**THE SAINTS' EVERLASTING REST**

Richard Baxter, 1652

"There remains therefore a ***rest***unto the people of God." Hebrews 4:9

***~~Chapter I.
The Introduction to the Work, with Some Account of the NATURE of the Saints' Rest.~~***

*The important design of the apostle in the text, to which the author earnestly bespeaks the attention of the reader. The saints' rest defined, with a general plan of the work that this rest presupposes. The author's humble sense of his inability fully to show what this rest contains.* It contains,

1. A ceasing from means of grace;
2. A perfect freedom from all evils;
3. The highest degree of the saints' personal perfection, both in body and soul;
4. The nearest enjoyment of God, the chief good;
5. A sweet and constant action of all the powers of soul and body in this enjoyment of God.

It was not only our *interest*in God, and actual *enjoyment*of him, which was lost in Adam's fall—but all *spiritual knowledge*of him, and true disposition towards such a felicity. When the Son of God comes with recovering grace, and discoveries of a spiritual and eternal happiness and glory—he finds not faith in man to believe it. As the poor man, that would not believe anyone had such a sum as a hundred pounds, it was so far above what he himself possessed, so men will hardly now believe there is such a happiness as once they had, much less as Christ has now procured.

When God would give the Israelites his Sabbaths of rest, in a land of rest, it was harder to make them believe it, than to overcome their enemies, and procure it for them. And when they had it, only as a small intimation and pledge of an incomparably more glorious rest through Christ, they yet believe no more than they possess—but say, with the epicure at the feast, "Surely there is no other Heaven but this!" or, if they expect more by the Messiah, it is only the increase of their earthly felicity. The apostle aims most of this Epistle against this obduracy, and clearly and largely proves that the end of all *ceremonies*and *shadows*is to direct them to Jesus Christ, the *substance*; and that the rest of Sabbaths, and Canaan, should teach them to look for a *further rest*, which indeed is their happiness. My text is his conclusion after divers arguments; a conclusion which contains . . .
the ground of all the believer's comfort,
the end of all his duty and sufferings,
the life and sum of all gospel promises and Christian privileges.

What more welcome to men under personal afflictions, tiring duties, disappointments, or sufferings—than rest? It is not our comfort only—but our stability. Our liveliness in all duties, our enduring of tribulation, our honoring of God, the vigor of our love, thankfulness, and all our graces; yes, the very being of our religion and Christianity—depend on the believing, serious thoughts of our rest.

And now, reader, whoever you are, young or old, rich or poor, I entreat you, and charge you, in the name of your Lord, who will shortly call you to a reckoning, and judge you to your everlasting, unchangeable state—that you give not these things the *reading*only, and so dismiss them with a bare approbation; but that you set upon this work, and take God in Christ for your only rest, and fix your heart upon him above all. May the *living God*, who is the portion and rest of his saints, make these our carnal minds so spiritual, and our earthly hearts so heavenly—that loving him, and delighting in him, may be the work of our lives; and that neither I that write, nor you that read this book, may ever be turned from this path of life; "lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest," we should "come short of it," through our own unbelief or negligence.

The saints' rest is the most happy state of a Christian; or, it is *the perfect endless enjoyment of God by the perfected saints*, according to the measure of their capacity, to which their souls arrive at death, and both soul and body most fully after the resurrection and final judgment. According to this definition of the saints' rest,
a larger account of its *nature*will be given in this chapter;
of its preparatives, chapter 2;
its excellencies, chapter 3 and
chapter 4, the persons for whom it is designed.
Further to illustrate the subject, some description will be given, chapter 5, of their misery who lose this rest;
and chapter 6, who also lose the enjoyments of time, and suffer the torments of Hell.
Next will be shown, chapter 7, the necessity of diligently seeking this rest;
chapter 8, how our title to it may he discerned;
chapter 9, that they who discern their title to it should help those that cannot;
and chapter 10, that this rest is not to be expected on earth.
It will then be proper to consider, chapter 11, the importance of a heavenly life upon earth;
chapter 12, how to live a heavenly life upon earth;
chapter 13, the nature of heavenly contemplation, with the time, place and temper most fit for it;
chapter 14, what use heavenly contemplation makes of consideration, affections, soliloquy and prayer: and likewise,
chapter 15, how heavenly contemplation may be assisted by sensible objects, and guarded against a treacherous heart.
Heavenly contemplation will be exemplified, chapter 16, and the whole work concluded.

There are some things necessarily *presupposed*in the nature of this rest, as:

That mortal men are the people seeking it. For angels and glorified spirits have it already, and the devils and damned are past hope:

That they choose God alone for their end and happiness. He who takes anything else for his happiness is out of the way the first step:

That they are *distant*from this end. This is the woeful case of all mankind since the fall. When Christ comes with regenerating grace, he finds no man sitting still—but all posting to eternal ruin, and making haste toward Hell; until, by *conviction*, he first brings them to a standstill, and then, by *conversion*, turns their hearts and lives sincerely to himself. This end, and its excellency, is supposed to be known, and seriously intended. An *unknown good*moves not to desire or endeavor. And not only a distance from this rest—but the true knowledge of this distance, is also supposed. They that never yet knew they were without God, and in the way to Hell, never yet knew the way to Heaven. Can a man find he has lost his God and his soul, and not cry, "I am undone!" The reason why so few obtain this rest, is, they will not be convinced that they are, in point of title, distant from it and, in point of practice, contrary to it. Whoever sought for that which he knew not he had lost? "Those who are whole need not a physician—but those who are sick."

The influence of a superior *moving Cause*is also supposed; else we shall all stand still, and not move toward our rest. If God move us not, we cannot move. It is a most necessary part of our Christian wisdom, to keep our subordination to God, and dependence on him. "We are not sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves—but our sufficiency is of God." "Without me," says Christ, "you can do nothing."

It is next supposed, that those who seek this rest have an inward principle of spiritual life. God does not move men like stones—but he endows them with life, not to enable them to move without him—but in subordination to himself, the first mover.

And further, this rest supposes such an actual tendency of soul toward it as is *regular*and *constant*, *earnest*and *laborious*. He who hides his talent shall receive the wages of a slothful servant. Christ is the door, the only way to this rest. "But strait is the gate and narrow is the way;" and we must strive, if we will enter; for "many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able; which implies, "that the kingdom of Heaven suffers violence." Nor will it bring us to the end of the saints, if we begin in the *spirit—*and end in the *flesh*. He only "that endures to the end shall be saved." And never did a soul obtain rest with God whose desire was not set upon him *above*all other things in the world. "Where your treasure is, there will your heart he also." The remainder of our old nature will much weaken and interrupt these desires—but never overcome them. And, considering the opposition to our desires, from the contrary principles in our nature, and from the weakness of our graces, together with our continued distance from the end, our tendency to that end must be laborious, and with all our might. All these things are *pre-supposed*, in order to a Christian's obtaining an interest in heavenly rest.

Now we have ascended these steps into the *outward court*, may we look within the *veil?*May we show what this rest *contains*, as well as what it pre-supposes? Alas! how little know I of that glory! The *glimpse*which Paul had, contained what could not, or must not, be uttered. Had he spoken the things of Heaven in the language of Heaven, and none understood that language—then what the better? May the Lord reveal to me what I may reveal to you! May the Lord open some light, and show both you and I our inheritance! Not as to *Balaam*only, whose eyes were opened to see the goodliness of Jacob's tents, and Israel's tabernacles, where he had no portion, and from whence must come his own destruction; not as to *Moses*, who had only a discovery instead of possession, and saw the land which he never entered—but as the *pearl*was revealed to the merchant in the Gospel, who rested not until he had sold all he had, and bought it; and as Heaven was opened to blessed Stephen, which he was shortly to enter, and the glory showed him what would be his own possession.

The things contained in heavenly rest are such as these:
a ceasing from means of grace;
a perfect freedom from all evils;
the highest degree of the saints' personal perfection, both of body and soul;
the nearest enjoyment of God, the chief good,
and a sweet and constant action of all the powers of body and soul in this enjoyment of God.

**1.**One thing contained in heavenly rest, is, **the ceasing from means of grace**. When we have obtained the haven—we are done sailing. When the workman receives his wages—it is implied he has done his work. When we are at our journey's end—we are done with the way. Whether prophecies, they shall fail; whether tongues, they shall cease; whether knowledge, it also, so far as it had the nature of means, shall vanish away.

There shall be no more *prayer*, because no more necessity—but the full enjoyment of what we prayed for: neither shall we need to *fast*, and *weep*, and *watch*any more—being out of the reach of sin and temptations. *Preaching*is done; the ministry of man ceases; ordinances become useless. The laborers are called in, because the harvest is gathered, the tares burned, and the work finished; the unregenerate past hope, and the saints past fear, for ever.

**2.** There is in heavenly rest a **perfect freedom from all evils**: from all the evils that accompanied us through our course, and which necessarily follow our absence from the chief good, besides our freedom from those eternal flames and restless miseries which the *neglecters*of Christ and grace must forever endure—a woeful inheritance, which, both by birth and actual merit, was due to us as well as to them!

In Heaven there is nothing that *defiles*or is *unclean*. All that remains outside. And doubtless there is not such a thing as *grief*and *sorrow*known there; nor is there such a thing as a pale face, a languid body, feeble joints, helpless infancy, decrepit old age, painful or pining sickness, griping fears, consuming cares, nor whatever deserves the name of *evil*. We wept and lamented when the world rejoiced—but our sorrow is turned to joy, and our joy shall no man take from us.

**3.**Another ingredient of this rest is, **the highest degree of the saints' personal perfection, both of body and soul**. Were the glory ever so great, and themselves not made capable of it by a personal perfection suitable thereto, it would be little to them. "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love him!" For the *eye*of flesh is not capable of seeing them, nor this *ear*of hearing them, nor this *heart*of understanding them: but there, the eye, and ear, and heart are made capable; else, how do they enjoy them? The more perfect the sight is—the more delightful the beautiful object. The more perfect the appetite—the sweeter the food. The more musical the ear—the more pleasant the melody. The more perfect the soul—the more joyous those joys, and the more glorious, to us, is that glory.

**4.** The principal part of this rest is**our nearest enjoyment of God, the chief good**. And here, reader, wonder not if I be at a loss, and if my apprehensions receive but little of that which is in my expressions. If it did not appear to the beloved disciple what we shall be—but only, in general, "that when Christ shall appear—we shall be *like him*," no wonder if I know little. When I know so little of God—I cannot much know what it is to enjoy him. If I know so little of spirits, how little of the Father of spirits, or the state of my own soul, when advanced to the enjoyment of him!

I stand and look upon a *heap of ants*, and see them all at one view: they know not me, my being, nature, or thoughts, though I am their fellow-creature: how little then, must we know of the great Creator, though he, with one view, clearly beholds us all!

A *glimpse*, the saints behold as in a looking-glass, which makes us capable of some poor, dark apprehensions of what we shall behold in glory. If I should tell a worldling what the holiness and spiritual joys of the saints on earth are—he cannot know; for grace cannot be clearly known without grace; how much less could he conceive it, should I tell him of this glory! But to the saints I may be somewhat more encouraged to speak, for grace gives them a *slight knowledge*and *slight taste*of glory.

If men and angels should study to speak the blessedness of that state in one word, what could they say beyond this—that it is the nearest enjoyment of God? O the full joys offered to a believer in that one sentence of Christ, "Father, I will that those who you have given me be with me where I am—that they may behold my glory which you have given me!" Every word is full of life and joy.

If the queen of Sheba had cause to say of Solomon's glory, "Happy are your men, happy are these your servants, who stand continually before you, and hear your wisdom;" then, surely, those who stand continually before God, and see his glory, and the glory of the Lamb, are more than happy. To them will Christ give to eat of the tree of life, and to eat of the hidden manna; yes, he will make them pillars in the temple of God, and they shall go no more out; and he will write upon them the name of his God, and the name of the city of his God, and he will write upon them his new name; yes, more, if more may be, he will grant them to sit with him in his throne! "These are those who came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple, and he who sits on the throne shall dwell among them. The Lamb, who is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

O blind, deceived world! can you show us such a glory? This is the city of our God, where the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them and be their God. The glory of God shall enlighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And there shall be no more curse; but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him, and they shall see his face, and his name shall be in their foreheads! These sayings are faithful and true, and the things which must shortly be done.

And now we say, as Mephibosheth—let the world take all, forasmuch as our Lord will come in peace. Rejoice, therefore, in the Lord, O you righteous! and say, with his servant David, "The Lord is the portion of my inheritance: the lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yes, I have a goodly heritage. I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; my flesh also shall rest in hope. You will show me the path of life; in your presence is fullness of joy; at your right hand there are pleasures for evermore."

What presumption would it have been, once, to have thought or spoken of such a thing, if God had not spoken it before us! I dared not have thought of the saints' preferment in this life, as Scripture sets it forth, had it not been the express truth of God. How unfitting to talk of being *sons of God*—speaking to him—having fellowship with him—dwelling in him and he in us—if this had not been God's own language! How much less dared we have once thought of shining forth as the sun—of being joint heirs with Christ—of judging the world—of sitting on Christ's throne—of being one in him and the Father—if we had not all this from the mouth, and under the hand of God! But has he said—and shall he not do it? Has he spoken—and shall he not make it good? Yes, as the Lord God is true, thus shall it be done to the man whom Christ delights to honor.

Be of good cheer, Christian; the time is at hand when God and you shall be near, and as near as you can well desire. You shall dwell in his family! Is that enough? It is better to be a door-keeper in the house of God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. You shall ever stand before him, about his throne, in his presence-chamber. Would you yet be *nearer*? You shall be his child, and he your Father; you shall be an heir of his kingdom; yes, more, the spouse of his Son. And what more can you desire? You shall be a member of the body of his Son; he shall be your head; you shall be one with him, who is one with the Father, as he himself has desired for you of his Father: "that they all may be one, as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be one in us; and the glory which you gave me, I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and you in me, that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that you have sent me, and have loved them as you have loved me."

**5.** We must add, that this rest contains**a sweet and constant action of all the powers of the soul and body in this enjoyment of God**. It is not the rest of a stone, which ceases from all motion when it attains the center. This body shall be so changed, that it shall no more be flesh and blood, which cannot inherit the kingdom of God; but a spiritual body. We sow not that body which shall be—but God gives it a body as it has pleased him, and to every seed his own body. If *grace*makes a Christian differ so much from what he was, as to say,*I am not the man I was*—then how much more will *glory*make us differ! As much as a spiritual body, above the sun in glory, exceeds these frail, noisome, diseased bodies of flesh—so far shall our senses exceed those we now possess.

Doubtless, as God advances our senses, and enlarges our capacity, so will he advance the happiness of those senses, and fill up, with himself, all that capacity. Certainly the body would not be *raised*up and continued, if it were not to share in the glory. As it has shared in the obedience and sufferings—so shall it also in the blessedness. As Christ bought the whole man, so shall the whole partake of the everlasting benefits of the purchase. O blessed employment of a glorified body! to stand before the throne of God and the Lamb, and to sound forth forever, "You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honor, and power. Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing; for you have redeemed us to God, by your blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and have made us unto our God kings and priests. Alleluia! Salvation, and glory, and honor, and power, unto the Lord our God. Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigns!"

O Christians! this is the blessed rest; a rest, as it were, *without rest*; for "they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come." And if the *body*shall be thus employed—then O how shall the *soul*be taken up! As its *powers*and *capacities*are greatest, so its *actions*are strongest, and its *enjoyments*sweetest. As the bodily senses have their proper actions, whereby they receive and enjoy their objects—so does the soul in its own actions enjoy its own objects, by knowing, remembering, loving, and delightful rejoicing. This is the soul's enjoyment. By these *eyes*it sees, and by these *arms*it embraces.

*Knowledge*, of itself, is very desirable. As far as the rational soul exceeds the sensitive, so far the delights of a philosopher, in discovering the secrets of nature, and knowing the mystery of sciences—exceed the delights of the drunkard, the voluptuary, or the sensualist. So excellent is all truth. What, then, is their delight who know the *God*of truth! How noble a faculty of the soul is the understanding! It can compass the earth; it can measure the sun, moon, stars, and Heaven; it can foreknow each eclipse to a minute, many years before. But this is the top of all its excellency, that it can know *God*, who is infinite, who made all these—a little here, and more, much more, hereafter.

O the wisdom and goodness of our blessed Lord! He has created the *understanding*with a natural bias and inclination to truth, as its object; and to the prime truth, as its prime object. Christian, when, after long gazing heaven-ward, you have got a glimpse of Christ, do you not sometimes seem to have been with Paul in the third Heaven, whether in the body or out, and to have seen what is unutterable? Are you not, with Peter, ready to say, "Master, it is good to be here!" "O that I might dwell in this mount! O that I might ever see what I now see!" Did you never look so long upon the *Sun of Righteousness*until your eyes were dazzled with his astonishing glory? And did not the splendor of it make all things below seem dark and drear to you? Especially in the day of suffering for Christ, when he usually appears most manifestly to his people—did you never see one walking in the midst of the fiery furnace with you, like the Son of God?

Believe me, Christians, you that have known most of God in Christ here—it is as nothing compared to what you shall know: in comparison of that, it scarcely deserves to be called knowledge. For as these bodies, so that knowledge must cease, that a more perfect may follow. "Knowledge shall vanish away. For we know in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but, when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass darkly—but then face to face; now I know in part—but then shall I know, even as also I am known."

Marvel not, therefore, Christian, how it can be life eternal to know God and Jesus Christ. To enjoy God and Christ is eternal life; and the soul's enjoying is in knowing. Those who savor only of earth, and consult with flesh, think it a poor happiness to know God. "But we know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in wickedness; and we know that the Son of God is come, and has given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life."

The *memory*will not be idle, or useless, in this blessed work. From that height, the saint can look behind him and before him. And to compare past with present things must raise in the blessed soul an inconceivable esteem and sense of its condition. To stand on that mount, whence we can see the *Wilderness*and *Canaan*both at once; to stand in *Heaven*and look back on *earth*, and weigh them together in the balance of a comparing sense and judgment—how must it needs transport the soul, and make it cry out, "Is this the purchase that cost so dear as the blood of Christ? No wonder! O blessed *price*and thrice blessed *love*, that invented and condescended! Is this the end of believing? Is this the end of the Spirit's workings? Have the *gales of grace*blown me into such a harbor? Is it hither that Christ has allured my soul? O blessed *way*, and thrice blessed *end!*

Is this the glory which the Scriptures spoke of, and ministers preached of so much? I see the Gospel is indeed good tidings, even tidings of peace and good things, tidings of great joy to all nations! Is my mourning, my fasting, my sad humblings, my heavy walking—come to this! Is my praying, watching, fearing to offend, come to this! Are all my afflictions, Satan's temptations, the world's scorns and jeers—come to this! O vile nature, that resisted so much, and so long, such a blessing! Unworthy soul! is this the place you came to so unwillingly? Was duty wearisome? Was the world too good to lose? Could you not leave all, deny all, and suffer anything—for this? Were you reluctant to die—to come to this? O false heart, you had almost betrayed me to eternal flames, and lost me this glory!

Are you not now ashamed, my soul, that ever you questioned that love which brought you hither? that you were jealous of the *faithfulness*of your Lord? that you suspect his *love*, when you should only have suspected yourself? that ever you did quench a motion of his Spirit? and that you should misinterpret those *providences*, and repine at those ways which have *such*an end? Now you are sufficiently convinced that your blessed Redeemer was saving you as well when he *crossed*your desires—as when he *granted*them; when he *broke*your heart—as when he *bound*it up. No thanks to you, *unworthy self*, for this received crown; but to Jehovah and the Lamb be glory forever!"

But, O! the full, the near, the sweet enjoyment, is that of love. "God is love, and he who dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him." Now the poor soul complains, "O that I could love Christ more!" *Then*you cannot but love him. *Now*, you know little of his amiableness—and therefore love little. *Then*, your eyes will affect your heart, and the continual viewing of that *perfect beauty*will keep you in continual transports of love.

Christians, does it not now stir up your love, to remember all the experiences of his love? Does not *kindness*melt you, and the sunshine of Divine *goodness*warm your frozen hearts? What will it do *then*, when you shall live in love, and have all in Him, who is all? Surely love is both work and wages. What a high favor, that God will *allow*us to love him! that he will be embraced by those who have embraced lust and sin before him!

But more than this, he returns love for love; nay, a thousand times more. Christian, you will be then *brim-full of love;*yet, *love*as much as you can, you shall be ten thousand times more *beloved*. Were the arms of the Son of God open upon the *cross*, and an open passage made to his heart by the spear; and will not his arms and heart be open to you in *glory?*Did not he begin to love before you loved, and will not he continue now? Did he love you, an enemy? you, a sinner? you, who even loathe yourself? and own you, when you disclaimed yourself? And will he not *now*immeasurably love you, a son? you, a perfect saint? you, who return some love for love? He who in love wept over the old Jerusalem when near its ruin—with what love will he rejoice over the new Jerusalem in her glory!

Christian, believe this, and think on it! You shall be *eternally embraced*in the arms of that love which was from everlasting, and, will extend to everlasting; of that love which brought the Son of God's love . . .
from *Heaven*to earth,
from *earth*to the cross,
from the *cross*to the grave,
from the *grave*to *glory!*

That love which was weary, hungry, tempted, scorned, scourged, buffeted, spit upon, crucified, pierced; which did fast, pray, teach, heal, weep, sweat, bleed, die—that love will eternally embrace you. When perfect created love and most perfect uncreated love meet together, it will not be like Joseph and his brethren, who lay upon one another's necks weeping; it will be loving and *rejoicing*—not loving and *sorrowing*. Yes, it will make Satan's court ring with the news that Joseph's brethren are come, that the saints are arrived safe at the bosom of Christ, out of the reach of Hell forever!

Nor is there any such love as David's and Jonathan's, breathing out its last into sad lamentations for a forced separation. Know this, believer, to your everlasting comfort—*if* *those arms have once embraced you, neither sin nor Hell can get you thence forever!*You have not to deal with an inconstant creature—but with Him with whom is no variableness nor shadow of turning. His love to you will not be as yours was on earth to him—seldom, and cold, up and down. He who would not cease nor abate his love, for all your enmity, unkind neglects, and churlish resistances—can he cease to love you, when he has made you perfectly lovely? He who keeps you so constant in your love to him, that you can challenge tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, or sword, to separate your love from Christ—how much more will he himself be constant! Indeed you may be "persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

And now, are we not left in the apostle's admiration: "What shall we say to these things!" Infinite love must needs be a mystery to a finite capacity! No wonder angels desire to look into this mystery. And if it be the study of saints here "to know the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of the love of Christ, which passes knowledge;" the saints' everlasting rest must consist in the enjoyment of God by love.

Nor does *joy*share least in this fruition. It is this which all we have mentioned leads to, and concludes in; even the *inconceivable delight*which the blessed feel in seeing, knowing, loving, and being beloved of God. This is "the *white stone*which no man knows, saving he who receives it." Surely this is the joy with which a stranger does not intermeddle. All Christ's ways of mercy, tend to and end in the saints' joys. He wept, sorrowed, suffered—that they might rejoice; he sends the Spirit to be their comforter; he multiplies promises; he reveals their future happiness—that their joy may be full. He opens to them the fountain of living waters—that they may thirst no more, and that it may spring up in them to everlasting life. He chastens them—that he may give them rest. He makes it their duty to rejoice in him always, and again commands them to rejoice. He never brings them into so low a condition that he does not leave them more cause of joy than sorrow. And has the Lord such a care for our comfort here? O what will that joy be, where the soul being perfectly prepared for joy, and joy prepared by Christ for the soul—it shall be our work, our business, *eternally to rejoice!*

The saints' joy shall be greater than the damned's torment; for their torment is the torment of creatures, prepared for the devil and his angels; but our joy is the joy of our *Lord*. The same glory which the Father gave the Son, the Son has given them, to sit with him in his throne, even as he sat down with his Father in his throne. You, poor soul, who pray for joy, wait for joy, complain for lack of joy, who long for joy—you then shall *have full joy*, as much as you can hold, and more than ever you thought on, or your heart desired!

In the meantime walk carefully, watch constantly, and then let God measure out to you your times and degrees of joy. It may be that he keeps them until you have more need. You had better lose your *comfort*, than your *safety*. If you should die full of fears and sorrows, it will be but a moment—and they are all gone and concluded in inconceivable joy! As the joy of the *hypocrite*—so the fears of the upright are but for a *moment*. God's "anger endures but a moment; in his favor is life; weeping may endure for a night—but joy comes in the morning." O blessed morning!

Poor, humble, drooping soul, how would it fill you with joy now, if a voice from Heaven should tell you of the love of God, the pardon of your sins, and assure you of your part in these joys! What then will your joy be, when your *actual possession*shall convince you of your title, and you shall be in Heaven before you are aware!

And it is not *your*joy only; it is a *mutual*joy as well as a mutual love. Is there joy in Heaven at your *conversion*—and will there be none at your *glorification?*Will not the angels welcome you there, and congratulate your safe arrival? Yes, it is the joy of Jesus Christ; for now he has the end of his undertaking, labor, suffering, dying—when we have our joys; when he is "glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe;" when he "sees of the travail of his soul, and is satisfied." This is *Christ's harvest*, when he shall reap the fruit of his labors; and he will not *regret*his sufferings—but he will *rejoice*over his purchased inheritance, and his people will rejoice in him.

Yes, the Father himself puts on joy, too, in our joy. As we grieve his Spirit, and weary him with our iniquities, so he is rejoiced in our good. O how quickly does he now spy a returning prodigal, even afar off! How does he run and meet him! And with what compassion does he fall on his neck and kiss him, and put on him the best robe, and a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet, and kills the fatted calf, to eat and be merry! This is indeed a happy meeting; but nothing compared to the embracing and joy of that last and great meeting.

Yes, more—as God does mutually love and joy, so he makes this *his*rest, as it is our rest. What an eternal rest, when the work of redemption, sanctification, preservation, glorification, is all finished and perfected forever! "The Lord your God in the midst of you is mighty; he will save, he will *rejoice*over you with joy, he will *rest*in his love, he will joy over you with singing." Well may we then rejoice in our God with joy, and rest in our love, and joy in him with singing.

Alas! my fearful heart scarcely dares to proceed. Methinks I hear the Almighty's voice saying to me, "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?" But pardon your servant, O Lord. I have not pried into unrevealed things. I bewail that my apprehensions are so dull, my thoughts so mean, my affections so stupid, and my expressions so low and unfitting such a glory. I have only *heard*by the hearing of the ear—O let your servant see you, and possess these joys! Then shall I have more suitable conceptions, and shall give you fuller glory; I shall abhor my present self, and disclaim and renounce all these imperfections. "I have uttered that I understood not, things too wonderful for me, which I knew not." Yet "I believed, and therefore have I spoken." What, Lord, can you expect from *dust*—but levity? or from *corruption*—but defilement? Though the weakness and irreverence is the fruit of my own corruption—yet the fire is from your altar, and the work of your commanding. I looked not into your ark, nor put forth my hand unto it, without you. Wash away these *stains*also in the blood of the Lamb. Imperfect, or none—must be your service here. O take your Son's excuse, "the spirit is willing—but the flesh is weak."

***~~Chapter 2.
The Great PREPARATIVES for the Saints' Rest.~~***

There are *four things* which principally *prepare* the way to enter into it; particularly:
1. The glorious appearing of Christ;
2. The general resurrection;
3. The last judgment; and,
4. The saints' coronation.

The passage of paradise is not now so blocked up as when the law and curse reigned. Finding a new and living way consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, the flesh of Christ, by which we may with boldness enter into the *holiest*—I shall draw near with fuller assurance. And, finding the *flaming sword*removed, I shall look again into the paradise of our God. And because I know that this is no *forbidden fruit*, and withal that it is good for food, and pleasant to the spiritual eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one truly wise and happy; I shall, through the assistance of the Spirit, take and eat thereof myself, and give to you, according to my power—that you may eat. The *porch*of this temple is exceeding glorious, and the *gate*of it is called Beautiful. Here are four things as the four corners of this porch.

**1. The most glorious coming and appearing of the Son of God** may well be reckoned in his people's glory. For their sake he came into the world, suffered, died, rose, ascended; and for their sake it is that he will *return*. To this end, will Christ come again to receive his people unto himself, that where he is, there they may be also. The bridegroom's departure was not upon divorce. He did not leave us with a purpose to return no more. He has left *pledges*enough to assure us to the contrary. We have his word, his many promises, his ordinances—which show forth his death until he come; and his *Spirit*, to direct, sanctify, and comfort until he return. We have frequent tokens of love from him, to show us he forgets not his promise, nor us. We daily behold the forerunners of his coming, foretold by himself. We see the fig-tree puts forth leaves, and therefore know that summer is near.

Though the riotous world say, My Lord delays his coming; yet let the saints lift up their heads, for their redemption draws near! Alas! fellow-Christians, what would we do if our Lord should not return? What a case are we here left in! What! leave us in the midst of wolves, and among lions, a generation of vipers—and here forget us! Did he buy us so dear, and then leave us sinning, suffering, groaning, dying daily; and will he come no more to us? It cannot be! This is like *our*unkind dealing with Christ, who, when we feel ourselves warm in the world, care not for coming to him; but this is not like *Christ's*dealing with us.

He who would come to *suffer*, will surely come to *triumph*. He who would come to *purchase*, will surely come to *possess*. Where else would all our hopes be? What would become of our faith, our prayers, our tears and our waiting? What would all the patience of the saints be worth to them? Would we not be of all men, the most miserable? Christians, has Christ made us forsake all the world, and to be forsaken of all the world? to hate all, and be hated of all? and all this for him—that we might have him instead of all? And will he, do you think, after all this, forget us and forsake us himself? Far be such a thought from our hearts!

But why did he not *stay*with his people while he was here? Why? Was not the work on earth done? Must he not take possession of glory in our behalf? Must he not *intercede*with the Father, plead his sufferings, be filled with the Spirit to send forth, receive authority, and subdue his enemies? Our abode here is short. If he had stayed on earth, what would it have been to enjoy him for a few days, and then die? He has more in Heaven to dwell among; even the souls of many generations. He will have us live by *faith*, and not by sight.

O fellow-Christians, what a day will that be, when we, who have been kept prisoners by sin, by sinners, by the grave—shall be brought out by the Lord himself! It will not be such a coming as his first was, in poverty and contempt—to be spit upon, and buffeted, and crucified again. He will not come, O careless world! to be slighted and neglected by you any more. Yet that coming lacked not its glory. If the heavenly host, for the celebration of his *nativity*, must praise God; with what shoutings will angels and saints at that day proclaim glory to God, peace and good-will toward men! If a *star*must lead men from remote parts, to come to worship the child in the manger; then how will the glory of his next appearing constrain all the world to acknowledge his sovereignty! If, riding on an *donkey*, he enter Jerusalem with hosannas; with what peace and glory will he come toward the New Jerusalem! If, when he was in the form of a *servant*, they cry out, "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?"—then what will they say when they shall see him coming in his *glory*, and the heavens and the earth obey him?

To think and speak of that day with horror does well become the impenitent sinner—but ill the believing saint. Shall the wicked behold him, and cry, "Yonder is he whose blood we neglected, whose grace we resisted, whose counsel we refused, whose government we cast off!" And shall not the saints, with inconceivable gladness, cry, "Yonder is he whose blood redeemed us, whose Spirit cleansed us, whose law governed us; in whom we trusted, and he has not deceived our trust; for whom we long waited, and now we see that we have not waited in vain!

O cursed corruption! Which would have had us turn to the world and present things, and say—Why should we wait for the Lord any longer? Now we see, "Blessed are all those who wait for him." And now, Christians, should we not put up that petition heartily, "May Your kingdom come! The Spirit and the bride say, Come! and let him that hears," and reads, "say, Come!" Our Lord himself says, "Surely I come quickly! Amen! Even so, come! Lord Jesus."

**2.**Another thing that leads to paradise is that great work of Jesus Christ, in ***raising*the body from the dust and uniting it again unto the soul.**A wonderful effect of infinite power and love! "Yes wonderful indeed," says unbelief, "*if*it is true. What, shall all these scattered bones and dust, become a man?" Let me with reverence plead for God, for that power whereby I hope to arise. What sustains the massive body of the earth? What limits the vast *ocean*of the waters? Whence is that constant ebbing and flowing of the tides? How many times larger than all the earth is the sun, that glorious body of light? Is it not as easy to raise the dead—as to make Heaven and earth, and all of nothing? Look not on the dead bones, and dust, and difficulty—but at the *promise*. Contentedly commit these bodies to a prison that shall not long contain them. Let us lie down in peace and take our rest; it will not be an *everlasting night*, nor endless sleep. If unclothing be the thing you fear—it is only that you may have better clothing. If to be turned out of doors be the thing you fear, remember that, when "the earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved, you have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

Lay down cheerfully this *lump of corruption*; you shall undoubtedly receive it again in incorruption. Lay down freely this earthly, this natural body; you shall receive it again a celestial, a spiritual body. Though you lay it down with great dishonor—you shall receive it in glory! Though you are separated from it through *weakness*—it shall be raised again in mighty power; "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed!" "The dead in Christ shall *rise*first. Then those who are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air."

Triumph now, O Christian, in these *promises*; you shall shortly triumph in their *performance*. This is the day which the Lord will make; we shall rejoice and be glad in it. The grave that could not keep our Lord—cannot keep us. He arose for us—and by the same power will cause us to arise. "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, those also who sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him." Let us never look at the *grave*—but let us see the *resurrection*beyond it! Yes, let us be "steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know our labor is not in vain in the Lord."

**3.** Part of this prologue to the saints' rest is the **public and solemn process at their judgment**, where they shall first themselves be *acquitted*and *justified*, and then with Christ *judge*the world. Young and old, of all estates and nations, who ever existed from the creation to that day, must here come and receive their doom. O terrible! O joyful day! Terrible to those that have forgotten the coming of their Lord! Joyful to the saints, whose waiting and hope was to see this day! Then shall the world behold the *goodness*and *severity*of God; on them who perish, severity; but to his chosen, goodness.

Every one must give an *account*of his stewardship. Every talent of time, health, abilities, mercies, afflictions, means, warnings—must be reckoned for. The sins of *youth*, those which they had *forgotten*, and their *secret*sins—shall all be laid open before angels and men. They shall see the Lord Jesus, whom they neglected, whose word they disobeyed, whose ministers they abused, whose servants they hated, now sitting to judge them. Their own *consciences*shall cry out against them, and call to their remembrance all their misdoings. Which way will the wretched sinner look? Who can conceive the dreadful thoughts of his heart?

Now the *world*cannot help him; his *old companions*cannot; the *saints*neither can nor will. Only the Lord Jesus can; but there is the misery—*he will not!*Time was, sinner, when Christ would—and you would not; now, gladly would you—and *he will not.*All in vain is it to "cry to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sits upon the throne!" for you have the *Lord of mountains and rocks*for your enemy, whose voice they will obey, and not yours. I charge you, therefore, before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the living and the dead at his appearing, and his kingdom—that you set yourself seriously to ponder these things.

But why tremble, O humble, *gracious*soul? He who would not lose one *Noah*in a common deluge, nor overlook one *Lot*in Sodom; nay, that could do nothing until he went forth—will he forget you at that day? "The Lord knows how to *deliver*the godly out of temptation, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment, to be punished." He knows how to make the same day—the greatest terror to his foes, and yet the greatest joy to his people. "There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh—but after the Spirit."

"Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" Shall the law? "The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made them free from the law of sin and death." Or shall conscience? "The Spirit himself bears witness with their spirit, that they are the children of God. It is God who justifies, who is he who condemns?" If our Judge condemns us not—then who shall? He who said to the adulterous woman,*Has no man condemned you? neither do I*—will say to us, more faithfully than Peter to him, Though all men deny you, or condemn you—I will not. Having confessed me before men, you "will I also confess before my Father in Heaven."

What inexpressible joy, that our *dear Lord*, who loves our souls and whom our souls love—shall be our *Judge!*Will a man fear to be judged by his dearest friend? or a wife by her own husband? Christian, did Christ come down and suffer, and weep, and bleed, and die for you—and will he now condemn you? Was he judged, condemned, and executed in your stead—and now will he himself condemn you? Has he done most of the work already, in redeeming, regenerating, sanctifying and preserving you—and will he now undo it all?

Well then, let the terror of that day be never so great, surely our Lord can mean no ill to us in it all. Let it make the devils tremble, and the wicked tremble—but it shall make us *leap for joy*.

It must affect us deeply with the sense of our mercy and happiness—to see the most of the world tremble with terror—while we triumph with joy; to hear them doomed to everlasting flames—when we are proclaimed heirs of the kingdom; to see our neighbors, who lived in the same town, came to the same congregation, dwelt in the same houses, and were esteemed more honorable in the world than ourselves—now, by the Searcher of hearts, eternally separated. This, with the great *magnificence*and *dreadfulness*of the day, the apostle pathetically expresses: "It is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to those who trouble you; and to you who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be *glorified*in his saints, and to be *admired*in all those who believe, in that day."

Yet more—we shall be so far from the dread of that judgment, that we ourselves shall become the *judges!*Christ will take his people, as it were, into commission with himself, and they shall sit and approve his righteous judgment. "Do you not know that the saints shall judge the world?" Nay, "know you not that we shall judge angels?" Were it not for the word of Christ who speaks it—this advancement would seem incredible, and the language arrogant. Even Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied this, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them, of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodlily committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him."

Thus shall the saints be honored, and "the upright shall have dominion in the morning." O that the careless world "were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!" that they would be now of the same mind as they will be when they shall see the heavens pass away with a great noise, and the elements melt with fervent heat, and the earth also, and the works that are therein, burnt up! when all shall be on fire about them, and all earthly glory consumed. "For the heavens and the earth which are now, are reserved unto fire against the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men. Seeing, then, that all these things shall be dissolved, what kind of people ought you to be in all holiness and godliness, looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?"

**4.** The last preparative for the saints' rest is **their solemn *coronation*and receiving the *kingdom***. For as Christ, their head, is anointed both King and Priest—so under him are his people made unto God both kings and priests, to reign, and to offer praises forever. The crown of righteousness, which was laid up for them, shall by the Lord, the righteous Judge, be given them at that day. They have been *faithful unto death*, and therefore he will give them a *crown of life*. And according to the improvement of their talents here—so shall their rule and dignity be enlarged.

They are not dignified with empty titles—but *real dominion*. Christ will grant them to sit with him on his throne, and will give them power over the nations, even as he received of his Father; and he "will give them the *morning star*." The Lord himself will give them possession, with these applauding expressions: "Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things; enter into the joy of your Lord!"

And with this solemn and blessed proclamation, shall he *enthrone*them: "Come, you who are blessed by my Father—inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Every word is full of life and joy.

"Come"—this is the holding forth of the golden scepter, to warrant our approach unto this glory. Come now as near as you will; fear not the Bethshemites' judgment; for the enmity is utterly abolished. This is not such a "Come" as we were accustomed to hear, "Come, take up your cross and follow me." Though that was sweet—yet this is much more.

"You who are blessed"—blessed indeed, when that mouth so pronounces us! For though the world has accounted us accursed, and we have been ready to account ourselves so; yet, certainly, those whom he blesses, are blessed; and those only whom he curses, are cursed; and his blessing cannot be reversed.

"By my Father"—blessed in the Father's love, as well as the Son's; for they are one. The Father has testified his love in their election, donation to Christ, and in the sending of Christ, and accepting his ransom, as the Son has also testified his.

"Inherit"—no longer slaves, nor servants only, nor children under age, who differ not in possession—but only in title, from servants; but now we are heirs of the kingdom, and joint-heirs with Christ.

"The kingdom"—no less than the kingdom! Indeed, to be*King of kings and Lord of lords*is our Lord's own proper title; but to be kings, and reign with him, is ours. The *enjoyment*of this kingdom is as the light of the sun; each has the whole—and the rest none the less.

"Prepared for you"—God is the Alpha as well as the Omega of our blessedness. Eternal love has laid the foundation. He prepared the *kingdom*for us—and then prepared *us*for the kingdom. This is the preparation of his counsel and decree, for the execution whereof Christ was yet to make a further preparation.

"For you"—not for believers only in *general*, who, without individuality, are nobody; but for *you personally*.

"From the foundation of the world"—not only from the promise *after*Adam's fall—but from all eternity.

Thus we have seen the Christian safely landed in paradise, and conveyed honorably to his rest. Now let us a little further, in the next chapter, view those *mansions*, consider their *privileges*, and see whether there is any glory like unto this glory.

***~~Chapter 3.
The EXCELLENCIES of the Saints' Rest~~***

1. It is the purchased possession;
2. It is a free gift;
3. It is peculiar to saints;
4. It is an association with saints and angels;
5. It derives its joys immediately from God himself;
6. It will be seasonable;
7. It will be suitable;
8. It will be perfect, without sin and suffering;
9. It will be everlasting.

Let us draw a little nearer, and see what further ***excellencies***this rest affords. The Lord hide us in the clefts of the rock, and cover us with the hands of indulgent grace—while we approach to take this view.

**1.** It is a most singular honor of the saints' rest, to be called the **purchased possession**; that is, the fruit of the blood of the Son of God; yes, the chief fruit, the end and perfection of all the fruits and efficacy of that blood. Greater love than this, there is not—to lay down the life of the lover. And to have this our Redeemer ever before our eyes, and the liveliest sense and freshest remembrance of that dying, bleeding love, still upon our souls! How will it fill our souls with perpetual joy, to think that *in the streams of this blood*—we have swum through the violence of the *world*, the snares of *Satan*, the seductions of *flesh*, the curse of the *law*, the wrath of an offended God, the accusations of a guilty *conscience*, and the vexing *doubts*and *fears*of an unbelieving heart—and are arrived safely at the presence of God!

*Now*he cries to us, "Is it nothing to you, all you that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow!" And we scarcely regard the mournful voice—scarcely turn aside to view the wounds. But *then*our perfected souls will feel, and flame in love—for his dying love. With what astonishing apprehensions will redeemed saints everlastingly behold their blessed Redeemer—the *purchaser*, and the *price*, together with the *possession*! Neither will the view of his *wounds of love*renew our wounds of sorrow. He, whose first words after his resurrection were to a great sinner, "Woman, why do you weep?" knows how to raise love and joy, without any *cloud of sorrow*or *storm of tears*.

If anything we enjoy was purchased with the life of our dearest friend—how highly would we value it! If a dying friend delivers us but a token of his love—how carefully do we preserve it, and still remember him when we behold it, as if his own name were written on it! And will not, then, the death and blood of our Lord *everlastingly sweeten*our possessed glory? As we write down the price which our goods cost us; so, on our righteousness and glory write down the price: The precious blood of Christ! His sufferings were to satisfy the justice that required blood, and to bear what was due to sinners, and so to restore them to the life they lost, and the happiness from which they fell. The work of Christ's redemption so well pleased the Father, that he gave him power to advance his chosen people, and give them the glory which was given to himself; and all this "according to his good pleasure and the counsel of his own will."

**2.** Another pearl in the saints' diadem is, that **it is a free gift**. These two, *purchased*and *free*, are the *chains of gold*which make up the wreaths for the tops of the pillars in the temple of God. It was dear to Christ—but free to us. When Christ was to buy, silver and gold were worth nothing; prayers and tears could not suffice, nor anything below his blood; but *our buying*is receiving; we have it freely, without money and without price. *A thankful acceptance of a free acquittance*is no paying of the debt. Here is all free; if the Father freely gives the Son, and the Son freely pays the debt; and if God freely accepts that way of payment, when he might have required it of the principal; and if both Father and Son freely offer us the purchased life on our cordial acceptance; and if they freely send the Spirit to enable us to accept; what is here, then, which is not free?

O the *everlasting admiration*that must surprise the saints to think of this freeness! "What did the Lord see in me, that he should judge me fit for such a state? That I, who was but a poor, diseased, despised wretch—should be clad in the brightness of this glory! That I, a creeping worm—should be advanced to this high dignity! That I, who was but lately groaning, weeping, dying—should now be as full of joy as my heart can hold! Yes, should be taken from the grave where I was decaying, and from the dust and darkness where I seemed forgotten—and be here set before his throne! That *I*should be taken, with Mordecai, from captivity, and be set next unto the king; and with Daniel from the den, to be made ruler of princes and provinces! Who can fathom unmeasurable love?"

If *worthiness*were our condition for admittance—we might sit down and weep, with John, because no man was found worthy. But "the *Lion*of the tribe of Judah" is worthy, and has prevailed; and by that title we must hold the inheritance. We shall offer there the offering that David refused—even *praise for that which cost us nothing*. Christ has dearly bought—yet freely gives.

If it were only for nothing, and without our merit—the wonder would be great; but it is moreover against our merit, and against our long endeavoring our own ruin. What an *astonishing thought*it will be, to think of the immeasurable difference between our deservings—and receivings! between the state we *should*have been in—and the state we *are*in! to look down upon Hell, and see the vast difference from that to which we are adopted! What pangs of love will it cause within us to think, "Yonder was the place that sin would have brought me to—but this is it that Christ has brought me to! Yonder death was the wages of my sin—but this eternal life is the gift of God, through Jesus Christ my Lord. Who made me to differ? Would I not have now been in those flames—if I had had my own way, and been left alone to my own will? Would I not have *lingered in Sodom*until the flames had seized on me—if God had not in mercy brought me out?"

Doubtless this will be our everlasting admiration—that so rich a crown should fit the head of so vile a sinner; that such high advancement, and such long unfruitfulness and unkindness—can be the state of the *same person*; and that such *vile rebellions*can conclude in such most*precious joys!* But no thanks to *us*, nor to any of *our*duties and labors, much less to our neglects and laziness! We know to *whom*the praise is due, and must be given forever.

Indeed, to this very end, it was that infinite wisdom cast the whole design of man's salvation into this mold of *purchases and freeness*—that the love and joy of man might be perfected, and the honor of grace most highly advanced; that the thought of *merit*might neither cloud the one nor obstruct the other; and that on these *two hinges*the gate of Heaven might turn. So then let DESERVED be written on the door of Hell; but on the door of Heaven, THE FREE GIFT!

**3.** This rest is peculiar to saints:**it belongs to them alone—and not to others.**If all Egypt had been *light*, the Israelites would not have had the less; but to enjoy that light *alone*, while their neighbors lived in thick darkness—must make them more sensible of their privilege. *Distinguishing mercy*affects more than any mercy. If Pharaoh had passed as safely as Israel, the Red Sea would have been less remembered. If the rest of the world had not been drowned, and the rest of Sodom and Gomorrah not burned—the saving of *Noah*would have been no wonder, nor Lot's deliverance so much talked of. When one is enlightened—and another left in darkness; one reformed—and another enslaved by his lust; it makes the saints cry out, "Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself unto *us*—and not unto the world?"

When the prophet is sent to *one widow*only, out of all that were in Israel, and to cleanse *one Naaman*out of all the lepers—the mercy is more observable. That will surely be a *day*of immense feeling on both sides, when there shall be two in one bed, and two in the field—the *one taken*and the *other left*. The saints shall look down upon the burning lake, and in the sense of their own happiness, and in the approbation of God's just proceedings—they shall rejoice and sing, "You are righteous, O Lord, because you have *judged*thus!"

**4.** But though this rest be peculiar to the saints—yet**it is common to ALL the saints**; for it is an association of blessed spirits, both saints and angels: a corporation of perfected saints, whereof Christ is the head: the communion of saints completed. As we have been together in the labor, duty, danger and distress—so shall we be in the great recompense and deliverance! As we have been *scorned*and *despised*together—so shall we be *owned*and *honored*together. We who have gone through the day of *sadness*together—shall enjoy together that day of *gladness*together. Those who have been with us in *persecution*and in prison—shall be with us also in that place of *consolation*.

How oft have our groans made, as it were, one sound! our tears one stream! and our desires one prayer! But now all our praises shall make up one melody; all our churches—one church; and all ourselves—one body; for we shall be all one in Christ, even as he and the Father are one. It is true, we must be careful not to look for that in the saints, which is alone in Christ. But if the *forethought*of sitting down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of Heaven, may be our lawful joy; how much more the *real*sight and *actual*possession! It cannot but be comfortable to think of that day, when we shall join with *Moses*in his song, with *David*in his psalms of praise, and with all the *redeemed*in the song of the Lamb forever; when we shall see . . . *Enoch*walking with God; *Noah*enjoying the end of his singularity; *Joseph*of his integrity; *Job*of his patience; *Hezekiah*of his uprightness and *all the saints*the end of their faith.

Not only our old acquaintances—but *all*the saints of all ages, whose faces we never saw—we shall there both *know*and comfortably *enjoy*. Yes, *angels*as well as saints will be our blessed acquaintance. Those who now are willingly our ministering spirits—will willingly then be our companions in joy. They who had such joy in Heaven for our *conversion*—will gladly rejoice with us in our *glorification*. Then we shall truly say, as David: I am a companion of all those who fear you; when "we are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels; to the general assembly and church of the first-born, who are written in Heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant!" It is a singular excellence of heavenly rest, that we are "fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God."

**5.** As another property of our rest, **we shall derive its joys immediately from God**. *Now*we have nothing at all immediately from God—but at the second or third hand; or how many, who knows? From the *earth*, from *man*, from *sun*and moon, from the ministration of *angels*, and from the *Spirit*, and *Christ*. Though, in the hand of *angels*, the stream savors not of the imperfection of *sinners*—yet it does of the imperfection of *creatures*. And as it comes from *man*, it savors of both. How quick and piercing is the *word*in itself! yet many times it never enters, being managed by a feeble arm. What weight and worth is there in every passage of the blessed Gospel! enough, one would think, to enter and pierce the dullest soul, and wholly possess its thoughts and affections; and yet how often does it fall as water upon a stone! The things of God which we handle, are divine; but our manner of handling is human. There is little we touch—but we leave the *print of our fingers*behind.

If *God*speaks the word himself—it will be a piercing, melting word indeed. The Christian now knows, by experience, that his most *immediate*joys are his sweetest joys; which have least of man, and are most directly from the Spirit. Christians who are much in secret prayer and contemplation, are men of greatest life and joy; because they have all more *immediately*from God himself. Not that we should cast off hearing, reading, and conference, or neglect any ordinance of God; but to live *above*them while we use them, is the way of a Christian.

There is joy in these *remote*receivings; but the fullness of joy is in *God's immediate presence*. We shall then have light without a candle, and perpetual day without the sun for "the city has no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it; for the glory of God enlightens it, and the Lamb is the light thereof; there shall be no night there, and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; and they shall reign forever and ever."

We shall then have *enlightened understandings*without Scripture, and be governed without a written law; for the Lord will perfect his law in our hearts—and we shall be all perfectly taught of God. We shall have joy, which we drew not from the promises, nor fetched home by faith or hope. We shall have communion with God without ordinances, without this fruit of the vine, when Christ shall drink it new with us in his Father's kingdom, and refresh us with the comforting wine of *immediate enjoyment*.

To have necessities, but *no supply*—is the state of those in Hell.

To have necessity supplied by means of *creatures*—is the state of us on earth.

To have necessity supplied *immediately from God*—is the state of the saints in Heaven.

To have no necessity at all—is the prerogative of God himself.

**6.**A further excellence of this rest is, that it will be **seasonable**. He who expects the fruit of his vineyard at the season, and makes his people "like a tree planted by the rivers of water, which brings forth his fruit *in his season*," will also give them the *crown*in season. He who will have a word of joy spoken in season to him that is weary—will surely cause the time of *joy*to appear in the fittest season. Those who are not weary in well-doing, shall, if they faint not—*reap*in due season. If God gives rain even to his enemies, both the former and the latter in its season, and reserves the appointed weeks of harvest, and covenants that there shall be day and night in their season; then surely the glorious *harvest*of the saints shall not miss its season.

Doubtless, he who would not stay a day longer than his promise—but brought Israel out of Egypt on the self-same day when the four hundred and thirty years expired—neither will he fail of one day or hour of the *fittest season for his people's glory*. When we have had in this world a long night of darkness—will not the day breaking and the rising of the Sun of Righteousness be then seasonable? When we have passed a long and tedious journey through great dangers—is not *home*then seasonable? When we have had a long and perilous war, and received many a wound—would not a peace, with *victory*, be seasonable?

Men live in a continual weariness; especially the saints, who are most weary of that which the world cannot feel:
some weary of a blind mind;
some of a hard heart;
some of their daily doubts and fears;
some of the lack of spiritual joys; and
some of the sense of God's wrath.

And when a poor Christian has desired, and prayed, and waited for deliverance many years—is it not *then*seasonable? We lament that we do not find a *Canaan*in the wilderness, or the *songs of Zion*in a strange land; that we have not a *harbor*in the main ocean, nor our *rest*in the heat of the day, nor *Heaven*before we leave the earth—and would not all this be very unseasonable?

**7.** As this rest will be seasonable, so it will be **suitable**. The new nature of the saints, suits their spirits to this rest. Indeed, their *holiness*is nothing else but a *spark*taken from this element, and by the Spirit of Christ kindled in their hearts: the *flame*whereof, mindful of its own divine original, ever tends to the place from whence it comes.

Temporal crowns and kingdoms could not make a *rest*for saints. As they were not redeemed with so low a price, neither are they endued with so low a nature. As God will have from them a spiritual worship, suited to his own spiritual being—he will provide them a spiritual *rest*, suitable to their spiritual *nature*. The knowledge of God and his Christ, a delightful satisfaction in that mutual love, an everlasting rejoicing in the enjoyment of our God, with a perpetual singing of his high praises—this is Heaven for a saint.

*Then*we shall *live in our own element*. We are *now*as the fish in a vessel of water, only so much as will keep them alive; but what is that, compared to the ocean? We have a *little air*let in to us, to afford us breathing; but what is that, compared to the sweet and fresh gales upon mount Zion? We have a *beam*of the sun to enlighten our darkness, and a warm ray to keep us from freezing; but then we shall live in its light, and be revived by its heat forever.

As are the *natures*of the saints, such are their *desires*; and it is the desires of our renewed nature to which this rest is suited. While our desires remain corrupted and misguided, it is a far greater mercy to *deny*them, yes, to *destroy*them—than to satisfy them. But those desires which are spiritual—are of his own planting, and he will surely water them, and give the increase. He quickened our hunger and thirst for righteousness, that he might make us happy in a full satisfaction.

Christian, this is a rest after your own heart! It contains all that your heart can wish; that which you long, pray, labor for—there you shall find it all. You had rather have God in Christ, than all the world; there you shall have him! What would you not give for assurance of his love? There you shall have assurance without suspicion. *Desire*what you can, and *ask*what you will, as a Christian—and it shall be given you, not only to *half*of the kingdom—but to the enjoyment both of kingdom and King! This present life is a life of desire and prayer—but Heaven is a life of *satisfaction*and *enjoyment*.

This rest is very suitable to the saints' *necessities*also, as well as to their *natures*and *desires*. It contains whatever they truly need; not supplying them with coarse, created comforts—which, like Saul's armor on David, are more *burden*than benefit. It was Christ and perfect holiness which they most needed—and with these shall they be supplied.

**8.**Still more, this rest will be **absolutely perfect**. We shall then have *joy without sorrow*, and *rest without weariness*. There is no *mixture*of corruption with our graces, nor of suffering with our comfort. There are none of those *waves*in that *harbor*, which now so toss us up and down. Today we are well—tomorrow sick; today in esteem—tomorrow in disgrace; today we have friends—tomorrow none; nay, we have wine *and*vinegar in the same cup! If revelations raise us to the third Heaven—the messenger of Satan must presently buffet us, and the *thorn in the flesh*fetch us down. But there is none of this *inconstancy*in Heaven. If perfect *love*casts out fear, then perfect *joy*must cast out sorrow, and perfect *happiness*exclude all the relics of misery. We shall there rest from all the evil of sin and of suffering.

Heaven excludes nothing more directly than *sin*, whether of nature or of act. "There shall never enter anything that defiles, neither whatever works abomination, or makes a lie." What need Christ at all to have died—if Heaven could have contained *imperfect*souls? "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." His blood and Spirit have not done all this—only to leave us, after all, *defiled*. "What communion has light with darkness? and what concord has Christ with Belial?"

Christian, if you are once in Heaven—you shall sin no more. Is not this glad news to you, who have prayed and watched against it so long? I know, if it were offered to your choice, you would rather choose to be freed from sin, than have all the world. You shall have your desire! That hard heart, those vile thoughts which accompanied you to every duty—shall be left behind forever. Your *understanding*shall never more be troubled with darkness. All dark Scriptures shall be made plain; all seeming contradictions reconciled. The poorest Christian is there a more perfect theologian than any here. O that happy day, when *error*shall vanish forever! when our understanding shall be filled with God himself, whose light will leave no darkness in us! His *face*shall be the *Scripture*where we shall read the truth.

Many a godly man here, in his *mistaken zeal*, has been the means of deceiving and perverting his brethren, and, when he sees his own error, cannot tell how to undeceive them. But there we shall join in one truth, as being one in Him who is the truth.

We shall also rest from all the sin of our will, affections, and acts. We shall no more retain this *rebelling principle*, which is still drawing us from God acts. We shall no more be oppressed with the power of our corruptions, nor vexed with their presence: no pride, passion, slothfulness, insensibility, shall enter with us; no strangeness to God, and the things of God; no coldness of affections, nor imperfection in our love; no inconstant walking, nor grieving of the Spirit; no scandalous action, nor unholy conversation. We shall rest from all these forever! Then shall our will correspond to the divine will, as face answers face in a looking-glass, and from which, as our law and rule, we shall never swerve. "For he who is entered into his rest, he also has ceased from his own works, as God did from his."

Our *sufferings*were but the consequences of our sinning—and in Heaven they both shall cease together!

We shall rest from all our *doubts of God's love*. It shall no more be said that "doubts are like the thistle, a bad weed—but growing in good ground." They shall now be fully weeded out, and trouble the gracious soul no more. We shall hear that kind of *language*no more: "What shall I do to know my state? How shall I know that God is my Father? that my heart is upright? that my conversion is true? that faith is sincere? I am afraid my sins are unpardoned; that all I do is hypocrisy; that God will reject me; that he does not hear my prayers." All this is there turned into praise.

We shall rest from all *sense of God's displeasure*. Hell shall not be mixed with Heaven. At times the gracious soul remembered God—and was troubled; complained—and was overwhelmed, and refused to be comforted; divine wrath lay hard upon him, and God afflicted him with all his waves. But that blessed day shall convince us, that though God hid his face from us for a moment—yet with everlasting kindness will he have mercy on us.

We shall rest from all the ***temptations****of Satan*. What a grief is it to a Christian, though he yields not to the temptation—yet to be *solicited*to deny his Lord! What a torment to have such horrid suggestions made to his soul! such blasphemous ideas presented to his imagination! sometimes . . .
cruel thoughts of God,
undervaluing thoughts of Christ,
unbelieving thoughts of Scripture,
or injurious thoughts of Providence!

To be tempted sometimes . . .
to turn to present things,
to *play with the* *baits of sin*, and
venture on the delights of flesh,
and sometimes on atheism itself!

Especially when we know the *treachery of our own hearts*—as ready as tinder to take fire as soon as one of those *sparks*shall fall upon them!

***Satan***has power here to tempt us in the *wilderness*—but he enters not the holy city; he may set us on a pinnacle of the temple in the earthly Jerusalem—but the New Jerusalem he may not approach; he may take us up into an exceeding high mountain—but the mount Zion he cannot ascend; and if he could, all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, would be a *despised bait*to the soul possessed of the kingdom of our Lord! No, it is in vain for Satan to offer one temptation more.

All our temptations from the ***world***and the ***flesh***shall also cease. Oh the hourly dangers that we here walk in! Every sense and member is a *snare*; every creature, every mercy, and every duty is a *snare*to us. We can scarcely open our eyes, but we are in danger . . .
of *envying*those above us,
or *despising*those below us;
of *coveting*the honors and riches of some,
or beholding the rags and beggary of others with *pride*and unmercifulness!

If we see *beauty*—it is a bait to lust;
if *deformity*—it is a bait to loathing and disdain.

How soon do slanderous reports, vain jests, wanton speeches—creep into the heart! How constant and strong a watch does *our appetite*require!

Have we loveliness and beauty? What fuel for pride!

Are we deformed? What an occasion of repining!

Have we strength of reason and gifts of learning? O how prone to be puffed up, hunt after applause, and despise our brethren!

Are we unlearned? How apt then to despise what we have not!

Are we in places of authority? How strong is the temptation to abuse our trust, make our will our law, and mold all the enjoyments of others by the rules and model of our own interest and policy!

Are we inferiors? How prone to envy others' pre-eminence, and bring their actions to the bar of our judgment!

Are we rich—and not too much exalted?

Are we poor—and not discontented?

Are we not lazy in our duties, or make a Christ of them?

Not that *God*has made these things our snares; but through our own corruption, they become so to us. *Our own selves are the greatest snares to ourselves!*But this is our comfort: our rest will free us from all of these! As Satan has no entrance there, so he has nothing to serve his malice; but all things there shall join with us in the high praises of our great Deliverer.

As we rest from the *temptations*—so shall we rest from the abuses and **persecutions**of the world. The prayers of the souls under the altar will then be answered, and God will avenge their blood on those who dwell on the earth. This is the time for crowning with *thorns*; that, for crowning with *glory*. Now, "all who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution;" then, those who *suffered*with him—shall be *glorified*with him. Now, we must be hated by all men for Christ's sake; then, Christ will be admired in his saints, who were thus hated.

We are *here*made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men! As the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things—men separate us from their company, and reproach us, and cast out our names as evil; but we shall *then*be as much gazed at for our glory, and they will be shut out of the church of the saints, and separated from us, whether they will or not. We can now scarce pray in our families, or sing praises to God—but our voice is a vexation to them: how must it torment them, then, to see us praising and rejoicing—while they are howling and lamenting!

You, brethren, who can now attempt no work of God without losing the love of the world, consider, you shall have none in Heaven, but those who will further your work, and join heart and voice with you in your everlasting joy and praise. Until then, possess you your souls in patience. Bind all *reproaches*as a *crown*to your heads. Esteem them greater riches than the world's treasures. "It is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to those who trouble you; and to you who are troubled—rest with Christ."

We shall then rest from all our sad **divisions**and unChristian quarrels with one another. How lovingly do thousands live *together*in Heaven—who lived at *variance*upon earth! There is no contention, because there is none of this pride, ignorance, or other corruption. There is no plotting to strengthen our party, nor deep designing against our brethren. If there be sorrow or shame in Heaven—we shall then be both sorry and ashamed to remember all this ugly conduct on earth; as Joseph's brethren were ashamed when they remembered their former unkind usage of him. Is it not enough that all the world is against us—but *we*must also be against one another? O happy days of persecution—which drove us together in love, whom the sunshine of liberty and prosperity crumbles into dust by our contentions! O happy day of the saints' rest in glory—when, as there is one God, one Christ, one Spirit—so we shall have one heart, one church, one employment forever!

We shall then rest from viewing our loved ones sufferings. The church on earth is a mere *hospital!*

Some groaning under a *dark understanding*,
some under an *insensible heart*,
some anguishing under *unfruitful weakness*,
some bleeding for *miscarriages*and *wilfulness*;
some crying out of their *poverty*,
some groaning under *pains*and *infirmities*, and
some bewailing a *whole catalogue of calamities*.

But a far greater grief it is, to see our dearest and most intimate friends turned aside from the truth of Christ, continuing their neglect of Christ and their souls, and nothing will awaken them out of their security: to look on an *ungodly*father or mother, brother or sister, wife or husband, child or friend—and think how certainly they shall be in Hell forever, if they die in their present unregenerated state; to think of the Gospel departing, poor souls left willingly dark and destitute, and blowing out the light that should guide them to salvation! Our day of rest, will free us from all this, and the days of mourning shall be ended. Then your people, O Lord, shall be all righteous; they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of your planting, the work of your hands; that you may be glorified.

Then we shall rest from all our own **personal sufferings**. This may seem a small thing to those who live in ease and prosperity; but to the daily afflicted soul—it makes the thoughts of Heaven delightful. O the *dying life*we now live! as full of sufferings as of days and hours! Our Redeemer leaves this *measure of misery*upon us, to make us know for what we are indebted, to remind us of what we would else forget, to be serviceable to his wise and gracious designs, and advantageous to our full and final recovery.

Grief enters at every sense, seizes every part and power of flesh and spirit. What noble part is there which suffers its pain or ruin alone? But sin and flesh, dust and pain—will all be left behind together. O the blessed tranquility of that region, where there is nothing but sweet continued peace! O healthful place—where none are sick! O fortunate land—where all are kings! O holy assembly—where all are priests! How free a state—where none are servants, but to their supreme Monarch! The poor man shall no more be tired with his labors. No more hunger or thirst, cold or nakedness—no pinching frosts or scorching heats. Our faces shall no more be pale or sad. No more breaches in friendship, nor parting of friends asunder; no more trouble accompanying our relations, nor voice of lamentation heard in our dwellings. God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes. O my soul, *bear*with the infirmities of your earthly tabernacle; it will be thus but only a little longer; the sound of your Redeemer's feet is even at the door.

We shall also rest from all the **toils**of duties. The conscientious magistrate, parent and minister cries out, "O the burden that lies upon me!" Every relation, state, age has variety of duties; so that every conscientious Christian cries out, "O the burden! O my weakness, that makes it burdensome!" But our remaining rest will ease us of the burdens.

Once more, we shall rest from all these troublesome **afflictions**which necessarily accompany our absence from God. The trouble that is *mixed*in our desires and hopes, our longings and waitings—shall then cease. We shall no more look into our cabinet—and miss our treasure; into our hearts—and miss our Christ! We shall no more seek him from ordinance to ordinance; but all be concluded in a most blessed and full enjoyment.

**9.**The last jewel of our crown is, that it will be an **everlasting rest**. Without this, all would be comparatively nothing. The very thought of *leaving*it, would embitter all our joys. It would be a *Hell in Heaven*—to even *think*of eventually losing Heaven; as it would be a kind of *Heaven to the damned*—had they but hope of eventually escaping.

*Mortality*is a great hindrance of all sublunary delights. How it spoils our pleasure—to see it dying in our hands! But, O blessed eternity! where our lives are perplexed with no such thoughts, nor our joys interrupted with any such fears! where "we shall be *pillars*in the temple of God, and go no more out." While we were *servants*, we held by lease, and that but for the term of a transitory life; "but the *son*abides in the house forever."

O my soul, let go your dreams of present pleasure, and loose your hold of earth and flesh. Study frequently, study thoroughly, this one word—**eternity**. What! live—and never die! rejoice—and ever rejoice!

*O happy souls in Hell—should you but escape after millions of ages!*O miserable saints in Heaven—should you be dispossessed after the age of a million of worlds! This word, *everlasting*, contains the perfection of their torment and our glory. O that the sinner would study this word; methinks it would startle him out of his dead sleep! O that the gracious soul would study it; methinks it would revive him in his deepest agony!

"And must I, Lord, thus *live*forever. Then will I also *love*forever. Must my *joys*be immortal—and shall not my *thanks*be also immortal? Surely, if I shall never lose my glory—so I will never cease your praises. If you will both perfect and perpetuate me and my glory, as I shall be yours, and not my own—so shall my glory be your glory. And as your glory was your ultimate end in my glory, so shall it also be my end—when you have crowned me with that glory which has no end. Unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory, for ever and ever!"

Thus I have endeavored to show you a *glimpse of approaching glory*. But how short are my expressions of its excellency!

Reader, if you be an humble, sincere believer, and wait with longing and laboring for this rest—you will shortly *see*and *feel*the truth of all this. You will then have so high an impression of this blessed state, as will make you pity the ignorance and distance of mortals, and will tell you all that is here said, falls short of the whole truth a thousandfold.

In the mean time, let this much *kindle*your desires, and *quicken*your endeavors. Up and be doing—run, and strive, and fight, and hold on: for you have a *certain glorious prize*before you. God will not mock you; do not mock yourself, nor betray your soul by delaying—and all is your own. What kind of men, do you think, would Christians be in their lives and duties—if they had still this glory fresh in their thoughts? what frame would their spirits be in, if their thoughts of Heaven were lively and believing? Would their hearts be so heavy; their countenances so sad? Or would they have need to take up their comforts from below? Would they be so reluctant to suffer—or so afraid to die? or would they not think every *day*a *year*, until they enjoy it? May the Lord heal our carnal hearts, lest we "enter not into this rest because of unbelief."

***~~Chapter 4.
The CHARACTER of the People for Whom this Rest Is Designed~~***

The people of God who shall enjoy this rest are:
1. Chosen from eternity;
2. Given to Christ;
3. Born again;
4. Deeply convinced of . . .
the evil of sin,
their misery by sin,
the vanity of the creature,
and the all-sufficiency of Christ.
5. Their will is proportionably changed.
6. They engage in covenant with Christ.
7. They persevere in their engagements.

The reader invited to *examine himself*by these characteristics of God's people. Further testimony from Scripture, that this rest shall be enjoyed by the people of God: also that *none but they*shall enjoy it; and that it *remains*for them, and is not to be enjoyed until they come to another world. The chapter concludes with showing, that their *souls*shall enjoy this rest, while separated from their bodies.

While I was in the mount, describing the *excellencies of the saints' rest,*I felt it was good being there, and therefore tarried the longer; and were there not an extreme disproportion between *my conceptions*and the subject—much longer would I have been. Can a prospect of that happy land be tedious?

Having read of such high and unspeakable glory, a stranger would wonder for what *rare creatures*this mighty preparation should be made, and expect some illustrious sun should break forth: but, behold! only a *shellful of dust*, animated with an invisible rational soul, and that rectified with as unseen a restoring power of grace—and this is the *creature*that must possess such glory! You would think it must needs be some *deserving*piece, or one that brings a *valuable*price: but, behold! one that *has*nothing and can *deserve*nothing; yes, that deserves the contrary, and would, if he might, proceed in that deserving. But, being apprehended by love, he is brought to him who is all; and most affectionately receiving him, and resting on him, he does, in and through him, *receive all this!*

More particularly, the *people*for whom this rest is designed are . . .
chosen of God from eternity;
given to Christ as their Redeemer;
born again;
deeply convinced of the evil and misery of a sinful state, the vanity of the creature, and the all-sufficiency of Christ;
their will is renewed;
they engage themselves to Christ in covenant;
and they persevere in their engagements to the end.

**1.** The people for whom this rest is designed, whom the text calls "the people of God," are "**chosen by God**before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy and without blame before him in love." That they are but a part of mankind, is apparent in Scripture and experience. They are the *little flock*, to whom "it is their Father's good pleasure to give the kingdom." Fewer they are than the world imagines; yet not so few as some drooping spirits think, who are suspicious that God is unwilling to be their God, when they know themselves willing to be his people.

**2.**These people are **given by God to his Son**, to be by him *redeemed*from their lost state, and advanced to this glory. God has given all things to his Son—but not as he has given his chosen people to him. "God has given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as the Father has *given*him." The difference is clearly expressed by the apostle; "he has put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the *church*."

**3.** One great qualification of these people is that they are **born again**. To be the people of God without regeneration, is as impossible as to be the children of men without generation. Seeing we are born God's enemies, we must be new-born his sons, or else remain enemies still. The greatest *reformation*of life that can be attained, without this new life wrought in the soul—may procure our further *delusion*—but never our salvation.

**4.** This new life in the people of God reveals itself by conviction, or a **deep sense of divine things**.

They are convinced of the **evil of sin**. The sinner is made to know and feel that the sin which was his delight—is a more loathsome thing than a toad or serpent, and a greater evil than plague or famine; being a breach of the righteous law of the most high God, dishonorable to him, and destructive to the sinner. Now the sinner no more hears the reproofs of sin as words of course; but the mention of his sin speaks to his very heart—and yet he is willing you should show him the worst. He was accustomed to marvel what made men keep up such a stir against sin; what harm it was for a man to take little forbidden pleasures; he saw no such *heinousness*in it—that Christ must needs die for it, and a christless world be eternally tormented in Hell. Now the case is altered; God has opened his eyes to see the *inexpressible vileness of sin!*

They are convinced of their own **misery**by reason of sin. They who *before*read the threats of God's law as men do the story of foreign wars—*now* find it their own story, and perceive they read their own doom, as if they found their own names written in the curse, or heard the law say, as Nathan, "You are the man!" The wrath of God seemed to him before, but a storm to a man in a dry house, or as the pains of the sick to the healthful bystander; but now he finds the disease is his own, and feels himself a condemned man: that he is dead and damned in point of law, and that nothing is lacking but mere execution, to make him absolutely and irrecoverably miserable.

This is a work of the Spirit wrought in some measure, in all the regenerate. How should he come to Christ for *pardon*—who did not first find himself guilty and condemned? or for *life*—who never found himself spiritually dead? "The whole need not a physician—but those who are sick." The discovery of the *remedy*as soon as the *misery*, must needs prevent a great part of the trouble. And perhaps the joyful apprehensions of mercy, may make the sense of misery sooner forgotten.

They are also convinced of the **creature's vanity and insufficiency**. Every man is naturally an idolater. Our hearts turned from God in our first fall; and, ever since, the *creature*has been our *god*. This is the grand sin of our nature. Every unregenerate man ascribes to the creature, divine prerogatives, and allows it the highest room in his soul; or, if he is convinced of misery, he flies to it as his savior.

Indeed, God and His Christ shall be called Lord and Savior; but the real expectation is from the creature, and the work of God is laid upon it. Pleasure, profit and honor, are the *natural man's trinity—*and his *carnal self*is these in unity! It was our first sin to aspire to be as gods, and it is the greatest sin that is propagated in our nature from generation to generation. When God should guide us—we guide ourselves; when he should be our Sovereign—we rule ourselves. The laws which he gives us—we find fault with, and would correct and, if we had the making of them—we would have made them otherwise. When he should take care of us, (and must, or we perish,) we will take care for ourselves. When we should depend on him in daily receiving—we had rather have our portion in our own hands. When we should submit to his providence—we usually quarrel with it, and think we could make a better disposal than God has made. When we should study and love, trust and honor God—we study and love, trust and honor our carnal selves. Instead of God, we would have all men's eyes and dependence on us, and all men's thanks returned to us, and would gladly be the only men on earth extolled and admired by all.

*Thus, we are naturally our own idols!* But down falls this *Dagon*when God once renews the soul. It is the chief design of that great work, to bring the heart back to God himself. He convinces the sinner that the creature can neither be his God—to make him happy; nor his Christ—to recover him from his misery and restore him to God, who is his happiness. God does this not only by his word—but also by his providence. This is the reason why affliction so frequently concurs in the work of conversion. Arguments which speak to the quick—will force a hearing when the most powerful *words*are slighted.

If a sinner made his *credit*his god, and God cast him into the lowest disgrace; or bring him, who idolized his *riches*, into a condition wherein they cannot help him, or cause them to take wing and fly away—what a help is here to this work of conviction! If a man made *pleasure*his god, whatever a roving eye, a curious ear, a greedy appetite, or a lustful heart could desire—and God takes these from him, or turns them into gall and wormwood—what a help is here to conviction!

When God casts a man into languishing sickness, and inflicts wounds on his heart, and stirs up against him his own conscience, and then, as it were, says to him, "Try if your *credit*, *riches*, or *pleasures*can help you. Can they heal your wounded conscience? Can they now support your tottering tabernacle? Can they keep your departing soul in your body? or save you from my everlasting wrath? or redeem your soul from eternal flames? Cry aloud to *them*, and see now whether these will be to you instead of God and Christ." O how this works now with the sinner! Sense acknowledges the truth, and even the flesh is convinced of the *creature's vanity*—and our very *deceiver*is undeceived.

The people of God are likewise convinced of **the absolute necessity, the full sufficiency, and perfect excellency of Jesus Christ**—as a man in famine is convinced of the necessity of food; or a man that has heard or read his sentence of condemnation—of the absolute necessity of pardon; or a man that lies in prison for debt—of his need of a surety to discharge it. Now the sinner feels an insupportable burden upon him, and sees there is none but Christ who can take it off. He perceives the law proclaims him to be a rebel, and none but Christ can make his peace. He is as a man pursued by a lion, that must perish if he finds not a present sanctuary. He is now brought to this dilemma; either he must have Christ to justify him—or be eternally condemned. He must have Christ to save him—or burn in Hell forever. He must have Christ to bring him to God—or be shut out of his presence everlastingly! And no wonder if he cries as the martyr, "None but Christ! none but Christ!" Not gold—but bread, will satisfy the hungry; nor will anything but pardon comfort the condemned.

All things are counted but rubbish now—that he may win Christ; and what was gain—he counts loss for Christ. As the sinner sees his misery, and the inability of himself and all things to relieve him, so he perceives there is *no saving mercy outside of Christ*. He sees that though the creature cannot, and he himself cannot—yet Christ can help him. Though the fig leaves of our own *unrighteous righteousness*, are too short to cover our nakedness—yet the righteousness of Christ is large enough. Our righteousness is disproportionate to the justice of the law—but Christ's righteousness extends to every tittle. If he intercedes—there is no denial; such is the dignity of his *person*and the value of his *merits*—that the Father grants all he desires. Before, the sinner knew Christ's excellency as a blind man knows the light of the sun; but now, as one that beholds its glory.

**5.** After this deep conviction, **the *will*manifests also its change**. As, for instance, the sin which the understanding pronounces evil—the will turns from with abhorrence. Not that the sensitive appetite is changed, or any way made to abhor its object; but when it would prevail against reason, and carry us to sin against God, instead of *Scripture*being the rule, and *reason*the master, and *sense*the servant—this disorder and evil, the will abhors.

The *misery*also, which sin has procured, is not only discerned—but bewailed. It is impossible that the soul should now look either on its trespass against God, or yet on its own self-procured calamity—without some contrition. He who truly discerns that he has killed Christ, and killed himself—will surely in some measure be pricked to the heart. If he cannot weep, he can heartily groan and his heart feels what his understanding sees.

The *creature*is renounced as vanity, and turned out of the heart with disdain: not that it is undervalued, or the use of it condemned; but its idolatrous abuse, and its unjust usurpation. Can Christ be the way—where the creature is the end? Can we seek Christ to reconcile us to God—while in our hearts we prefer the creature before him? In the soul of every unregenerate man—the *creature*is both God and Christ. As turning from the creature to God, and not by Christ, is no true turning; so believing in Christ, while the creature has our hearts, is no true believing.

Our *aversion from*sin, *renouncing our idols*, and our *right receiving Christ*—is all but one work, which God ever perfects where he begins. At the same time, the will cleaves to God the Father, and to Christ. Having been convinced that nothing else can be his happiness—the sinner now finds it is in God. Convinced also that Christ alone is able and willing to make peace for him—he most affectionately accepts of Christ as his Savior and Lord. Paul's preaching was "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." And life eternal consists, first in "knowing the only true God;" and then "Jesus Christ, whom he has sent." To take the Lord for our God is the natural part of the covenant; the supernatural part is, to take Christ for our Redeemer. The former is first necessary, and implied in the latter. To accept Christ without affection and love—is not justifying faith: nor does love follow as a fruit—but immediately concurs; for faith is the receiving of Christ with the whole soul. "He who loves father or mother more than Christ, is not worthy of him," nor is justified by him. Faith accepts him as Savior and Lord—for in both relations will he be received, or not at all. Faith not only acknowledges his *sufferings*, and accepts of pardon and glory—but acknowledges his *sovereignty*, and submits to his government and way of salvation.

**6.** As an essential part of the character of God's people, they now **enter into a cordial covenant with Christ**. The sinner was never strictly, nor comfortably, in covenant with Christ until now. He is sure, by the free offers, that Christ consents and now he cordially consents himself; and so the agreement is fully made. With this covenant Christ delivers up himself in all comfortable relations to the sinner; and the sinner delivers up himself to be saved and ruled by Christ. Now the soul resolutely concludes, "I have been blindly led by *flesh*and lust, by the *world*and the *devil*, too long—almost to my utter destruction; I will now be wholly at the disposal of my Lord, who has bought me with his blood, and will bring me to his glory."

**7.** I add, that the people of God **persevere**in this covenant to the end. Though the believer may be tempted—yet he never disclaims his Lord, renounces his allegiance, nor repents of his covenant; nor can he properly be said to break that covenant, while that *faith*continues which is the condition of it. Indeed, those who have verbally covenanted, and not cordially, may tread under foot the blood of the covenant, as an unholy thing, by separation from those without the church; but the elect cannot be so deceived. Though this perseverance is *certain*to true believers—yet it is made a *condition*of their salvation; yes, of their continued life and fruitfulness, and of the continuance of their justification, though not of their first justification itself. But eternally blessed be that *hand of love*which has drawn the free promise, and subscribed and sealed to that which ascertains us both of the *grace*which is the condition, and the *kingdom*which on that condition is offered!

Such are the *essentials*of this people of God—not a full portraiture of them in all their excellencies, nor all the marks whereby they may be discerned. I beseech you, reader, as you have the hope of a Christian, or the reason of a man—judge yourself as one that must shortly be judged by a righteous God, and faithfully answer these questions. I will not inquire whether you remember the *time*or the *order*of these workings of the Spirit—there may be much uncertainty and mistake in that. If you are sure they are wrought in you—it is not so great a matter that you should know *when*or *how*you came by them. But carefully examine and inquire: Have you been thoroughly convinced of a prevailing *depravation*through your whole soul? and a prevailing *wickedness*through your whole life? and how vile *sin*is? and that by the covenant you have transgressed, the least sin deserves eternal death? Do you consent to the law, that it is true and righteous, and perceive yourself sentenced to this death by it? Have you seen the utter insufficiency of every creature, either to be itself your happiness, or the means of removing this your misery? Have you been convinced that your happiness is only in God, as the end—and in Christ, as the way to him and that you must be brought to God through Christ, or perish eternally? Have you seen an absolute necessity of your enjoying Christ, and the full sufficiency in him to do for you whatever your case requires? Have you discovered the excellency of this *pearl*to be worth your "selling all to buy it?" Have your convictions been like those of a man who thirsts—and not merely a change in opinion, produced by reading or education?

Have both your sin and misery been the abhorrence and burden of your soul? If you could not *weep*—yet could you heartily *groan*under the insupportable weight of both? Have you renounced all your *own*righteousness? Have you turned your *idols*out of your heart, so that the creature has no more the sovereignty—but is now a servant to God and Christ? Do you accept of Christ as your only Savior, and expect your justification, recovery and glory from him alone? Are his *laws*the most powerful commanders of your life and soul? Do they ordinarily prevail against the commands of the flesh, and against the greatest interest of your credit, profit, pleasure or life? Has Christ the *highest*room in your heart and affections, so that, though you cannot love him as you would—yet nothing else is loved so much?

Have you, to this end, made a hearty covenant with him, and delivered up yourself to him? Is it your uttermost care and watchful endeavor that you may be found faithful in this covenant; and though you fall into sin—yet would not renounce your bargain, nor change your Lord, nor give up yourself to any other government, for all the world?

If this be truly your case—then you are one of "the people of God" in my text and as sure as the promise of God is true, this blessed rest remains for you. Only see that you "*abide*in Christ," and "*endure*to the end;" for "if any man draws back—God shall have no pleasure in him."

But if no such work be found within you, whatever your deceived heart may think, or however strong your false hopes may be, you will find to your cost, except *thorough conversion*prevent it—that the *rest*of the saints belongs not to you. "O that you were wise, that you would understand this, that you would consider your latter end!" that yet, while your soul is in your body, and "a price is in your hand," and opportunity and hope before you—your ears may be open, and your heart yield to the persuasions of God, so that you may rest among his people, and enjoy "the inheritance of the saints in light!"

That this rest shall be enjoyed by the people of God, is a truth which the Scripture, if its testimony be further needed, clearly asserts in a variety of ways; as, for instance, that they are "**foreordained**to it, and it for them. God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city." They are styled "vessels of mercy, prepared unto glory." "In Christ they have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things after the counsel of his own will." And "whom he did predestine—them he also glorified." Who can deprive his people of that rest which is designed for them by God's eternal purpose?

Scripture tells us, they are **redeemed**to this rest. "By the blood of Jesus, we have boldness to enter into the holiest;" whether that entrance means by faith and prayer here, or by full possession hereafter. Therefore the saints in Heaven sing a new song unto Him who has "redeemed them to God by his blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, and made them kings and priests unto God." Either Christ, then, must lose his blood and sufferings, and never "see of the travail of his soul"—or else "there remains a rest for the people of God."

In Scripture this rest is **promised**to them. As the firmament with stars, so are the sacred pages bespangled with these divine engagements. Christ says, "Fear not, little flock—for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." "I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father has appointed unto me—that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom."

All the *means of grace*, the operations of the Spirit upon the soul, and gracious actings of the saints, every command to repent and believe, to fast and pray, to knock and seek, to strive and labor, to run and fight—prove that there remains a rest for the people of God. The Spirit would never kindle in us such strong desires after Heaven, such love to Jesus Christ—if we should not receive what we desire and love. He who "guides our feet into the way of peace," will undoubtedly bring us to the end of peace. How nearly are the *means*and *end*conjoined! "The kingdom of Heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force." Those who "follow Christ in the regeneration, shall sit upon thrones of glory." Scripture assures us, that the saints have the "beginnings, foretastes, pledges, and seals" of this rest here. "Though they have not seen Christ—yet loving him, and believing in him, they rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory; receiving the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls." They "rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

And does God "seal them with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the *pledge*of their inheritance," and will he deny the *full possession*? The Scripture also mentions, by name, those who have entered into this rest; as Enoch, Abraham, Lazarus, and the thief that was crucified with Christ. And if there is a rest for these, surely there is a rest for all believers. But it is in vain to bring together Scripture proofs, seeing it is the very end of Scripture, to be a guide to lead us to this blessed state, and to be the charter and grant by which we hold all our title to it.

Scripture not only proves that this rest remains for the people of God—but also that it remains for *none but them*; so that the remainder of the world shall have no part in it. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord. Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. He who believes not the Son, shall not see life—but the wrath of God abides on him. No whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. The wicked shall be turned into Hell, and all the nations that forget God. They all shall be damned, who believe not the truth—but have pleasure in unrighteousness. The Lord Jesus shall come in flaming fire, taking vengeance on those who know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."

Had the ungodly returned before their life was expired, and been heartily willing to accept of Christ for their Savior and their King, and to be saved by him in his way, and upon his most reasonable terms—they might have been saved. God freely offered them life—and they would not accept it. The pleasures of the flesh seemed more desirable to them—than the glory of the saints. Satan offered them the one, and God offered them the other; and they had free liberty to choose which they would, and they chose "the pleasures of sin for a season," before the everlasting rest with Christ.

And is it not a righteous thing, that they should be *denied*that which they would not accept? When God pressed them so earnestly, and persuaded them so importunately, to come in, and yet they would not—then where should they be, but among the *dogs*outside? Though man is so wicked that he will not yield until the mighty power of grace prevails with him—yet still we may truly say that he may be saved, if he will, on God's terms. His *inability*being moral, and lying in willful wickedness, is no more excuse to him than it is to an adulterer that he cannot love his own wife, or to a malicious person that he cannot but hate his own brother—is he not so much the worse, and deserving of so much the sorer punishment?

Sinners shall lay all the blame on their own wills in Hell forever. Hell is a rational torment by conscience, according to the nature of the rational subject. If sinners could but then say: It was *God's*fault, and not ours—it would quiet their consciences and ease their torments, and make Hell, to them, to be no Hell. But to remember their wilfulness, will feed the fire, and cause the worm of conscience "never to die."

It is the will of God that this rest should yet *remain*for his people—and not be enjoyed *until*they come to another world. Who should dispose of the creatures—but he who made them? You may as well ask why have we not spring and harvest without winter? or, why is the earth below and the heavens above? as why we have not our rest while still on earth? All things must come to their perfection by degrees. The *strongest man*must first be a child. The *greatest scholar*must first begin with the alphabet. The *tallest oak*was once an acorn. This life is our infancy; and would we be perfect in the womb, or born at full stature? If our rest was here, most of God's providences must be useless. Should God lose the glory of his church's miraculous deliverances, and of the fall of his enemies—that men may have their happiness here? If we were all happy, innocent, and perfect—what use was there for the glorious work of our sanctification, justification, and future salvation?

If we lacked nothing—we would not depend on God so closely, nor call upon him so earnestly. How little would he hear from us, if we had what we would have! God would never have had such songs of praise from Moses at the Red Sea and in the wilderness, from Deborah and Hannah, from David and Hezekiah—if they had been the choosers of their own condition. Have not your own highest praises to God, reader, been occasioned by your dangers or miseries? The greatest glory and praise God has through the world, is for redemption, reconciliation, and salvation by Christ; and was not *man's misery*the occasion of that? And where God loses the opportunity of exercising his mercies—man must lose the happiness of enjoying them. Where God loses his praise—man will certainly lose his comforts.

O the sweet comforts the saints have had in return for their prayers! How would we know what a tender-hearted Father we have—if we had not, as the prodigal, been denied the husks of earthly pleasure and profit? We would never have felt Christ's tender heart—if we had not felt ourselves "weary and heavy laden, hungry and thirsty, poor and contrite." It is a delight to a soldier or traveler, to look back on his escapes when they are over; and for a saint in Heaven to look back on his sins and sorrows upon earth; his fears and tears, his enemies and dangers—his needs and calamities must make his joy more joyful. Therefore the blessed, in praising the Lamb, mention his "redeeming them out of every nation, and kindred, and tongue;" and so out of their misery, and needs, and sins, "and making them kings and priests to God." But if they had had nothing but contentment and rest on earth—then what room would there have been for these rejoicings hereafter?

Besides, we are *not capable of rest*upon earth. Can a soul that is so weak in grace, so prone to sin, so nearly joined to such a neighbor as this flesh—have full contentment and rest in such a case? What is soul-rest—but our freedom from sin, and imperfections, and enemies? And can the soul have rest, which is molested with all these, and that continually? Why do Christians so often cry out, in the language of Paul, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?" What makes them "press toward the mark, and run that they may obtain, and strive to enter in," if they are capable of rest in their present condition?

And our bodies are incapable, as well as our souls. They are not now those sun-like bodies which they shall be, when this "corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality." They are our *prisons*and our *burdens*—so full of infirmities and defects, that we spend most of our time in repairing them and supplying their continual needs. Is it possible that an immortal soul should have rest in such a disordered habitation? Surely these sickly, weary, loathsome bodies—must be refined before they can be capable of enjoying rest.

The *objects*which we here enjoy are insufficient to afford us rest. Alas! what is there in all the world to give us rest? Those who have most of it, have the greatest burden. Those who get most of it, and rejoice most in it—do all cry out at last of its vanity and vexation. Men promise themselves a *Heaven upon earth*; but when they come to enjoy it—it flies from them! He who has any regard to the works of the Lord, may easily see that the very end of them is . . .
to take down our idols,
to make us weary of the world,
and seek our rest in him.

Where does he *cross*us most—but where we promise ourselves most contentment? If you have a child you dote upon—it becomes your sorrow. If you have a friend you trust in, and judge unchangeable—he becomes your scourge. Is this a place, or state of rest? And as the objects we here enjoy are insufficient for our rest—so God, who is sufficient, is here little enjoyed. It is not here, that he had prepared the presence-chamber of his glory. He has drawn the curtain between us and him. We are far from him as *creatures*, and farther as frail *mortals*, and farthest as *sinners*. We hear now and then a word of comfort from him, and receive his *love-tokens*to keep up our hearts and hopes; but this is not our *full enjoyment*. And can any soul that has made God his portion, as every one has that shall be saved by him—find rest in so vast a distance from him, and so *seldom*and *small*enjoyment of him?

Nor are we capable of rest—as there is a *worthiness*which must go before it? Christ will give the crown to none but the worthy. Are we fit for the *crown,*before we have overcome? or for the *prize,*before we have run the race? or to receive our *reward,*before we have wrought in the vineyard? or to be *rulers*of ten cities, before we have improved our ten talents? or to enter into the joy of our Lord, before we have done well as good and faithful servants? God will not alter the course of justice, to give you *rest*before you have *labored*—nor the *crown*of glory until you have *overcome*. There is reason enough why our rest should remain until the life to come.

Take heed, then, Christian reader, how you dare to contrive and care for a rest on earth; or to murmur at God for your trouble, and toil, and needs in the flesh. Does your poverty weary you? your sickness, your bitter enemies and unkind friends? It *should*be so here. Do the abominations of the times, the sins of professors, the hardening of the wicked, all weary you? It *must*be so while you are absent from your *rest*. Do your sins and your naughty, distempered heart weary you? Be thus wearied more and more! But, under all this weariness, are you willing to go to God, your rest; and to have your *warfare*accomplished, and your *race*and *labor*ended? If not, complain more of your own heart, and get it more weary—until rest seems more desirable.

I have but one thing more to add, for the close of this chapter—that the *souls*of believers enjoy inconceivable blessedness and glory—while they remain separated from their bodies. What can be more plain than these words of Paul: "We are always confident, knowing that while we are at home," or rather sojourning, "in the body, we are absent from the Lord; for we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." Or these: "I am in a strait between two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better." If Paul had not expected to enjoy Christ until the resurrection—why should he be in a strait, or *desire*to depart? Nay, should he not have been reluctant to depart upon the very same grounds? for while he was in the flesh he enjoyed something of Christ.

Plain enough are the words of Christ to the thief, "*Today*shall you be with me in paradise." In the parable of Dives and Lazarus, it seems unlikely Christ would so evidently intimate and suppose the soul's happiness or misery presently after death, if there were no such thing. Our Lord's argument for the resurrection supposes, that, "God being not the God of the dead—but of the living," therefore Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were then living in the *soul*. If the "blessedness of the dead who die in the Lord" were only in resting in the grave—then a beast or a stone were as blessed; nay, it were evidently a curse, and not a blessing. For was not life a great mercy? Was it not a greater mercy to serve God and to do good; to enjoy all the comforts of life, the fellowship of saints, the comfort of ordinances, and much of Christ in all—than to lie rotting in the grave?

Therefore some further blessedness is there promised. How else is it said, "We are come to the spirits of just men made perfect?" Surely, at the resurrection, the body will be made perfect as well as the spirit. The Scriptures tell us, that Enoch and Elijah are taken up already. And shall we think they possess that glory alone? Did not Peter, James, and John see Moses also with Christ on the mount? yet the Scripture says, *Moses died*. And is it likely that Christ deluded their senses in showing them Moses, if he should not partake of that glory until the resurrection?

And is not that of *Stephen*as plain as we can desire? "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Surely, if the Lord receive it, it is neither asleep, nor dead, nor annihilated; but it is where he is, and beholds his glory. That of the wise man is of the same import: "The spirit shall return unto God who gave it." Why are we said to "have eternal life;" and that to "know God is life eternal;" and that a believer "on the Son *has*everlasting life?" Or how is "the kingdom of God within us?" If there is as great an interruption of our life as until the resurrection—this is no eternal life, nor "everlasting kingdom."

"The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah" are spoken of as "suffering the vengeance of eternal fire!" And if the wicked already suffer eternal fire, then no doubt but the godly enjoy eternal blessedness. When John saw his glorious relations, he is said to be "in the Spirit," and to be "carried away in the Spirit." And when Paul was "caught up to the third Heaven," he knew not "whether in the body or out of the body." This implies that *spirits*are capable of these glorious things without the help of their bodies. The same is implied when John says, "I saw under the altar the *souls*of those who were slain for the word of God." When Christ says, "Fear not them who kill the body—but are not able to kill the soul," does it not plainly imply, that when wicked men have killed our bodies, that is, have separated the souls from them—yet the souls are still alive?

The soul of Christ was alive when his body was dead, and therefore so shall be ours too. This appears by his words to the thief, "Today shall you be with me in paradise;" and also by his voice on the cross, "Father, into your hands I commend my Spirit." If the spirits of those that "were disobedient in the days of Noah were in prison," that is, in a living and suffering state; then, certainly, the separate spirits of the just are in an opposite condition of happiness. Therefore, faithful souls will no sooner leave their prisons of flesh, but angels shall be their convoy; Christ, and all the perfected spirits of the just, will be their companions; Heaven will be their residence, and God their happiness. When such die, they may boldly and believingly say, as Stephen, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit;" and commend it, as Christ did, into a Father's hands.

***~~Chapter 5.
The Great Misery of Those Who Lose the Saints' Rest~~***

*I. The loss of Heaven includes:*1. The personal perfection of the saints;
2. God himself;
3. All delightful affections towards God;
4. The blessed society of angels and glorified spirits.

*II. The aggravations of the loss of Heaven:*1. The *understanding*of the ungodly will then be cleared;
2. Also enlarged.
3. Their *consciences*will make a true and close application.
4. Their *affections*will be more lively.
5. Their *memories*will be large and strong.

If you, reader, are a stranger to Christ, and to the holy nature and life of his people, who have been described, and shall live and die in this condition—let me tell you, you shall never partake of the joys of Heaven, nor have the least taste of the saints' eternal rest! I may say, as Ehud to Eglon, "I have a message to you from God;" that, as the word of God is true, you shall never see the face of God in peace! This sentence I am commanded to pass upon you; take it as you will, and escape it if you can.

I know your humble and hearty subjection to Christ would procure your escape; he would then acknowledge you for one of his people, and give you a portion in the inheritance of his chosen. If this might be the happy success of my message, I should be so far from repining, like Jonah, that the threatenings of God are not executed upon you—that I would bless the day that ever God made me so happy a messenger. But if you end your days in your unregenerate state, as sure as the heavens are over your head, and the earth under your feet—you shall be shut out of the rest of the saints, and receive your portion in everlasting fire!

I expect you will turn upon me and say, When did God show you the *book of life*, or tell you who they are that shall be saved, and who shut out? I answer, I do not name you, nor any other; I only conclude it of the unregenerate in general, and of you, if you be such a one. Nor do I go about to determine who shall repent, and who shall not; much less, that you shall never repent. I had rather show you what *hopes*you have before you, if you will not sit still and lose them. I would far rather persuade you to *hearken*in time, before the door is shut against you, than tell you there is no hope of your repenting and returning.

But, if the foregoing description of the people of God does not agree with the state of your soul, is it then a hard question whether you shall ever be saved? Need I ascend up into Heaven to know that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord;" or, that only "the pure in heart shall see God;" or, that "except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God?" Need I go up to Heaven to inquire that of Christ which he came down to earth to tell us, and sent his Spirit in his apostles to tell us, and which he and they have left upon record to all the world? And though I know not the secrets of your heart, and therefore cannot tell you by name whether it is your state or not; yet, if you are but willing and diligent, you may know yourself whether you are an heir of Heaven or not.

It is the main thing I desire, that, if you are yet miserable—you may discern and escape it. But how can you escape, if you neglect Christ and salvation? It is as impossible as for the devils themselves to be saved; nay, God has more plainly and frequently spoken it in Scripture of such sinners as you are, than he has of the devils. Methinks a sight of your case would strike you with amazement and horror. When Belshazzar "saw the fingers of a man's hand that wrote upon the wall—his countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another." What trembling, then, should seize on you, who have the hand of God himself against you, not in a sentence or two—but in the very scope of the Scriptures, threatening the loss of an everlasting kingdom! Because I would gladly have you lay it to heart, I will show you, first,

**I. The NATURE of your loss of Heaven**; secondly, its *aggravations*.

**1. The glorious personal perfection which the saints enjoy in Heaven, is the great loss of the ungodly.** They lose that shining luster of the body, surpassing the brightness of the sun at noon-day. Though the bodies of the wicked will be raised more spiritual than they were upon earth—yet that will only make them capable of the more exquisite torments! They would be glad then if every member were a dead member, that it might not feel the punishment inflicted on it; and if the whole body were a rotten carcass, or might lie down again in the dust.

Much more do they lack that moral perfection which the blessed partake of; those holy dispositions of mind; that cheerful readiness to do the will of God; that perfect rectitude of all their actions. Instead of these, they have that perverseness of will, that loathing of good, that love to evil, that violence of passion, which they had on earth. It is true, their understandings will be much cleared by the ceasing of former temptations, and experiencing the falsehood of former delusions—but they have the same dispositions still, and gladly would commit the same sins, if they could—they lack but opportunity.

There will be a greater difference between these wretches and the glorified Christian, than there is between a *toad*and the *sun*in the firmament. The rich man's purple and fine linen, and sumptuous fare, did not so exalt him above Lazarus while at his gate, full of sores.

**2. They shall have no comfortable relation to God, nor communion with him.** "As they did not like to retain God in their knowledge," but said unto him, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of your ways;" so God will abhor to retain them in his household. He will never admit them to the inheritance of his saints, nor endure them to stand in his presence; but "will profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, you that work iniquity!" They are ready now to lay as confident claim to Christ and Heaven as if they were sincere, believing saints. The swearer, the drunkard, the whoremonger, the worldling can say: Is not God our Father as well as yours? But when Christ separates his followers from his foes, and his faithful friends from his deceived flatterers—where, then, will be their presumptuous claim? Then they shall find that God is not their Father, because they would not be his people.

As they would not consent that God, by his Spirit, should dwell in them—so the tabernacle of wickedness shall have no fellowship with him, nor the wicked inhabit the city of God. Only those who walked with God here—shall live and be happy with him in Heaven. Little does the world know what is the loss of that soul who loses God! What a dungeon would the earth be, if it had lost the sun! What a loathsome carrion the body, if it had lost the soul! Yet all these are nothing, compared to the loss of God.

As the enjoyment of God is the Heaven of the saints—so the loss of God is the Hell of the ungodly. And as the enjoying of God is the enjoying of all—so the loss of God is the loss of all.

**3. They also lose all delightful affections toward God**: that transporting knowledge; those delightful views of his glorious face; the inconceivable pleasure of loving him; the apprehensions of his infinite love to us; the constant joys of his saints, and the rivers of consolation with which he satisfies them. Is it *nothing*to lose all this? The employment of a king in ruling a kingdom, does not so far exceed that of the vilest slave—as this heavenly employment exceeds that of an earthly king.

God suits men's employment to their natures. Your hearts, sinners, were never set upon God in your lives, never warmed with his love, never longed after the enjoyment of him; you had no delight in speaking or hearing of him; you had rather have continued on earth, if you had known how—than to be interested in the glorious praises of God. Is it fit, then, that you should be members of the celestial choir?

**4. They shall be deprived of the blessed society of angels and glorified saints.** Instead of being companions of those happy spirits, and numbered with those triumphant kings—they must be driven down to Hell, where they shall have companions of a far different nature and quality! Scorning and abusing the saints, hating them, and rejoicing at their calamities, was not the way to obtain their blessedness. Now you are shut out of that company, from which you first shut out yourselves; and are separated from them, with whom you would not be joined. You could not endure them in your houses, or towns, or scarcely in the kingdom. You took them, as Ahab did Elijah, for the "troublers of the land;" and, as the apostles were taken, for "men that turned the world upside down." If anything fell out amiss, you thought all was owing to them. When they were dead or banished—you were glad they were gone, and thought the country well rid of them.

They troubled you by faithfully reproving your sins. Their holy lives troubled your consciences, to see them so far excel you. It was a vexation to you to hear them pray or sing praises in their families. And is it any wonder if you are separated from them hereafter? The day is near when they will trouble you no more. Between them and you, will be a great gulf fixed. Even in this life, while the saints were "mocked, destitute, afflicted, tormented," and while they had their personal imperfections—yet, in the judgment of the Holy Spirit, they were men "of whom the world was not worthy." Much more unworthy will the world be of their fellowship in glory.

**II.** I know many will be ready to think they could spare these things in this world well enough, and why may they not be without them in the world to come? Therefore, to show them that this loss of Heaven will then be most tormenting, let them now consider,

**1. The UNDERSTANDING of the ungodly will then be *cleared*to know the worth of that which they have lost.** Now they lament not their loss of God, because they never knew his excellence; nor the loss of that holy employment and society, for they were never sensible what they were worth. A man that has lost a jewel, and took it but for a common stone, is never troubled at his loss; but when he comes to know *what*he lost; then he laments it. Though the understandings of the damned will not be sanctified—yet they will be cleared from a multitude of errors. They now think that their honors, estates, pleasures, health, and life are better worth their labor, than the things of another world; but when these things have left them in misery, when they experience the things of which they before but read and heard—they will be of an other mind.

They would not believe that water would drown, until they were in the sea; nor the fire burn, until they were cast into it: but when they *feel*—they will easily believe. All that error of mind which made them set light by God, and abhor his worship, and vilify his people—will then be confuted and removed by experience. Their *knowledge*shall be increased, that their *sorrows*may be increased. Poor souls! they would be comparatively happy, if their understandings were wholly taken from them, if they had no more knowledge than idiots or brutes; or, if they knew no more in Hell than they did upon earth, their loss would less trouble them. How happy would they then think themselves, if they did not know there is such a place as Heaven! *Now*, when their knowledge would help to prevent their misery—they will not know, or will not read or study that they may know; therefore, when their knowledge will but feed their consuming fire—they *shall*know, whether they will or not. They are now in a dead sleep, and dream that they are the happiest men in the world; but when death awakes them, how will their judgments be changed in a moment! and they that would not see—shall then see, and be ashamed.

**2. As their understanding will be *cleared*—so it will be more *enlarged*, and made more capacious to conceive the worth of that glory which they have lost.** The strength of their apprehensions, as well as the truth of them, will then be increased. What deep apprehensions of the wrath of God, the madness of sinning, the misery of sinners—have those souls who now *endure*this misery—in comparison with those on earth that do but *hear*of it! What sensibility of the worth of life has the condemned man who is going to be executed—compared with what he was accustomed to have in the time of his prosperity! Much more will the *actual loss of eternal blessedness*make the damned exceedingly apprehensive of the greatness of their loss. As a large vessel will hold more water than a shell—so will their more enlarged understandings contain more matter to feed their torment, than their shallow capacity can now do.

**3. Their CONSCIENCES also will make a truer and closer application of this doctrine to themselves, which will exceedingly tend to increase their torment.** It will then be no hard matter to them to say, "This is my loss! and this is my everlasting remediless misery!" The lack of this self-application is the main cause why they are so little troubled now. They are hardly brought to believe that there is such a state of misery; but more hardly to believe that it is likely to be their own. This makes so many *sermons*lost to them, and all *threatenings*and *warnings*in vain. Let a minister of Christ show them their misery ever so plainly and faithfully—they will not be persuaded they are so miserable. Let him tell them of the *glory*they must lose, and the *sufferings*they must feel—and they think he means not them—but some *notorious sinners*.

*It is one of the hardest things in the world to bring a wicked man to know that he is wicked, or to make him see himself in a state of wrath and condemnation!* Though they may easily find, by their strangeness to the new birth, and their enmity to holiness—that they never were partakers of them; yet they as truly expect to see God and be saved, as if they were the most sanctified people in the world! How seldom do men cry out, after the plainest discovery of their state:*I am the man!*Or acknowledge, that, if they die in their present condition, they are undone forever! But when they suddenly *find*themselves in the land of darkness, *feel*themselves in scorching flames, and see they are shut out of the presence of God forever—then the application of God's anger to themselves will be the easiest matter in the world! They will then roar out these forced confessions, *"O my misery! O my folly! O my inconceivable, irrecoverable loss!"*

**4. Then will their AFFECTIONS likewise be more lively, and no longer stupified.** A hard heart now makes Heaven and Hell seem but trifles! We have showed them everlasting glory and misery—and they are as men asleep! Our words are as stones cast against a wall—which fly back in our faces! We talk of dreadful things—but it is to dead men! We search the wounds—but they never feel it! We speak to rocks, rather than to men; the earth will as soon tremble, as they!

But when these dead souls are revived—what passionate sensibility, what pangs of horror, what depths of sorrow—will there then be! How violently will they denounce and reproach themselves! How will they rage against their former madness! The lamentations of the most affectionate wife for the loss of her husband, or of the tenderest mother for the loss of her children—will be nothing compared to theirs, for the loss of Heaven.

O the self-accusing and self-tormenting fury of those forlorn creatures! How will they even tear their own hearts, and be God's executioners upon themselves! As themselves were the only *meritorious cause*of their sufferings—so themselves will be the *chief executioners*. Even Satan, as he was not so great a cause of their sinning as themselves, will not be so great an instrument of their torment. How happy would they think themselves then—if they were turned into rocks, or anything that had neither passion nor sense! How happy, if they could then *feel*as lightly as they were accustomed to *hear!*if they could sleep out the time of execution, as they did the time of the sermons which warned them of it! But their stupidity is gone—it will not be.

**5. Their MEMORIES will moreover be as large and strong as their understanding and affections.** Could they but lose the use of their memory, their loss of Heaven, being forgot, would little trouble them. Though they would account annihilation a great mercy, they cannot lay aside any part of their being. *Understanding, conscience, affections, memory*—must all live to torment them, which should have helped to their happiness. As by these they should have fed upon the love of God, and drawn forth perpetually the joys of his presence—so by these must they feed upon his wrath, and draw forth continually the pains of his absence.

*Now*they have no leisure to consider, nor any room in their memories for the things of another life; but *then*they shall have nothing else to do; their memories shall have no other employment. God would have had the doctrine of their eternal state "written on the posts of their doors, on their hands and hearts;" he would have them mind it, "and mention it when they lay down and rose up, when they sat in their houses, and when they walked by the way," and seeing they rejected this counsel of the Lord, therefore it shall be written always before them in the place of their thraldom, that, whichever way they look—they may still behold it.

It will torment them to think of the greatness of the glory they have lost. If it had been what they could have spared, or a loss to be repaired with anything else—it had been a smaller matter. If it had been health, or wealth, or friends, or life—it had been nothing. But, O! to lose that exceeding and eternal weight of glory!

It will also torment them to think of the possibility they once had of obtaining it! Then they will remember, "Time was, when I was as fair for the kingdom as others. I was set upon the stage of the world; if I had believed in Christ, I might now have had possession of the inheritance. I who am now tormented with these damned fiends—might have been among yonder blessed saints. The Lord did set before me life and death; and having chosen death, I deserve to suffer it. The prize was held out before me if I had run well, I might have obtained it—if I had striven; I might have had the victory—if I had fought valiantly, I would have been crowned."

It will yet more torment them to remember that their obtaining the crown was not only possible—but very *probable*. It will wound them to think, "I had once the gales of the Spirit ready to have assisted me. I was proposing to be another man, to have cleaved to Christ, and forsake the world. I was almost resolved to have been wholly for God. I was once even turning from my base seducing lusts. I had cast off my old companions, and was associating with the godly. Yet I turned back, lost my hold, and broke my promises. I was *almost persuaded*to be a real Christian—yet I overcame those persuasions. What workings were in my heart when a faithful minister pressed home the truth! O how fair was I once for Heaven! *I almost had it—and yet I have lost it!*Had I followed on to seek the Lord, I would now have been blessed among the saints."

It will exceedingly torment them to remember their *lost opportunities*. "How many weeks, and months, and years did I lose, which if I had improved—I would now have been happy! Wretch that I was! could I find no time to study the work for which I had all my time? no time, among all my labors, to labor for eternity? Had I time to eat, and drink, and sleep—and none to save my soul? Had I time for mirth and vain discourse—and none for prayer? Could I take time to secure the world—and none to try my title to Heaven? O precious time! I had once enough—and now I must have no more. I had once so much I knew not what to do with it; and now it is gone, and cannot be recalled. O that I had but one of those years to live over again! how speedily would I repent! How earnestly would I pray! how diligently would I hear! how closely would I examine my state! how strictly would I live! *But it is now too late, alas! too late!"*

It will add to their calamity to remember how often they were persuaded to return. "Gladly would the minister have had me escape these torments. With what love and compassion did he beseech me—and yet I did but make a jest of it! How oft did he convince me—and yet I stifled all these convictions! How did he open to me my very heart—and yet I was reluctant to know the worst of myself! O how glad would he have been if he could have seen me cordially turn to Christ! My godly friends admonished me; they told me what would become of my wilfulness and negligence at last; but I neither believed nor regarded them. How long did *God*himself condescend to entreat me! How did the Spirit strive with my heart, as if he was reluctant to take a denial! How did Christ stand knocking, one Sunday after another, and crying to me: "Open, sinner, open your heart to your Savior, and I will come in and sup with you, and you with me! Why do you delay? How long shall your vain thoughts lodge within you? Will you not be pardoned and sanctified, and made happy?"

O how the recollection of such divine pleadings will passionately transport the damned with self-indignation! "Must I tire out the patience of Christ? Must I make the God of Heaven follow me in vain, until I have wearied him with crying to me, *Repent! return!*O how justly is that *patience*now turned into *fury*which falls upon me with irresistible violence! When the Lord cried to me, "Will you not be made clean? When shall it once be?"—my heart, or at least my practice answered, "Never!" And now, when I cry,*How long shall it be until I am freed from this torment?—*How justly do I receive the same answer, "Never, never!'"

It will also be most cutting to remember on what *easy terms*they might have escaped their misery. Their work was not to remove mountains, nor conquer kingdoms, nor fulfill the law to the smallest tittle, nor satisfy justice for all their transgressions. "The yoke was easy, and the burden light" which Christ would have laid upon them. It was but to repent and cordially accept him for their Savior; to renounce all other happiness, and take the Lord for their supreme good; to renounce the world and the flesh, and submit to his meek and gracious government, and to forsake the ways of their own devising, and walk in his holy, delightful way.

"Ah," thinks the poor tormented wretch, "how justly do I suffer all this—who would not be at so small pains to avoid it! Where was my understanding when I neglected that gracious offer; when I called the Lord a hard master, and thought his pleasant service a bondage, and the service of the devil and the flesh the only freedom? Was I not a thousand times worse than mad, when I censured the holy way of God as *needless preciseness*; when I thought the laws of Christ too strict? What would all sufferings for Christ and well-doing have been—compared with these sufferings that I must undergo forever? Would not the Heaven, which I have lost—have recompensed all my losses? And would not all my sufferings have been there forgotten? What if Christ had bid me to do some great matter; whether to live in continual fears and sorrows, or to suffer death a hundred times over—should I not have done it? How much more, when he only said, 'Believe and be saved. Seek my face, and your soul shall live. Take up your cross and follow me, and I will give you everlasting life.' O gracious offer! O easy terms! O cursed wretch, that would not be persuaded to accept them!"

This also will be a most tormenting consideration, to *remember for what they sold their eternal welfare*. When they compare the value of the pleasures of sin with the value of "the recompense of reward"—how will the vast disproportion astonish them! To think of the low delights of the flesh, or the applauding breath of mortals, or the possessing heaps of gold—and then to think of everlasting glory. "This is all I had for my soul, my God, my hopes of blessedness!"

It cannot possibly be expressed how these thoughts will tear his very heart. Then will he exclaim against his folly: "O miserable wretch! Did I sell my soul for so base a price? Did I part with my God for a little dirt and dross; and sell my Savior, as Judas, for a little silver? I had but a dream of delight for my hopes of Heaven; and, now I am awakened—it is all vanished. My morsels are now turned to gall, and my cups to wormwood. When they were past my taste—the pleasure perished. And is this all that I have had, for the inestimable treasure? What a mad exchange did I make! What if I had gained all the world, and lost my soul! But, alas! how small a profit of the world was it for which I gave up Heaven!"

O that sinners would think of this—when they are swimming in the delights of the flesh, and studying how to be rich and honorable in the world! when they are desperately venturing up on known transgression, and sinning against the checks of conscience!

It will add yet more to their torment, when they consider that they most *willfully procured their own destruction*. Had they been *forced*to sin—it would much abate the rage of their consciences; or if they were punished for another man's transgressions or any other had been the chief author of their ruin. But to think it was the choice of their own will, and that none in the world could have forced them to sin against their wills—this will be a cutting thought! "Had I not enemies enough in the world," thinks this miserable creature, "but I must be an enemy to myself? God would never give the devil, nor the world, so much power over me as to force me to commit the least transgression. They could but *entice*—it was myself who yielded and did the evil. And must I lay hands upon my own soul, and imbrue my hands in my own blood? *Never had I so great an enemy as myself!*Never did God offer any good to my soul—but I resisted him. He has heaped mercy upon me, and renewed one deliverance after another, to draw my heart to him; yes, he has gently chastised me, and made me groan under the fruit of my disobedience; and though I promised largely in my affliction—yet never was I heartily willing to serve him."

Thus will it gnaw the hearts of these sinners, to remember that *they were the cause of their own ruin;*and that they willfully and obstinately persisted in their rebellion, and were volunteers in the service of the devil.

The wound in their consciences will be yet deeper, when they shall not only remember it was their own doing—but that they were*at so much cost and pains for their own damnation!*What great undertakings did they engage in to effect their ruin; to resist the Spirit of God; to overcome the power of mercies, judgments, and even the word of God—to subdue the power of reason and silence conscience! All this they undertook and performed. Though they walked in continual danger of the wrath of God, and knew he could lay them in the dust, and cast them into Hell in a moment—yet would they run upon all this.

O the *labor*it costs sinners to be damned! Sobriety, with health and ease, they might have had at a cheaper rate; yet they will rather have gluttony and drunkenness, with poverty, shame, and sickness. Contentment they might have, with ease and delight; yet they will rather have covetousness and ambition, though it costs them cares and fears, labor of body and distraction of mind. Though their anger be self-torment, and revenge and envy consume their spirits; though impurity destroy their bodies, estates, and good names—yet will they do and suffer all this, rather than suffer their souls to be saved!

With what rage will they lament their folly, and say, "Was damnation worth all this cost and pains? Might I not have been damned with less cost—but I must *purchase*it so dearly? I thought I could have been saved without so much ado—and could I not have been destroyed without so much ado? Must I so laboriously work out my own damnation, when God commanded me to work out my own salvation?' If I had done as much for Heaven as I did for Hell—I had surely had it. I cried out of the tedious way of godliness, and the painful course of self-denial; and yet I could be at a great deal more pains for Satan and for damnation. Had I loved Christ as strongly as I did my pleasures, and profits, and honors; and thought on him as often, and sought him as painfully—O how happy would I have now been! How justly do I suffer the flames of Hell for buying them so dear, rather than have Heaven, when it was purchased to my hands!"

O that God would persuade you, reader, to take up these thoughts now—for preventing the inconceivable calamity of taking them up in Hell as your own tormentor! Say not that they are only imaginary. Read what *Dives*thought, being in torments. As the joys of Heaven are chiefly enjoyed by the rational soul in its rational actings—so must the pains of Hell be suffered. As they will be men still, so will they feel and act as men.

***~~Chapter 6.
The Misery of Those Who, Besides Losing the Saints' Rest, Lose the Enjoyments of Time, and Suffer the Torments of Hell.~~***

***I.****The****enjoyments****of time which the damned lose:*1. Their presumptuous belief of their interest in God and Christ;
2. All their hopes;
3. All their peace of conscience;
4. All their carnal mirth;
5. All their sensual delights.

***II.****The****torments****of the damned are exceedingly great:*1. The principal Author of them is God himself.
2. The place or state of torment.
3. These torments are the effects of divine vengeance.
4. God will take pleasure in executing them.
5. Satan and sinners themselves will be God's executioners.
6. These torments will be universal;
7. Without any mitigation;
8. And eternal.

The obstinate sinner convinced of his folly in venturing on these torments; and entreated to fly for safety to Christ.

As "godliness has a promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come;" and if we "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," then all lower "things shall be added unto us;" so also are the ungodly threatened with the loss both of spiritual and temporal blessings; and because they sought not first God's kingdom and righteousness, therefore shall they lose both it and that which they did seek, and there "shall be taken from them that little which they have."

If they could but have kept their present enjoyments—they would not have much cared for the loss of Heaven. If they had "lost and forsaken all for Christ," they would have found all again in him; for he would have been*all in all*to them. But, now they have forsaken Christ for other things—they shall lose Christ, *and*that also for which they forsook him, even the enjoyments of time, besides suffering the torments of Hell.

**1. They shall lose their *presumptuous belief*of their interest in the favor of God and the merits of Christ.**This false belief now supports their spirits, and defends them from the terrors that would otherwise seize upon them. But what will ease their trouble when they can believe no longer, nor rejoice any longer? If a man is near to the greatest harm, and yet strongly believes that he is in safety, he may be as cheerful as if all were well. If there were no more to make a man happy but to *believe*that he is so, or shall be so—then happiness would be far more common than it is like to be.

As true faith is the leading grace in the regenerate—so is false faith the leading vice in the unregenerate. Why do such multitudes sit still when they might have pardon—but that they truly think they are pardoned already? If you could ask thousands in Hell, what madness brought them there? they would most of them answer, "We thought we were sure of being saved—until we found ourselves damned! We would have been more earnest seekers of regeneration and the power of godliness—but we truly thought we were Christians already. We have *flattered ourselves into these torments*, and now there is no remedy!"

Reader, I must in faithfulness tell you that the confident belief of their good state, which the careless, unholy, unhumbled multitude so commonly boast of—will prove in the end but a soul-damning delusion! There is none of this false *believing*in Hell. It was Satan's stratagem, that being *blindfold*, they might follow him the more boldly; but then he will uncover their eyes, and they shall see where they are!

**2. They shall lose also all their HOPES.** In this life, though they were *threatened*with the wrath of God—yet their *hope*of escaping it bore up their hearts. We can now scarcely speak with the vilest drunkard, or swearer, or scoffer—but he *hopes*to be saved, for all this. O happy world, if salvation were as common as this hope! Nay, so strong are men's hopes, that they will dispute the cause with Christ himself at the judgment, and plead their "having ate and drank in his presence, and prophesied in his name, and in his name cast out devils;" they will stiffly deny that ever they neglected Christ, in hunger, nakedness, or in prison, until he confutes them with the sentence of their condemnation. O the sad state of those men when they must bid farewell to all their hopes!

"When a wicked man dies—his expectation shall perish; and the hope of unjust men perishes. But the eyes of the wicked will fail, and escape will elude them; their hope will become a dying gasp." As the soul departs not from the body without the greatest pain, so does the hope of the wicked depart. The soul departs from the body suddenly, in a moment, which has there delightfully continued so many years; just so does the hope of the wicked depart. The soul will never more return to live with the body in this world; and the hope of the wicked takes an everlasting farewell of his soul. A miracle of resurrection shall again unite soul and body—but there shall be no such miraculous resurrection of the damned's *hope*.

Methinks it is the most pitiable sight this world affords, to see such an ungodly person dying, and to think of his *soul*and his *hopes*departing together. With what a sad change he appears in another world! Then if a man could but ask that hopeless soul, "Are you as confident of salvation as you were accustomed to be?" what a sad answer would be returned! O that careless sinners would be awakened to think of this in time!

Reader, rest not until you can give a reason of all your hopes, grounded upon Scripture promises: that they purify your heart; that they quicken your endeavors in godliness; that the more you hope the less you sin, and the more exact is your obedience. If your hopes are such as these, go on in the strength of the Lord, hold fast your hope, and "never shall it make you ashamed." But if you have not one sound evidence of a work of grace on your soul, cast away your hopes. Despair of ever being saved, "except you be born again;" or of "seeing God—without holiness;" or of having part in Christ—except you "love him above father, mother, or your own life."

This kind of despair is one of the first steps to Heaven. If a man is quite out of his way, what must be the first means to bring him in again? He must despair of ever coming to his journey's end in the way that he is in. If his home be eastward and he is going westward, as long as he hopes he is right, he will go on and as long as he goes on hoping, he goes further amiss. When he despairs of coming home, except he turns back, then he will return, and then he may hope. Just so it is, sinner, with your soul: you are born out of the way to Heaven, and have proceeded many a year; you go on and hope to be saved, because you are not so bad as many others. Except you throw away those hopes and see that you have all this while been quite out of the way to Heaven—you will never return and be saved. There is nothing in the world more likely to keep your soul out of Heaven, than your false hopes of being saved, while you are out of the way to salvation. See then how it will aggravate the misery of the damned, that, with the loss of Heaven, they shall lose all that hope of it which now supports them.

**3. They will lose all that false PEACE OF CONSCIENCE which makes their present life so easy.**Who would think, observing how quietly the multitude of the ungodly live—that they must very shortly lie down in everlasting flames? They are as free from the fears of Hell as an obedient believer; and for the most part have less disquiet of mind than those who shall be saved. Happy men, if this peace would prove lasting! "When they shall say,*Peace and safety!*then sudden destruction comes upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape." O cruel *peace*, which ends in such a war!

The soul of every man by nature is Satan's garrison; all is at peace in such a man, until Christ comes and gives it terrible alarms of judgment and Hell, batters it with his threats and terrors, forces it to yield to his mere mercy, and take him for the governor; then does he cast out Satan, "overcome him, take from him all his armor wherein he trusted, and divides his spoils," and then does he establish a firm and lasting peace.

If, therefore, you are yet in that first peace, never think it will endure. Can your soul have lasting peace, in enmity with Christ? Can he have peace, against whom God proclaims war? I wish you no greater good than that God break in upon your careless heart, and shake you out of your false peace, and make you lie down at the feet of Christ, and say, "Lord, what would you have me to do?" and so receive from him a better and surer peace, which will never be quite broken—but be the beginning of your everlasting peace, and not perish in your perishing, as the *groundless peace*of the world will do.

**4. They shall lose all their CARNAL MIRTH.** They will themselves say of their "laughter—it is foolish. And what does pleasure accomplish?" It was but "as the crackling of thorns under a pot." It made a blaze for a while—but it was presently gone, and returned no more. The talk of *death*and *judgment*was irksome to them, because it damped their mirth. They could not endure to think of their *sin*and *danger*, because these thoughts sunk their spirits. They knew not what it was to weep for sin, or to humble themselves under the mighty hand of God. They could laugh away sorrow, and sing away cares, and drive away those melancholy thoughts.

To meditate and pray, they imagined, would be enough to make them miserable, or run mad. Poor souls, what a misery will that life be, where you shall have nothing but sorrow—intense, heart piercing, multiplied sorrow; when you shall neither have the joys of saints nor your own former joys! *Do you think there is one merry heart in Hell?* or one joyful countenance or jesting tongue? You now cry, "a little mirth is worth a great deal of sorrow." But surely a little godly sorrow, which would have ended in eternal joy, had been worth much more than all your *foolish*mirth; for the end of such mirth is sorrow.

**5. They shall also lose all their SENSUAL DELIGHTS.** That which they esteemed their chief good, their heaven, their god—must they lose, as well as God himself. What a fall will the proud *ambitious*man have from the height of his honors! As his dust and bones will not be known from the dust and bones of the poorest beggar—so neither will his soul be honored or favored more than theirs. What a number of the great, noble, and learned will be shut out from the presence of Christ! They shall not find their magnificent buildings, soft beds, and easy couches. They shall not view their curious gardens, their pleasant meadows, and plenteous harvests. Their tables will not be so furnished nor attended. The rich man is there no more "clothed in purple and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day." There is no expecting the admiration of beholders. They shall spend their time in sadness—and not in sports and pastimes.

What an alteration will they then find! The heat of their lust will be then abated. How will it even cut them to the heart to look each other in the face! What an interview will there then be, cursing the day that ever they saw one another!

O that sinners would now remember and say, "Will these delights accompany us into the other world? Will not the remembrance of them be then our torment? Shall we then take this partnership in vice, for true friendship? Why should we sell such lasting incomprehensible joys—for a taste of *seeming*pleasure? Come, as we have sinned together, let us pray together that God would pardon us; and let us help one another toward Heaven, instead of helping to deceive and destroy each other." O that men but knew what they desire, when they would so earnestly have all things suited to the desires of the flesh! It is but to desire their temptations to be increased and their snares strengthened.

**II.**As the loss of the saints' rest will be aggravated by *losing the enjoyments of time*—it will be much more so by **suffering the torments of Hell**. The exceeding greatness of such torments may appear, by considering,

**1. The principal AUTHOR of Hell-torments is God himself.**As it was no less than God whom sinners had offended—so it is no less than God who will punish them for their offences. He has *prepared*those torments for his enemies. His continued anger will still be devouring them. His breath of indignation will kindle the flames. His wrath will be an intolerable burden to their souls.

If it were but a *creature*they had to do with, they might better bear it. Woe to him that falls under the *strokes of the Almighty!*"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!" It were nothing in comparison to this, if *all the world*were against them, or if the strength of all creatures were united in one to inflict their penalty.

They had now rather venture to displease God than displease a customer, a master, a friend, a neighbor, or their own flesh; but then they will wish a thousand times, in vain, that they had been hated by all the world—rather than have lost the favor of God.

What a consuming fire is his wrath! If it be kindled here but a little, how do we "wither like grass!" How soon does our strength decay and turn to weakness, and our beauty to deformity! The flames do not so easily run through the dry stubble—as the wrath of God will consume these wretches! Those who could not bear a prison, or a gibbet, or a fire for Christ, or scarcely a few scoffs—how will they now bear the devouring flames of Divine wrath?

**2. The place or state of torment is purposely ordained to glorify the JUSTICE of God.** When God would glorify his *power*, he made the worlds. The lovely order of all his creatures declares his *wisdom*. His providence is shown in sustaining all things. When a spark of his *wrath*kindles upon the earth, the whole world, except only eight people, are drowned; Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboim are burnt with fire from Heaven; the sea shuts her mouth upon some, the earth opens and swallows up others; the pestilence destroys by thousands.

Yet the glorifying of the mercy and justice of God is intended most eminently for the life to come. As God will then glorify his mercy in a way that is now beyond the comprehension of the saints who must enjoy it, so also will he manifest his justice to be indeed the justice of God. The *everlasting flames of Hell*will not be thought too hot for the rebellious; and, when they have there burned through millions of ages, God will not repent of the evil which has befallen them. Woe to the soul that is thus the object of the wrath of the Almighty, as a bush that must burn in the flames of his jealousy and never be consumed!

**3. The torments of the damned must be extreme, because they are the EFFECT OF DIVINE VENGEANCE.** Wrath is terrible—but vengeance is implacable. When the great God shall say, "My rebellious creature shall now pay for all the abuse of my patience; remember how I waited your leisure in vain, how I stooped to persuade and entreat you—did you think I would always be so slighted?" Then will he be avenged for every abused mercy, and for all their neglects of Christ and grace. O that men would foresee this, and please God better in preventing their woe!

**4. Consider also, that though God had rather men would accept of Christ and mercy—yet, when they persist in rebellion, he will take pleasure in their execution.** He tells us, "Fury is not in me;" yet he adds, "Who would set the briers and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together." Wretched creatures, when "he who made them will not have mercy upon them, and he who formed them will show them no favor. As the Lord rejoiced over them to do them good—so the Lord will rejoice over them to destroy them, and bring them to nothing."

Woe to the souls whom God *rejoices*to punish: "He will *laugh*at their calamity, he will mock when their fear comes; when their fear comes as desolation, and their destruction comes as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish come upon them." Terrible thing, when none in Heaven or earth can help them but God—and he shall *rejoice*in their calamity! Though Scripture speaks of God's laughing and mocking, not literally—but after the manner of men; yet it is an act of God in tormenting the sinner, which cannot otherwise be more fitly expressed.

**5. Consider that Satan and themselves shall be God's executioners.**He who was here so successful in drawing them from Christ, will then be the instrument of their punishment for yielding to his temptations. That is the reward he will give them for all their service; for their rejecting the commands of God, forsaking Christ, and neglecting their souls at his persuasion. If they had served Christ as faithfully as they did Satan—he would have given them a better reward. It is also most just that they should be their *own*tormentors; that they may see their whole *destruction*is of themselves and then, whom can they complain of but themselves?

**6. Consider also that their torment will be UNIVERSAL.** As all parts have joined in sin, so must they all partake in the torment.

The ***soul***, as it was the chief in sinning—shall be the chief in suffering; and as it is of a more excellent nature than the body, so will its torments far exceed bodily torments; and as its joys far surpass all sensual pleasures, so the pains of the soul exceed corporeal pains. It is not only a soul—but a *sinful soul*that must suffer. Fire will not burn except the fuel be combustible; but if the wood be dry, how fiercely will it burn! The guilt of their sins will be to damned souls, like tinder to gunpowder, to make the flames of Hell take hold upon them with fury.

The ***body***must also bear its part. The body which was so carefully looked to, so tenderly cherished, so curiously dressed—what must it now endure! How are its haughty looks now brought down! How little will those flames regard its loveliness and beauty!

Those *eyes*which were accustomed to be delighted with curious sights—must then see nothing but what shall terrify them! an angry God above them, with those saints whom they scorned enjoying the glory which they have lost; and about them will be only devils and damned souls! How will they look back and say*, "Are all our feasts, and games, and revels come to this?"*

Those *ears*, which were accustomed to music and songs, shall hear the shrieks and cries of their damned companions; children crying out against their parents, who gave them encouragement and example in evil; husbands and wives, masters and servants, ministers and people, magistrates and subjects, charging their misery upon one another, for discouraging in duty, conniving at sin, and being silent when they should have plainly foretold the danger. Thus will soul and body be *companions*in woe.

**7. Far greater will these torments be, because WITHOUT MITIGATION**. In this life, when told of Hell, or if conscience troubled their peace, they had comforters at hand; their carnal friends, their business, their company, their mirth. They could drink, play, or sleep away their sorrows. But now all these remedies are vanished. Their hard, presumptuous, unbelieving heart was a wall to defend them against trouble of mind. Satan was himself their comforter, as he was to our first mother. "Has God said, you shall not eat? You shall not surely die! Does God tell you that you shall die in Hell? There is no such matter; God is more merciful. Or, if there be a Hell, what need you fear it? Are not you Christians? Was not the blood of Christ shed for you?" Thus as the Spirit of Christ is the Comforter of the saints, so *Satan is the comforter of the wicked.*

Never was a thief more careful lest he should awake the people when he is robbing a house, than Satan is not to awaken a sinner! But when the sinner is dead, then Satan has *done*flattering and comforting. Which way, then, will the forlorn sinner look for comfort? Those who drew him into the snare, and promised him safety—now forsake him, and are forsaken themselves. His comforts are gone, and the righteous God, whose forewarnings he made light of; will now make good his word against him to the last tittle.

**8. But the greatest aggravation of these torments will be their ETERNITY.**When a thousand millions of ages are past, they are as fresh to begin as the first day. If there were any hope of an end, it would ease the damned to foresee it; but *FOREVER*is an intolerable thought! They were never weary of sinning—nor will God be weary of punishing. They never heartily repented of sin—nor will God repent of their suffering. They broke the laws of the eternal God, and therefore shall suffer eternal punishment. They knew it was an everlasting kingdom which they refused, and what wonder if they are everlastingly shut out of it? Their immortal souls were guilty of the trespass—and therefore must immortally suffer the pains.

What happy men would they think themselves, if they might have lain still in their graves, or might but there lie down again! How will they call and cry, "O death, where are you now gone? Now come and cut off this doleful life. O that these pains would break my heart, and end my being! O that I might once at last die! O that I had never had a being!" These *groans*will the thoughts of eternity wring from their hearts.

They were accustomed to think sermons and prayers long; how long then will they think these endless torments! What difference is there between the length of their worldly pleasures—and their eternal pains! The one continued but a moment, the other endure through all eternity.

Sinner, remember how time is almost gone. You are standing at the *door of eternity*; and death is waiting to open the door, and put you in. Go, sleep out a few more nights, and stir about a few more days on earth—and then your nights and days shall end: your thoughts, and cares, and pleasures shall all be devoured by eternity; you must enter upon the state which shall never be changed. As the joys of Heaven are beyond our conception, so are the pains of Hell. Everlasting torment is inconceivable torment!

But methinks I see the obstinate sinner desperately resolving, "If I must be damned, there is no remedy. Rather than I will live as the Scripture requires, I will put it to the venture; I shall escape as well as others, and we will even bear it as well as we can." Alas poor creature, let me beg this of you, before you do so resolve, that you would lend me your attention to a few questions, and weigh them with the reason of a man.

Who are you, that you should bear the wrath of God? What is your strength? Is it not as the strength of *wax*or *stubble*to resist the fire, or as chaff to the wind or as dust before the fierce whirlwind? If your strength were as iron, and your bones as brass; if your foundation were as the earth, and your power as the heavens—yet would you perish at the breath of his indignation. How much more, when *you are but a piece of breathing clay, kept a few days from being eaten with worms, by the mere support and favor of Him whom you are thus resisting!*

Why do you tremble at the signs of almighty power and wrath? at peals of thunder or flashes of lightning or that unseen power which rends in pieces the mighty oaks, and tears down the strongest buildings; or at the plague, when it rages around you? If you had seen the plagues of Egypt, or the earth swallow up Dathan and Abiram, or Elijah bring fire from Heaven to destroy the captains and their companies—would not any of these sights have daunted your spirit?*How then can you bear the plagues of Hell?*

Why are you dismayed with such small sufferings as befall you here: a tooth-ache, a fit of the gout or stone, the loss of a limb, or falling into beggary and disgrace? And yet all these put together will one day be accounted a *happy*state—in comparison of that which is suffered in Hell.

Why does the approach of *death*so much affright you? O how cold it strikes to your heart! And would not the grave be accounted a paradise, compared with that place of torment which you slight?*Is it an intolerable thing to burn part of your body by holding it in the fire? What, then, will it be to suffer ten thousand times more forever in Hell!*

The *thought*or *mention*of Hell occasions disquiet in your spirit; and can you endure the *torments*themselves? Why does the rich man complain to Abraham of his torments in Hell? or your dying companions lose their courage, and change their haughty language? Why cannot these make as light of Hell as yourself? Did you never see or speak with a man in despair? How uncomfortable was his talk! how burdensome his life! Nothing he possessed did him good: he had no sweetness in food or drink; the sight of friends troubled him; he was weary of life, and fearful of death. If the misery of the damned can be endured, why cannot a man more easily endure these *foretastes*of Hell?

What if you should see the devil appear to you in some terrible shape! Would not your heart fail you, and your hair stand on an end? And how will you endure to live forever where you shall have no other company but devils and the damned, and shall not only see them—but be tormented with them and by them?

Let me once more ask, if the wrath of God be so light, why did the Son of God himself make so great a matter of it? It caused "his sweat to be, as it were, great drops of blood, falling down to the ground." The Lord of life cried, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." And on the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Surely if anyone could have borne these sufferings easily, it would have been Jesus Christ. He had another measure of strength to bear it than you have. Woe to you, sinner, for your mad security! Do you think to find that tolerable to you—which was so heavy to Christ? Nay, the Son of God is cast into a bitter agony and bloody sweat, only under the curse of the law—and yet you, feeble, foolish creature, fear not to bear also the curse of the Gospel, which requires a "much sorer punishment." The good Lord bring you to your right mind by repentance, lest you buy your wit at too dear a rate!

And now, reader, I demand your resolution. What use will you make of all this? Shall it be lost to you? or will you consider it in good earnest? You have cast away many a *warning*of God; will you do so by this also? Take heed; God will not *always*stand warning and threatening. The hand of vengeance is lifted up, the blow is coming, and woe to him on whom it lights! Do you throw away this *book*, and say it speaks of nothing but Hell and damnation. Thus you used also to complain of the *preacher*. But would you not have us tell you of these things? Should we be guilty of the blood of your soul, by keeping silent that which God has charged us to make known? Would you perish in ease and silence, and have us perish with you—rather than displease you by speaking the truth?

If you will be guilty of such inhuman cruelty, God forbid we should be guilty of such sottish folly! This kind of preaching or writing is the ready way to be hated; and the desire of applause is so natural, that few delight in such a displeasing way. But consider, are these things *true*—or are they not? If they were not true, I would heartily join with you against any that frighten people without a cause. But if these threatenings are the word of God—then what a wretch are you, who will not hear it and consider it!

If you are one of the people of God, this doctrine will be a comfort to you, and not a terror. Preaching Heaven and mercy to you, is entreating you to *seek*them, and not reject them; and preaching Hell, is but to persuade you to *avoid*it. If you were quite past hope of escaping it, then it were in vain to tell you of Hell; but as long as you are alive—there is hope of your recovery, and therefore all means must be used to awaken you from your lethargy.

*Alas! what heart can now possibly conceive, or what tongue express, the pains of those souls that are under the wrath of God!* Then, sinners, you will be crying to Jesus Christ, "O mercy! O pity, pity on a poor soul!" Why, I do now, in the name of The Lord Jesus, cry to you. "O have mercy, have pity, man—upon your own soul!" Shall God pity you, who will not be entreated to pity yourself? If your horse sees but a pit before him, you can scarcely force him in; and will you so obstinately cast yourself into Hell, when the danger is foretold you?

"Who can stand before the indignation of the Lord? and who can abide the fierceness of his anger?" Methinks you should need no more words—but presently cast away your soul-damning sins, and wholly deliver up yourself to Christ. Resolve on it immediately, and let it be done, that I may see your face in *rest*among the saints. May the Lord persuade your heart to strike this covenant without any longer delay! But if you are hardened unto death—yet say that you were faithfully warned, and had a friend that would gladly have prevented your damnation.

***~~Chapter 7.~~***

***~~The Necessity of Diligently Seeking the Saints' Rest.~~***

The saints' rest is surprisingly neglected. The author mourns the neglect, and excites the reader to diligence, by considering:

1. The *ends*we aim at,
the *work*we have to do,
the shortness and uncertainty of our *time*,
and the diligence of our *enemies*.

2. Our talents, mercies, relations to God, and our afflictions.

3. What assistance we have, what principles we profess, and our certainty never to do enough.

4. That every grace tends to diligence, and to trifle is lost labor; that much time is misspent and that our recompense and labor will be proportionable.

5. That striving is the divine appointment; all men do or will approve it; the best Christians, at death, lament their lack of it. Heaven is often lost for lack of it—but never obtained without it.

6. God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit are in earnest.

God is earnest in hearing and answering prayer.

Ministers are earnest in their instructions and exhortations.

All the creatures are earnest in serving us.

Sinners are earnest in serving the devil, as we were once, and now are, in worldly things.

In Heaven and Hell all are in earnest.

*If there is so certain and glorious a rest for the saints—then why is there no more earnest seeking after it?* One would think, if a man did but once hear of such unspeakable glory to be obtained, and believed what he heard, that he would be transported with the vehemence of his desire after it, and would almost forget to eat and drink, and would care for nothing else, and speak of and inquire after nothing else—but how to get this treasure. And yet people who hear of it daily, and profess to believe it as a fundamental article of their faith—as little mind it, or labor for it, as if they had never heard of any such thing, or did not believe one word they hear. This reproof is applicable to the worldly-minded, to the profane multitude, to formal professors, and even to the godly themselves.

The worldly-minded are so taken up in seeking the things below, that they have neither heart nor time to seek this rest. O foolish sinners, "who has bewitched you?" The world bewitches men into brute beasts, and draws them even to madness. See what riding and running, what scrambling and catching for a thing of nothing, while eternal rest lies neglected! What contriving and caring to get a step higher in the world than their brethren, while they neglect the kingly dignity of the saints! What insatiable pursuit of fleshly pleasures, while they regard the praises of God, the joy of angels, as a tiresome burden! What unwearied diligence in raising their posterity, enlarging their possessions, (perhaps for a poor living from hand to mouth,) while judgment is drawing near! But how it shall go with them then, never brings them to one hour's consideration! What rising early and sitting up late, and laboring from year to year—to maintain themselves and children until they die! But what shall follow after they never think!

Yet these men cry, "May we not be saved without so much ado?" How early do they rouse up their servants to their labor! but how seldom do they call them to prayer, or reading the Scriptures! What has this world done for its lovers and friends, that it is so eagerly followed and painfully sought after, while Christ and Heaven are neglected? or what will the world do for them for the time to come? The common *entrance*into the world is through anguish and sorrow. The *passage*through it is with continual care and labor. The passage *out*of it is the sharpest of all.

O unreasonable, deluded men! will *mirth*and *pleasure*help you in eternity? Will gold and worldly glory prove fast friends to you in the time of your greatest need? Will they hear your cries in the day of your calamity? At the hour of your death will they either answer or relieve you? Will they go along with you to the other world, and bribe the Judge and bring you off clear, or purchase you a place among the blessed? Why then did the rich man want "a drop of water to cool his tongue?"

Or are the sweet morsels of worldly delight and honor of more worth than eternal rest? Will they recompense the loss of that enduring treasure? Can there be the least hope of any of these? Ah, vile, deceitful world! how often have we heard your most faithful servants at last complaining, "O, the world has deceived me, and undone me! It flattered me in my prosperity—but now it turns me off in my necessity. If I had as faithfully served Christ as I have served the world, he would not have left me thus comfortless and hopeless." Thus they complain; and yet succeeding sinners will take no warning.

As for the *profane multitude*, they will not be persuaded to be at so much pains for salvation as to perform the common outward duties of religion. If they have the Gospel preached in the town where they dwell, it may be they will give the hearing to it one part of the day, and stay at home the other; or if the master comes to the congregation—yet part of his family must stay at home. If they have not the plain and powerful preaching of the Gospel, how few are there in a whole town who will travel a mile or two to hear abroad, though they will go many miles to the market for provisions for their bodies! They know the Scripture is the law of God, by which they must be acquitted or condemned in the judgment; and that "the man is blessed who delights in the law of the Lord, and in his law does meditate day and night;" yet will they not be at the pains to read a chapter once a day.

If they carry a Bible to church, and neglect it all the week, this is the most use they make of it. Though they are commanded to pray without ceasing, and to pray always—yet they will neither pray constantly in their families nor in secret. Though Daniel would rather be cast to the lions than forbear praying three times a day in his house, where his enemies might see him; yet these men will rather venture to be an eternal prey to Satan, the roaring lion, than thus seek their own safety. Or *their cold and heartless prayers invite God to a denial*; for among men it is taken for granted, that he who asks but slightly and seldom, cares not much for what he asks.

They judge themselves unworthy of Heaven, who think it not worth their more constant and earnest requests. If every door was marked where families do not, morning and evening, earnestly seek the Lord in prayer, and his wrath were poured out upon such prayerless families—our towns would be as places overthrown by the plague, the people being dead within, and the mark of judgment without. I fear, where one house would escape, ten would be marked out for death; and the very doors, as it were, cry, "Lord, have mercy upon us," because the people would not pray themselves.

But especially if we could see what men do in their secret chambers, how few would you find in a whole town that spend one quarter of an hour, morning and night, in earnest supplication to God for their souls! O how little do these men value eternal rest! Thus do they slothfully neglect all endeavors for their own welfare, except some public duty in the congregation, to which custom or credit engages them. Persuade them to read good books, learn the grounds of religion in their catechism, and sanctify the Lord's day in prayer, and meditation, and hearing the word, forbearing all worldly thoughts and speeches, and what a tedious life do they take this to be! as if they thought Heaven were not worth doing so much for.

Another class are formal professors, who will be brought to any *outward*duty—but to the *inward*work of religion they will never be persuaded. They will preach, or hear, or read, or talk of Heaven, or pray in their families, and take part with the people or causes that are good, and desire to be esteemed among the godly; but you can never bring them to the more spiritual duties—as to be constant and fervent in secret prayer and meditation; conscientious in self-examination; heavenly-minded; to watch over their hearts, words and ways; to mortify the flesh, and not make provision to fulfill its lusts; to love and heartily forgive an enemy, and prefer their brethren before themselves; to lay all they have, or do, at the feet of Christ, and prize his service and favor before all; to prepare to die and willingly leave all to go to Christ. Hypocrites will never be persuaded to any of these.

If any hypocrite entertains the Gospel with joy, it is only in the surface of his soul; he never gives the seed any depth of earth: it changes his opinions—but never melts and new molds his heart, nor sets up Christ there in full power and authority. As his religion lies most in *opinion*, so does his chief business and conduct. He is usually an ignorant, bold, conceited dealer in controversies, rather than a humble embracer of known truth with love and obedience. By seldom talking with seriousness and humility of the great things of Christ, he shows his religion dwells in his brain, and not in his heart. The *wind of temptation carries him away as a feather*, because his heart is not established with Christ and grace. He never, in private conversation, humbly bewails his soul's imperfections, or tenderly acknowledges his unkindness to Christ; but gathers his greatest comfort from his being of such a persuasion or party.

The like may be said of the worldly hypocrite, who chokes the Gospel with the thorns of worldly cares and desires. He is convinced that he must be religious, or he cannot be saved; and therefore he reads, and hears, and prays, and forsakes his former company and courses, but he resolves to keep his hold of present things. His *judgment*may say, God is the chief good; but his *heart*and *affections*never said so. The world has more of his affections than God, and therefore the world is his God. Though he does not run after opinions and novelties, like the world—yet he will be of that opinion which will best serve his worldly advantage. As one whose spirits are enfeebled by some pestilential disease, so this man's spirits being possessed by the plague of a worldly disposition, how feeble is he in secret prayer! how superficial in examination and meditation! how poor in heart-watchings! how nothing at all in loving and walking with God, rejoicing in him, or desiring him! So that both these and many other sorts of hypocrites, though they will go with you in the easy *externals*of religion—yet will never be at the pains of *inward*and spiritual duties.

And even the godly themselves are too lazy seekers of their everlasting rest. Alas! what a disproportion is there between our light and heat, our profession and prosecution! Who makes such haste as if it were for Heaven? How still we stand! How idly we work! How we talk, and jest, and trifle away our time! How deceitfully we perform the work of God! How we *hear*, as if we heard not! and *pray*, as if we prayed not! and *examine*, and *meditate*, and *reprove sin*, as if we did it not! and *enjoy Christ*, as if we enjoyed him not! as if we had learned to use the things of Heaven as the apostle teaches us to "use the things of the world!"

What a frozen stupidity has benumbed us! We are dying, and we know it, and yet we stir not! We are at the door of eternal happiness or misery, and yet we perceive it not. Death knocks, and we hear it not; God and Christ call and cry to us, "Today, if you will hear my voice, harden not your hearts; work while it is day, for the night comes, when none can work."

Now ply your business, labor for your lives, lay out all your strength and time now or never! Yet we stir no more than if we were half asleep. What haste do death and judgment make! how fast do they come on! they are almost upon us, and yet what little haste we make! *Lord, what a senseless, earthly, hellish thing is a hard head!*Where is the man that is in earnest a Christian? Methinks men everywhere make but a trifle of their eternal state. They look after it but a little by the by; they do not make it the business of their lives. *If I were not sick myself of the same disease, with what tears should I mix this ink!*with what groans should I express these complaints! and with what heart-grief should I mourn over this universal SPIRITUAL deadness!

Do *magistrates*among us seriously perform their work? Are they zealous for God? Do they build up his house? Are they tender of his honor? Do they second the word and oppose sin and sinners, as the disturbers of our peace and the only cause of all our miseries? Do they improve all their power, wealth, and honor, and all their influence, for the greatest advantage to the kingdom of Christ, as men that must shortly give an account of their stewardship?

How few are the *ministers*who are serious in their work! Nay, how grievously do the very best fail in this! Do we cry out of men's disobedience to the Gospel "in the demonstration of the Spirit," and deal with sin as the destroying fire in our towns, and by force pull men out of it? Do we persuade our people as those should that "know the terrors of the Lord?" Do we press Christ, and regeneration, and faith, and holiness upon men, believing that, without these, they can never have eternal life? Do our affections yearn over the ignorant, careless, obstinate multitude? When we look them in the face, do our hearts melt over them, lest we should never see their faces in eternal rest? Do we, as Paul, "tell them, weeping," of their fleshly and earthly disposition; "and teach them publicly, and from house to house, at all seasons, and with many tears?" Do we entreat them, as for their soul's salvation? Or rather, do we not study to gain the approbation of carnal hearers; as if a minister's business were of no more weight but to tell a smooth tale for an hour, and look no more after the people until the next sermon? Does not carnal prudence control our fervor, and make our discourses lifeless on subjects the most piercing? *How gently do we handle those sins which will so cruelly handle our people's souls!*

In a word, our lack of seriousness about the things of Heaven, charms the souls of men into formality, and brings them to this customary careless hearing, which undoes them. May the Lord pardon the great sin of the ministry in this thing and, in particular, my own!

And are the *people*more serious than magistrates or ministers? How can it be expected? Reader, look but to yourself and resolve the question. Ask conscience, and allow it to tell you truly. Have you set your eternal rest before your eyes, as the great business you have to do in this world? Have you watched and labored with all your might, "that no man take your crown?" Have you made haste, lest you should come too late, and die before your work is done? Have you pressed on, through crowds of opposition, "toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus," and "reaching forth unto those things which are before?" *Can conscience witness your secret cries, and groans, and tears?*Can your family witness that you taught them the fear of the Lord, and warned them not to "go to that place of torment?" Can your minister witness that he has heard you cry out, "What shall I do to be saved?" and that you have followed him with complaints against your corruptions, and with earnest inquiries after the Lord? Can your neighbors about you witness that you reprove the ungodly, and take pains to save the souls of your brethren?

Let all these witnesses judge this day between God and you, whether you are in earnest about eternal rest or not. You can tell by his work whether your servant has loitered, though you did not see him; so you may, by looking at your own work. *Are your love to Christ, your faith, your zeal, and other graces, strong or weak?*What are your joys? What is your assurance? Is all in order with you? Are you ready to die, if this should be the day? Do the souls among whom you have conversed bless you? Judge by this, and it will quickly appear whether you have been laborers or loiterers.

O blessed eternal rest, how unworthily are you neglected! O glorious kingdom, how are you undervalued! Little know the careless sons of men what a state they so neglect. If they once knew it, they would surely be of another mind. I hope you, reader, are sensible *what a desperate thing it is to trifle about eternal rest, and how deeply you have been guilty of this yourself*. And I hope, also, you will not allow this conviction to die. Should the physician tell you, "If you will observe but one thing, I doubt not to cure your disease," would you not observe it? So I tell you, if you will observe but this one thing for your soul, I make no doubt of your salvation: shake off your sloth, and put to all your strength, and be a Christian indeed. I know not then what can hinder your happiness.

As far as you are gone from God, seek him with all your heart, and no doubt you shall find him. As unkind as you have been to Jesus Christ, *seek him heartily, obey him unreservedly*, and your salvation is as sure as if you had it already. But, full as Christ's *satisfaction*is, free as the *promise*is, large as the *mercy*of God is, if you only *talk*of these when you should eagerly entertain them, you will be never the better for them. *If you loiter when you should labor, you will lose the crown*. Fall to work, then, speedily and seriously, and bless God that you have yet time to do it.

To show that I urge you not without cause, I will here add a variety of animating considerations. Rouse up your spirit, and, as Moses said to Israel, "set your heart unto all the words which I testify unto you this day; for it is not a vain thing, because it is your life." May the Lord open your heart, and fasten his counsel effectually upon you!

**1.**Consider how reasonable it is that our diligence should be answerable to the *ends*we aim at, to the *work*we have to do, to the shortness and uncertainty of our *time*, and to the contrary diligence of our *enemies*.

The ENDS of a Christian's desire and endeavors are so great that no human understanding can comprehend them. What is so excellent, so important, or so necessary as the glorifying of God, the salvation of our own and other men's souls, by escaping the torments of Hell, and possessing the glory of Heaven? Can a man be too much affected with things of such consequence? Can he *desire*them too earnestly, or *love*them too strongly, or *labor*for them too diligently? Do not we know, that if our prayers prevail not, and our labor succeeds not, we are undone forever?

The work of a Christian here is very great and various. The soul must be renewed; corruptions must be mortified; evil customs, temptations, and worldly interests must be conquered; flesh must be subdued; life, friends, and credit must be slighted; conscience, on good grounds, must be quieted and assurance of pardon and salvation attained. *Though God must give us these without our merit—yet he will not give them without our earnest seeking and labor*. Besides, there is much knowledge to be acquired, many ordinances to be used and duties to be performed. Every age, year and day, every place we come to, every person we deal with, every change of our condition, still require the renewing of our labor. Wives, children, servants, neighbors, friends, enemies—all of them call for duty from us. Judge then, whether men that have so much business lying upon their hands, should not exert themselves; and whether it is their wisdom either to delay or loiter.

Time passes on. Yet a few days, and we shall be here no more. Many diseases are ready to assault us. We who are now preaching, and hearing, and talking, and walking, must very shortly be carried and laid in the dust, and there left to the worms, in darkness and corruption. We are almost there already; we know not whether we shall have another sermon or hour.

How active should they be who know they have so short a space for so great a work! And we have enemies that are always plotting and laboring for our destruction. How diligent is Satan in all kinds of temptations! Therefore "be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour; whom resist steadfast in the faith."

How diligent are all the ministers of Satan! false teachers, scoffers, and persecutors?*Our inbred corruptions are the most busy and diligent of all!*Will a feeble resistance serve our turn? Should not we be more active for our own preservation than our enemies are for our ruin?

**2.**It should excite us to diligence, when we consider our talents and our mercies, our relation to God, and the afflictions he lays upon us.

The TALENTS which we have received are many and great. What people breathing on earth have had plainer instructions, or more forcible persuasions, or more constant admonitions, in season and out of season? Sermons, until we have been weary of them; and Sabbaths, until we have profaned them; excellent books in such plenty that we knew not which to read? What people have had God so near them? or have seen so much of Christ crucified before their eyes? or have had Heaven and Hell so open unto them? What speed should such a people make for Heaven! How should they fly who are thus winged! and how swiftly should they sail that have wind and tide to help them! A small measure of grace becomes not such a people, nor will an ordinary diligence in the work of God excuse them.

All our lives have been filled with MERCIES. God has mercifully poured out upon us the riches of sea and land, of Heaven and earth. We are fed and clothed with mercy. We have mercies within and without. To number them, is to count the stars, or the sands of the sea-shore. If there be any difference between Hell and earth, yes, or Heaven and earth, then certainly we have received mercy. If the blood of the Son of God be mercy, then we are engaged to God by mercy. Shall God think nothing too much nor to good for us—and shall we think all too much that we do for him? *When I compare my slow and unprofitable life with the frequent and wonderful mercies received, it shames me, it silences me, and leaves me inexcusable.*

Besides our talents and mercies, our RELATIONS TO GOD are most endearing. Are we his children, and do we not owe him our most tender affections and dutiful obedience? Are we "the spouse of Christ," and should we not obey and love him? "If he is a Father, where is his honor? and if he is a Master where is his fear? We call him Master, and Lord, and we say well;" but if our industry be not answerable to our relations, we condemn ourselves in saying we are his children or his servants.

How will the hard labor and daily toil which servants undergo to please their masters—judge and condemn those who will not labor so hard for their great Master? Surely there is no master like him; nor can any servants expect such fruit of their labors as his servants.

If we wander out of God's way, or loiter in it, how is every creature ready to be his rod to bring us back or urge us on! *Our sweetest mercies will become our sorrows*. Rather than lack a rod, the Lord will make us a scourge to ourselves; our *diseased bodies*shall make us groan; our *perplexed minds*shall make us restless; our *conscience*shall be as a scorpion in our bosom. And is it not easier to endure the labor than the spur? Had we rather be still afflicted, than be up and doing? And though those who do most, meet also with afflictions; yet surely, according to their peace of conscience and faithfulness to Christ, the bitterness of their cup is abated.

**3.** To quicken our diligence in our work, we should also consider what *assistance*we have, what *principles*we profess, and our certainty that we can never do too much.

For our ASSISTANCE in the service of God, all the world are our servants. The *sun*, moon, and stars attend us with their light and influence. The *earth*, with all its furniture of plants and flowers, fruits, birds, and beasts; the *sea*, with its inhabitants; the *air*, the wind, the frost and snow, the heat and fire, the clouds and rain—all wait upon us while we do our work. Yes, "the angels are all our ministering spirits."

Nay more, the patience of God waits upon us; the Lord Jesus Christ waits in the offers of his blood; the Holy Spirit waits, by striving with our backward hearts; besides the ministers of the Gospel, who study and wait, preach and wait, pray and wait upon careless sinners.

Is it not an intolerable crime for us to *trifle*, while angels and men, yes, the Lord himself, stand by and look on, and, as it were, hold the candle for us while we do nothing? I beseech you, Christians, whenever you are praying, or reproving transgressors, or upon any duty—remember what assistance you have for your work, and then judge how you ought to perform it.

The PRINCIPLES we profess are:
that God is the chief good;
that all our happiness consists in his love, and therefore it should be valued and sought above all things;
that he is our only Lord, and therefore chiefly to be served;
that we must love him with all our heart, and soul, and strength;
that our great business in the world is to glorify God and obtain salvation.

Are these doctrines seen in our practice? or rather, do not our *works*deny what our *words*confess?

But, however our assistance and principles excite us to our work, we are sure we can never do too much. Could we "*do*all, we are unprofitable servants;" much more when we are sure to *fail*in all. No man can obey or serve God too much. Though all superstition, or service of our own devising, may be called a "being righteous over much;" yet, as long as we keep to the rule of the world, we can never be righteous too much. The world is mad with malice when they think that faithful diligence in the service of Christ is foolish singularity. The time is near, when they will easily confess that God could not be loved or served too much, and that no man can be too earnest to save his soul. We may easily do too much for the world—but we cannot do too much for God.

**4.**Let us further consider:
that it is the nature of every grace to promote diligence,
that trifling in the way to Heaven is lost labor,
that much precious time is already misspent, and
that in proportion to our labor, will be our recompense.

See the *nature and tendency of every grace*.

If you *loved*God, you would think nothing too much that you could possibly do to serve him and please him. Love is quick and impatient, active and observant. If you loved Christ, you would keep his commandments, nor accuse them of too much strictness.

If you had *faith*, it would quicken and encourage you.

If you had the *hope*of glory, it would, as the spring in the watch, set all the wheels of your souls a-going.

If you had the *fear of God*, it would rouse you out of your slothfulness.

If you had *zeal*, it would inflame, and "consume you."

In whatever degree you are sanctified, in the same degree you will be serious and laborious in the work of God.

*Those who trifle lose their labor*. Many, who, like Agrippa, are but almost Christians, will find, in the end, they shall be but *almost*saved. If two be running in a race, he who runs slowest loses both prize and labor. A man that is lifting at a weight, if he puts not sufficient strength to it, had as good put none at all. How many duties have Christians lost for lack of doing them thoroughly! "Many will *seek*to enter in, and shall not be able," who, if they had *striven*, might have been able. Therefore, put to a little more diligence and strength, that all you have done already be not in vain.

Besides, *is not much precious time already lost?* With some of us, childhood and youth are gone; with some, their middle age also. With all of us, the time before us is very *uncertain*. What time have we slept, talked, and played away, or spent in worldly thoughts and cares! How little of our work is done! *The time we have lost cannot be recalled*;*should we not, then, redeem and improve the little which remains?*If a traveler sleeps or trifles most of the day, he must travel so much faster in the evening, or fall short of his journey's end.

Doubt not but *the recompense will be according to your labor*. The seed which is buried and dead will bring forth a plentiful harvest. *Whatever you do or suffer, everlasting rest will pay for all. There is no relenting of labors or sufferings in Heaven*. There no one says, "Would that I had spared my pains, and prayed less, or been less strict, and done as the rest of my neighbors!" On the contrary, it will be their joy to look back upon their labors and tribulations, and to consider how the mighty power of God brought them through all.

We may all say, as Paul, "I reckon that the sufferings" and labors "of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." *We labor but for a moment; we shall rest forever*. Who would not put forth all his strength for one hour, when, for that hour's work, he may be a prince while he lives? "God is not unrighteous to forget our work and labor of love." Will not "all our tears be wiped away," and all the sorrow of our duties be then forgotten?

**5.**Nor does it less deserve to be considered, that *striving is the divinely appointed way of salvation*; that all men either do, or will approve it; that the best Christians, at death, lament their negligence; and *that Heaven itself is often lost for lack of striving—but is never had on easier terms*.

The sovereign wisdom of God has made striving necessary to salvation. Who knows the way to Heaven better than the God of Heaven? When men tell us we are too strict, whom do they accuse, God or us? If it were a fault, it would lie in him who commands, and not in us who obey. These are the men that ask us, whether we are wiser than all the world beside and yet they will pretend to be wiser than God. How can they reconcile their language with the laws of God?

"The kingdom of Heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force. *Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able*. Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, where you go. Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. Give diligence to make your calling and election sure. If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"

Let them bring all the seeming reasons they can against the holy violence of the saints; this suffices me to confute them all, that God is of another mind, and he has commanded me to do much more than I do; and though I could see no other reason for it, his will is reason enough.

***~~Who should make laws for us—but he who made us? and who should point out the way to Heaven—but he who must bring us there? and who should fix the terms of salvation—but he who bestows the gift of salvation?~~***

So that, let the world, the flesh, or the devil speak against a holy, laborious life, this is my answer: God has commanded it. Nay, there never was, nor ever will be, a man but will approve such a life, and will one day justify the diligence of the saints. And who would not go that way which every man shall finally applaud? True, it is now "a way everywhere spoken against." But let me tell you, most that speak against it, in their judgments approve of it; and those that are now against it, will shortly be of another mind. If they come to Heaven, their mind must be changed before they come there. If they go to Hell, their judgment will then be altered whether they will or not.

Remember this, you that love the opinion and way of the multitude. Why, then, will you not be of the opinion that all will be of soon? Why will you be of a judgment which you are sure, all of you, shortly to change? *O that you were but as wise in this as those in Hell!*

Even the best of Christians, when they come to die, exceedingly lament their negligence. They then wish, "O that I had been a thousand times more holy, more heavenly, more laborious for my soul! The world accuses me for doing too much—but my own conscience accuses me for doing too little. It is far easier bearing the scoffs of the world, than the lashes of conscience. I had rather be reproached by the devil for seeking salvation, than reproved of God for neglecting it." How do their failings thus wound and disquiet those who have been the wonder of the world for their heavenly conversation!

*It is for lack of diligence that Heaven itself is lost.* When they that have "heard the word, and anon with joy received it, and have done many things, and heard" the ministers of Christ gladly, shall yet perish—should not this rouse us out of our security? How far has many a man followed Christ, and yet forsaken him when all worldly interests and hopes were to be renounced! God has resolve that Heaven shall not be had on easier terms. *Rest must always follow labor*. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." *Seriousness is the very thing wherein consists our sincerity*. If you are not serious, you are not a Christian. Seriousness is not only a high degree in Christianity—but the very life and essence of it. As fencers upon a stage differ from soldiers fighting for their lives, so hypocrites differ from serious Christians. If men could be saved without this serious diligence, they would never regard it; all the excellencies of God's ways would never entice them. But when God has resolved, that, *without serious diligence here, we shall not rest hereafter—*is it not wisdom to exert ourselves to the uttermost?

**6.**But to persuade you, if possible, reader, to be serious in your endeavors for Heaven, let me add more considerations; as, for instance, consider:

GOD is in earnest with you; and why should you not be so with him? *In his commands, his threatenings, his promises, he means as he speaks.*In his judgments he is serious. Was he not so when he drowned the world, when he consumed Sodom and Gomorrah, and when he scattered the Jews? Is it time, then, to trifle with God?

JESUS CHRIST was serious in purchasing our redemption. In teaching, he neglected his food and drink. In prayer, he continued all night. In doing good, his friends thought him beside himself. In suffering, he fasted forty days, was tempted, betrayed, spit upon, buffeted, crowned with thorns, sweat drops of blood, was crucified, pierced, died. There was no jesting in all this. And should we not be serious in seeking our own salvation?

The HOLY SPIRIT is serious in soliciting us to be holy and happy. His motions are frequent, pressing, and importunate. "He strives with us." He is grieved when we resist him; and should we not be serious then, in obeying and yielding to his motions?

God is serious in hearing our prayers, and bestowing his mercies. He "regards every groan and sigh, and puts every tear into his bottle." The next time you are in trouble you will beg for a serious regard of your prayers. And shall we expect real mercies when we are slight and superficial in the work of God?

The MINISTERS of Christ are serious in exhorting and instructing you. They beg of God, and of you; and long more for the salvation of your souls than for any worldly good. If they kill themselves by their labor, or suffer martyrdom for preaching the Gospel, they think their lives are well lived, so that they prevail for the saving of your souls. And shall other men be so careful and self-denying for your salvation, and you be so careless and negligent of your own?

How diligent and serious are all the CREATURES in serving you! What haste makes the sun to compass the world! The fountains are always flowing for your use; the rivers still running; spring and harvest keep their times. How hard does your ox labor for you from day to day! How speedily does your horse travel with you! And shall you alone be negligent? Shall all these be so serious in serving you—and you so careless in your service to God?

The *servants of the world and the devil are serious and diligent*. They work as if they could never do enough. They make haste, as if afraid of coming to Hell too late. They trod down ministers, sermons, and all before them. And *shall they be more diligent for damnation than you for salvation?*Have you not a better Master, sweeter employment, greater encouragements, and a better reward?

Time was when you were serious yourself in serving Satan and the flesh, if it be not so yet. How eagerly did you follow your pleasures, your evil company, and sinful delights! And will you not now be as earnest and violent for God? You are to this day in earnest about the things of this life. If you are sick or in pain, what serious complaints do you utter! If you are poor, how hard do you labor for a livelihood! And is not the business of your salvation of far greater consequence?

*There is no jesting in Heaven or Hell.* *The saints have a real happiness, and the damned a real misery*. There are no remiss or sleepy praises in Heaven, nor such lamentations in Hell. All there are in earnest. When you, reader, shall come to death and judgment, O what deep, heart-piercing thoughts will you have of eternity! Methinks I foresee you already astonished to think how you could possibly make so light of these things. Methinks I even hear you crying out of your stupidity and madness.

And now, reader, having laid down these undeniable arguments, I do, in the name of God, demand your resolution: Will you yield obedience or not? I am confident your conscience is convinced of your duty. Dare you now go on in your common, careless course, against the plain evidence of reason and commands of God, and against the light of your own conscience? Dare you live as loosely, sin as boldly, and pray as seldom as before? Dare you slight the service of God, and think of your everlasting state as carelessly as before? Or do you not rather resolve to "gird up the loins of your mind," and set yourself wholly to the work of your salvation, and break through the oppositions, and slight the scoffs and persecutions of the world, and "lay aside every weight, and the sin which does so easily beset you, and run with patience the race that is before you?"

I hope these are your full resolutions. Yet, because I know the obstinacy of the heart of man, and because I am solicitous that your soul should live—I once more entreat your attention to the following questions and I command you from God, that you stifle not your conscience, nor resist conviction but answer them faithfully, and obey accordingly.

If, by being diligent in godliness, you could grow rich, get honor, or preferment in the world, be recovered from sickness, or live forever in prosperity on earth—what lives would you lead, and what pains would you take in the service of God? And is not the saints' rest a more excellent happiness than all this?

If it were felony to neglect secret or family worship, or be loose in your lives—what manner of people would you then be? And is not eternal death more terrible than temporal death?

If God usually punished with some present judgment every act of sin, as he did the lie of Ananias and Sapphira, what kind of lives would you lead? And is not eternal wrath far more terrible?

If one of your acquaintances should come from the dead and tell you that he suffered the torments of Hell for those sins you are guilty of, what manner of people would you be afterwards? How much more should the warnings of God affright you?

*If you knew that this were the last day you had to live in the world, how would you spend it?*And you know not but it may be your last, and are sure your last is near.

If you had seen the general dissolution of the world, and all the pomp and glory of it consumed to ashes, what would such a sight persuade you to do? Such a sight you shall certainly see.

If you had seen the judgment-seat, and the books opened, and the wicked stand trembling on the left hand of the Judge, and the godly rejoicing on the right hand, and their different sentences pronounced—what people would you have been after such a sight! This sight you shall one day surely see.

If you had seen Hell open, and all the damned there in their endless torments; also Heaven opened, as Stephen did, and all the saints there triumphing in glory—what a life would you lead after such sights! These you will see before it be long.

If you had lain in Hell but one year, or one day, or hour, and there felt the torments you now hear of—how seriously would you then speak of Hell, and pray against it! And will you not take God's word for the truth of this, unless you feel it? Or, if you had possessed the glory of Heaven but one year, what pains would you take rather than be deprived of such incomparable glory!

Thus I have said enough, if not to stir up the sinner to a serious working out his salvation—yet at least to silence him, and leave him inexcusable at the judgment of God. Only as we do by our friends when they are dead, and our words and actions can do them no good—yet to testify our affection for them we weep and mourn, so will I also do for these unhappy souls. It makes my heart tremble to think how they will stand before the Lord, confounded and speechless! When he shall say, "Was the world, or Satan, a better friend to you than I? Had they done for you more than I had done? Try now whether they will save you, or recompense you for the loss of Heaven, or be as good to you as I would have been?"—what will the wretched sinner answer to any of this?

But though man will not hear, we may hope in speaking to God: "O you that did weep and groan in spirit over a dead Lazarus, pity these dead and senseless souls, until they are able to weep and groan in pity to themselves! As you have bid your servants speak, so speak now yourself. They will hear your voice speaking to their hearts, who will not hear my speaking to their ears. Lord, you have long knocked at these hearts in vain; now break the doors and enter in!"

To show the godly why they, above all men, should be laborious for Heaven, I desire to ask them: What manner of people should those be whom God has chosen to be vessels of mercy? who have felt the smart of their negligence in their new birth, in their troubles of conscience, in their doubts and fears, and in other sharp afflictions? who have often confessed their sins of negligence to God in prayer? who have bound themselves to God by so many covenants?

What manner of people should they be who are near to God, as the children of his family; who have tasted such sweetness in diligent obedience; who are many of them so uncertain what shall everlastingly become of their souls? What manner of people should they be in holiness, whose sanctification is so imperfect; whose lives and duties are so important to the saving or destroying a multitude of souls; and on whom the glory of the great God so much depends? Since these things are so, I charge you, Christian, in your Master's name, to consider and resolve the question, "What manner of people ought we to be in all holy conduct and godliness?" And let your *life*answer the question as well as your *tongue*.

***~~Chapter 8. How to Discern Our Title to the Saints' Rest.~~***

Self-examination urged:

1. From the possibility of arriving at a certainty;

2. From the hindrances which will be thrown in our way by Satan, sinners, our own hearts, and many other causes;

3. From considering how easy, common and dangerous it is to be mistaken; that trying will not be so painful as the neglect; that God will soon try us, and that to try ourselves will be profitable.

4. Directions how to try ourselves.

5. Marks for trial, particularly: Do we make God our chief good? Do we heartily accept of Christ for our Lord and Savior?

Is there such a glorious rest so near at hand and shall none enjoy it but the true people of God? What mean most of the world, then, to live so contentedly without assurance of their saving interest in this rest, and neglect the trying of their title to it? When the Lord has so fully opened the *blessedness of that kingdom*which none but obedient believers shall possess; and so fully expressed those *torments*which the rest of the world must eternally suffer; methinks those who believe this to be certainly true, should never be at any quiet in themselves, until they are fully assured of their being heirs of the kingdom.

Lord, what a strange madness is this, that men, who know they must presently enter upon unchangeable joy or pain, should yet live as uncertain what shall be their eternal doom as if they had never heard of any such state; yes, and live as quietly and merrily in this uncertainty as if all were made sure, and there were no danger! Are these men alive, or dead? Are they awake, or asleep? What do they think on? Where are their hearts?

If they have but a weighty suit at law, how careful are they to know whether it will go for or against them! If they were to be tried for their lives at an earthly bar, how careful would they be to know whether they should be saved or condemned, especially if their care might surely save them! If they be dangerously sick they will inquire of the physician, "What think you, sir—shall I escape, or not?" But in the business of their salvation they are content to be uncertain!

If you ask of most men "a reason of the hope that is in them," they will say, "Because God is merciful, and Christ died for sinners," and the like general reasons, which any man in the world may give as well as they—but put them to prove their interest in Christ and in the saving mercy of God, and they can say nothing to the purpose.

If God or man should say to one of them, "Friend, what is the state of your soul? Is it regenerate, sanctified and pardoned, or not?" He would say, as Cain of Abel, "I know not. Am I my soul's keeper? I hope well. I trust God with my soul. I shall speed as well as other men do. I thank God I never made any doubt of my salvation." You have cause to doubt, because you did never doubt; and yet more, because you have been so careless in your confidence. What do your expressions reveal but a willful neglect of your own salvation?

This is just as if a ship-master who should let his vessel alone, and say, "I will venture it among the rocks, and waves, and winds; I will trust God with it; it will speed as well as other vessels."

What horrible abuse of God is this, to pretend to trust God, to cloak their own willful negligence! If you did really trust God, you would also be ruled by him, and trust him in his own appointed way. He requires you to give "diligence to make your calling and election sure," and so trust him. He has marked out a way in scripture by which you are charged to search and try yourself, and may arrive at certainty. Would not he be a foolish traveler that would hold on his way when he does not know whether he is right or wrong; and say, "I hope I am right; I will go on, and trust in God?"*Are you not guilty of this folly in your travel to eternity?*Not considering that a little serious inquiry whether your way be right, might save you a great deal of labor, which you bestow in vain, and must undo again, or else you will miss of salvation and undo yourself.

How can you think or speak of the great God without terror, as long as you are uncertain whether he is your *father*or your *enemy*, and know not but all his perfections may be employed against you? or of Jesus Christ, when you know not whether his blood has purged your soul; whether he will condemn or acquit you in judgment; or whether he is the foundation of your happiness; or stone of stumbling to break you and grind you to powder?

How can you open the Bible and read a chapter—but it should terrify you? Methinks every leaf should be to you as Belshazzar's writing on the wall, except only that which draws you to try and reform. If you read the *promises*, you know not whether they shall be fulfilled to you.*If you read the threatenings, for anything you know, you read your own sentence*. No wonder you are an enemy to plain preaching, and say of the minister, as Ahab of the prophet, "I hate him, for he does not prophesy good concerning me—but evil." How can you without terror join in prayer? When you receive the Lord's supper, you know not whether it be your bane or bliss. What comfort can you find in your friends, and honors, and houses, and lands, until you know you have the love of God with them, and shall have rest with him when you leave them?

Offer a prisoner, before he knows his sentence, either music, or clothes, or preferment; what are they to him, until he knows he shall escape with his life? For if he knows he must die the next day, it will be small comfort to die rich or honorable. Methinks it should be so with you until you know your eternal state.

When you lie down to take your rest, methinks the uncertainty of your salvation should keep you waking, or terrify you in your dreams and trouble your sleep. Does it not grieve you to see the people of God so comfortable in their way to glory, when you have no good hope of ever enjoying it yourself?

*How can you think of your dying hour?*You know it is near, and there is no *avoiding*it, nor any *remedy*found out that can prevent it. If you should die this day, (and who knows "what a day may bring forth?") you are not certain whether you shall go to Heaven or Hell. And can you be merry until you have escaped from this dangerous state? *What shift do you make to preserve your heart from horror, when you remember the great judgment-day, and everlasting flames?*When you hear of it do you not tremble as Felix? If the "keepers shook, and became as dead men, when they saw the angel come and roll back the stone from Christ's sepulcher," *how can you think of living in Hell with devils*, until you have some well-grounded assurance that you shall escape it? *Your bed is very soft, or your heart is very hard, if you can sleep soundly in this uncertain case.*

If this general uncertainty of the world about their salvation were remediless, then must it be borne as other unavoidable miseries. But alas! the common cause is willful negligence. Men will not be persuaded to use the remedy.

*The great means to conquer this uncertainty is self-examination, or the serious and diligent trying of a man's heart and state by the rule of Scripture.*Either men understand not the nature and use of this duty, or else they will not be at the pains to try. Go through a congregation of a thousand men, and how few of them will you find that ever bestowed one hour in all their lives in a close examination of their title to Heaven! Ask your own conscience, reader, when was the time, and where was the place, that ever you solemnly took your heart to task, as in he sight of God, and examined it by Scripture, whether it be renewed or not; whether it be holy or not; whether it be set most on God or the creatures, on Heaven or earth? And when did you follow on this examination until you had discovered your condition, and pass sentence on yourself accordingly?

But since this is a work of so high importance, and so commonly neglected, I will show that it is possible, by trying, to come to a certainty; then show what hinders men from trying and knowing their state and then offer motives to examine, and directions, together with some marks out of Scripture, by which men may try, and certainly know, whether they are the people of God or not.

**1. Scripture shows that the *certainty* of salvation may be attained, and ought to be labored for**, when it tells us so frequently that the saints before us have known their justification and future salvation; when it declares, that "whoever believes in Christ shall not perish—but have everlasting life;" which it would be vain to declare, if we cannot know ourselves to be believers or not; when it makes such a wide difference between the children of God and the children of the devil; when it bids us "give diligence to make our calling and election sure;" and earnestly urges us to "examine, prove, know our own selves, whether we be in the faith, and whether Jesus Christ is in us, or we are reprobates;" also, when its precepts require us to rejoice always, to call God our Father, to live in his praises, to love Christ's appearing, to wish that he may come quickly, and to comfort ourselves with the mention of it. But who can do any of these heartily, that is not, in some measure, sure that he is the child of God?

**2. Among the many *hindrances* which keep men from self-examination, we cannot doubt but SATAN will do his part.** If all the power he has, or all the means and instruments he can employ, can do it—he will be sure, above all duties, to keep you from this. He is reluctant that the godly should have the joy, assurance, and advantage against corruption, which the faithful performance of self-examination would procure them. As for the ungodly, he knows, if they would once earnestly examine, they would find out his deceits and their own danger, and so be very likely to escape him. *How could he get so many millions to Hell willingly, if they knew they were going there?*And how could they avoid knowing it, if they did but thoroughly examine; having such a clear light and sure rule in the Scripture to reveal it?*If the snare be not hid, the bird will escape it.*

Satan knows how to fish for souls better than to show them the hook and line or frighten them away with a noise, or with his own appearance. Therefore he labors to keep them from a searching ministry or to keep the minister from helping them to search or to take off the edge of the word, that it may not pierce and divide; or to turn away their thoughts; or to possess them with prejudice. Satan knows when the minister has provided a searching sermon, fitted to the state and necessity of a hearer; and therefore he will keep him away that day, if it be possible or cast him into a sleep or steal away the word by the cares and talk of the world, or some way prevent its operation.

**Another great hindrance to self-examination arises from WICKED MEN.**Their example; their merry company and discourse; their continually insisting on worldly concerns; their raillery and scoffs at godly people; also their persuasions, allurements, and threats—are all of them exceedingly great temptations. God does scarcely ever open the eyes of a poor sinner to see that his way is wrong—but presently there is a multitude of Satan's apostles ready to deceive and settle him again in the quiet possession of his former master.

"What!" say they, "do you make a doubt of your salvation, who have lived so well, and done nobody any harm? *God is merciful and if such as you shall not be saved, God help a great many!*What do you think of all your forefathers? And what will become of all your friends and neighbors who live as you do? Will they all be damned? Come, come, if you hearken to these preachers, they will drive you out of your senses. Are not all men sinners? and did not Christ die to save sinners? Never trouble your head with these thoughts, and you shall do well."

***~~O, how many thousands have such charms kept asleep in deceit and security until death and Hell have awakened them!~~***

The Lord calls to the sinner, and tells him, "The gate is strait, the way is narrow, and few find it; try and examine yourself; give diligence to make sure."

The world cries, "Never doubt, never trouble yourself with these thoughts."

In this strait, sinner, consider, it is Christ, and not your forefathers, or neighbors, or friends, who must judge you at last: and, if Christ condemns you, then these cannot save you; therefore common reason may tell you that it is not from the words of ignorant men—but from the word of God you must gain your hope of salvation. When Ahab would inquire among the multitude of flattering prophets, it was his death. *They can flatter men into the snare—but they cannot tell how to bring them out*. "Let no man deceive you with vain words for, because of these things comes the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience; be not therefore partakers with them."

*But the greatest hindrances are in men's own HEARTS.* Some are so ignorant that they know not what self-examination is, nor what a minister means when he persuades them to try themselves; or they know not that there is any necessity for it—but think every man is bound to believe that his sins are pardoned, whether it be true or false, and that it is a great fault to make any question of it; or they do not think that assurance can be attained; or that there is any great difference between one man and another—but that we are all Christians, and therefore need not trouble ourselves any further; or at least they know not wherein the difference lies.

They have as gross an idea of regeneration as Nicodemus had. Some will not believe that God will ever make such a difference between men in the life to come, and therefore will not search themselves whether they differ here. Some are so stupefied, say what we can to them, that they lay it not to heart—but give us the hearing, and there is the end of it all. Some are so possessed with self-love and pride, that they will not so much as suspect they are in danger; like a proud tradesman, who scorns the prudent advice of tallying up his books; or like fond parents who will not believe or hear any evil of their children.

Some are so guilty that they dare not try themselves, and yet they dare venture on a more dreadful trial. Some are so in love with sin, and so dislike the way of God, that they dare not try their ways, lest they be forced from the course they love, to that which they loathe. Some are so resolved never to change their present state, that they neglect examination as a useless thing. Before they will seek a new way, when they have lived so long and gone so far, *they will put their eternal state to hazard, come of it what will*.

Many men are so busy in the world that they cannot set themselves to the trying of their title to Heaven. Others are so clogged with slothfulness of spirit that they will not be at the pains of an hour's examination of their own hearts. But the most common and dangerous impediment is that false faith and hope, commonly called *presumption*, which bears up the hearts of the greatest part of the world, and so keeps them from suspecting their danger.

And if a man should break through all these hindrances, and set upon the duty of self-examination—yet assurance is not presently attained. Too many deceive themselves in their inquiries after it, through one or other of the following causes: there is such confusion and darkness in the soul of man, especially of an unregenerate man, that he can scarcely tell what he does, or what is in him. As in a house where nothing is in its proper place, it will be difficult to find what is wanted, so it is in the heart where all things are in disorder. *Most men accustom themselves to be strangers at home, and too little observe the temper and motions of their own hearts*. Many are resolved what to judge before they try; like a bribed judge, who examines as if he would judge uprightly, when he is previously resolved which way the cause shall go. Men are partial in their own cause; ready to think their great sins small, and their small sins none; their gifts of nature to be the work of grace, and to say, "All these have I kept from my youth!" "I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing!"

Most men search but by the halves. If it will not easily and quickly be done, they are discouraged, and leave off. They try themselves by false marks and rules, not knowing wherein the truth of Christianity consists; some looking beyond, and some short of the Scripture standard. And frequently they fail in this work by attempting it in their own strength. As some expect the Spirit should do it without them, so others attempt it themselves, without seeking or expecting the help of the Spirit. Both these will certainly fail of assurance.

Some other hindrances keep even true Christians from comfortable certainty. As, for instance, the weakness of grace. Small things are hardly discerned. *Most Christians content themselves with a small measure of grace, and do not follow on to spiritual strength and manhood*. The chief remedy for such would be to follow on in duty until their graces are increased. Wait upon God in the use of his prescribed means, and he will undoubtedly bless you with increase. O that Christians would bestow most of that time in getting more grace, which they bestow in anxious doubtings whether they have any or none; and lay out those serious affections in praying for more grace, which they bestow in fruitless complaints! I beseech you, Christian, take this advice as from God; and then, when you believe strongly, and love fervently, you can no more doubt of your faith and love, than a man that is very hot can doubt of his warmth, or a man that is strong and vigorous can doubt of his being alive.

Christians hinder their own comfort by looking more at *signs*which tell them what they are, than at *precepts*which tell them what they should do; as if their present must needs be their everlasting state; and if they be now unpardoned, there were no remedy. *Were he not mad who would lie weeping because he is not pardoned, when his prince stands by all the while, offering him a pardon, and persuading him to accept it?*Justifying faith, Christian, is not your persuasion of God's special love to you—but your accepting Christ to make you holy.*It is far better to accept Christ as offered, than spend so much time in doubting whether we have Christ or not.*

Another cause of distress to Christians is their mistaking assurance for the joy that sometimes accompanies it; as if a child should think himself a son no longer than while he sees the smiles of his father's face, or hears the comfortable expressions of his mouth; and as if the father ceased to be a father whenever he ceased those smiles and speeches.

The trouble of souls is also increased by their not knowing the ordinary way of God's conveying comfort. They think they have nothing to do but to wait for when God will bestow it. But they must know that *the matter of their comfort is in the promises, and thence they must draw it as often as they expect it, by daily and diligently meditating upon the promises; and in this way they may expect the Spirit will communicate comfort to their souls*. The joy of the promises and the joy of the Holy Spirit are one: add to this, their expecting a greater measure of assurance than God usually bestows. *As long as they have any doubting, they think they have no assurance*. They consider not that there are many degrees of certainty. While they are here, they shall "know but in part." Add also their deriving their comfort at first from insufficient grounds. This may be the case of a gracious soul, who has better grounds but does not see them. As an infant has life before he knows it, and many misapprehensions of himself and other things—yet it will not follow that he has no life. So when Christians find a flaw in their first *comforts*, they are not to judge it a flaw in their *safety*.

Many continue doubting, through the exceeding weakness of their natural powers. *Many honest hearts have weak heads*, and know not how to perform the work of self-trial. They will acknowledge the promises, and yet deny the apparent conclusion. If God does not some other way supply the defect of their reason, I see not how they should have clear and settled peace.

One great and too common cause of distress, is *the secret maintaining of some known sin*. This abates the degree of our graces, and so makes them more indiscernible. It obscures that which it destroys not; for it bears such sway that grace is not in action, nor seems to stir, nor is scarce heard speak, for the noise of this corruption. *It puts out or dims the eye of the soul*, and stupefies it, that it can neither see nor feel its own condition. But especially it provokes God to withdraw himself, his comforts, and the assistance of his Spirit, without which we may search long enough before we have assurance.

God has made a separation between sin and peace. *As long as you cherish your pride, your love of the world, the desires of the flesh, or any unchristian practice, you expect comfort in vain*. If a man "sets up his idols in his heart, and puts the stumbling-block of his iniquity before his face, and comes" to a minister, or to God, "to inquire" for comfort—instead of comforting him, God "will answer him that comes, according to the multitude of his idols."

Another very great and common cause of the lack of comfort is, that *grace is not kept in constant and lively exercise*. *The way of painful duty, is the way of fullest comfort.*Peace and comfort are Christ's great encouragements to faithfulness and obedience; and therefore, though our obedience does not merit them—yet they usually rise and fall with our diligence in duty. As prayer must have faith and fervency to procure it success, besides the blood and intercession of Christ, so must all other parts of our obedience. *If you grow seldom, and formal, and cold in duty, especially in your secret prayers to God, and yet find no abatement in your joys, I cannot but fear your joys are either carnal or diabolical*.

Besides, grace is never apparent and sensible to the soul but while it is in action; therefore lack of action must cause lack of assurance. And the action of the soul upon such excellent objects naturally brings consolation with it. *The very act of loving God, in Christ, is inexpressibly sweet.*The soul that is best furnished with grace, when it is not in action, is like a lute well stringed and tuned, which, while it lies still, makes no more music than a common piece of wood; but when it is handled by a skillful musician the melody is delightful. Some degree of comfort follows every good action, as heat accompanies fire, and as beams and influence issue from the sun. A man that is cold should labor until heat is excited; so he who wants assurance must not stand still—but exercise his graces until his doubts vanish.

*The lack of consolation in the soul is also very commonly owing to bodily melancholy*. It is no more strange for a conscientious man, under melancholy, to doubt, and fear, and despair—than for a sick man to groan, or a child to cry when it is chastised. Without the physician in this case, the labors of the divine are usually in vain. You may silence—but you cannot comfort such people. You may make them confess they have some grace, and yet cannot bring them to the comfortable conclusion. All the good thoughts of their state, which you can possibly help them to, are seldom above a day or two old. They cry out of sin and the wrath of God, when the chief cause is in their bodily disease.

***~~3. As motives to the duty of self-examination, I entreat you to consider the following:~~***

To be deceived about your title to Heaven is very easy. *Many are now in Hell that never suspected any falsehood in their hearts, that excelled in worldly wisdom, that lived in the clear light of the Gospel, and even preached against the negligence of others*. To be mistaken in this great point is also very common. It is the case of most in the world. In the old world, and in Sodom, we find none that were in any fear of judgment.

Almost all men among us truly expect to be saved; yet Christ tells us, "there be few that find the strait gate and narrow way which leads unto life." And if such multitudes are deceived, should we not search the more diligently, lest we should be deceived as well as they? Nothing is more dangerous than to be thus mistaken. If the godly judge their state worse than it is, the consequences of this mistake will be sorrowful; but the mischief flowing from the mistake of the ungodly is unspeakable. It will exceedingly confirm them in the service of Satan. It will render ineffectual the means that should do them good. It will keep a man from compassionating his own soul. It is a case of the greatest consequence, where everlasting salvation or damnation is to be determined. And if you mistake until death, you are undone forever!

Seeing, then, that the danger is so great, what wise man would not follow the search of his heart both day and night until he were assured of his safety? Consider how small the labor of this duty is, in comparison of that sorrow which follows its neglect. You can endure to toil and sweat from year to year, to prevent poverty—so why not spend a little time in self-examination, to prevent eternal misery? By neglecting this duty you can scarcely do Satan a greater pleasure, or yourself a greater injury. *It is the grand design of the devil, in all his temptations, to deceive you, and keep you ignorant of your danger until you feel the everlasting flames; and will you join with him to deceive yourself?*If you do this for him, you do the greatest part of his work. And has he deserved so well of you, that *you should assist him in such a design as your damnation?*

The time is near when God will search you. If it is but in this life by affliction, it will make you wish that you had tried and judged yourself, that you might have escaped the judgment of God. It was a terrible voice to Adam, "Where are you? Have you eaten of the tree?" And to Cain, "Where is your brother?" Men "consider not in their hearts that," says the Lord, "remember all their wickedness; now their own doings have beset them about; they are before my face."

Consider also what would be the sweet effects of this self-examination. If you are upright and godly, it will lead you straight toward assurance of God's love; if you are not, though it will trouble you at the present—yet it will tend to your happiness, and at length lead you to the assurance of that happiness.*Is it not a desirable thing to know what shall befall us hereafter; especially what shall befall our souls and what place and state we must be in forever?*And as the very knowledge itself is desirable, how much greater will the comfort be of that certainty of salvation! What sweet thoughts will you have of *God!* All that greatness and justice which is the terror of others, will be your joy. How sweet may be your thoughts of *Christ*, and the blood he has shed, and the benefits he has procured! How welcome will the *word of God*be to you, and "how beautiful the very feet of those that bring it!" How sweet will be the *promises*when you are sure they are your own! The very *threatenings*will occasion your comfort, to remember that you have escaped them. What boldness and comfort may you then have in prayer, when you can say "Our Father" in full assurance? It will make the Lord's supper a refreshing feast to your soul. It will multiply the sweetness of every common mercy.

How comfortably may you then undergo all *afflictions!*How will it sweeten your forethoughts of *death*and *judgment*, of *Heaven*and *Hell!* How lively will it make you in the work of the Lord, and how profitable to all around you! What vigor will it infuse into all your graces and affections! How will it kindle your repentance, inflame your love, quicken your desires, and confirm your faith; be a fountain of continual rejoicing, overflow your heart with thankfulness, raise you high in the delightful work of praise, help you to be heavenly-minded, and render you persevering in all! All these sweet effects of assurance, would make your life a Heaven upon earth.

Though I am certain these motives have weight of reason in them—yet I am jealous, reader, lest you lay aside the book as if you had no more to do, and never set yourself to the practice of the duty. The case in hand is of the greatest consequence—whether you shall everlastingly live in Heaven or Hell. I here request you, in behalf of your soul; nay, I charge you, in the name of the Lord, that you defer no longer—but take your heart to task in good earnest, and think with yourself, "Is it so *easy*, so *common*and so *dangerous*to be mistaken? Are there so many wrong ways? Is the heart so deceitful? Why then do I not search into every corner until I know my state? Must I shortly undergo the trial at the bar of Christ, and do I not now try myself? What a case would I then be in, should I then fail of salvation? May I know by a little diligent inquiry now—and do I refuse the labor?"

But perhaps you will say, "I know not how to do it." In that I am now to give you *directions*; but, alas! it will be in vain, if you are not resolved to *practice*them. Will you, therefore, before you go any further, here promise, before the Lord, to set yourself upon the speedy performance of the duty, according to the directions I shall lay down from the word of God?*I demand nothing unreasonable or impossible: it is but to bestow a few hours to know what shall become of you forever.*If a neighbor, or a friend, desired but an hour's time of you, in conversation, or business, or anything in which you may be of service—surely you would not deny it; how much less should you deny this to yourself in so great a matter! I pray you to take from me this request, as if; in the name of Christ, I presented it to you on my knees; and I will betake me on my knees to Christ again, to beg that he will persuade your heart to the duty.

**4. The *directions* how to examine yourself are such as these**: Empty your mind of all other cares and thoughts, that they may not distract or divide your mind. This work itself will be enough without joining others with it. Then fall down before God in hearty prayer, desiring the assistance of his Spirit to reveal to you the plain truth of your condition, and to enlighten you in the whole progress of this work. Make choice of the most convenient time and place. Let the place be the most private, and the time when you have nothing to interrupt you; and, if possible, let it be the present time.

Have in readiness, either in memory or writing, some scriptures, containing the descriptions of the saints and the Gospel terms of salvation and convince yourself thoroughly of their infallible truth. Proceed then to put the question to yourself. Let it not be, whether there is any good in you at all; nor whether you have such or such a degree and measure of grace—but whether such or such a saving grace is in you in sincerity or not.

If your heart draws back from the work, force it on. Lay your command upon it. Let reason interpose, and use its authority. Yes, lay the command of God upon it, and charge it to obey upon the pain of his displeasure. Let conscience also do its office, until your heart is excited to the work. Nor let your heart trifle away the time, when it should be diligently at the work. Do as the psalmist; "My spirit made diligent search." He who can prevail with his own heart, shall also prevail with God.

If, after all your pains, you are still in doubt, then seek out for help. Go to one that is godly, experienced, able, and faithful—and tell him your case, and desire his best advice. Use the judgment of such a one as that of a physician for your body; though this can afford you no full certainty—yet it may be a great help to stay and direct you. But do not make it a pretense to put off your own self-examination. Only use it as one of the last remedies, when your own endeavors will not serve.

When you have discovered your true state, pass sentence on yourself accordingly; either that you are a true Christian, or that you are not. Pass not this sentence rashly, nor with self-flattery nor with melancholy terrors—but deliberately, truly, and according to your conscience, convinced by Scripture and reason. Labor to get your heart affected with its condition, according to the sentence passed on it.

If graceless, think of your misery. If renewed and sanctified, think what a blessed state the Lord has brought you into. Pursue these thoughts until they have left their impression on your heart. Write this sentence at least in your memory: "At such a time, upon thorough examination, I found my state to be thus, or thus." Such a record will be very useful to you hereafter. Trust not to this one discovery, so as to try no more; nor let it hinder you in the daily search of your ways; neither be discouraged if the trial must be often repeated. Especially take heed, if unregenerate, not to conclude of your future state by the present. Do not say, "Because I am ungodly, I shall die so; because I am a hypocrite, I shall continue so." Do not despair. Nothing but your unwillingness can keep you from Christ, though you have hitherto abused him and dissembled with him.

**5. Now let me add some *marks* by which you may try your title to the saints' rest.** I will only mention these two:

1. Taking God for your chief good.

2. Heartily accepting Christ for your only Savior and Lord.

Every soul that has a title to this rest places **his chief happiness in God**. This rest consists in the full and glorious enjoyment of God. *He who does not make God his chief good and ultimate end, is in heart a pagan and a vile idolater.*Let me ask, then: do you truly account it your chief happiness to enjoy the Lord in glory, or do you not? Can you say, "The Lord is my portion? Whom have I in Heaven but you? There is none upon earth whom I desire besides you?" If you are an heir of everlasting rest, it is thus with you.

Though the *flesh*will be pleading for its own delights, and the *world*will be creeping into your affections—yet in your ordinary, settled, prevailing judgment and affections, you prefer God before all things in the world. You make him the very end of your desires and endeavors. The very reason why you hear, and pray, and desire to live on earth, is chiefly that you may seek the Lord, and make sure of your rest. Though you do not seek it so zealously as you should—yet it has the chief of your desires and endeavors, so that nothing else is desired or preferred before it. You will think no labor or suffering too great to obtain it. And though the flesh may sometimes shrink—yet you are resolved and ready to go through all.

*Your esteem for it will also be so high, and your affection to it so great, that you would not exchange your title to it, and hopes of it, for any worldly good whatever. If God should set before you an eternity of earthly pleasure on the one hand, and the saints' rest on the other, and bid you take your choice—you would refuse the world and choose this rest.*But if you are yet unsanctified, then you do in your heart prefer your worldly happiness before God; and though your tongue may say that God is your chief good—yet your heart does not so esteem him. For the world is the chief end of your desires and endeavors. Your very heart is set upon it. Your greatest care and labor is to maintain your fleshly delights. But the life to come has little of your care or labor. You did never perceive so much excellency in the unseen glory of another world, as to draw your heart after it, and bring you to labor heartily for it. The little pains you bestow for it is but a secondary effort.

God has but *the world's leavings*—only that time and labor which you can spare from the world, or those few cold and careless thoughts which follow your constant, earnest, and delightful thoughts of earthly things. *Neither would you do anything at all for Heaven, if you knew how to keep the world*. But lest you should be turned into Hell when you can keep the world no longer, therefore you will do something. For the same reason you think the way of God is too strict, and will not be persuaded to the constant labor of walking according to the Gospel rule; and when it comes to the trial, that you must forsake Christ or your worldly happiness—then you will venture Heaven rather than earth, and so willfully deny your obedience to God. And certainly, if God would but give you permission to live in health and wealth forever on earth, you would think it a better state than the rest of heaven—let them seek for Heaven that would, you would think this world to be your chief happiness. This is your case, if you are yet an unregenerate person, and have no title to the saints' rest.

And as you take God for your chief good, so you heartily accept of Christ for your only Savior and Lord, to bring you to this rest. The former mark was the sum of the first and great command of the law, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart."

The second mark is the sum of the command of the Gospel, "**Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved**." And the performance of these two is the whole of godliness and Christianity. This mark is but the definition of faith. Do you heartily consent that Christ alone shall be your Savior, and no further trust to your duties and works than as *means*appointed in subordination to him; not looking at them as in the least measure able to satisfy the curse of the law, or as a legal righteousness, or any part of it; but consent to trust your salvation on the redemption made by Christ?

*Are you also content to take him for your only Lord and King, to govern and guide you by his laws and Spirit, and to obey him even when he commands the hardest duties, and those which most cross the desires of the flesh?* Is it your sorrow when you break your resolution herein; and your joy when you keep closest in obedience to him? *Would you not change your Lord and Master for all the world?*Thus is it with every true Christian.

But if you are a hypocrite, it is far otherwise. You may call Christ your Lord and your Savior—but you never found yourself so lost without him as to drive you to seek him, and trust him, and lay your salvation on him alone; at least, you did never heartily consent that he should govern you as your Lord, nor resign your soul and life to be ruled by him, nor take his word for the law of your thoughts and actions.

Doubtless you are willing to be saved from Hell by Christ when you die; but, in the meantime, he must command you no further than will consist with your pleasure, or other worldly ends! And if he would give you permission, you had far rather live after the world and the flesh, than after the Word and the Spirit. And though you may now and then have a motion or purpose to the contrary—yet this that I have mentioned is the ordinary desire and choice of your heart. You are therefore no true believer in Christ; for though you confess him in *words*—yet in *works*you deny him, "being abominable and disobedient, an unto every good work reprobate." This is the case of those who shall be shut out of the saints' rest.

Observe, it is the consent of the heart, or will, which I especially lay down to be inquired after. I do not ask whether you are assured of salvation, nor whether you can believe that your sins are pardoned, and that you are beloved of God in Christ. These are no parts of justifying faith—but excellent fruits of it, and they that receive them are comforted by them; but perhaps you may never receive them while you live, and may yet be a true heir of rest. Do not say then, "I cannot believe that my sins are pardoned, or that I am in God's favor; and therefore I am no true believer." This is a most mistaken conclusion.

The question is, whether you heartily accept of Christ, that you may be pardoned, reconciled to God, and so saved. Do you consent that He shall be your Lord who has bought you, and that he shall bring you to Heaven in his own way? This is justifying, saving faith, and the mark by which you must try yourself. Yet still observe that all this consent must be hearty and real, not feigned or with reservations. It is not like that of the dissembling son, who said, "I go, sir—and went not." If any have more of the government of you than Christ, you are not his disciple. I am sure these two marks are such as every Christian has, and none but sincere Christians. O that the Lord would now persuade you to the close performance of this self-trial, that you may not tremble with horror of soul when the Judge of the world shall try you; but be able so to prove your title to rest, that the prospect and approach of death and judgment may raise your spirits and fill you with joy.

On the whole, if Christians would have comforts that will not deceive them, let them make it the great labor of their lives to grow in grace, to strengthen and advance the interest of Christ in their souls, and to weaken and subdue the interest of the flesh. Deceive not yourselves with a persuasion that Christ has done all, and left you nothing to do. To overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil, and, in order to that, to stand always armed upon our watch, and valiantly and patiently to fight it out—is of great importance to our assurance and salvation. He who performs it not is no more than a nominal Christian. Not to every one that presumptuously believes—but "to him that overcomes, will Christ give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knows, saving he who receives it; he shall eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God, and shall not be hurt of the second death. Christ will confess his name before his Father, and before his angels, and make him a pillar in the temple of God, and he shall go no more out; and will write upon him the name of his God, and the name of the city of his God, which is New Jerusalem, which comes down out of Heaven from his God, and will write upon him his new name." Yes, "He will grant to him to sit with him on his throne, even as he also overcame, and is set down with his Father on his throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says unto the churches."

***~~Chapter 9. The Duty of the People of God to Excite Others to Seek this Rest.~~***

The author laments that Christians do so little to help others to obtain the saints' rest:

**I.** Shows the nature of this duty; particularly,

1. In having our hearts affected with the misery of our brethren's souls;

2. In taking all opportunities to instruct them in the way of salvation;

3. In promoting their profit by public ordinances.

**II.** Assigns various reasons why this duty is so much neglected, and answers some objections against it.

**III.** Urges to the discharge of it, by several considerations:

1. Addressed to such as have knowledge, learning, and utterance;

2. Those who are acquainted with sinners;

3. Physicians that attend dying men;

4. People of wealth and power;

5. Ministers;

6. And those that are entrusted with the care of children or servants.

The chapter concludes with an earnest request to Christian parents to be faithful to their trust.

Has God set before us such a glorious prize as the saints' rest, and made us capable of such inconceivable happiness? Why, then, do not all the citizens of this kingdom exert themselves more to help others to the enjoyment of it? Alas! how little are poor souls about us indebted to most of us! *We see the glory of the kingdom, and they do not! We see the misery of those that are out of it, and they do not!*We see some wandering quite out of the way, and know, if they hold on, they can never come there; and they themselves discern it not. And yet we will not seriously show them their danger and error, and help to bring them into the way, that they may live.

Alas! how few Christians are there to be found who set themselves with all their might to save souls! No thanks to us if Heaven be not empty, and if the souls of our brethren perish not forever. Considering how important this duty is to the glory of God and the happiness of men, I will show:
how it is to be *performed*;
why it is so much *neglected*;
and then offer some considerations to *persuade* to it.

**First. THE DUTY of exciting and helping others to discern their title to the saints' rest.**This does not mean that every man should turn a public preacher, or that any should go beyond the bounds of their particular calling; much less does it consist in promoting a party spirit and, least of all, in speaking against men's faults behind their backs, and being silent before their faces. This duty is of another nature, and consists of the following things:
in having our hearts affected with the misery of our brethren's souls,
in taking all opportunities to instruct them in the way of salvation,
and in promoting their profit by public ordinances.

**1. Our hearts must be affected with the misery of our brethren's souls.** We must be compassionate toward them, and yearn after their recovery and salvation. If we earnestly longed for their conversion, and our hearts were solicitous to do them good, it would set us at work, and God would usually bless it.

**2. We must take every opportunity that we possibly can to instruct them how to attain salvation.**If the person is ignorant, then labor to make him understand the chief happiness of man; how far he was once possessed of it; the covenant God then made with him; how he broke it; and what penalty he incurred; and into what misery he brought himself. Teach him his need of a Redeemer; how Christ mercifully interposed, and bore the penalty; what the new covenant is; how men are drawn to Christ; and what are the riches and privileges which believers have in him.

If he is not moved by these things, then show him:
the excellency of the glory he neglects; *the extremity and eternity of the torments of the damned*;
the justice of enduring them for willfully refusing grace;
the certainty, nearness, and terrors of death and judgment;
the vanity of all things below;
the sinfulness of sin;
the preciousness of Christ;
the necessity of regeneration, faith, and holiness, and their true nature.

If, after all, you find him entertaining false hopes, then urge him to examine his state; show him the necessity of doing so; help him in it; nor leave him until you have convinced him of his *misery*and *remedy*. Show him how vain and destructive it is to join Christ and his duties, to compose his justifying righteousness. Yet be sure to draw him to the use of all *means*; such as hearing and reading the word, calling upon God, and associating with the godly: persuade him to forsake sin, avoid all temptations to sin, especially evil companions, and to wait patiently on God in the use of means, as the way in which God will be found.

But, because the manner of performing this work is of great consequence, observe therefore these rules:

Enter upon it with right intentions.

Aim at the glory of God in the person's salvation.

Do it not to get a name or esteem to yourself; or to bring men to depend upon you, or to get followers; but in obedience to Christ, in imitation of him, and tender love to men's souls.

Do not as those who labor to reform their children or servants from such things as are against their own profit—but never seek to save their souls in the way which God has appointed.

Do it *speedily*. As you would not have them delay their return, do not you delay to seek their return. While you are purposing to teach and help him:
the man goes deeper in debt;
wrath is heaping up;
sin is taking root;
custom fastens him;
temptations to sin multiply;
conscience grows seared;
the heart hardened;
the devil rules;
Christ is shut out;
the Spirit is resisted;
God is daily dishonored;
his law is violated;
he is robbed of that service which he should have;
time runs on apace;
death and judgment are at the door;
and *what if the man dies and drops into Hell, while you are purposing to prevent it!*

If, in the case of his bodily distress, you "must not say to him, go and come again, and tomorrow I will give it to you—when you have it by you;" how much less may you delay the support of his soul! *That physician is no better than a murderer, who negligently delays until his patient is dead or past cure.*Lay aside excuses, then, and all lesser business, and "exhort one another daily, while it is called today, lest any be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."

Let your exhortation proceed from compassion and love. To jeer and scoff, to rail and vilify, is not a likely way to reform men, or convert them to God. *Go to poor sinners with tears in your eyes, that they may see you believe them to be miserable, and that you sincerely pity their case.*Deal with them with earnest, humble entreaties. Let them perceive it is the desire of your heart to do them good; that you have no other end but their everlasting happiness; and that it is your sense of their danger, and your love to their souls, that forces you to speak; even because you "know the terrors of the Lord," and *for fear you should see them in eternal torments.*

Say to them, "Friend, you know I seek no advantage of my own: the method to please you, and keep your friendship, were to soothe you in your way, or let you alone; but love will not suffer me to see you perish, and be silent. I seek nothing at your hands but that which is necessary to your own happiness. It is you yourself that will have the gain and comfort if you come to Christ." *If we were thus to go to every ignorant and wicked neighbor, what blessed fruit should we quickly see!*

Do it with all possible *plainness*and *faithfulness*. Do not make their sins less than they are, nor encourage them in a false hope. If you see the case is dangerous, speak plainly: "Neighbor, I am afraid God has not yet renewed your soul. I fear you are not yet recovered from the power of Satan to God. I fear you have not chosen Christ above all, nor sincerely taken him for your sovereign Lord. If you had, surely you dared not so easily disobey him, nor neglect his worship in your family and in public; you could not so eagerly follow the world, and talk of nothing but the things of the world. If you were in Christ, you would be a new creature; old things would be passed away, and all things would become new. You would have new *thoughts*, new speech, new *company*, new *endeavors*, and a new *life*.

Certainly without these you can never be saved; you may think otherwise, and hope otherwise as long as you will—but your hopes will all deceive you, and perish with you. Thus must you deal faithfully with men, if ever you intend to do them good. It is not in curing men's souls, as in curing their bodies, where they must not know their danger, lest it hinder the cure. They are here agents in their own cure; and *if they know not their misery, they will never bewail it, nor know their need of a Savior.*

Do it also *seriously*, *zealously*, and *effectually*. Labor to make men know that *Heaven and Hell are not matters to be played with, or passed over with a few careless thoughts*. "It is most certain that, one of these days, you shall be in everlasting joy or torment; and does it not awaken you? Are there so few that find the way of life? Are there so many that go the way of death? Is it so hard to escape? Is it so easy to miscarry? and yet you sit still and trifle? What do you mean? The world is passing away; its pleasures, honors, and profits are fading and leaving you; eternity is a little before you; God is just and jealous; his *threatenings*are true; the great day will be terrible; time runs on apace; your life is uncertain; you are far behindhand; your case is dangerous; if you die tomorrow, how unready are you! With what terror will your soul leave the body! And do you yet loiter?

Consider, God is all this while waiting your leisure. His patience bears with you; his long-suffering forbears with you; his mercy entreats you; Christ offers you his blood and merits; the Spirit is persuading; conscience is accusing; Satan waits to have you! This is your time—now or never. *Had you rather burn in Hell than repent on earth? Had you rather have devils your tormentors, than Christ your Savior?*Will you renounce your part in God and glory, rather than renounce your sins?

O friends, what do you think of these things? God has made you men; do not renounce your reason where you should chiefly use it." Alas! it is not a few dull words between jest and earnest, between sleeping and waking, that will rouse a dead-hearted sinner. *If a house be on fire you will not make a cold oration on the nature and danger of fire—but will run and cry, Fire! fire!*To tell a man of his sins as softly as Eli did his sons; or to reprove him as gently as Jehoshaphat did Ahab; "Let not the king say so;" usually does as much harm as good.*Loathness to displease men makes us undo them.*

Yet, lest you run into extremes, I advise you to do it with prudence and discretion. Choose the fittest season. Deal not with men when they are in a passion, or where they will take it for a disgrace. When the earth is soft, the plough will enter. Take a man when he is under affliction, or newly impressed under a sermon. Christian faithfulness requires us not only to do good when it falls in our way—but to watch for opportunities. Suit yourself also to the quality and temperament of the person. You must deal with the ingenious more by argument than persuasion. There is need of both to the ignorant. The affections of the *convinced*should be chiefly excited. The *obstinate*must be sharply reproved. The *timorous*must be dealt with tenderly. Love, and plainness, and seriousness take with all; but words of terror some can hardly bear. Use also the most apt expressions. Unseemly language makes the hearers loathe the food they should live by, especially if they are men of curious ears and carnal hearts.

Let all your reproofs and exhortations be backed with the authority of God. Let sinners be convinced that you speak not merely your own thoughts. Turn them to the very chapter and verse where their sin is condemned, and their duty commanded. The voice of man is contemptible—but the voice of God is solemn and terrible. They may reject your words, who dare not reject the words of the Almighty.

Be frequent with men in this duty of exhortation. If we are "always to pray, and not to faint," because God will have us importunate with himself; the same course, no doubt, will be most prevailing with men. Therefore we are commanded "to exhort one another daily," and "with all long-suffering." The fire is not always brought out of the flint at one stroke; nor men's affections kindled at the first exhortation: and if they were—yet if they be not followed they will soon grow cold again. *Follow sinners with your loving and earnest entreaties, and give them no rest in their sin.*This is true charity, the way to save men's souls, and will afford you comfort upon review.

Strive to bring all your exhortations to an outcome. If we speak the most convincing words, and all our care is over with our speech, we shall seldom prosper in our labors. But God usually blesses their labors whose very heart is set upon the conversion of their hearers, and who are therefore inquiring after the success of their work. If you reprove a sin, cease not until the sinner promises you to leave it, and avoid the occasions of it. If you are exhorting to a duty, urge for a promise to enter upon it without delay. If you would draw men to Christ, *leave them not until they are brought to confess the misery of their present unregenerate state, and the necessity of Christ, and of faith and repentance, and have promised you to be faithful in the use of means*. O that all Christians would take this course with all their neighbors who are enslaved to sin, and strangers to Christ!

Once more, be sure your *example*exhorts as well as your *words*. Let them see you constant in all the duties to which you persuade them. Let them see in your life, that superiority to the world which your lips recommend. Let them see, by your constant labors for Heaven, that you indeed believe what you would have them believe. *A holy and heavenly life is a continual sting to the consciences of sinners around you, and continually solicits them to change their course*.

**3. Besides the duty of private admonition, you must endeavor to help men to profit by public ordinances.** In order to that, endeavor to procure for them faithful ministers where they are wanting. "How shall they hear without a preacher?" Improve your interest and diligence to this end, until you prevail. Extend your purposes to the utmost. How many souls may be saved by the ministry you have procured! It is a higher and nobler charity than relieving their bodies. What abundance of good might great men do, if they would support, in academic education, such youth as they have first carefully chosen for their talents and piety, until they should be fit for the ministry! And when a faithful ministry is obtained, help poor souls to receive the fruit of it—draw them constantly to attend it—remind them often what they have heard; and, if it be possible, let them hear it repeated in their families or elsewhere—promote their frequent meeting together, besides publicly in the congregation; not as a separate church—but as a part of the church, more diligent than the rest in redeeming time and helping the souls of each other heavenward. Labor also to keep the ordinances and ministry in esteem: no man will be much wrought on by that which be despised. The apostle says, "We beseech you, brethren, to know those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you and to esteem them very highly in love, for their work's sake."

**Secondly. Let us inquire what may be the CAUSES OF THE GROSS NEGLECT of this duty**; that the hindrances, being discovered, may the more easily be overcome.

One hindrance is, **men's own sin and guilt.** They have not themselves been ravished with heavenly delights—how then should they draw others so earnestly to seek them? They have not felt their own lost condition, nor their need of Christ, nor the renewing work of the Spirit—how then can they reveal these to others? They are guilty of the sins they should reprove—and this makes them ashamed to reprove.

Another is,**a secret infidelity prevailing in men's hearts**. Did we truly believe that all the unregenerate and unholy shall be eternally tormented—then how could we refrain from speaking, or avoid bursting into tears, when we look them in the face, especially when they are our near and dear friends? Thus does secret unbelief consume the vigor of each grace and duty. O Christian, if you did truly believe that your ungodly friends, wife, husband, or child, should certainly lie forever in Hell, except they be thoroughly changed before death shall snatch them away, would not this make you address them day and night until they were persuaded? Were it not for this cursed unbelief, our own and our neighbors' souls would gain more by us than they do.

These attempts are also much hindered by **our lack of charity and compassion for men's souls**. We look on miserable souls, and pass by, as the priest and Levite passed by the wounded man. What though the sinner, wounded by sin and captivated by Satan, do not desire your help himself; yet *his misery*cries aloud. If God had not heard the cry of our miseries before he heard the cry of our prayers, and been moved by his own pity before he was moved by our importunity—we might long have continued the slaves of Satan. You will pray to God for them, to open their eyes and turn their hearts—but why not endeavor their conversion, if you desire it? And if you do not desire it, why do you ask it? Why do you not beg them to consider and return, as well as pray to God to convert and turn them? If you should see your neighbor fallen into a pit, and should pray God to help him out—but neither put forth your hand to help him, nor once direct him to help himself—would not every man censure you for your cruelty and hypocrisy? It is as true of the soul as of the body. If any man "sees his brother have need, and shuts up his affections and compassion from him, how dwells the love of God in him?" or what love has he to his brother's soul?

We are also **hindered by a base, man-pleasing disposition**. We are so desirous to keep in favor with men, that it makes us most unreasonably neglect our own duty. He is a foolish and unfaithful physician that will let a sick man die, for fear of troubling him. If our friends are deranged, we please them in nothing that tends to their hurt. And yet when they are beside themselves in point of salvation, and in their madness posting on to damnation, we will not stop them for fear of displeasing them. How can we be Christians, who "love the praise of men more than the praise of God?" For, if we "seek to please men, we shall not be the servants of Christ."

It is common to be **hindered by sinful bashfulness**. When we should shame men out of their sins, we are ourselves ashamed of our duties. May not these sinners condemn us, when they blush not to swear, be drunk, or neglect the worship of God; and we blush to tell them of it and persuade them from it? Bashfulness is unfitting in cases of necessity. It is not a work to be ashamed of; to obey God in persuading men from their sins to Christ.

Reader, has not your conscience told you of your duty many a time, and urged you to speak to poor sinners, and yet you have been ashamed to open your mouth, and so let them alone to sink or swim? O read and tremble, "Whoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation—of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

An idle and **impatient spirit hinders us.**It is an ungrateful work, and sometimes makes men our enemies. Besides, it seldom succeeds at the first, except it be followed on. *You must be long in teaching the ignorant, and persuading the obstinate*. We consider not what patience God used toward us when we were in our sins. Woe to us, if God had been as impatient with us as we are with others.

**Another hindrance is, self-seeking**. "All seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's," and their brethren's. With many, pride is a great impediment. If it were to speak to a great man, and it would not displease him, they would do it. But to go among the poor, and take pains with them in their cottages—where is the person who will do this? Many will rejoice in being instrumental to convert a gentleman, and they have good reason; but overlook the multitude, as if the souls of all were not alike to God.

Alas these men little consider how low Christ stooped to us!

Few rich, and noble, and wise are called. It is the poor that receive the glad tidings of the Gospel. And with some, their ignorance of the duty hinders them from performing it: either they know it not to be a duty, or at least not to be *their*duty. If this is your case, reader, I am in hope you are now acquainted with your duty, and will enter upon it.

Do not object to this duty, that you are unable to manage an exhortation; but either set those at the work who are more able, or faithfully and humbly use the small ability you have, and tell them, as a weak man may do—what God says in his word. Decline not the duty because it is your superior who needs advice and exhortation. Order must be dispensed with, in cases of necessity. Though it be a husband, a parent, a minister—you must teach him in such a case. If parents are in want, children must relieve them. If a husband be sick, the wife must fill up his place in family affairs. If the rich are reduced to beggary, they must receive charity. If the physician be sick, somebody must look to him.

Thus the poorest servant must admonish his master, and the child his parent, and the wife her husband, and the people their minister; just so that it is done when there is real need, and with all possible humility, modesty, and meekness. Do not say, this will make us all preachers; for every good Christian is a teacher, and has a charge of his neighbor's soul. Every man is a physician, when a regular physician cannot be had, and when the hurt is so small that any man may relieve it; and in the same cases every man must be a teacher.

Do not despair of success. Cannot God give it? And must it not be by means? Do not plead, it will only be casting pearls before swine. When you are in danger to be torn in pieces, Christ would have you forbear; but what is that to you who are in no such danger? As long as they will hear, you will have encouragement to speak, and may not cast them off as contemptible swine. Say not, "It is a friend on whom I much depend; and by telling him his sin and misery, I may lose his love, and be undone." Is his love more to be valued than his safety? or your own benefit by him, than the salvation of his soul? or will you connive at his damnation because he is your friend? Is that your best requital of his friendship? *Had you rather he should burn in Hell forever, than you should lose his favor*, or the maintenance you have from him?

**Thirdly. But that all who fear God may be excited to do their utmost to help others to this blessed rest, let me entreat you to consider the following MOTIVES**.

Not only nature—but especially grace, disposes the soul to be communicative of good; therefore, to neglect this work, is a sin both against nature and grace. Would you not think him unnatural who would allow his children or friends to starve in the streets, while he has provision at hand? And is not he more unnatural, who will let them eternally perish, and not open his mouth to save them? *An unmerciful, cruel man, is a monster to be abhorred by all*. If God had bid you give them all your estate, or lay down your life to save them—you would surely have refused, when you will not bestow a little breath to save them. Is not the soul of a husband, or wife, or child, or neighbor, worth a few words?*Cruelty to men's bodies is a most damnable sin; but to their souls much more, as the soul is of greater worth than the body, and eternity than time*. Little know you what many a soul may now be feeling in Hell, who died in their sins for lack of your faithful admonition.

Consider what Christ did toward the saving of souls. He thought them worth his blood; and shall we not think them worth our breath? Will you not do a little where Christ has done so much? *Consider what fit objects of pity ungodly people are*. They are dead in trespasses and sins, have not hearts to feel their miseries, nor to pity themselves. If others do not pity them, they will have no pity for themselves. For it is the nature of their disease to make them pitiless to themselves, yes, their own most cruel destroyers.

Consider, it was once your own case. It was God's argument to the Israelites, to be kind to strangers, because they themselves had been "strangers in the land of Egypt." So should you pity those who are strangers to Christ, and to the hopes and comforts of the saints, because you were once strangers to them yourselves. Consider your *relationship*to them. It is your neighbor, your brother, whom you are bound to love as yourself. He who loves not his brother, whom he sees daily, does not love God, whom he never saw. And *does he love his brother, who will see him go to Hell, and never hinder him?*

Consider what a load of guilt this neglect lays upon your own soul. You are guilty of the murder and damnation of all those souls whom you do thus neglect, and of every sin they now commit, and of all the dishonor done to God thereby; and of all these judgments which their sins bring upon the town or country where they live.

*Consider what it will be to look upon your poor friends in eternal flames, and to think that your neglect was a great cause of it.*If you should there perish with them, it would be no small aggravation of your torment. If you are in Heaven, it would surely be a sad thought, were it possible that any sorrow could dwell there, to hear a multitude of poor souls cry out, forever, "O, if you would but have told me plainly of my sin and danger, and drove it home to me, I might have escaped all this torment, and be now in rest!" What a sad voice will this be!

Consider what a joy it will be in Heaven, to meet those there whom you have been the means to bring there; to see their faces, and join with them forever in the praises of God, whom you were the happy instruments of bringing to the knowledge and obedience of Jesus Christ!

Consider how many souls you may have drawn into the way of damnation, or hardened in it. We have had, in the days of our ignorance, our companions in sin, whom we enticed or encouraged. And does it not befit us to do as much to save men, as we have done to destroy them?

Consider how diligent are all the enemies of these poor souls to draw them to Hell.

The *devil*is tempting them day and night.

Their *inward lusts*are still working for their ruin.

The *flesh*is still pleading for its delights.

Their *old companions*are increasing their dislike of holiness.

And if nobody is diligent in helping them to Heaven, what is like to become of them?

Consider how deep the neglect of this duty will wound you when conscience is awakened. When a man comes to die, conscience will ask him, "What good have you done in your lifetime? The saving of souls is the greatest good work; what have you done toward it? How many have you dealt faithfully with?" I have often observed that the consciences of dying men very much wounded them for this omission.

For my own part, when I have been near death, my conscience has accused me more for this than for any other sin. It would bring every ignorant, profane neighbor to my remembrance, to whom I never made known their danger; it would tell me, "You should have gone to them in private, and told them plainly of their desperate danger, though it had been when you should have eaten or slept, if you had no other time." Conscience would remind me how, at such or such a time, I was in company with the ignorant, or riding by the way with a willful sinner, and had a fit opportunity to have dealt with him—but did not; or at least did it to little purpose. May the Lord grant I may better obey conscience while I have time, that it may have less to accuse me of at death!

Consider what a seasonable time you now have for this work. There are times in which it is not safe to speak; it may cost you your liberty or your life. Besides, *your neighbors will shortly die, and so will you. Speak to them, therefore, while you may.*Consider, though this is a work of the greatest charity—yet every one of you may perform it; the poorest as well as the rich. Every one has a tongue to speak to a sinner.

Once more, consider the happy consequences of this work where it is faithfully done. You may be instrumental in saving souls, for whom Christ came down and died, and in whom the angels of God rejoice. Such souls will bless you here and hereafter. God will have much glory by it. The church will be multiplied and edified by it; your own soul will enjoy more improvement and vigor in the divine life, more peace of conscience, more rejoicing in spirit.

Of all the personal mercies that I ever received, next to the love of God in Christ to my own soul, I must most joyfully bless him for the plentiful success of my endeavors upon others. O what fruits, then, might I have seen—if I had been more faithful! I know we need be very jealous of our deceitful hearts on this point, lest our rejoicing should come from our pride. Naturally we would have the praise of every good work ascribed to ourselves. Yet to imitate our Father in goodness and mercy, and to rejoice in the degree of them we attain to, is the duty of every child of God. I therefore tell you my own experience to persuade you, that if you did but know what a joyful thing it is, you would follow it night and day through the greatest discouragements.

Up, then, every man that has a tongue, and is a servant of Christ, and do something of your Master's work. Why has he given you a tongue—but to speak in his service? And how can you serve him more eminently than in laboring for the salvation of souls? He who will pronounce you blessed at the last day, and invite you to "the kingdom prepared for you," because you "fed him, and clothed him, and visited him," in his poor members, will surely pronounce you blessed for so great a work as bringing souls to his kingdom.

He who says, "the poor you have always with you," has left the ungodly always with you, that you might still have matter to exercise your charity upon. If you have the heart of a Christian or of a man, let it yearn towards your ignorant, ungodly neighbors. Say, as the lepers of Samaria, "We do not well; this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace." *Has God had so much mercy on you, and will you have no mercy on your poor neighbors?*But as this duty belongs to all Christians, so especially to some, according as God has called them to it, or qualified them for it to them, therefore, I will more particularly address the exhortation:

**1.** God especially expects this duty at your hands, to whom he has given more learning and knowledge, and endued with better utterance, than your neighbors. The strong are made to help the weak, and those who see must direct the blind. God looks for this faithful improvement of your powers and gifts, which, if you neglect, it were better you had never received them; for they will but aggravate your condemnation, and be as useless to your own salvation as they were to others.

**2.** All those who are particularly acquainted with some ungodly men, and who have peculiar interest in them, God looks for this duty at your hands. Christ himself did eat and drink with publicans and sinners; but it was only to be their physician, and not their companion. Who knows but God gave you interest in them to this end, that you might be the means of their spiritual recovery? They that will not regard the words of a stranger, may regard a brother, or sister, or husband, or wife, or near friend; besides that, the bond of friendship engages you to special kindness and compassion.

**3.**Christian physicians that are much about dying men, should, in a special manner, take conscience of this duty. It is their peculiar advantage, that they are at hand; that they are with men in sickness and danger, when the ear is more open and the heart less stubborn than in time of health. Men look upon their physician as a person in whose hands is their life or, at least, who may do much to save them; and therefore they will the more regard his advice. You that are of this honorable profession, do not think this a work beside your calling, as if it belonged to none but ministers; except you think it beside your calling to be compassionate, or to be Christians. O help, therefore, to fit your patients for Heaven! and, whether you see they are for life or death, teach them both how to live and die, and point them to a remedy for their souls, as you do for their bodies. Blessed be God that very many of the chief physicians of this age have, by their eminent piety, vindicated their profession from the common imputation of atheism and profaneness.

**4.** Men of wealth and authority, and that have many dependants, have excellent advantages for this duty. O what a world of good might gentlemen do if they had but hearts to improve their influence over others! Have you not all your honor and riches from God? Does not Christ say, "Unto whoever much is given, of him much shall be required?" If you speak to your dependants for God and their souls, you may be regarded, when even a minister would be despised. As you value the honor of God, your own comfort, and the salvation of souls—improve your influence over your friends and neighbors; visit their houses; see whether they worship God in their families; and take all opportunities to press them to their duty. Despise them not. Remember, God is no respecter of persons. Let men see that you excel others in piety, compassion, and diligence in God's work, as you do in the riches and honors of the world. I confess you will, by this means, be singular—but then you will be singular in glory; for few of the mighty and noble are called.

**5.**As for the ministers of the Gospel, it is the very work of their calling to help others to Heaven. Be sure to make it the main end of your studies and preaching. *He is the able, skillful minister, who is best skilled in the art of instructing, convincing, persuading, and consequently, of winning souls*; and that is the best sermon that is best in these things. When you seek not God—but yourselves, God will make you the most contemptible of men. It is true of your reputation, as Christ says of your life, "He who loves it shall lose it." Let the vigor of your persuasions show that you are sensible on how weighty a business you are sent. Preach with seriousness and fervor, as men who believe their own doctrine, and *know their hearers must be prevailed with, or be damned*. Think not that all your work is in your studies and pulpit. *You are shepherds, and must know every sheep, and what is their disease, and mark their strayings, and help to cure them, and fetch them home.*

Learn of Paul, not only to teach your people "publicly," but "from house to house." Inquire how they grow in knowledge and holiness, and on what grounds they build their hopes of salvation, and whether they walk uprightly, and perform the duties of their several relations. See whether they worship God in their families, and teach them how to do it. Be familiar with them, that you may maintain your interest in them, and improve it all for God. Know of them how they profit by public teaching.

If any too little "savor the things of the Spirit," let them be pitied—but not neglected. If any *walk disorderly*; recover them with diligence and patience. If they be *ignorant*, it may be your fault as much as theirs. *Be not asleep while the wolf is awake!*Deal not slightly with any. Some will not tell their people plainly of their sins, because they are great men and some, because they are godly; as if none but the poor and the wicked should be dealt plainly with. Yet labor to be skillful and discreet, that the *manner*may answer to the excellency of the *matter*.

Every reasonable soul has both judgment and affection; and every rational, spiritual sermon must have both. Study and pray, and pray and study, until you are become "workmen who need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth," that your people may not be ashamed, nor weary in hearing you. Let your conversation teach men as well as your doctrine. Be as forward in a holy and heavenly life, as you are in pressing others to it. Let your discourse be edifying and spiritual. Suffer anything, rather than the Gospel and men's souls should suffer. *Let men see that you use not the ministry only for a trade to live by; but that your hearts are set upon the welfare of souls*. Whatever meekness, humility, condescension, or self-denial you teach them from the Gospel, *teach it to them also by your sincere example*.

Study and strive after unity and peace. If ever you would promote the kingdom of Christ and your people's salvation, do it in a way of peace and love. It is as hard a thing to maintain:
a sound understanding,
a tender conscience,
a lively, gracious, heavenly frame of spirit,
and an upright life amidst contention—
as to keep your candle lighted in the greatest storms. "Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when he comes, shall find so doing."

**6.** All you whom God has entrusted with the care of children and servants, I would also persuade to this great work of helping others to the heavenly rest. Consider what plain and pressing commands of God require this at your hands. "These words you shall teach diligently unto your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise up." "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." "Bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Joshua resolved that "he and his house would serve the Lord." And God himself says of Abraham, "I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord."

Consider, it is a duty you owe your children in point of justice. From you they received the defilement and misery of their nature; and therefore you owe them all possible help for their recovery. Consider how near your children are to you: they are parts of yourselves. If they prosper when you are dead, you view it as if you lived and prospered in them; and should you not be of the same mind for their everlasting rest? Otherwise you will be witnesses against your own souls. *Your care, and pains, and cost for their bodies—will condemn you for your neglect of their precious souls.*Yes, all the brute creation may condemn you. Which of them is not tender of its young?

Consider, God has made your children your charge, and your servants too. Everyone will confess they are the minister's charge. And have not you a greater charge of your own families than any minister can have of them? Doubtless at your hands God will require the blood of their souls. It is the greatest charge you ever were entrusted with, and we to you, if you allow them to be ignorant or wicked for lack of your instruction or correction. Consider what work there is for you in their dispositions and lives:

Theirs is not one sin—but thousands.

They have hereditary diseases bred in their nature.

The things you must teach them are contrary to the interests and desires of their flesh.

May the Lord make you sensible what a work and charge lie upon you!

Consider what sorrows you prepare for yourselves by the neglect of your children. *If they prove thorns in your eyes, they are of your own planting*. If you should repent and be saved, is it nothing to think of their damnation; and yourselves the occasion of it? But if you die in your sins, how will they cry out against you in Hell! "All this was wrong of you; you should have taught us better, and did not; you should have restrained us from sin and corrected us—but did not." What an addition will such outcries be to your misery!

On the other hand, think what a comfort you may have if you be faithful in this duty! If you should not succeed, you have freed your own souls, and may have peace in your own consciences. If you succeed, the comfort is inexpressible, in their love and obedience, their supplying your needs, and delighting you in all your remaining path to glory. Yes, all your family may fare the better for one pious child or servant. But the greatest joy will be, when you shall say, "Lord, here am I, and the children you have given me;" and shall joyfully live with them forever. Consider how much the welfare of the church and the state depends on this duty. Good laws will not reform us, if reformation begin not at home. This is the cause of all our miseries in the church and the state, even the lack of a holy education of children.

I also entreat parents to consider what excellent advantages they have for promoting the salvation of their children. They are with you while they are tender and *flexible*: you have a *twig*to bend, not an oak. None in the world have such an interest in their affections as you have: you have also the greatest authority over them. Their whole dependence is upon you for a maintenance. You best know their temper and inclinations. You are ever with them, and can never want opportunities: especially you, mothers, remember this, who are more with your children, while young, than their fathers. What pains do you take for their bodies! What do you suffer to bring them into the world! And will you not be at as much pains for the saving of their souls? Your affections are tender, and will it not move you to think of their perishing in Hell forever? I beseech you, for the sake of the children of your own flesh, teach them, admonish them, watch over them, and give them no rest until you have brought them to Christ.

I shall conclude with this earnest request to all Christian parents that read these lines, that they would have compassion on the souls of their poor children, and be faithful to the great trust that God has put on them. If you cannot do what you would for them—yet do what you can. Both the church and the state, the city and the country, groan under the neglect of this weighty duty. Your children know not God nor his laws—but "take his name in vain," and slight his worship, and you neither instruct them nor correct them; and therefore God corrects both them and you. You are so tender of them, that God is the less tender of both them and you. Wonder not if God makes you smart for your children's sins; for you are guilty of all they commit by your neglect of your duty to reform them. Will you resolve, therefore to enter upon this duty, and neglect it no longer? Remember Eli.

Your children are like Moses in the bulrushes, ready to perish if they have not help. If you would not be charged before God as murderers of their souls, nor have them cry out against you in everlasting fire—see that you teach them how to escape it, and bring them up in holiness and the fear of God. I charge every one of you, upon your allegiance to God, as you will very shortly answer the contrary at your peril, that you neither refuse nor neglect this most necessary duty. If you are not willing to do it, now that you know it to be so great a duty, you are rebels, and no true subjects of Jesus Christ.

If you are willing—but know not how, I will add a few words of direction to help you.

Lead them, by your own example, to prayer, reading, and other religious duties;
inform their understandings;
store their memories;
rectify their wills;
quicken their affections;
keep tender their consciences;
restrain their tongues;
teach them gracious speech;
reform and watch over their outward conversation.

To these ends, get them Bibles and pious books, and see that they read them. Examine them often as to what they learn; especially spend the Lord's day in this work; and suffer them not to spend it in sports or idleness. Show them the meaning of what they read or learn. Instruct them out of the holy Scriptures. Keep them out of evil company, and acquaint them with the godly. Especially show them the necessity, excellency, and pleasure of serving God, and labor to fix all upon their hearts.

***~~Chapter 10.~~***

***~~The Saints' Rest Is Not to Be Expected on Earth.~~***

In order to show the sin and folly of expecting rest here:

**I.**The reasonableness of present afflictions is considered:

1. That they are the way to rest.

2. Keep us from mistaking our rest.

3. From losing our way to it.

4. Quicken our pace toward it.

5. Chiefly inconvenience our flesh.

6. Under them the sweetest foretastes of rest are often enjoyed.

**II.** How unreasonable to rest in present enjoyments:

1. That it is idolatry.

2. That it contradicts God's end in giving them.

3. Is the way to have them refused, withdrawn, or embittered.

4. That to be allowed to take up our rest here is the greatest curse;

5. That it is seeking rest where it is not.

6. That the creatures, without God, would aggravate our misery.

7. And all this is confirmed by experience.

**III.** The unreasonableness of our unwillingness to die, and possess the saints' rest, is largely considered.

We are not yet come to our resting place. Does it remain? How great, then, is our sin and folly to seek and expect it here! Where shall we find the Christian that deserves not this reproof? *We would all have continual prosperity, because it is easy and pleasing to the flesh—*but we consider not the unreasonableness of such desires. And when we enjoy convenient houses, goods, lands, and revenues, or the necessary means God has appointed for our spiritual good—we seek rest in these enjoyments.

Whether we are in an afflicted or prosperous state, it is apparent that we exceedingly make the creature our rest. Do we not desire earthly enjoyments more violently, when we lack them, than we desire God himself? Do we not delight more in the possession of them, than in the enjoyment of God? And if we lose them, does it not trouble us more than our loss of God? Is it not enough that they are refreshing helps in our way to Heaven—but they must also be made our Heaven itself?

Christian reader, I would as willingly make you sensible of this sin, as of any sin in the world, if I knew how to do it; for the Lord's great controversy with us is in this point. In order to this, I most earnestly beseech you to consider *the reasonableness of present afflictions*, and the unreasonableness of resting in present enjoyments, as also of our unwillingness to die that we may possess eternal rest.

**FIRST**. To show the reasonableness of present afflictions, consider:
they are the way to rest;
they keep us from mistaking our rest, and from losing the way to it;
they quicken our pace toward it;
they chiefly inconvenience our flesh; and
under them God's people have often the sweetest foretastes of their rest.

**1.**Consider that labor and trouble are the common way to rest, both in the course of nature and grace. Can there possibly be rest without weariness? Do you not travail and toil first, and rest afterwards? The day for labor is first, and then follows the night for rest. Why should we desire the course of *grace*to be perverted, any more than the course of *nature?* It is an established decree, "that we must, through much tribulation, enter into the kingdom of God;" and that, "if we suffer, we shall also reign with Christ." And what are we, that God's statutes should be reversed for our pleasure?

**2. Afflictions are exceedingly useful to us, to keep us from mistaking our rest.** A Christian's motion toward Heaven is voluntary, and not constrained. Those means, therefore, are most profitable, which help his understanding and will. The most dangerous mistake of our souls is, to take the creature for God, and earth for Heaven. What warm, affectionate, eager thoughts have we of the world, until afflictions cool and moderate them!*Afflictions speak convincingly, and will be heard when preachers cannot.* Many a poor Christian is sometimes bending his thoughts to wealth, or flesh-pleasing, or applause, and so loses his relish of Christ and the joy above—until God breaks in upon his riches, or children, or conscience, or health, and breaks down his mountain which he thought so strong. And then when he lies in Manasseh's fetters, or is fastened to his bed with pining sickness, the world is nothing, and Heaven is something. If our dear Lord did not put these *thorns*under our head, we would sleep out our lives and lose our glory.

**3. Afflictions are also God's most effectual means to keep us from losing our way to our rest.** Without this hedge of thorns on the right hand and left, we would hardly keep the way to Heaven. If there be but one gap open, how ready are we to find it, and turn out at it! When we grow wanton, or worldly, or proud—how much does sickness or other affliction reduce us! Every Christian, as well as Luther, may call *affliction one of the best school-masters*; and, with David, may say, "Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept your word."

Many thousand recovered sinners may cry,
"O healthful sickness!
 O comfortable sorrows!
 O gainful losses!
 O enriching poverty!
 O blessed day that ever I was afflicted!"

Not only the "green pastures and still waters—but the rod and staff, they comfort us." Though the word and Spirit do the main work—yet *suffering so unbolts the door of the heart*, that the word has easier entrance.

**4. Afflictions likewise serve to quicken our pace in the way to our rest.** It were well if mere love would prevail with us, and that we were rather *drawn*to Heaven than *driven*. But, seeing our hearts are so bad that mercy will not do it, it is better to be urged onward with the sharpest scourge, than loiter, like the foolish virgins, until the door is shut. *O what a difference is there between our prayers in health and in sickness! between our repentings in prosperity and adversity!*Alas! if we did not sometimes feel the *spur*, what a slow pace would most of us hold toward Heaven! Since our vile natures require it, why should we be unwilling that God should do us good by sharp means? Judge, Christian, whether you do not go more watchfully and speedily in the way to Heaven in your sufferings, than in your more pleasing and prosperous state.

**5. Consider, further, it is but the flesh that is chiefly troubled and grieved by afflictions.**In most of our sufferings the soul is free, unless we ourselves willfully afflict it.

"Why then, O my soul, do you side with this flesh, and complain as it complains? It should be your work to keep it under, and bring it into subjection; and if God does it for you, should you be discontented? Has not the pleasing of it been the cause of almost all your spiritual sorrows? Why, then, may not the displeasing of it further your joy? Must Paul and Silas not sing because their feet are in the stocks? Their spirits were not imprisoned. Ah, Unworthy soul! is this your thanks to God for preferring you so far before your body? When it is rotting in the grave you shall be a companion of the perfected spirits of the just. In the meantime, have you not consolation which the flesh knows nothing of? Murmur not, then, at God's dealings with your body: if it were for lack of love to you, he would not have dealt so by all his saints. Never expect your *flesh*should truly expound the meaning of the *rod*. It will call love hatred, and say, God is destroying, when he is saving. It is the suffering part, and therefore not fit to be the judge."

Could we once believe God, and judge of his dealings by his word, and by their usefulness to our souls and reference to our rest, and could we stop our ears against all the clamors of the flesh—then we would have a truer judgment of our afflictions.

**6. Once more, consider, God seldom gives his people so sweet a foretaste of their future rest as in their deep afflictions.***He keeps his most precious cordials for the time of our greatest faintings and dangers*. He gives them when he knows they are needed and will be valued, and when he is sure to be thanked for them, and that his people will be rejoiced by them. Especially when our sufferings are more directly for his cause, then he seldom fails to sweeten the bitter cup. The martyrs have possessed the highest joys.

When did Christ preach such comfort to his disciples as when "their hearts were sorrowful" at his departure? When did he appear among them and say, "Peace be unto you," but when they were shut up for fear of the Jews? When did Stephen see Heaven opened—but when he was giving up his life for the testimony of Jesus?

*Is not that our best state, wherein we have most of God?*Why else do we desire to come to Heaven? If we look for a Heaven of fleshly delights, we shall find ourselves mistaken.

Conclude, then, that affliction is not so bad a state for a saint in his way to rest. Are we wiser than God? Does he not know what is good for us, as well as we? or is he not as careful of our good as we are of our own? Woe to us if he were not much more so, and if he did not love us better than we love either him or ourselves!

Say not, "I could bear any other affliction but this!" If God had afflicted you where you can bear it, your *idol*would neither have been discovered nor removed.

Neither say, "If God would before long deliver me, I could be content to bear it." Is it nothing, that he has promised it "shall work for your good?" Is it not enough that you are sure to be delivered at death?

Nor let it be said, "If my affliction did not disable me from my duty, I could bear it." It does not disable you for that duty which tends to your own personal benefit—but is the greatest quickening help you can expect. As for your duty to others, it is not your duty when God disables you.

Perhaps you will say, "The godly are my afflicters; if it were ungodly men, I could easily bear it." *Whoever is the instrument, the affliction is from God*, and the deserving cause yourself; and is it not better to look more to God than to yourself? Did you not know that the best men are still sinful in part?

Do not plead, "If I had but that consolation which God reserves for suffering times, I would suffer more contentedly; but I do not perceive any such thing." The more you suffer for righteousness sake, the more of this blessing you may expect; and the more you suffer for your own evil doing, the longer it will be before that sweetness comes. Are not the comforts you desire neglected or resisted? Have your afflictions wrought kindly with you, and fitted you for comfort? It is not suffering that prepares you for comfort—but the sanctified success and fruit of suffering upon your heart.

**SECONDLY**. To show the unreasonableness of resting in present enjoyments, consider:
it is idolizing them;
it contradicts God's end in giving them;
it is the way to have them refused, withdrawn, or embittered to be allowed to take up our rest here, is the greatest curse;
it is seeking rest where it is not to be found;
the creatures, without God, would aggravate our misery;
and to confirm all this, we may consult our own and others experience.

**1. It is gross *idolatry*to make any creature, or means, our rest.** To be the rest of the soul is God's own prerogative. As it is evident idolatry to place our rest in riches or honor, so it is but a more *refined idolatry*to take up our rest in excellent means of grace. How must we offend our dear Lord when we give him cause to complain, as he did of our fellow idolaters: "My people have been lost sheep; they have forgotten their resting-place. My people can find rest in anything rather than in me. They can delight in one another—but not in me. They can rejoice in my creatures and creation—but not in me. Yes, in their very labors and duties they seek for rest—but not in me. They had rather be anywhere than be with me. Are these their gods? Have these redeemed them? Will these be better to them than I have been, or than I would be?"

If you yourselves had a wife, a husband, a son, who had rather be any where than in your company, and was never so merry as when farthest from you—would you not take it badly? So our God must needs do.

**2. You contradict the end of God in giving these enjoyments.** He gave them to help you to him—and do you take up with them in his stead? He gave them to be refreshments in your journey—and would you dwell in your inn and go no farther? It may be said of all our comforts and ordinances, as is said of the Israelites, "The ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them, to search out a resting-place for them." So do all God's mercies act here. They are not that rest; as John professed he was not the Christ; but they are "voices crying in this wilderness," to bid us prepare, "for the kingdom of God," our true rest, "is at hand." Therefore, to rest here, were to turn all mercies contrary to their own ends and to our own advantage, and to destroy ourselves with that which should help us.

**3. It is the way to cause God either to deny the mercies we ask, or to take from us those we enjoy, or at least embitter them to us.**God is nowhere so jealous as here. If you had a servant whom your wife loved better than yourself, would you not take it ill of such a wife, and rid your house of such a servant? So, if the Lord see you begin to settle in the world, and say, "Here I will rest," then it is no wonder if he soon, in his jealousy, unsettle you. *If he loves you, no wonder if he*take that from you with which he sees you are destroying yourself.

It has long been my observation of many, that when they have attempted great works, and have just finished them or have aimed at great things in the world, and have just obtained them; or have lived in much trouble, and have just overcome it; and begin to look on their condition with contentment, and rest in it; they are then usually near to death or ruin.

When a man is once at this language, "Soul, take your ease," the next news usually is, "You fool, this night," or this month, or this year, "your soul shall be required, and then whose shall these things be?"

What house is there where this fool dwells not? Let you and I consider whether it be not our own case.

Many a servant of God has been destroyed from the earth by being overvalued and over-loved. I am persuaded that our discontents and murmurings are not so provoking to God, nor so destructive to the sinner—as our too sweet enjoying and resting in a pleasing worldly state. If God has crossed you in wife, children, goods, friends, either by taking them away, or the comfort of them—then try whether this be not the cause; for wherever your desires stop, and you say, "Now I am well," that condition you make to be your God, and engage the jealousy of God against it. Whether you be a friend to God or an enemy, you can never expect that God should allow you quietly to enjoy your idols.

**4. Should God allow you to take up your rest here, it is one of the worst curses that could befall you.** It were better never to have a day of ease in the world; for then weariness might make you seek after true rest. But if you are allowed to sit down and rest here—then a restless wretch you will be through all eternity.*To "have their portion in this life," is the lot of the most miserable, perishing sinners.*Does it become Christians, then, to expect so much here? Our rest is our Heaven; and where we take our rest, there we make our Heaven. Would you have but such a Heaven as this poor world?

**5. It is seeking rest where it is not to be found.** Your labor will be lost; and if you proceed, your soul's eternal rest too. Our rest is only in the full obtaining of our ultimate end. But that is not to be expected in this life; neither is rest, therefore, to be expected here. Is God to be enjoyed in the best church here as he is in Heaven? How little of God the saints enjoy under the best means let their own complainings testify. Poor comforters are the best ordinances without God.

Should a traveler take up his rest in the way? No; because his home is his journey's end. When you have all that creatures and means can afford, have you what you believed, prayed, suffered for? I think you dare not say so. *We are like little children strayed from home, and God is now bringing us home, and we are ready to turn into any house, stay and play with everything in our way, and sit down on every green bank*, and much ado there is to get us home.

We are also in the midst of our labors and dangers; and is there any resting here? What painful duties lie upon our hands! to our brethren, to our own souls, and to God; and what an arduous work, in respect to each of these, lies before us! And can we rest in the midst of all our labors? Indeed, we may rest on earth, as the ark is said to have "rested in the midst of Jordan"—a short and small rest; or as Abraham desired the "angels to turn in and rest themselves" in his tent, where they would have been reluctant to have taken up their dwelling.

Should *Israel*have fixed their rest in the wilderness, among serpents, and enemies, and weariness and famine?

Should *Noah*have made the ark his home, and have been reluctant to come forth when the waters were assuaged?

Should the *mariner*choose his dwelling on the sea, and settle his rest in the midst of rocks, and sands, and raging tempests?

Should a *soldier*rest in the midst of his enemies?

And are not Christians such travelers, such mariners, such soldiers?

Have you not fears within and troubles without? Are we not in continual dangers? We cannot eat, drink, sleep, labor, pray, hear, converse—but in the midst of snares; and shall we sit down and rest here?

O Christian, follow your work, look to your dangers, hold on to the end, win the field, and come off the ground before you think of a settled rest.

Whenever you talk of a rest on earth, it is like Peter on the mount, "you know not what you say." If, instead of telling the converted thief "this day shall you be with me in paradise," Christ had said he should rest there upon the cross—would he not have taken it for derision? Methinks it would be ill resting in the midst of sickness and pain, persecutions and distresses.

But if nothing else will convince us—yet sure the remains of sin, which so easily beset us, should quickly satisfy a believer that here on earth is not his rest. I say, therefore, to every one that thinks of rest on earth, "Arise and depart, for this is not your rest, because it is polluted."

These things cannot, in their nature, be a true Christian's rest.

They are too *poor*to make us rich.

They are too *low*to raise us to happiness.

They are too *empty*to fill our souls.

They are of too *short*a continuance to be our eternal contentment.

If prosperity, and whatever we here desire, be too base to make gods of; they are too base to be our rest. The soul's rest must be sufficient to afford it perpetual satisfaction. But the contentment which creatures afford waxes old, and abates after a short enjoyment. If God should rain down angel's food, we would soon loathe the manna. If novelty support not, our delights on earth grow dull. *All creatures are to us as flowers to the bee; there is but little honey on any one, and therefore there must be but a superficial taste, and so to the next.* *The more the world is known, the less it satisfies*.*Those only are taken with it, who see no farther than its outward beauty, without discerning its inward vanity*. When we thoroughly know the condition of other men, and have discovered the evil as well as the good, and the defects as well as the perfections—we then cease our admiration.

**6. To have creatures and means without God, is an aggravation of our misery.**If God should say, "Take my creatures, my word, my servants, my ordinances—but not myself;" would you take this for happiness? If you had the word of God, and not "the Word," who is God; or the bread of the Lord, and not the Lord, who "is the true bread;" or could cry with the Jews, "The temple of the Lord," and had not the Lord of the temple—this would be a poor happiness. Was Capernaum the more happy, or the more miserable, for seeing the mighty works which they had seen, and hearing the words of Christ which they heard? Surely that which aggravates our sin and misery cannot be our rest.

**7. To confirm all this, let us consult our own and others experience**. Millions have made the trial—but did any ever find a sufficient rest for his soul on earth? Delights I deny not but they have found—but rest and satisfaction they never found. And shall we think to find that which never man could find before us? Ahab's kingdom is nothing to him without Naboth's vineyard; and did that satisfy him when he obtained it? Were you, like Noah's dove, to look through the earth for a resting-place, you would return confessing that you could find none.

Go ask *honor*, Is there rest here? You may as well rest on the top of tempestuous mountains, or in Aetna's flames.

Ask *riches*, Is there rest here? Even such as is in a bed of thorns.

If you inquire for the rest of *worldly pleasure*, it is such as the fish has in swallowing the bait; when the pleasure is sweetest, death is nearest.

Go to *learning*, and even to divine ordinances, and inquire whether there your soul may rest. You might indeed receive from these an olive branch of hope, as they are *means*to your rest, and have relation to eternity; but, in regard of any satisfaction in themselves, you would remain as restless as ever.

How well might all these answer us, as Jacob did Rachel, "Am I in God's stead," that you come to me for soul-rest? Not all the states of men in the world; neither court nor country, towns nor cities, shops nor fields, treasures, libraries, solitude, society, studies, nor pulpits—can afford any such thing as this rest. If you could inquire of the dead of all generations, or of the living through all dominions, they would all tell you, "there is no rest here!" Or, if other men's experience move you not, take a view of your own. Can you remember the state that did fully satisfy you? or, if you could, will it prove lasting? I believe we may all say of our earthly rest, as Paul of our hope, "If it were in this life only, we are of all men the most miserable!"

If, then, either *Scripture*or *reason*, or the *experience*of ourselves and all the world, will convince us—we may see there is no resting here. And yet how guilty are the generality of us of this sin! How many halts and stops do we make before we will make the Lord our rest! How must God even drive us, and fire us out of every good condition, lest we should sit down and rest there!

If he gives us prosperity, riches, or honor—we in our hearts dance before them, as the Israelites before their calf, and say, "These are your gods," and conclude "it is good to be here."

If he embitters all these to us, how restless are we until our condition be sweetened, that we may sit down again and rest where we were! *If he proceeds in the cure, and take the creature quite away—then we labor, and cry, and pray that God would restore it, that we may make it our rest again!* And while we are deprived of our former idol—yet, rather than come to God, we delight ourselves in the hope of recovering it, and make that very hope our rest, or search about from creature to creature to find out something to supply it's place; yes, if we can find no supply—yet we will rather settle in this misery, and make a rest of a wretched being, than leave all and come to God.

O the cursed aversion of our souls from God! If any place in Hell were tolerable, the soul would rather take up its rest there than come to God. Yes, when he is bringing us over to him, and has convinced us of the worth of his ways and service, the last deceit of all is here; we will rather settle upon those *ways*that lead to him, and those *ordinances*that speak of him, and those *gifts*which flow from him, than come entirely over to himself.

Christian, marvel not that I speak so much of resting in these; beware, lest it prove your own case. I suppose you are so far convinced of *the vanity of riches, honor and pleasure*, that you can more easily disclaim these; and it is well if it be so. But the means of grace you look on with less suspicion, and think you can not delight in them too much, especially seeing most of the world despise them. I know he who delights in any worldly thing more than in them, is not a Christian. But when we are content with *ordinances without God*, and had rather be at public worship than in Heaven, and a member of the church here than of the perfect church above, this is a sad mistake. So far let your soul take comfort in ordinances as God accompanies them; remembering, this is not Heaven—but the first-fruits. "While we are present in the body, we are absent from the Lord;" and while we are absent from him, we are absent from our rest.

If God were as willing to be absent from us as we from him, and as reluctant to be our rest as we to rest in him, we should be left to an eternal restless separation. In a word, as you are sensible of the sinfulness of your earthly discontents, so be you also of your irregular satisfaction, and pray God to pardon them much more. *Above all the plagues on this side of Hell, see that you watch and pray against settling any where short of Heaven, or reposing your soul on anything below God.*

**THIRDLY**. The next thing to be considered is our unreasonable unwillingness to die, that we may possess the saints' rest. We linger, like Lot in Sodom, until "the Lord, being merciful unto us, plucks us away against our will. I confess that death, of itself, is not desirable; but the soul's rest with God is, to which death is the common passage. Because we are apt to make light of this sin, let me set before you its nature and remedy, in a variety of considerations.

It has in it **much infidelity**. If we did truly believe that the promise of this glory is the word of God, and that God truly means as he speaks, and is fully resolved to make it good; if we truly believed that there is indeed such blessedness prepared for believers—then surely we should be as impatient of living as we are now fearful of dying, and should think every day a year until our last day should come.

Is it possible that we can *truly believe that death will remove us from misery to such glory—and yet be reluctant to die?*If the doubts of our own interest in that glory make us fear—yet a true belief of the certainty and excellency of this rest would make us restless until our title to it be cleared. Though there is much faith and Christianity in our *mouths*—yet there is much infidelity and paganism in our *hearts*, which is the chief cause that we are so reluctant to die.

It is also much owing to the **coldness of our love**. If we love our friend, we love his company; his presence is comfortable, his absence is painful; when he comes to us, we entertain him with gladness; when he dies, we mourn, and usually over-mourn. To be separated from a faithful friend, is like the rending of a member from our body.

Would not our desires after God be such, if we really loved him? Nay, should it not be much more than such, as he is, above all friends, most lovely? May the Lord teach us to look closely to our hearts, and take heed of self-deceit in this point! Whatever we pretend, if we love either father, mother, husband, wife, child, friend, wealth, or life itself, more than Christ—we are yet "none of his" sincere "disciples."

When it comes to the trial, the question will not be: Who has preached most, or heard most, or talked most? but, who has loved most? Christ will not take sermons, prayers, fastings; no, nor the "giving our goods," nor the "burning of our bodies," instead of love. And do we love him, and yet care not how long we are from him? Was it such a joy to Jacob to see the face of Joseph in Egypt? And *shall we be contented without the sight of Christ in glory, and yet say we love him?*I dare not conclude that we have no love at all, when we are so reluctant to die. But I dare say, were our love more, we would die more willingly. If this holy flame were thoroughly kindled in our breasts, we should cry out with David, "As the deer pants after the water-brooks, so pants my soul after you, O God! My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?"

**By our unwillingness to die, it appears we are little weary of sin**. Did we feel sin to be the greatest evil, we should not be willing to have its company so long. "O foolish, sinful heart! have you been so long a cage of all unclean lusts, a fountain incessantly pouring forth the bitter waters of transgression, and are you not yet weary? Wretched soul! have you been so long wounded in all your faculties, so grievously languishing in all your works, so fruitful a soil of all iniquities, and are you not yet more weary? Would you still lie under your imperfections? Has your sin proved so profitable a commodity, so necessary a companion, such a delightful employment, that you do so much dread the parting day? May not God justly grant you your wishes, and seal you a lease of your desired distance from him, and nail your ears to these doors of misery, and exclude you eternally from his glory?"

It shows that we are insensible of the vanity of earth, when we are so reluctant to hear or think of our death. "Ah, foolish, wretched soul! does every prisoner groan for freedom? and every slave desire his jubilee? and every sick man long for health? and every hungry man for food? and do you alone abhor deliverance? Does the sailor wish to see land? Does the gardener desire the harvest, and the laborer to receive his pay? Does the *traveler*long to be at home, and the *racer*to win the prize, and the *soldier*to win the field? and are you reluctant to see your labors finished, and to receive the end of your faith and sufferings? Have your griefs been only dreams? If they were—yet methinks you should not be afraid of waking. Or is it not rather the world's delights that are all mere dreams and shadows? Or is the world become of late more kind? We may at our peril reconcile ourselves to the world—but it will never reconcile itself to us. O unworthy soul! who had rather dwell in this land of darkness, and wander in this barren wilderness—than be at rest with Jesus Christ! who had rather stay among the wolves, and daily suffer the scorpion's stings—than praise the Lord with the host of Heaven."

*This unwillingness to die does actually impeach us of high treason against the Lord.* Is it not choosing earth before him, and taking present things for our happiness, and consequently making them our very God? If we did indeed make God our end, our rest, our portion, our treasure—then how is it possible but we should desire to enjoy him? It, moreover, reveals some dissimulation. Would you have any man believe you when you call the Lord your only hope, and speak of Christ as all in all, and of the joy that is in his presence—and yet would endure the hardest life, rather than die and enter into his presence?

What self-contradiction is this, to talk so harshly of the world and the flesh, to groan and complain of sin and suffering—and yet fear no day more than that we expect should bring our final freedom! What hypocrisy is this, to profess to strive and fight for Heaven, which we are reluctant to come to! and spend one hour after another in prayer for that which we would not have! Hereby we wrong the Lord and his promises, and disgrace his ways in the eyes of the world; as if we would persuade them to question whether God is true to his word or not; whether there be any such glory as the Scripture mentions.

When they see those so reluctant to leave their hold of present things, who have professed to live by faith, and have boasted of their hopes in another world, and spoken disgracefully of all things below, in comparison of things above—how does this confirm the world in their unbelief and sensuality!

"Surely," say they, "if these professors did expect so much glory, and make so light of the world as they seem—then they would not themselves be so reluctant to die." O how are we ever able to repair the wrong which we do to God and souls by this scandal? And what an honor to God, what a strengthening to believers, what a conviction to unbelievers would it be—if Christians in this answered their profession, and cheerfully welcome the news of rest!

It also evidently shows that we have spent much time to little purpose. Have we not had all our life-time to prepare to die; so many years to make ready for one hour; and are we so unready and unwilling yet? What have we done? Why have we lived? Had we any greater matters to mind? Would we have wished for more frequent warnings? How often has death entered the habitations of our neighbors! How often has it knocked at our own door! How many diseases have vexed our bodies—that we have been forced to receive the sentence of death! And are we unready and unwilling after all this? O careless, dead-hearted sinners! unworthy neglecters of God's warnings! faithless betrayers of our own souls!

Consider, *not to die is never to be happy*. To escape death is to miss of blessedness, except God should translate us, as Enoch and Elijah, which he never did before or since. "If in this life only we have hope in Christ—then we are of all men most miserable."*If you would not die and go to Heaven, what would you have more than an epicure or a beast?*Why do we pray, and fast, and mourn; why do we suffer the contempt of the world; why are we Christians, and not pagans and infidels—if we do not desire a life to come?

Would you lose your faith and labor, Christian; all your duties and sufferings, all the end of your life, and all the blood of Christ, and *be contented with the portion of a worldling or a brute?*Rather say, as one did on his deathbed, when he was asked whether he was willing to die or not, *"Let him be reluctant to die who is reluctant to be with Christ."*Is God willing by death to glorify us—and are we unwilling to die, that we may be glorified? Methinks, if a prince were willing to make you his heir, you would scarcely be unwilling to accept it; the refusing such a kindness would reveal ingratitude and unworthiness. As God has resolved against them who make excuses when they should come to Christ, "None of those men, who were bidden, shall taste of my supper;" so it is just with him to resolve against us, who frame excuses when we should come to glory.

The Lord Jesus Christ was willing to come from Heaven to earth for us—and shall we be unwilling to remove from earth to Heaven for ourselves and him! He might have said, "What is it to me if these sinners suffer? If they value their flesh above their spirits, and their lusts above my Father's love; if they will sell their souls for naught—who is it fit should be the loser? Should I, whom they have wronged? Must they willfully transgress my law, and I undergo their deserved pain? Must I come down from Heaven to earth, and clothe myself with human flesh, be spit upon, and scorned by man, and fast, and weep, and sweat, and suffer, and bleed, and die a cursed death—and all this for wretched worms who would rather hazard their souls than forbear one forbidden morsel? Do they cast away themselves so slightly—and must I redeem them so dearly?"

Thus we see Christ had reason enough to have made him unwilling; and yet did he voluntarily condescend. But we have no reason against our coming to him; except we will reason against our hopes, and plead for a perpetuity of our own calamities. Christ came down to raise us up; and would we have him lose his blood and labor and go again without us? Has he bought our rest at so dear a rate? Is our inheritance "purchased with his blood?" And are we, after all this, reluctant to enter his rest? Ah, sirs! it was Christ, and not we, who had cause to be reluctant. May the Lord forgive and heal this foolish ingratitude!

Do we not combine with our most cruel foes in their most malicious designs, while we are reluctant to die and go to Heaven? What is the devil's daily business? Is it not to keep our souls from God? And shall we be content with this? Is it not the one half of Hell which we wish to ourselves, while we desire to be absent from Heaven? What sport is this to Satan, that his desires and yours, Christian, should so concur! that, when he sees he can not get you to Hell, he can so long keep you out of Heaven, and make you the earnest petitioner for it yourself! O gratify not the devil so much to your own injury!

Do not our daily fears of death make our lives a continual torment? Those lives which might be full of joy, in the daily contemplation of the life to come, and the sweet, delightful thoughts of bliss—how do we fill them up with causeless terrors! Thus we consume our own comforts, and prey upon our truest pleasures. When we might lie down, and rise up, and walk abroad, with our hearts full of the joys of God—we continually fill them with perplexing fears. *For he who fears dying, must be always fearing because he has always reason to expect it.*And how can that man's life be comfortable, who lives in continual fear of losing his comforts?

Are not these fears of death self-created sufferings? as if God had not inflicted enough upon us—but we must inflict more upon ourselves. Is not death bitter enough to the flesh of itself—but we must double and treble its bitterness? The sufferings laid upon us by God do all lead to happy outcomes; the progress is from *tribulation*to *patience*, from thence to *experience*, and so to *hope*, and at last to *glory*. But the sufferings we make for ourselves are circular and endless, from sin to suffering, from suffering to sin, and so to suffering again. And not only so—but they multiply in their course; every sin is greater than the former, and so every suffering also: so that, except we think God has made us to be our own tormentors, we have small reason to nourish our fears of death.

And are they not useless, unprofitable fears? As all our care "cannot make one hair white or black, nor add one cubit to our stature"—so neither can our fear prevent our sufferings, nor delay our death one hour: willing or unwilling, we must die. Many a man's fears have hastened his end—but no man's did ever avert it.

It is true, a cautious fear concerning the danger after death has profited many, and is very useful to the preventing of that danger. *But for a member of Christ, and an heir of Heaven, to be afraid of entering his own inheritance, is a sinful, useless fear.*

Do not our fears of dying ensnare our souls, and add strength to many temptations? What made Peter deny his Lord? What makes apostates in suffering times forsake the truth? Why does the green blade of unrooted faith wither before the beat of persecution? Fear of imprisonment and poverty may do much—but fear of death will do much more. So much fear as we have of death, so much cowardice we usually have in the cause of God; besides the multitude of unbelieving contrivances, and discontents at the wise disposal of God, and hard thoughts of most of his providences, of which this sin makes us guilty.

Let us further consider what sufficient time most of us have had. Why should not a man, that would die at all, be as willing at thirty or forty, if God see fit, as at seventy or eighty?*Length of time does not conquer corruption—it never withers nor decays through age.*Except we receive an addition of grace as well as time, we naturally grow worse.

"O my soul, depart in peace! As you would not desire an unlimited state in wealth and honor, so desire it not in point of time. If you were sensible how little you deserve an hour of that patience which you have enjoyed, you would think you had had a large part. Is it not divine wisdom that sets the bounds? God will honor himself by various people and ages, and not by one person or age. Seeing you have acted your own part, and finished your appointed course—come down contentedly, that others may follow, who must have their turns as well as yourself. Much time has much duty; beg therefore for grace to improve it better; but be content with your share of time.

"You have also had a competency of the comforts of life. God might have made your life a burden, until you had been as weary of possessing it as you are now afraid of losing it. He might have suffered you to have consumed your days in ignorance, without the true knowledge of Christ—but he has opened your eyes in the morning of your days, and acquainted you early with the business of your life. Has your heavenly Father caused your lot to fall in Europe—not in Asia or Africa; in England—not in Spain or Italy? *Has he filled up all your life with mercies, and do you now think your share too small?*What a multitude of hours of consolation, of delightful Sabbaths, of pleasant studies; of precious companions, of wonderful deliverances, of excellent opportunities, of fruitful labors, of joyful tidings, of sweet experiences, of astonishing providences—has your life partaken of!

"Has your life been so sweet that you are reluctant to leave it? Is this your thanks to Him who is thus drawing you to his own sweetness? O foolish soul! would that you were as covetous after eternity, as you are for a fading, perishing life! and after the presence of God in glory, as you are for continuance on earth! Then you would cry, *Why is his chariot so long in coming? why tarry the wheels of his chariot? How long, Lord? how long?*"

What if God should let you live many years—but deny you the mercies which you have hitherto enjoyed? Might he not give you life, as he gave the murmuring Israelites quail? He might give you life until you are weary of living, and as glad to be rid of it as Judas or Ahithophel; and make you like many miserable creatures in the world, who can hardly forbear laying violent hands on themselves.

Be not therefore so importunate for life, which may prove a judgment instead of a blessing. How many of the precious servants of God, of all ages and places, have gone before you! You are not to enter an untrodden path, nor appointed first to break the ice. Except Enoch and Elijah, which of the saints have escaped death? And are you better than they? There are many millions of saints dead, more than now remain on earth. What a number of your own bosom friends and Christian companions are now gone, and why should you be so reluctant to follow? Nay, has not Jesus Christ himself gone this way? Has he not sanctified the grave to us, and perfumed the dust with his own body, and are you reluctant to follow him too? Rather say as Thomas, 'Let us also go, that we may die with him.'

If what has been said will not persuade, Scripture and reason have little force. I have said the more on this subject, finding it so needful to myself and others; finding among so many Christians, who could do and suffer much for Christ—so few that can willingly die; and of many, who have somewhat subdued other corruptions, so few that have gotten the conquest of this.

I persuade not the ungodly from fearing death; it is a wonder that they fear it no more, and spend not their days in continual horror.

***~~Chapter 11.~~***

***~~The Importance of Leading a Heavenly Life upon Earth.~~***

The reasonableness of delighting in the thoughts of the saints' rest.

Christians exhorted to it, by considering:

1. It will evidence their sincere piety.

2. It is the highest excellence of the Christian desires.

3. It leads to the most comfortable life.

4. It will be the best preservative from temptations to sin.

5. It will invigorate their graces and duties.

6. It will be their best cordial in afflictions.

7. It will render them most profitable to others.

8. It will honor God.

9. Without it we disobey the commands, and lose the most gracious and delightful discoveries of the word of God.

10. It is the more reasonable to have our hearts *with God*, as his is much on us.

11. It is the more reasonable to have our hearts *in Heaven*, where we have so much interest and relation.

12. Besides, there is nothing but Heaven worth setting our hearts upon.

Is there such a rest remaining for us?

Why, then, are not our thoughts more upon if?

Why are not our hearts continually there?

Why dwell we not there in constant contemplation?

What is the cause of this neglect?

Are we reasonable in this, or are we not?

Has the eternal God provided us such a glory, and promised to take us up to dwell with himself?

Is not this worth thinking on?

Should not the strongest desires of our hearts be after it?

Do we believe this, and yet forget and neglect it?

If God will not give us permission to approach this light, what mean all his earnest invitations?

Why does he so condemn our earthly-mindedness, and command us to set our affections on things above?

Ah, vile hearts! Were God against it, we were likelier to be for it; but when he commands our hearts to Heaven—then they will not stir one inch. We are like our predecessors, the sinful Israelites, when God would have them march for Canaan, then they mutiny, and will not stir; but when God bids them not go, then will they be presently marching. If God says, "Love not the world, nor the things of the world," we dote upon it. How freely, how frequently can we think of our pleasures, our friends, our labors, our flesh and its lusts! Yes, our wrongs and miseries, our fears and sufferings!

But where is the Christian whose heart is on his eternal rest? What is the matter? Are we so full of joy that we need no more? Or is there nothing in Heaven for our joyous thoughts? Or rather, are not our hearts carnal and stupid? Let us humble these sensual hearts, that have in them no more of Christ and glory. If this world was the only subject of our discourse, all would call us ungodly; why, then, may we not call our hearts ungodly, that have so little delight in Christ and Heaven?

But I am speaking only to those whose *portion*is in Heaven, whose *hopes*are there, and who have forsaken all to enjoy this glory—and shall I be discouraged from persuading such to be heavenly-minded? Fellow-Christians, if you will not hear and obey, who will? Well may we be discouraged to exhort the blind, ungodly world, and may say, as Moses did, "Behold, the children of *Israel*have not hearkened unto me; how then shall *Pharaoh*hear me?"

I require you, reader, as ever you hope for a part in this glory, that you presently:
take your heart to task,
chide it for its willful strangeness to God,
turn your thoughts from the pursuit of vanity,
bend your soul to study eternity,
busy it about the life to come,
habituate yourself to such contemplations,
and let not those thoughts be seldom and cursory—but bathe your soul in Heaven's delights.

If your backward soul begins to flag and your thoughts to scatter—then call them back, hold them to their work, bear not with their laziness, nor connive at one neglect. And when you have, in obedience to God, tried this work, got acquainted with it, and kept a guard on your thoughts until they are accustomed to obey, *you will then find yourself in the suburbs of Heaven*, and that there is indeed a sweetness in the work and way of God, and that the life of Christianity is a life of joy. You will meet with those abundant consolations which you have prayed, panted, and groaned after—and which so few Christians do ever here obtain, because they know not this way to them, or else make not conscience of walking in it.

Say not, "We are unable to set our own hearts on Heaven; this must be the work of God only." Though God is the chief disposer of your hearts—yet, next under him, you have the greatest command of them yourselves. Though without Christ you can do nothing—yet under him you may do much, and must, or else it will be undone, and yourselves undone through your neglect. *Christians, if your souls were healthful and vigorous, they would perceive incomparably more delight and sweetness in the believing, joyful thoughts of your future blessedness*—than the soundest stomach finds in its food, or the strongest senses in the enjoyment of their objects; so little painful would this work be to you.

But because I know, while we have flesh about us and any remains of that "carnal mind which is enmity against God" and this noble work, that all motives are little enough, I will here lay down some considerations, which, if you will deliberately weigh with an impartial judgment, I doubt not will prove effectual with your hearts, and make you resolve on this excellent duty.

More particularly consider:
it will evidence your sincere piety;
it is the highest excellence of the Christian temper;
it is the way to live most comfortably;
it will be the best preservative from temptations to sin;
it will enliven your graces and duties;
it will be your best cordial in all afflictions;
it will render you most profitable to others;
it will honor God;
without it you will disobey the commands and lose the most gracious and delightful discoveries of the word of God.

It is also the more reasonable to have your hearts with God, as his is so much on you; and in Heaven, where you have so much interest and relation; besides, *there is nothing but Heaven worth setting your hearts upon.*

**1. Consider that a heart set upon Heaven will be one of the most unquestionable evidences of your sincerity, and a clear discovery of a true work of saving grace upon your souls.**You are often asking, "How shall we know that we are truly sanctified?" Here you have a sign infallible from the mouth of Jesus Christ himself: "Where your treasure is, there will your hearts be also." God is the saints' treasure and happiness; Heaven is the place where they must fully enjoy him. A heart, therefore, set upon Heaven, is a heart set upon God. Surely a heart set upon God, through Christ, is the truest evidence of saving grace.

When *learning*will be no proof of grace; when *knowledge*, *duties*, *gifts*will fail; when arguments from your tongue or hand may be confuted; yet then will this, from the bent of your heart, prove you sincere. Take a poor Christian, of a weak understanding, a feeble memory, a stammering tongue—yet his heart is set on God, he has chosen him for his portion, his thoughts are on eternity, his desires are there; he cries out, "O that I were there!" He takes that day for a time of imprisonment, in which he has not had one refreshing view of eternity. I had rather die in this man's condition, than in the case of him who has the most eminent gifts, and is most admired for his performances—while his heart is not thus taken up with God.

The man that Christ will find out at the last day, and condemn for lack of a "wedding garment," will be one that lacks this frame of heart. The question will not then be, How much have you known, or professed, or talked? but, *How much have you loved Christ, and where was your heart?*Christians, as you would have a proof of your title to glory, labor to get your hearts above. If sin and Satan keep not your affections from thence, they will never be able to keep away your souls.

**2. A heart in Heaven is the highest excellence of Christian temperament.**As there is a common excellence by which Christians differ from the world, so there is this peculiar dignity of spirit, by which the more excellent differ from the rest. As the noblest of creatures, so *the noblest of Christians are they whose faces are set most direct for Heaven*. Such a heavenly saint, who has been enrapt up to God in his contemplations, and is newly come down from the views of Christ—what discoveries will he make of those superior regions! How high and sacred is his discourse! enough to convince an understanding hearer that he has seen the Lord, and that no man could speak such words, except he had been with God. This, this is the noble Christian.

The most famous mountains and trees are those that reach nearest to Heaven; and *he is the choicest Christian whose heart is most frequently and most delightfully there*. If a man has lived near the king, or has seen the sultan of Persia, or the grand Turk, he will be thought a step higher than his neighbors. What, then, shall we judge of him that daily travels as far as Heaven, and there has seen the King of kings, has frequent admittance into the divine presence, and feasts his soul upon the tree of life? For my part, I value this man before the noblest, the richest, the most learned in the world.

**3. A heavenly mind is the nearest and truest way to a life of comfort.** The countries far north are cold and frozen, because they are distant from the sun. What makes such frozen, uncomfortable Christians—but their living so far from Heaven? And what makes others so warm in comforts—but their living higher, and having nearer access to God? When the sun in the spring draws nearer to our part of the earth, how do all things welcome its approach! The earth looks green, the trees shoot forth, the plants revive, the birds sing, and all things smile upon us.

If we would but try this life with God, and keep these hearts above, what a spring of joy would be within us! How would we forget our winter sorrows! How early should we rise to sing the praise of our great Creator!*O Christian, get above!*Those that have been there have found it warmer; and I doubt not but you have sometimes tried it yourself.

When have you largest comforts? Is it not when you have conversed with God, and meditated on the inhabitants of the higher world, and viewed their mansions, and filled your soul with the forethoughts of glory? If you know by experience what this practice is, I dare say you know what spiritual joy is. If, as David professes, "the light of God's countenance more gladdens the heart than corn and wine," then, surely, they that draw nearest, and most behold it, must be fullest of these joys.

Whom should we blame, then, that we are so void of divine consolation—but our own negligent hearts? God has provided us a crown of glory, and promised to set it shortly on our heads—and we will not so much as think of it! He bids us behold and rejoice, and we will not so much as look at it! Yet we complain for lack of comfort. It is by believing that we are filled with joy and peace, and no longer than we continue believing. It is in hope the saints rejoice, and no longer than they continue hoping.

God's Spirit works our comforts, by setting our own spirits at work upon the promises, and raising our thoughts to the place of our comforts. As you would delight a covetous man by showing him gold—so God delights his people by leading them, as it were, into Heaven, and showing them himself and their rest with him. He does not kindle our joys while we are idle, or taken up with other things. He gives the fruits of the earth, while we plough, and sow, and weed, and water, and dress, and with patience expect his blessing. In the same way, does he give the joys of the soul.

I entreat you, reader, in the name of the Lord, and as you value the life of constant joy, and that good conscience which is a continual feast—to enter upon this work seriously, and learn the *art of heavenly-mindedness*, and you shall find the increase a hundred fold, and the benefit abundantly exceed your labor.

But this is the misery of man's nature: though every man naturally hates sorrow and loves the most merry and joyful life—yet few love the *way*to joy, or will endure the pains by which it is obtained; they will take the first that comes to hand, and content themselves with earthly pleasures—rather than ascend to Heaven to seek it. Yet, when all is done, they must have it there, or be without it.

**4. A heart in Heaven will be a most excellent preservative against temptations to sin**. It will keep the heart well employed. *When we are idle, we tempt the devil to tempt us*; as careless people become thieves. A heart in Heaven can reply to the tempter, as Nehemiah did: "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come!" It has no leisure to be lustful or wanton, ambitious or worldly. If you were but busy in your lawful callings, you would not be so ready to hearken to temptations; much less if you were also busy above with God.

Would a judge be persuaded to rise from the bench, when he is sitting upon a case of life and death, to go and play with children in the streets? *No more will a Christian, when he is taking a survey of his eternal rest, give ear to the alluring charms of Satan or the world.*The children of that kingdom should never have time for trifles, especially when they are employed in the affairs of the kingdom; and this employment is one of the saints' chief preservatives from temptations.

A heavenly mind is the freest from sin, because it has truer and livelier apprehensions of spiritual things. He has so deep an insight into the evil of sin, the vanity of the creature, the brutishness of fleshly, sensual delights—that temptations have little power over him. "In vain the net is spread," says Solomon, "in the sight of any bird." And usually in vain does Satan lay his snares to entrap the soul that plainly sees them. *Earth*is the place for his temptations, and the ordinary bait. How shall these ensnare the Christian who has left the earth and walks with God?

Is converse with wise and learned men the way to make one wise? Much more is converse with God. If travelers return home with wisdom and experience, how much more he who travels to Heaven! If our bodies are suited to the air and climate we most live in, his understanding must be fuller of light who lives with the Father of lights. The men of the world that dwell below, and know no other conversation but earthly—it is no wonder if their "understanding be darkened," and Satan "take them captive at his will." *How can worms and moles see, whose dwelling is always in the earth?*

While this dust is in their eyes, it is no wonder that they mistake:
gain, for godliness,
sin, for grace,
the world, for God,
their own wills, for the law of Christ,
and, in the outcome, Hell for Heaven.

But when a Christian withdraws himself from his worldly thoughts, and begins to converse with God in Heaven, methinks he is, as Nebuchadnezzar, taken from the beasts of the field to the throne, and "his reason returns unto him." When he has had a glimpse of eternity, and looks down on the world again, how does he charge with folly:
his neglects of Christ,
his fleshly pleasures,
his earthly cares!

How does he say of his laughter, It is mad; and of his vain mirth, What does it accomplish? How does he truly think there is no man in *Bedlam*so truly mad as willful sinners, and unworthy slighters of Christ and glory!

This makes a dying man usually wiser than others, because he looks on eternity as near, and has more heart-piercing thoughts of it than he ever had in health and prosperity. Then many of the most bitter enemies of the saints have their eyes opened, and like Balaam, cry out, "O that I might die the death of the righteous, and that my last end might be like his!"

Yet let the same men recover, and lose their apprehensions of the life to come—and how quickly do they lose their understanding with it! Tell a dying sinner of the riches, honors or pleasures of the world—and would he not answer, "What is all this to me, who must presently appear before God, and give an account of all my life?"

Christian, if the apprehended nearness of eternity will work such strange effects upon the ungodly, and make them so much wiser than before—O what rare effects would it produce in you, could you always dwell in the presence of God, and in lively thoughts of your everlasting state! Surely a believer, if he improve his faith, may ordinarily have more quickening apprehensions of the life to come, in the time of his health, than an unbeliever has at the hour of his death.

*A heavenly mind is also fortified against temptations, because the affections are thoroughly prepossessed with the high delights of another world.* He who *loves*most, and not he who only *knows*most—will most easily resist the motions of sin. The will does as sweetly relish goodness as the understanding does truth; and here lies much of a Christian's strength. *When you have had a fresh, delightful taste of Heaven, you will not be so easily persuaded from it.*You cannot persuade a child to part with his sweets while the taste is in his mouth. O that you would be much in feeding on the hidden manna, and frequently tasting the delights of Heaven! *How would this confirm your resolutions, and make you despise the fooleries of the world, and scorn to be cheated with such childish toys.*

If the devil had set upon Peter in the mount of transfiguration, when he saw Moses and Elijah talking with Christ, would he so easily have been drawn to deny his Lord? What! with all that glory in his eye? No. So if he should set upon a believing soul, when he is taken up into the mount with Christ—what would such a soul say? "Get behind me, Satan; would you persuade me hence with trifling pleasures, and steal my heart from this my rest? Would you have me sell these joys for nothing? Is any honor or delight like this? Can that be profit, for which I must lose this?"

But Satan stays until we are come down, and the taste of Heaven is out of our mouths, and the glory we saw is even forgotten—and then he easily deceives our hearts. Though the Israelites below eat and drink, and rise up to play before their idol—Moses in the *mount*will not do so.*O, if we could keep the taste of our souls continually delighted with the sweetness above, with what disdain would we spit out the poisoned baits of sin!*

Besides, while the heart is set on Heaven, a man is under God's protection. If Satan then assaults us, God is more engaged for our defense, and will doubtless stand by us and say, "My grace is sufficient for you." *When a man is in the way of God's blessing, he is in the less danger of sin's enticing.*Amidst your temptations, Christian reader, use much this powerful remedy: keep close with God by a heavenly mind; follow your business above with Christ, and you will find this a surer help than any other. "The way of life is above to the wise, that he may depart from Hell beneath." Remember that "Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generation;" for he "walked with God." God said to Abraham, "Walk before me, and be perfect."

**5. The diligent keeping your hearts in Heaven will maintain the vigor of all your graces, and put life into all your duties.** The heavenly Christian is the lively Christian. It is our strangeness to Heaven which makes us so dull. How will the soldier hazard his life, and the mariner pass through storms and waves, and no difficulty keep them back—when they think of an uncertain, perishing treasure! What life, then, would it put into a Christian's endeavors, if he would frequently think of his everlasting treasure! We run so slowly, and strive so lazily—because we so little mind the *prize*.

Observe the man who is much in Heaven, and you shall see he is not like other Christians; something of what he has seen above, appears in all his duty and conversation. If a preacher, how heavenly are his sermons! If a private Christian, what heavenly converse, prayers, and deportment! Set yourself upon this employment, and others will see the face of your conduct shine, and say, Surely he has been "with God on the mount."

But if you lie, complaining of deadness and dullness; that you cannot love Christ, nor rejoice in his love; that you have no life in prayer, or any other duty, and yet neglect this quickening employment—then you are the cause of your own complaints.

Is not your life "hid with Christ in God?" Where must you go but to Christ for it? And where is that—but to Heaven, "where Christ is?" "You will not come to Christ, that you may have life." If you would have light and heat—then why are you no more in the sunshine? For lack of this recourse to Heaven, your soul is as a lamp not lighted, and your duties as a sacrifice without fire. Fetch one coal daily from this altar, and see if your offering will not burn. Light your lamp at this flame, and feed it daily with oil from hence, and see if it will not gloriously shine. *Keep close to this reviving fire, and see if your affections will not be warm*. In your lack of love to God, lift up your eye of faith to Heaven, behold his beauty, contemplate his excellencies—and see whether his amiableness and perfect goodness will not ravish your heart. As exercise gives appetite, strength, and vigor to the body—so these heavenly exercises will quickly cause the increase of grace and spiritual life.

Besides, it is not false or strange fire which you fetch from Heaven for your sacrifices. The zeal which is kindled by your meditations on Heaven, is most likely to be a heavenly zeal. Some men's fervency is only drawn from their books, some from the sharpness of affliction, some from the mouth of a powerful minister, and some from the attention of an auditory; but he who knows his way to Heaven, and derives it daily from the true fountain, shall have his soul revived with the water of life, and enjoy that quickening which is peculiar to the saints. By this faith you may offer Abel's sacrifice, more excellent than that of common men, and "by it obtain witness that you are righteous, God testifying of your gifts" that they are sincere.

When others are ready, like Baal's priests, to "cut themselves," because their sacrifice will not burn—you may breathe the spirit of Elijah, and in the chariot of contemplation soar aloft, until your soul and sacrifice gloriously flame, though the flesh and the world should cast upon them all the water of their opposing enmity.

Say not, How can mortals ascend to Heaven? *Faith has wings, and meditation is its chariot*. Faith is as a burning glass to your sacrifice, and meditation sets it to the face of the sun; only take it not away too soon—but hold it there awhile, and your soul will feel the happy effect.

Reader, are you not thinking, when you see a lively Christian, and hear his fervent prayers and edifying discourse, "O how happy a man is this! O that my soul were in this blessed condition!" Why, I here advise you, from God—set your soul conscientiously to this work, wash frequently in this *Jordan*, and your leprous, dead soul will revive, "and you shall know that there is a God in Israel," and that you may live a vigorous and joyful life, if you do not willfully neglect your own mercies.

**6. Frequent believing views of glory are the most precious cordials in all afflictions.** These cordials, by cheering our spirits, render our sufferings far more easy, enable us to bear them with patience and joy, and so strengthen our resolutions, that we forsake not Christ for fear of trouble. If the way be ever so rough—can it be tedious if it leads to Heaven? O sweet sickness, sweet reproaches, sweet imprisonments, and sweet death—which are accompanied with these tastes of our future rest!

This keeps the suffering from the *soul*, so that it can only touch the *flesh*. Had it not been for that little (alas! too little) taste which I had of rest—my sufferings would have been grievous, and death more terrible. I may say. "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." Unless this promised rest "had been my delight, I would then have perished in my affliction. One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after—that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple. For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion. In the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me upon a rock. And now shall my head be lifted up above my enemies round about me. Therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises unto the Lord."

*All sufferings are nothing to us, so far as we have these supporting joys.* When persecution and fear have shut the doors, Christ can come in, and stand in the midst, and say to his disciples, "Peace be unto you!" Paul and Silas can be in Heaven, even when they are thrust into the inner prison, their bodies scourged with "many stripes, and their feet fast in the stocks." The martyrs found more rest in their flames than their persecutors in their pomp and tyranny; because they foresee the flames they escape, and the rest to which their fiery chariot is conveying them. If the Son of God will walk with us, we are safe in the midst of those flames which shall devour those who cast us in.

*Abraham*went out of his country, "not knowing where he went;" because "he looked for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

*Moses*"esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; because he had respect unto the recompense of reward. He forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; because he endured as seeing Him who is invisible. Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection."

Even Jesus, "the author and finisher of our faith, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

*This is the noble advantage of faith: it can look on the means and end together.* The great reason of our impatience and censuring of God, is that we gaze on the evil itself—but fix not our thoughts on what is beyond it. They that saw Christ only on the cross, or in the grave, shook their heads and thought him lost. But God saw him dying, buried, rising, glorified; and all this at one view. Faith will, in this, imitate God, so far as it has the looking-glass of a promise to help it.

We see God burying us under ground—but we foresee not the spring, when we shall all revive. Could we but clearly see Heaven, as the end of all God's dealings with us, surely none of his dealings could be grievous. If God would once raise us to this life, we should find, that though Heaven and sin are at a great distance; yet, Heaven and a prison, or banishment; Heaven and the belly of a whale, or a den of lions; Heaven and consuming sickness, or invading death—are at no such distance. But as "Abraham saw Christ's day and rejoiced," so we, in our most forlorn state, might see that day when Christ shall give us rest, and therein rejoice.

I beseech you, Christian, for the honor of the Gospel, and for your soul's comfort, leave not this heavenly art to be learned when, in your greatest extremity, you have most need to use it. He who, with Stephen, "sees the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God," will comfortably bear the shower of stones. "The joy of the Lord is our strength," and that joy must be drawn from the place of our joy; and if we walk without our strength, how long are we likely to endure?

**7. He whose heart is in Heaven, is the profitable Christian to all about him.**When a man is in a strange country, how glad is he of the company of one of his own nation! How delightful is it to talk of their own country, their acquaintance, and affairs at home! With what pleasure did Joseph talk with his brethren, and inquire after his father and his brother Benjamin!

Is it not so to a Christian, to talk with his brethren that have been above, and inquire after his Father, and Christ his Lord? When a *worldly man*will talk of nothing but the world, and a *politician*of state affairs, and a mere *scholar*of human learning, and a *common professor*of his duties—the heavenly man will be speaking of Heaven, and the strange glory his faith has seen, and our speedy and blessed meeting there. O how refreshing and useful are his expressions! How his words pierce and melt the heart, and transform the hearers into other men! How does his "doctrine drop as the rain, and his speech distill as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass," while his lips publish the name of the Lord, and ascribe greatness unto his God! His sweet discourse of Heaven is like the "box of precious ointment," which, being "poured upon the head of Christ, filled the house with the fragrance." All that are near may be refreshed by it.

Happy are the people that have a heavenly minister! Happy are the children and servants that have a heavenly father or master! Happy is the man that has a heavenly companion, who will watch over your ways, strengthen you when you are weak, cheer you when you are drooping, and "comfort you with the comfort with which he himself" has been so often comforted of God! This is he who will always be blowing at the spark of your spiritual life and drawing your soul to God, and will say to you, as the Samaritan woman, "Come and see one that has told me all that I ever did;" one that has loved our souls to the death. "Is not this the Christ?"

Is not "the knowledge of God and him eternal life?" Is it not the glory of the saints to see his glory? Come to this man's house and sit at his table, and he will feast your soul with the dainties of Heaven. Travel with him along the way, and he will direct and quicken you in your journey to Heaven. Trade with him in the world, and he will counsel you to buy "the pearl of great price." If you wrong him, he can pardon you, remembering that Christ has pardoned his greater offences. If you are angry, he is meek, considering the meekness of his heavenly Pattern. Or, if he quarrels with you, he is soon reconciled, when he recollects that in Heaven you must be everlasting friends.

This is the Christian of the right stamp, and all about him are better for him. How unprofitable is the society of all other sorts of professors in comparison with this! If a man should come from Heaven, how would men long to hear what reports he would make of the other world, and what he had seen, and what the blessed there enjoy! Would they not think this man the best companion, and his discourses the most profitable? Why, then, do you value the company of heavenly saints no more, and inquire no more of them, and relish their discourse no better? For every saint shall go to Heaven in person, and is frequently there in spirit, and has often viewed it in the looking-glass of the Gospel. For my part, I had rather have the company of a heavenly-minded Christian, than that of the most learned disputants or princely commanders.

**8. No man so highly honors God, as he whose heart is in Heaven.**Is not a parent dishonored when his children feed on husks, are clothed with rags, and keep company with none but rogues and beggars? And is not our heavenly Father, when we, who call ourselves his children, feed on earth, and the garb of our souls is like that of the world; and our hearts familiarly converse with and "cleave to the dust," rather than stand continually in our Father's presence? Surely we live below the children of the King, not according to the height of our hopes, nor the provision of our Father's house, and the great preparations made for his saints.

It is well that we have a Father of tender compassion, who will own his children in rags. If he did not first pledge his interest in us, neither ourselves nor others could know us to be his people. But when a Christian can live above, and rejoice his soul with the things that are unseen, how is God honored by such a one! The Lord will testify for him: This man believes me, and takes me at my word, he rejoices in my promise before he has possession; he can be thankful for what his bodily eyes never saw; his rejoicing is not in the flesh; his heart is with me; he loves my presence, and he shall surely enjoy it in my kingdom forever. "Blessed are those who have not seen, and yet have believed. Those who honor me, I will honor."

How did God esteem himself honored by Caleb and Joshua, when they went into the promised land and brought back to their brethren a taste of the fruits, and spoke well of the good land, and encouraged the people! What a promise and recompense did they receive!

**9. A soul that does not set its affections an things above, disobeys the commands, and loses the most gracious and delightful discoveries of the word of God.** The same God that has commanded you to believe, and to be a Christian, has commanded to "seek those things which are above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God: and to set our affections on things above, not on things of the earth." The same God that has forbidden you to murder, steal, or commit adultery, has forbidden you the neglect of this great duty; and dare you willfully disobey him? Why not make conscience of one as well as the other? He has made it your duty, as well as the means of your comfort, that a double bond may engage you not to forsake your own mercies.

Besides, what are all the most glorious descriptions of Heaven, all those discoveries of our future blessedness and precious promises of our rest—but lost to you? Are not these the stars in the firmament of Scripture, and the golden lines in that book of God? Methinks you should not part with one of these *promises*, no, not for a world. As Heaven is the perfection of all our mercies, so the promises of it in the Gospel are the very soul of the Gospel. Is a comfortable word from the mouth of God of such worth, that all the comforts in the world are nothing to it? And do you neglect and overlook so many of them? Why should God reveal so much of his counsel, and tell us beforehand of the joys we shall possess—but to make us know it for our joy? If it had not been to fill us with the delights of our foreknown blessedness, he might have kept his purpose to himself, and never have let us know it until we came to enjoy it. Yes, when we had got possession of our rest, he might still have concealed its *eternity*from us, and then the fears of losing it would have diminished the sweetness of our joys.

But it has pleased our Father to open his counsel, and let us know the very intent of his heart, that our joy might be full, and that we might live as the heirs of such a kingdom. And shall we now overlook all? Shall we live in earthly cares and sorrows, and rejoice no more in these heavenly discoveries than if the Lord had never written them? If your prince had sealed you a title of some lordship, how often would you cast your eyes upon it, and made it your delightful study, until you should come to possess the dignity itself! And has God sealed you a title of Heaven, and do you let it lie by you, as if you had forgot it?*O that our hearts were as high as our hopes, and our hopes as high as these infallible promises!*

**10. It is only fair that our hearts should be on God, when the heart of God is so much on us.**If the Lord of glory can stoop so low as to set his heart on sinful dust, methinks we should easily be persuaded to set our hearts on Christ and glory, and ascend to him in our daily affections—who so much condescends to us.

Christian, do you not perceive that the heart of God is set upon you, and that he is still minding you with tender love—even when you forget him? Is he not following you with daily mercies, moving upon your soul, providing for your body, preserving both? Does he not bear you continually in the arms of love, and promise that "all shall work together for your good," and suit all his dealings to your greatest advantage, and "give his angels charge over you?" And can you be taken up with fleeting earthly joys, and forget your Lord, who forgets not you? *What unkind ingratitude!*

When he speaks of *his own kindness for us*, hear what he says: "Zion said, The Lord has forsaken me, and my Lord has forgotten me! Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget—yet will I not forget you. Behold, I have engraved you upon the palms of my hands!"

But when he speaks of *our regards to him*, the case is otherwise. "Does a maiden forget her jewelry, a bride her wedding ornaments? Yet my people have forgotten me, days without number!" Give no cause for God thus to expostulate with us. Rather let our souls get up to God, and visit him every morning, and our hearts be towards him every moment.

**11. Our interest in Heaven, and our relation to it, should continually keep our hearts upon it.**There our Father keeps his court. We call him "Our Father in Heaven." *Unworthy children, that can be so taken up in their play as to be mindless of such a Father.*There also is Christ, our head, our husband, our life; and shall we not look towards him, and go to him as often as we can, until we come to see him face to face? There also is the "New Jerusalem." And there are multitudes of our elder brethren. There are our friends and old acquaintances, whose society we so much delighted in, and whose departure hence we so much lamented; and is this not attractive to your thoughts? If they were within your reach on earth, you would go and visit them; and why not oftener visit them in spirit, and rejoice beforehand to think of meeting them there?

Socrates rejoiced that he should die, because he believed he should see Homer, Hesiod, and other eminent people. "How much more do I rejoice," said a pious old minister, "who am sure to see Christ my Savior, the eternal Son of God, besides so many wise, holy and renowned patriarchs, prophets, and apostles." A believer should look to Heaven, and contemplate the blessed state of the saints, and think with himself, "Though I am not yet so happy as to be with you—yet this is my daily comfort: you are my brethren and fellow-members in Christ, and therefore your joys are my joys, and your glory, by this near relation, is my glory; especially while I believe in the same Christ, and hold fast the same faith and obedience by which you were thus dignified, and rejoice in spirit with you, and congratulate your happiness in my daily meditations."

Moreover, our house and home is above, "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens!" Why do we then look no oftener towards it, and "groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our house which is from Heaven?" If our home were far meaner, surely we should remember it, because it is our home. If you were but banished into a strange land—how frequently would your thoughts be at home! And why is it not thus with us in respect to Heaven? *Is not that more truly and properly our home, where we must take up our everlasting abode*, than this, which we are every hour expecting to be separated from, and to see no more? We are strangers on earth, and Heaven is our country. We are heirs now, and that Heaven our inheritance; even "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled; and that fades not away, reserved in Heaven for us." We are here in continual distress and want, and there lies our substance; even "a better and an enduring substance."

Yes, the very hope of our souls is there; all our hope of relief from our distresses; all our hope of happiness, when here we are miserable; all this "hope is laid up for us in Heaven."

Why, beloved Christians, have we so much interest—and so few thoughts there? so near relation—and so little affection? Does it become us to be delighted in the company of strangers—so as to forget our Father and our Lord? Or to be so well pleased with those that hate and grieve us—as to forget our best and dearest friends. Or to be so fond of borrowed trifles—as to forget our eternal joy and rest?

God usually pleads his property in us; and thence concludes he will do us good, even because we are his people, whom he has chosen out of all the world. Why then do we not plead our interest in him, and so raise our hearts above; even because he is our God, and because Heaven is our sure possession? Men commonly over-love and overvalue their own things, and mind them too much. O that we could mind our own inheritance, and value it half as much as it deserves!

**12. Once more consider, that there is nothing but Heaven worth setting our hearts upon.** If God has them not, who shall? If you mind not your rest, what will you mind? Have you found out some other God; or something that will serve you instead of rest? Have you found on earth an eternal happiness? Where is it? What is it made of? Who was the man that found it out? Who was he who last enjoyed it? Where dwelt he? What was his name?

Or are you the first that ever discovered Heaven on earth? Ah, wretch! trust not to your discoveries; boast not of your gain until experience bids you to boast. Disquiet not yourself in looking for that which is not on earth, lest you learn your experience with the loss of your soul, which you might have learned on easier terms; even by the warnings of God in his word, and the loss of thousands of souls before you.

If Satan should take you up to the mountain of temptation, and "show you all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them," he could show you nothing that is worthy of your thoughts, much less to be preferred before your rest. Indeed, so far as duty and necessity require it, we must be content to mind the things below; but who is he who contains himself within the compass of those limits? Yet, if we ever so diligently contract our cares and thoughts, we shall find the least to be bitter and burdensome.

*Christian, see the emptiness of all these things, and the preciousness of the things above*. If your thoughts should, like the laborious bee, go over the world from flower to flower, from creature to creature, they would bring no honey or sweetness home, save what they gathered from their relations to eternity.

Though every truth of God is precious, and ought to be defended; yet even all our study of truth should be still in reference to our eternal rest; for the observation is too true, "that the lovers of controversies in religion have never been warmed with one spark of the love of God." And as for minding the "affairs of the church and the state;" so far as they illustrate the providence of God, and tend to the settling of the Gospel and the government of Christ, and consequently to the saving of our own souls and those of our posterity—they are well worth our diligent observation; but these are only their relations to eternity.

Even all our dealings in the world, our buying and selling, our eating and drinking, our building and marrying, our peace and war, so far as they relate not to the life to come—but tend only to the pleasing of the flesh, are not worthy the frequent thoughts of a Christian. And now, *does not your conscience say that there is nothing but Heaven, and the way to it, that is worth your minding?*

Now, reader, are these considerations weighty or not? Have I proved it to be your duty to keep your heart on things above, or have I not? If you say, *Not*, then I am confident that you contradict your own conscience. If you acknowledge yourself convinced of the duty, that very tongue of your shall condemn you, and that confession be pleaded against you, if you willfully neglect such a confessed duty. Be thoroughly willing, and the work is more than half done.

I have now a few PLAIN DIRECTIONS to give you for your help in this great work; but, alas! it is in vain to mention them, except you are willing to put them into practice. However, I will propose them to you, and may the Lord persuade your heart to the work!

***~~Chapter 12.~~***

***~~Directions How to Lead a Heavenly Life upon Earth.~~***

***~~I. The HINDRANCES to a heavenly life:~~***

1. Living in any known sin.

2. An earthly mind.

3. Ungodly companions.

4. A mere notional religion.

5. A proud haughty spirit.

6. A slothful spirit.

7. Resting in preparatives for a heavenly life, without the thing itself.

***~~II. The DUTIES which will promote a heavenly life:~~***

1. Be convinced that Heaven is the only treasure and happiness.

2. Labor to know your interest in it.

3. Realize how near it is.

4. Frequently and seriously talk of it.

5. Endeavor, in every duty, to raise your affections nearer to it.

6. To the same purpose improve every object and event.

7. Be much in the angelic work of praise.

8. Possess your souls with believing thoughts of the infinite love of God.

9. Carefully observe and cherish the motions of the Spirit of God.

10. Nor ever neglect the due care of your bodily health.

As you value the comforts of a heavenly walk, I must here charge you, from God, to avoid carefully some dangerous hindrances; and then faithfully and diligently to practice such duties as will especially assist you in attaining to a heavenly life.

***~~First. Let us consider those HINDRANCES which are to be avoided with all possible care.~~***

**1. Living in any known sin is a grand impediment to a heavenly life.**What havoc will this make in your soul!

O the joys that this has destroyed!

O the ruin it has made among men's graces!

O the soul-strengthening duties it has hindered!

Christian reader, are you one who has violated your conscience? Are you a willful neglecter of known duty, either public, private, or secret? Are you a slave to your appetite, or to any other commanding sense? Are you a proud seeker of your own esteem? Are you a peevish and passionate person, ready to take fire at every word, or look, or supposed slight? Are you a deceiver of others in your dealings, or one that will be rich, right or wrong?

If this is your case, I dare say Heaven and your soul are very great strangers. These "beams in your eye" will not allow you to look to Heaven; they will be "a cloud between you and your God." When you do but attempt to study eternity and gather refreshment from the life to come, your sin will presently look you in the face, and say, "These things belong not to you. How should you take comfort from Heaven, who take so much pleasure in the lusts of the flesh?"

How will this dampen your joys, and make the thoughts of that day and state become your trouble and not your delight! Every willful sin will be to your joys, as water to the fire; when you think to quicken them, this will quench them. It will utterly indispose and disable you, that you can no more ascend in divine meditation than a bird can fly when its wings are clipped. Sin cuts the very sinews of this heavenly life.

O man! what a life do you lose! What daily delights do you sell for vile lusts! If Heaven and Hell can meet together, and God become a lover of sin—only then may you live in your sin, and in the foretastes of glory and have a conversation in Heaven, though you cherish your corruption. And take heed lest it banish you from Heaven, as it does your heart. And though you be not guilty, and know no reigning sin in your soul, think what a sad thing it would be, if ever this should prove your case. Watch, therefore especially resolve to keep from the occasions of sin, and out of the way of temptations. What need have we daily to pray, "Lead us not into temptation—but deliver us from evil!"

**2. An earthly mind is another hindrance carefully to be avoided.** God and mammon, earth and Heaven—cannot both have the delight of your heart. When the heavenly believer is blessing himself in his God, and rejoicing in hope of the glory to come; perhaps you are blessing yourself in your worldly prosperity, and rejoicing in hope of your thriving here. When he is comforting his soul in the views of Christ, of angels and saints, whom he shall live with forever—then you are comforting yourself with your wealth, in looking over your bonds, your goods, your cattle, or your buildings; and in thinking of the favor of the great, of the pleasure of a plentiful estate, of larger provisions for your children after you, of the advancement of your family, or the increase of your dependants.

If Christ pronounced him a fool who said, "Soul, take your ease; you have much goods laid up for many years;" then how much more so are you, who, knowingly, speak in your heart the same words! Say, what is the difference between this fool's expressions and your affections? Remember, *you have to do with the Searcher of hearts*. Certainly, as much as you delight and take up your rest on earth—so much of your delight in God is abated. Your earthly mind may consist with your outward profession and common duties—but it cannot consist with this heavenly duty. You yourself know how seldom and cold, how cursory and reserved your thoughts have been of the joys above, ever since you did trade so eagerly for the world.

O the cursed madness of many that seem to be religious! They thrust themselves into a multitude of employments, until they are so loaded with labors and clogged with cares, that their souls are as unfit to converse with God; as a man to walk with a mountain on his back; and as unapt to soar in meditation, as their bodies to leap above the sun! And when they have lost that *Heaven upon earth*which they might have had, they take up with a few rotten arguments to prove it lawful; though, indeed, they cannot.

I advise you, Christian, who have tasted the pleasures of a heavenly life, if ever you would taste them more, *avoid this devouring gulf of an earthly mind*. If once you come to this, *that you "will be rich,"*you fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts. Keep these things loose about you like your upper garments, that you may lay them aside whenever there is need; but let God and glory be to next your heart. Ever remember that "the friendship of the world is enmity with God. Whoever, therefore, will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God." "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." This is plain dealing, and happy he who faithfully receives it!

**3. Beware of the company of the ungodly.**Not that I would dissuade you from necessary converse, or from doing them any office of love; especially not from endeavoring the good of their souls, as long as you have any opportunity or hope. Nor would I have you to conclude them to be dogs and swine, in order to evade the duty of reproof. Nor even to judge them such at all, as long as there is any hope for the better. Much less can I approve of their practice, who conclude men to be dogs or swine before ever they faithfully and lovingly admonish them, or perhaps before they have known them, or even spoken with them.

But it is the unnecessary society of ungodly men, and too much familiarity with unprofitable companions, from which I would dissuade you. Not only the profane, the swearer, the drunkard, and the enemies of godliness will prove to be hurtful companions to us—though these indeed are chiefly to be avoided; but *too frequent society with people merely civil and moral, whose conversation is empty and unedifying, may much divert our thoughts from Heaven*. Our backwardness is such, that we need the most constant and powerful helps.

A stone or a clod is as fit to rise and fly in the air, as our hearts are naturally to move toward Heaven. You need not hinder the rocks from flying up to the sky; it is sufficient that you do not help them. Surely, if our spirits have not great assistance, they may easily be kept from soaring upward, though they should never meet with the least impediment.

O think of this in the choice of your company! When your spirits are so disposed for Heaven that you need no help to lift them up—but, as flames, you are always mounting, and carrying with you all that is in your way, then, indeed, you may be less careful of your company; but, until then, as you love the delights of a heavenly life, be careful herein.

What will it advantage you in a divine life, to hear how the *market*goes, or what the *weather*is, or is likely to be, or what *news*is stirring? *This is the discourse of earthly men.*What will it conduce to the raising of your heart to God, to hear that this is an able minister, or that an eminent Christian, or this an excellent sermon, or that an excellent book; or to hear some difficult but unimportant controversy? Yet *this, for the most part, is the sweetest discourse you are like to have from a formal, speculative, dead-hearted professor*. Nay, if you had been newly warming your heart in the contemplation of the blessed joys above, would not this discourse benumb your affections and quickly freeze your heart again?

I appeal to the judgment of any man who has tried it, and makes observations on the frame of his spirit. Men cannot well talk of one thing and mind another, especially things of such different natures. You, young men, who are most liable to this temptation, think seriously of what I say. Can you have your hearts in Heaven while among your roaring companions in an alehouse or tavern? Or when you work in your shops with those whose common language is cursings, "filthiness, or foolish talking or jesting?" Nay, let me tell you, if you choose such company when you might have better, and find most delight in such, you are far from a heavenly conversation that, as yet, you have no title to Heaven at all, and in that state shall never come there. If your treasure was in Heaven, your heart could not be on things so distant. In a word, our company will be a part of our happiness in Heaven, and it is a singular part of our furtherance to it, or hindrance from it.

**4. Avoid frequent disputes about lesser truths, and a religion that lies only in opinions.** *They are usually least acquainted with a heavenly life, who are violent disputers about the circumstantials of religion.*He whose religion is all in his opinions, will be most frequently and zealously speaking his opinions. He whose religion lies in the knowledge and love of God in Christ, will be most delightfully speaking of that happy time when he shall enjoy them. *He is a rare and precious Christian, who is skillful to improve well-known truths.*

Therefore let me advise you who aspire after a heavenly life, not to spend too much of your thoughts, your time, your zeal, or your speech, upon disputes that less concern your souls; but *when hypocrites are feeding on husks or shells*, you must feed on the joys above. I wish you were able to defend every truth of God, and to this end would read and study; but still I would have the chief truths to be chiefly studied, and no thuths which cast out your thoughts of eternity. The least controverted points are usually most weighty, and of most necessary and frequent use to our souls. Therefore study well such Scripture precepts as these: "Him that is weak in the faith receive you—but not to doubtful disputations. Foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they breed strifes. And the servant of the Lord must not strive." "Avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain." "If any man teaches otherwise, and consents not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness—he is proud, knowing nothing—but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof comes envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness; from such withdraw yourself."

**5. Take heed of a proud and lofty spirit.**There is such an antipathy between this sin and God, that you will never get your heart near him, nor get him near your heart—as long as pride prevails in it. If pride cast the angels out of Heaven, it must needs keep your heart from Heaven. If it cast our first parents out of paradise, and separated between the Lord and us, and brought his curse on all the creatures here below—then it will certainly keep our hearts from paradise, and increase the cursed separation from our God.

Fellowship with God will keep men humble, and that lowliness will promote their fellowship. When a man is used to be much with God, and taken up in the study of his glorious attributes—he abhors himself in dust and ashes; and that self-abhorrence is his best preparative to obtain admittance to God again. Therefore, after a soul-humbling day, or in times of trouble, when the soul is lowest—it has freest access to God, and savor most of the life above. The delight of God is in "him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at his word;" and the delight of such a soul is in God; and where there is mutual delight, there will be freest admittance, heartiest welcome, and most frequent converse.

But God is so far from dwelling in the soul that is proud, that he will not admit it to any near access. "The proud he knows afar off." "God resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble." A proud mind is high in conceit, self-esteem, and carnal aspiring. A humble mind is high indeed in God's esteem, and in holy aspiring. These two sorts of high-mindedness are most of all opposite to each other, as we see most wars are between princes and princes, and not between a prince and a plowman.

Well, then, are you a man of worth in your own eyes? Are you delighted when you hear of your esteem with men, and much dejected when you hear that they slight you? Do you love those best that honor you, and think meanly of those who do not, though they be otherwise men of godliness and honesty? Must you have your humors fulfilled, and your judgment be a rule, and your word a law to all about you? Are your passions kindled if your word or will is crossed? Are you ready to judge humility to be sordid baseness, and know not how to submit to humble confession, when you have sinned against God or injured your brother? Are you one that look strange at the godly poor, and are most ashamed to be their companion? Can you not serve God in a low place as well as a high? Are your boastings restrained more by prudence or artifice, than humility? Do you desire to have all men's eyes upon you, and to hear them say, "This is the man!" Are you unacquainted with the deceitfulness and wickedness of your heart? Are you more ready to defend your innocence, than accuse yourself, or confess your fault? Can you hardly bear a close reproof, or receive plain dealing?

If these symptoms are undeniably in your heart, you are a proud person. *There is too much of Hell abiding in you, to have any acquaintance with Heaven*. *Your soul is too like the devil, to have any familiarity with God.*A proud man makes himself his God, and sets up himself as his idol; how, then, can his affections be set on God? How can he possibly have his heart in Heaven? Wit memory may possibly furnish his tongue with humble and heavenly expressions—but in his spirit there is no more Heaven than there is humility. I speak the more of it, because it is the most common and dangerous sin in morality, and most promotes the great sin of infidelity.

O Christian! if you would live continually in the presence of your Lord, lie in the dust, and he will thence take you up. "Learn of him to be meek and lowly; and you shall find rest for your soul." Otherwise your soul will be "like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt;" and instead of these sweet delights in God, your pride will fill you with perpetual disquiet.

As he who humbles himself as a little child shall hereafter be greatest in the kingdom of Heaven—so shall he now be greatest in the foretastes of that kingdom. God "dwells with a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." Therefore, "humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up." And when "others are cast down, then you shall say, there is lifting up; and he shall save the humble person."

**6. A slothful spirit is another impediment to this heavenly life.** And I truly think there is nothing hinders it more than this in men of a good understanding. If it were only the exercise of the body, the moving of the lips, the bending of the knee, men would as commonly step to Heaven as they go to visit a friend. But to separate our thoughts and affections from the world, to draw forth all our graces, and increase each in its proper object, and hold them to it until the work prospers in our hands—this, this is the difficulty.

Reader, Heaven is above you, and do you think to travel this steep ascent without labor and resolution? *Can you get that earthly heart to Heaven, and bring that backward mind to God, while you lie still and take your ease?*If lying down at the foot of the hill, and looking toward the top, and wishing we were there, would serve the turn—then we would have daily travelers for Heaven. But "the kingdom of Heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force." There must be violence used to get these first-fruits, as well as to get the full possession. Do you not feel it so, though I should not tell you? Will your heart get upward, unless you drive it?

You know that Heaven is all your hope; that nothing below can yield you rest; that a heart, seldom thinking of Heaven, can draw but little comfort thence; and yet do you not lose your opportunities and lie below, when you should walk above and live with God? Do you not commend the sweetness of a heavenly life, and judge those the best Christians who use it, and yet never try yourself? As the sluggard that stretches himself on his bed and cries, O that this were working!—so do you talk, and trifle, and live at your ease, and say, *O that I could get my heart to Heaven!*

How many read books and hear sermons, expecting to hear of some easier way, or to meet with a shorter course to spiritual comfort than they are ever like to find in Scripture! Or they ask for directions for a heavenly life, and if the *mere hearing*them will serve, they will be heavenly Christians; but if we show them their work, and tell them they cannot have these delights on easier terms—then they leave us, as the young man left Christ, sorrowful.

If you are convinced, reader, that this work is necessary to your comfort, then set upon it resolutely. If your heart draws back, force it on with the command of reason. If your reason begins to dispute, produce the command of God, and urge your own necessity, with the other considerations suggested in the former chapter.

Let not such an incomparable treasure lie before you, with your hands in your pockets; nor your life be a continual vexation, when it might be a continual feast, only because you will not exert yourself. Sit not still with a disconsolate spirit while comforts grow before your eyes, like a man in the midst of a garden of flowers, who will not rise to get them and partake of their sweetness.

This I know, Christ is the fountain; but the well is deep, and you must get forth this water before you can be refreshed with it. I know, so far as you are spiritual, you need not all this striving and violence; but in part you are carnal, and as long as it is so, there is need of labor.

It was the custom of the Parthians not to give their children any food in the morning before they saw the sweat on their faces with some labor. You shall find this to be God's usual course—not to give his children the tastes of his delights until they begin to sweat in seeking after them. Judge, therefore, whether a heavenly life or your carnal ease is better; and, as a wise man, make your choice accordingly.

Yet, let me add for your encouragement, that you need not employ your thoughts more than you now do; it is only to fix them upon better and more pleasant objects. Employ but as many serious thoughts every day upon the excellent glory of the life to come, as you now do upon worldly affairs, yes, on vanities and impertinences—and your heart will soon be in Heaven. On the whole, it is "the field of the slothful that is all grown over with thorns and nettles; and the desire of the slothful kills his joy, for his hands refuse to labor; and it is the slothful man that says, There is a lion in the way, a lion is in the streets. As the door turns upon its hinges, so does the slothful man upon his bed. The slothful hides his hand in his bosom; it grieves him to bring it again to his mouth," though it be to feed himself with the food of life.

What is this but throwing away our consolations, and consequently the precious blood that bought them? For "he who is slothful in his work, is brother to him who is a great waster." Apply this to your spiritual work, and study well the meaning of it.

**7. Contentment with the mere preparatives to the heavenly life, while we are utter strangers to the life itself, is also a dangerous and secret hindrance**; when we take up with the mere study of heavenly things, and the notions of them, or the talking with one another about them; as if this were enough to make us heavenly. None are in more danger of the snare, than those that are employed in leading the devotions of others, especially preachers of the Gospel. O how easily may such be deceived! while they do nothing so much as read and study of Heaven; preach, and pray, and talk of Heaven—Alas! all this is but mere preparation; this is but collecting the materials, not erecting the building itself; it is but gathering the manna for others, and not eating and digesting it ourselves.

As he who sits at home may draw exact maps of countries, and yet never see them nor travel toward them; so may you describe to others the joys of Heaven, and yet never come near it in your own hearts. A blind man, by learning, may dispute of light and colors; so may you set forth to others that heavenly light which never enlightened your own souls, and bring that fire from the hearts of your people which never warmed your own hearts.

What heavenly passages had Balaam in his prophecies—yet how little of it in his spirit! Nay, we are under a more subtle temptation than any other men to draw us from this heavenly life. Studying and preaching of Heaven more resembles a heavenly life than thinking and talking of the world does; and the resemblance is apt to deceive us. This is to die the most miserable death—even to famish ourselves because we have bread on our tables; and to die for thirst, while we draw water for others; thinking it enough that we have daily to do with it, though we never drink for the refreshment of our own souls.

Having thus showed what hindrances will resist the work, I expect that you resolve against them, consider them seriously, and avoid them faithfully—or else your labor will be vain.

**Secondly**, I must also tell you that I here expect your promise, as you value the delights of these foretastes of Heaven, to**make conscience of performing the following DUTIES**; particularly,

**1. Be convinced that Heaven is the only treasure and happiness, and labor to know what a treasure and happiness it is.**If you do not believe it to be the chief good, you will never set your heart upon it; and this conviction must sink into your affections; for if it is only a notion, it will have little efficacy. If Eve once supposes she sees more worth in the forbidden fruit than in the love and enjoyment of God—then it is no wonder if it has more of her heart than God. If your judgment once prefers the delights of the flesh before the delights of the presence of God—it is impossible your heart should be in Heaven.

*As it is ignorance of the emptiness of things below that makes men so overvalue them; so it is ignorance of the high delights above which is the cause that men so little mind them.*If you see a purse of gold, and believe it to be counterfeit, it will not entice your affections to it. It is not the *real*excellence of a thing itself—but its *known*excellence, that excites desire. If an ignorant man sees a book containing the secrets of arts or sciences, he values it no more than a common scroll, because he knows not what is in it; but he who knows it, highly values it, and can even forbear his food, drink and sleep, to read it.

As the Jews killed the Messiah while they waited for him, because they did not know him; so the world cries out for rest, and busily seeks for delight and happiness, because they know it not; for did they thoroughly know what it is, they could not so slight the everlasting treasure.

**2. Labor also to know that Heaven is your own happiness.**We may confess Heaven to be the best condition, though we despair of enjoying it; and we may desire and seek it, if we see the attainment but probable; but we can never delightfully rejoice in it until we are in some measure persuaded of our title to it. What comfort is it to a man that is naked, to see the rich attire of others? What delight is it for a man that has not a house to put his head in, to see the sumptuous buildings of others? Would not all this rather increase his anguish, and make him more sensible of his own misery? Just so, for a man to know the excellencies of Heaven, and not know whether he shall ever enjoy them, may raise desire and urge pursuit—but he will have little joy. Who will set his heart on another man's possessions? If your houses, your goods, your cattle, your children were not your own, you would less mind them, and less delight in them.

O Christian! rest not until you can call this rest your own: bring your heart to the bar of trial; set the qualifications of the saints on one side, and of your soul on the other, and then judge how nearly they resemble. You have the same Word to judge yourself by now, as you must be judged by at the great day. Mistake not the Scripture's description of a saint, that you neither acquit nor condemn yourself upon mistakes. For as *groundless hopes tend to confusion, and are the greatest cause of most men's damnation*; so *groundless doubts tend to and are the great cause of the saints' perplexity and distress*.

Therefore, lay your foundation for trial safely, and proceed in the work deliberately and resolutely, nor give over until you can say either you have or have not yet, a title to this rest. O if men did truly know that God is their own Father, and Christ their only Redeemer and Head, and that those are their own everlasting habitations, and that there they must abide and be happy forever—how could they but be transported with the forethoughts thereof! If a Christian could but look upon sun, moon and stars, and reckon all his own in Christ, and say, "These are the blessings that my Lord has procured me, and things incomparably greater than these;" what holy raptures would his spirit feel!

The more do they sin against their own comforts, as well as against the grace of the Gospel, who plead for their unbelief, and cherish distrustful thoughts of God, and injurious thoughts of their Redeemer; who represent the covenant as if it were of works, and not of grace; and Christ as an enemy rather than a Savior; as if he were willing they should die in their unbelief, when he has invited them so often and so affectionately, and suffered the agonies that they should suffer.

Wretches that we are! to be keeping up jealousies of our Lord, when we should be rejoicing in his love. As if any man could choose Christ before Christ has chosen him; or any man were more willing to be happy than Christ is to make him happy. Away with these injurious if not blasphemous thoughts! If ever you have harbored such thoughts in your bosom, cast them from you, and take heed how you ever entertain them more.

God has written the names of his people in Heaven, as you write your names on your goods; and shall we be attempting to erase them out, and to write our names on the doors of Hell? But blessed be "God, whose foundation stands sure;" and who "keeps us by his power, through faith, unto salvation."

**3. Labor to apprehend how *near*your rest is.** What we think near at hand, we are more sensible of than that which we behold at a distance. When judgments or mercies are afar off, we talk of them with little concern; but when they draw close to us, we tremble at, or rejoice in them. This makes men think on Heaven so insensibly, because they conceive it at too great a distance; they look on it as twenty, thirty, or forty years off. How much better were it to receive "the sentence of death in ourselves," and to *look on eternity as near at hand!*

While I am thinking and writing of it, it hastens near, and I am even entering into it before I am aware. While you are reading this, whoever you are, *time hastens on, and your life will be gone, "as a tale that is told."*If you truly believed you would die tomorrow, how seriously would you think of Heaven tonight! When Samuel had told Saul, "Tomorrow you shall be with me," this struck him to the heart. And if Christ should say to a believing soul, "Tomorrow shall you be with me," this would bring him in spirit to Heaven beforehand. Do but suppose that you are still entering into Heaven, and it will greatly help you more seriously to mind it.

**4. Let your eternal rest be the subject of your frequent serious discourse, especially with those who can speak from their hearts, and are seasoned themselves with a heavenly nature.** It is a pity that Christians should ever meet together without some talk of their meeting in Heaven, or of the way to it, before they part. It is a pity that so much time is spent in vain conversation and useless disputes, and not a serious word of Heaven among them. Methinks we should meet together on purpose to warm our spirits with discoursing of our eternal rest. To hear a Christian set forth that blessed, glorious state, with life and power, from the promises of the Gospel, methinks should make us say, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he opened to us the Scriptures?"

If a Felix will tremble when he hears his judgment powerfully represented, why should not the believer be revived when he hears his eternal rest described? Wicked men can be delighted in talking together of their wickednesss—and should not Christians then be delighted in talking of Christ; and the heirs of Heaven in talking of their inheritance? This may make our hearts revive, as did Jacob's heart to hear the message that called him to Goshen, and to see the chariots that should bring him to Joseph. O that we were furnished with skill and resolution to turn the stream of men's common discourse to these more sublime and precious things! And, when men begin to talk of things unprofitable, that we could tell how to put in a word for Heaven, and say, as Peter of his bodily food, "Not so, for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean!" O the good that we might both do and receive by this course!

Had it not been to deter us from unprofitable conversation, Christ would not have talked of our "giving an *account of every idle word*in the day of judgment." Say, then, as the Psalmist, when you are in company, "Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy." Then you shall find it true, that a "wholesome tongue is a tree of life."

**5. Endeavor, in every duty, to raise your affections nearer to Heaven.**God's end in the institution of his ordinances was that they should be as so many steps to advance us to our rest, and by which, in subordination to Christ, we might daily ascend in our affections. Let this be your end in using them, and doubtless they will not be unsuccessful.

How have you been gladdened by a few lines from a friend, when you could not see him face to face! And may we not have fellowship with God in his ordinances, though our persons be yet so far remote? May not our spirits rejoice in reading those lines which contain our legacy and charter for Heaven? *With what gladness and triumph may we read the expressions of divine love, and hear of our celestial country, though we have not yet the happiness to behold it!*

Men that are separated by sea and land can by letters carry on great and gainful trades; and may not a Christian, in the wise improvement of duties, drive on this happy trade for rest? Come, then, renounce formality, custom and applause—and kneel down in secret or public prayer, with hope to get your heart nearer to God before you rise up. *When you open your Bible, or other book, hope to meet with some passage of divine truth, and such a blessing of the Spirit with it as will give you a fuller taste of Heaven*. When you are going to the house of God, say, "I hope to meet with something from God to raise my affections before I return; I hope the Spirit will give me his presence and sweeten my heart with those celestial delights; I hope Christ will appear to me in that way, and shine about me with light from Heaven; let me hear his instructing and reviving voice, and cause the scales to fall from my eyes, that I may see more of that glory than I ever yet saw. I hope, before I return, my Lord will bring my heart within the view of rest, and set it before his Father's presence, that I may return as the shepherds from the heavenly vision, glorifying and praising God for all the things I have heard and seen."

When the Indians first saw that the English could converse together by letters, they thought there was some spirit enclosed in them. So would bystanders admire, when Christians have communion with God in duties, what there is in those Scriptures, in that sermon, in this prayer, that fills their hearts so full of joy, and so transports them above themselves. Remember, therefore, always to *pray for your minister, that God would put some divine message into his mouth, which may leave a heavenly relish upon your spirit.*

**6. Improve every object and every event to remind your soul of its approaching rest.**As all providences and creatures are means to our rest, so they point us to that as their end. God's sweetest dealings with us at present would not be half so sweet as they are, if they did not intimate some further sweetness. You take but the bare pledge and overlooks the main sum, when you receive your mercies and forget your crown. O that Christians were skillful in this art! You can open your *Bible*; learn to open the volumes of *creation*and *providence*—to read there also of God and glory. Thus we might have a fuller taste of Christ and Heaven in every common meal than most men have in a sacrament.

If you prosper in the world, let it make you more sensible of your eternal prosperity. If you are weary with labor, let it make the thoughts of your eternal rest more sweet. If things go cross, let your desires be more earnest to have sorrows and sufferings forever cease. Is your body refreshed with food or sleep? Remember the inconceivable refreshment with Christ. Do you hear any good news? Remember what glad tidings it will be to hear the trumpet of God and the applauding sentence of Christ. Are you delighted with the society of the saints? Remember what the perfect society in Heaven will be. Is God communicating himself to your spirit? Remember the time of your highest advancement, when both your communion and joy shall be full. Do you hear the raging noise of the wicked and the confusions of the world? Think of the blessed harmony in Heaven. Do you hear the tempest of war? Remember the day when you shall be in perfect peace, under the wings of the Prince of Peace forever. Thus, *every condition and creature affords us advantages for a heavenly life, if we had but hearts to improve them*.

**7. Be much in the angelic work of praise.** *The more heavenly the employment, the more it will make the spirit heavenly*. Praising God is the work of angels and saints in Heaven, and will be our own everlasting work; and if we were more in it now, we would be more like what we shall be then. As desire, faith and hope are of shorter continuance than love and joy, so also preaching, prayer, and ordinances, and all means for expressing and confirming our faith and hope, shall cease—when our triumphant expressions of love and joy shall abide forever.

The liveliest emblem of Heaven that I know upon earth, is when the people of God, in the deep sense of his excellency and bounty, from hearts abounding with love and joy, join together, both in heart and voice, in the cheerful and melodious singing of his praises. These delights, like the testimony of the Spirit, witness themselves to be of God, and bring the evidences of their heavenly parentage along with them.

Little do we know how we wrong ourselves by shutting out of our prayers the praises of God, or allowing them so narrow a room as we usually do, while we are copious enough in our confessions and petitions. Reader, I entreat you, remember this: let praises have a larger room in your duties; keep matter ready at hand to feed your praise, as well as matter for confession and petition.

To this end study the excellencies and goodness of the Lord as frequently as your own wants and unworthiness; the mercies you have received, and those which are promised, as often as the sins you have committed. "Praise is lovely for the upright. Whoever offers praise, glorifies God. Praise the Lord, for the Lord is good; sing praises unto his name, for it is pleasant. Let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name."

Had not David a most heavenly spirit, who was so much in this heavenly work? Does it not sometimes raise our hearts when we only read the song of Moses and the psalms of David? How much more would it raise and refresh us to be skillful and frequent in the work ourselves!

O the madness of youth, who lay out that vigor of body and mind upon vain delights and fleshly lusts, which is so fit for the noblest work of man! And O the sinful folly of many of the saints, who drench their spirits in continual sadness, and waste their days in complaints and groans, and so make themselves, both in body and mind, unfit for this sweet and heavenly work!

Instead of joining with the people of God in his praises, they are questioning their worthiness and studying their miseries; and they so rob God of his glory and themselves of their consolation. But the greatest destroyer of our comfort in this duty, is our taking up with the tune and melody, and allowing the heart to be idle which ought to perform the principal part of the work, and use the melody to revive and exhilarate itself.

**8. Ever keep your soul possessed with believing thoughts of the infinite love of God.** Love is the attractive of love. Few so vile—but will love those who love them. No doubt it is the death of our heavenly life to have hard thoughts of God, to conceive of him as one that would rather damn than save us. *This is to put the blessed God into the similitude of Satan*. When our ignorance and unbelief have drawn the most deformed picture of God in our imaginations, then we complain that we cannot love him nor delight in him. This is the case of many thousand Christians.*Alas, that we should thus blaspheme God and blast our own joys!*

Scripture assures us that "God is love; that fury is not in him; that he has no pleasure in the death of the wicked—but that the wicked turn from his way and live." Much more has he testified his love to his chosen people, and his full resolution to save them. O that we could always think of God as we do of a friend; as of one that sincerely loves us, even more than we do ourselves; whose very heart is set upon us to do us good, and has therefore provided for us an everlasting dwelling with himself! It would not then be so hard to have our hearts ever with him.

*Where we love most heartily, we shall think most sweetly and most freely*. I fear most Christians think higher of the love of a hearty friend than of the love of God; and what wonder, then, if they love their friends better than God, and trust them more confidently than God and had rather live with them than with God?

**9. Carefully observe and cherish the motions of the Spirit of God.** If ever your soul gets above this earth, and gets acquainted with this heavenly life, the Spirit of God must be to you as the chariot to Elijah; yes, the very living principle by which you must move and ascend. O, then, grieve not your guide, quench not your life, knock not off your chariot wheel! You little think *how much the life of all your graces and the happiness of your souls depend upon your ready and cordial obedience to the Spirit*. When the Spirit urges you to secret prayer; or forbids you your transgressions; or points to you the way in which you should go—and you will not regard Him, then no wonder if Heaven and your soul be strange. If you will not follow the Spirit while he would draw you to Christ and your duty; how should he lead you to Heaven, and bring your heart into the presence of God? What supernatural help, what bold access shall the soul find in its approaches to the Almighty, that constantly obeys the Spirit? And how backward, how dull, how ashamed will he be in these addresses, who has often broke away from the Spirit who would have guided him?

Christian reader, do you not feel sometimes a strong impression to retire from the world and draw near to God? Do not disobey—but take the offer, and hoist up your sails while this blessed gale may be had. The more of the Spirit we resist, the deeper will it wound us. The more we obey Him, the speedier will be our pace.

**10. I advise you, as a further help to this heavenly life, neglect not the due care of your bodily health.** Your body is a useful servant if you give it its due, and no more than its due. But*it is a most devouring tyrant if you allow it to have what it unreasonably desires*. And it is as a blunted knife if you unjustly deny what is necessary to its support. When we consider how frequently men offend on both extremes, and how few use their bodies aright, we cannot wonder if they be much hindered in their converse with Heaven. *Most men are slaves to their appetite, and can scarcely deny anything to their flesh*, and are therefore willingly carried by it to their sports, or profits, or vain companions—when they should raise their minds to God and Heaven. As you love your souls, "make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lust thereof," but remember, "to be carnally minded is death; because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So, then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if you live after the flesh, you shall die; but if you, through the Spirit, mortify the deeds of the body, you shall live."

There are a few who much hinder their heavenly joy by denying the body its necessities, and so making it unable to serve them: if such wronged their flesh only, it would be no great matter; but they wrong their souls also; as he who spoils the house injures the inhabitants. *When the body is sick and the spirits languish, how heavily do we move in the thoughts and joys of Heaven.*

***~~Chapter 13.~~***

***~~The Nature of Heavenly Contemplation; with the Time, Place, and Temper Fittest for It.~~***

The duty of heavenly contemplation is recommended and defined. The definition is illustrated.

I. The **times**fittest for it.

1. Stated.

2. Frequent.

3. Seasonable every day, particularly every Lord's day—but more especially when our hearts are warmed with a sense of divine things; or when we are afflicted or tempted; or when we are near death.

II. The fittest **place**for it.

III. The fittest **temper**for it.

1. When our minds are most clear of the world.

2. When our minds are most solemn and serious.

Once more I entreat you, reader, as you make conscience of a revealed duty, and dare not willfully resist the Spirit; as you value the high delights of a saint, and the soul-ravishing exercise of heavenly contemplation—that you diligently study, and speedily and faithfully practice the following directions.

If, by this means, you do not find an increase of all your graces, and do not grow beyond the stature of a common Christian, and are not made more serviceable in your place, and more precious in the eyes of all discerning people; if your soul enjoys not more communion with God, and your life is not fuller of comfort, and you have not more support in a dying hour; then cast away these directions, and exclaim against me forever as a deceiver.

The duty which I press upon you so earnestly, and in the practice of which I am now to direct you, is, *"The set and solemn acting of all the powers of your soul in meditation upon your everlasting rest."*More fully to explain the NATURE of this duty, I will here illustrate a little the description itself; and then point out the fittest time, place, and temper of mind for it.

It is not improper to illustrate a little the manner in which we have described this duty of meditation, or the considering and contemplating of spiritual things. It is confessed to be a duty by all—but practically denied by most. Many who make conscience of other duties, easily neglect this. They are troubled if they omit a sermon, a fast, or a prayer, in public or private; yet were never troubled that they have omitted *meditation*perhaps all their lifetime to this very day; though it be *that duty by which all other duties are improved, and by which the soul digests truth for its nourishment and comfort.*it was God's command to Joshua, "This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth—but you shall *meditate*therein day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written therein." As digestion turns food into nourishment for vigorous health, so meditation turns the truths received and remembered into warm affection, firm resolution, and holy conversation.

This meditation is the acting of all the powers of the soul. It is the work of the living soul, and not of the dead. It is a work the most spiritual and sublime, and therefore not to be well performed by a heart that is merely carnal and earthly. Men must necessarily have some relation to Heaven, before they can familiarly converse there. I suppose them to be such as have a title to rest, when I persuade them to rejoice in the meditations of rest. Supposing you to be a Christian, I am now exhorting you to be an active Christian. It is the work of the soul I am setting you to, for bodily exercise here profits little. It must have all the powers of the soul to distinguish it from the common meditation of students; for the understanding is not the whole soul, and therefore cannot do the whole work.

As in the body, the stomach must turn the food into nourishment for the heart and brain; so in the soul, the *understanding*must take in truths, and prepare them for the *will*, and that for the *affections*. Christ and Heaven have various excellencies, and therefore God has formed the soul with different powers for apprehending these excellencies. What the better had we been for odoriferous flowers, if we had no smell? What good would language or music have done us, if we could not hear? What pleasure should we have found in foods and drinks, without the sense of taste?

So what good could all the glory of Heaven have done us, or what pleasure should we have had in the perfection of God himself, if we had been without the affections of love and joy? And what strength or sweetness can you possibly receive by your meditations on eternity, while you do not exercise those affections of the soul by which you must be sensible of this sweetness and strength?

It is the mistake of Christians to think that meditation is only the work of the understanding and memory; when every school-boy can do this, or people that hate the things which they think on. So that you see *there is more to be done than barely to remember and think of Heaven*. As some labors not only stir a hand or a foot—but exercise the whole body; so does meditation the whole soul. As the affections of sinners are set on the world, are turned to idols and fallen from God as well as their understanding; so must their affections be reduced to God as well as the understanding. As their whole soul was filled with sin before, so the whole must be filled with God now. See David's description of the blessed man: "His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law does he *meditate*day and night."

*This meditation is set and solemn.* As there is solemn prayer, when we set ourselves wholly to that duty; and ejaculatory prayer, when, in the midst of other business, we send up some short request to God—so also there is *solemn*meditation, when we apply ourselves wholly to that work; and *transient*meditation, when, in the midst of other business, we have some good thoughts of God in our minds. And as solemn prayer is either set in a constant course of duty, or occasional, at an extraordinary season; so also is meditation.

Now, though I would persuade you to that meditation which is mixed with your common labors, and also that to which special occasions direct you; yet I would have you likewise make it a constant standing duty, as you do hearing, praying, and reading the Scriptures; and no more intermix other matters with it, than you would with prayer, or other stated solemnities.

This meditation is upon your everlasting rest. I would not have you cast off your other meditations; but surely, *as Heaven has the preeminence in perfection, it should have it also in our meditation*. *That which will make us most happy when we possess it, will make us most joyful when we meditate upon it.*Other meditations are as numerous as there are lines in the scripture, or creatures in the universe, or particular providences in the government of the world. But this is a walk to Mount Zion; from the kingdoms of the world to the kingdom of saints; from earth to Heaven; from time to eternity. It is walking upon sun, moon and stars, in the garden and paradise of God. It may seem far off; but our spirits are quick and their motion is swift.

You need not fear, like the men of the world, lest these thoughts should make you mad. It is in Heaven, and not Hell, that I persuade you to walk. It is joy, and not sorrow, that I persuade you to exercise. I urge you to look on no deformed objects—but only *upon the ravishing glory of saints, and the unspeakable excellencies of the God of glory, and the beams that stream from the face of his Son*. Will it distract a man to think of his only happiness? Will it distract the miserable to think of mercy, or the prisoner to foresee deliverance, or the poor to think of approaching riches and honor?

Methinks it should rather make a man mad to think of living in a world of woe, and abiding in poverty and sickness, among the rage of wicked men—than to think of living with Christ in bliss. "But wisdom is justified of all her children." Knowledge has no enemy but the ignorant. This heavenly course was never spoken against by any but those that never knew it, or never used it. I fear more the neglect of men that approve it, than the opposition or arguments of any against it.

**First. As to the fittest TIME for this heavenly contemplation**, let me only advise that it be stated—frequent—and seasonable.

**1. Give it a STATED time.**If you suit your time to the advantage of the work, without placing any religion in the time itself, you have no need to fear superstition. Stated time is a hedge to duty, and defends it against many temptations to omissions. Some have not their time at command, and therefore cannot set their hours; and many are so poor, that the necessities of their families deny them this freedom. Such people should be watchful to redeem time as much as they can, and take their vacant opportunities as they fall, and especially join meditation and prayer as much as they can with the labors of their calling.

Yet those who have more time to spare from their worldly necessities, and are masters of their time, I still advise to keep this duty to a stated time. And indeed, if every work of the day had its appointed time, we should be better skilled both in redeeming time and performing duty.

**2. Let it be FREQUENT** as well as stated. How often it should be I cannot determine, because men's circumstances differ; but in general, Scripture requires it to be frequent, when it mentions *meditating day and night*. For those, therefore, who can conveniently omit other business, I advise that it be once a day at least.

*Frequency in heavenly contemplation is particularly important, to prevent a shyness between God and your soul.*Frequent society breeds familiarity, and familiarity increases love and delight, and makes us bold in our addresses. The chief end of this duty is to have acquaintance and fellowship with God; and therefore, if you come but seldom to it, you will still keep yourself a stranger to God. When a man feels his need of God, and must seek his help in a time of necessity, then it is great encouragement to go to a God we know and are acquainted with.

"O," says the heavenly Christian, "I know both *wither*I go, and to *whom*. I have gone this way many a time before now. It is the same God that I daily converse with, and the way has been my daily walk. God knows me well enough, and I have some knowledge of him."

On the other hand, what a horror and discouragement will it be to the soul, when it is forced to fly to God in straits, to think, "Alas! I know not where to go. I never went this way before. I have no acquaintance at the court of Heaven. My soul knows not that God that I must speak to, and I fear he will not know my soul."

But especially when we come to die, and must immediately appear before this God, and expect to enter into his eternal rest, then the difference will plainly appear; then what a joy will it be to think, "I am going to the place from whence I tasted such frequent delights. I am going to that God whom I have met in my meditation so often! My heart has been in Heaven before now, and has often tasted its reviving sweetness; and if my eyes were so enlightened and my spirits so refreshed when I had but a *taste*, what will it be when I shall feed on it freely?"

On the contrary, what a terror will it be to think, "I must die and go I know not where; from a place where I am acquainted, to a place where I have no familiarity or knowledge!" It is an inexpressible horror to a dying man to have strange thoughts of God and Heaven. I am persuaded that it is the neglect of this duty which so commonly makes death, even to godly men, unwelcome and uncomfortable. Therefore I persuade to frequency in this duty.

And as it will prevent shyness between you and God, so also it will prevent unskilfulness in the duty itself. How awkwardly do men set their hands to a work in which they are seldom employed! Whereas *frequency will habituate your heart to the work, and make it more easy and delightful*. The hill which made you pant and puff at first going up, you may easily run up when you are once accustomed to it.

You will also prevent the loss of the heat and life you have obtained. If you eat but once in two or three days, you will lose your strength as fast as it comes. *If in holy meditation you get near to Christ and warm your heart with the fire of love, and then come but seldom, your former coldness will soon return*; especially as the work is so spiritual and against the bent of depraved nature. It is true, the intermixing of other duties, especially secret prayer, may do much to the keeping of your heart above; but *meditation is the life of most other duties, and the view of Heaven is the life of meditation*.

**3. Choose also the most SEASONABLE time.**All things are beautiful and excellent in their season. Unseasonableness may lose the fruit of your labor, may raise difficulties in the work, and may turn a duty to a sin. The same hour may be seasonable to one, and unseasonable to another. Servants and laborers must take that season which their business can best afford; either while at work, or in traveling, or when they lie awake in the night. Such as can choose what time of the day they will, should observe when they find their spirits most active and fit for contemplation, and fix upon that as the stated time.

I have always found that the fittest time for myself is the evening, from sun-setting to the twilight. I the rather mention this, because it was the experience of a better and wiser man; for it is expressly said, "Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the *eventide*."

The *Lord's day*is exceedingly seasonable for this exercise. When should we more seasonably contemplate our rest, than on that day of rest which typifies it to us? It being a day appropriated to spiritual duties, methinks we should never exclude this duty, which is so eminently spiritual. I truly think this is the chief work of a Christian Sabbath, and most agreeable to the design of its positive institution. *What fitter time to converse with our Lord than on the Lord's day?* What fitter day to ascend to Heaven than that on which he arose from earth, and fully triumphed over death and Hell? The fittest temper for a true Christian is, like John, to "be in the Spirit on the Lord's day." And what can bring us to this joy in the Spirit—but the spiritual beholding of our approaching glory?

Take notice of this, you who spend the Lord's day only in public worship; your allowing no time to private duty; and therefore neglecting this spiritual duty of meditation, is very hurtful to your souls. You, also, that have time on the Lord's day for idleness and vain discourse, were you but acquainted with this duty of contemplation, you would need no other pastime; you would think the longest day short enough, and be sorry that the night had shortened your pleasure.

Christians, let Heaven have more share in your Sabbaths, where you must shortly keep your everlasting Sabbaths. Use your Sabbaths as steps to glory, until you have passed them all, and are there arrived. Especially you who are poor, and cannot take time in the week as you desire—see that you well improve this day; as your bodies rest from their labors, let your spirits seek after rest from God.

Besides the constant seasonableness of every day, and particularly every Lord's day—there are also more peculiar seasons for heavenly contemplation. As for instance:

**When God has more abundantly warmed your spirit**with fire from above, then you may soar with greater freedom. A little labor will set your heart a going at such a time as this; whereas at another time you may take pains to little purpose. Observe the gales of the Spirit, and how the Spirit of Christ moves your spirit. "Without Christ we can do nothing;" and therefore let us be doing while he is doing! and be sure not to be out of the way, nor asleep, when he comes.

When the Spirit finds your heart, like Peter, in prison and in irons, and smites you, and says, "Arise quickly, and follow me!" be sure you then arise and follow; and you shall find your chains fall off, and all doors will open, and you will be at Heaven before you are aware!

Another peculiar season for this duty is **when you are in a suffering, distressed, or tempted state**. When should we take our cordials but in time of fainting? When is it more seasonable to walk to Heaven than when we know not in what corner of earth to live with comfort? Or when should our thoughts converse more above, than when we have nothing but grief below? Where should Noah's dove be but in the ark, when the waters cover all the earth, and she cannot find rest for the sole of her foot? *What should we think on but our Father's house, when we have not even the husks of the world to feed upon?*

Surely God sends your afflictions for this very purpose. Happy are you, poor man, if you make this use of your poverty! And you who are sick, if you so improve your sickness! It is seasonable to go to the promised land, when our burdens are increased in Egypt and our straits in the wilderness!

Reader, if you knew what a cordial to your griefs the serious views of glory are—you would less fear these harmless troubles, and more use that preserving, reviving remedy. "In the multitude of my" troubled "thoughts within me," says David, "your comforts delight my soul." "I reckon," says Paul, "that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish—yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things which are seen—but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal—but the things which are not seen are eternal."

And another season peculiarly fit for this heavenly duty is **when the messengers of God summon us to die**. When should we more frequently sweeten our souls with the believing thoughts of another life, than when we find that this life is almost ended? No men have greater need of supporting joys than dying men; and these joys must be drawn from our eternal joy.

As heavenly delights are sweetest when nothing earthly is joined with them—so the delights of dying Christians are oftentimes the sweetest they ever had. What a prophetic blessing had dying *Isaac*and *Jacob*for their sons! With what a heavenly song and divine blessing did *Moses*conclude his life? What heavenly advice and prayer had the disciples from their *Lord*, when he was about to leave them! When *Paul*was "ready to be offered," what heavenly exhortation and advice did he give the Philippians, Timothy, and the elders of Ephesus! How near to Heaven was *John*in Patmos—but a little before his translation there!

It is the general temper of the saints to be then most heavenly when they are nearest Heaven. If it by your case, reader, to perceive the dying time draw on, O where should your heart now be but with Christ? Methinks you should even behold him standing by you, and should speak to him as your father, your husband, your physician, your friend. Methinks you should, as it were, see the angels about you, waiting to perform their last office to your soul—even those angels which disdained not to carry into Abraham's bosom the soul of Lazarus, nor will think much to conduct you there. Look upon your pain and sickness as Jacob did on Joseph's chariots, and let your spirit revive within you, and say, "It is enough. Christ is yet alive! Because he lives, I shall live also."

Do you need the choicest cordials? Here are choicer than the world can afford—here are all the joys of Heaven, even the vision of God and Christ, and whatever the blessed here possess. These dainties are offered you by the hand of Christ; he has written the receipt in the promises of the Gospel; he has prepared the ingredients in Heaven—only put forth the hand of faith and feed upon them, and rejoice, and live.

The Lord says to you, as to Elijah, "Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for you." Though it be not long—yet the way is miry; therefore obey this voice, arise and eat, "and in the strength of that food you may go to the mount of God;" and, like Moses, "die in the mount where you go up;" and say, as Simeon, "Lord, now let your servant depart in peace, for my eye" of faith "has seen your salvation!"

**Secondly. Concerning the fittest PLACE for heavenly contemplation**, it is sufficient that the most convenient is some private retirement. Our spirits need every help, and to be freed from every hindrance in the work. If, in private prayer, Christ directs us to "enter into our closet and shut the door, that our Father may see us in secret"—so should we do this in meditation. *How often did Christ himself retire to some mountain, or wilderness, or other solitary place!*

I give not this advice for occasional meditation—but for that which is set and solemn. Therefore withdraw yourself from all society, even that of godly men—that you may awhile enjoy the society of your Lord. If a student cannot study in a crowd, who exercises only his memory—much less should you be in a crowd, who are to exercise all the powers of your soul, and upon an object so far above nature. We are fled so far from superstitious solitude, that we have even cast off the solitude of contemplative devotion. We seldom read of God's appearing by himself, or by his angels, to any of his prophets or saints, in a crowd—but frequently when they were alone.

But observe for yourself what place best agrees with your spirit, within doors or without. Isaac's example, in "going out to meditate in the *field*," will, I am persuaded, best suit with most. Our Lord so much used a *solitary garden*, that even Judas, when he came to betray him, knew where to find him: and though he took his disciples there with him—yet he "was withdrawn from them" for more secret devotions; and though his meditation be not directly named, but only his praying—yet it is very clearly implied; for his soul is first made sorrowful with bitter meditations on his sufferings and death, and then he pours it out in prayer.

Christ had his accustomed place, and consequently accustomed duty—and so must we. He has a place that is solitary, where he retires, even from his own disciples—and so must we. His meditations go further than his thoughts; they affect and pierce his heart and soul—and so must ours.

Only there is a wide difference in the object: Christ meditates on the sufferings that our sins had deserved, so that the wrath of his Father passed through all his soul. We are to meditate on the glory he has purchased, that the love of the Father and the joy of the Spirit may enter our thoughts, and revive our affections, and overflow our souls.

**Thirdly. I am next to advise you concerning the PREPARATION OF YOUR HEART for this heavenly contemplation.** *The success of the work much depends on the frame of your heart*. When man's heart had nothing in it to grieve the Spirit, it was then the delightful habitation of his Maker. God did not leave his residence there, until man expelled him by unworthy provocations. There was no shyness or reserve until the heart grew sinful, and too loathsome a dungeon for God to delight in. Were this soul reduced to its former innocence, God would quickly return to his former habitation; yes, so far as it is renewed and repaired by the Spirit, and purged from its lusts, and beautified with his image, the Lord will yet acknowledge it as his own. Christ will manifest himself unto it, and the Spirit will take it for his temple and residence. *So far as the heart is qualified for conversing with God, so far it usually enjoys him.*Therefore, "with all diligence keep your heart, for out of it are the issues of life." More particularly,

**1. Get your heart as clear from the world as you can.**Wholly lay aside the thoughts of your business, troubles, enjoyments, and everything that may take up any room in your soul. Get it as empty as you possibly can, that it may be the more capable of being filled with God. If you could perform some outward duty with a part of your heart while the remainder is absent—yet this duty, above all, I am sure you can not. When you shall go into the mount of contemplation, you will be like the covetous man at the heap of gold, who, when he might take as much as he could, lamented that he was able to carry no more. You will find as much of God and glory as your narrow heart is able to contain, and almost nothing to hinder your full possession but the incapacity of your own spirit.

Then you will think, "O that this understanding and these affections could contain more! It is more my unfitness than anything else that even this place is not my Heaven. God is in this place, and I know it not. This mount is full of chariots and fire—but my eyes are shut, and I cannot see them. O the words of love Christ has to speak, and wonders of love he has to show—but I cannot hear them yet! Heaven is ready for me—but my heart is unready for Heaven."

Therefore, reader, seeing your enjoyment of God in this contemplation much depends on the capacity and disposition of your heart, seek him here, if ever, with all your soul. Thrust not Christ into the stable and the manger, as if you had better guests for the chief rooms. Say to all your worldly business and thoughts, as Christ to his disciples, "Sit here, while I go and pray yonder;" or as Abraham to his servants, when he went to offer Isaac, "Abide here, and I will go yonder and worship, and come again to you." Even as "the priests thrust king Uzziah out of the temple," where he presumed to burn incense, when they saw the leprosy upon him; so you must thrust those thoughts from the temple of your heart, which have the badge of God's prohibition upon them.

**2. Be sure to enter upon this work with the greatest solemnity of heart and mind.**There is no trifling in holy things. "God will be sanctified in those who come near him." These spiritual, excellent, soul-raising duties, are, if well used, most profitable; but, when used unfaithfully, they are most dangerous. *Labor, therefore, to have the deepest apprehensions of the presence of God and his incomprehensible greatness*. If queen Esther must not draw near "until the king holds out the scepter," think, then with what reverence you should approach Him who made the worlds with the word of his mouth, who upholds the earth as in the palm of his hand, who keeps the sun, moon and stars in their courses, and who sets bounds to the raging sea! *You are going to converse with Him, before whom the earth will quake and devils tremble, and at whose bar you and all the world must shortly stand and be finally judged.*

O think! "I shall *then*have lively apprehensions of his majesty. My drowsy spirits will then be awakened, and my irreverence be laid aside. I should now be roused with the sense of his greatness, and the dread of his name possess my soul."

Labor also to apprehend the greatness of the work which you attempt, and to be deeply sensible both of its importance and excellency. *If you were pleading for your life at the bar of an earthly judge, you would be serious, and yet that would be a trifle compared to this.*If you were engaged in such a work as David against Goliath, on which the welfare of a kingdom depended; in itself considered, it were as nothing compared to this.

Suppose you were going to such a wrestling as Jacob's, or to see the sign which the three disciples saw in the mount—how seriously, how reverently would you both approach and behold it! If but an angel from Heaven should appoint to meet you at the same time and place of your contemplations, with what dread would you be filled!

Consider, then, with what a spirit you should meet the Lord, and with what seriousness and awe you should daily converse with him.

Consider, also, the blessed outcome of the work, if it succeeds; it will be your admission to the presence of God, and the beginning of your eternal glory on earth; a means to make you live above the rate of other men, and fix you in the next place to the angels themselves, that you may both live and die joyfully. The *prize*being so great, your *preparations*should be answerable. None on earth live such a life of joy and blessedness as those who are acquainted with this heavenly conversation. *The joys of all other men are but like a child's plaything, a fool's laughter, or a sick man's dream of health*. He who trades for Heaven is the only gainer, and he who neglects it is the only loser. How seriously, therefore, should this work be done!

***~~Chapter 14.~~***

***~~What Use Heavenly Contemplation Makes of Consideration, the Affections, Soliloquy, and Prayer.~~***

I. The use of CONSIDERATION, and its great influence over the heart.

II. Contemplation is promoted by the AFFECTIONS; particularly,

1. By love.

2. By desire.

3. By hope.

4. By courage, or boldness.

5. By joy.

III. The usefulness of SOLILOQUY and PRAYER in heavenly contemplation.

Having set your heart in tune, we now come to the music itself. Having got an appetite, now approach to the feast, and delight your soul as with marrow and fatness. Come, for all things are now ready. *Heaven and Christ, and the exceeding weight of glory, are before you.*Do not make light of this invitation, nor begin to make excuses. Whoever you are, rich or poor, though in an alms-house or hospital, though in the high-ways or hedges, my commission is, if possible, to compel you to come in; and blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God! The *manna*lies about your tents; walk out, gather it up, take it home, and feed upon it. In order to this, I am only to direct you how to use your consideration—and affections—your soliloquy and prayer.

**First. CONSIDERATION is the great instrument by which this heavenly work is carried on.**This must be voluntary, and not forced. Some men consider unwillingly—so God will make the wicked consider their sins when he shall "set them in order before their eyes." So shall the damned consider the excellency of Christ, whom they once despised, and the eternal joys which they have foolishly lost. Great is the power which *consideration*has for moving the affections and impressing things on the heart; as will appear by the following particulars:

**1. Consideration, as it were, opens the door between the head and the heart.**The *understanding*having received truths, lays them up in the *memory*; and *consideration*conveys them from thence to the *affections*. What excellency would there be in much learning and knowledge, if the obstructions between the head and the heart were but opened, and the affections did but correspond to the understanding!

He is usually the best scholar, whose apprehension is quick, clear and tenacious; but he is usually the*best Christian, whose apprehension is the deepest and most affectionate, and who has the readiest passages, not so much from the ear to the brain, as from the brain to the heart.*And though the Spirit is the principal cause—yet, on our part, this passage must be opened by consideration.

**2. Consideration presents to the affections those things which are most important.** The most delightful object does not entertain where it is not seen, nor the most joyful news affect him who does not hear it; but consideration presents to our view those things which were as absent, and *brings them to the eye and ear of the soul.*Are not Christ and glory affecting objects? Would they not work wonders upon the soul, if they were but clearly discovered, and our apprehensions of them in some measure corresponded to their worth? It is consideration that presents them to us. Consideration is the Christian's telescope by which he can see from earth to Heaven.

**3. Consideration, also, presents the most important things in the most affecting way.**It reasons the case with a man's own heart. When a believer would reason his heart to heavenly contemplation, how many arguments offer themselves:
from God and Christ,
from each of the divine perfections,
from our former and present state,
from precious Scripture promises,
from present sufferings and enjoyments,
from Hell and Heaven!

Everything offers itself to promote our joy, and *consideration is the hand to draw them all out*; it adds one reason to another, until the scales turn. This it does when persuading to joy, until it has silenced all our distrusts and sorrows, and our cause for rejoicing lies plain before us.

If another's reasoning is powerful with us, though we are not certain whether he intends to inform or deceive us, how much more should our own reasoning prevail with us, when we are so well acquainted with our own intentions! Nay, how much more should God's reasoning prevail with us, which we are sure cannot deceive, or be deceived! Now, consideration is but the reading over and repeating God's reasons to plead with himself why he should return to his father's house, so have we to plead with our affections, to persuade them to our Father's everlasting mansions.

**4. Consideration exalts reason to its just authority.***It helps to deliver reason from its captivity to the senses, and sets it again on the throne of the soul.*When reason is silent, it is usually subject; for when it is asleep, the senses domineer. But consideration awakens our reason, until, like Samson, it rouses up itself, and breaks the bonds of sensuality, and bears down the delusions of the flesh.

What strength can the lion exert while asleep? What is a king, when dethroned, more than another man? Spiritual reason, excited by meditation, and not imagination or fleshly sense, must judge of heavenly joys. Consideration exalts the objects of faith, and comparatively disgraces the objects of sense. *The most inconsiderate men are most sensual.*It is too easy and common to sin against knowledge; but against sober, strong, persevering consideration, men seldom offend.

**5. Consideration makes reason strong and active.**Before, it was as standing water—but now as a stream, which violently bears down all before it. Before, it was as the stones in the brook—but now like that out of David's sling, which *smites the Goliath of our unbelief in the forehead*. As wicked men continue wicked, because they bring not reason into action and exercise; so godly men are uncomfortable, because they let their reason and faith lie asleep, and do not stir them up to action by this work of meditation. What fears, sorrows and joys will our very dreams excite! How much more, then, would serious meditation affect us!

**6. Consideration continues and perseveres in this rational employment.** Meditation holds reason and faith to their work, and blows the fire until it thoroughly burns. To run a few steps will not get a man heat—but walking an hour may; and though a sudden occasional thought of Heaven will not raise our affections to any spiritual heat—yet *meditation can continue our thoughts until our hearts grow warm*. Thus you see the powerful tendency of *consideration*to produce this great elevation of the soul in heavenly contemplation.

**Secondly. Let us next see how this heavenly work is promoted by the particular exercise of the AFFECTIONS.**It is by consideration that we first have recourse to the memory, and from thence take those heavenly doctrines which we intend to make the subject of our meditation; such as promises of eternal life, descriptions of the saints' glory, the resurrection, etc. We then present them to our judgment, that it may deliberately view them and take an exact survey, and determine uprightly concerning the perfection of our celestial happiness, against all the dictates of flesh and sense, and so as to magnify the Lord in our hearts, until we are filled with a holy admiration.

But the principal thing is to exercise, not merely our *judgment*—but our *faith*in the truth of the promises, and of our own personal interest in them, and title to them. *If we did really and firmly believe that there is such a glory, and that within a few days our eyes shall behold it—O what passion would it raise within us!*What astonishing apprehensions of that life would it produce! What love, what longing would it excite within us! O how it would actuate every affection! How it would transport us with joy, upon the least assurance of our title!

Never expect to have love and joy move, when faith stands still, which must lead the way. Therefore daily exercise faith, and set before it the freeness of the promise, God's urging all to accept it, Christ's gracious disposition, all the evidences of the love of Christ, his faithfulness to his engagement, and the evidences of his love in ourselves. Lay all these together, and think whether they do not testify the good will of the Lord concerning our salvation, and may not properly be pleaded against our unbelief.

Thus, when the *judgment*has determined, and *faith*has apprehended the truth of our happiness, then may our meditation proceed to raise our *affections*; and particularly love, desire, hope, courage or boldness, and joy.

**1. LOVE is the first affection to be excited in heavenly contemplation;** the object of it is goodness. Here, Christian, is the soul-reviving part of your work. Go to your *memory*, your *judgment*and your *faith*, and from them produce the excellencies of your rest; present these to your affection of love, and you will find yourself, as it were, in another world. Speak out, and love can *hear*. Do but reveal these things, and love can *see*.

It is the brutish love of the world that is blind; divine love is exceedingly quick-sighted. *Let your faith take hold of your heart, and show it the sumptuous buildings of your eternal habitation, and the glorious ornaments of your father's house, even the mansions Christ is preparing, and the honors of his kingdom*.

Let your faith lead your heart into the presence of God, and as near as you possibly can, and say to it, "Behold the Ancient of Days, the Lord Jehovah, whose name is, I AM—this is he who made all the worlds with his word, who upholds the earth, who rules the nations, who disposes of all events, who subdues his foes, who controls the swelling waves of the sea, who governs the winds, and causes the sun to run its race, and the stars to know their courses. *This is he who loved you from everlasting, formed you in the womb, gave you this soul, brought you forth, showed you the light, and ranked you with the chief of his earthly creatures*; who endued you with your understanding, and beautified you with his gifts; who maintains your life and all its comforts, and distinguishes you from the most miserable and vilest of men. *O here is an object worthy of your love!*Here should you even pour out your soul in love! Here it is impossible for you to love too much! This is the Lord who has blessed you with his benefits, spread your table in the sight of your enemies, and made your cup overflow! This is he whom angels and saints praise, and the heavenly host forever magnify!"

Thus do you expatiate on the praises of God, and open his excellencies to your heart, until the holy fire of love begins to kindle in your bosom.

If you do not yet feel your love burn, lead your heart farther, and show it the Son of the living God, whose name is "Wonderful, Counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace!" Show it the King of saints on the throne of his glory, "the First and the Last; who is, and was, and is to come; who lives, and was dead, and behold, he lives for evermore; who has made your peace by the blood of his cross," and has prepared for you a habitation of eternal peace. His *office*is that of the great peace-maker; his *kingdom*is the kingdom of peace; his *Gospel*is the tidings of peace; his *voice*to you now is the voice of peace!

Draw near, and behold him. Do you not hear his voice? He who bade Thomas come near, and see the print of the nails, and put his finger into his wounds; he it is that calls to you, "Come near, and view the Lord your Savior, and be not faithless—but believing. Peace be unto you, fear not, it is I."

Look well upon him. Do you not know him? It is he who:
brought you up from the pit of Hell,
reversed the sentence of your damnation,
bore the curse which you should have borne,
restored you to the blessing you had forfeited,
and purchased the advancement which you must inherit forever.

And do you not yet know him? His hands were pierced, his head, his side, his heart were pierced—that by these marks you might always know him.

Do you not remember when he "found you lying in your blood and took pity on you, and dressed your wounds, and brought you home, and said unto you, Live!"

Have you forgotten, since he wounded himself to cure your wounds, and let out his own blood to stop your bleeding?

If you know him not by the face, the voice, the hands, you may know him by that *heart*. That soul-pitying heart is his; it can be none but his; love and compassion are its certain signatures. This is he who chose your life before his own; who pleads his blood before his father, and makes continual intercession for you. If he had not suffered, then what Hell you would have suffered! *There was but a step between you and Hell, when he interposed and bore the stroke.*And is not here fuel enough for your love to feed on? Does not your throbbing heart stop here to ease itself, and, like Joseph, "seek for a place to weep in?" Do not the tears of your love bedew these lines? Go on, then, for the field of love is large; it will be your eternal work to behold and love; nor need you lack objects for your present meditation.

How often has your Lord found you, like *Hagar*, sitting, and weeping, and giving up your soul for lost, and he opened to you a well of consolation, and also opened your eyes to see it!

How often, in the posture of *Elijah*, desiring to die out of your misery, has he spread a table of unexpected relief, and sent you on his work refreshed and encouraged!

How often, in the case of the prophet's servant, crying out, "Alas, what shall we do, for an army encompasses us," has he "opened your eyes to see more for you than against you!"

How often, like *Jonah*, peevish and weary of your life, has he mildly said, "Do you well to be angry" with me, or murmur against me?

How often has he set you on "watching and praying," repenting and believing, "and, when he has returned, has found you asleep;" and yet he has covered your neglect with a mantle of love, and gently pleaded for you, that "the spirit is willing—but the flesh is weak!"

Can your heart be cold when you think of all this? Can it be hard, when you remember these boundless compassions? Thus, reader, hold forth the goodness of Christ to your heart; plead thus with *your frozen soul*, until, with David, you can say, "My heart was hot within me; while I was musing, the fire burned."

If this will not rouse up your love, you have:
all of Christ's personal excellencies to add,
all of his particular mercies to yourself,
all of his sweet and near relations to you, and
the happiness of your everlasting abode with him!

Only follow them close to your heart.

Deal with it as Christ did with *Peter*, when he thrice asked him, "Do you love me?" until he was grieved, and answered, "Lord, you know that I love you!" So *grieve and shame your heart out of its stupidity*, until you can truly say, "I know, and my Lord knows, that I love him."

**2. The next affection to be excited in heavenly contemplation, is DESIRE.**The object of it is goodness, considered as absent, or not yet attained. *If love is warm, desire will not be cold*. Think with yourself, "What have I seen! O the incomprehensible glory! O the transcendent beauty! O blessed souls that now enjoy it! who see a thousand times more clearly what I have seen at a distance, and through dark, interposing clouds.

What a difference between my state and theirs!

I am sighing—and they are singing!

I am offending, and they are pleasing God!

I am a spectacle of pity, like a Job or Lazarus; but they are perfect, and without blemish!

I am here entangled in the love of the world, while they are swallowed up in the love of God!

They have none of my cares and fears;
they weep not in secret;
they languish not in sorrows;
their tears are wiped away from their eyes!

O happy, a thousand times happy souls! Alas, that I must dwell in sinful flesh, when my brethren and companions dwell with God!

How far out of sight and reach of their high enjoyment do I here live!

What poor feeble thoughts have I of God!

What cold affections toward him!

How little have I of that life, that love, that joy, in which they continually live!

How soon does that little depart, and leave me in thicker darkness! Now and then a spark falls upon my heart, and, while I gaze upon it, it dies, or rather, my cold heart quenches it. But they have their light in his light, and drink continually at the spring of eternal joy.

Here we are vexing each other with quarrels, when they are of one heart and voice, and daily sound forth the hallelujahs of Heaven with perfect harmony. O what a *feast*has my faith beheld—and what a famine is yet in my spirit! O blessed souls! I may not, I dare not envy your happiness; I rather rejoice in my brethren's prosperity, and am glad to think of the day when I shall be admitted into your fellowship. I wish not to displace you—but to be so happy as to be with you.

Why must I stay, and weep, and wait? My Lord is gone; He has left this earth, and is entered into his glory. My brethren are gone; my friends are there; my hope, my all is there.

When I am so far distant from my God, wonder not what ails me if I now complain; an ignorant Micah will do so for his idol, and shall not my soul do so for the living God? Had I no hope of everlasting enjoyment, I would go and hide myself in the deserts, and lie and howl in some obscure wilderness, and spend my days in fruitless wishes. But since it is the land of my promised rest, and the state I must myself be advanced to, and my soul draws near, and is almost there—I will love and long, I will look and desire, I will be breathing: How long, Lord! how long will you allow this soul to pant and groan, and not open to him who waits, and longs to be with you!"

Thus, Christian reader, let your thoughts aspire, until your soul longs, as David, "O that one would give me to drink of the wells of salvation!" And until you can say, as he did, "I have longed for your salvation, O Lord!" And as the mother and brethren of Christ, when they could not come to him because of the multitude, sent to him, saying, "Your mother and brethren stand outside, desiring to see you;" so let your message to him be, and he will own you; for he has said, "those who hear my word, and do it, are my mother and my brethren."

**3. Another affection to be exercised in heavenly contemplation, is HOPE.** This hope:
helps to support the soul under sufferings,
animates it in the greatest difficulties,
gives it firmness in the severest trials,
enlivens it in duties, and
is the very spring which sets all the wheels in motion.

Who would believe or strive for Heaven—if it were not for the hope he has of obtaining it? Who would pray—but for the hope of prevailing with God? If your hope dies—then your duties die, your endeavors die, your joys die, and your soul dies! And if your hope is not in exercise—but asleep, it is next to dead. Therefore, Christian reader, when you are raising your affections to Heaven, forget not to give one lift to your hope. Think thus, and reason thus with your own heart:

"Why should I not confidently and comfortably hope, when my soul is in the hands of so compassionate a Savior, and when the kingdom is at the disposal of so bountiful a God? Did he ever reveal the least backwardness to my good, or inclination to my ruin? Has he not sworn, that "he delights not in the death of him that dies—but rather that he should repent and live?" Have not all his dealings witnessed the same? Did he not warn me of my *danger*when I never feared it, because he would have me escape it? Did he not tell me of my *happiness*when I had no thoughts of it, because he would have me enjoy it? How often has he drawn me to himself and his Christ, when I have drawn backward! How has his Spirit incessantly solicited my heart! And would he have done all this, if he had been willing that I should perish?

"Should I not hope, if an honest man had promised me something in his power? And shall I not hope when I have the covenant and oath of God himself? It is true, the glory is out of sight; we have not beheld the mansions of the saints; but *is not the promise of God more certain than our sight?*We must not be saved by sight—but by hope; and hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man sees, why does he yet hope for it? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it. I have been ashamed of my hope in an arm of flesh—but hope in the promise of God makes not ashamed. In my greatest sufferings I will say, the Lord is my portion; therefore will I hope in him. The Lord is good unto those who wait for him, to the soul that seeks him. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord; for the Lord will not cast off forever; but though he causes grief—yet he will have compassion, according to the multitude of his mercies. Though I languish and die—yet will I hope; for the righteous has hope in his death. Though I must lie down in dust and darkness—yet there my flesh shall rest in hope. And when my flesh has nothing to rejoice in—yet will I hold fast the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end; for the hope of the righteous shall be gladness.

"Indeed, if I must myself satisfy divine justice, then there had been no hope; but Christ has brought in a better hope, by the which we draw near to God. Or, if I had to do with a feeble creature, there were small hope; for how could he raise this body from the dust and lift me above the sun? But what is this compared to the Almighty Power which made the heavens and the earth out of nothing? Cannot that power which raised Christ from the dead, raise me? Cannot that power which has glorified the Head, glorify also the members? Doubtless, by the blood of his covenant, God will send forth his prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water: therefore will I turn to the stronghold, as a prisoner of hope."

**4. COURAGE, or BOLDNESS, is another affection to be exercised in heavenly contemplation**; it leads to resolution, and concludes in action. When you have raised your love, desire and hope, go on, and think thus with yourself: Will God indeed dwell with men? And is there such a glory within the reach of hope? Why then do I not lay hold upon it? Where is the cheerful vigor of my spirit? Why do I not gird up the loins of my mind? Why do I not set upon my enemies on every side, and valiantly break through all resistance? What should stop me, or intimidate me?

"Is God with me, or against me, in the work? Will Christ stand by me, or will he not? If God and Christ are for me, who can be against me? In my course to Heaven, almost all things are against me—but God is for me; and therefore how happily does the work succeed!

"Do I enter upon this work in my own strength, or rather in the strength of Christ my Lord? And cannot I do all things through him who strengthens me? Was he ever foiled by an enemy? He has indeed been assaulted—but was he ever conquered? Why, then, does my flesh urge me with the difficulties of the work?*Is anything too hard for Omnipotence?*May not Peter boldly walk on the sea, if Christ gives the word of command? If he begins to sink, is it from the weakness of Christ, or from the smallness of his faith? Do I not well deserve to be turned into Hell, if mortal threats can drive me there? Do I not well deserve to be shut out of Heaven, if I will be frightened from thence with the reproach of tongues? What if it were father, or mother, or husband, or wife, or the nearest friend I have in the world, if they may be called friends who would draw me to damnation—should I not forsake all that would keep me from Christ? Will their friendship countervail the love of God for me, or be any comfort to my condemned soul? Shall I be yielding to the desires of men, and only harden myself against the Lord?

"Let them beseech me upon their knees, I will scorn to stop my course to behold them, I will shut my ears to their cries. Let them flatter or frown, let them draw out tongues and swords against me; I am resolved, in the strength of Christ, to break through and look upon them as dust.*If they would entice me with preferment, even with the kingdoms of the world, I will no more regard them than the dung of the earth.*

"O blessed rest! O glorious state! Who would sell you for dreams and shadows? Who would be enticed or affrighted from you? Who would not strive, and fight, and watch, and run, and that with violence, even to the last breath—in order to obtain you? Surely none but those that know you not, and believe not your glory."

**5. The last affection to be exercised in heavenly contemplation, is JOY.** Love, desire, hope and courage, all tend to raise our joy. Joy is so desirable to every man by nature, and so essentially necessary to constitute our happiness, that I hope I need not say much to persuade you to anything that would make your life delightful. Supposing you, therefore, already convinced that *the pleasures of the flesh are brutish and perishing, that your solid and lasting joy must be from Heaven*; instead of persuading, I shall proceed in directing.

Reader, if you have managed well the former work, you have gotten within sight of your everlasting rest!

You believe the truth of it;
you are convinced of its excellencies;
you have fallen in love with it;
you long after it;
you hope for it; and
you are resolved to venture courageously for obtaining it.

But is here any work for joy in this? We delight in the good we possess; it is present good that is the object of joy; and you will say, "Alas, I am yet without it!" But think a little further with yourself.

Is it nothing to have a deed of gift from God?

Are his infallible promises no ground of joy?

Is it nothing to live in daily expectation of entering into the kingdom of God?

Is not my assurance of being hereafter glorified, a sufficient ground for inexpressible joy?

Is it not a delight to the heir of a kingdom to think of what he must soon possess, though at present he little differs from a servant?

Have we not both command and example for "rejoicing in the hope of the glory of God?"

Here then, reader, take your heart once more and carry it to the top of the highest mount. Show it the kingdom of Christ, and the glory of it; and say to it, "All this will your Lord give you, who have believed in him, and been a worshiper of him. It is the Father's good pleasure to give you this kingdom. See this astonishing glory which is above you? All this is your own inheritance. This crown is yours, these pleasures are yours; this company, this beautiful place, all are yours; because you are Christ's, and Christ is yours; when you were united to him, you had all these with him."

Thus take your heart into the land of promise; show it the pleasant hills and fruitful valleys; show it the clusters of grapes which you have gathered, to convince it that it is a blessed land, flowing with better than milk and honey. Enter the gates of the holy city, walk through the streets of the "New Jerusalem, walk about Zion, and go round about her; count the towers thereof; mark well her bulwarks; consider her palaces—that you may tell it to your soul. Has it not "the glory of God," and is not "her light like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal?"

"The *wall*was made of jasper, and the city of pure gold, as pure as glass. The *foundations*of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious stone. The twelve *gates*were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl. The great *street*of the city was of pure gold, like transparent glass. I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life!" These sayings are faithful and true; and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angels, and his own Son, "to show unto his servants the things which must shortly take place."

Say now to all this, "This is *your*rest, O my soul! This must be the place of your everlasting habitation." Let all the sons of "Zion rejoice; let the daughters of Jerusalem be glad; for great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion. God is known in her palaces for a refuge."

Yet proceed on. Lead on your heart as from street to street; bring it into the palace of the Great King; lead it, as it were, from chamber to chamber. Say to it, "Here must I lodge; here must I live; here must I praise, here must I love, and be beloved. I must shortly be one of this heavenly choir, and be better skilled in the music. Among this blessed company must I take up my place; my voice must join to make up the melody. My tears will then be wiped away; my groans be turned to another tune; my cottage of clay be changed to this palace; my prison rags to these splendid robes; and my sordid flesh shall be put off, and such a sun-like, spiritual body be put on; for the former things are here passed away. Glorious things are spoken of you, O city of God!

When I look upon this glorious place, what a dunghill and dungeon is earth! O what difference between a man, feeble, pained, groaning, dying, rotting in the grave—and one of these triumphant, shining saints! Here shall I drink of the river of pleasures, the streams whereof make glad the city of God.

Must Israel, under the bondage of the law, serve the Lord with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things? Surely I shall serve him with joyfulness and gladness of heart for the abundance of glory. Did persecuted saints take joyfully the confiscation of their goods? and shall not I take joyfully such a full reparation of all my losses?

Was it a celebrated day wherein the Jews rested from their enemies, because it was turned unto them from sorrow to joy, and from mourning into a good day? What a day, then, will that be to my soul, whose rest and change will be inconceivably greater?

When the wise men saw the *star*that led to Christ, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy; but I shall shortly see *him*, who is himself the bright and morning Star!

If the disciples departed from the sepulcher with great joy, when they had but heard that their Lord was risen from the dead—then what will be my joy, when I shall see him reigning in glory, and myself raised to a blessed communion with him! Then shall I indeed have beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, and Zion shall be made an eternal excellency!

Why, then do I not arise from the dust, and cease my complaints? Why do I not trample on vain delights, and feed on the foreseen delights of glory? Why is not my life a continual joy, and the savor of Heaven perpetually upon my spirit?

Let me here observe, that there is no necessity to exercise these affections, either exactly in this order, or all at one time. Sometimes one of your affections may need more exciting, or may be more lively than the rest. Or, if your time is short, one may be exercised one day and another the next—all which must be left to your prudence to determine.

You have also an opportunity, if inclined to make use of it, to exercise opposite and more mixed affections, such as:
hatred of sin, which would deprive your soul of these immortal joys;
godly fear, lest you should abuse your mercy;
godly shame and grief, for having abused it;
sincere repentance; self-indignation;
jealously over your deceitful heart;
and pity for those who are in danger of losing these immortal joys.

**Thirdly. We are also to take notice how heavenly contemplation is promoted by SOLILOQUY and PRAYER.** Though *consideration*is the chief instrument in this work—yet, by itself, it is not so likely to affect the heart. In this respect contemplation is like preaching, where the mere explaining of truths and duties is seldom attended with much success, as the lively application of them to the conscience; and especially when a divine blessing is earnestly sought to accompany such application.

**1. By SOLILOQUY, or a pleading the case with yourself, you must in your meditation quicken your own heart.**Enter into a serious debate with it. Plead with it in the most moving and affecting language, and urge it with the most powerful and weighty arguments. It is what holy men of God have practiced in all ages. Thus David: "Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God." And again; "Bless the Lord, O my soul! and forget not all his benefits!"

This soliloquy is to be made use of according to the several affections of the soul, and according to its several necessities. It is a *preaching to one's self*; for as every good master or father of a family is a good preacher to his own family, so *every good Christian is a good preacher to his own soul*. Therefore the very same method which a minister should use in his preaching to others, every Christian should endeavor after in speaking to himself.

Observe the matter and manner of the most heart-affecting minister; let him be a pattern for your imitation; and the same way that he takes with the hearts of his people—you also take with your own heart. Do this in your heavenly contemplation; *explain*to yourself the things on which you meditate; confirm your faith in them by Scripture; and then *apply*them to yourself according to their nature and your own necessity.

There is no need to object against this, from a sense of your own inability. Does not God command you to "teach the Scriptures diligently unto your children, and talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise up?" And if you must have some ability to teach your *children*—then much more to teach *yourself*; and if you can talk of divine things to others, why not also to your own heart?

**2. Heavenly contemplation is also promoted by speaking to God in PRAYER**, as well as by speaking to ourselves in soliloquy. Ejaculatory prayer may very properly be mixed with meditation, as a part of the duty. How often do we find David, in the same psalm, sometimes pleading with his soul and sometimes with God! The apostle bids us "speak to *ourselves*in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs;" and no doubt we may also speak to God in them. This keeps the soul sensible of the divine presence, and tends greatly to quicken and raise it.

As God is the highest object of our thoughts, so our viewing him, speaking to him and pleading with him, more elevates the soul and excites the affections than any other part of meditation. Though we remain unaffected while we plead the case with ourselves; yet, when we turn our speech to God, it may strike us with awe. The holiness and majesty of him whom we speak to, may cause both the matter and words to pierce the deeper.

When we read that "Isaac went out to meditate in the field," the margin says, "to pray;" for the Hebrew word signifies both. Thus, in our meditations, to *intermix soliloquy and prayer*, sometimes speaking to our own hearts, and sometimes to God, is, I apprehend, the highest step to which we can advance in this heavenly work.

Nor should we imagine it will be as well to take up with prayer alone, and lay aside meditation; for they are distinct duties, and must both of them be performed. We need one as well as the other, and therefore shall wrong ourselves by neglecting either. Besides, *the mixture of them, like music, will be more engaging; as the one serves to put life into the other.*

Our speaking to ourselves in meditation, should go before our speaking to God in prayer. For lack of attending to this due order, men speak to God with far less reverence and affection than they would speak to an angel if he would appear to them; or to a judge, if they were speaking for their lives. Speaking to the God of Heaven in prayer, is a weightier duty than most are aware of.

***~~Chapter 15.~~***

***~~Heavenly Contemplation Assisted by Sensible Objects, and Guarded Against a Treacherous Heart.~~***

It is difficult to maintain a lively impression of heavenly things, therefore:

I. Heavenly contemplation may be assisted by sensible objects:

1. If we draw strong suppositions from sense.

2. If we compare the objects of sense with the objects of faith.

II. Heavenly contemplation may also be guarded against a treacherous heart, by considering:

1. The great backwardness of the heart to this duty.

2. Its trifling in it.

3. Its wandering from it.

4. Its too abruptly putting an end to it.

*The most difficult part of heavenly contemplation is to maintain a lively sense of heavenly things upon our hearts.* It is easier merely to think of Heaven a whole day, than to be lively and affectionate in those thoughts a quarter of an hour.

*Faith*is imperfect—for we are renewed but in part, and goes against a world of resistance; and, being supernatural, is prone to decline and languish, unless it is continually excited.

*Sense*is strong according to the strength of the flesh; and, being natural, continues while nature continues.

The objects of faith are far off; but those of sense are near. We must go as far as Heaven for our joys. To rejoice in what we never saw, nor ever knew the man that did see, and this upon a mere promise of the Bible—is not so easy as to rejoice in what we see and possess. It must, therefore, be a point of spiritual prudence, to *call in sense to the assistance of faith*. It will be a good work, if we can make friends of these usual enemies, and make them instruments for raising us to God, which are so often the means of drawing us from him.

Why has God given us either our senses or their common objects, if they might not be serviceable to his praise? Why does the Holy Spirit describe the glory of the New Jerusalem in expressions that are pleasing to the flesh? Is it that we might think Heaven to be made of gold and pearl? or that saints and angels eat and drink? To help us to conceive of them as we are able, and to use these things of sense as a telescope, in which we must see the things themselves imperfectly represented, until we come to an immediate and perfect sight. Besides showing *how heavenly contemplation may be assisted by sensible objects, this chapter will also show how it may be preserved from a wandering heart.*

**First. In order that heavenly contemplation may be ASSISTED BY SENSIBLE OBJECTS**, let me only advise to draw strong suppositions from sense, and to compare the objects of sense with the objects of faith.

**1. For the helping of your affections in heavenly contemplation, draw as strong suppositions as possible from your senses.**Think on the joys above, as boldly as Scripture has expressed them. Bring down your conceptions to the reach of sense. Both love and joy are promoted by familiar acquaintance. When we attempt to think of God and glory, without the Scripture's manner of representing them—we are lost, and have nothing to fix our thoughts upon; we set them so far from us, that our thoughts are strange, and we are ready to say, what is above us is nothing to us. To conceive of God and glory only as above our conception, will beget but little love; or above our love, will produce little joy.

Therefore put Christ no farther from you than he has put himself, lest the divine nature be again inaccessible. Think of Christ as in our own glorified nature. Think of glorified saints as men made perfect. Suppose yourself a companion with John, in his survey of the New Jerusalem, and viewing the thrones, the majesty, the heavenly hosts, the shining splendor which he saw. Suppose yourself his fellow-traveler into the celestial kingdom, and that you had seen all the saints in their white robes, with "palms in their hands;" and that you had heard those "songs of Moses and of the Lamb."

If you had really seen and heard these things, in what a rapture would you have been! And the more seriously you put this supposition to yourself, the more will your meditation elevate your heart.

Do not, like the Papists, draw them in pictures! but get the liveliest picture of them in your mind that you possibly can, by contemplating the Scripture account of them, until you can say, "Methinks I *see*a glimpse of glory! Methinks I *hear*the shouts of joy and praise, and even stand by Abraham and David, Peter and Paul, and other triumphant souls! Methinks I even *see*the Son of God appearing in the clouds, and the world standing at his bar to receive their doom; and hear him say, Come, you who are blessed of my Father! and see them go rejoicing into the joy of their Lord!

My very dreams of these things have sometimes greatly affected me; and should not these just suppositions much more affect me? What if I had seen, with *Paul*, those unutterable things? Or, with *Stephen*, had seen Heaven opened, and Christ sitting at the right hand of God? Surely that one sight was worth his storm of stones.

What if I had seen, as Micaiah did, the Lord sitting upon his throne, and all the host of Heaven standing on his right hand and on his left?

Such things did these men of God see; and I shall shortly see far more than ever they saw, until they were loosed from the flesh, as I must be.

Thus you see how it excites our affections in this heavenly work, if we make strong and familiar suppositions from our bodily senses, concerning the state of blessedness, as the Spirit has in condescending language expressed it.

**2. The other way in which our senses may promote this heavenly work, is by comparing the objects of sense with the objects of faith.**As for instance: You may strongly argue with your heart from the corrupt delights of sensual men, compared to the joys above. Think with your self, "Is it such a delight to a sinner to do wickedly? And will it not be delightful indeed to live with God? Has the *drunkard*such delight in his cups, that the fears of damnation will not make him forsake them? Will the *licentious*man rather part with his credit, estate and salvation, than with his brutish delights? If the way to Hell can afford such pleasure—what then are the pleasures of the saints in Heaven! If the *covetous*man has so much pleasure in his wealth, and the *ambitious*man in places of power and titles of honor—what pleasure then have the saints in everlasting treasures, and in heavenly honors, where we shall be set above principalities and powers, and be made the glorious spouse of Christ!

How delightfully will the *voluptuous*follow their recreations from morning until night, or sit at their cards and dice nights and days together! O then, the delight we shall have, when we come to our rest, in beholding the face of the living God, and in singing forth praises unto him and the Lamb!

Compare also the delights *above—*with the lawful and moderate delights of *sense*. Think with yourself, "How sweet is food to my taste when I am hungry; especially if it be, as Isaac said, such as I love—which my temperance and appetite incline to? What delight, then, must my soul have in feeding upon Christ, the living bread, and in eating with him at his table in his kingdom!

Was a mess of pottage so sweet to Esau in his hunger, that he would buy it at so dear a rate as his birthright? How highly, then, should I value this never-perishing food!

How pleasant is *drink*in the extremity of thirst; scarcely to be expressed; enough to make the strength of Samson revive! O then, how delightful will it be to my soul to drink of that fountain of living water, which whoever drinks shall thirst no more!

How delightful are:
pleasant fragrances to the *smell*;
or music to the *ear*;
or beautiful sights to the *eye!*

What fragrance, then, has the precious ointment which is poured on the head of our glorified Savior, and which must be poured on the head of all his saints, and will fill all Heaven with its fragrance! How pleasing will be those real beauties above! How glorious the building not made with hands, the house that God himself dwells in, the walks and prospects in the city of God, and the celestial paradise!

Compare, also, the delights above with those we find in natural knowledge. These are far beyond the delights of sense—but how much farther are the delights of Heaven! Think, then, "can an Archimedes be so taken up with his mathematical inventions, that the threats of death cannot disengage him—but he will die in the midst of his contemplations? Should not I be much more taken up with the delights of glory, and die with these contemplations fresh upon my soul—especially when my death will perfect my delights, while those of Archimedes die with him?

What exquisite pleasure is it to dive into the secrets of nature, and find out the mysteries of arts and sciences; especially if we make a new discovery in any one of them! What high delights are there, then, in the knowledge of God and Christ! If the face of human learning is so beautiful as to make sensual pleasures appear base and brutish—how beautiful, then, is the face of God! When we meet with some choice book, how could we read it day and night, almost forgetful of food, drink, or sleep! What delights are there, then, at God's right hand, where we shall know in a moment all that is to be known!

Compare, also, the delights above, with the delights of morality and of the natural affections. What delight had many sober heathen in the rules and practice of moral duty, so that they took him alone for an honest man who did well through the love of virtue, and not merely for fear of punishment. Yes, so much valued was this moral virtue, that they thought a man's chief happiness consisted in it!

Think, then, What excellency will there be in our heavenly perfection, and in that uncreated perfection of God which we shall behold!

What sweetness is there in the exercise of natural love, whether to children, parents, yoke-fellows, or intimate friends! Does David say of Jonathan, Your love to me was wonderful, surpassing the love of women! Did the soul of Jonathan cleave to David? Had Christ himself one disciple whom he especially loved, and who was accustomed to lean on his breast?

If, then, the delights of close and cordial friendship are so great—then what delight shall we have in the friendship of the Most High, and in the dearest love of the saints! Surely this will be a stricter friendship than these, more lovely and desirable friends than ever the sun beheld. Both our affections to our Father and Savior, and especially theirs to us, will be such as we never knew here.

If one angel could destroy an army, the affections of spirits must also be proportionably stronger, so that we shall then love a thousand times more ardently than we can now.

As all the attributes and works of God are incomprehensible, so is this of love: he will love us infinitely beyond our most perfect love to Him. What, then, will there be in this mutual love!

Compare also the excellencies of Heaven, with those glorious works of creation which our eyes now behold. What wisdom, power and goodness are manifested therein! How does the majesty of the Creator shine in this fabric of the world! "His works are great, sought out by all those who have pleasure therein."

What divine skill in forming the bodies of men or beasts! What excellency in every plant! What beauty in flowers! What variety and usefulness in herbs, plants, fruits and minerals! What wonders are contained in the earth and its inhabitants; the ocean of waters, with its motions and dimensions; and the constant succession of spring and autumn, of summer and winter!

Think, then, "If these things, which are but servants to sinful man, are so full of mysterious worth—then what is that place where God himself dwells, and which is prepared for just men made perfect with Christ!

What glory is there in the least of yonder stars! What a vast resplendent body is yonder moon, and every planet! What an inconceivable glory has the sun! But all this is nothing compared to the glory of Heaven. Yonder sun must there be laid aside as useless. Yonder sun is but darkness, compared to the luster of my Father's house. I shall myself be as glorious as that sun. This whole earth is but my Father's footstool. This *thunder*is nothing to his dreadful voice. These *winds*are nothing to the breath of his mouth. If the sending rain, and making the sun to rise on the just and on the unjust, is so wonderful—then how much more wonderful and glorious will that Sun be which must shine on none but saints and angels?"

Compare also the enjoyments above, with the wonders of Providence in the church and the world. Would it not be an astonishing sight to see "the sea stand as a wall on the right hand and on the left, and the dry land appear in the midst, and the people of Israel pass safely through, and Pharaoh and his host drowned?" How astonishing would it have been to have seen the ten plagues of Egypt? How astonishing would it have been to have seen the rock gushing forth streams? or manna and quail rained from Heaven? or the earth opening and swallowing up the wicked?

But we shall see far greater things than these! And not only sights more wonderful—but more delightful! There shall be no blood, nor wrath, intermingled; nor shall we cry out, as the men of Beth-shemesh, "Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God?"

How astonishing to see the sun stand still in the firmament, or "the dial of Ahaz go back ten degrees!" But we shall see when there shall be *no sun*; or rather shall behold forever a Sun of infinitely greater brightness.

What a life would we have, if we could have drought or rain at our prayers; or have fire from Heaven to destroy our enemies, as Elisha; or miraculously cure diseases, and speak all languages, as the apostles!

Alas! these are nothing compared to the wonders we shall see and possess with God; and all of them wonders of goodness and love!

We shall ourselves be the subjects of more wonderful mercies than any of these. *Jonah*was raised but from a three days' burial in the belly of a fish; but we shall be raised from many years' decay and dust; and that dust exalted to the glory of the sun; and that glory perpetuated through eternity!

Surely, if we observe but common providences, as the motions of the sun; the tides of the sea; the stability of the earth; the watering it with rain, as a garden; the keeping in order a wicked, confused world; with many others things—they are all admirable. But what are these compared to the Zion of God, the vision of the divine Majesty, and the order of the heavenly host?

Add to these, those *particular providences*which you have yourself enjoyed and recorded through your life—and compare them with the mercies you shall have above. Look over the mercies of your youth and riper age, of your prosperity and adversity, of your several places and relations—are they not excellent and innumerable, rich and engaging? How sweet was it to you, when God resolved your doubts; scattered your fears; prevented the problems into which your own counsel would have cast you; eased your pains; healed your sickness; and raised you up, as from death and the grave!

Think, then, "Are all these *providences* so sweet and precious, that without them my life would have been a perpetual misery? Has his providence on earth lifted me so high, and his gentleness made me so great? How sweet, then, will his glorious presence be! How high will his eternal love exalt me! And how great shall I be made in communion with his greatness! If my pilgrimage and warfare have such mercies—then what shall I find in my heavenly home and in my triumph? If God communicates so much to me while I remain a sinner—then what will he bestow when I am a perfected saint! If I have had so much at such a distance from him—then what shall I have in his immediate presence, where I shall forever stand before his throne!"

Compare the joys above with the comforts you have here received in *ordinances*. Has not the Bible been to you as an open fountain, flowing with comforts day and night? What suitable promises have come into your mind; so that, with David, you may say, "Unless your law had been my delight, I would then have perished in my affliction!" Think, then, "If his *word*is so full of consolation—then what overflowing springs shall we find in God himself! If his letters are so comfortable—then what will the glory of his presence be! If his promises are so sweet—then what will their fulfillment be! If the testament of our Lord, and our charter for the kingdom, are so comfortable—then what will be our possession of the kingdom itself!"

Think farther, "What delights have I also found in the *word preached!*When I have sat under a heavenly, heart-searching teacher—how has my heart been warmed! Methinks I have felt myself almost in Heaven. How often have I gone to the congregation, troubled in spirit—and returned joyful! How often have I gone doubting—and God has sent me home persuaded of his love in Christ! What cordials have I met with to animate me in every conflict! If the face of Moses shone so gloriously—then what glory is there in the face of God! If the feet of those who publish peace, that bring good tidings of salvation, be beautiful—then how beautiful is the face of the Prince of Peace! If this treasure be so precious in earthen vessels—then what is that treasure laid up in Heaven! Blessed are the eyes that see what is seen there, and the ears that hear the things that are heard there. There shall I hear Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, John, Peter, Paul—not preaching to gainsayers, in imprisonment, persecution and reproach; but triumphing in the praises of him who has raised them to honor and glory."

Think also, "What joy is it to have *access and acceptance in prayer*; that I may always go to God, and open my case, and unbosom my soul to him, as to my most faithful friend! But it will be a more unspeakable joy, when I shall receive all blessings without asking, and all my necessities and miseries will be removed, and when God himself will be the portion and inheritance of my soul!"

As for the *Lord's supper*, "What a privilege is it to be admitted to sit at his table, to have his covenant sealed to me there! But all the life and comfort there, is but to assure me of the comforts hereafter. *O the difference between the last supper of Christ on earth, and the marriage supper of the Lamb at the great day!* Then his place will be the glorious heavens; his attendants, all the hosts of angels and saints—no Judas, no unfurnished guest comes there; but the humble believers must sit down by them, and their feast will be their mutual loving and rejoicing."

Concerning the communion of saints, think with yourself, "What a pleasure is it to live with holy and heavenly Christians! David says of such, that they were all his delight. O what a delightful society, then, shall I have above! Had I but seen *Job*on the dunghill, what a mirror of patience! What will it be to see him in glory! How delightful to have heard *Paul*and *Silas*singing in the stocks! How much more to hear them sing praises in Heaven! What melody did *David*make on his harp! But how much more melodious to hear that sweet singer in the heavenly choir! What would I have given for an hour's free converse with Paul, when he was just come down from the third Heaven! But I must shortly see those things myself, and possess what I see!"

Once more, think of praising God in concert with his saints: "What if I had been in the place of those shepherds who saw and heard the heavenly host singing: *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men!* But I shall see and hear more glorious things. How blessed should I have thought myself, had I heard Christ in his thanksgivings to his Father! How much more, when I shall hear him pronounce *me*blessed!

If there was such joy at bringing back the ark, or at rebuilding the temple; what will there be in the New Jerusalem! If the earth rent when the people rejoiced at Solomon's coronation; what a joyful shout will there be at the appearing of the King of the church! If, when the foundations of the earth were laid, the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy—then what a joyful song will there be, when the world of glory is both founded and finished, when the top-stone is laid, and when the holy city is adorned as the bride, the Lamb's wife!'"

Compare the joys you shall have in Heaven, with what the saints have found in the *way*to it, and in the *foretastes*of it. When did God ever reveal the least of himself to any of his saints—but the joy of their hearts corresponded to the revelation? In what an ecstasy was Peter on the mount of transfiguration! "Master," says he, "it is good for us to be here—let us make three tabernacles; one for you, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah." As if he had said, "O let us not go down again to yonder persecuting rabble; let us not return to our mean and suffering state. Is it not better to stay here, now that we are here? Is not here better company and sweeter pleasure?"

How was *Paul*lifted up with what he saw! How did the face of *Moses*shine when he had been talking with God! These were all extraordinary foretastes—but little compared to the full beatific vision. How often have we read and heard of dying saints who have been full of joy; and when their bodies have felt the extremity of sickness and pain, have had so much of Heaven in their spirits that their joy has far exceeded their sorrows! If a spark of this fire is so glorious even amidst the sea of adversity-what then is glory itself!

O the joy that the martyrs have felt in the flames! They were flesh and blood, as well as we; it must therefore be some excellent thing that filled their spirits with joy while their bodies were burning. Think, reader, in your meditations, "Sure it must be some wonderful foretaste of glory that made the flames of fire easy, and the king of terrors welcome. What then is glory itself!

What a blessed rest, when the thoughts of it made Paul desire to depart and be with Christ; and make the saints never think themselves well until they are dead! Shall Saunders embrace the stake, and cry, 'Welcome, cross!' And shall I not more delightfully embrace my blessedness, and cry, 'Welcome, crown!' Shall Bradford kiss the fagot—and shall I not kiss the Savior? Shall another poor martyr rejoice to have her foot in the same hole of the stocks in which Mr. Philpot's had been before her? *And shall not I rejoice that my soul shall live in the same place of glory where Christ and his apostles are gone before me?*Shall fire and fagot, prisons and banishment, cruel mockings and scourgings, be more welcome to others, than Christ and glory to me? God forbid!"

Compare the glory of the heavenly kingdom, with the glory of the church on earth, and of Christ in his state of humiliation. If Christ's suffering in the room of sinners had such excellency—then what is Christ at his Father's right hand! If the church under her sins and enemies have so much beauty—then what will she have at the marriage of the Lamb!

How wonderful was the Son of God in the form of a servant! When he is born, a new star must appear, and conduct the strangers to worship him in a manger; heavenly hosts with their songs must celebrate his nativity. While a child, he must dispute with doctors. When he enters upon his office, he turns water into wine, feeds thousands with a few loaves and fishes, cleanses the lepers, heals the sick, restores the lame, gives sight to the blind, and raises the dead. *How wonderful, then, is his celestial glory!*

If there is such cutting down of boughs, and spreading of garments, and crying Hosanna, for one that comes into Jerusalem riding on an donkey—then what will there be when he comes with his angels in his glory! If those who had heard him "preach the Gospel of the kingdom," confess, "Never any man spoke like this man!" Those, then, who behold his majesty in his kingdom will say, "There was never glory like this glory."

If, when his enemies came to apprehend him, they fell to the ground; if, when he is dying, the earth quakes, the veil of the temple is rent, the sun is eclipsed, the dead bodies of the saints arise, and the bystanders acknowledge, "truly this was the Son of God!"—then O what a day will it be when the dead must all arise and stand before him! When he "will once shake, not the earth only—but the heavens also! When this sun shall be taken out of the firmament, and be everlastingly darkened with his glory! And when every tongue shall confess him to be the Lord and King!

If, when he rose again, death and the grave lost their power; if angels must "roll away the stone," terrify the keepers until they are "as dead men," and send the tidings to his disciples; if he ascends to Heaven in their sight—then of what power, dominion and glory is he now possessed, and which we must forever possess with him!

When he is gone, can a few poor fishermen and tent-makers cure the lame, blind and sick, open prisons, destroy the disobedient, raise the dead, and astonish their adversaries?—then what a world will that be, where every one can do greater works than these!

If the preaching of the Gospel is accompanied with such power as to reveal the secrets of the heart, humble the proud sinner, and make the most obdurate tremble; if it can make men burn their books, sell their lands, and bring in the price and lay it down at the preacher's feet; if it can convert thousands, and turn the world upside down; if its doctrine, from the prisoner at the bar, can make the judge on the bench tremble; if Christ and his saints have this power and honor in the day of their abasement, and in the time appointed for their suffering and disgrace—then what will they have in their absolute dominion and full advancement in their kingdom of glory!

*Compare the glorious change you shall have at last, with the gracious change which the Spirit has here wrought on your heart.*There is not the smallest sincere grace in you—but is of greater worth than the riches of the Indies*.*There is not a hearty desire after Christ—but is more to be valued than the kingdoms of the world. A renewed nature is the very image of God; Christ dwelling in us, and the Spirit of God abiding in us—it is a beam from the face of God; the seed of God remaining in us; the only inherent beauty of the rational soul. It ennobles man above all nobility; fits him to understand his Maker's pleasure, do his will, and receive his glory. If this grain of mustard-seed be so precious—then what is "the tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God!"

If a spark of life, which will but strive against corruptions, and flame out a few desires and groans, be of so much worth—then how glorious then is the fountain of this life!

If we are said to be like God when we are pressed down with a body of sin—then surely we shall be much more like God when we have no such thing as sin within us.

Is the desire after, and love of Heaven, so excellent—what then is the thing itself?

Is our joy in foreseeing and believing so sweet—then what will be the joy of full possession?

How glad is a Christian when he feels his heart begin to melt, and be dissolved with the thoughts of his sinful unkindness! Even this sorrow yields him joy. O what then will it be, when we shall know, and love, and rejoice, and praise in the highest perfection!

Dialog with yourself, "What a change was it to be taken from that state wherein I was born, and in which I was riveted by custom, when thousands of sins lay against me; and if I had so died, I have been damned forever! What an astonishing change, to be justified from all these enormous crimes, and freed from all these fearful plagues, and made an heir of Heaven! How often, when I have thought of my regeneration, have I cried out: O blessed day! and blessed be the Lord that ever I saw it! How, then, shall I cry out in Heaven: O blessed eternity! and blessed be the Lord that brought me to it!

Did the angels of God rejoice to see my conversion? Then surely they will congratulate my felicity in my salvation. Grace is but a spark raked up in the ashes, covered with flesh from the sight of the world, and sometimes covered with corruption from my own sight; but my everlasting glory will not be so clouded, nor my light be under a bushel—but upon a hill, even upon mount Zion, the mount of God.

Once more, compare the joys which you shall have above, with those foretastes of it which the Spirit has given you here. Has not God sometimes revealed himself extraordinarily to your soul, and let a drop of glory fall upon it? Have you not been ready to say: "O that it might be thus with my soul continually!"

Did you never cry out with the martyr, after your long and mournful expectations, "He is come! he is come!"

Did you never, under a lively sermon of Heaven, or in your retired contemplations on that blessed state—perceive your drooping spirits revive, and your dejected heart lift up your head, and the light of Heaven dawn on your soul? Think with yourself, "What is this pledge, compared to the full inheritance? Alas, all this light, that so amazes and rejoices me, is but a candle lighted from Heaven to lead me there through this world of darkness! "

If some godly men have been overwhelmed with joy until they have cried out, Hold, Lord, stay your hand; I can bear no more! What then will be my joys in Heaven, when my soul shall be so capable of seeing and enjoying God, that though the light be ten thousand times greater than the sun—yet my eyes shall be able forever to behold it! Or if you have not yet felt these sweet foretastes, (for every believer has not felt them,) then make use of such delights as you have felt, in order the better to discern what you shall hereafter feel.

**Secondly. I am now to show how heavenly contemplation may be PRESERVED FROM A WANDERING HEART.**Our chief work here is to reveal the danger, and that will direct to the fittest remedy. *The heart will prove the greatest hindrance in this heavenly employment*; either,
by backwardness to it;
or by trifling in it;
or by frequent excursions to other objects;
or by abruptly ending the work before it is well begun.
As you value the comfort of this work, these dangerous evils must be faithfully resisted.

**1. You will find your heart as backward to this, I think, as to any work in the world.**O what *excuses*will it make! What *evasions*will it find out! What *delays*and *demurs*, when it is ever so much convinced! Either it will question whether it is a duty or not; or if it be so to others, whether to yourself. It will tell you, "This is a work for ministers who have nothing else to study; or, for people that have more leisure time than you have." If you be a minister, it will tell you, "This is the duty of the people; it is enough for you to meditate for their instruction, and let them meditate on what they have heard." *As if it was your duty only to cook their food and serve it up, and they alone must eat it, digest it, and live upon it.*

If all this will not do, your heart will tell you of other business, or set you upon some other duty—for *it had rather go to any duty than this.*Perhaps it will tell you, "Other duties are greater, and therefore this must give place to them, because you have no time for both. Public business is more important; to study and preach for the saving of souls must be preferred before these private contemplations."

As if you had not time to care for your own salvation, for looking after that of others; or your charity to others were so great, that it obliges you to neglect your own eternal welfare; or as if there was any better way to fit us to be useful to others, than making this proof of our doctrine ourselves.

Certainly Heaven is the best fire to light our candle at, and the best book for a preacher to study; and if we would be persuaded to study that more, the church would be provided with more heavenly lights. When our studies are divine and our spirits divine—our preaching will also be divine, and we may be called divines indeed.

Or if your heart will have nothing to say against the work, it will trifle away the time in *delays*, and promise this day and the next—but still keep off from the business. Or it will give you a flat denial, and oppose its own unwillingness to your reason. All this I speak of the heart, so far as it is still carnal; for I know, so far as it is spiritual, it will judge this to be the sweetest work in the world.

What is now to be done? Will you do it if I tell you? Would you not say in a like case, "What would I do with a servant that will not work, or with a horse that will not travel? Shall I keep them to look at?" Then faithfully deal thus with your heart; persuade it to the work, take no denial, chide it for its backwardness, use violence with it.

Have you no command of your own thoughts? Is not the subject of your meditations a matter of choice, especially under the guidance of your judgment? Surely God gave you, with your new nature, some power to govern your thoughts.

*Are you again become a slave to your depraved nature?*Resume your authority. Call in the Spirit of Christ to your assistance, who is never backward to so good a work, nor will deny his help in so just a cause. Say to him, "Lord, you gave my reason the command of my thoughts and affections; the authority I have received over them is from you; and now, behold, they refuse to obey your authority. *You command me to set them to the work of heavenly meditation—but they rebel and stubbornly refuse the duty.*Will you not assist me to exercise that authority which you have given me? O send down your Spirit, that I may enforce your commands, and effectually compel them to obey your will! Thus you shall see your heart will submit, its resistance be overcome, and its backwardness be turned into cheerful compliance.

**2. Your heart will also be likely to betray you by TRIFLING, when it should be effectually meditating.**Perhaps, when you have an hour for meditation, the time will be spent before your heart will be serious. *This doing of duty as if we did it not, ruins as many as the omission of it.*Here let your eye be always upon your heart. Look not so much to the *time*it spends in the duty, as to the *quantity*and *quality*of the work that is done.

You can tell by his work, whether a servant has been diligent. Ask yourself, "What affections have yet been exercised? How much nearer am I to Heaven?"

Think not, since your heart is so trifling, it is better to let it alone: for, by this means you will certainly banish all spiritual obedience; because *the best hearts, being but sanctified in part, will resist, so far as they are carnal*. But rather consider well the corruptions of your nature; and that its sinful indispositions will not supersede the commands of God; nor one sin excuse another; and that God has appointed means to excite our affections.

This self-reasoning, self-considering duty of heavenly meditation, is the most effective means both to excite and increase love. Therefore neglect not the duty until you feel your love constrain you, any more than you would stay from the fire until you feel yourself warm; but engage in the work until love is excited, and then love will constrain you to further duty.

**3. Your heart will also be making *excursions*from your heavenly meditation to other objects.** It will be turning aside, like a careless servant, to talk with every one that passes by. When there should be nothing in your mind but Heaven—it will be thinking of your calling, or your afflictions, or of every bird, or tree, or place you see.

The cure is here the same as before: use watchfulness and violence. Say to your heart, "What! did I come hither to think of my worldly business, of people, places, news or vanity, or of anything but Heaven, be it ever so good? Can you not watch one hour? Would you leave this world and dwell forever with Christ in Heaven, and not leave it one hour to dwell with Christ in meditation? Is this your love to your friend? Do you love Christ, and the place of your eternal, blessed abode, no more than this?"

***~~If the ravening birds of wandering thoughts devour the meditations intended for Heaven, they devour the life and joy of your thoughts; therefore drive them away from your sacrifice, and strictly keep your heart to the work.~~***

**4. Abruptly ending your meditation before it is well begun, is another way in which your heart will deceive you.** You may easily perceive this in other duties. In secret prayer, is not your heart urging you to cut it short, and frequently making a motion to be done? So in heavenly contemplation, your heart will be weary of the work, and will stop your heavenly walk before you are well warm. But charge it in the name of God to stay, and not do so great a work by halves.

Say to it, "Foolish heart! if you beg a while, and go away before you have your alms—is not your begging a lost labor? If you stop before the end of your journey—is not your travel lost? You came hither in hope to have a sight of the glory which you must inherit—and will you stop when you are almost at the top of the hill, and turn back before you have taken your survey? You came hither in hope to speak with God—and will you go before you have seen him? You came to bathe yourself in the streams of consolation, and to that end did unclothe yourself of your earthly thoughts—and will you only touch the bank and return?

You came to spy out the land of promise—go not back without one cluster of grapes to show your brethren, for their encouragement. Let them see that you have tasted of the wine by the gladness of your heart; and that you have been anointed with the oil, by the cheerfulness of your countenance; and have fed of the milk and honey, by the mildness of your disposition and the sweetness of your conversation.

*This heavenly fire would melt your frozen heart, and refine and spiritualize it*; but it must have time to operate. Thus pursue the work until something be done, until your *graces*be in exercise, your *affections*raised, and your *soul*refreshed with the delights above. Or, if you can not attain these ends at once, be the more earnest at another time. "Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, when he comes, shall find so doing."

***~~Chapter 16.~~***

***~~Heavenly Contemplation Exemplified, and the Whole Work Concluded.~~***

The reader's attention excited to meditation, by:

1. The excellencies of heavenly rest;
2. its nearness;
3. dreadful to sinners;
4. and joyful to saints;
5. its dear purchase;
6. its difference from earth.
7. The heart pleaded with;
8. unbelief banished;
9. a careless world pitied.
10. Heavenly rest the object of love;
11. and joy.
12. The heart's backwardness to heavenly joy lamented.
13. Heavenly rest the object of desire.

And now, reader, according to the above directions, *make conscience of daily exercising your graces in meditation as well as prayer*. Retire into some secret place, at a time the most convenient to yourself, and, laying aside all worldly thoughts, with all possible seriousness and reverence look up towards Heaven;
remember there is your everlasting rest;
study its excellency and reality;
and rise from sense to faith, by comparing heavenly with earthly joys.

hen mix ejaculations with your soliloquies; until, having pleaded the case reverently with God, and seriously with your own heart, you have pleaded yourself from a clod, to a flame; from a forgetful sinner and a lover of the world, to an ardent lover of God; from a fearful coward, to a resolved Christian; from an unfruitful sadness to a joyful life. In a word, until you have pleaded your heart from earth to Heaven; from conversing below, to walking with God; and until you can lay your heart to rest, as in the bosom of Christ, by some such meditation of your everlasting rest as is here added for your assistance.

***~~1. The excellencies of heavenly rest!~~***

Rest! How sweet the sound. It is melody to my ears! It lies as a reviving cordial to my heart, and from thence sends forth lively spirits, which beat through all the pulses of my soul!

Rest! not as the stone that rests on the earth, nor as this flesh shall rest in the grave, nor such a rest as the carnal world desires.

O blessed rest! when we rest not day and night, saying Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty! When we shall rest from sin—but not from worship; from suffering and sorrow—but not from joy!

O blessed day! when I shall rest with God! when I shall rest in the bosom of my Lord! when I shall rest in knowing, loving, rejoicing and praising! when my perfect soul and body shall together perfectly enjoy the most perfect God! when God, who is love itself, shall perfectly love me, and rest in his love to me, as I shall rest in my love to him; and rejoice over me with joy, and joy over me with singing, as I shall rejoice in him!

**2. How near is that most blessed, joyful day!** It comes apace. He who shall come will come, and will not tarry! Though my Lord seems to delay his coming—yet a little while and he will be here. What is a few hundred years when they are over? How surely will he appear! How suddenly will he seize upon the careless world, even as the lightning comes out of the east and shines unto the west! He who is gone hence, shall so come. Methinks I hear his trumpet sound! Methinks I see him coming in clouds, with his attending angels, in majesty and glory!

**3. O, secure sinners! what now will you do?**Where will you hide yourselves? What shall cover you? Mountains are gone; the heavens and the earth, which were, are now passed away; the devouring fire has consumed all, except yourselves, who must be the fuel forever. O that you could consume as soon as the earth, and melt away as did the heavens! Ah, these wishes are now but vain! The Lamb himself would have been your friend; he would have loved you, and ruled you, and have saved you; but you would not then, and now it is too late. Cry not, Lord, Lord; it is too late, too late. Why do you look about? can any save you? Where do you run? can any hide you? *O, wretch, that have brought yourself to this!*

**4. Now, blessed saints, who have believed and obeyed!**this is the end of faith and patience. This is it for which you prayed and waited. Do you now repent your sufferings and sorrows, your self-denial and holy walking? Are your tears of repentance now bitter or sweet? See how the Judge smiles upon you—there is love in his looks; the titles of Redeemer, Husband, Head, are written in his amiable, shining face. Harken, he calls you! he bids you stand here on his right hand—fear not, for there he sets his sheep.

O joyful sentence! Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. He takes you by the hand, the door is open, the kingdom is his, and therefore yours. There is *your*place before his throne! The Father receives you as the spouse of his Son, and bids you welcome to the crown of glory. Ever so unworthy, you must be crowned. This was the project of free redeeming grace, the purpose of eternal love. O blessed grace! O blessed love! O how love and joy will rise! But I cannot express it, I cannot conceive it.

**5. This is that joy which was procured by sorrow, that crown which was procured by the cross.** My Lord wept, that now my tears might be wiped away. He bled, that I might now rejoice. He was forsaken, that I might not now be forsaken. He then died, that I might now live. O free mercy, that can exalt so vile a wretch as me! Free to me, though dear to Christ! Free grace, that has chosen me when thousands were forsaken! When my companions in sin must burn in Hell, I must here rejoice in endless glory! Here must I rejoice in rest! Here must I live with all these saints! O comfortable meeting of my old acquaintance, with whom I prayed, and wept, and suffered, and spoke often of this day and place! I see the grave could not detain you—the same love has redeemed and saved you also.

**6. This is not like our cottages of clay, our prisons, our earthly dwellings.** This voice of joy is not like our old complaints, our impatient groans and sighs; nor this melodious praise like the scoffs and revilings, or the oaths and curses which we heard on earth. This *body*is not like that we had, nor this *soul*like the soul we had, nor this life like the life we lived. We have changed our place and state, our clothes and thoughts, our looks, language and company.

Before, a saint was weak and despised. We were so proud and peevish we could often scarce discern his graces; but now, how glorious is a saint! Where is now their body of sin, which wearied themselves and those about them? Where are now our different judgments, reproachful names, divided spirits, exasperated passions, strange looks, uncharitable censures? Now we are all of one mind, of one name, of one heart, house and glory. O sweet reconciliation! Happy union!

Now the Gospel shall no more be dishonored through our folly. No more, my soul, shall you lament the sufferings of the saints or the church's ruins; nor mourn your suffering friends, nor weep over their dying beds or their graves. You shall never suffer your old *temptations*from *Satan*, the *world*or your own *flesh*. Your pains and sickness are all cured; your body shall no more burden you with weakness and weariness; your aching head and heart, your hunger and thirst, your toil and labor are all gone.

O what a mighty change is this! from the dunghill, to the throne! from persecuting sinners, to praising saints! from a vile body, to this which shines as the brightness of the firmament! from a sense of God's displeasure, to the perfect enjoyment of him in love! from all my doubts and fears to this possession which puts me out of doubt! from all my fearful thoughts of death, to this joyful life!

O blessed change! Farewell sin and sorrow forever! Farewell my rocky, proud, unbelieving heart! Farewell my worldly, sensual, carnal heart! Welcome now my most holy, heavenly nature. Farewell repentance, faith and hope—and welcome love, and joy, and praise. I shall now have my *harvest*, without ploughing or sowing; my *joy*, without a preacher or a promise; even all from the face of God himself. *Whatever mixture is in the streams, there is nothing but pure joy in the fountain*.

Here shall I be encircled with eternity, and ever live, and ever, ever praise the Lord. My face will not wrinkle nor my hair be gray; for this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal, immortality, and death shall be swallowed up in victory. O death, where is now your sting? O grave, where is your victory? Never shall I trouble myself with thoughts of death, nor lose my joys through fear of losing them. When millions of ages are passed, my glory is but beginning; and when millions more are passed, it is no nearer ending! Every day is all noon, every month is harvest, every year is a jubilee, every day is full perfection, and all this is one eternity. O blessed eternity! the glory of my glory! the perfection of my perfection!

**7. Ah, drowsy, earthly heart! How coldly do you think of this reviving day!**Had you rather sit down in dirt, than walk in the palace of God? Are you now remembering your worldly business, or thinking of your lusts, earthly delights and merry company? Is it better to be here on earth, than above with God? Is the company better? Are the pleasures greater? Come away; make no excuse nor delay; God commands and I command you; gird up your loins; ascend the mount; look about you with faith and seriousness.

Look not back upon the way of the wilderness, except it be to compare the kingdom with that howling desert, more sensibly to perceive the wide difference. Yonder is your Father's glory; yonder, O my soul, must you continue when you depart from this body; and when the power of your Lord has raised it again and joined you to it, yonder must you live with God forever! There is the glorious New Jerusalem, the gates of pearl, the foundation of pearl, the streets and pavements of transparent gold. That sun, which lights all this world, will be useless there; even yourself shall be as bright as yonder shining sun. God will be the sun and Christ the light, and in his light shall you have light.

**8. O my soul! Do you stagger at the promises of God through unbelief?** I much suspect you. *Did you believe indeed, you would be more affected with it.*Is it not under the hand, and seal, and oath of God? Can God lie? Can he who is truth itself be false? What need has God to flatter or deceive you? Why should he promise you more than he will perform? Dare not to charge the wise, almighty, faithful God with this. How many of the promises have been performed to you in your conversion! Would God so powerfully concur with a feigned word?

O wretched heart of unbelief! Has God made you a promise of rest, and will you come short of it? Your eyes, your ears and all your senses may prove delusions—sooner than a promise of God can delude you. You may be surer of that which is written in the word, than if you saw it with your eyes, or feel it with your hands. Are you sure you are alive, or that this is earth you stand on, or that your eyes see the sun? As sure is all this glory to the saints; as sure shall I be higher than yonder stars, and live forever in the holy city, and joyfully sound forth the praises of my Redeemer, if I be not shut out by this evil heart of unbelief, causing me to depart from the living God.

**9. And is this rest so sweet and so sure? Then what about the careless world?**Do they understand what they neglect? Did they ever hear of it, or are they yet asleep, or are they dead? Do they certainly know that the eternal crown is before them, while they thus sit still, or follow trifles? Undoubtedly they are irrational, to mind so much their provision by the way—when they are hastening so fast to another world, and their eternal happiness lies at stake! Had they one spark of reason left, they would never sell their rest for toil, nor their glory for worldly vanities, nor venture Heaven for sinful pleasure. *Poor men! O that you would once consider what you hazard, and then you would scorn these tempting baits!* Blessed forever be that love which has rescued me from this bewitching darkness!

**10. Draw yet nearer, O my soul! with your most fervent love.** Here is matter for it to work upon, something worth your loving. O see what beauty presents itself! Is not all the beauty in the world united here? Is not all other beauty but deformity? Do you now need to be persuaded to love? Here is a feast for your eyes and all the powers of your soul—do you need entreaties to feed upon it? *Can you love a little shining earth, a walking piece of clay? and can you not love that God, that Christ, that glory, which are so truly and unmeasurably lovely?* You can love your friend, because he loves you; and is the love of a friend like the love of Christ? Their weeping or bleeding for you does not ease you, nor stay the course of your tears or blood; but the tears and blood that fell from your Lord have a sovereign, healing virtue.

O my soul! If love deserves and should beget love, what incomprehensible love is here before you! *Pour out all the store of your affections here, and all is too little.*O that it were more! O that it were many thousand times more! Let him have the first-born and strength of your soul—who parted with strength, and life, and love for you.

O my soul! Do you love excellency? Yonder is the region of light; this is the land of darkness. Yonder twinkling stars, that shining moon and radiant sun, are all but *lanterns, hung out of your Father's house, to light you while you walk in this dark world*. But how little do you know the glory and blessedness that are within.

Do you love for suitableness? What person is more suitable than Christ? His Godhead and humanity, his fullness and freeness, his willingness and constancy—all proclaim him your most suitable friend. What state is more suitable to your misery, than mercy? or to your sin and pollution, than honor and perfection? What place is more suitable to you than Heaven?

Does this world agree with your desires? Have you not had a sufficient trial of it, or do you love for interest and near relation? Where have you better interest than in Heaven, or nearer relation than there?

Do you love acquaintance and familiarity? Though your eyes have never seen your Lord—yet you have heard his voice, received his benefits, and lived in his bosom. He taught you to know yourself and him; he opened to you that first window, through which you saw into Heaven. Have you forgotten since your heart was:
careless, and he awakened it;
hard, and he softened it;
stubborn, and he made it yield;
at peace, and he troubled it;
whole, and he broke it; and
broken, until he healed it again?

Have you forgotten the times when he found you in tears; when he heard your secret sighs and groans—and left all to come and comfort you; when he took you, as it were, in his arms, and asked you: Poor soul, what ails you? Do you weep, when I have wept so much? Be of good cheer—your wounds are saving, and not deadly; it is I have made them, who mean you no hurt; though I let out your blood, I will not let out your life!

I remember his voice. How gently did he take me up! How carefully did he dress my wounds! Methinks I hear him still saying to me: Poor sinner, though you have dealt unkindly with me, and cast me off—yet I will not do so by you. Though you have set light by me and all my mercies—yet they and myself are all yours. What would you have that I can give you? And what do you want, that I cannot give you? If anything I have will give you pleasure, you shall have it.

Would you have pardon? I freely forgive you all the debt.

Would you have grace and peace? You shall have both.

Would you have myself? Behold I am yours—your Friend, your Lord, your Brother, Husband and Head.

Would you have the Father? I will bring you to him, and you shall have him, in and by me!

These were my Lord's reviving words.

After all, when I was doubtful of his love, methinks I yet remember his overcoming arguments: Have I done so much, sinner, to testify my love—and yet do you doubt? Have I offered you myself and love so long—and yet do you question my willingness to be yours? At what dearer rate should I tell you that I love you? Will you not believe my bitter passion proceeded from love? Have I made myself in the Gospel a lion to your enemies and a lamb to you—and do you overlook my lamb-like nature?

Had I been willing to let you perish, what need I have done and suffered so much? What need I follow you with such patience and importunity? Why do you tell me of your wants—have I not enough for me and you? or of your unworthiness—for if you were yourself worthy, what should you do with my worthiness? Did I ever invite or save the worthy and righteous? or is there any such upon earth? Have you nothing? Are you lost and miserable, helpless and forlorn? Do you believe I am an all-sufficient Savior, and would you have me? Lo, I am yours—take me; if you are willing, I am. Neither sin nor Satan shall break the bond.

These, O these, were the blessed words which his Spirit from his Gospel spoke unto me, until he made me cast myself at his feet, and cry out: My Savior, and my Lord, you have broken, you have revived my heart; you have overcome, you have won my heart; take it, it is yours; if such a heart can please you, take it; if it cannot, make it such as you would have it.

Thus, O my soul, may you remember the sweet familiarity you have had with Christ; therefore, if acquaintance will cause affection, let out your heart unto him. It is he who has stood by your bed of sickness, has eased your pains, refreshed your weariness, and removed your fears. He has been always ready, when you have earnestly sought him; has met you in public and private; has been found of you in the congregation, in your house, in your closet, in the field, in your waking nights, in your deepest dangers.

If bounty and compassion be an attractive of love—then how unmeasurably, then, am I bound to love him! All the mercies that have filled up my life, all the places that ever I abode in, all the societies and people I have been conversant with, all my employments and relations, every condition I have been in, and every change I have passed through—all tell me that *the fountain is overflowing goodness*.

Lord, what a sum of love am I indebted to you! And how does my debt continually increase! How should I love you, for so much love to me? But shall I dare to think of requiting you, or of recompensing all your love with mine? Will my mite, requite you for your golden mines? Will my faint wishes, requite you for your constant bounty. Mine, which is nothing—for yours, which is infinite? Shall I dare to contend in love with you, or set my borrowed, languid spark against the sun of love? Can I love as high, as deep, and broad, as long as Love itself? as much as he who made me, and that made me love, and gave me all that little which I have? *As I cannot match you in the works of power, nor make, nor preserve, nor rule the worlds; no more can I match you in love.*

No, Lord, I yield! I am overcome. O blessed conquest! Go on victoriously, and still prevail, and triumph in your love. The captive of love shall proclaim your victory; when you lead me in triumph from earth to Heaven, from death to life, from the dread tribunal to the eternal throne! Myself, and all who see it, shall acknowledge you has prevailed, and all shall say, "Behold, how he loved him!"

Yet let me love in subjection to your love; as your redeemed captive. Shall I not love at all, because I cannot reach your measure? O that I could feelingly say, 'I love you,' even as I love my friend and myself! Though I cannot say, as the apostle, 'You know that I love you;' yet I can say, Lord, you know that I would love you. I am angry with my heart, that it does not love you; I chide it—yet it does not mend; I reason with it, and would gladly persuade it—yet I do not perceive it stir; I rub and chafe it in the use of ordinances, and yet I feel it not warm within me.

Unworthy soul! is not your eye now upon the only lovely object? Are you not now beholding the ravishing glory of the saints? And do you not love? Are you not a rational soul, and should not reason tell you that *earth is a dungeon compared to the celestial glory?*Are you not yourself a spirit, and should you not love God, who is a spirit, and the Father of spirits? *Why do you love so much your perishing clay, and love no more the heavenly glory?*Shall you love when you come there; when the Lord shall take your body from the grave, and make you shine as the sun in glory forever and ever—shall you then love, or shall you not? Is not the *place*a meeting of lovers? Is not the *life*a state of love? Is not Heaven the great marriage-day of the Lamb? Is not the employment there the work of love, where the souls with Christ take their fill?

O then, my soul, begin it here! Be sick with love now—that you may be well with love there. Keep yourself now in the love of God; and let neither life, nor death, nor anything, separate you from it; and you shall be kept in the fullness of love forever, and nothing shall embitter or abate your pleasure; for the Lord has prepared a city of love, a place for communicating love to his chosen, and those who love his name shall dwell therein.

**11. Awake, then, O my drowsy soul!** To sleep under the light of grace is unreasonable, much more in the approach of the light of glory. Come forth, my dull, congealed spirit; your Lord bids you rejoice, and again rejoice. You have lain long enough in your prison of flesh:
where Satan has been your jailer,
where cares have been your chains,
where fears have been your scourges,
where your food has been the bread of affliction,
where sorrows have been your lodgings,
where your sin and foes have made your bed,
where an unbelieving heart has been the gates and bars that have kept you in!

The angel of the covenant now calls you, and bids you arise and follow him. Up, O my soul! and cheerfully obey, and your bolts and bars shall all fly open!

Follow the Lamb wherever he goes. Should you fear to follow such a guide? Can the sun lead you to a state of darkness? Will He lead you to death, who died to save you from it? Follow him, and he will show you the paradise of God. He will give you a sight of the New Jerusalem, and a taste of the tree of life. Come forth, my drooping soul, and lay aside your winter dress; let it be seen, by your garments of joy and praise, that the spring has come; and as you now see your comforts green, you shall shortly see them white and ripe for harvest, and then you shall be called to reap, and gather and take possession.

Should I suspend and delay my joys until then? Should not the joys of the spring go before the joys of harvest? Is title nothing before possession? Is the heir in no better a state than a slave? My Lord has taught me to rejoice in hope of his glory, and how to see it through the bars of a prison; for, when persecuted for righteousness sake, he commands me to rejoice and be exceeding glad, because my reward in Heaven is great.

I know he would have my joys exceed my sorrows; and as much as he delights in the humble and contrite, he yet more delights in the soul that delights in him. Has my Lord spread a table for me in this wilderness, and furnished it with the promises of everlasting glory, and set before me angels' food? Does he frequently and importunately invite me to sit down and partake, and spare not? Has he to that end furnished me with reason, and faith, and a joyful disposition; and is it possible that he should be unwilling to have me rejoice? Is it not his command to delight yourself in the Lord; and his promise, to give you the desires of your heart? Are you not charged to rejoice evermore; yes, to sing aloud and shout for joy?

Why should I, then, be discouraged? My God is willing, if I were but willing. He is delighted in my delights. He would have it my constant frame and daily business to be near him in my believing meditations, and to live in the sweetest thoughts of his goodness. O blessed employment, fit for the sons of God!

But your *feast*, my Lord, is nothing to me without an *appetite*. You have set the dainties of Heaven before me; but alas! I am *blind*and cannot see them! I am *sick*and cannot relish them! I am so *benumbed*that I cannot put forth a hand to take them! I therefore humbly beg this grace, that, as you have opened Heaven to me in your word, so you would open my eyes to see it, and my heart to delight in it; else Heaven will be no Heaven to me. O Spirit of life! breathe upon your graces in me; take me by the hand and lift me from the earth, that I may see what glory you have prepared for those who love you!

Away, then, you soul-tormenting cares and fears, you heart-vexing sorrows! At least forbear a little while—stand by; stay here below, until I go up and see my everlasting rest. The way is strange to me—but not to Christ. There was the eternal abode of his glorious Deity; and there has he also brought his glorified flesh. It was his work to *purchase*my everlasting rest; it is his to *prepare*it, and to prepare me for it, and *bring*me to it.

The eternal God of truth has given me his promise, his seal and oath, that, believing in Christ, I shall not perish—but have everlasting life. There shall my soul be speedily removed, and my body very shortly follow. Can my tongue say that I shall shortly and surely live with God—and yet my heart not leap within me? can I say it with faith, and not with joy?

Ah, faith, how sensibly do I now perceive your weakness! But though unbelief darkens my light, and dulls my life, and suppress my joys—it shall not be able to conquer and destroy me; though it envy all my comforts—yet some, it spite of it, I shall even here receive; and if that did not hinder, what abundance might I have! The light of Heaven would shine into my heart, and I might be almost as familiar there as I am on earth.

Come away, then, my soul; stop your ears to the ignorant language of infidelity; you are able to answer all its arguments; or, if you are not—yet tread them under your feet. Come away; stand not looking on that grave, nor turning those bones, nor reading your lesson now in the dust—those lines will soon be wiped out. But lift up your head and look to Heaven, and see your name written in golden letters in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain!

What if an angel should tell you that there is a mansion in Heaven prepared for you, that it shall certainly be yours forever; would not such a message make you glad? And do you make light of the infallible Word of promise, which was delivered by the Spirit, and even by the Son himself?

Suppose you had seen a fiery chariot come for you, and take you up to Heaven, like Elijah—would not this rejoice you? But your Lord assures you that the soul of a Lazarus has a convoy of angels to carry it into Abraham's bosom. *Shall a drunkard be so merry among his cups, or the glutton in his delicious fare—and shall not I rejoice, who must shortly be in Heaven?*Can food and drink delight me when I hunger and thirst? Can I find pleasure in walks, and gardens, and pleasant dwellings? Can beautiful *objects*delight my eyes; or grateful *fragrances*delight my smell; or *melody*delight my ears? And shall not the forethought of celestial bliss delight me?

Methinks among my books I could employ myself in sweet contentment , and bid the world farewell, and pity the rich and great that know not this happiness; what then will my happiness in Heaven be, where my knowledge will be perfect!

If the queen of Sheba came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and see his glory—then how cheerfully should I pass from earth to Heaven, to see the glory of the eternal majesty, and attain the height of wisdom, compared with which the most learned on earth are but fools and idiots!

What if God had made me commander of the earth; what if I could remove mountains, heal diseases with a word or a touch, or cast out devils—should I not rejoice in such privileges and honors as these; and shall I not much more rejoice that my name is written in Heaven?

I cannot here enjoy my parents, or my near and beloved friends, without some delight; especially, when I have given my whole heart to my friend, how sweet was that exercise of my love! *O what will it then be to live in perpetual love of God!*For brethren to dwell together in unity here, how good and how pleasant it is! To see a family live in love; husband and wife, parents, children and servants doing all in love to one another; to see a town live together in love, without any envyings, brawlings, or contentions, law-suits, factions, or divisions—but every man loving his neighbor as himself, thinking they can never do too much for one another—but striving to go beyond each other in love—how happy, how delightful a sight is this! O then, what blessed society will the family of Heaven be, and those peaceful inhabitants of the New Jerusalem, where there is no division nor differing judgments, no disaffection nor strangeness, no deceitful friendship, no, not one unkind expression, not one angry look or thought; but all are one in Christ, who is one with the Father, and all live in the love of him who is love itself!

The soul is not more where it lives, than where it loves. How near, then, will my soul be united to God, when I shall so heartily, strongly and incessantly love him! Ah, wretched, unbelieving heart, that can think of such a day, and work, and life, as this, with such low and feeble joys! But my future enjoyments will be more lively.

How delightful is it to me to behold and study those inferior works of creation! What a beautiful earth do we here dwell in; the floor so dressed with herbs, and flowers, and trees, and watered with springs and rivers; the skies so widely expanded, so admirably adorned! What wonders do sun, moon and stars, seas and winds, contain! And has God prepared such a house for corruptible flesh, for a soul imprisoned? and does he bestow so many millions of wonders upon his enemies?

*O what a dwelling must that be which he prepares for his dearly beloved children!*How will the glory of the New Jerusalem exceed all the present glory of earth!

Arise then, O my soul, in your contemplation, and let your thoughts of that glory as far exceed in sweetness, your thoughts of the excellencies below! Fear not to go out of this body and this world, when you must make so happy a change. Say, as one did when he was dying, I am glad and even leap for joy, that the time is come, in which that mighty Jehovah, whose majesty in my search of nature I have admired, whose goodness I have adored, whom by faith I have desired and panted after—will now show himself to me face to face!

How wonderful, also, are the works of *providence!* How delightful to see the greatest God interest himself in the safety and advancement of a few humble, praying—but despised people; and to review those special mercies with which my own life has been adorned and sweetened! How often have my *prayers*been heard, my *tears*regarded, my *troubled soul*relieved! How often has my Lord bid me be of good cheer! What a support are these experiences, these clear testimonies of my Father's love—to my fearful, unbelieving heart!

O then, what a blessed day will that be when I shall have all mercy, perfection of mercy, and fully enjoy the Lord of mercy; when I shall stand on the shore and look back on the raging seas I have safely passed; when I shall review my pains and sorrows, my fears and tears, and possess the glory which was the end of all! If one drop of lively faith was mixed with these considerations, what a heaven-ravishing heart would I carry within me! Gladly would I believe; Lord, help my unbelief!

How sweet, O my soul, have *ordinances*been to you! What delight have you had in prayer and thanksgiving, under heavenly sermons and in the society of saints, and to see the Lord adding to the church such as should be saved! How, then, can my heart conceive the joy which I shall have to see the *perfected church in Heaven*, and to be admitted into the celestial temple, and with the heavenly host praise the Lord forever?

Was the *word of God*sweeter to Job than his necessary food, and to David than honey and the honeycomb, and was it the joy and rejoicing of Jeremiah's heart—then how blessed a day will that be when we shall fully enjoy the Lord of this word, and shall no more need these written precepts and promises, nor *read any book but the face of the glorious God!*If those who heard Christ speak on earth were astonished at his wisdom and answers, and wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth, how shall I, then, be affected to behold him in his majesty!

Can the prospect of glory make others welcome the cross and even refuse deliverance; and cannot it make you cheerful under lesser sufferings? Can the prospect of glory sweeten the flames of martyrdom and not sweeten your life, or your sickness, or your natural death? Is it not the same Heaven which they and I must live in? Is not their God, their Christ, their crown and mine, the same? And shall I look upon it with an *eye*so dim, a *heart*so dull, a *countenance*so dejected? Some small foretastes of it have I myself had; and how much more delightful have they been than any earthly things ever were! What, then, will the full enjoyment be!

What a beauty is there here in the imperfect *graces*of the Spirit! Alas! how small are these to what we shall enjoy in our perfect state! What a happy life should I here live, could I but love God as much as I would; could I be all love and always loving! O my soul, what would you give for such a life? Had I such apprehensions of God, such knowledge of his word as I desire—could I fully trust him in all my straits; could I be as lively as I would in every duty; could I make God my constant desire and delight—I would not envy the world their honors or pleasures.

What a blessed state, O my soul! will you shortly be in, when you shall have far more of these than you can now desire, and shall exercise your perfected graces in the immediate vision of God—and not in the dark, and at a distance, as now!

Is the sinning, afflicted, persecuted church of Christ so much more excellent than any particular gracious soul? What then will the church be when it is fully gathered and glorified; when it has ascended from the valley of tears to Mount Zion; when it shall sin and suffer no more! The glory of the Old Jerusalem will be darkness and deformity compared to the glory of the New Jerusalem. What cause shall we have, then, to shout for joy, when we shall see how glorious the heavenly temple is—and remember the baseness of the church on earth!

**12. But, alas! at what a loss am I in the midst of my contemplation!**I thought my heart had all the while attended—but I see it has not. What life is there in empty thoughts and words, without affections? Neither God, nor I, find pleasure in them.

*Where have you been, unworthy heart, while I was opening to you the everlasting treasures?* Are you not ashamed to complain so much of an uncomfortable life, and to murmur at God for filling you with sorrows, when he in vain offers you the delights of angels? Had you now but followed me closely, it would have made you revive and leap for joy, and forget your pains and sorrows. Did I think my heart had been so backward to rejoice?

**13. Lord, you have reserved my perfect joys for Heaven; therefore, help me to desire until I may possess, and let me long when I cannot, as I would, rejoice.** O my soul, you know, to your sorrow, that you are not yet at your rest. *When shall I arrive at that safe and quiet harbor where there are none of these storms, waves, and dangers—when I shall never more have a weary, restless night or day? Then my life will not be such a mixture of hope and fear, of joy and sorrow; nor shall flesh and spirit be combating within me; nor faith and unbelief, humility and pride, maintain a continual conflict. O when shall I be past these soul-tormenting fears, and cares and griefs? When shall I be out of this soul-contradicting, ensnaring, deceitful flesh; this corruptible body, this vain, vexatious world?*

Alas, that I must stand and see the church and cause of Christ tossed about in contention, and made subservient to private interests or deluded imaginations. There is none of this disorder in the heavenly Jerusalem; there I shall find a harmonious concert of perfected spirits, obeying and praising their everlasting King. O how much better to be a door-keeper there, than the commander of this tumultuous world.

*Why am I no more weary of this weariness? Why do I so forget my resting-place?*Up then, O my soul, in your most raised and fervent desires! Stay not until this flesh can desire with you; expect not that sense should apprehend your blessed object, and tell you when and what to desire.

Does not the dullness of your desires after rest, accuse you of most detestable ingratitude and folly? Must your Lord procure you a heavenly rest at so dear a rate, and do you no more value it? Must he go before to prepare so glorious a mansion for such a wretch, and are you reluctant to go and possess it? Shall the Lord of glory be desirous of your company, and you not desirous of his? Must earth become a very Hell to you, before you are willing to be with God?

Behold the most lovely creature, or the most desirable state, and tell me, where would you be if not with God?

Poverty is a burden;
riches are a snare;
sickness is unpleasing;
health is unsafe;
the frowning world bruises your heel;
the smiling world stings you to the heart;

so much as the world is loved and delighted in, it hurts and endangers the lover. If it may not be loved—then why should it be desired? If you are applauded, it proves the most contagious breath; if you are vilified, or unkindly used, methinks this should not entice your love. If your successful *labors*and your godly friends seem better to you than a life with God—then it is time for God to take them from you. If your *studies*have been sweet, have they not also been bitter? And, at best, what are they compared to the everlasting view of the God of truth? Your *friends*here have been your delight, and have they not also been your vexation and grief? They are gracious, and are they not also sinful? They are kind, and are they not soon displeased? They are humble; but alas, how proud also! Their graces are sweet, and their gifts helpful; but are not their corruptions bitter, and their imperfections hurtful? And are you so reluctant to go from them to your God?

*O my soul, look above this world of sorrows!* Have you so long felt the smarting rod of affliction, and no better understood its meaning? Is not every stroke to drive you hence? Is not its voice like that to Elijah: What are you doing here? Do you forget your Lord's prediction? In the world you shall have tribulation; in me you shall have peace!

Ah, my dear Lord, I feel your meaning; it is written in my flesh, engraved in my bones. My heart you aim at; your rod *drives*me, your silken cord of love *draws*me—and all to bring it to yourself.*Lord, can such a heart be worth your having?* Make it worthy, and then it is yours; take it to yourself, and then take me. This clod has life to stir—but not to rise. As the feeble child looks to the tender mother—it looks up to you, and stretches out the hands, and gladly would have you take it up. Though I cannot say: My soul longs after you—yet I can say, I long for such a longing heart. The spirit is willing, the flesh is weak.

My spirit cries, Let your kingdom come, or let me come to your kingdom; but the flesh is afraid you should hear my prayer, and take me at my word. O blessed be *your grace, which makes use of my corruptions to kill themselves*; for I fear my fears, and sorrow for my sorrows, and long for greater longings; and thus the painful means of attaining my desires increase my weariness, and that makes me groan to be at rest.

Indeed, Lord, my soul itself is in a strait, and what to choose I know not; but you know what to give. To depart and be with you, is far better; but to abide in the flesh seems needful. You know I am not weary of your work—but of sorrow and sin. I am willing to stay while you will employ me, and despatch the work you have put into my hands. But, I beseech you, stay no longer when this is done; and while I must be here, let me be still amending and ascending; make me still better, and take me at the best. I dare not be so impatient as to importune you to cut off my time, and snatch me hence unready; because I know my everlasting state so much depends on the improvement of this life.

Nor would I stay when my work is done, and remain here sinning, while my brethren are triumphing. *Your footsteps bruise this worm, while those stars shine in the firmament of glory*. Yet I am your child as well as they. Christ is my Head as well as theirs; why is there, then, so great a distance?

But I acknowledge the equity of your ways; though we are all children—yet I am the prodigal, and therefore more fit, in this remote country, to feed on husks—while they are always with you, and possess your glory. They were once themselves in my condition—and I shall shortly be in theirs! They were of the lowest form, before they came to the highest; they suffered, before they reigned; they came out of great tribulation, who are now before your throne; and shall I not be content to come to the crown as they did; and to drink of their cup, before I sit with them in the kingdom?

Lord, I am content to stay your time, and go your way, so that you will exalt me also in your season, and take me into your barn when you see me ripe. In the meantime, I may desire, though I am not to repine; I may believe and wish, though not make any sinful haste; I am willing to *wait*for you—but not to *lose*you; and when you see me too contented with your absence, then quicken my languid desires, and blow up the dying spark of love; and leave me not until I am able sincerely to cry out: As the deer pants after the water brooks, so my soul pants after you, O God! My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?

My heart is in Heaven, from whence I look for a Savior. My affections are set on things above, where Christ sits, and my life is hid. I walk by faith, and not by sight; willing rather to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord.

What interest has this empty world in me; and what is there in it that may seem so lovely as to entice my desires from my God, or make me reluctant to soar away? Methinks, *when I look upon it with a deliberate eye, it is a howling wilderness, and too many of its inhabitants are untamed monsters.*I can view all its beauty as deformity, and drown all its pleasures in a few penitent tears; or the wind of a sigh will scatter them away. *O let not this flesh so seduce my soul as to make it prefer this weary life before the joys that are about your throne!*

And though death itself is unwelcome to nature—yet your grace makes your glory appear to me so desirable that the king*of terrors*may be the *messenger of my joy*. Draw my soul to yourself by the secret power of your love, as the sunshine in the spring draws forth the creatures from their winter cells. Entice my soul to you as the loadstone does the iron, and as the greater flame attracts the less!

Dispel, therefore, the clouds that hide your love from me, or remove the scales that hinder my eyes from beholding you. Gor the beams that stream from your face, and the foretastes of your great salvation, and nothing else, can make a soul sincerely say: Now let your servant depart in peace!

But it is not your ordinary discoveries that will here suffice; as the work is greater, so must your help be. O turn these *fears*into strong desires; and this *reluctance to die*into longings after you! While I must be absent from you, let my soul as heartily groan as my body does under its lack of health! If I have any more *time*to spend on earth, let me live as without the world in you, as I have sometimes lived as without you in the world! While I have a *thought*to think, let me not forget you; or a *tongue*to move, let me mention you with delight; or *breath*to breathe, let it be after you, and for you; or a *knee*to bend, let it daily bow at your footstool; and when by sickness you confine me, then make my bed, number my pains, and put all my tears into your bottle!

As my flesh desired what my spirit abhorred, so now let my spirit desire that day of death which my flesh abhors; that my friends may not with so much sorrow wait for the departure of my soul, as my soul with joy shall wait for its own departure! Then let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his—even a removal to that glory which shall never end! Then let your convoy of angels bear my departing soul among the perfected spirits of the just, and let me follow my dear friends who have died in Christ before me; and while my sorrowing friends are weeping over my grave, let my spirit be reposed with you in glorious rest; and while my body shall lie moldering in the dust, let my soul have the inheritance of the saints in light!

O you who numbers the very hairs of my head—number all the days that my body lies in the dust; and you who writes all my members in your book—keep an account of my scattered bones!

O my Savior, hasten the time of your return; send forth your angels, and let that dreadful, joyful trumpet sound! Delay not, lest the living give up their hope! Delay not, lest earth should grow like Hell, and your church, by division, be all crumbled to dust! Delay not lest your enemies get advantage of your flock, and lest pride, hypocrisy, sensuality and unbelief prevail against that little remnant, and when you come, you find not faith on the earth! Delay not, lest the grave should boast of victory, and, having learned rebellion of its guest, should refuse to deliver you up your due!

O hasten that great *resurrection day*, when your command shall go forth, and none disobey; when the sea and the earth shall yield up their hostages, and all who sleep in the grave shall awake, and the dead in Christ shall rise first; when the seed which you sow corruptible, shall come forth incorruptible; and graves that received rottenness and dust, shall return to you as glorious stars and suns!

Therefore dare I lay down my body in the dust, entrusting it, not to a grave—but to you; and therefore my flesh shall rest in hope, until you shall raise it to the possession of everlasting rest.

Return, O Lord, how long? O let your kingdom come! Your desolate bride says, Come! Your Spirit within her says, Come! and teaches her thus to pray with groanings which cannot be uttered. Yes, the whole creation says, Come! waiting to be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. You yourself have said: Surely I come quickly! Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus

***~~CONCLUSION~~***

Thus, reader, I have given you my best advice for maintaining a heavenly heart and mind. It you can not thus meditate methodically and fully—yet do it as you can; only be sure to do it seriously and frequently.

Be acquainted with this heavenly work, and you will, in some degree, be acquainted with God. Your joys will be spiritual, prevalent and lasting, according to the nature of their blessed object; you will have comfort in life and death. When you have neither wealth, nor health, nor the pleasures of this world—yet will you have comfort. Without the presence or help of any friend, without a minister, without a book, when all means of grace are denied you, or taken from you—yet may you have vigorous, real comfort. Your graces will be mighty, active and victorious. The daily joy which is thus drawn from Heaven will be your strength.

You will be as one who stands on the top of an exceeding high mountain; he looks down on the world as if it were quite below him; fields and woods, cities and towns seem to him but little spots.*Thus despicably will you look on all things here below.*The greatest princes will seem but as grasshoppers; the busy, contentious, covetous world—are but as a heap of ants. Men's *threatenings*will be no terror to you, nor the *honors*of this world any strong enticement; *temptations*will be harmless, as having lost their strength; *afflictions*will be less grievous, as having lost their sting; and every *mercy*will be better known and relished.

It is now, under God, in your own choice, whether you will live this blessed life or not; and whether all this pains I have taken for you shall prosper, or be lost. If it is lost through your neglect, you yourself will prove the greatest loser.

*O man, what have you to mind but God and Heaven?*Are you not almost out of this world already? Do you not look every day, whether one disease or another will release your soul? *Does not the grave wait to be your house, and worms to feed upon your face and heart?*What if your pulse must beat a few strokes more? What if you have a little longer to breathe, before you breathe out your last? *What if you have a few more nights to sleep, before you sleep in the dust?*Alas! what will this be when it is gone? And is it not almost gone already?

Very shortly you will see your hour-glass run out, and say to yourself, "My life is done! My time is gone! It is past recalling! There is nothing now but Heaven or Hell before me!" Where, then, should your heart be now but in Heaven? Did you know what a dreadful thing it is to have a doubt of Heaven when a man is dying, it would make you shudder. And what else but doubt can that man then do, who never seriously thought of Heaven before.

Some there are who say, "It is not worth so much time and trouble to think of the greatness of the joys above; if we can make sure they are ours, we know they are great." But as these men obey not the command of God, which requires them to have their hearts in Heaven, and to set their affections on things above; so they willfully make their own lives miserable, by refusing the delights which God has set before them.

And if this were all, it were a small matter: but see what abundance of other mischiefs follow the neglect of these heavenly delights. This neglect will damp, if not destroy, their love to God. This neglect will make it unpleasant to them to think or speak of God, or engage in his service. This neglect tends to pervert their judgment concerning the ways and ordinances of God. This neglect makes them sensual and voluptuous. This neglect leaves them under the power of every affliction and temptation, and is a preparative to total apostasy. This neglect will also make them fearful and unwilling to die—for who would go to a God or a place he has no delight in? Who would leave his pleasure here, if he had not better to go to?

Had I only proposed a course of melancholy, and fear, and sorrow, you might reasonably have objected. But you must have heavenly delights, or none that are lasting. God is willing that you should daily walk with him, and draw consolations from the everlasting fountain. If you are unwilling, you will bear the loss; and, when you are dying, seek for comfort where you can get it, and see whether fleshly delights will remain with you. Then *conscience*will remember, in spite of you, that you were once persuaded to a way for more excellent pleasures—pleasures that would have followed you through death, and have lasted to eternity!

As for you, whose hearts God has weaned from all things here below, I hope you will value this heavenly life, and *take one walk every day in the New Jerusalem*. God is your love and your desire; you would gladly be more acquainted with your Savior; and I know it is your grief that your hearts are not nearer to him, and that they do not more feelingly love him and delight in him.

O try this *life of meditation on your heavenly rest!*Here is the mount on which the fluctuating ark of your souls may rest. Let the world see, by your heavenly lives, that religion is something more than opinions and disputes, or a task of outward duties. If ever a Christian is like himself, and conformable to his principles and profession—it is when he is most serious and lively in his duty.

As Moses, before he died, went up into Mount Nebo to take a survey of the land of Canaan—so the Christian ascends the mount of contemplation, and by faith surveys his everlasting rest. He looks upon the glorious mansions, and says, "glorious things are" deservedly "spoken of you, you city of God!" He hears, as it were, the melody of the heavenly choir, and says, "Happy is the people who are in such a case; yes, happy is that people whose God is the Lord!" He looks upon the glorified inhabitants, and says, "Happy are you, O Israel; who is like unto you, O people, saved by the lord, who is the shield of your help and the sword of your excellency!"

When he looks upon the Lord himself, who is their glory, he is ready, with the rest, to "fall down and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and say, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come! You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honor, and power!"

When he looks on the glorified Savior, he is ready to say Amen to that "new song, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power be unto Him that sits upon the throne, and unto the lamb, forever and ever. For you were slain, and have redeemed us to God by your blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and have made us, unto our God, kings and priests!"

When he looks back on the wilderness of this world, he blesses the believing, patient, despised saints; he pities the ignorant, obstinate, miserable world; and for himself he says, as Peter, "It is good to be here;" or, as Asaph, "It is good for me to draw near to God; for, lo, those who are far from you shall perish."

Thus as *Daniel*, in his captivity, daily opened his window towards Jerusalem, though far out of sight, when he went to God in his devotions—so may the believing soul, in this captivity of the flesh, look towards that "Jerusalem which is above."

And as Paul was to the Colossians, so may the believer be with the glorified spirits, though absent in the flesh—yet with them in the spirit, rejoicing and beholding their heavenly order.

And as the lark sweetly sings while she soars on high—but is suddenly silenced when she falls to the earth; so is the frame of the soul most delightful and divine while fixed on the views of God by heavenly contemplation. Alas, we make there too short a stay, fall down again, and lay aside our music!

"O merciful Father, the attraction of love and ocean of delights, draw up these drossy hearts unto yourself, and keep them there until they are spiritualized and refined; and second your servant's weak endeavors, and persuade those that read these lines, to the practice of this delightful, heavenly work! O do not allow the soul of your most unworthy servant to be a stranger to those joys which he describes to others; but keep me, while I remain on earth, in daily breathings after you, and in a believing, affectionate walking with you! And when you come, let me be found so doing; not serving my flesh, nor asleep, with my lamp empty; but waiting and longing for your return!"

Let those who shall read these heavenly directions, not merely read the fruit of my studies—but the breathing of my hope and love; that if my heart were open to their view, they might there read the same most deeply engraved with a beam from the face of the Son of God; and not find vanity, or lust, or pride within, when the words of life appear without. May these lines not witness against me; but proceeding from the heart of the writer, may be effectual, through your grace, upon the heart of the reader, and so be the savor of life to both! Amen.

"Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it." Hebrews 4:1

"I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life!" Revelation 21

"He who testifies to these things says, *'Yes, I am coming soon!'*Amen. Come, Lord Jesus." Revelation 22:20