to a life of holiness and obedience to God?

Do I love and delight in holiness?

Can I truly say that I am dead to the world and carnal self, and that I live for God, and the glory which he has promised?

Has Heaven more of my estimation and resolution than earth?

Is God the dearest and highest in my soul?

Once, I am sure, I lived principally to the world and flesh, and God had nothing but some heartless services which the world could spare, and which were the leavings of the flesh.

Is my heart now turned another way?

Have I a new design, and a new end, and a new train of holy affections?

Have I set my hopes and heart in Heaven?

Is it not the scope, and design, and bent of my heart and life, to get to Heaven, and see the glorious face of God, and live in his everlasting love and praise?

When I sin, is it against the habitual bent and design of my heart?

Do I conquer all gross sins, and am I weary and willing to be rid of my infirmities?

This is the state of a converted soul, and thus it must be with me, or I must perish. Is it thus indeed with me, or is it not? It is time to get this doubt resolved, before the dreadful judge resolves it. I am not such a stranger to my own heart and life, but I may somewhat perceive whether I am thus converted or not. If I am not converted, it will do me no good to flatter my soul with false conceits and hopes. I am resolved no more to deceive myself, but endeavor to know truly, off or on, whether I be converted, yes or no: that, if I am, I may rejoice in it; and glorify my gracious Lord, and comfortably go on until I reach the crown. If I am not, I may set myself to beg and seek after the grace that should convert me, and may turn without any more delay. For, if I find in time that I am out of the way, by the help of Christ I may turn and be recovered. But, if I wait until either my heart is forsaken of God, in blindness or hardness, or until I be caught away by death—then it is then too late. There is no place for repentance and conversion then. I know it must be *now or never*.

Sirs, this is my request to you, that you will but take your hearts to task, and thus examine them, until you see, if it may be, whether you are converted or not. If you cannot find it out by your own endeavors, go to your ministers, if they are faithful and experienced men, and ask their assistance. The matter is great, let not bashfulness, nor carelessness hinder you. They are set over you to advise you, for the saving of your soul, as physicians advise you for the curing of your bodies.

It undoes many thousands, that they think they are in the way to salvation when they are not; and thinking that they are converted, when it is no such thing. Then, when we call to them to turn, they go away as they came, and think that this concerns not them; for they are turned already, and hope they shall do well enough in the way that they are in; at least if they do but pick the fairest path, and avoid some of the foulest steps; when, *alas! all this while they live but to the world and flesh, and are strangers to God and eternal life, and are quite out of the way to Heaven*.

All this is much because we cannot persuade them to a few serious thoughts of their condition, and to spend a few hours in the examining of their states. Is there not many a self-deceiving wretch that hears me this day, who never bestowed one hour in all their lives to examine their souls, and try whether they are truly converted or not?

O merciful God, who will care for such wretches as care no more for themselves, and that will do so much to save them from Hell, and help them to Heaven—who will do so little for it themselves! *If all that are in the way to Hell did but know it, they dared not continue in it.*The greatest hope that the devil has of bringing you to damnation without a rescue, is by keeping you blindfold and ignorant of your state, and making you believe that you may do well enough in the way that you are in. If you knew that you were out of the way to Heaven, and were lost forever if you should die as you are—would you dare to sleep another night in the wretched state that you are in? Would you dare to live another day in it? Could you heartily laugh or be merry in such a state? What! and not know but *you may be snatched away to Hell in an hour!*Surely it would constrain you to forsake your former company and course and to betake yourselves to the ways of holiness and the communion of saints. Surely it would drive you to cry to God for a new heart, and to seek help of those that are fit to counsel you.

*Surely there is none of you who desires being eternally damned.*Well then, I beseech you presently make inquiry into your hearts, and give them no rest until you find out your condition; that, if it is good, you may rejoice in it, and go on; and, if it is bad, you may presently look about you for recovery, as men who believe they must turn or die. What do you say, Sirs? Will you resolve, and promise, to be at thus much labor for your own souls? Will you fall upon this self-examination when you get home?

Is my request unreasonable? Your consciences know it is not. Resolve on it, then, before you stir; knowing how much it concerns your souls. I beseech you, for the sake of that God that commands you, at whose bar you will shortly all appear, that you do not deny me this reasonable request. For the sake of souls that must turn or die, I beseech you to deny me not; even but to make it your business to understand your own condition, and build upon sure ground, and know whether you are converted or not, and venture not your souls on ignorant security.

***~~Doctrine 2. It is the promise of God, that the wicked shall live, if they will but turn; sincerely and thoroughly turn.~~***

"As surely as I live," declares the Sovereign LORD, "I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, O house of Israel?" Ezekiel 33:11

A true description of those who are in a converted state has already been given you; the change which conversion makes in the soul has also been described; and the request is most earnestly repeated to you, impartially and thoroughly to consider your condition. Rest not satisfied, until you know whether you are indeed converted.

But perhaps you will say, what if we should find ourselves yet unconverted, what shall we do then? This question leads me to my second doctrine, which will do much to the answering of it, to which I now proceed.

The Lord here professes that this is what he takes pleasure in, that the wicked turn and live. Heaven is made as sure to the converted, as Hell is to the unconverted. Turn and live is as certain a truth as turn or die. God was not bound to provide us a Savior, nor open to us a door of hope, nor call us to repent and turn when once we had cast ourselves away by sin—but he has freely done it to magnify his mercy. Sinners, there are none of you shall have cause to go home and say I preach despair to you. We do not shut up the *door of mercy*against you. O that you would not shut it up against yourselves! Do we tell you that God will have no mercy on you, though you turn and be sanctified? When did you ever hear a preacher say such a word? You who bark at preachers of the gospel, for desiring to keep you out of Hell, and say that they preach despair—tell me, if you can, when did you ever hear any sober man say, that there is no hope for you, though you repent and be converted? No, it is the contrary that we proclaim from the Lord; and, whoever is born again, and by faith and repentance does become a new creature, shall certainly be saved. So far are we from persuading you to despair of this, that we persuade you not to make any doubt of it.

It is life, not death, that is the first part of our message to you. Our commission is to offer salvation, certain salvation; a speedy, glorious, everlasting salvation, to everyone of you; to the poorest beggar as well as the greatest Lord; to the worst of you, even to drunkards, swearers, worldlings, thieves, yes, to the despisers and reproachers of the holy way of salvation. We are commanded by the Lord our master to offer you a pardon for all that is past, if you will but now at last return and live. We are commanded to beseech and entreat you to accept the offer and return; to tell you what preparations are made by Christ; what mercy waits for you, what patience waits on you, what thoughts of kindness God has towards you, and how happy, how certainly and unspeakably happy, you may be, if you will.

We have indeed also a message of wrath and death, yes, of a two-fold wrath and death; but neither of them is our principal message. We must tell you of the wrath that is on you already, and the death that you are born under, for the breach of the law of works. But this is but to show you the need of mercy, and to provoke you to esteem the grace of the Redeemer. We tell you nothing but the truth, which you must know. For, who will seek out for medicine, who knows not that he is sick?

Our telling you of your misery is not it that makes you miserable, but drives you out to seek for mercy. It is you who have brought this death upon yourselves. We tell you also of another death; even remediless and much greater torment, that will fall on those that will not be converted! But, as this is true, and must be told to you, so it is but the last and saddest part of our message. We are first to offer you mercy if you will turn; and it is only those that will not turn, nor hear the voice of mercy—to whom we must foretell damnation to. Will you but cast away your transgressions, delay no longer, but come away at the call of Christ, and be converted, and become new creatures—and we have not a word of damning wrath or death to speak against you.

I do here in the name of the Lord of life, proclaim to you, all who hear me this day, to the greatest, the oldest sinner, that you may have mercy and salvation, if you will but turn. There is mercy in God, there is sufficiency in the satisfaction of Christ, the promise is free, and full, and universal. You may have life, if you will but turn. But then, as you love your souls, remember what turning it is that the scripture speaks of. It is not to mend the old house, but to pull down all, and build anew on Christ, the rock and sure foundation. It is not to mend somewhat in a carnal course of life, but to mortify the flesh, and live after the spirit. It is not to serve the flesh and the world, in a more reformed way, without any scandalous disgraceful sins, and with a certain kind of religiousness. It is to change your master, and your works, and end, and to set your face the contrary way, and do all for the life that you never saw, and dedicate yourselves and all you have to God. This is the change that must be made, if you will live.

Yourselves are witnesses now, that it is salvation, and not damnation—which is the great doctrine I preach to you, and the first part of my message to you. Accept of this, and we shall go no farther with you; for we would not so much as affright or trouble you with the name of damnation without necessity.

But if you will not be saved, there is no remedy, but damnation must take place. For there is no middle place between the two, you must have either life or death—salvation or damnation.

And we are not only to offer you life, but to show you the grounds on which we do it; and call you to believe that God does mean indeed as he speaks; that the promise is true, and extends conditionally to you, as well as others; and that Heaven is no dream, but a true felicity.

If you ask, Where is your commission for this offer? Among a hundred texts of scripture, I will show it to you in these few:

First, you see it here in my text, and the following verses, and in the 18th of Ezekiel, as plain as can be spoken. And in 2 Corinthians 5.17-21, you have the very sum of our commission. " Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

So in Mark 16.15-16, "Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to all creature. He who believes, (that is with such a converting faith as is expressed) and is baptized, shall be saved: but he who believes not shall be damned."

And Luke 24.46-47, "Thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance, (which is conversion) and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations."

And Acts 5.30-31, "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you slew and hanged on a tree: him has God exalted with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins."

And Acts 13.38-39, "Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this name is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and, by him, all that believe are justified from all things, from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses."

And, lest you think this offer is restrained to the Jews, see Galatians 6.15, "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision avails any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature."

And Luke 14.17, "Come, for all things are now ready."

You see by this time that we are commanded to offer life to you all, and to tell you, from God, that if you will turn, you may live.

Here you may safely trust your souls; for the love of God is the fountain of this offer, John 3.16. The blood of the Son of God has purchased it: The faithfulness and truth of God are engaged to make the promise good; miracles have sealed up the truth of it; preachers are sent through the world to proclaim it; the sacraments are instituted and used for the solemn delivery of the mercy offered to them that will accept it; and the Spirit opens the heart to receive it; and is itself the pledge of the full possession. So that the truth of it is past controversy, that the worst of you all, and every one of you, if you will but be converted, may be saved.

Indeed, if you believe that you shall be saved without conversion, then you believe a falsehood; and, if I should preach that to you, I would preach a lie. This were not to believe God, but the devil and your own deceitful hearts. God has his promise of life, and the devil has his promise of life. God's promise is, "return and live!"

The devil's promise is, "you shall live, whether you turn or not."

The Word of *God*is, as I have shown you, "Except you be converted, and become as little children, you cannot enter into the kingdom of Heaven," Matthew 18.3. "Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God," John 3.3, 5. "Without holiness none shall see God," Hebrews 12.14.

The *devil's*word is, "you may be saved without being born again and converted; you may do well enough without being holy; God does but frighten you; he is more merciful, than to damn all the unconverted, as he says; he will be better to you than his word." And, alas! the greatest part of the world believe this word of the devil before the Word of God! Just as our sin and misery came into the world. God says to our first parents, "if you eat you shall die:" And the devil contradicted him and said, "You shall not die, if you do but cry, *God have mercy*, at last, and give over the acts of sin when you can practice it no longer." And this is the word that the world believes. *O heinous wickedness, to believe the devil before God!*

And yet that is not the worst; but blasphemously they call this a believing and trusting in God, when they put him in the shape of Satan, who was a liar from the beginning. And when they believe that the Word of God is a lie, they call this a trusting God, and say they believe in him, and trust in him for salvation.

Where did ever God say, that the unregenerate, unconverted, unsanctified, shall be saved? Show such a word in Scripture. I challenge you, if you can. Why this is the devil's word, and to believe it is to believe the devil, and the sin that is commonly called *presumption*. And do you call this a believing and trusting God? There is everything in the Word of God to comfort and strengthen the hearts of the sanctified. But there is not a word to strengthen the hands of wickedness, nor to give men the least hope of being saved, though they are never sanctified.

But, if you will turn, and come into the way of mercy, the mercy of the Lord is ready to receive you. Then trust God for salvation boldly; for he is engaged by his word to save you. He will be a father to none but his children, and he will save none but those who forsake the world, the devil, and the flesh, and come into his family to be members of his Son, and have communion with his saints.

But, if they will not come in, it is the fault of themselves. His doors are open, he keeps none back. He never sent such a message as this to any of you, "It was now too late; I will not receive you though you be converted." He might have done so, and done you no wrong. But he did not; he does not to this day. He is still ready to receive you, if you were but ready sincerely, and with all your hearts, to turn. And the fullness of this truth will yet more appear in the two following doctrines, which I shall therefore next proceed to, before I make any farther application of this.

**Doctrine 3. God takes pleasure in men's conversion and salvation, but not in their death or damnation.**He had rather they would turn and live, than go on and die.

I shall first teach you how to understand this, and then clear up the truth of it to you.

And, for the first, you must observe these following things.

**1.**A simple willingness is the first act of the will, following the simple apprehension of the undertaking, before it proceeds to compare things together. But the *choosing*act of the will is a following act, and supposes the preceding practical act of the *understanding*. And these two acts may often be carried to contrary objects without any fault at all in the person.

**2.** An sincere willingness may have divers degrees. Some things I am so far willing of as that I will do all that lies in my power to accomplish them. And some things I am truly willing another should do, when yet I will not do all that ever I am able to procure them, having many reasons to dissuade me therefrom, though yet I will do all that belongs me to do.

**3.** The will of a ruler, as such, is manifested in making and executing laws; but the will of a man, in his simple natural capacity, or as absolute lord of his own, is manifested in desiring or resolving of events.

**4.** A ruler's will, as lawgiver, is first and principally that his laws be obeyed, and not at all that the penalty be executed on any, but only on supposition that they will not obey his laws. But a ruler's will, as judge, supposes the law already either kept or broken; and therefore he resolves on rewards or punishments accordingly.

Having given up these necessary distinctions, I shall next APPLY them to the case in hand in these following propositions.

**1.**It is in the looking-glass of the word that in this life we must know God; and so, according to the nature of man, we ascribe to him understanding and will, removing all the imperfections that we can, because we are capable of no higher positive conceptions of him.

**2.**And, on the same grounds, we do (with the scripture) distinguish between the acts of God's will, as diversified from the respects or the objects—though as to God's essence they are all one.

**3.** And the bolder, because that, when we speak of Christ, we have the more ground for it from human nature.

**4.** And thus we say, that the simple delight, will, or love of God, is to all that is naturally or morally good according to the nature and degree of its goodness. And so he has pleasure in the conversion and salvation of all, which yet will never come to pass.

**5.** And God, the ruler and law-giver of the world, has so far a practical will for their salvation as to make them a free deed of gift of Christ and life, and an act of oblivion for all their sin—if so be they will not unthankfully reject it, and to command his messengers to offer this gift to all the world, and persuade them to accept it. And so he does all that, as a lawgiver or promiser, belongs to him to do for their salvation.

**6.**But yet he resolves, as lawgiver, that those who will not turn, shall die. And, as judge, when their day of grace is past, he will execute that decree.

**7.**So, that he thus sincerely wills the conversion of those that will never be converted; but not as absolute Lord, with the fullest efficacious resolution, nor as a thing which he resolves shall undoubtedly come to pass, or would engage all his power to accomplish. It is in the power of a prince to set a guard upon a murderer, to see that he shall not murder and be hanged. But, if upon good reason he forbear this, and do but send to his subjects, and warn and entreat them not to be murderers, I hope he may well say, that he would not have them murder and then be hanged. He takes no pleasure in it, but rather that they forbear and live: And, if he does more for some, upon some special reason, he is not bound to do so by all. The king may well say to all the murderers and felons in the land, "I have no pleasure in your death, but rather that you would obey my laws and live. But, if you will not, I have resolved for all this, that you shall die."

The judge may truly say to the thief or murderer, "Alas, man, I have no delight in your death. I had rather you had kept the law and saved your life: but seeing you have not, I must condemn you, or else I would be unjust." So, though God have no pleasure in your damnation, and therefore calls upon you to return and live—yet he has pleasure in the demonstration of his own justice, and the executing his laws; and therefore he has for all this fully resolved, that, if you will not be converted, you shall surely be condemned.

If God were so much against the death of the wicked as that he were resolved to do all that he can to hinder it, then no man would be condemned. Whereas Christ decrees that few will be saved. But so far God is against your damnation as that he will teach you and warn you, and set before you life and death, and offer you your choice, and command his ministers to entreat you not to damn yourselves, but accept his mercy, and so to leave you without excuse.

But, if this will not do, and if still you be unconverted, he professes to you, he is resolved on your damnation, and has commanded us to say to you in his name, verse 18, "O wicked man, you shall surely die!" And Christ has sworn it over and over, with a "Truly, truly, except you be converted, and born again, you *cannot*enter into the kingdom of Heaven" Matthew 18.3. John 3.3. Mark that he said, you *cannot*. It is in vain to hope for it, and in vain to dream that God is willing for it, for it is a thing that cannot be.

In a word, you see then the meaning of the text, that God, the great law giver of the world, does take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn and live. Though he is resolved that none shall live but those that turn, and, as a judge, even delights in justice, and in manifesting his hatred of sin, though not in the misery, which they have brought upon themselves, in itself considered.

2. And for *the proofs of the point*, I shall be very brief in them, because I suppose you easily believe it already.

**1.**The very gracious nature of God, proclaimed, Exodus 34.6. and 20.6. and frequently elsewhere, may assure you of this, that he has no pleasure in your death and damnation.

**2.** If God had more pleasure in your death than in your conversion and life, he would not have so frequently commanded you in his word, to turn. He would not have made you such promises of life, if you will but turn. He would not have persuaded you to it by so many reasons. The tenor of his gospel proves the point.

**3.** And his commission, that he had given to the ministers of the gospel, does fully prove it. If God had taken more pleasure in your damnation than in your conversion and salvation, then he would never have charged us to offer you mercy, and to teach you the way of life, both publicly and privately; and to entreat and beseech you to turn and live; and to acquaint you with your sins, and foretell you of your danger, and to do all that possibly we can for your conversion, and to continue patiently so doing, though you should hate or abuse us for our pains. Would God have done this, and appointed his ordinances for your good, if he had taken pleasure in your death?

**4.**It is proved also by the course of his providence. If God had rather you were damned than converted and saved—he would not second his word with his works, and entice you by his daily kindness to himself, and give you all the mercies of this life, which are his means to lead you to repentance, Romans 2.4 and bring you so often under *his rod*to force you to your wits. He would not set so many examples before your eyes, no, nor wait on you so patiently as he does, from day to day, and year to year.

These are no signs of one who takes pleasure in your death. If this had been his delight, how easily could he have had you long ago in Hell? How often before this could he have caught you away in the midst of your sins, with a curse or oath, or lie in your mouth, in your ignorance, and pride, and sensuality? When you were last in your drunkenness, or last deriding the ways of God—how easily could he have stopped your breath, and tamed you with his plagues, and made you sober in another world?

Alas! how small a matter is it for the Almighty to rule the tongue of the profanest railer, and tie the hands of the most malicious persecutor, or calm the fury of the bitterest of his enemies—and make them know that they are but worms? *If he should frown upon you, you would drop into your grave, and then into Hell.*If he gave commission to one of his angels to go and destroy ten thousand sinners, how quickly would it be done. How easily can he lay you upon the bed of languishing, and make you lie roaring there in pain, and make you eat the words of reproach which you have spoken against his servants, his word, his worship, and his holy ways, and make you send to beg their prayers whom you did despise in your presumption!

How easily can he lay your flesh under gripes and groans, and make it too weak to hold your soul, and make it more loathsome than the dung of the earth! That flesh which now must have what it loves, and must not be displeased though God is displeased; and must be humored in foods, drinks, and clothes, whatever God says to the contrary, how quickly would the frowns of God consume it?

When you were passionately committing your sin, and quarreling with those who would have drawn you from it, and showing your spleen against the reprover, and pleading for the works of darkness—how easily could God have snatched you away in a moment, and set you before his dread Majesty, where you should see ten thousand times ten thousand glorious angels waiting on his throne? and have called you there to plead your cause, and asked you, "What have you now to say against your Creator, his truth, his servants, or his holy ways? Now plead your cause, and make the best of it that you can. Now what can you say in excuse of your sins? Now give account of your worldliness and fleshly life, of your time, of all the mercies you have had!"

O how your stubborn heart would have melted, and your proud looks be taken down, and your countenance turned pale, and your stout words changed into speechless silence, or dreadful cries, if God had but set you thus at his bar, and pleaded his own cause with you, which you have here so maliciously pleaded against!

How easily can he at any time say to your guilty soul, "Come away, and live in that flesh no more until the resurrection," and it cannot resist! A word of his mouth would cease your present life, and then all your parts and powers would stand still. And, if he say unto you, "Live no longer, or live in Hell," you could not disobey.

But God has yet done none of this, but has patiently forborne with you, and mercifully upheld you, and given you that *breath*which you breathed out against him, and given those mercies which you sacrificed to your flesh, and afforded you that provision which you spent to satisfy your greedy throat. He gave you every minute of that time which you did waste in idleness, or drunkenness, or worldliness.

Does not all his patience and mercy show that he has not desired your damnation? Can the candle burn without the oil? Can your houses stand without the earth to bear them? As well can you live one hour without the support of God! And why did he so long support your life, but to see when you would think of the folly of your ways, and return and live. Will any man purposely put weapons into his enemy's hands to resist him; or hold a candle for a murderer that is killing his children, or to an idle servant that plays or sleeps the while? Surely it is to see whether you will at last return and live, that God has so long waited on you.

**5.**It is farther proved, by the suffering of his Son, that God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. Would he have ransomed them from death at so dear a rate? Would he have astonished angels and men by his condescension? Would God have dwelt in flesh, and have come in the form of a servant, and have assumed humanity into one person with the Godhead? Would Christ have lived a life of suffering, and died a cursed death for sinners, if he had rather taken pleasure in their death? Suppose you saw him but so busy in preaching, and healing of them, as you find him in Mark 3.21, or so long in fasting, as in Matthew 4, or all night in prayer, as in Luke 6.12, or praying with the drops of blood trickling from him instead of sweat, as Luke 22.44, or suffering a cursed death upon the cross, and pouring out his soul as a sacrifice for our sins? Would you have thought these the signs of one that delighted in the death of the wicked?

And think not to extenuate it by saying, that it was only for his elect. For, it was your sin, and the sin of all the world, that lay upon our Redeemer. His sacrifice and satisfaction is sufficient for all, and the fruits of it are offered to one as well as another. But it is true that it was never the intent of his mind to pardon and save any who would not by faith and repentance be converted. If you had seen and heard him weeping and bemoaning the state of disobedient, impenitent people, Luke 14.41, 42, or complaining of their stubbornness, as Matthew 23.37, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how oft would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you would not!"

if you had seen and heard him on the cross praying for his persecutors, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do"—would you have suspected that he had delighted in the death of the wicked, even of those that perish by their willful unbelief? When God has so loved, (not only loved, but *so*loved) the world, as to give His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in him, by an effectual faith, should not perish, but have everlasting life; I think he has hereby proved, against the malice of men and devils, that he takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but had rather that they would turn and live.

**6.**Lastly, if all this will not yet satisfy you, take his own word, that knows best his own mind, or at least believe his oath.

**Doctrine 4. The Lord has confirmed to us by his oath, that he has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that he turn and live**; that he may leave man no pretense to question the truth of it.

If you dare question his *word*, I hope you dare not question his *oath*. As Christ has solemnly protested that the unregenerate and unconverted cannot enter into the kingdom of Heaven, Matthew 18.3. John 3.3. so God has sworn that his pleasure is not in their death, but in their conversion and life. And as the Apostle says, Hebrews 6.13, 16, 17, 18. Because he can swear by no greater than himself, he says, "As I live, etc." For men truly swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of strife: wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, "we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before us, which we have, as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast."

If there is any man who cannot reconcile this truth with the doctrine of predestination, or the actual damnation of the wicked, that is his own ignorance; he has no pretense left to deny or question therefore the truth of the point in hand; for this is confirmed by the oath of God, and therefore must not be distorted to reduce it to other points; but doubtful points must rather be reduced to it, and certain truths must be believed to agree with it, though our shallow brains do hardly discern the agreement.

 **USE**.

I do now entreat you, if you be an unconverted sinner that hear these words, that you would ponder a little on the aforementioned doctrines, and bethink yourself awhile who it is that takes pleasure in your sin and damnation! Certainly it is not God: He has sworn, for his part, that he takes no pleasure in it. And I know it is not the pleasing of him that you intend in it. You dare not say, that you drink, and swear, and neglect holy duties, and quench the motion of the Spirit—to please God. That were as if you should reproach the prince, and break his laws, and seek his death—and say you did all this to please him.

Who is it then that takes pleasure in your sin and death? Not any that bear the image of God, for they must be like-minded to him. God knows it is no pleasure to your faithful teachers *to see you serve your deadly enemy, and madly venture your eternal state, and willfully run into the flames of Hell.*It is no pleasure to them to see upon your souls such blindness, and hard-heartedness and carelessness, and presumption; such willfulness in evil, and such unteachableness and stiffness against the ways of life and peace. They know these are marks of eternal death, and of the wrath of God, and they know from the Word of God what is like to be the end of them; and therefore it is no more pleasure to them than to a tender physician to see the plague-marks break out upon his patient.

Alas! to foresee your everlasting torments, and know not how to prevent them! To see how near you are to Hell, and we cannot make you believe it, or even consider it! To see how easily, how certainly you might escape, if we knew but how to make you willing! How fair you are for everlasting salvation, if you would but turn and do your best, and make it the care and business of your lives! But you will not do it. If our lives lay on it, we cannot persuade you to it: We study day and night what to say to you, that may convince you and persuade you, and yet it is undone. We lay before you the Word of God, and show you the very chapter and verse where it is written, that you cannot be saved except you be converted, and yet we leave the most of you as we find you! We hope you will believe the Word of God, though you believe not us, and that you will regard it when we show you the plain scripture for it: but we hope in vain, and labor in vain, as to any saving change upon your hearts.

And do you think that this is a pleasant thing to us? Many a time in secret prayer we complain to God with sad hearts, "Alas! Lord, we have spoken to them in your name, but they little regard us: We have told them what you bid us to tell them concerning the danger of an unconverted state, but they do not believe us. We have told them that you have protested that "there is no peace to the wicked," but the worst of them all will scarcely believe that they are wicked. We have shown them your word, where you have said, "That if they live after the flesh they shall die;" Romans 8.13, but they say, "They will believe in you, when they will not believe you; that they will trust in you, when they give no credit to your word; and when they have hope that the threatenings of your words are false, they will yet call this a hoping in God; and though we show them where you have said, that when a wicked man dies, all his hopes perish—yet we cannot persuade them from their deceitful hopes," Proverbs 11.7.

We tell them what a base unprofitable thing sin is; but they love it, and therefore will not leave it. We tell them how dear they buy this pleasure, and that they must pay for it in everlasting torment; and they bless themselves, and will not believe it; but will do as the most do. And, because God is merciful, they will not believe him, but will venture their souls, come of it what will.

We tell them how ready the Lord is to receive them; and this does but make them delay their repentance and be bolder in their sin. Some of them say they purpose to repent, but they are still the same. Some say they do repent already, while yet they are not converted from their sins. We exhort them, we entreat them, we offer them our help, but we cannot prevail with them. Those who were drunkards, are drunkards still. Those who were voluptuous flesh-pleasing wretches, are such still. Those who were worldlings, are worldlings still. Those who were ignorant, and proud, and self-conceited, are so still.

Few of them will see and confess their sin, and fewer will forsake it, but comfort themselves that *all men are sinners*; as if there were no difference between a converted sinner and an unconverted sinner. Some of them will not come near us when we are willing to instruct them, but think they know enough already, and need not our instruction; and some of them will give us the hearing, yet do what they desire. Most of them are like dead men who cannot feel; so that, when we tell them of the matters of everlasting consequence, we cannot get a word of it to their hearts.

If we do not obey them, and humor them in baptizing the children of the most obstinately wicked, and giving them the Lord's Supper, and doing all that they would have us, though never so much against the Word of God—they will hate us, and rail at us. But if we beseech them but to confess and forsake their sins, and save their souls, they will not do it. We tell them, if they will but turn, we will deny them none of the ordinances of God, neither baptism to the children, nor the Lord's Supper to themselves. But they will not hear us. They would have us disobey God, and damn our own souls to please them, and yet they will not turn and save their own souls to please God.

They are wiser in their own eyes than all their teachers; they rage and are confident in their own way, and, if we would never so sincere, we cannot change them. Lord, this is the case of our miserable neighbors, and we cannot help it; we*see them ready to drop into Hell, and we cannot help it*; we know if they would sincerely turn they might be saved, but we cannot persuade them; if we would beg them on our knees, we cannot persuade them to it; if we would beg it of them with tears, we cannot persuade them. What more can we do?"

These are the secret complaints and moans that many a poor minister makes. And do you think that he has any pleasure in this? Is it a pleasure to him to see you go on in sin, and cannot stop you? To see you so miserable, and cannot so much as make you sensible of it? *To see you merry, when you are not sure to be an hour out of Hell?*To think what you must forever suffer, because you will not turn? And to think what an everlasting life of glory you willfully despise and cast away? What sadder thing can you bring to their hearts? And how could you devise to grieve them more?

Who is it then that you pleasure by your sin and death? It is none of your understanding godly friends. Alas, it is the grief of their souls to see your misery; and they lament you many a time when you give them little thanks for it, and when you have not hearts to lament yourselves.

Who is it then that takes pleasure in your sin? It is none but the three great enemies of God, whom you renounced in your baptism, and are now turned falsely to serve.

**1. The devil**indeed takes pleasure in your sin and death; for this is the very end of all his temptations. For this, he watches night and day. You cannot devise to please him better than to go on in sin. How glad is he when he sees you going to the alehouse, or other sin and when he hears you curse, or swear, or rail? How glad is he when he hears you revile the minister that would draw you from your sin, and help to save you? These are his delight.

**2. The wicked**are also delighted in it; for it is agreeable to their nature.

**3.** But I know, for all this, that it is not the pleasing of the devil that you intend, even when you please him; but **it is your own flesh, the greatest and most dangerous enemy, that you intend to please**. It is the flesh that would be pampered, that would be pleased in food, and drink, and clothing; that would be pleased in your company, and pleased in applause and credit with the world, and pleased in sports, and lusts, and idleness. This is the gulf that devours all! This is the very god that you serve, for, the scripture says of such, "that their bellies are their gods!"

But I beseech you stay a little and consider the business.

1. Question. Should your flesh be pleased before your Maker? Will you displease the Lord, and displease your teachers, and your godly friends—and all to please your brutish appetites, or sensual desires? Is not God worthy to be the ruler of your flesh? If he shall not rule it, he will not save it; you cannot in reason expect that he should.

2. Question. Your flesh is pleased with your sin; but is your conscience pleased? does not it grudge within you and tell you sometimes that all is not well, and that your case is not so safe as you make it to be? Should not your soul and conscience be pleased before your corruptible flesh?

3. Question. But, is not your flesh preparing for its own displeasure also? *It loves the bait, but does it love the hook?* It loves the strong drink and sweet morsels; it loves its ease, and sport, and merriment; it loves to be rich, and well spoken of by men, and to be somebody in the world. *But does it love the curse of God? Does it love to stand trembling before his bar, and to be judged to everlasting fire?*Does it love to be tormented with the devils forever?

Take all together: for *there is no separating sin and Hell*, but only by faith and true conversion. If you will keep one you must have the other. If death and Hell be pleasant to you, no wonder then if you go on in sin.

What if sin were ever so pleasant, is it worth the loss of life eternal? Is a little drink, or food, or ease; is the good word of sinners; are the pleasures of this world to be valued above the joys of Heaven? Are they worth the sufferings of eternal fire?

These questions should be considered before you go any farther, by every man that has reason to consider, and that believes he has a soul to save or lose.

Well, the Lord here swears that he has no pleasure in your death, but rather that you would turn and live; if yet you will go on and die rather than turn; remember it was not to please God that you did it; it was to please the world, and to please yourselves. And, if men will damn themselves to please themselves, and run into endless torments for delight, and have not the wit, the heart, the grace, to hearken to God or man, that would reclaim them, what could remedy this? They must take what they get by it, and repent it in another manner, when it is too late! Before I proceed any further in the application, I shall come to the next doctrine; which gives me a fuller ground for it.

**Doctrine 5.**So earnest is God for the conversion of sinners, that he doubles his commands and exhortations with vehemency:*"Turn! Turn! Why will you die?"*

This doctrine is the application of the former, as by a use of exhortation, and accordingly I shall handle it.

Is there an unconverted sinner who hears these vehement words of God? Is there a man or woman in this assembly that is yet a stranger to the renewing, sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit? Hearken then to the voice of your Maker, and turn to him by Christ without delay. Would you know the will of God? Why this is his will, that you presently turn. Shall the living God send so earnest a message to his creatures, and should they not obey?

Hearken then, all you who live after the flesh; the Lord who gave you your breath and being, has sent a message to you from Heaven; and this is his message,*"Turn! Turn! Why will you die?"* He who has ears to hear, let him hear. Shall the voice of the eternal Majesty be neglected? If he does but terribly thunder, you are afraid. O but this word concerns your everlasting life or death. It is both a command and an exhortation. As if he had said to you, "I charge you, upon the allegiance that you owe to me your Creator and Redeemer, that you renounce the flesh, the world, and the devil, and turn to me that you may live. I condescend to entreat you, as you love or fear him who made you. As you love your own life, even your everlasting life, Turn and live! As ever you would escape eternal misery, "Turn, turn, for why will you die?" And is there a heart in man, in a reasonable creature, that can once refuse such a message, such a command, such an exhortation as this? O what a vile thing then is the heart of man!

Hearken then, all that love yourselves, and all that regard your own salvation: Here is the most joyful message that ever was sent to the ears of man, "Turn you, turn you, for why will you die?" You are not yet shut up under eternal desperation. Here is mercy offered you: turn, and you shall have it. O with what joyful hearts should you receive these glad tidings! I know this is not the first time that you have heard it; but how have you regarded it, or how do you regard it now? Hear, all you ignorant, careless sinners, the word of the Lord! Hear, all you worldlings, you sensual flesh-pleasers; you gluttons, and drunkards, and whoremongers, and swearers; you railers and backbiters, slanderers and liars:*"Turn! Turn! Why will you die?"*

Hear, all you who are void of the love of God, whose hearts are not toward him, nor taken up with the hopes of glory, but set more by your earthly prosperity and carnal delights than by the joys of Heaven; all you who are religious but a little by the by, and give God no more than your flesh can spare; who have not denied your carnal selves, and forsaken all that you have for Christ, in the estimation and grounded resolution of your souls, but have some one thing in the world so dear to you that you cannot spare it for Christ, if he required it, but will rather venture on his displeasure and wrath than forsake it:*"Turn! Turn! Why will you die?"*

If you never heard it, or observed it before, remember that you were told it from the Word of God this day, that if you will but turn, you may live; and if you will not turn, you shall surely die.

What now will you do, Sirs? What is your resolution? Will you turn, or will you not? Halt not any longer between two opinions. If the Lord is God, follow him; if your flesh is God, then serve it still. If Heaven is better than earth and fleshly pleasures, come away then, and seek a better country, and "lay up your treasure where rust and moths do not corrupt, and thieves cannot break through and steal, and be awakened at last with all your might to seek the kingdom that cannot be moved," and to employ your lives on a higher design, and turn the stream of your cares and labors another way than formerly you have done. But, if earth is better than Heaven, or will do more for you, or last you longer—then keep it, and make your best of it, and follow it still. Are you resolved what to do? If you be not, I will set a few more moving considerations before you, to see if *reason*will make you resolve.

Consider first, "What preparations mercy has made for your salvation." What pity it is that any man should be damned after all this. The time was, when the flaming sword was in the way, and the curse of God's law would have kept you back if you had been ever so willing to turn to God. The time was when yourself, and all the friends that you have in the world, could never have procured you the pardon of your sins, though you had ever so much lamented and reformed them. But Christ has removed this impediment by the ransom of his blood.

The time was, that God was wholly unreconciled, as being not satisfied for the violation of his law; but now he is so far satisfied and reconciled, as that he has made you a free offer of full forgiveness, and a free deed of gift of Christ and life, and offers it to you, and entreats you to accept it, and it may be yours, if you will. "For he was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation!"

Sinners, we too are commanded to deliver this message to you all, as from the Lord, "Come, for all things are ready!" Are all things ready—and are you unready? God is ready to receive you, and pardon all that you have done against him, if you will but come. As long as you have sinned, as willfully as you have sinned, he is ready to cast all behind his back, if you will but sincerely come. Though you have been prodigals, and run away from God, and have stayed away from him so long, he is ready even to meet you, and embrace you in his arms, and rejoice in your conversion, if you will but turn. Even the earthly worldling and swinish drunkard will find God ready to bid them welcome, if they will but come.

Does not this turn your heart within you? O sinner, if you have a heart of flesh, and not of stone in you, methinks this should melt it. Shall the infinite Majesty of Heaven even wait for your returning, and be ready to receive you who have abused him, and rejected him so long? Shall he delight in your conversion—who might at any time glorify his justice in your damnation. Yet does it not melt your heart within you, and are you not yet ready to come in? Have you not as much reason to be ready to come as God has to invite you and bid you welcome?

But, that is not all: Christ has done his part on the cross, and made such way for you to the Father, that on his account you may be welcome if you will come. And yet are you not ready? A pardon is already expressly granted and offered you in the gospel. And yet are you not ready?

The ministers of the gospel are ready to assist you, to instruct you; they are ready to pray for you, and yet are you not ready?

All who fear God about you are ready to rejoice in your conversion, and to receive you into the communion of saints, and to give you the right hand of fellowship; yes, though you had been one that had been cast out of their society—they dare not but forgive where God forgives, when it is manifest to them, by your confession and amendment. They dare not so much as throw your former sins in your fac, because they know that God will not upbraid you with them. If you had been ever so scandalous, if you would but heartily be converted and come in, they would not refuse you, let the world say what they would against it. And, are all these ready to receive you, and yet are you not ready to come in?

Yes, Heaven itself is ready! The Lord will receive you into the glory of his saints, a vile brute as you have been. If you will but be but cleansed, you may have a place before his throne. His angels will be ready to guard your soul to the place of joy, if you do but sincerely come in.

And is *God*ready, the *sacrifice*of Christ ready, the *promise*ready, and pardon ready?—Are *ministers*ready, and the people of God ready, and *Heaven*itself ready, and *angels*ready, and all these but waiting for your conversion—and yet are you not ready? What! not ready to live, when you have been dead so long? Not ready to come to your right understanding, as the prodigal is said to come to himself, Luke 15.17, when you have been beside yourself so long? Not ready to be saved, when you are even ready to be eternally condemned? Are you not ready to lay hold on Christ, who would deliver you, when you are even ready to drown and sink into damnation? *Are you not ready to be saved from Hell, when you are even ready to be cast remedilessly into it?*

Alas, man! do you know what you are doing? If you die unconverted there is no doubt to be made of your damnation. You are not sure to live an hour—and yet are you not ready to turn and to come in? O miserable wretch! Have you not served the flesh and the devil long enough? Yet have you not enough of sin? Is it so good to you, or so profitable for you? Do you know what it is, that you would yet have more of it? Have you had so many calls, and so many mercies, and so many blows, and so many examples? Have you seen so many laid in the grave, and yet are you not ready to let go your sins, and come to Christ? What! after so many convictions, and gripes of conscience, after so many purposes and promises, are you not yet ready to turn and live? O that your eyes, your heart, were opened, to know how fair an offer is now made to you! What a joyful message it is we are sent on, to bid you come, for all things are ready.

Consider also, what calls you have to turn and live. How many, how loud, how earnest, how dreadful, and yet what encouraging, joyful calls.

For the principal inviter is God himself. He, who commands Heaven and earth, commands you to turn; and presently, without delay, to turn! He commands the sun to run its course, and to rise upon you every morning; and though it is so glorious a creature, and many times bigger than all the earth—yet it obeys him, and fails not one minute of its appointed time. He commands all the *planets*and *orbs*of Heaven, and they obey him. He commands the *sea*to ebb and flow, and the whole creation to keep its course, and all obey him. The *angels*of Heaven obey his will, when he sends them to minister to such silly worms as we on earth. And yet, if he command but a sinner to turn, he will not obey him; he thinks himself wiser than God, and he cavils and pleads the cause of sin, and will not obey. If the Lord Almighty says the word, the Heavens and all therein obey him; but if he calls but a drunkard out of an alehouse, he will not obey. If he calls a worldly fleshly sinner to deny himself; and mortify the flesh, and set his heart on a better inheritance—he will not obey him.

If you had any love in you, you would know the voice, and say, "Oh this is my father's call! How can I find in my heart to disobey? The sheep of Christ know and hear his voice, and they follow him, and he gives them eternal life." If you had any spiritual life and sense in you, at least you would say, "This call is the solemn voice of God, and who dares disobey?" For says the prophet, "The lion has roared, who will not fear?" God is not a man, that you should dally and play with him. Remember what he says to Paul at his conversion, "It is hard for you to kick against the goads!" Will you yet go and despise his word, and resist his Spirit, and stop your ear against his call?

Who is it that will have the worst of this? Do you know whom you disobeys and contend with, and what you are doing? It were a far wiser and easier task for you to contend with the thorns, and spurn them with your bare feet, and beat them with your bare hands, or put your head into the burning fire. "Be not deceived, God will not be mocked!" Galatians 6.7. Whoever else is mocked, God will not: you had better play with the fire in your thatch than with the fire of his burning wrath: "For our God is a consuming fire!" Hebrews 12.29.

O how unfit a match are you for God! "It is a fearful thing to fall into his hands," Hebrews 10.31. And therefore it is a fearful thing to contend with him, or resist him. As you love your souls, take heed what you do. What will you say, if he begins in wrath to plead with you? What will you do if he takes you in hand? Will you not strive against his judgment, as now you do against his grace? Says the Lord, Isaiah 27.4, 6. "Fury is not in me;" that is, I delight not to destroy you. I do it, as it were, unwillingly; but yet "Who would set the briars and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together. Oh let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me!" *It is an unequal combat for the briars and stubble to make war with the fire.*

And thus you see who it is who calls you, that should move you to hear this call, and turn. So consider also, by what instruments, and how often, and how earnestly, he does it.

1. Every leaf of the blessed book of God has as it were a voice, and calls unto you, *Turn and live! Turn, or you will die!*How can you open it, and read a leaf, or hear a chapter, and not perceive God bids you turn?

2. It is the voice of every sermon that you hear. For what else is the scope and drift of all, but to call and persuade, and entreat you to turn?

3. It is the voice of many a motion of the Spirit, that secretly speaks over these words again, and urges you to turn.

4. It is likely, sometimes, that it is the voice of your own conscience. Are you not sometimes convinced that all is not well with you? Does not your conscience tell you that you must be a new man, and take a new course, and often call you to return?

5. It is the voice of the gracious examples of the godly. When you see them live a Heavenly life, and fly from the sin which is your delight, this really calls on you to turn.

6. It is the voice of all the works of God. For, they also are God's books, that teach you this lesson, by showing you his greatness, and wisdom, and goodness; and calling you to observe them, and admire the Creator, Psalm 19.1, 2. "The Heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shows his handiwork; day unto day utters speech, night unto night shows knowledge."

Every time the sun rises upon you, it really calls you to turn; as if it should say, "What do I travel and compass the world for, but to declare to men the glory of their Maker, and to light them to do his work? And do I still find you doing the work of sin, and sleeping out your life in negligence? Awake, you who sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light!"

"And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature." Romans 13:11-14

7. It is the voice of every mercy you possess. If you could but hear and understand them, they all cry out unto you, *Turn!*Why does the earth bear you, but to seek and serve the Lord? Why does it afford you its fruits, but to serve him? Why does the air afford you breath, but to serve him? Why do all the creatures serve you with their labors and their lives, but that you might serve the Lord? Why does he give you time, and health, and strength, but for to serve him? Why have you food, and drink, and clothes, but for his service? Have you anything which you have not received? If you did receive them, it is reason you should bethink you, from whom, and to what end and use, you did receive them. Did you never cry to him for help in your distress? Did you then understand that it was your part to turn and serve him if he would deliver you? He has done his part, and spared you yet longer, and tried you another and another year; and yet do you not turn?

You know the parable of the unfruitful fig-tree, Luke 13. When the Lord had said, "Cut it down, why does it use up the ground?" He was entreated to try it one year longer, and then if it proved not fruitful, to cut it down. Christ himself there makes the application twice over, verse 3 and 5. "Except you repent, you shall all likewise perish!" How many years has God looked for the fruits of love and holiness from you, and has found none, and yet has spared you. How many a time, by your willful ignorance, and carelessness, and disobedience, have you provoked justice to say, "Cut him down, why does he cumber he the ground?" And yet mercy has prevailed, and patience has forborne the fatal blow to this day. If you had the understanding of a man within you, you would know that all this calls you to turn. "Do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance? But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed. God "will give to each person according to what he has done." To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger." Romans 2:4-8

8. Moreover, it is the voice or every *affliction*to call you to make haste and turn. Sickness and pain cry *Turn!*Poverty, and loss of friends, and every twig of the chastising rod cry *Turn!*Yet will you not hearken to the call! These have come near you, and made you feel, they have made you groan—and can they not make you turn?

9. The very frame of your nature and being itself, bespeaks your return. Why have you *reason*, but to rule your flesh, and serve your Lord? Why have you an *understanding*soul, but to learn and know his will and do it? Why have you a *heart*within you that can love, and fear, and desire—but that you should fear him, and love him, and desire him?

10. Yes, your own engagements, by promise to the Lord, do call upon you to turn and serve him. You have bound yourself to him by a baptismal covenant, and renounced the world, the flesh, and the devil; this you have confirmed by the profession of Christianity, and renewed it at sacraments, and in times of affliction. And will you promise and vow, and never perform, and turn to God?

Lay all these together, now, and see what should be the outcome. The holy *scripture*calls upon you to turn. The *ministers*of Christ call upon you to turn. The *Spirit*cries turn. Your conscience cries turn. The *godly*, by persuasions and example cry turn. The whole world, and all the *creatures*therein, that are presented to your consideration, cry turn. The present *forbearance*of God, cries turn. All the *mercies*which you receive cry turn. The rod of God's *chastisement*cries turn. Your reason, and the frame of your nature bespeaks your turning. And so do all your promises to God—and yet have you not resolved to turn?

11. Moreover, poor sinner! did you ever consider upon what terms you stand all this while with him who calls on you to turn? You are his own, and owe him yourself and all that you have—and may he not command his own? You are his absolute servant, and should serve no other master. You stand at his mercy, and your life is in his hands—and he has resolved to save you upon no other terms. You have many malicious spiritual enemies, that would be glad if God would but forsake you, and let them alone with you, and leave you to their will; how quickly would they deal with you in another manner? And you can not be delivered from them but by turning unto God.

You are fallen under his wrath by your sin already; and you know not how long his patience will yet wait. Perhaps this is the last year—perhaps the last day. His sword is even at your heart while the word is in your ear; and if you turn not, you are a dead and undone man! Were your eyes but open to see where you stand, even upon the brink of Hell, and to see how many thousands are there already that did not turn, you would see that it is time to look about you!

Well, Sirs, look inwards now, and tell me how are your hearts affected with those offers of the Lord? You hear what is his mind; he delights not in your death; he calls to you,*Turn, turn!*It is a fearful sign if all this moves you not, or if it does but half move you. And much more if it make you more careless in your misery, because you hear of the mercifulness of God. The working of the medicine will partly tell us whether there be any hope of the cure.

O what glad tidings would it be to those, that are now in Hell, if they had but such a message from God! What a joyful word would it be to hear this, *Turn and live*. Yes, what a welcome word would it be to yourself, when you have felt that wrath of God but an hour! Or, if after a thousand or ten thousand years of torment you could but hear such a word from God, *Turn and live!* Yet will you neglect it, and make us to return without our errand?

Behold, sinners, we are sent here as the messengers of the Lord, to set before you life and death. What do you say? Which of them will you choose? *Christ stands, as it were, by you, with Heaven in the one hand, and Hell in the other, and offers you your choice; which will you choose?*

"The voice of the Lord makes the rocks to tremble," Psalm 26. And is it nothing to hear him threaten you, if you will not turn? Do you not understand and feel this voice, *"Turn! Turn! Why will you die?*" Why, it is the voice of love, of infinite love, of your best and kindest friend, as you might easily perceive by the motion; and yet can you neglect it? It is the voice of pity and compassion. The Lord sees where you are going, which makes him call after you,*"Turn, turn."*He sees what will become of you if you turn not. He thinks with himself, "Ah this poor sinner will cast himself into endless torments if he does not turn. I must in justice deal with him according to my righteous law!" and therefore he calls after you, Turn, turn, O sinner! If you did but know the thousandth part as well as God does, the *danger*that is near you, and the *misery*that you are running into, we would have no more need to call after you to turn.

Moreover, this voice that calls to you, is the same that has prevailed with thousands already, and called all to Heaven that are now there. They would not now, for a thousand worlds, wish that they had made light of it, and not turned to God. Now what are they possessing who turned at God's call? Now they perceive that it was indeed the *voice of love*that meant them no more harm than their salvation. And, if you will obey the same call, you shall come to the same happiness. *There are millions that must forever lament that they turned not. But there is never a soul in Heaven that is sorry that they are converted.*

Well, Sirs, are you yet resolved, or are you not? Do I need to say any more to you? What will you do? Will you turn or not? Speak, man, in your heart to God, though you speak not out to me. Speak, lest he take your silence for denial. Speak quickly, lest he never make you the like offer more. Speak resolvedly, and not waveringly, for he will have no indifferents to be his followers. Say in your heart now, without any more delay, even before you stir from hence, "By the grace of God I am resolved presently to turn! And because I know my own insufficiency, I am resolved to wait on God for his grace, and to follow him in his ways, and forsake my former courses and companions and give up myself to the guidance of the Lord."

You are not shut up in the darkness of heathenism, nor in the desperation of the damned. Eternal life is before you; and you may have it on reasonable terms, if you will. Yes, on free cost, if you will accept it. The way of God lies plain before you; you may have Christ, and pardon, and holiness, if you will. What do you say? Will you, or will you not? If you say nay, or say nothing, and still go on—then God is witness, and this congregation is witness, and your own consciences are witnesses, how fair an offer you had this day. Remember, you might have had Christ, and would not. Remember, when you have lost it, that you might have had eternal life as well as others, and would not—and all because you would not turn.

**Ezekiel 33:11.**
"Say to them: As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die!"

It has been explained, and proved, that God takes pleasure in men's conversion and salvation, but not in their death or damnation. He would rather they would turn and live, than go on and die. That he may leave man no pretense to doubt of it, the Lord hat confirmed it to us by his oath. Yes, farther, so earnest is God for the conversion of sinners, that he doubles his commands and exhortations with vehemency, Turn! Turn!

Having already illustrated and applied each of these points, let us come to the next doctrine, and hear your reasons.

***~~Doctrine 6. The Lord condescends to reason the case with unconverted sinners, and to ask them why they will die.~~***

A strange disputation it is, both as to the controversy and as to the disputants.

**I. The controversy or question**, propounded to dispute of, is, "Why wicked men will damn themselves?" Or, "Why they will rather die than turn?" Whether they have any sufficient reason for so doing?

**II. The disputants**are God and man; the most holy God, and wicked unconverted sinners.

Is it not a strange thing, which God does seem here to suppose, that any man should be willing to die and be damned? Yes, that this should be the case of the wicked; that is, of the greatest part of the world. But, you will say, this cannot be, for nature desires the preservation and felicity of itself, and the wicked are more selfish than others, and not less; and therefore how can any man be willing to be damned? To which I answer:

**1.** It is a certain truth that no man can be willing of any evil as evil, but only as it has some appearance of good; much less can any man be willing to be eternally tormented. Misery, as such, is desired by none.

**2.** But yet, for all that, it is most true which God here teaches us, that the cause, why the wicked die and are damned, is, because, they will die and be damned. And this is true in several respects.

1. Because they will go the way that leads to Hell, though they are told by God and man where it goes, and where it ends; and though God has so often professed in his word, that if they hold on in that way, they shall be condemned, and that they shall not be saved unless they turn. "There is no peace, says the Lord, unto the wicked." "The way of peace they know not; there is no judgment in their goings; they have made crooked paths; whoever goes therein shall not know peace."

They have the word and the oath of the living God for it; that, if they will not turn, they shall not enter into his blessed rest. And yet wicked they are, and wicked they will be, let God and man say what they will; fleshly they are, and fleshly they will be, worldlings they are, and worldlings they will be; though God has told them that "the love of the world is enmity to God; and that if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him'" So that, consequently, these men are willing to be damned, though not directly; *they are willing to walk in the way to Hell, and love the certain cause of their torment; though they be not willing of Hell itself, and do not love the pain which they must endure.*

Is not this the truth of your case, sinners? You would not burn in Hell; but you will kindle the fire by your sins, and cast yourselves into it! You would not be tormented with devils forever, but you will do that which will certainly procure it, in despite of all that can be said against it. It is just as if you would say, *"I will drink this poison, but you I will not die. I will cast myself headlong from the top of a steeple, but yet I will not kill myself. I will thrust this knife into my heart, but yet I will not take away my life. I will put this fire into the thatch of my house, yet I will not be burned."*

Just so it is with wicked men; they will be wicked, and they will live after the flesh and the world, and yet they would not be damned. But do you not know that *the means lead to the end?*and that God has by his righteous law concluded, that you must repent or perish? He who will take poison, may as well say plainly, "I will kill myself;" for it will prove no better in the end. Though perhaps he loved it for the sweetness of the sugar that was mixed with it, and would not be persuaded that it was poison, but that he might take it and do well enough; but it is not his conceits and vain confidence that will save his life.

Just so, if you will be drunkards, or fornicators, or worldlings, or live after the flesh, you may as well say plainly, "We will be damned!" for so you will be unless you turn. Would you not rebuke the folly of a thief or murderer, that would say, "I will steal and kill, but I shall not be hanged," when he knows that, if he does the one, the judge in justice will see that the other be done? If he say, "I will steal and murder," he may as well say plainly, "I will be hanged." So, if you will go on in a carnal life, you may as well say plainly, "We will go to Hell."

2. Moreover, the wicked will not use those *means*, without which there is no hope of their salvation. He who will not eat, may as well say plainly, he will not live, unless he can tell how to live without food. He who will not go his journey, may as well say plainly he will not come to the end. He who falls into the water, and will not come out, nor suffer another to help him out, may as well say plainly, he will be drowned.

So if you be carnal and ungodly, and will not be converted, nor use the means by which you should be converted, you may as well say plainly that you will be damned. For if you have found out a way to be saved without conversion, you have done that which was never done before.

3. Yes, this is not all. The wicked are unwilling even to partake of salvation itself. They may desire somewhat which they call by the name of Heaven—yet Heaven itself, considered in the true nature of its felicity, they desire not; yes, their hearts are quite against it. Heaven is a state of perfect holiness, and of continual love and praise to God—and the wicked have no heart for this. The imperfect love, and praise, and holiness, which is here to be attained, they have no desire for; much less of that which is so much greater. *The joys of Heaven are of so pure and spiritual a nature, that the heart of the wicked cannot desire them.*

So that by this time you may see on what ground it is, that God supposes that the wicked are willing their own destruction. They will rather venture on certain misery than be converted; and then, to quiet themselves in their sins, they will make themselves believe that they shall nevertheless escape eternal damnation.

II. And as this controversy is matter of astonishment (that even men should be such enemies to themselves, as willfully to cast away their souls) so are the disputants too. That God should stoop so low as thus to plead the case with man; and that men should be so strangely blind and obstinate as to need all this in so plain a case; yes, and to resist all this, when their own salvation lies upon the issue!

No wonder that they will not hear us that are men, when they will not hear the Lord himself: As God says in Ezekiel 3.7, when He sent the prophet to the Israelites, "The house of Israel will not hearken unto you; for they will not hearken unto me—for all the house of Israel are impudent and hard-hearted" No wonder if they can plead against a minister, or a godly neighbor, when they will plead against the Lord himself; even against the plainest passages of his word, and think that they have *reason*on their side.

When they weary the Lord with their words, they say, "Wherein have we wearied Him?" Malachi 2.17. The priests, who despised His name, dared ask, "Wherein have we despised your name?" And when they polluted his altar, and made the temple of the Lord contemptible they dared say, "Wherein have we polluted you?" Malachi 1.6, 7. But "Woe unto him, says the Lord, who strives with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth: Shall the clay say to him who fashioned it, What are you making?" Isaiah 45.9.

Question: But why is it that God will reason the case with man?

Answer 1. Because that man being a reasonable creature, is accordingly to be dealt with, and by reason to be persuaded and overcome. God has therefore endowed them with reason, that they might use it for him. One would think a reasonable creature should not go against the clearest and the greatest reason in the world, when it is set before him.

2. At least, men shall see that God did require nothing of them that was unreasonable, but that whatever forbids them, he has all the right reason in the world on his side. They have good reason to obey him, but none to disobey. thus even the damned shall be forced to justify God, and confess that it was only reasonable that they should have turned to him; and they shall be forced to condemn themselves, and confess that they had little reason to cast away themselves by the neglecting of His grace in the day of their visitation.

***~~USE.~~***

Look up your best and strongest reasons, sinners, if you will make good your way. You see now with *whom*you have to deal. What do you say, unconverted, sensual sinner? Dare you venture upon a dispute with God? Are you able to confute him? God asks you, Why will you die? Are you furnished with a sufficient answer? Will you undertake to prove that God is mistaken, and that you are in the right? O what an undertaking is that! Why, either he or you are mistaken, when he is for your conversion, and you are against it. He calls upon you to turn, and you will not. He bids you do it presently, even today, while it is called today—and you delay, and think there is time enough hereafter. He says it must be a total change, and you must be holy, and new creatures, and born again—and you think that less may serve the turn, and that it is enough to patch up the old man, without becoming new.

Who is in the right now? God or you? God calls on you to turn, and to live a holy life, and you will not—by your disobedient lives your prove that you will not turn. If you desire to be save, why do you not turn? Why have you not done it all this while? And why do you not fall upon it yet? Your wills have the command of your lives. We may certainly *conclude that you are unwilling to turn*, when you do not turn. And, why will you not? Can you give any reason for it that is worthy to be called a reason?

I, who am but a worm, your fellow-creature, of a shallow capacity, dare challenge the wisest of you all to reason the case with me, while I plead my Maker's cause. I need not be discouraged, when I know I plead but the cause that God pleads, and contend for him who will have the best at last. Had I but these two general grounds against you, I am sure that you have no good reason on your side.

**1.**I am sure it can be no good reason which is against the God of truth and reason. It cannot be light that is contrary to the sun. There is no knowledge in any creature, but what it has from God; and therefore none can be wiser than God. It is fatal presumption for the highest angel to compare with his Creator. What is it then for a lump of dirt, an ignorant sot, who knows not himself, nor his own soul, who knows but little of the things which he sees—yet who is more ignorant than many of his neighbors—to set himself against the wisdom of the Lord? It is one of the fullest discoveries of the horrible wickedness of carnal men, and the stark madness of such as sin, that *so silly a mole*dare contradict his Maker, and call in question the Word of God. Yes, that those people in our parishes, who are so ignorant, that they cannot give us a reasonable answer concerning the very principles of religion, are yet so wise in their own conceit, that they dare question the plainest truths of God, yes, contradict them and cavil against them, when they can scarcely speak sense, and will believe them no farther than agrees with their foolish wisdom.

**2.** And as I know that God must needs be in the right, so I know the case is so palpable and gross which he pleads against, that no man can have reason for it. Is it possible that a man can have any reason to break his master's laws? and reason to dishonor the Lord of glory? and reason to abuse the Lord who bought him?*Is it possible that a man can have any good reason to damn his own immortal soul?*Mark the Lord's question, "Turn you, turn you, why will you die?" *Is eternal damnation a thing to be desired? Are you in love with Hell? What reason have you to willfully perish?*

If you think you have reason to sin, should you not remember that "death is the wages of sin," Romans 6.23, and think whether you have any reason to undo yourselves, body and soul, forever? You should not only ask whether you love the adder, but whether you love the sting? It is such a thing for a man to cast away his everlasting happiness, and to sin against God, that no good reason can be given for it. But, the more anyone pleads for it, the madder he shows himself to be.

*Had you a kingdom offered you for every sin that you commit, it were not reason, but madness, to accept it.* Could you by every sin obtain the highest thing on earth that flesh desires, it were no considerable value to persuade you in reason to commit it. If it were to please your greatest or dearest friends, or to obey the greatest prince on earth, or to save your lives, or to escape the greatest earthly misery; *all these are of no consideration to draw a man in reason to the committing of one sin*. If it were a right hand or a right eye that would hinder your salvation, it is the most gainful way to cast it away, rather than to go to Hell to save it; for there is no saving a *part*when you lose the *whole*.

So exceedingly great are the matters of eternity, that nothing in this world deserves once to be named in comparison with them; nor can any earthly thing, though it were life, or crowns, or kingdoms, be a reasonable excuse for the neglect of matters of such high and everlasting consequence. A man can have no reason to blast his ultimate end. *Heaven is such a thing, that, if you lose it, nothing can make up the loss. Hell its such a thing, that, if you suffer it, nothing can remove your misery, or give you ease and comfort.*And therefore nothing can be a valuable consideration to excuse you for neglecting your own salvation; for, says our Savior, "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Mark 8.36.

O sirs, that you did but know what matters they are that we are now speaking to you of! The saints in Heaven have other kind of thoughts of these things. If the devil could come to those who live in the sight and love of God, and should offer them a cup of ale, or a whore, or merry company, or sport to entice them away from God and glory; tell me, how do you think they would receive the motion? Nay, or if he should offer them to be kings of the earth, do you think this would entice them down from Heaven? O with what hatred and holy scorn would they disdain and reject the motion!

And why should not you do so, who have Heaven offered to you, if you had but faith to see it? There is not a soul in Hell but knows that it was a mad exchange to forfeit Heaven for fleshly pleasure; and that it is not a little mirth, or pleasure, or worldly riches, or honor, or the good will or word of men, that will quench Hell fire, or make him a gainer, who loses his soul.

Oh! if you had heard what I believe, if you had seen what I believe, and that on the credit of the Word of God, you would say there can be no reason to warrant a man to damn his eternal soul. You dared not sleep quietly another night, before you had resolved to turn and live.

If you see a man put his hand in the fire until it burn off, you will marvel at it; but this is a thing that a man may have a reason for; as Bishop Cranmer had when he burnt off his hand for subscribing to Popery. If you see a man cut off a leg or arm, it is a sad sight; but this is a thing that a man may have a good reason for; as many a man does to save his life. If you see a man give his body to be burnt to ashes, and to be tormented with racks, and refuse deliverance when it is offered, that is a hard case to flesh and blood: but this a man may have good reason for; as you may see in Hebrews 11.33, 34, 35, 36 and as many a hundred martyrs have done. But for a man to forsake the Lord who made Him, and to run into the fire of Hell, when he is told of it, and entreated to turn that he may be saved; this is a thing that can have no reason in the world, that is reason indeed, to justify or excuse it. *Heaven will pay for the loss of anything that we lose to get it; but nothing can pay for the loss of Heaven.*

I beseech you now let this word come nearer to your hearts. As you are convinced that you have no reason to destroy yourselves, so tell me what reason have you to refuse to turn, and live to God? What reason has the vilest worldling, or drunkard, or ignorant careless sinner of you all, why you should not be as holy as any you know, and be as careful for your souls as any other?*Will not Hell be as hot to you as to others?* Should not your own souls be as dear to you as theirs is them? Has not God as much authority over you? Why then will you not become a sanctified people as well as they?

O Sirs, when God brings the matter down to the very principles of nature, and shows that *you have no more reason to be ungodly than you have to damn your own souls!*if yet you will not understand and turn, it seems a desperate case that you are in. And now, either you have reason for what you do, or you have not: if not, will you go against reason itself? Will you do that which you have no reasons for? But, if you think you have, produce them, and make the best of your matter.

Reason the case a little with me, your fellow-creature, which is far easier than to reason the case with God. Tell me, man, here before the Lord, as if you were to die this hour, why should you not resolve to turn this day, before you stir from the place you stand in? What reason have you to deny, or to delay? Have you any reason that satisfies your own conscience for it? Or any that you dare own and plead at the bar of God? If you have, let us hear them, bring them forth, and make them good. But, alas! what poor stuff, what nonsense instead of reasons, do we daily hear from ungodly men? But for their necessity, I would be ashamed to name them.

1. One says, "If none shall be saved but such converted and sanctified ones as you talk of, then Heaven would be but empty, then God help a great many!

Answer What! it seems you think that God does not know, or else that he is not to be believed! Measure not all by yourselves; God has thousands and millions of his sanctified ones; but yet they are few in comparison of the world, as Christ himself has told us, Matthew 7.13, 14, Luke 12.32. It better profits you to make that use of this truth which Christ teaches you: "Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leads unto life, and few there be that find it; but wide is the gate and broad is the way, that leads to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat." Luke 13.22-24. "Fear not, *little*flock, (says Christ to his sanctified ones) for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom!" Luke 12.32.

Objection 2. I am sure if such as I go to Hell, we shall have much company.

Answer. And will that be any ease or comfort to you? Or do you think you may not have company enough in Heaven? Will you be undone for company? Or *will you not believe that God will execute his threatenings, because there be so many that are guilty?*All these are silly unreasonable conceits.

Objection 3. But all men are sinners, even the best of you all?

Answer. But all are not unconverted sinners. The godly live not in gross sins; and their very infirmities are their grief and burden, which they daily long, and pray, and strive to be rid of. Sin has not dominion over them.

Objection 4. I do not see that professors are any better than other men; they will defraud, and oppress, and are as covetous as any.

Answer. Whatever *hypocrites*are, it is not so with those that are sanctified. God has thousands and tens of thousands that are otherwise; though the malicious world accuses them of what they can never prove, and of that which never entered into their hearts. And commonly they charge them with heart-sins, which none can see but God; because they can charge them with no such wickedness in their lives as they are guilty of themselves.

Objection 5. But I am no whoremonger, nor drunkard, nor oppressor—and therefore why should you call me to be converted?

Answer. As if you were not born after the flesh, and had not lived after the flesh, as well as others! Is it not as great a sin as any of these, for a man to have an earthly mind, and to love the world above God, and to have an unbelieving, unhumbled heart? Nay, let me tell you more; that many people who avoid *disgraceful sins*are as fast glued to the world, and as much slaves to the flesh, and as strange to God, and averse to Heaven, as others are in their more shameful and notorious sins.

Objection 6. But I mean nobody any harm, nor do any harm. Why then should God condemn me?

Answer. Is it no harm to neglect the Lord who made you, and the work for which you came into the world, and to prefer the creature before the Creator, and to neglect grace that is daily offered you? *It is the depth of your sinfulness to be insensible of it*; the dead feel not that they are dead. If once you were made spiritually alive, you would see more amiss in yourself, and marvel at yourself for making so light of it.

Objection 7. I think you would make men mad under pretense of converting them; it is enough to rack the brains of sinful people, to muse so much on matters too high for them.

Answer 1. Can you be madder than you are already? Or at least, can there be a more dangerous madness than to neglect your everlasting welfare, and willfully damn yourselves?

2. A man is never in his wits until he is converted; he never knows *God*, nor knows *sin*, nor knows *Christ*, nor knows the *world*, nor *himself*, nor what his business is on earth, so as to set himself about it—until he be converted. The scripture says, "That the wicked are unreasonable men," and, "That the wisdom of the world is foolishness with God." It is said of the prodigal, that, "when he came to himself," he resolved to return. It is a wise world, when men will disobey God, and run to Hell for fear of being out of their wits?

3. What is there in the work that Christ calls you to, that should drive a man out of his wits? Is it the loving of God, and calling upon him, and comfortably thinking of the glory to come, and the forsaking of our sins, and loving one another, and delighting ourselves in the service of God? Are these such things as should make men mad?

4. And whereas you say that these matters are too high for us, you accuse God himself for making this our work, and giving us his word, and commanding all that will be blessed to meditate on it day and night. Are the matters which we are made for, and which we live for—too high for us to meddle with? This is plainly to unman us, and to make brutes of us, as if we were like them that must meddle with no higher matters than what belongs to flesh and earth. *If Heaven be too high for you to think on and provide for, it will be too high for you ever to possess.*

5. If God should sometimes suffer any weak-headed people to be distracted by thinking of eternal things; this is because they misunderstand them, and run without a guide. Of the two, I had rather be in the case of such a one, than of the mad unconverted world, who take their distraction to be their wisdom.

Objection 8. I do not thing that God cares so much what men think, or speak, or do, as to make so great a matter of it.

Answer. It seems, then, you take the Word of God to be false, and then what will you believe? But your own reason might teach you better, if you believe not the scriptures. For you see God sets not so light by us, but that he given to make us, and still preserves us, and daily upholds us, and provides for us. Will any wise man make intricate device for nothing? Will you make or buy a clock or watch, and daily look at it, and not care whether it is accurate or not?

Surely, if you believe not *a particular eye of Providence observing your hearts and lives*, you cannot believe or expect any particular Providence to observe your wants and troubles to relieve you. And, if God had so little cared for you as you imagine, you would never have lived until now—a hundred diseases would have striven which should first destroy you. Yes, the devils would have haunted you, and fetched you away alive, as the great fishes devour the less, and as ravenous birds and beasts devour others. You cannot think that God made man for no end or use; and, if he made him for any—it was surely for himself. And can you think he cares not whether his ends are accomplished, and whether we do the work that we are made for?

Yes, by this atheistical objection *you make God to have made and upheld all the world in vain.*What are all other lower creatures for, but for man? What does the *earth*, but bear and nourish us? and the *beasts*do serve us with their labors and lives, and so of the rest. And has God made so glorious a habitation, and set man to dwell in it, and made all his servants—and now does he look for nothing at his hands? nor care how he thinks, or speaks, or lives? This is most unreasonable.

Objection 9. It was a better world when men did not make so much ado in religion.

Answer 1. It has ever been the custom to praise the times past. That world that you speak of was accustomed to say, it was a better world in their forefathers' days—and so did they of their forefathers. This is but an old custom, because *we all feel the evil of our own times*, but we see not that which was before us.

Answer 2. Perhaps you speak as you think: worldlings think the world is at the best, when it is agreeable to their minds, and when they have most mirth and worldly pleasure. And I doubt not but the devil, as well as you, would say, that then it was a better world, for then he had more service and less disturbance. But *the world is at the best when God is most loved, regarded, and obeyed.*And how else will you know when the world is good or bad, but, by this?

Objection 10. There are so many ways and religions that we know not which to be of, and therefore we will be even as we are.

Answer. Because there are many, will you be of that way that you may be sure is wrong? None are farther out of the way than worldly, fleshly, unconverted sinners; for they do not only err in this or that opinion, but in the very scope and drift or their lives. If you were going a journey that your life lay on, would you stop or turn again, because you met with some cross-ways, or because you saw some travelers go on horse, and some by foot, and some perhaps break over the hedge, yes, and some miss the way? Or would you not rather be the more careful to inquire of the way? If you have some servants that know not how to do your work right, and some that are unfaithful; would you take it well of any of the rest that would therefore be idle, and do you no service, because they see their companions so bad?

Objection 11. I do not see that it goes any better with those that are so godly than with other men; they are as poor and in as much trouble as others.

Answer. And perhaps in much more, when God sees it is fit for them. They take not earthly prosperity for their wages; they have laid up their treasure and hopes in another world, or else they are not Christians indeed; the less they have, the more is ahead, and they are content to wait until then.

Objection 12. When you have said all that you can, I am resolved to hope well and trust in God, and do as well as I can, and not make so much ado.

Answer 1. Is that doing as well as you can, when you will not turn to God, but your heart is against his holy and diligent service? It is as well as you desire it to be, but that is your misery.

Answer 2. My desire is, that you should hope and trust in God. But, for what is it that you would hope? Is it to be saved, if you turn and be sanctified? For this you have God's promise, and therefore hope for it, and spare not. But if you hope to be saved, without conversion and a holy life, this is not to hope in God, but in Satan, or yourselves; for God has given you no such promise, but told you the contrary; but it is Satan and self-love, that made you such promises, and raised you to such hopes.

Well, if these and such as these, are all you have to say against conversion and a holy life, your *all*is nothing, and worse than nothing. And if these, and such as these, seem reasons sufficient to persuade you to forsake God, and cast yourselves into Hell, the Lord deliver you from such reasons, and from such blind understandings, and from such senseless hardened hearts.

Dare you offer one of there reasons at the bar of God? Do you think it will then serve your turn to say, "Lord, I did not turn, because I had so much to do in the world, or because I did not like the lives of some professors; or because I saw men of so many opinions?" O how easily will the light of that day shame such reasonings as these!

Had you the *world*to look after? Let the world which you served now pay you your wages, and save you if it can. Had you not a better world to look after first? And were you not commanded, to "seek first God's kingdom and righteousness; and promised that other things should be added to you?" Matthew 6.33. And were you not told, "that godliness was profitable to all things, having the promise of this life, and that which is to come?" 1 Timothy 4.8.

Did the sins of the professors hinder you? You should rather have been the more heedful, and learned by their falls to beware, and have been the more careful, and not the more careless. *It was the Scripture, and not their lives, that was your rule.*

Did the many opinions of this world hinder you? Why the Scripture, that was your rule, did teach you but one way, and that was the right way; if you had followed that, even in so much as was plain and easy, you should never have miscarried.

Will not such answers as these silence you? If these will not, God has those that will; when he asks the man, Matthew 22.12. "Friend, how come you in hither, not having on a wedding-garment?" That is, what are you doing in my church among professed Christians, without a holy heart and life? What answer did he make? Why the text says, he was speechless; he had nothing to say. The clearness of the case, and the Majesty of God, will then easily stop the mouths of the most confident of you, though you will not be convinced by anything we can say to you now; but will make good your cause, be it ever so bad.

I know already, that never a reason that now you can give me will do you any good at last, when your case must be opened before the Lord and all the world. Nay, I scarcely think that your own consciences are well satisfied with your reasons. For, if they are, it seems then you have not so much as purposed to repent. But, if you purpose to repent, it seems you do not put much confidence in your reasons which you bring against it. What say you, unconverted sinners? Have you any good reasons to give, why you should not turn, and presently turn, with all your hearts?*Or will you go to Hell in spite of reason itself?*Bethink you what you do in time, for it will shortly be too late to remedy yourself. Can you find any fault with God, or his work, or his wages? Is he a bad master?*Is the devil, whom you serve, a better master? Or is the flesh a better master? Is there any harm in a holy life? Is a life of worldliness and ungodliness better?*Do you think in your consciences, that it would do you any harm to be converted and live a holy life? What harm can it do you? Is it harm to you to have the spirit of Christ within you? And to have a cleansed purified heart? If it is bad to be holy, why does God say, "Be holy, for I am holy."

Is it evil to be like God? Is it not said, "that God made man in His own image?" Why, this holiness is his image. This Adam lost, and this Christ by his word and Spirit would restore to you, as he does to all that he will save. Tell me truly, as before the Lord, though you are hesitant to live a holy life—had you not rather die in the case of those that do so than of others? If you were to die this day, had you not rather die in the case of a converted man, than of an unconverted man? Of a holy and Heavenly man than of a carnal earthily man? And would you not say, as Balaam, Number 23.10, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his?"

And why will you not now be of the mind that you will be of then? *First or last you must come to this, either to be converted, or to wish you had been, when it is too late.*But what is it that you are afraid of losing if you turn to God?

Is it your *friends?* you will but exchange them; God will be your friend, and Christ, and the Spirit, will be your friend, and every Christian will be your friend. You will get one friend that will stand you in more stead than all the friends in the world could have done. *The friends you lose would have but enticed you to Hell*; but could not have delivered you. But the friend you get will save you from Hell, and bring you to His own eternal rest.

Is it your *pleasure*that you are afraid of losing? You think you shall never have a merry day again, if once you be converted. Alas! that you should think it a greater pleasure to live in foolish sports and merriments, and please your flesh—than to live in the believing thoughts of glory, and in the love of God, and in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit, in which the state of grace consists! Romans 14.17.

If it would be a greater pleasure for you to think of your lands and inheritance (if you were lords of all the country) than it is for a child to play for stones—why should it not be a greater joy to you to think of the kingdom of Heaven being yours, than of all the riches or pleasures of the world? As it is but foolish childishness that makes children so delight in *toys*that they would not leave them for all your land—so it is but foolish worldliness, and fleshliness and wickedness, that make you so much delight in your houses, and lands, and food, and drink, and ease, and honor, as that you would not part with them for the Heavenly delights.

But what will you do for pleasure when these are gone? Do you not think of that? When your pleasures end in horror, and go out like a stinking snuff, the pleasures of the saints are then at best. I have had myself but a little taste of the Heavenly pleasures in the forethoughts of the blessed approaching day, and in the present persuasions of the love of God in Christ. But I have taken too deep a draught of earthily pleasures, so that you may see, if I be partial, it is on your side; and yet I must profess, from that little experience, that there is no comparison. There is more joy to be had in a day, (if the sun of life shine clear upon us) in the state of holiness, than in a whole life of sinful pleasures. I had "rather be a door-keeper in the house of God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." (Psalm 84.10). "A day in his courts is better than a thousand any where else," Psalm 84.13. The mirth of the wicked is like the laughter of a madman, that knows not his own misery; and therefore Solomon says of such laughter, "it is mad, and of mirth, what does it accomplish?"

"It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, for death is the destiny of every man; the living should take this to heart. Sorrow is better than laughter, because a sad face is good for the heart. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of pleasure. It is better to heed a wise man's rebuke than to listen to the song of fools. Like the crackling of thorns under the pot, so is the laughter of fools. This too is meaningless." Ecclesiastes 7:2-6

All the pleasure of fleshly things is but like the scratching of a man who has the itch; it is his disease that makes him desire it; and a wise man had rather be without his pleasure than be troubled with his itch. Your loudest laughter is but like that of a man that is tickled; he laughs when he has no cause of joy. Judge, as you are men, whether this be a wise man's part. It is but your carnal unsanctified nature that makes a holy life seem grievous to you, and a course of sensuality seem more delightful. If you will but turn, the Holy Spirit will give you another nature and inclination, and then it will be more pleasant to you to be rid of your sin, than now it is to keep it; and you will then say, that you knew not what a pleasant life was until now, and that it was never well with you until God and holiness were your delight.

Question. But how does it come to pass that men should be so unreasonable in the matters of salvation? They have wit enough in other matters, what makes them so hesitant to be converted, that there should need so many words in so plain a case, and all will not do, but the most will live and die unconverted?

Answer. To name them only in a few words, the causes are these:

1. Men are naturally in love with the world and flesh, and their nature has an enmity to God and godliness, as the nature of a serpent has to a man. And when all that we can say goes against an habitual inclination of their natures, it is no marvel if it prevails.

2. They are in darkness, and know not the very things they hear. Like a man that was born blind, and hears a high commendation of the light. But what will hearing do unless he sees it? They know not what God is, nor what is the power of the cross of Christ, nor what the spirit of holiness is, nor what it is to live in love by faith; they know not the certainty, and suitableness, and excellency of the Heavenly inheritance. They know not what conversion, and a holy mind and conduct, are, even when they hear of them. They are in a mist of ignorance. They are lost and bewildered in sin; like a man that has lost himself in the night, and knows not where he is, nor how to come to himself again until the day-light recovers him.

3. They are willfully confident that they need no conversion, but some partial amendment; and that they are in the way to Heaven already, and are converted when they are not. And, if you meet a man that is quite out of his way, you may long enough call on him to turn back again, if he will not believe you that he is out of the way.

4. They are become slaves to their flesh, and drowned in the world to make provision for it. Their lusts, and passions, and appetites, have distracted them, and got such a hold over them, that they cannot tell how to deny them, or how to mind anything else. So that the *drunkard*says, "I love a cup of good drink, and I cannot forbear it." The *glutton*says, "I love good food, and I cannot forbear." The *fornicator*says, "I love to have my lust fulfilled, and I cannot forbear." And the *gamester*loves to have his sports, and he cannot forbear. So that they are become even captivated slaves to their flesh, and their very willfulness is become an impotency; and what they *would*not do, they say they *cannot*do. The worldling is so taken up with earthly things, that he has neither heart, nor mind, nor time, for Heavenly realities.

As "the lean cows ate up the fat ones," so this lean and barren world eats up all the thoughts of Heaven.

5. Some are so carried away by the stream of evil company, that they are possessed with hard thoughts of a godly life, by hearing them speak against it; or at least they think they may venture to do as they see most do, and so they hold on in their sinful ways.*When one is cut off and cast into Hell, and another snatched away from among them to the same condemnation, it does not much daunt them, because they see not where they are gone.* Poor wretches, they hold on in their ungodliness, for all this; for they little know that their companions are now lamenting it in torments. In Luke 16 the rich man in Hell would have had someone to warn his five brethren, lest they should come to that place of torment. It is like, he knew their minds and lives, and knew that they were hastening there, and little dreamed that he was there, yes, and would little have believed one that should have told them so.

I remember a passage that a gentleman yet living told me that he saw upon a bridge over the Severn. A man was driving a flock of lambs over a bridge, and something meeting them, and hindering their passage, one of the lambs leaped upon the wall of the bridge, and, his legs slipping from under him, he fell into the stream. The rest seeing him, did one after one leap over the bridge, and almost all of them were drowned. Those that were behind did little know what was become of them that went before, but thought they might venture to follow their companions. But, as soon as ever they were over the wall, and falling headlong, the case was altered.

Even so it is with unconverted carnal men. One dies by them, and drops into Hell, and another follows the same way. Yet they will go after them, because they think not where they are gone. Oh but when death has once opened their eyes, and when they see what is on the other side of the wall, even in another world; then what would they give to be where they were!

6. Moreover, the unconverted have a subtle, unseen and malicious enemy them, who uses his wily devices in the dark. It is his principal business to hinder their conversion, and keep them in darkness . . .
by persuading them not to believe the Scriptures;
or not to trouble their minds with these matters;
or by persuading them to think badly of a godly life;
or that they may be saved without conversion, and without all this stir;
and that God is so *merciful*that He would never damn any such as they;
or at least, that they may love their sin, and live for pleasure, and follow the world a little longer—and then let them go, and repent when they are old and worn out.

By such deluding cheats as these, the devil keeps the most in his captivity, and leads them to eternal misery.

These, and such like wiles as these, keep so many thousands unconverted, when God has done so much, and Christ has suffered so much, and ministers have said so much for their conversion. When their reasons are silenced, and they are not able to answer the Lord who calls after them, "Turn! Turn! Why will you die?" yet all comes to nothing with the greatest part of them; and they leave us no more to do, after all, but to sit down, and lament their willful misery.

**Ezekiel 33:11.**
"Say to them: As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die!"

I have now shown you the *reasonableness of God's commands*, and the *unreasonableness of wicked men's disobedience*. If nothing will serve their turn, but men will yet refuse to turn, we are next to consider whose fault it is if they are damned. And this brings me to the last doctrine; which is,

**Doctrine 7.** That if, after all, these men will not turn, it is not the fault of *God*that they are condemned, but themselves, even their own willfulness. They die, because they will die; that is, because they will not turn.

If you will go to Hell, what can remedy this? God here acquits himself of your blood; it shall not lie on him if you are lost. A negligent minister may draw it upon him; and those that encourage you in sin, may draw it upon them; but be sure of it, it shall not lie upon God. Says the Lord, concerning his unprofitable vineyard, "Judge, I pray you, between me and my vineyard, what could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? When he had planted it in a fruitful soil, and fenced it, and gathered out the stones, and planted it with the choicest vines," what should he have done more to it? He has made you men, and endowed you with reason; he has furnished you with all external necessaries, he has given you a righteous perfect law. When you had broken it, and undone yourselves, he had pity on you, and sent His Son by a miracle of condescending mercy to die for you, and be a sacrifice for your sins; and he "was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself." The Lord Jesus has made you a deed of gift of himself, and eternal life with him, on the condition you will but accept it and return.

He has, on this reasonable condition, offered you the free pardon of all your sins; he has written this in his word, and sealed it by his Spirit, and sent it by his ministers; they have made the offer to you many a time, and called you to accept it, and to turn to God. They have in his name entreated you, and reasoned the case with you, and answered all your frivolous objections. He has long waited on you, and stayed your leisure, and allowed you to abuse him to his face. He has mercifully sustained you in the midst of your sins; he has compassed you about with all sorts of mercies: he has also *intermixed afflictions*to mind you of your folly, and call you to your wits; and his Spirit has been often striving with your hearts, and saying there, "Turn, sinner, turn to him who calls you! Where are you going? What are you doing? Do you know what will be the final end of your impenitence? How long will you hate your friends, and love your enemies? When will you let all go, and turn, and deliver up yourself to God, and give your Redeemer the possession of your soul? When shall it once be?"

These pleadings have been used with you. And when you have delayed, you have been urged to make haste, and God has called to you, "Today, while it is called today, harden not your heart! Why not now without any more delay?" Eternal life has been set before you, the joys of Heaven have been opened to you in the gospel; the certainty of them have been manifested; the certainty of the everlasting torments of the damned has been declared to you. Unless you would have had a sight of Heaven and Hell—what more could you desire? Christ has been, as it were, set forth crucified before your eyes. You have been a hundred times told that you are but lost men until you come unto him. You have been often told of . . .
the evil of sin,
the vanity of the world,
all the fleeting pleasures it can afford,
the shortness and uncertainty of your lives,
the endless duration of the joy or torment of the life to come.

All this, and more than this, have you been told, and told again, even until you were weary of hearing it, and until you could make the lighter of it, because you had so often heard it, like the blacksmith's dog, that is brought by custom to sleep under the noise of the hammers, and when the sparks do fly about his ears. Though all this has not converted you—yet you are alive, and might have mercy to this day, if you had but hearts to receive it.

Now let reason itself be the judge, whether it is God's fault or yours, if after this you will be unconverted and be damned? If you die now, it is because you will die. What should be said more to you? What course should be taken that is more likely to prevail? Are you able to say, and make it good, "We would gladly have been converted, and become new creatures, but we could not. We would gladly have forsaken our sins, but could not. We would have changed our company, and our thoughts, and our discourse, but we could not."

Why could you not, if you sincerely desired to? What hindered you, but the wickedness of your hearts? Who forced you to sin? Who held you back from duty? Had not you the same teaching, and time, and liberty to be as godly as your godly neighbors had? Why then could not you have been godly as well as they? Were the church-doors shut against you? or did you not keep away yourselves? or sit and sleep, or hear as if you did not hear?

Did God put in any exceptions against you in his word, when he invited sinners to return; and when he promised mercy to those that do return? Did he say, "I will pardon all who repent except you?" Did he shut you out from the liberty of his holy worship? Did he forbid you to pray to him? You know he did not. God did not drive you away from him—but you forsook him, and ran away yourselves! And when he called you to him, you would not come. If God had excepted you out of the general promise and offer of mercy, or had said to you, "Stand off; I will have nothing to do with such as you; pray not to me, for I will not hear you; if you repent ever so much, and cry for mercy ever so much, I will not regard you."

If God had left you nothing to trust to but desperation, then you had had a fair excuse. You might have said, "To what end do I repent and turn, when it will do no good?" But this was not your case. You might have had Christ to be your Lord and Savior, as well as others, and you would not; because you felt not yourselves sick enough for the physician, and because you could not spare your sins and pleasures. In your hearts you said, as those rebels, Luke 19.14. "We will not have this man to reign over us!"

Christ "would have gathered you under the wings of his salvation, and you would not" Matthew 23.37. What desires for your welfare did the Lord express in his holy word! With what compassion did he stand over you, and say, "O that my people had hearkened unto me, and that they had walked in my ways!" Psalm 81.13. "O that there were such a heart in this people, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them and with their children forever!" Deuteronomy 5.20. "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!" Deuteronomy 33.29. He would have been your God, and done all for you that your souls could well desire; but you loved the world and your flesh above him, and therefore you would not hearken to him. "You would have none of him"

No marvel, then, if he gave you up to your own lusts, and you walked in your own counsels. He condescends to *reason*, and *pleads*the case with you, and asks you, "What is there in me or my service, that you should be so much against me? What harm have I done you, sinner? Have I deserved this unkind dealing at your hand? Many mercies have I shown you—for which of them do you thus despise me? Is it I, or is it Satan, that is your enemy? Is it I, or is it your carnal self that would undo you? Is it a holy life, or a life of sin that you have cause to fly from? If you are undone, you procure this to yourself, by forsaking me, the Lord, that would have saved you." "Does not your own wickedness correct you, and your sin reprove you, that you may see that it is an evil and bitter thing that you have forsaken me?" "What iniquity have you found in me, that you have followed after vanity, and forsaken me?"

He calls out as it were to the brutes, to hear the controversy he has against you. Micah 6.3-5, "Hear, O you mountains, the Lord's controversy, and you strong foundations of the earth, for the Lord God has a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel. O my people, what have I done unto you, and wherein have I wearied you? Testify against me, for I brought you up out of Egypt, and redeemed you, etc." "Hear, O heavens! Listen, O earth! For the LORD has spoken: I reared children and brought them up, but they have rebelled against me. The ox knows his master, the donkey his owner's manger, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand. Ah, sinful nation, a people loaded with guilt, a brood of evildoers, children given to corruption! They have forsaken the LORD; they have spurned the Holy One of Israel and turned their backs on him." Isaiah 1:2-4

"Do you thus requite the Lord, O foolish and unwise people? Is not he your Father that bought you? Has he not made you, and established you?" Deuteronomy 22.6. When he saw that you forsook him, even for nothing, and turned away from your Lord and life, to hunt after *the chaff and feathers of the world*, he told you of your folly, and called you to a more profitable employment, "Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare. Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live. I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my faithful love promised to David." Isaiah 55:1-3

"Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon." Isaiah 55:6-7

"Be astonished: O Heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid! For, my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." Many a time has Christ proclaimed that free invitation to you, "Let him who is athirst come; and whoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

But you put him to complain after all his offers: "They will not come to me, that they may have life" John 5.40. He has invited you to feast with him in the kingdom of his grace, and you have had excuses from your *grounds*, and your *cattle*, and your worldly *business*; and, when you would not come, you have said you could not; and provoked him to resolve that you should never taste of his supper, Luke 14.15, 24. And who is it fault of now but yourselves? What can we say is the chief cause of your damnation, but your own wills? You *will*be damned.

The whole case is laid open by Christ himself, "Wisdom calls aloud in the street, she raises her voice in the public squares; at the head of the noisy streets she cries out, in the gateways of the city she makes her speech: "How long will you simple ones love your simple ways? How long will mockers delight in mockery and fools hate knowledge? If you had responded to my rebuke, I would have poured out my heart to you and made my thoughts known to you. But since you rejected me when I called and no one gave heed when I stretched out my hand, since you ignored all my advice and would not accept my rebuke, I in turn will laugh at your disaster; I will mock when calamity overtakes you— when calamity overtakes you like a storm, when disaster sweeps over you like a whirlwind, when distress and trouble overwhelm you. Then they will call to me but I will not answer; they will look for me but will not find me. Since they hated knowledge and did not choose to fear the LORD, since they would not accept my advice and spurned my rebuke, they will eat the fruit of their ways and be filled with the fruit of their schemes. For the waywardness of the simple will kill them, and the complacency of fools will destroy them!" Proverbs 1:20-32

I thought best to recite the whole text at large to you, because it does so fully show the cause of the destruction of the wicked. It is not because God would not teach them, but because they would not learn. It is not because God would not call them, but because they would not turn at His reproof. Their willfulness is their undoing.

**USE**.

From what has been said, you may farther learn these following things:

**1.** From hence you may see, not only what blasphemy and impiety it is to lay the blame of men's destruction upon God, but also, how unfit these wicked wretches are to bring in such a charge against their Maker. They cry out upon God, and say that he gives them not grace, and his threatenings are severe, and God forbid that all should be damned that be not converted and sanctified. They think it a hard measure that a short sin should have an endless suffering; and if they be damned they say they cannot help it; when in the mean time they are busy about their own destruction, even *cutting the throat of their own souls*, and will not be persuaded to turn. *They think God were cruel if he should damn them; and yet they are so cruel to themselves, that they will run into the fire of Hell*; when God has told them that Hell is a little before them, and neither entreaties, nor threatenings, nor anything that can be said, will stop them.

We see them almost undone; their careless, worldly, fleshly lives tell us that they are in the power of the devil. We know, if they die before they are converted, all the world cannot save them; and, knowing the uncertainty of their lives, we are afraid every day lest they drop into the fire. And therefore we entreat them to pity their own souls, and not to undo themselves when mercy is at hand, and they will not hear us. We entreat them to cast away their sin, and come to Christ without delay, and to have some mercy on themselves—but they will have none. And yet they think that God must be cruel if he condemns them.

O willful miserable sinners! It is not God that is cruel to you; it is you who are cruel to yourselves! You are told that you must turn or burn, and yet you will not turn. You are told, that if you will needs keep your sins, you shall keep the curse of God with them—and yet you will keep them. You are told that there is no way to eternal happiness but by holiness; and yet you will not be holy. What would you have God say more to you? What would you have him do with his mercy? He offers it to you, and you will not have it. You are in the ditch of sin and misery, and he would give you his hand to help you out—and you refuse his help. He would cleanse you of your sins, and you had rather keep them. You love your lust, and love your gluttony, and pleasures, and drunkenness, and will not let them go.

Would you have him bring you to Heaven whether you will or not? Or would you have him bring you and your sins to Heaven together? Why that is an impossibility—you may as well expect he should turn the sun into darkness! What! an unsanctified fleshly heart to be in Heaven! it cannot be. "There enters nothing that is unclean," Rev. 21.17. "For what communion has light with darkness, or Christ with Belial?" 2 Corinthians 6.14, 15. "All the day long has he stretched out his hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people," Romans 10.25.

What will you do now? Will you cry to God for mercy? Why God calls upon you to have mercy upon yourselves, and you will not. Ministers see the poisoned cup in the drunkard's hand, and tell him that there is poison in it, and desire him to have mercy on his soul, and forbear; and he will not hear us. Drink it he must and will; he loves it; and therefore, though Hell come next, he says that he cannot help it. What should one say to such men as these?

We tell the ungodly careless worldling, it is not such a life that will ever bring you to Heaven. If a bear were at your back, you would mend your pace, and, when the curse of God is at your back, and Satan and Hell are at your back, will you not stir, but ask, "What needs all this ado?" Is your immortal soul of no more worth? Oh! have mercy upon yourselves! But they will have no mercy on themselves, nor once regard us. We tell them the end will be bitter. Who can dwell with the everlasting fire? And yet they will have no mercy on themselves. And yet will these poor wretches say that God is more merciful than to condemn them, when it is themselves who cruelly and unmercifully run upon condemnation; and if we should go to them, and entreat them, we cannot stop them. If we should fall on our knees and beg them, we cannot stop them; but to Hell they will go, and yet will not believe that they are going there!

If we beg of them for the sake of God who made them, and preserves them; for the sake of Christ who died for them; for the sake of their own poor souls—to pity themselves, and go no farther in the way to Hell, but come to Christ while his arms are open, and enter into the state of life while the door stands open, and now take mercy while mercy may be had—they will not be persuaded! If we should die for it, we cannot so much as get them so much as now and then to consider with themselves of the matter, and turn.

Yet they can say, "I hope God will be merciful." Did you never consider what he says, Isaiah 27.11. "It is a people of no understanding, therefore he who made them will not have mercy on them; and he who formed them will show them no favor." If another man will not clothe you when you are naked, and feed you when you are hungry—you will say that he is unmerciful. If he should cast you into prison, or beat and torment you—you would say he is unmerciful. And yet you will do a thousand times more against yourselves, even cast away both soul and body forever, and never complain of your own unmercifulness!

Yes, and God who waited upon you all the while with his mercy, must be taken to be unmerciful, if he punishes you after all this. Unless the Holy God of Heaven will give these wretches permission to trample upon his Son's blood, and with the Jews, as it were, again to spit in his face, and do despite to the spirit of grace, and make a jest of sin, and a mock at holiness, and set cast aside saving mercy for their filthy of their fleshly pleasures; and unless, after all this, He will save them by the mercy which they cast away, and would have none of—then God himself must be called unmerciful by them. But he will be justified when he judges, and he will not stand or fall at the bar of sinful worms.

I know there are many particular cavils that are brought by them against the Lord; but I shall not here stay to answer them particularly, having done it already in my *Treatise of Judgment*, to which I shall refer them. Had the disputing part of the world been as careful to avoid sin and destruction, as they have been busy in imputing them to God—they might have exercised their wits more profitably, and have less wronged God, and sped better themselves.

When so ugly a monster as sin is within us, and
so heavy a thing as punishment is upon us, and
so dreadful a thing as Hell is before us—
one would think the unconverted would be concerned for their souls! It would be an easy question—who is in the fault, whether God or man be the principal and culpable cause?

Some men are such favorable judges of themselves, that they are more prone to accuse the infinite perfection and goodness itself, than their own hearts, and imitate their first parents, who said, "The serpent tempted me, and the woman that you gave me gave unto me, and I did eat"—secretly implying that God was the cause. So say they, "the *understanding*that you gave me was unable to discern. The *will*that you gave me was unable to make a better choice. The *objects*which you set before me enticed me. The temptation which you permitted to assault me, prevailed against me."

This is the fruit of proud self-conceitedness; when men receive not God's truth as a child his lesson, in a holy submission to the omniscience of our teacher, but as *censurers*who are too wise to learn.

Objection. But we cannot convert ourselves until God convert us: we can do nothing without his grace. It is not in him who wills, nor in him who runs, but in God who shows mercy.

Your disability is your very unwillingness itself which excuses not your sin, but makes it the greater. You could turn if you were but truly willing; and, if your wills themselves are so corrupted, that nothing but effectual grace will move them, you have the more cause to seek for that grace, and yield to it, and do what you can in the use of means—and not neglect it, or set yourself against it. Do what you are able first, and then complain of God for denying you grace, if you have cause.

Objection. But you seem to intimate all this while, that man has free will.

Answer. The dispute about free will is beyond your capacity; I shall therefore now trouble you with no more but this about it. Your will is naturally a free, that is, a self-determining faculty, but it is *viciously inclined*, and backward to do good. Therefore we see, by sad experience, that it has not a virtuous moral freedom. But that it is the wickedness of it which deserves the punishment. And I pray you let us not befool ourselves with opinions. Let the case be your own.

If you had an *enemy*so malicious that he falls upon you and beats you every time he meets you, and takes away the lives of your children, will you excuse him, because he says, "I have not free-will, it is my nature; I cannot choose, unless God gives me grace." If you have a *servant*who robs you, will you take such an answer from him? Might not every thief and murderer, that is hanged at the assize, give such an answer? "I have not free will; I cannot change my own heart! What can I do without God's grace?" And shall they therefore be acquitted? If not, why then should you think to be acquitted for a course of sin against the Lord?

2. From hence also you may observe these three things together:

1. What a subtle tempter *Satan*is.

2. What a deceitful thing *sin*is.

3. What a foolish corrupted creature *man*is.

1. *Satan*is a subtle tempter indeed, who can persuade the greatest part of the world to go willfully into everlasting fire, when they have so many warnings and dissuasives as they have.

2. *Sin*is a deceitful thing indeed, that can bewitch so many thousands to part with everlasting life, for a thing so base and utterly unworthy!

3. A foolish corrupted creature *man*is indeed, who will be cheated of his salvation for nothing, yes, for a known nothing; and that by an enemy, and a known enemy. You would think it impossible that any man in his wits should be persuaded, for a trifle, to cast himself into the fire, or water, or into a coal-pit, to the destruction of his life. And yet men will willingly be enticed to cast themselves into Hell! If your natural lives were in your own hands, that you should not die until you should kill yourselves, how long would most of you live? And yet, when your everlasting life is so far in your own hands, under God, that you cannot be undone until you undo yourselves, how few of you will forbear your own undoing?

Ah! what a silly thing is man!

And what a bewitching and befooling thing is sin!

3. From hence also you may learn, that it is no great wonder if wicked men are hinderers of others in the way to Heaven, and would have as many unconverted as they can, and would draw them into sin and keep them in it! Can you expect that they should have mercy on *others*, who have none upon themselves? and that they should so much seek the destruction of others, who seek to destroy themselves? They do no worse by others than they do by themselves.

4. Lastly, You may hence learn, that the greatest enemy to man is himself. The greatest judgment in this life, that can befall him, is to be left to himself. The great work that grace has to do, is to save us from ourselves. The greatest accusations and complaints of men should be against themselves. The greatest work that we have to do ourselves, is to resist ourselves. The greatest enemy that we should daily pray, and watch, and strive against, is our own carnal hearts and wills. The greatest part of your work, if you will do good to others, and help them to Heaven, is to save them from themselves, even from their *blind understandings*, and corrupted wills, and *perverse affections*, and *wicked passions*, and unruly senses. I only name all these for brevity sake; and leave them to your farther consideration.

Well, Sirs, now we have found out the great delinquent and murderer of souls, (even men's selves, their own wills) what remains but that you judge according to the evidence, and confess this great iniquity before the Lord, and be humbled for it, and do so no more? To these three ends distinctly, I shall add a few words more.

1. Farther to *convince*you.

2. To *humble*you.

3. To *reform*you, if there yet be any hope.

1. We know so much of the exceeding gracious nature of God, who is so willing to do good, and delights to show mercy, that we have no reason to suspect him of being the culpable cause of our death, or to call him cruel. He has made all good, and he preserves and maintains all; the eyes of all things wait upon him, and he gives them their food in due season; he opens his hand, and satisfies the desires of all the living, Psalm 145.15, 16.

He is not only "righteous in all his ways (and therefore will deal justly) and holy in all his *works*, (and therefore not the author of sin) but he is also good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works." Psalm 145.17, 19.

But as for man, we know his *mind*is dark, his *will*perverse, his twisted affections carry him so headlong, that he is fitted by his folly and corruption to such a work as the destroying of himself. If you saw a lamb lie killed in the way, would you sooner suspect the sheep, or the wolf to be the author of it, if they both stand near? Or, if you see a house broken into, and the people murdered, would you sooner suspect the judge, who is wise and just, and had no need—or a known thief and murderer?

I say therefore as James 1.13-15, "Let no man say, when he is tempted, that he is tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempts he any man, (to draw him to sin) but every man is tempted when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed. Then, when lust has conceived, it brings forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, brings forth death." You see here that sin is the offspring of your own lust, and not to be fathered on God; and that death is the offspring of your own sin, and the fruit which it will yield to you as soon as ripe. *You have a storehouse of evil in yourselves, as a spider has of poison, from whence you are bringing forth hurt to yourselves, and spinning such webs as entangle your own souls.*Your nature shows that it is you who are the cause.

2. It is evident that you are your own destroyers, in that you are so ready to receive any temptation almost that is offered you. Satan is scarce readier to move you to any evil, than you are ready to hear and to do as he would have you. If he would tempt your understanding to error and prejudice, you yield. If he would hinder you from good resolutions-it is soon done. If he would cool any good desires or affections—it is soon done. If he would kindle any lust, or vile affections and desires in you—it is soon done. If he will put you on to evil thoughts, or deeds—you are so willing, that he needs not rod or spur. If he would keep you from holy thoughts, and words, and ways—a little does it, you need no prodding. You examine not his suggestions; nor resist them with any resolution; nor cast them out as he casts them in, nor quench the sparks which he endeavored to kindle; but you fo in with him, and meet him half-way, and embrace his notions, and tempt him to tempt you. And *it is easy for him to catch such greedy fish that are searching for a bait, and will take the bare hook!*

3. Your destruction is evidently of yourselves, in that you resist all who would help to save you, and would do you good, or hinder you from undoing yourselves. God would help and save you by his word, and you resist it; it is too strict for you. He would sanctify you by his Spirit, and you resist and quench him. If any man reprove you for your sin, you fly in his face with evil words. If he would draw you to a holy life, and tell you of your present danger, you bid him to mind his own business, and will not turn when you are persuaded. If ministers would privately instruct and help you, you will not come to them; your unhumbled souls feel but little need of their help. If they would Catechize you, you are too old to be catechized, though you are not too old to be ignorant and unholy. Whatever they can say to you for your good, you are so self-conceited and wise in your own eyes, (even in the depth of ignorance) that you will regard nothing that agrees not with your present conceits; but you will contradict your teachers, as if you were wiser than they; you resist all that they can say to you, by your ignorance, unwilfulness, and foolish cavils, and shifting evasions, and unthankful rejections; so that no good that is offered can find any welcome acceptance and entertainment with you.

4. Moreover, it is apparent that *you are self-destroyers*, in that you draw the matter of your sin and destruction even from the blessed God himself. You do not like the plans of his *wisdom*. You do not like his *justice*, but take it for cruelty. You do not like his *holiness*, but are ready to think he is such a one as yourselves, and make as light of sin as you do. You do not like his *truth*, but would have his *threatenings*prove false. And his *goodness*, which you seem most highly to approve, you resist, as it would lead you to repentance. You abuse his *goodness*, to the strengthening of your sin, as if you might freely sin because God is merciful, and because his grace does so much abound.

5. Yes, you fetch destruction from the blessed Redeemer, and death from the Lord of life himself! And nothing more emboldens you in sin, than that Christ has died for sinners; as if now the danger of death were over, and you might boldly venture. As if Christ were become a servant to Satan and your sins, and must wait upon you while you are abusing him; and because he is become the physician of souls, and is able to save to the utmost all who come to God by him, you think he must allow you to refuse his help, and throw away medicines, and must save you whether you will come to God by him or not; so that a great part of your sins are occasioned by your bold presumption upon the death of Christ; not considering that *he came to redeem his people from their sins*, and to sanctify them a peculiar people to himself, and to confirm them in holiness to the image of their Heavenly Father, and to their head.

6. You also fetch your own destruction from all the providences and works of God. When you think of his eternal foreknowledge and decrees, it is to harden you in your sin, or possess your minds with quarreling thoughts, as if his decrees might spare you the labor of repentance and a holy life, or else were the cause of sin and death.

If he afflicts you, you repine. If he prosper you, you the more forget him, and are the more backwards to the thoughts of the life to come. If the wicked prosper, you forget the end that will set all reckonings strait; and are ready to think it is as good to be wicked as godly; and thus you draw your death from all these reasons.

7. And the like you do from all the creatures and mercies of God to you. He gives them to you as the tokens of his love, and furniture for his service—and you turn them against him, to the pleasing of your flesh. You eat and drink to please your appetite, and not for the glory of God, and to enable you to perform his work. Your *clothes*you abuse to pride. Your *riches*draw your hearts from Heaven, Philippians 3.18. Your *honors*and applause puff you up. If you have wealth and strength, it makes you more secure, and forget your end. Yes, other men's mercies are abused by you to your hurt. If you see their honors and dignity, you are provoked to *envy*them. If you see their riches, you are ready to *covet*them. If you look upon beauty, you are stirred up to *lust*. And it is well if godliness itself be not an eyesore to you.

8. The very gifts that God bestows on you, and the ordinances of grace which he has instituted for his church, you turn to sin. If you have better abilities than others, you grow proud and self-conceited. If you have but common abilities, you take them for special grace. You take the *bare hearing*of your duty for so good a work, as if it would excuse you for not obeying it. Your prayers are turned into sin, because you regard iniquity in your hearts, Psalm 66.18. "Your prayers are abominable, because you turn away your ear from hearing the law," Proverbs 28.9, and are more ready to offer the sacrifice of fools (thinking you do God some special service) than to hear his word and obey it."

9. Yes, the people that you converse with, and all their actions, you make the occasions of your sin and destruction. If they live in the fear of God—you hate them. If they live ungodly—you imitate them. If the wicked are many—you think you may the more boldly follow them. If the godly be few—you are the more emboldened to despise them. If they walk exactly, you think they are too precise. If one of them falls in a particular temptation, you stumble upon them, and turn away from holiness, because they are imperfectly holy; as if you were warranted to break your necks, because some others have by heedlessness sprained a sinew or put out a bone. If a hypocrite is revealed, you say that Christians are all alike, and think yourselves as honest. A professor can scarcely slip into any miscarriage, but, because he cuts his finger, you think you may boldly cut your throats! If ministers deal plainly with you—you say they rail. If they speak gently—you either sleep under them, or are little more affected than the seats you sit upon. If any errors creep into the church, some greedily receive them, and others reproach the Christian doctrine for them, which is most against them. If we would draw you from any ancient rooted error, which can but plead two, or three, or six, or seven hundred years *custom*, you are as much offended with a motion for reformation as if you were to lose your life by it, and hold fast old errors, while you cry out against new ones.

Scarcely a difference can arise among the ministers of the gospel, but you will fetch your own death from it. And you will not hear, or at least not obey, the unquestionable doctrine of any of those who jump not with your conceits. One will not hear a minister because he says the Lord's prayer; and another will not hear him because he does not use it. One will not hear those who are for Episcopacy; and another will not hear those who are against it. And, thus I might show it you in many other cases, how you turn all that come near you to your own destruction; so clear is it that the ungodly are self-destroyers, and that their perdition is of themselves.

Methinks now, upon the consideration of what is said, and the review of your own ways—that you should think of what you have done, and be ashamed and deeply humbled to remember it. If you be not, I pray you consider these following truths:

**1.** To be your own destroyers is to sin against the deepest principle in your natures, even the principle of self-preservation. Everything naturally desires or inclines to its own happiness, welfare, or perfection. And will you set yourselves to your own destruction? When you are commanded to love your neighbors as yourselves, it is supposed that you naturally love yourselves. But if you love your neighbors no better than yourselves, it seems you would have all the world be damned.

**2.**How extremely do you cross your own intentions! I know you intend not your own damnation, even when you are procuring it. You think you are but doing good to yourselves, by gratifying the desires of your flesh; but, alas! it is but as a draught of cold water in a burning fever, or as the scratching of an itching wild-fire, which increases the disease and pain. If indeed you would have pleasure, or profit, or honor—then seek them where they are to be found, and *do not hunt after them in the way to Hell.*

**3.**What pity is it, that you should do that against yourselves which none else on earth or in Hell can do! If all the world were combined against you, or all the devils in Hell were combined against you—they could not destroy you without yourselves, nor make you sin but by your own consent. And will you do that against yourselves, which no one else can do? You have hateful thoughts of the devil, because he is your enemy, and endeavors your destruction. And will you be worse than devils to yourselves? Why thus it is with you, if you had hearts to understand it, when you run into sin, and run from godliness, and refuse to turn at the call of God—you do more against your own souls than men or devils could do besides! And, if you should set yourselves and bend your wits to do yourselves the greatest harm, you could not devise to do a greater.

**4.** You are false to the trust that God has reposed in you. He has much entrusted you with your own salvation; and will you betray your trust? He has set you with all diligence to keep your hearts; and is this the keeping of them? Proverbs 4.23.

**5.** You forbid all others to pity you, when you will have no pity on yourselves. If you cry to God in the day of your calamity, for mercy—what can you expect, but that he should thrust you away, and say, "Nay, you would not have mercy on yourself. Who brought this upon you but your own willfulness?" And if your brethren see you everlastingly in misery, how shall they pity you, who were your own destroyers, and would not be dissuaded?

**6.** It will everlastingly make you your own tormentors in Hell to think that you brought yourselves willfully to that misery! O what a torturing thought it will be forever to think with yourselves that this was your own doing!—That you were warned of this day, and warned again, but it would not do! That you willfully sinned, and willfully turned away from God! That you had time as well as others, but you abused it! That you had teachers as well as others, but you refused their instructions! You had holy examples, but you did not imitate them. You were offered Christ, and grace, and glory, as well as others—but you had more desire for your fleshly pleasures. You had a price in your hands, but you had not a heart to lay it out, Proverbs 17.16. Can it but torment you to think of your present folly?

O that your eyes were open to see what you have done in the willful wronging of your own souls! and that you better understood these words of God, "Listen to my instruction and be wise; do not ignore it. Blessed is the man who listens to me, watching daily at my doors, waiting at my doorway. For whoever finds me finds life and receives favor from the LORD. But whoever fails to find me harms himself; all who hate me love death." Proverbs 8:33-36

And now I am come to the conclusion of this work, my heart is troubled to think how I shall leave, lest after this, the *flesh*should still deceive you, and the *world*and the *devil*should keep you asleep—and I should leave you as I found you, until you awake in Hell! Though in care of your poor souls, I am afraid of this, as knowing the obstinacy of a carnal heart, yet I can say with the prophet Jeremiah, 17.16, "I have not desired the woeful day, the Lord knows." I have not, with James and John, desired that "fire might come from Heaven" to consume them that refused Jesus Christ. It is the preventing of the eternal fire that I have been all this while endeavoring! O that it had been a needless work! That God and conscience might have been as willing to spare me this labor as some of you could have been!

Dear friends! I am so reluctant that you should die in everlasting fire, and be shut out of Heaven, if it is possible to prevent it, that I shall once more ask you: what do you now resolve? Will you turn, or die? I look upon you as a physician on his patient, in a dangerous disease, who says to him, "Though you are far gone, take but this medicine, and forbear but these few things that are hurtful to you, and I dare warrant your life. But if you will not do this, you are but a dead man!" What would you think of such a man, if the physician, and all the friends he has, cannot persuade him to take one medicine to save his life, or to forbear one or two poisonous things that would kill him?

This is *your*case. As far as you are gone in sin, do but now turn and come to Christ, and take his remedies, and your souls shall live: Cast up your deadly sins by repentance, and turn not to the *poisonous vomit*any more, and you shall do well. But yet, if it were your bodies that we had to deal with, we might partly know what to do for you. Though you would not consent—yet you might be held or bound, while the medicine were poured down your throats, and hurtful things might be kept from you. But about your souls it cannot be so; we cannot convert you against your wills. *There is no carrying madmen to Heaven in fetters*; you may be condemned against your wills, because you sinned with your wills; but you cannot be saved against your wills.

The wisdom of God has thought fit to lay men's salvation or destruction exceedingly much upon the choice of their own wills; that no man shall come to Heaven, who chose not the way to Heaven, and no man shall come to Hell, but shall be forced to say, "I have the thing I chose, my own will did bring me hither!"

Now, if I could but get you to be willing, to be thoroughly, and resolvedly, and habitually willing—the work were more than half done. And alas! must we lose our friends, and must they lose their God, their happiness, their souls, for lack of this? Oh! God forbid! *It is a strange thing to me, that men are so inhuman and stupid in the greatest matters*, that in less things are very civil and courteous, and good neighbors. For anything I know, I have the love of all, or almost all my neighbors, so far, that if I should send to any man in the town, or parish, or country, and request a reasonable courtesy from them, they would grant it to me. But when I come to request of them the greatest matter in the world, for themselves, and not for me—they little regard it.

I know not whether people think a man in the pulpit is sincere or not, and means as he speaks. Yet I think I have few neighbors, but, if I were sitting familiarly with them, and telling them what I have seen, or done, or known in the world, they would believe me, and regard what I say. But when I tell them from the infallible Word of God, what they themselves shall see and know in the world to come—they show by their lives that they do either not believe it, or not much regard it.

If I met ever a one of them on the way, and told them, yonder is a precipice, or there is a quicksand, or there are thieves lie in wait for you, I could persuade them to turn. But when I tell them that *Satan*lies in wait for them, and that *sin*is poison to them, and that *Hell*is not a matter to be jested with—they go on as if they did not hear me. Truly, neighbors, I am in as good earnest with you in the pulpit as I am in any familiar discourse, and, if ever you will regard me, I beseech you let it be here.

I think there is never a man of you all, but, if my own life lay at your wills, you would be willing to save it, (though I cannot promise that you would leave your sins for it.) If I come hungry or naked to one of your doors, would you not part with more than a cup of drink to relieve me? I am confident that you would; if it were to save my life, I know you would (some of you) hazard your own. And yet, will you not be entreated to part with your sensual pleasures for your own salvation?

I profess to you, Sirs, I am as hearty a beggar with you this day, for the saving of your own souls, as I would be for my own supply, if I were forced to come begging to your own doors. And therefore, if you would hear me then, hear me now. If you would pity me then, be entreated now to pity yourselves. I do again beseech you, as if it were on my bended knees, that you would hearken to your Redeemer, and turn, that you may live. All you who have lived in ignorance, carelessness, and presumption to this day; all you who have been drowned in the cares of the world, and have no mind of God and eternal glory; all you who are enslaved to your fleshly desires of foods and drink, pleasures and lusts; and all you who know not the necessity of holiness, and never were acquainted with the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit upon your souls; who never embraced your blessed Redeemer by a lively faith, and with admiring and thankful apprehensions of his love; and who never felt a higher estimation of God and Heaven, and heartier love to them, than your fleshly prosperity, and the things below: I earnestly beseech you, not only for my sake, but for the Lord's sake, and for your souls' sake—that you go not one day longer in this wretched condition, but cry to God for converting grace, that you may be made new creatures, and may escape the plagues that are a little before you.

If ever you will do anything for me, grant me this request, to turn from your evil ways, and live. Deny me anything that ever I shall ask you for myself, if you will but grant me this. And if you deny me this, I care not for anything else that you would grant me. Nay, as ever you will do anything at the request of the Lord who made you and redeemed you, deny him not this; for if you deny him this, he cares for nothing that you shall grant him. As ever you would have him hear your prayers, and grant your requests, and do for you at the hour of death and day of judgment, or in any of your extremities—deny not his request now in the day of your prosperity. O believe it, death and judgment, and Heaven and Hell, are other matters when you come near them, than they seem to carnal eyes afar off. Well though I cannot hope so well of all, I will hope that some of you are by this time purposing to turn and live, and that you are ready to say, "God forbid that we should choose destruction by refusing conversion, as hitherto we have done."

If these be the thoughts and purposes of your hearts, I shall gladly give you directions what to do, and that but briefly, that you may the easier remember it for your practice.

***~~DIRECTION 1.~~***

If you will be converted and saved, then *labor to understand the necessity and true nature of conversion*; for what, and from what, and to what, and by what, it is that you must turn. Consider in what a lamentable condition you are until the hour of your conversion, that you may feel it is not a state to be rested in. You are under the guilt of all the sins that ever you committed; and under the wrath of God, and the curse of his law. You are slaves to the devil, and daily employed in his work against the Lord, yourselves, and others. You are spiritually dead and deformed, as being void of the holy life, and nature, and image of the Lord. You are unfit for any holy work, and do nothing that is truly pleasing unto God. You are without any promise or assurance of his protection, and live in continual danger of his justice, not knowing what hour you may be snatched away to Hell, and most certain to be damned if you die in that condition. And nothing short of conversion can prevent it.

Whatever civilities, or amendments, or virtues, are short of true conversion, will never procure the saving of your souls. Keep the true sense of this natural misery, and so of the necessity of conversion on your hearts.

And then you must understand what it is to be converted—it is to have a new heart or disposition, and a new conduct.

***~~Question 1. Why must we turn?~~***

Answer. For these ends following, which you may attain:

1. You shall immediately be made living members of Christ, and have a saving interest in him, and be renewed after the image of God, and be adorned with all his graces, and quickened with a new and Heavenly life, and saved from the tyranny of Satan and the dominion of sin, and be justified from the curse of the law, and have the pardon of all the sins of your whole lives, and be accepted by God, and made his sons, and have liberty to call Him *Father*, and go to him by prayer in all your needs, with a promise of acceptance. You shall have the Holy Spirit to dwell in you, to sanctify and guide you. You shall have part in the brotherhood, communion, and prayers of the saints. You shall be fitted for God's service, and be freed from the dominion of sin, and be useful and a blessing to the place where you live, and shall have the promise of this life, and that which is to come. You shall lack nothing that is truly good for you, and your necessary afflictions you will be enabled to bear. You may have some taste of communion with God in the spirit, especially in all holy ordinances, where God prepares a feast for your souls. You shall be heirs of Heaven while you live on earth, and may foresee by faith the everlasting glory, and so may live and die in peace. You shall never be so low, but your happiness will be incomparably greater than your misery. How precious is every one of these blessings, which I do but name, and which in this life you may receive.

And then, 2. At death your souls shall go to Christ, and at the day of judgment both soul and body shall be justified and glorified, and enter into your Master's joy; where your happiness will consist in these particulars:

1. You shall be *perfected*yourselves. Your mortal bodies shall be made immortal, and the corruptible shall put on incorruption. You shall no more be hungry, or thirsty, or weary, or sick; nor shall you need to fear either shame, or sorrow, or death, or Hell. Your souls shall be perfectly freed from sin, and perfectly fitted for the knowledge, and love, and praises of the Lord.

2. Your *employments*shall be to behold your glorious Redeemer, with all your holy fellow-citizens of Heaven; and to see the glory of the most blessed God, and to love him perfectly, and be beloved by him, and to praise him everlastingly.

3. Your glory will contribute to the glory of the New Jerusalem, the city of the living God; which is more than to have a private felicity to yourselves.

4. Your glory will contribute to the glorifying of your Redeemer, who will everlastingly be magnified and pleased in you who are the travail of his soul; and this is more than the glorifying of yourselves.

5. And the eternal Majesty, the living God, will be glorified in your glory; both as he is magnified by your praises, and as he communicates of his glory and goodness to you, and as he is pleased in you, and in the accomplishment of his glorious work, in the glory of the New Jerusalem, and of His Son. All this, the poorest beggar of you, who is converted, shall certainly and endlessly enjoy!

**2.**You see WHY you must turn. Next you must understand **from what you must turn**. And that is, in a word, from your carnal self, which is the end of all the unconverted. From the flesh that would be pleased before God, and would still be enticing you; from the world, that is the bait; and from the devil, that is the angler for souls, and the deceiver. And so from all known and willful sins.

**3.**Next you must know **to what END you must turn**: and that is, to God as your end, to Christ as the way to the Father; to holiness, as the way appointed you by Christ; and to the use of all the helps and means of grace afforded you by the Lord.

**4.** Lastly; you must know **by what you must turn**. And that is, by Christ, as the only Redeemer and Intercessor; and by the Holy Spirit, as the sanctifier; and by the Word, as his instrument or means; and by faith and repentance, as the means and duties on your part to be performed. All this is of necessity.

**DIRECTION 2.**If you will be converted and saved, *be much in secret serious consideration*. Inconsiderateness undoes the world. Withdraw yourselves often into retired secrecy, and there think:

of the *end*why you were made;

of the *life*you have lived;

of the *time*you have lost;

of the *sin*you have committed;

of the *love*and sufferings and fullness of Christ;

of the *danger*you are in;

of the nearness of *death*and *judgment*;

of the certainty and excellency of the joys of *Heaven*;

of the certainty and terror of the torments of *Hell*, and the eternity of both;

of the necessity of conversion and a holy life.

Steep your hearts in such considerations as these.

**DIRECTION 3.**If you will be converted and saved, attend upon the Word of God, which is the ordinary means. Read the scripture, or hear it read, and other holy writings that apply it. Constantly attend on the public preaching of the word. As God will lighten the world by the sun, and not by himself alone without it—so will he convert and save men by the preaching of his word, which is the lights of the world. When he had miraculously humbled Paul, he sends him to Ananias, Acts 9.10. And when he has sent an angel to Cornelius, it was but to bid him send for Peter, who is to tell him what he is to believe and do.

**DIRECTION 4.**Betake yourselves to God in a course of earnest constant prayer. Confess and lament your former lives, and beg his grace to illuminate and convert you. Beseech him to pardon what is past, and to give you his Spirit, and change your hearts and lives, and lead you in his ways, and save you from temptations. Ply this work daily, and be not weary of it.

**DIRECTION 5.** Presently give over your known and willful sins. Make a stand, and go that way no farther. Be drunk no more, but avoid the place and occasion of it. Cast away your lusts and sinful pleasures with detestation, and, if you have wronged any, restore as Zaccheus did. If you will commit again your old sins, what blessings can you expect on the means for conversion?

**DIRECTION 6.**Presently, if possible, change your company, if it have hitherto been bad. Not by forsaking your necessary relations, but your *unnecessary sinful companions*, and join yourselves with those that fear the Lord, and inquire of them the way to Heaven.

**DIRECTION 7.**Deliver up yourselves to the Lord Jesus as the physician of your souls, that he may pardon you by his blood, and sanctify you by his Spirit, by his word and ministers—the instruments of the Spirit. He is the way, the truth, and the life; there is no coming to the Father but by him. "Nor is there any other name under Heaven by which you can be saved!" Acts 4.12. Study therefore His *person*and *nature*, and what he has *done*and suffered for you, and what he is to you, and what he will be, and how he is fitted to the full supply of all your necessities.

**DIRECTION 8.**If you mean indeed to turn and live, *Do it speedily, without delay*. If you be not willing to turn today, you are not willing to do it at all. Remember you are all this while in your blood, under the guilt of many thousand sins, and under God's wrath. *You stand at the very brink of Hell; there is but a step between you and death*. And this is not a case for a man that is well in his wits to be quiet in. Up therefore immediately, and fly as for your lives; as you would be gone out of your house, if it were all on fire over your heads.

O if you did but know in what continual danger you live in, and what daily unspeakable loss you do sustain, and what a safer and sweeter life you might live—you would not stand trifling, but presently turn. Multitudes miscarry who willfully delay, when they are convinced that it must be done. Your lives are short and uncertain; and, what a miserable case are you in, if you die before you thoroughly turn! You have stayed too long already, and wronged God too long; sin gets strength and rooting while you delay. Your conversion will grow more hard. You have much to do, and therefore put not all off to the last, lest God forsake you, and give you up to yourselves, and then you are undone forever!

**DIRECTION 9.**If you will turn and live, *do it unreservedly, absolutely, and universally*. Think not to capitulate with Christ, and divide your heart between him and the world, and to part with some sins, and keep the rest; and to let that go that which your flesh can spare. This is but self-deluding—you must in heart and resolution forsake all that you have, or else you cannot be his disciples, Luke 14:26, 33. If you will not take God and Heaven for your portion, and lay all below at the feet of Christ, but you must needs also have your good things here, and have an earthly portion, and God and glory are not enough for you—then it is in vain to dream of salvation on these terms, for it will not be.

If you seem ever so religious, if yet it is but a carnal righteousness, and the flesh's prosperity, or sinful pleasure is still *excepted*in your devotedness to God, this is as certain a way to death as open profaneness, though it may be more plausible.

**DIRECTION 10.**If you will turn and live, do it *resolvedly*, and stand not still deliberating, as if it were a doubtful case. Stand not wavering, as if you were yet uncertain whether God or the flesh be the better master; or whether Heaven or Hell be the better end; or whether sin or holiness is the better way. But away with your former lusts, and presently, habitually, fixedly *resolve*. Be not one day of one mind, and the next day of another; but be at a point with all the world, and resolvedly give up yourselves, and all you have to God. Now while you are reading, or hearing this, *resolve*. Before you sleep another night, resolve. Before you stir from the place, resolve. Before Satan has time to distract you, resolve. You never turn indeed, until you do resolve, and that with a firm unchangeable resolution. So much for the Directions.

And now I have done my part in this work, that you may turn to the call of God, and live. What will become of it, I cannot tell. I have cast the seed at God's command, but it is not in my power to give the increase. I can go no farther with my message. I cannot bring it to your hearts, nor make it work. I cannot do your parts for you to receive it and consider it. I cannot do God's part, by opening your heart to cause you to receive it. Nor can I show Heaven or Hell to your eye-sight, nor give you new and tender hearts. If I knew what more to do for your conversion, I hope I would do it.

O you who are the gracious Father of spirits, you have sworn you delight not in the death of the wicked, but rather that they may turn and live—deny not your blessing to those persuasions and directions, and suffer not your enemies to triumph in your sight; and the great deceiver of souls to prevail against your Son, your Spirit, and your Word! O pity poor unconverted sinners, who have no hearts to pity themselves. Command the *blind*to see, and the *deaf*to hear, and the *dead*to live, and let not sin and death be able to resist you. Awaken the secure, resolve the unresolved, confirm the wavering, and let the eyes of sinners who read these lines, be next employed in weeping over their sins; and bring them to themselves and to your Son, before their sins have brought them to perdition. If you say but the word, these poor endeavors shall prosper to the winning of many a soul, to their everlasting joy, and everlasting glory. Amen.

"Say to them: As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, O house of Israel?" Ezekiel 33:11