**÷**00 EXTRACTS FROM THE WORKS OF THOMAS MANTON

by Thomas Manton

This module was created by wlue777

**÷**00a THE LIFE OF Dr. Thomas Manton

Thomas Manton was born in 1620, at lawrence-Lydiard in the county of Somerset. Both his father and grandfather were ministers. He went to Oxon at 15years of age. He was first minister of Culliton, in Devon and afterwards of Stoke-Newington in Middlesex, before he came to Covent-Garden, where he succeeded Mr. Sedgwick. He was in great reputation at the time of King Charles's return, one of the Savoy commissioners and very earnest in his endeavors to get the declaration for Ecclesiastical affairs fed into a law. And had it been compassed would have accepted the Deanery that was offered him. He was a man of great learning, judgment and integrity; and an excellent unwearied preacher, one of great temper and moderation and respected by all that knew him, whose spirits were not incurably cankered. Dr. Bates, in his sermon at his funeral, gives this account of him: "A clear judgment, rich fancy, strong memory, and happy elocution met in him, and were excellently improved by his diligent study." In preaching he was of that conspicuous eminence, that none could detract from him, but from ignorance or envy. He abounded in the work of the Lord and though a very frequent preacher, yet was always superior to others and equal to himself.

Archbishop Usher was wont to say of him, " That he was a voluminous preacher:" Not as if he was tedious for length, but because he had the art of reducing the substance of volumes of divinity into a narrow compass. And Mr. Charnoch oft represented him as the best collector of sense of the age. He was no fomenter of faction, but studious of the public tranquility. His generous constancy of mind in resisting the current of popular humor, declared his loyalty to his divine master, he was imprisoned for his nonconformity and many ways a sufferer and yet kept up a considerable interest at court and with men of note and figure. The Noble Earl (afterwards Duke) of Bedford, who had for some time been his parishioner at Covent-Garden, was his cordial friend unto his death and so also was my Lord Wharton, and many other persons of considerable quality. He generally had the chair in the meetings of the dissenting ministers of the city who found the want of his prudence, activity and interest joined together, when he was taken from them. He died October the 18th, 1677, leaving behind him the general reputation of as excellent a preacher, as this city or nation hath produced.

**÷**00b THE PREFACE

It may seem a just discouragement from publishing more sermons at this time, when there are such numbers abroad.  For the abundance of things useful is fatal to their value, and the rareness enhances their price. If men were truly wise, spiritual treasures should be excepted  from this common law, yet plenty even of them causes satiety.  But the following sermons have that peculiar excellence, that will make them valuable to all  that have discerning minds, and such a tincture of religion as makes them capable of tasting the goodness of divine things.

I shall say nothing here of the intellectual endowments of the author, in which he appeared eminent among the first nor of his graces to adorn his memory. For a saint that is crowned with eternal glory by the righteous judge, needs not the weak fading testimony of men. Besides that universal esteem he had from those who knew his ability, diligence, and fidelity in the work of God makes it unnecessary for them who are his admirers and friends. And for those who are unacquainted with his worth, if they take a view of his works, they will have the same opinion. I will give some account of the sermons themse1ves.

The main design of them is to represent the inseparable connection between Christian duties and privileges, wherein the essence of our religion consists.  The gospel is not a naked unconditioned offer of pardon and eternal life in favor of sinners, but upon most convenient terms for the glory of God and the good of men and enforced by the strongest obligations upon them. The promises are attended with commands, to repent, believe, and persevere in the uniform practice of obedience.  The Son of God came into the world, not to make God less holy but to make us holy, that we might please and enjoy Him. Not to vacate our duty and free us from the law as the rule of obedience,  (for that is both impossible and would be most infamous and reproachful to our savior. To challenge such an exemption in point of right is to make ourselves Gods, to usurp it in point of fact is to make ourselves devils.) But his end was to enable and induce us to return to God, as our rightful Lord and proper felicity, from whom we rebelliously and miserably fell by our disobedience, in seeking happiness out of Him. Accordingly the gospel is called the law of faith, as it commands those duties upon the motives of eternal hopes and fears, and as it will justify or condemn men with respect to their obedience or disobedience, which is the proper character of a law. These things are managed in the following sermons in that convincing persuasive manner, as makes them very necessary for these times, when some that esteemed themselves the favorites of heaven, yet woefully neglected the duties of the lower hemisphere, as righteousness, truth, and honesty, and when carnal Christians are so numerous, that despise serious Godliness, as solemn hypocrisy and live in an open violation of Christ's precepts, yet presume to be saved by Him. Anathema maranatha. Though no age has been more enlightened with the knowledge of holy truths, yet none was ever more averse from obeying them.

I shall only add further, that they commend to our ardent affections and endeavors, true holiness as distinguished from the most refined, unregenerate morality. The Doctor saw the absolute necessity of this, and speaks with great jealousy of those who seem in their discourses to make it their highest aim to cultivate moral virtues, as justice, temperance, benignity, and the like by philosophic helps, representing them as becoming the dignity of the human nature, as agreeable to reason, as beneficial to societies  but transiently speak of the supernatural operation of the Holy Spirit, that is as requisite to free the soul from the chains of sin, as to release the body at the last day from the bands of death, that seldom preach of evangelical graces, faith in the redeemer, love to God for his admirable mercy in our salvation, zeal for his glory, humility in ascribing all that we can return in grateful obedience to the most free and powerful Grace of God in Christ, which are the vital principles of good works, and derive the noblest forms to all virtues.

 Indeed men may be composed and considerate in their words and actions, may abstain from gross enormities, and do many praiseworthy actions by the rules of moral prudence, yet without the infusion of divine grace to cleanse their stained natures, to renew them according to the image of God shining in the gospel to act them from motives superior to all that moral wisdom propounds, all their virtues of what elevation forever, cannot make them real saints. As the plant-animal has a faint resemblance of the sensitive life, but remains in the lower rank of vegetables, so these have a shadow, an appearance of the life of God, but continue in the corrupt state of nature. And the difference is greater between sanctifying graces wrought by the special power of the spirit, and the virtuous habits and actions that are the effects of moral counsel and constancy, than between true pearls produced by the beams of the sun, and counterfeit ones formed by the smoky heat of the fire.

In short, the Lord Jesus our savior and judge, who purchased the heavenly glory and has sole power to give the actual possession of it, assures us, that unless a man be born of the spirit, he can never enter into the kingdom of God.  The supernatural birth entitles to the supernatural inheritance.  Without this, how fair and specious forever the conversation of men appears, they must expect no other privilege at last, but a cooler place in hell and the coolest there is intolerable.

**÷**SERMON 1

Psa 32:1-2.

Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.  Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity and in whose spirit there is no guile.

The title of this Psalm is, A Psalm of instruction, so called, because David was willing to shew the way to happiness from his own experience.  And surely no lesson is so needful to be learned as this.  We all would be happy.  The good and bad, that so seldom agree in anything, yet agree in this, a desire to be happy.  Now happy we cannot be but in God, who is the only immutable, eternal and all-sufficient God, which satisfies and fills up all the capacities and desires of our souls.  And we are debarred from access to him by sin, which hath made a breach and separation between him and us and till that be taken away, there can be no converse and sin can only be taken away by God's pardon upon Christ's satisfaction.  God's pardon is clearly asserted by my text, but Christ's satisfaction must be supplied out of other scriptures.  As that 2 Cor. v. 19.  God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses to them.  Where the apostle clearly shews, that not imputing transgressions is the effect of God's grace in Christ.  And we do no wrong to this text to take it in here, for the apostle citing this scripture, Rom. iv. 6, 7, tell us that David describes the blessedness of the man unto whom the Lord imputes righteousness without works, when he saith, blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, whose sin is covered.  Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.

In the words you have, 1.  An emphatical setting forth of a great and blessed privilege, that is, pardon of sin.  2.  A description of the persons, who shall enjoy it, namely, such, in whose spirit there is no guile.

The privilege is that I shall confine my thoughts to.  It is set forth in three expressions, forgiving, transgression, covering of sin and not imputing iniquity.  The manner of speech is warm and vehement, it is repeated over again, blessed is the man.

I shall shew what these three expressions import, why the prophet doth use such vehemence in setting forth this privilege.

1.          Whose transgression is forgiven, or who is eased of his transgression.  Where sin is compared to a burden too heavy for us to bear, as also it is in other scriptures, Mat. xi. 28.  Come to me all ye that are weary and heavy laden.

2.          Whose sin is covered, alluding to the covering of filth, or the removing of that which is offensive out of sight.

3.          The third expression is, to whom the Lord imputes no sin, that is, doth not put sin to their account.  Where sin is compared to a debt, as it is also in the Lord's prayer, Mat. Vi. 12.  Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors. Thus is the act set forth.

The object of pardon is set forth under divers expressions, iniquity, transgression and sin.  When God proclaims his name, the same words are used, Exod. xxxiv. 7.  - Taking away iniquity, transgression and sin.

We have seen the meaning of the expression.  But why doth the man of God use such vehemence of inculcation, blessed is the man, and again, blessed is the man  Partly with respect to his own case.  David knew how sweet it was to have sin pardoned, he had felt the bitterness of sin in his own soul, to the drying up of his blood and therefore he doth express his sense of pardon in the most lively terms and partly with respect to those for whose use this instruction was written, that they might not look upon it as a light and trivial thing, but be thoroughly apprehensive of the worth of so great a privilege.  Blessed, happy, thrice happy, they who have obtained pardon of their sins and justification by Jesus Christ.

The doctrine then which I shall insist upon is this.  That it is a great step towards, yea, a considerable part of our blessedness, to obtain the pardon of our sins by Christ Jesus.  In order to this,

1.      I shall shew what necessity lies upon us to seek after this pardon.

2.      Our misery without it

3.      I shall speak of the annexed benefits and our happiness, if once we attain it.

1.  The necessity that lies upon us, being all guilty before God, to seek after the pardon of our sins by Christ.  That it may sink the deeper into your minds, I shall do it in this method:  First, a reasonable nature implies law, a law implies a sanction, a sanction implies a judge, and a judgment day (when all shall be called to account for breaking the law) and this judgment day infers the condemnation upon all mankind, unless the Lord find out some way, wherein we may be relieved.  This way God hath found out in Christ and being brought about by such a mysterious contrivance, we ought to be deeply and thankfully apprehensive of it and humbly and broken-heartedly to quit the one covenant, and accept of the grace provided for us in the other.

1.       A reasonable nature implies a conscience.  For man can reflect upon his won actions and hath that in him to acquit or condemn him accordingly as he doth good or evil, 1 John iii. 20, 21.  Conscience is nothing but the judgment a man makes upon his actions morally considered, the god or the evil that is in them, with respect to rewards or punishments.  As a man acts, he is a party but as he reviews and censures his actins, he is a judge.  Let us take notice only of the condemning part, for that is proper to our case.  After the fact, the force of conscience is usually felt more than before or in the fact, because before, through the treachery of the senses and the revolt of the passions, the judgment of reason is not so clear.  Our passions raise mists, which darkened the mind, and incline the will by a pleasing violence, but after the evil action is done, then guilt flashes in the face of conscience.  Judas heart lay asleep while he was going on in his villainy, but afterwards it fell upon him, thou hast sinned in betraying innocent blood.  Conscience of sin may be smothered for a while, but the flame will break forth, and our hidden fears are easily revived and awakened, except we get our pardon and discharge.  A reasonable nature implies a conscience.

2.       A conscience implies a law, by which good and evil are distinguished.  For if we make conscience of anything, it must be by virtue of some law or obligation from God who is our maker and governor, and unto whom we are accountable and whose authority gives a force and warrant to the checks of conscience, without which they would be weak and ineffectual.  The heathens had a law, because they had a conscience, Rom. ii. 15.  Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another.  They have a conscience doth accuse or excuse, doth require according to the tenor of the law. So when the apostle speaks of those stings of conscience that are revived in us by the approach of death, he saith 1 Cor. xv. 56.  The sting of death is sin and the strength of sin is the law.  Those stings which men feel in a death-threatening sickness are not the fruits of their disease, but justified by the highest reason, they come from a sense of sin, and this sense is strengthened in us by the law of God, from whence conscience receives all its force.

3.       A law implies a sanction, or a confirmation by penalties and rewards, for otherwise it is but an arbitrary rule or direction, which we might disregard without any great loss or danger.  No the law is armed with a dreadful curse against all those that disobey it.  There is no dallying with God, he hath set life and death before us.  Life and good, death and evil, Deut. Xxx. 15.  The precept is the rule of our duty and the sanction is the rule of God's process, what God will do or might do and what we have deserved should be done to us.  The one shews what is due from us to God and the other what may justly be expected at God's hands, therefore before the penalty be executed, it concerns us to get a pardon.  The scripture represents God as angry with the wicked every day, standing continually with his bow ready, with his arrow upon the string, with his sword not only drawn, but whetted, just about to strike, if we turn not.  Psalm vii. 11, 12, 13.

4.       A sanction implies a judge, who will take cognizance of the keeping or breaking of this law:  For the sanction or penalty were but a vain scare-crow, if there were no person to look after it.  God that is our maker and governor is our judge.  Would he appoint penalties for the breach of his law and never reckon with us for our offences  This is a thought against the sense of conscience, against God's daily providence, against scripture, which everywhere represents God as a judge. Conscience is afraid of an invisible judge, who will call us to account for what we have done.  The Apostle tells us, Rom. i. 32, the heathen knew the judgment of God and that they that have done such things as they have done are worthy of death.  And providence shews us there is such a judge, that looks after the keeping and breaking of his law, hath owned every part of it from heavenly the judgments he executes.  Rom. i. 18.  The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.  He hath owned either table, by punishing sometimes the ungodliness and sometimes the unrighteousness of the world, nay every notable branch by way of omission or commission, every transgression and every disobedience hath been punished and God hath owned his law that is a firm authentic rule.  And surely we that are to appear before the bar of an impartial judge, being so obnoxious to him for the breach of his holy law, what have we to do but to make supplication to our judge and prevent execution by a submissive asking of a pardon, and accepting the grace of God hath provided.

5.      A judge implies a judgment day, or some time when his justice must have a solemn trial.  He reckons sometimes with nations now, for ungodliness and unrighteousness, by wars and pestilence and famine.  But there is a more general and final judgment.  Nature hath some kind of sense of in itself, and men are urged to repent, because God hath appointed a day wherein he will judge the world in righteousness, Acts xvii. 31.  God judges the world in patience now, but then in righteousness, when all things shall be reviewed and every thing restored, virtue to its public honor and vice to its due shame.

6.      If there be a solemn judgement day, when every one must receive his final doom, this judgment infers a condemnatin to a fallen creature, unless God set up another court for his relief, for man is utterly disabled by sin to fulfill the law, and can by no means avoid thepunishment due to his transgression.  I shalll prove this by three reasons, the law to fallen man is impossible, the penalty is intolerable, and the punishment (for ought yet appears, if God do n ot take another course), is unavoidable.

a.       The duty of the law is impossible.  It cannot justify us before God, it cannot furnish us with any answer to his demands, when he shall call us to an account.  Man is mightily addicted to the legal covenant, therefore it is one part of a gospel-minister's work to represent the impossibility of ever obtaining grace or life by that covenant.  Man would patch up a sorry righteousness of his own, some few superficial things.  He makes a short exposition of the law, that he may cherish a large opinion of his own righteousness, and brings it down to a poor contemptible thing, requiring a few external superficial duties.  But this is not, the loving the Lord our God with all our heart, the loving our neighbor as ourselves, or the doing all things to the glory of God, all which is to sullen man impossible.

b.      The penalty is intolerable.  For who can stand when God is angry  Ezek. xxii. 14.  Can thine heart endure or can thine hands be strong, in the day that I shall deal with thee  We that cannot endure the pain of the gout or stone, how shall we endure the eternal wrath of God  It is surely a very dreadful thing to fall into the hands of that living God that lives forever to punish the transgressors of his law.

c.       The punishment is unavoidable, unless sin be pardoned, and you submit to God's way.  For what hope can you have in God, whose nature engages him to hate sin and whose justice obliges him to punish it

1.       Whose nature engages him to hate sin and sinners.  Hab. i. 13.  He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity.  I urge this for a double reason, partly because I have observed, that all the security of sinners and their neglect of seeking after pardon by Jesus Christ, comes from their lessening thoughts of God's holiness, if their hearts were sufficiently possessed with an awe of God's unspotted purity, they would more look after the terms of grace God hath provided.  Why do men live securely in their sins  They think God is not so severe and harsh and so all their confidence is grounded on a mistake of God's nature, and such a dreadful mistake as amounts to a blasphemy.  Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself.  The other reason is this, the bottom of the fear that is in the hearts of men is God's holiness, 1 Sam. Vi. 20.  Who is able to stand before this holy God  And who would not fear thee for thou art holy, Rev. xv. 4.  We fear his power, why  Because it is set on work by his wrath.  We fear his wrath, why  Because it is kindled by his justice and righteousness.  We fear his righteousness, because it is grounded upon his holiness, upon the purity of his nature.

2.       His justice obliges him to punish sin that the law might not be made in vain.  It concerns the universal judge to maintain his justice in reference to men.  Gen. xviii. 25.  Shall not the judge of all the earth do right  And Rom. iii. 5, 6. Is God unrighteous to take vengeance   How then shall he judge the world  These scriptures imply that if there were the least blemish, in point of righteousness, God could not be the judge of the world.   Therefore, God's justice, which gives to every one their due, must shine in its proper place.  He will give vengeance to whom vengeance is due, and blessing to whom blessing belongs.  In our case, punishment belongs to us, and what can we expect from God but eternal destruction  But if all this be so, if a conscience supposes a law, a law a sanction, a sanction a judge a judge some time when his justice must have a solemn trial and this will necessarily infer condemnation to a fallen creature, what then shall we do

From this condemnation there is no escape, unless God set up another court, where condemned sinners may be taken to mercy, upon terms that may salve God's honor and government over mankind.  There is a great deal of difference between the forgiving private wrongs and the pardoning of public offences.  When equals fall out among themselves, they may end their differences in such ways as best please themselves.  But the case is different here, God is not reconciled to us, merely as the party offended, but as the governor of the world, the case lies between the judge of the world, and sinning mankind, therefore it must not be ended by mere compromise and agreement, but by satisfaction, that his law may be satisfied and the honor of his justice secured.  Therefore in order to pardon man, without any impeachment of his justice the Lord finds out this great mystery, God manifested in our flesh.  Jesus Christ is made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, Gal. iv. 5.  And is become a propitiation to satisfy God's justice, Rom. iii. 25, 26.  And so God shews mercy to his creatures, and yet the awe of his government is kept up, and a full demonstration of his righteousness is given to the world. This being done conveniently to God's honor, we must sue out our pardon with respect to both the covenants, both that which we have broken, the law of nature, and that which is made in Christ, and is to be accepted by us, as our sure refuge.

(1).  We must have a broken-hearted sense of sin, and of the curse due to the first covenant, for it is the disease that brings us to the physician, the curse drives us to the promise and the tribunal of justice to the throne of grace, it is the avenger of blood at our heels, that causes us to fly to our proper city of refuge.  So that if you extenuate sin, you hold to the first covenant and had rather plead innocent than guilty.  No, if you would have favor you must confess your sins.  1 John i. 9. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.  You must confess your sins, and with that remorse, that will become offences done to so great a God.  And there must not only be a sense of sin, but of the curse and merit of sin also.  For we must not only accuse, but judge ourselves, that God may not judge and condemn us, 1 Cor. xi. 31.  Self-accusing respects sin, and is acted in confession, self-judging respects the curse or punishment, that is due to us for sin, and it is a person's pronouncing upon himself according to the tenor of the law, acknowledging his guilt and this with brokenness of heart before God, when he hath involved himself in God's eternal displeasure.  The law is God's prison and no offenders can get out of it till they have God's leave and from him they have none, till they are sensible of the justice of that first dispensation, confess their sins with brokenness of heart and that it may be just with God to condemn them forever.

(2).  We must thankfully accept the Lord's grace that offers pardon to us.  For since God is pleased to try us a second time, and set us up with a new stock of grace, and that brought about in such a wonderful way, that he may recover the lost creation to himself, surely if we shall despise our remedy, after we have rendered ourselves incapable of our duty, no condemnation is bad enough for us, John. iii. 18, 19.  Therefore, we should admire the mercy of God in Christ and have such a deep sense of it, that it may check our sinful self-love, which hath been our bane and ruin.  And since God shewed himself willing to be reconciled, we must depend upon the merit, sacrifice, and intercession of Christ and be encouraged by his gracious promise and covenant, to come with boldness, that we may find grace and mercy to help in a time of need, Heb. Iv. 16.  Thus you see the need we have to look after this pardon of sin.

11.         I must shew our misery without this.  And this will be best done by considering the notions in the text.  Here is filth to be covered, a burden, of which we must be eased and a debt that must be cancelled and unless this be done, what a miserable condition are we in

  What a heavy burden is sin, where it is not pardoned  Carnal men feel it not for the present, but how soon may they feel it  Two sorts of consciences feel the burden of sin, a tender conscience and a wounded conscience.  It is grievous to a tender heart that values the love of God, to lie under the guilt of sin, Ps. Xxxviii. 4.  Mine iniquities are gone over mine head, as a burden too heavy for me.  Broken bones are sensible of the least weight and certainly a broken heart cannot make light of sin.  What kind of hearts are those that sin securely without remorse, and are never troubled.  Go to wounded consciences and ask of them what sin is, Prov. Xviii. 14.  A wounded spirit who can bear  As long as the evil lies without us, it is tolerable, the natural courage of a man may bear up under it, but when the spirit itself is wounded, with the sense of sin, who can bear it  If a spark of God's wrath light upon the conscience, how soon do men become a burden to themselves   Some in such a case have chosen strangling rather than life.  Ask Cain, ask Judas, what it is to feel the burden of sin.  Sinners are all their lifetime subject to this bondage.  It is not always felt, but soon awakened.  It may be done by a pressing exhortation at a sermon, it may be done by some notable misery that befall us, it may be done by a scandalous sin, it may be done by a grievous sickness or worldly disappointment.  Al these things and many more may easily revive it in us.  Therefore do but consider what it is to be eased of this burden, oh, the blessedness of it. It is filth to be covered, which renders us odious in the sight of God.  It is said, Prov. Xiii. 5.  that a sinner is loathsome. To whom  To God.  Certainly he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity.  To good men, the wicked is an abomination to the righteous, the new nature hath an aversion to sin.  Lot's righteous soul was vexed from day to day with the conversation of the wicked. Nay, the sinner is loathsome to himself.  They will not come to the light, lest their deeds should be reproved.  And we are shy of God's presence, we are sensible we have something that makes us offensive to him and we hang off from him when we have sinned against him.  Oh!  What a mercy is it then to have this filth covered, that we may not be ashamed to look God in the face and may come with a holy boldness into the preference of the blessed God!  Oh! the blessedness of the man, whose sin is covered! It is a debt that binds the soul to everlasting punishment.  If it be not pardoned, the judge will give us over to the jailor and the jailor cast us into prison, till we have paid the uttermost farthing, Luke xii. 59.  Certainly, it is a strange security that possesses the hearts of men, when we are obliged to suffer the vengeance of the eternal God, and yet can sleep quietly.  Body and soul will be taken away in execution.  The day of payment is set and may come much sooner than you think for.  You must get a discharge or else you are undone forever.  Now put altogether, certainly if you have ever been in bondage, if you have felt the sting of death, and curse of the law or been scorched by the wrath of God, or knew the horror of those upon whom God hath exacted this debt in hell, you would be more affected with this wonderful grace.  Oh!  the blessedness of the man, to whom the Lord imputes not his transgressions.

111.  I am to shew, the consequent benefits.  I will name three.

1.        It restores the creature to God and puts us again in a capacity to serve and please and glorify God.  Psal. Cxxx. 4.  There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.  Forgiveness invites us to return to God, obliges us to return to God and encourages us to live in a state of holy state of holy friendship with God, pleasing and serving him in righteousness and holiness all our days.  Certainly, it invites us to return to God.  Man stands aloof from a condemning God, but may be induced to submit to a pardoning God.  And it obliges us to return to God, to serve and love and please him, who will forgive so great a debt, and discharge us from all our sins, for she loved much, to whom much was forgiven.  And it encourages us to serve and please God.  Heb. Ix. 14.  How much more shall the blood of Christ cleanse your consciences from dead works, that ye may serve the living God  And that in a suitable manner that ye may serve God in a lively cheerful manner.  A poor creature bound to his law, and conscious of his own disobedience and obnoxious to wrath and punishment is mightily clogged and drives on heavily.  But when the conscience is purged from dead works, we serve the living God in a lively manner, this begets a holy cheerfulness in the soul and we are freed from that bondage, that otherwise would clog us in our duty.

2.        It says the foundation for solid comfort and peace.  Till sin be pardoned, you have no true comfort because the justice of the supreme governor of the world will still be dreadful to us, whose laws we have broken, whose wrath we have deserved and whom we still apprehend as offended with us.  We may lust the soul asleep with carnal delights, but the virtue of that opium will soon be spent.  All those joys are but stolen waters and bread eaten in secret, a poor peace that dares not come to the light, that is soon disturbed by a few serious thoughts of God and the world to come.  But when once sin is pardoned, then you have true joy.  Then misery is plucked up by the roots.  Comfort ye, comfort ye my people.  Why  Her iniquity is forgiven, Isa. Xi. 1, 2.  And we joy in God, (Rom. v. 11) as those that have received the atonement. The Lord Jesus hath made the atonement and when we have received it, then we joy in God, then there is matter for abundant delight, when the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us.

3.        When we are pardoned, then we are capable of eternal happiness.  Pardon of sin removes the impediment, takes the make-bate out of the way, removes that which hinders our entrance into heaven.  Till we are pardoned, there can be no entrance into heaven.  Now this removes the incapacity.  I observe remission of sins is put for all the privilege part, as repentance for the duties.  Acts v. 31.  Him hath God exalted to give repentance and remission of sins.  These are the two initial benefits, repentance, as the foundation of the new life, and remission of sins, as the foundation of all our future mercies.  The two chief blessings offered in the New Covenant are pardon and life, reconciliation with God and the everlasting fruition of him in glory and the one makes way for the other.  Acts xxvi. 28.  To open their eyes, and to turn them from Satan to God, that they may receive remission of sins, and an inheritance among the saints.

And thus you see the blessedness of the man, whose transgression is forgiven, whose filth is covered and unto who the Lord will not impute his sin.

To apply this, 1.  Let us bless God for the Christian Religion, where this privilege is discovered to us all in all its glory, and that upon very commodious terms, fit to gain the heart of man.  Mic. Vii. 18.  Who is a God like unto thee among all the Gods pardoning the transgressions of thine heritage  The business of religion is to provide sufficiently for two things, which have much troubled the considering part of the world, a suitable happiness for mankind and suitable means for the expiation of sin.  Happiness is our great desire, and sin is our great burden.  Now these are fully discovered to us by the Christian faith.  The last is that we are upon, the way how the grand scruple of the world may be satisfied, and their guilty fears appeased.  And that we may see the excellency of the Christian religion above all religions in the world, it offers pardon upon such terms as are most commodious to the honor of God and most satisfactory to our souls, that is upon the account of Christ's satisfaction, and our repentance, without which our case is not compassionable.  The first I here insist on.

The heathens were mightily perplexed about the way, how God could dispense with the honor of his justice in the pardon of sin.  That man is God's creature and therefore his subject that he hath exceedingly failed in his subjection to him and is therefore obnoxious to God's vengeance, are truths evident in the light of nature.  The heathens had some convictions of this, and saw a need that God should be propitiated by some sacrifices of expiation and the nearer they lived to the original of this institution, the more pressing were their apprehensions thereof. But in all their cruel superstitions there was no rest of soul, they knew not the true God, nor the proper ransom, nor had any sure way to convey pardon to them, but were still set of the distraction of their own thoughts, and could not make God merciful without some diminution of his justice, nor make him just without some diminution of his mercy.  Somewhat they conceived of the goodness of God by his continuing benefits, but yet they could not reconcile it to his justice, or will to punish sinners.  And all their apprehensions of the pardon of sin were but probabilities and what was wrought to procure merit was ridiculous or else barbarous and unnatural, as giving their first born for the sin of their soul, Mic. Vi. 7.  And all those notions they had about this apprehended expiation were too weak to change the heart or life of man.

Come we now to the Jews.  They had many sacrifices of God's own institution, but such as did not make the comers thereunto perfect, as pertaining to the conscience, Heb. Ix 9.  And the ransom that was to be given to provoked justice was known but to a few.  They saw much of the patience and forbearance of God, but little of the righteousness of God and the great propitiation, till God set forth Jesus Christ to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past.  Their ordinances and sacrifices were rather a bond acknowledging the debt, or personifying the ransom that was to be paid and their sacrifices did rather breed bondage, and their ordinances were called, handwriting of ordinances that were against them.  The redemption of souls was then spoken of, as a great mystery but sparingly revealed.  Eternal redemption by Christ was a hard saying in those days, only they knew no mere man could do it.  And in more early times, in Job's he was an interpreter, one of a thousand, that could bring this message to a distressed sinner, that God had found out a ransom. This atonement then that lies at the bottom of a pardon of sin was a rare thing in those days.  Let us bless God for the clear and open discovery of this truth and free offer of grace by Jesus Christ.

The second use is to quicken us to put in for a share in this blessed privilege.  Christians, a man that flows in wealth and honor, till he be pardoned is not a happy man.   A man that lives afflicted and contemned if he be a pardoned sinner; Oh! the blessedness of that man!   They are not happy that have a benumbed conscience, but they have a conscience settled in the grace of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord and bottom upon his holy covenant and that peace and grace he offers to us, this is the happy man.

Let me intreat you, if this be such a blessed thing, to make it your daily, your earnest your hearty prayer to God, that your sins may be pardoned, Matt. Vi. 12.  Our Lord hath taught us to pray, every day forgive us our trespasses today in one of the petitions, is common to all that that follow, as we beg daily bread, we must beg daily pardon, daily grace, against temptations.  Under the law they had a lamb every morning and every evening offered to God for a daily sacrifice, Numb. xxviii. 4, 5, 6.  We are all invited to look to the Lamb of God, that takes away the sins of the world.  Surely we have as much need as they, more cause than they because now all is openly made known unto us.  God came to Adam in the cool of the day, he would not let him sleep in his sins, before night came.  He comes and rouses his conscience, and then gives the promise of the seed of the woman that should bruise the serpent's head.  In reconciliation with God, let not the sun go down upon God's wrath, Eph. iv. 26.  A man should not sleep in his anger nor out of charity with man.  Surely, we should make our peace with God every day.  If a man under the law had contracted and uncleaniliness he was to wash his clothes before evening, that he might not lie a night in his uncleanness.  We should daily come to God with this request, Lord pardon our sins.

But what must those that are already adopted into God's family and taken into his grace and favor, daily pray for pardon of sin  Though upon our first faith we are indeed made children of God and heirs of eternal life, yet he that is clean need wash his feet.  We contract a great deal of pollution by walking up and down here and we must every day be cleaning our consciences before God and begging that we may be made partakers of this benefit.  The Lord may for our unthankfulness, our negligence our stupid security, revive the memory of old sins and make us look into the debt-book (that hath been cancelled) with horror, and possess the sins of our youth.  When we prove unthankful and careless and do not keep our watch, the Lord may suffer these things to return upon our consciences with great amazement, built raked out of his grace is more frightful than one risen from the dead.  But the worm of conscience is killed still by the application of the blood of Christ.

**÷**SERMON 2

 Psal. Xxxii. 1, 2.

Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity and in whose spirit there is no guile.

In this text, I observed that it is a great step towards, yea, a considerable part of our blessedness, to obtain pardon of our sins. I now proceed to exhort you to put in for a share in this blessedness. To persuade you to it, let me use a few motives.

1.      Till you are pardoned, you are never blessed, there is an obstacle in the way. What though you flow in wealth, ease and plenty, yet as long as this black storm hangs over your head, and you know not how soon it will drop upon you, you cannot be happy men. Do you account him a happy man who is condemned to die, because he hath a plentiful allowance till his execution Then those that remain in the guilt of their sins may be happy. But a pardoned sinner is blessed whatever befalls him. If he be afflicted, the sting of his affliction is gone, that is sin. If he were prosperous, the curse of his blessings is taken away, the wrath of God is appeased and so every condition is made tolerable or comfortable to him.

Nothing less than a pardon will serve the turn. Not forbearance on God's side, nor forgetuflness on ours.

1.        It is not a forbearance of the punishment on God's part, but a dissolving the obligation to the punishment. God may be angry with us, when he doth not actually strike us. As the Psalmist says, Psal. Vii. 11, 12, 13. God is angry at the wicked every day. If he turn not, he will whet his sword. He hath bent his bow, and made it ready. He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death, he ordains his arrows against the persecutors. In the day of his patience, he doth for a while spare, but God is ready to deal with them hand-to-hand, for he is sharpening his sword, he is bending his bow. Therefore we are never safe till we turn to God. Wherever there is sin, there is guilt and wherever there is guilt, there will be punishment. If we dance about the brink of hell and go merrily to execution, it argues not our safety, but our folly.

2.        Our senseless forgetfulness will do us no good. Carnal men mind not the happiness of an immortal soul, and they are not troubled because they consider not their condition. But a benumbed conscience cannot challenge this blessedness, they only put off that which they cannot put away. God is the wronged party, and supreme judge, to whose sentence we must stand or fall. If he justifies, then who will condemn But there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.

3.        A pardon is surely a great blessing, if we consider first, the evils we are freed from and secondly, the good depending upon it.

1.        The evils we are freed from. Guilt is the obligation to punishment, and pardon is the dissolving that obligation. Now the punishment is exceeding great, no less than hell and damnation. Eternity makes everything truly great. Look the loss, an eternal separation from the comfortable presence of God. When God turned Adam out of paradise his case was very sad but God took care of him, gave him a day of patience, promised the seed of the woman, who should recover the lapsed state of mankind. That exile therefore is nothing comparable to this. For now man is stripped of all his comfort, sent into an endless state of misery, where there shall be no hope of ever changing his condition. Now to be delivered from this that is so great an evil what blessedness is it For the pain as well as the loss our Lord sets it forth by two notions, Mark ix. 44. The worm that never dies, and the fire that shall never be quenched. The scripture speaks of the soul with allusions to the state of the body after death. In the body, worms breed usually, and many times they were burn with fire. Accordingly our state in the world to come is set forth by a worm and a fire. The worm implies the worm of conscience, a reflection upon our past folly and disobedience to God, and the remembrance of all the affronts we have put upon Christ. Here men may run from the rebukes of conscience by many shifts, sports or business, but then there is not a thought free, but the damned are always thinking of slighted means, abused comforts, wasted time, the offences done to a merciful God and the curse wherein they have involved themselves by their own folly. The fire that shall never be quenched, denotes the wrath of God or those unknown pains that shall be inflicted upon the body and soul which must needs be great, because God himself will take the sinful creature into his own hands and will shew forth the glory of his wrath and power upon him. When God punishes us by a creature, the creature is not a vessel capacious enough to convey the power of his wrath as when a giant strikes with a straw that cannot convey his strength. But when God falls upon us himself to fall into the hands of the living God, how dreadful is that Is it not a blessedness to be freed from so great an evil Then a little mitigation, a drop to cool your tongue would be accounted a great mercy.

2.        If we consider the good depending on it. You are not capable of enjoying God, and being happy forever, till his wrath be appeased, but when that is once done, then you may have sure hope of being admitted into his presence. Rom. v. 10. If when we were enemies we were reconciled by his death, much more being now reconciled shall we be saved by his life, that is, it is far more credible that a reconciled man should be glorified than that a sinner and rebel should be reconciled. If you get into God's peace, then what may you not expect from God The first favor to such as have been rebels against him facilitates the belief of all acts of grace.

Now what must we do, that we may be capable of this blessed privilege, that our sins may be pardoned, and our debt forgiven I shall give my answer in three branches.

I will show you what is to be done, as to your first entrance in the evangelic state What is to be done as to your continuance therein, and that you may still enjoy this privilege. And What is to be done, as to your recovery out of grievous lapses and falls

1.        As to our first entrance into the evangelic state, that is, by faith and repentance, both are necessary to pardon, Acts x. 43. To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins. The remission of sins is granted to a believer. Now repentance is full as necessary, Acts ii. 38. Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins. Luke xxiv. 47. And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. What is in another evangelist, to preach the gospel to every creature, in this is, that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name. And this is preaching the gospel, for the gospel is nothing else but a doctrine of repentance and remission of sins. So, if we will not hearken to vain men who have perverted the scripture, but stand to the plain gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, these two duties are necessary to pardon. Christ's satisfaction is not imputed to us, but upon terms agreed on in the covenant of redemption. As to the interpretation, there is required the intervention of Christ's merit, so to the application faith and repentance. Therefore St. Paul, Acts xx. 21. Testified both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance respects God, to whom we return, and faith Jesus Christ, by whom we return. From God we fell, to God we must return. We fell from him, as we withdrew our allegiance and sought our happiness elsewhere and we return to him as our rightful Lord and our proper happiness. And faith in Christ is necessary, because the Lord Jesus is the only remedy for our misery, who opened the way to God by his merit and satisfaction, and doth also bring us to walk in his ways.

But to clear this, I will show you,

That it is for the glory of God and our comfort, that there should be a stated method of applying the gospel. That this method is, by faith and repentance, which in many things agree, and in other respects differ. That they are required for distinct reasons and ends The use of these graces will plainly discover their nature to you, so that none need not any longer debate what is repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. It is for the glory of God and our comfort, that there should be a stated method of applying the privileges of the gospel.

(1). It is certainly for the glory of God. It is not meet and pardon and life should be prostituted to every one that will hastily challenge these privileges. Our case is not compassionable, till we relent and submit to God's terms. I would appeal to your own consciences. Is it more suitable to the wisdom of God, that a penitent sinner should have pardon, than an impenitent One that continues in his sins and despises both the curse of the law, and the grace of the gospel It is not agreeable to the honor of God, that such should have benefit by him. Again, for faith, it is not meet we should have benefit by one we know not and trust not. Whatever be God's mercy to infants who are not in a capacity to know and trust him, yet in grown persons, it is not fit we should have such great privileges settled upon us without our knowledge, or against our wills, God will have our consent in an humble and solemn way, that we may thankfully accept what he hath provided for us.

(2). And is it for our comfort, that we may make our claim, that we may state our interest with the greater certainty. For when great privileges are conditionally propounded, as they are in the new covenant, our right is suspended till the conditions be performed and certainly our comfort is suspended till we know they are performed, till we know ourselves to be such, as have an interest in the promises of the gospel. I have told you, blessed are they whose sins are pardoned. But saith the soul, if I knew my sins were pardoned, I should think myself blessed indeed. What would you reply to this anxious and serious soul God hath made a promise, an offer of a pardon by Christ. The offer of pardon is the invitation to use the means, that we may be possessed of it. But then the anxious soul replies to whom is this promise made To them that repent and believe. Here is the shortest way to bring the debate to an issue, wherein our comfort is so much concerned. Thus the application is stated and the fixing these conditions is more for the glory of God and our comfort. 2. The graces or duties upon which is fixed, faith and repentance, the repentance here spoken of, is not the legal but the evangelical repentance, in many things agree, in other respects differ.

(1). They agree in this, that they are both necessary to the fallen creature, and concern our recovery to God, and so are proper to the gospel, which is provided for the restoration of lapsed mankind. The gospel is a healing remedy, and therefore is Christ so often set forth by the term of a physician. The law was a stranger to both these duties, it knew no such thing as repentance and faith in Christ. For according to the tenour of it, once a sinner and forever miserable. But the gospel is a plank cast out after shipwreck, whereby we may escape, and come safe to shore.

Again, they both agree in this, that they concern our first recovery out of the apostasy of mankind, for afterwards, there are other things required. But as to our first entrance into the evangelic state, both these graces are required, and the acts of them interwoven.

Again, they both agree in this, that they have a continual influence upon our whole new obedience. For the secondary conditions of the covenant grow out of the first, and these two graces run throughout our whole life. Repentance mortifying sin is not a work of a day, but of our whole lives, and the like is faith. Again, they agree in that both are affected and wrought in us by the Holy Spirit, that God, who requires these things, gives them.

Lastly, they agree in this, that the one cannot be without the other, neither repentance without faith, nor faith without repentance. Repentance without faith, what would it be When we see our sins, despair would make us sit down and die, if there were not a savior to heal our natures, and convert our souls. Neither can faith be without repentance for unless there be a confession of past sins, with a resolution of future obedience, we continue in our obstinacy and stubbornness and so are incapable of mercy.

Repentance without faith would degenerate into the horror of the damned and our sorrow for sin would be tormenting rather than curing to us. And faith would be a licentious and presumptuous confidence without repentance, unless it be accompanied with this hearty consent of living in the love, obedience, and service of God, with a detestation of our former ways, it would be a turning the grace of God into wantonness. Therefore these two always go together.

2. Let me shew you wherein they differ. Which is in this, the one respects of God, the other Christ.

(1). Repentance towards God. While we live in sin, we are not only out of our way, but out of our wits. We were sometimes foolish and disobedient, serving divers lusts and pleasures, Tit. iii. 3. We live in rebellion against him, against whom we cannot make our party good, and withal contenting ourselves with a false transitory happiness, instead of a solid and eternal one, we never come to our wits again, till we think of returning to God, as the prodigal, when he came to himself, thought of returning to his father. So long as we lie in our sins, we are like men in a dream, we consider not whence we are, nor whither we are going, nor what shall become of us to all eternity, but go on against all reason and conscience, provoking God and destroying our own souls. Man is never in his true posture again, till he returns to God as his sovereign Lord and happiness. As our sovereign Lord, that we may perform our duty to him and our chief good that we may seek all our happiness in him. And none repent, but those that give up themselves to obey God and to do his will, as he is the sovereign Lord and look upon him as their chief happiness, and prefer his favor above all the pleasures of the world, that they may be able in truth to say, whom have I in heaven but thee And there is none upon earth I desire besides thee, Psal. Ixxiii. 25.

(2). Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ is necessary, that we may own our redeemer and be thankful to him, as the author of our deliverance, and that we may trust ourselves in his hands. We are to take Christ as our prophet, priest and king. To hear him as our prophet, Mat. Xviii. 5. This is my beloved son, hear him. We are to receive him as our Lord and King, Col. ii. 6. As ye have received Christ Jesus, the great Apostle, and high priest of our confession. Hear him we must as a prophet, that we may form our hopes by his covenant, and frame our lives by his holy and pure doctrine. Receive him we must as a king, that we may obey him in all things. Consider him as a priest that we may depend upon his sacrifice and intercession, and may the more confidently please his covenant and promises to God. Now without this there can be no commerce between Christ and us. Herein these things differ, repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the one respects the end, God, the other the means, Christ, repentance more especially respects our duty, faith our comfort. Repentance newness of life for the future and returning to the primitive duty, the love of God, and obeying his will, faith, pardon of what is past and hope of mercy to come. In short, to God we give up ourselves as our supreme Lord, to Christ as mediator, who alone can bring us to God. To God as taking his will for the rule of our lives and actions, and preferring his love above all that is dear in the world. To Christ, as our Lord and savior, who makes our peace with God, and gives the Holy Spirit to change our hearts, that we may forever live upon him as our life, hope and strength.

(3). These graces are required in order to pardon for distinct reasons and ends.

First, repentance is required for these reasons.

(1). Because otherwise God cannot have his end in pardon, which is to recover the lost creation. Christ came to seek and save that which was lost. Now to be lost in the first and primitive sense was to be lost to God. So if Christ came to save that which was lost, he came to recover us to God.

(2). Neither otherwise can the redeemer do his work, for which God hath appointed him. 1 Pet. iii. 18. He dyed, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. We accept him in all his offices for this end. I am the way, the truth and the life, no man comes to the father but by me. Therefore whole Christianity from the beginning to the end is a coming to God by Christ. Heb. Vii. 25. He is able to save to the uttermost, (whom) all those that come to God by him.

(3). Without it we should not have our happiness. It is our happiness to please and enjoy God, but we are not in a capacity to please and enjoy God till we are returned to him. They that are in the flesh cannot please the Lord, cannot enjoy him here, for here we see his face in righteousness, nor hereafter, for without holiness no man shall see God.

Secondly, but why is faith in our Lord Jesus Christ required, and so much spoken of in scripture

(1). Faith in Christ is most fitted for the acceptance of God's free gift. Faith and grace always go together and are put as opposite to law and works. Rom. iv. 16. It is of faith that it may be of grace. Eph. ii. 8. For by grace ye are saved through faith and not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast. Faith establishes and keeps up the honor of grace, for it is the free grace of God to condescend to the rebel world, so far as he hath done in the new covenant. We present ourselves before him as those that stand wholly to his mercy and have nothing to please for ourselves but the merit of our redeemer, by virtue of which we humbly beg pardon and life to be begun in us by his spirit, and perfected in glory.

(2). Why faith in Christ Because the way of our recovery is so strange and wonderful. It can only be received by faith. Sense cannot convey it to us, reason will not and nothing is reserved for the entertainment of this glorious mystery, pardon and salvation by our redeemer, but faith alone. If I should deduce this argument at large, I would show you nothing but faith can support us in these transactions with God. The comfort of the promise is so rich and glorious, that sense and reason cannot inform us of it. Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor can it enter into the heart of man to conceive the things God hath prepared for them that love him, 1 Cor. ii. 9. It is not meant only of heaven, but of the whole preparation that God hath made for us in the gospel. It is not a thing can come to us by eye or ear, or the conceiving of man's heart, we only entertain it by faith. And the persons upon whom it is bestowed are so unworthy, that it cannot enter into the heart of man, that God will be so good and do so much good to such. Besides the way God hath taken for our deliverance is astonishing. God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life. That God should become man, that he should submit to an accursed death for our sakes, is so high and glorious, that it can only be entertained by faith.

The use of these two graces discover their nature. What is faith and repentance Repentance towards God is a turning from sin to God. It is called in scripture sometimes a turning to God, in other places a seeking after God, a giving up ourselves to God. 2 Cor. viii. 5. They gave up themselves to the Lord. This is the repentance by which we enter into the gospel-state. Now what is faith Besides an assent to the gospel, it is a serious, thankful, broken-hearted acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ, that he may be made to every one of us what God hath appointed him to be, and do for every one of us what God hath appointed him to do for poor sinners. It is serious and broken-hearted trusting to this redeemer, that he may do the work of a redeemer in our hearts.

And thus, I have briefly opened this necessary doctrine, as clearly laid down in the scripture. And this is your entrance into the evangelic state.

11.       What is to be done, for our continuance therein I answer, faith and repentance are still necessary. The righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith. And repentance is still necessary. But I shall only press two things: First, new obedience, secondly, daily prayer.

1.       New obedience is required. 1 Job i. 7. If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his son cleanses us from all sin. Holy walking is necessary to the continuance of our being cleansed from sin and therefore mercy is promised to the forsaking of our sins. Prov. xviii. 13. He that confesses and forsakes his sins shall find mercy. Isa. iv. 7. Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts and let him return unto the Lord and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. Christ will be no advocate for them that continue in their sins. Our God is a God of salvation, we cannot speak enough of his saving mercy. But he will wound the head of his enemies and the hairy scalp of such a one, as goes on still in his trespasses, Psal. Ixviii. 20, 21.

2.       Daily prayer is required. We must every day be cleansing our consciences before God, and begging that we may still be partakers of his benefit.

111.        The third thing is our recovery out of grievous lapses and falls. In them there is required a particular and express repentance and repentance and faith must be carried with respect to those four things that are in sin. The fault, the guilt, the stain or blot and the punishment. You know the law supposes a righteous nature that God gives to man, therefore in sin there is a stain or blot, defacing God's image. The precepts of the law require duty, so it is a criminal act. The sanction of the law as threatened makes way for guilt, as executed, calls for punishment.

1.          For the fault, in the transgression of the law, see that the fault be not continued. Relapses are very dangerous. A bone often broken in the same place is hardly set again. You are in danger of this before the breach be well made up, or the orifice of the wound soundly closed.

2.          The guilt continues till serious and solemn repentance and humiliation before God, and suiting out our pardon in Christ's name, if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. There must be a solemn humbling for the sin and then God will forgive us. Suppose a man forbear the act and never commit it more, yet with serious remorse we must also beg our peace upon the account of our mediator. Therefore something must be done to take away the guilt.

3.          There is a blot or evil inclination to sin again. The blot of sin in general is the defacing of God's image, but in particular sins it is also some weakening of the reverence of God. A man cannot act a grievous willful sin, but there is a violent obstruction of the fear of God. A brand that hath been in the fire is more apt to take fire again, the evil influences of the sin continue. Now the root of sin must be mortified. It is not enough to forbear or confess a sin, but we must pull out the core of the distemper before all will be well.

4.          There is the punishment. Now we must deprecate eternal punishment and bless God for Jesus Christ, who hath delivered us from wrath to come. But as to temporal evils, God hath reserved a liberty to his fatherly justice, to influence them, as he shall see good. The righteous are recompensed upon earth, partly to increase their repentance, that when they smart under the fruit of sin, they may best judge of the evil of it. God doth in effect say, now know it is an evil and bitter thing to sin against me. God doth not do it to complete their justification, but to promote their sanctification, and to make us warnings to others, that they may not displease God as we do. Now for these reasons the Lord though he doth release the eternal punishment, yet reserves a liberty to chastise us in our persons, families, and relations. Therefore, what is our business Humbly to deprecate this temporal judgment thus, Lord correct me not in thine anger, nor chasten me in thy hot displeasure. We should be instant with God to get it stopped or mitigated. But if the Lord see fit that it shall come patiently submit to him and say as the church, I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him. These afflictive evils, some of them belong to God's external government and some to his internal. Some to his external government as when many are sick and weak and fallen asleep. When we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world. There are other things belong to his internal government, as the withdrawing the comforts of his spirit, or the lively influences of his grace for this was the evil David feared, when he had gone into willful sins, Psal. Ii. 11, 12. Cast me not away from thy presence and take not away thy holy spirit from me, restore unto me the joy of they salvation, and uphold me with thy free spirit. When we fall into sin, though the Lord doth not utterly take away his loving kindness from us, he may abate the influences of his grace so far, as that we may never recover the like measure, as long as we live.

**÷**SERMON 3

 2Pe 1:4.

Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

In these words the apostle extols the grace of God towards us in the gospel.  In them take notice of

The means The end and use of them The method and order in which this effect is wrought in us. The means whereby God conveys his grace to us, viz.  The promises of the gospel, which are set forth, 1.By their excellency, exceeding great and precious promises.  And 2, their freeness are given unto us.

Their excellency is set forth by two adjuncts.  They are exceeding great and precious.  The one notes their intrinsic value, they are exceeding great.  The other our esteem of them, they deserve to be precious to us.

Exceeding great, so called from the matter of them, which is great and precious such as pardon and life begun in sanctification and perfected in glory. Precious, deserving and challenging our esteem, being so suitable to our necessities and desires. Our necessity arises from the fears of misery so justly deserved.  Our desires are after a proper happiness, which is only offered to us in the promises of God, not only as probable, but as certain to be ours, if duly qualified.  Now these promises, being so great and precious, should attract us to all purity and holiness, for what is greater, and deserves to be more esteemed by us, than remission of sins and an inheritance among the sanctified

Their freeness (given) made freely, made good freely.

11.    Observe the end and use of them, that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature.

By the divine nature is not meant here the essence of God, but his communicable excellencies, of such divine properties as can be imparted to the creature and these not considered in their absolute perfection, but as they are agreeable to our present state and capacity.  These are sometimes called the image of God, Col. iii. 10.  The new man, which is renewed in holiness after the image of him that created him, because they imply a likeness to him.  And sometimes the life of God, Eph. iv. 18. being alienated from the life of God, because it is a vital principle.  And here, the divine nature, and that for two reasons:

1.        Because these are communicates to us by God, they are created in us by his divine power and therefore the word (created) is so often used on this occasion.  Eph. ii. 10.  We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus.  2 Cor. 17.  If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.  Creation is proper to God.  We have them by virtue of our communion with him.  They slow from God, as the light doth from the sun.

2.        Because by these perfections we resemble God.  Therefore it is said, 1 Pet. ii. 9.  We shew forth his praises, his virtues or divine attributes, his wisdom, goodness, bounty, holiness for in these we most resemble him.  If you take in his power, there is some resemblance of that too, as to the moral exercise in taming our flesh, mastering our inordinate lusts and passions, and vanquishing all temptations.  This is a spiritual power, and so spoken of, Prov. xvi. 32. He that is slow to anger is better than the might and he that rules his spirit, than he that takes a city.  And I can do all things through Christ that strengthens me, Phil. Iv. 13.  To live above the hopes and fears of the world, is a great ability and power.  And vanquishing the world is made the fruit of the new birth, 1 John v. 4.   That which is born of God overcomes the world.  And in that place where the spirit of a Christian is described, it is said to be a spirit (2 Tim. I. 7) of love, power and of a sound mind.  We conceive God to be a spiritual being, of infinite wisdom, goodness and power.  To his wisdom answereth the spirit of a sound mind, to his goodness a spirit of love, and what is the original and pattern of the spirit of power, the very name discovereth, namely God's own power.  So all his attributes leave their impress upon us.

III.               Observe, the way the method and order, how we receive the divine nature.  Having first escaped corruption that is in the world through lust.  As we die to sin, the divine nature increases in us.  There is a putting off, before there can be a putting on, Eph. iv. 22, 23, 24.  We put off the old man, which is corrupt by its deceitful lusts.  We begin the work of sanctification with mortification and then proceed to the positive duties of a new life.  For the plants of righteousness will not thrive in an impenitent and unmortified heart.  As the corruption of sin is driven out, so the divine nature succeeds.  These things cannot be joined together.  The corruption that is in the world and the divine nature can no more agree than darkness and light.  But let us see how this mortification is expressed.  Let us see,

1.      What is to be avoided  2.  The manner of shunning it.

What is to be avoided  The corruption that is in the world through lust.  Observe, sin is called corruption in scripture, because it is a blasting of our primitive excellency and purity, Psal. Xiv. They are all corrupt and abominable, that is, degenerated, fallen from their pristine purity.  Observe, the seat of this corruption is said to be in the world, where all uncleanness reigneth, therefore called the pollutions of the world, 2 Pet. ii. 20.  The generality of men are corrupted in their faith, worship and manners, therefore it is said, save yourselves from this outward generation.  Conversion to God implies a renouncing the corruptions of the world, having no fellowship with them.  So that the question is, whether we will conform to God or the world, whether we will have fellowship with the corruptions of the world, or be partakers of the divine nature.  We must avoid the one to obtain the other.  Lastly, observe that this corruption is said to reign in the world, through lust.  The bait is the appetite, this makes our abode in the world unsafe and dangerous.  If it were not for lust, neither the baits nor the examples of the world would pervert or hurt.  Mortify the lust and you have pulled up the temptations by the roots. Let us see the manner of shunning, in the word (escaping).  There is a flying away required, and that quickly as in the plague or from a fire, which hath almost burned us, or a flood that breaketh in upon us.  We cannot soon enough escape from sin.  No motion but flight becomes us in this case.

We may learn hence, that the great end and effect of the promises of the gospel is to make us partakers of the divine nature.  And herein let us consider,

The effect or end The means appointed to attain it The influence of the one on the other.

1.      For the effect or end.  Observe, 1.  That it is a natural not a transient effect.  There may be such a scene of the goodness, wisdom and power of God, as may produce sudden passion, as suppose of fear or love yet it may only affect us for the present and not produce a thorough change of heart and life.  There is an impression we cannot deny, and an impression suitable to those apprehensions that we have of God, but it is not a constant principle of holy spiritual operation. But the promises of the gospel are to breed in us such a temper of heart, as may be a second nature to us, a habit or constitution of soul that may include us to live to God.

A habit serves for this use that a man may act easily, pleasantly and constantly. (1).  To act easily.  There is an inclination and propensity to holiness. God created all things with an inclination to their proper operations, as fire to ascend, and water to descend.  So true Christians have a tendency to holy actions, their hearts are bent to please God and serve him and they do whatever they do with a kind of naturalness, because of this bent and inclination.  They act not only as enjoined, but as inclined.  The law of God is in their hearts and consequently they act not by constraint, but with a ready mind.  (2).  To act pleasantly.  They have not only a new bent, bias and tendency, but it is a delight to them to do what is holy as being in their element when they are thus employed.  What is against nature is harsh, but what is with nature is sweet and pleasant.  It is hard, a kind of force to bring them to do the contrary.  There needeth some kind of violence to bring a good man to sin, as also a bad man to do good.  (3).  It is a constant principle of holy operations, so that a man doth not only obey God easily, but evenly and without such frequent interruptions of the holy life.  Many do that which is good, or forbear evil uneasily because of the restraints of providence, or dictates of conscience and unevenly, by fits and starts.  But, Psal. cvi. 3.  Blessed is he that keepeth judgment and doth righteousness at all times.  They are continually exercising all duties of Godliness, righteousness and mercy for the operations of nature are constant, however obstructed or diverted at certain times.  This we are to look after that the sanctifying grace we have received become a new nature, that the soul have a tendency and delight as to spiritual objects, and be constantly and easily carried to them and that this be the whole frame and drift of our lives.

2.  It is a divine nature, that is not only such as floweth from God, but as carries a resemblance to him.  It floweth from God, for we are partakers, it is but a ray from his excellency and it carries a likeness to him or cometh nearer to the nature of God himself, than any thing that a man is capable of.  Now this is said for two reasons:-

(1).To shew the dignity of it. Nothing known to man is so like God, as a sanctified soul.  The saints have their maker's express image, therefore if God be excellent and holy, they are so.  The image and picture of God and Christ is in them, not made by a painter or carver, but by the Holy Ghost, 2 Cor. iii. 18.  This is not a forbidden image, which may stain our minds, or form in us ill conceptions of God, but raise our hearts to him.  Natural conscience doth homage to the image of God shining in the saints.  Mark vi. 20.  Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and a holy, so of Moses, it is said, Exod. xi. 3.  Moses was a great man in the land of Egypt, and in the sight of Pharaoh's servant and in the sight of all the people.  His person and presence were awful to them, as having something rare in it.  There is a secret excellency in holiness that often makes even wicked men stand in awe of those in whom it is eminent, but especially when they come to die, they have a sense of this excellency and approve a sober, righteous and godly life.  Then all things appear in their own colors and the fumes of lust being dissipated, they begin more clearly to discern the happiness of those who are made like God.  They would fain die with the righteous.  Numb. Xxiii. 10.  Let my last end be like his.  When entering on the confines of eternity, they grow wiser.

(2).  To shew the quality and condition of it.  You must have a new nature, and such a nature, as may be a divine nature.  If you have nothing above nature, you are strangers to the promises of the gospel. It is a thought that possesses many when they are pressed to Christian duties, we are not saints and therefore cannot abstain from such sins.  But do you mark what is said here, Christians must be partakers of a divine nature.  Not only they are cut off from any privilege by Christ, who corrupt themselves as brute beasts, Jud. X.  That is, against the light of nature engulf themselves in all manner of dissoluteness and sensuality but also they that walk as men only according to the rule of men who mind nothing beyond the present world.  1 Cor. iii. 3.  Are not ye carnal and walk as men  That is, they are not raised above the pitch of mere men and have nothing of the spirit of God in them.  This divine nature may be considered three ways.  Either,

(1).  As begun.  When we are first renewed in the spirit of our minds, and regenerated according to the image of God, Ephe. Iv. 23, 24.  There is a wonderful change wrought in sinners by reason of the divine qualities impressed on them.  So that the creature begins to look like God himself, their nature is altered, their course of life is altered and their designs and actions have something divine in them.

(2).  As increased, when more like God in a conspicuous degree.  At first the impression is but weak, and this glory is darkened by remaining imperfections and we shew forth much of Adam upon all occasion, as well as somewhat of Christ.  But where any are sincere and diligent, the old nature is more suppressed and the divine nature doth more eminently appear. 2 Cor. iii. 18.  We are changed from glory to glory.  We grow more like God and come nearer to the nature of God every day.  And is a shame we are hot, having been so long acquainted with the word.

(3).  As it is perfected in heaven.  For there we have the nearest communion with God, and so the highest conformity to him that we are capable of.  1 John iii. 2.  We shall see God as he is and be like him.  Perfectly like him.  There is not the least blemish upon a glorified soul.  Besides, then we are like him, not only in point of holiness, but in point of happiness.  For God is a holy and happy being.  Here we resemble God more in holiness and purity.  For many times the most eminent holiness may be accompanied with remarkable afflictions, but there as our holiness is exact, our felicity is complete also. First we are made holy and the immortal and in both like God.  Well then, this is the effect, partakers of a divine nature.  So that when you come among the people of God, and you be asked, what kind of men do you find them to be (As Gideon in another case, asked Zeba and Zalmunnah concerning his brethren, who answered, each one resembled the children of a king, Judge. Viii. 18) you may answer concerning them, who are really and eminently partakers of the grace of the gospel, they are all children of the most high God as like God as mortal men can be.

11.        Let us now see the means by which God doth accomplish this effect. To us are given great and precious promises.

1.        It is an instance of God's love that he will deal with us in the way of promises.  The world is depraved by sin and sunk into fears and despair of any good from God, whom we have so highly provoked.  Therefore God invites and allures us to himself by promises.  For promises are declarations of God's will in the gospel, whereby he signifies what good he will freely bestow upon us, if we will look after it.  These advantages we have by them.

(1).  A promise is more than a purpose. For the purpose of a man is hidden in his own bosom, but a promise is open and manifest.  Thereby we get the knowledge of the good intended to us.  If God had only purposed to bestow all his grace upon us, we could not have known his intention till it were manifested in the effect, it would have been as an hidden treasure, or sealed fountain, of no comfort or encouragement to us, till we had found it.  But now the word is gone out of his lips, we may know how we shall speed if we will hearken to his counsel.  God's promises are on his part the overflow of his love.  His heart is so big with thoughts of good to us, that his love cannot stay till the accomplishment of things, but he must tell us a forehand.  Isai. xiii. 9.  Before they spring forth, I tell you of them.  He might have done us good and given us notice, but that would not satisfy him.  It is an obligation God takes upon himself.  God's promises are a security put into our hands, not only gives us notice but assurance that thus it shall be.  We have the greater holdfast upon him, and may put his bond in suit.  Psal. cxix. 49.  Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope.

(2).  It is more than a doctrinal declaration.  It is one thing to reveal a doctrine, another to promise a benefit, that making a thing know, this makes a thing sure, that gives us notice, but this gives us interest.  If life and immortality had been only brought to light in the gospel, 2 Tim. I. 10.  It were a great mercy:  That eternal life is set before us, is a great matter.  But God hath put it into a promise, 1 John ii. 25. that we may make our title and claim:  Surely that is a matter of till greater comfort.  Psal. cxix. iii.  Thy testimonies have I taken as a heritage forever, for they are the rejoicing of my heart.

(3).  It is more than a prophecy, or simple prediction.  Scripture prophecies will be fulfilled because of God's veracity, but scripture promises will be fulfilled, not only because of God's veracity but also his fidelity and justice.  For by God's promise, man cometh to have a right to the thing promised.  It was his mercy to make the promise, but his justice and fidelity bind him to make it good.  1 John i. 9. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness, 2 Tim. iv. 8.

2.  The promises of the new covenant are of a most glorious and valuable nature.  They aren't about things of little moment, but about worthy and dear-bought blessings. They contain spiritual and eternal riches, such as the healing of our nature, the pardon of our sins, a safe conduct unto eternal happiness.  The glorifying of our souls, the resurrection of our bodies, and an unchangeable state of happiness. These are the greatest things, in which all the things of the world are but vain and empty.  Reconciliation with God is our privilege here.  And is it a light thing to be at peace with the living God  To enjoy his amity and love  To study and sit ourselves to do his will  To live in constant communion with him now  To have access to him at all times  To obtain from him whatever in reason and righteousness we can ask  A Christian is never upbraided with the perpetuity of addresses, never denied audience, never has cause to doubt of success, has more familiarity with God and a sure interest in his love than the greatest favorites have in any prince or potentate upon earth.  But then the eternal enjoyment of God hereafter, Phil. Iii. 14.  I press towards the mark, of the prize of our high calling of God in Christ Jesus. It is a high prize that is set before us, then we shall have a larger capacity to know God, and enjoy him and receive his benefits.  Psal. xvii. 15.  As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness, I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness.

3.  They are precious promises, worthy of esteem.  They are not about things that we have nothing to do with, but such wherein we are deeply and intimately concerned.  In God's promises there is due provision made for the desires, necessities and wants of mankind. Let me instance in pardon and life, the first inviting benefits, Acts xxvi. 18.  Pardon answereth the fears and life those desires of happiness, which are so natural to us.

(1).  The consciousness of sin, and the fear of God's wrath and displeasure should make offers of pardon acceptable to us.  The great scruple of the guilty creature is, how sin shall be expiated and God appeased.  Mic. Vi. 6, 7.  We fear punishment from a holy and just God and cannot get rid of bondage till sin be forgiven.  Till then the justice of the supreme governor of he world will be dreadful to us.  The gospel serveth for this use, to give us the knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins.  Luke. I. 77.

(2).  The other great privilege is eternal life.  Corrupt nature is not against the offers of felicity.  There was never a creature heard of that would not be happy, for there was never a creature but loved himself.  Therefore what more powerful inducement to bring us into the way of holiness, than this blessed hope set before us, that we may see God and live forever  Tit. Ii. 12, 13.

4.  All this is given to us wretched men without any desert of ours.  Without our asking or thinking the covenant was framed and modeled to our hands, and in the frame and contexture of it we may see a constant strain of grace, in the richness of the benefits, the graciousness of the donor, the seasonableness of the offer, the readiness of the help, when once we set ourselves to seek after God, and please and serve him and lastly, in the sureness of the reward, notwithstanding frailties and imperfections.

111.    Let us consider the influence of the one upon the other, or how do these promises promote the divine nature

From their drift, which is, to draw us from the creature to God and the world to heaven, to mortify the esteem of the false happiness which corrupts our natures and to raise us to those noble objects and ends, which dignify and adorn the soul.  It breeds an excellent spirit in us, which is carried above the world and the hopes and fears of it.  1 Cor. ii. 12.  Alas!  What a mean spirit they have, that drive no higher trade than providing for the flesh or accommodating a life which must shortly expire  Like foolish birds, who with great art and contrivance feather a nest, which within a little while they leave.  But how God like are they, who look to higher things, to please God, enjoy communion with him and live with him forever From the matter of the promises.  Many of which concern the change of our hearts, the cleansing or healing of our natures.  Heb. viii. 10.  I will put my laws in their minds, and write them in their hearts, and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.  Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26.  Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you and ye shall be clean from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you.   A new heart also will I give you and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh.  Jer. xxxiii. 8.  And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity.  All which are encouragements of prayer to God for this benefit.  If God doth not exclude us, we should not exclude ourselves. The condition or terms on which our rights is suspended.  Not pardon without repentance.  Acts iii. 19, repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins might be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.  Acts. ii. 28.  Repent, and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.  Not heaven or eternal life without holiness.  Heb. xii. 14.  Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. The power with which the promises are accompanied. 2 Pet. i. 3.  According as his divine power hath given us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue.  He gives us life temporal and spiritual and that immutable life of felicity hereafter.  The divine nature is communicated to us by virtue of the promises for the spirit is our sanctifier that worketh all in all.

From what hath been said, we may learn, 1.  to believe the promises, for they are most sure and certain.  God's testimony of the good things he will bestow upon us cannot deceive us or beget a vain and uncertain hope.  His promise is a testimony of his will and against his power nothing can stand.  There shall be a performance of those things spoken of by the Lord, Luke i. 45.

2.        To esteem them.  Heb. axe. 13.  These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them and embraced them.  We can never embrace them, till we are persuaded of their truth.  But then consider their worth.  Great is the stupidity of those who are nothing taken with these things.  If a great man engages himself anyway, we make great reckoning of his word and shall we not make greater matter of the word of God and esteem his promises  Esteem them so, as to get them at any price.  Sell all for the pearl of price.  Esteem them so as to be contented with a mean condition in the world.  Though God keeps us low, it is enough to be made partakers of his holiness.  Esteem them so as to perform the duties required, Psal. exix. 14.  Esteem them so as to keep up your rejoicing in Christ, Phil. ii. 8, 9, 10.  I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.

3.        Labor to improve the belief of every promise for the increase of holiness that we may be like God, pure and holy as he is.  2 Cor. vii. 1.  Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

**÷**SERMON 4

Mar 9:49.

For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt.

In the context you have a caution, which our Lord gives against offences given to others, either by defection from the truth, or by a sinful conversation.  And,

He estimates the cause of these offences, which is some beloved lust and that is better mortified than satisfied.  There is something precious, profitable and pleasant in our opinion and affection, that calls us from God and the duties we owe to him and apprehended by us as so necessary for us, that we can no more spare it than a right eye, a right hand or a right foot. Our Lord compares the loss of satisfaction in such lusts, with the danger of perishing forever and shews that (all things considered) it were better to be deprived of this profit, pleasure or honor than to lose eternal life.  Either that pleasure or lust must be denied, or we perish forever.  The right hand must be cut off, or else we shall be cast into hell-fire. Our Lord shews the danger of perishing forever, amplified by a notable description, their worm never dies and their fire shall never be quenched.  The scripture lisps to us in our own dialect and speaks in such notions as we can best understand, and therefore represents the state of the damned by what is terrible to sense.  By the worm is meant the anguish of conscience, by fire the wrath of God.  The torment of the wicked arises partly from their own consciences.  There is a vexing remembrance of what is past, their folly in the neglect of grace and there is a bitter sense of that state into which they have now plunged themselves and a fear of what is to come. Now beside this remorse for their folly, there is also a fire that shall never be quenched, the sharp torments that are prepared for the wicked. Here is a comparison of the pains of hell, with the trouble of mortification, first or last we must endure troubles and difficulties.  Now it is much more eligible to take pains in the mortifying of sin, than to bear eternal pains in the punishment of it.  This is that which is expressed in the text, for every one shall be salted with fire and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt,  in the words,

1.        Observe a double salting, either with fire or with salt, the one referring to one sort of people and the other to the other.  They agree in the common nature.  For salt is of a fiery nature, and apt to consume, but they differ in the matter to be consumed.  Salt consumes the superfluous moisture, which is apt to cause putrefaction, but the fire consumes the substance itself.  So that to be salted with fire is to be given you to everlasting destruction.  Fire consumes all things, and God is called a consuming fire to the wicked.

2.        Here is also an allusion to sacrifices, for every man that lives in the world must be a sacrifice to God.  The wicked are a sacrifice to God's justice, the good are a sacrifice offered to him that they may be capable of his mercy.  The first are a sacrifice against their wills, but the good are a free-will offering, a sacrifice not taken but offered.  Now the law of all sacrifices was, that they were to be salted with salt, Levit. ii. 13.  Three times it is repeated there to shew, that every sacrifice must be salted.  That the wicked, the objects of God's vindictive justice are accounted sacrifices, is evident by scripture.  So when God intended a great carnage of his enemies, he calls upon the fowls of heaven, Ezek. xxxix. 17.  Assemble yourselves and come to my sacrifice, with an allusion to the beasts offered in sacrifice.  This may be gathered from the signification of the sacrifices, the burnt-offerings especially, which signified the guilt of the sinner, the death of Christ, which is the propitiation for sin and the obedience of the sacrifice, as devoted to God.  Now the first signification took place, and had its effect upon them, if they neglected the other two meanings of the sacrifices and therefore they were to be looked on as salted with fire whereas the other, who were accepted were salted with salt.

This may be applied, (1).  To the wicked.  For every one shall be salted with fire, that is every one of them spoken of before, who indulged their corrupt affections, who did not keep the covenant of God, and renounce their beloved lusts.

(2).  To the good.  Every sacrifice shall be salted with salt, that is, every one that is not a sacrifice by constraint, but voluntarily gives up himself to God, to be ordered and disposed of according to his will, he is salted, not with fire, but with salt, which every one that is devoted to God is bound to have within himself. So while some are defined to the wrath of God, and salted with salt, preserved and kept in the profession and practice of Godliness.

In the farther opening of this, I shall shew,

1.        That the true notion of a Christian is, that he is a sacrifice or a thank offering to God.

2.        That the grace of mortification is the true salt, whereby this offering and sacrifice should be seasoned.

3.        The necessity of this salt that we may keep right with God in the duties of the covenant.

1.       The true notion of a Christian is, that he is a sacrifice to God.  This is evident by Rom. xii. 1. I beseech you, Brethren, by the mercies of God that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service, that is, the reasonable part that was figured by the sacrifices and oblations of the law.  Under the law, beasts were offered to God, but in the gospel men are offered to him, not as beasts were to be destroyed, slain, and burnt in the fire, but to be preserved for God's use and service.  In offering anything to God, two things were of consideration, there was a separation from a common, and a dedication to a holy use, and they both take place in the present matter.

1.          There is a separation of ourselves from a common use.  The beast was separated from the flock or herd, for this special purpose, to be given to God.  Thus we are separated from the rest of the world, that we may be a people to God.  We are no more our own, 1 Cor. vi. 19.  And we are no more to live to ourselves, but to him that died for us.  2 Cor. v. 15.  We are not to live to the world, to the flesh or to such things as the natural heart craves.  We have no right in ourselves, to dispose of ourselves of our time, of our interest, of our strength, but must wholly give up ourselves to God, to be disposed, ordered, governed by him at his own will and pleasure.

2.          There is a dedication of ourselves to God, to serve, please, honor and glorify him.

(1).  The manner of dedicating ourselves to God, is to be considered.  It is usually done with grief, shame and indignation at ourselves, that God hath been so long kept out of his right, with a full purpose to restore to him with advantage.  1 Pet. iv. 3.  The time past may suffice to have wrought the will of the flesh, and of man, it is high time to give up ourselves to the will of God.  We have been long enough, too long dishonoring God, destroying our souls, living according to the flesh and the course of the world, therefore they desire to make restitution. Their past neglects of God fill their hearts with shame, therefore they resolve to double their diligence, and to be as eminent in holiness, as before they were in vanity and sin.

(2). It is with a deep sense of the Lord's love in Christ.  For we give up ourselves to God not as a sin offering, but as a thank-offering.  Rom. xii. 1.  I beseech you by the mercies of God 2 Cor. v. 14.  For the love of Christ constrains us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead, and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him that died for them and rose again.  They are ravished with an admiration of God's goodness in Christ, and so give up themselves to him.

(3).  They entirely give up themselves to God. Not to be his in a few things, but in all, to serve him with all their faculties, you are not your own, but are bought with a price.  1 Cor. vi. 20.  Therefore glorify God both with your bodies and spirits, which are God's.  And to serve him in all conditions. Rom. xiv. 8.  Whether we live, we live unto God or whether we die, we die unto God, for living or dying we are the Lord's.  They are willing to be used for his glory, not only as active instruments, but as passive objects, they give up themselves to obey his governing will, to be what he would have them to be, as well as to do what he would have them to do.  With all their faculties in every condition of life, are they to be devoted to God, in all actions.  It is said, Zach. Xiv. 20, 21.  That holiness to the Lord shall be written not only upon the bowls of the altar and the posts of Jerusalem, not only upon the vessels of the temple, but upon common utensils, that is that not only in our sacred, but even in our common and civil actions, we should live as a people that are offered up to God.

(4).  The end why we give up ourselves to God is to serve, please and glorify him.  Acts xxvii. 23.  His I am, and him I serve, to please him by the obedience of his will, Rom. xii. 1,2, ye present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.  And be not conformed to this world,  but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable, and perfect will of God, Col. i. 10.  That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work.  This is the dedication by which a Christian becomes a spiritual sacrifice unto God.  Now we must be sincere and real in this, partly,

1.         Because the truth of our dedication will be known by our use.  Many give up themselves to God, but in the use of themselves there is no such matter, they carry it, as though their tongues were their own, and had no Lord over them, Psal. xii. 4.  They speak what they please, they use their hearts as their own, to think and covet what they please, their hands as their own, to do what they please, their bodies as their own, and their wealth, and strength and time as their own, either to spare it, or lavish it according as their lusts guide and incline them.  No, no, a sincere Christian makes conscience of his dedication to God, and if he be tempted to do anything contrary to this vow and dedication, his heart rises against temptation.  1 Cor. vi. 15.  Shall I take the members of Christ and make them the members of a harlot  God forbid.  In point of fidelity to God as we are in covenant with him, we must be careful, that we use what is God's for the glory of God, we must make conscience of alienating that which is sacred, that which is the Lord's.  Your thoughts, your affections, your time, your strength, all belong to him.

2.         Because God will one day call us to an account, Luke xix. 23.  He will demand his own with usury.  We shall be called to reckoning, what we have done for God, what part he hath had in our time, our strength, our parts, our interest.  Therefore every prudent Christian should himself keep a faithful and constant reckoning, how he lays out himself for God.

3.         We must be sincere in this, because we are under the eye of God, who considers whose business we do, his, or our own.  Luke i. 75.  That we should serve him in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life.  We are ever before him, and though he doth not presently call us to an account, yet many times now he punishes us for our neglect of his interest.  Ezek. xvi. 8. ye entered into a covenant with me and became mine.  That was the reason of his judgments against them.  When those that are his do not carry themselves as his, when that which is sacred is profaned by a common use, then a judgment is coming on a nation dedicated to God, or upon a person, if his ways be not upright with him.

11.           The next thing that I am to shew is, that the grace of mortification is the true salt, where with this offering and sacrifice should be seasoned.  There is some dispute, what is meant by the salt, which Christ recommends to his disciples and what was figured by the salt in the sacrifice, whether wisdom or zeal. In general it is the grace of the holy spirit by which sin is subdued and prevented and the meaning suits exactly with the emblem for,

1.           Salt preserves flesh from putrefaction by consuming that superfluous moisture, which otherwise would soon corrupt. And so the salt of the covenant doth prevent and subdue those lusts, which would cause us to deal unfaithfully with God.  Alas! Meat is not so apt to be tainted as we are to be corrupted, without the mortifying grace of the spirit.  Nothing is so unstable and mutable as an unmortified soul, therefore we can never behave ourselves as a sacrifice, and an offering to God, unless we mortify our members, which are upon earth, inordinate affections, covetousness and the like, Col. iii. 5.  In short, the flesh is that which is apt to be corrupted and therefore the grace that doth preserve us must be something that doth wean us from the interests of the flesh, and what is that but the mortifying grace of the Holy Spirit

2.           Salt hath an acrimony and doth macerate things and pierce into them, and so the grace of mortification is painful and troublesome to nature.  How healthful forever it be to the soul, no question it is distasteful to curb our affections and govern our hearts in the fear of God, but yet it is wholesome. It is a crucifying of the flesh, to handle it, as Christ suffered on the cross, to give it vinegar and gall, Gal. v. 24. but yet this is necessary, this is the thing which our Lord intends here in the context hat the sacrifice must be consumed or macerated, we either must suffer the pains of hell, or the pains of mortification, we must be salted with fire, or salted with salt.  It is better to pass to heaven with difficulty, than to avoid these difficulties and be in danger of eternal fire.  The strictness of Christianity is nothing so grievous as the punishment of sin.  We should rather displease ourselves, and displease all the world, than displease God, and be unfaithful to Christ.  No profit, no pleasure or secular concernment is so necessary, so comfortable, so useless to us as salvation.

3.           Salt makes things savory, so grace makes us savory, which may be interpreted with respect either to God or man.

1.        It makes us acceptable to God, when seasoned with this salt, for God would accept of no sacrifice without it.  Not that he tasted of their meat-offerings, but in types as well as in similitude there is a condescension to our apprehension of things. That that is salted is savory, therefore God would note his acceptation of our persons and services this way.  By nature we are all unsavory and distasteful to God.  Psal. xiv.  3.  They all become filthy, there is none that doth good, no not one. In the Hebrew, it is putrefied, stinking like corrupt and rotten flesh.  We must be salted and seasoned by the grace of Christ, and so we become amiable and acceptable in the sight of God.  The more upright we are, the more he delights in us.

            It makes us acceptable to men, the more we are thus salted and mortified, the more we shall do good to others.  Our Lord tells his disciples, Mat. V. 13.  ye are the salt of the earth.  But if the salt lose its savor, wherewith shall it be salted  It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men.  This is spoken to the disciples as disciples, not as apostles and public persons.  It is a mistake to think that only ministers are the light of the world, and the salt of the world.  No, all Christians must shine as lights in the midst of a crooked generation, all Christians must be as the salt of the earth.  Christ's whole sermon contains general duties, and the disciples were not yet sent abroad as apostles, that was done afterwards, chap. x. and therefore here he speaks to Christians as Christians.  Now they are said to be salt, even as they season all those among whom they live.  A Christian is never savory in his conversation with others, till he hath salt in himself, then all his actions are seasoned with grace and beget a remembrance of God, then his words are seasoned with grace, and do good to others.  The apostle saith, Eph. iv. 29. Let no corrupt communication come out of your mouths that is corrupt communication, which vents itself slandering, railing, foolish jesting, and idle discourse.  All these come from a corrupt heart.  These want the grace of mortification so are all sapless spirits that cannot speak anything of God seriously, but in their most serious discourse are as fresh as water.  But go among the mortified, and you receive the savor of good things from them, you have not only savory prayers, and savory sermons, but savory conferences and discourses.  Col. iv. 6.  Let your speech be always seasoned with salt, that is, do not speak idly, but in an edifying manner.  Now Christians ought to take heed they do not lose their savoriness, for then they do not please God, nor profit man and are fit for nothing but the Dunghill.  Thus I have proved the second thing, that the grace of mortification is the true salt, that seasons Christians.

111.    There is a necessity of this salt in all those that have entered into covenant with God.

1.  By covenant we are bound to the strictest duties and that upon the highest penalties.  The duty to which we are bound is very strict.  We have answered God in all the demands of his covenant, 1 Pet. iii. 21.  For baptism saves as the answer of a good conscience towards God.  The Lord puts in effect this question; will you die unto sin and live unto righteousness   This is the tenor of the baptismal covenant that is so often, so solemnly renewed at the Lord's Supper, and you are to reckon yourselves, Rom. vi. 11. to be dead unto sin and alive unto righteousness through Christ Jesus our Lord reckon yourselves that is in vow and obligation. And the penalty is very high, Heb. x. 26. if we sin willfully.  So that our admission into Christ's family will be in vain, yea to your further ruin, if you do not stand to the covenant if you keep sin still alive and add fuel to the flames.

Consider the abundance of sin that yet remains in us, and the marvelous activity of it in our souls, well then, since sin is not nullified, it must be mortified.  It works, it wars, it is very active and restless. The Apostle James tells us, (Jam. Iv. 5) the spirit that dwelleth in us, lusteth to envy.  It is not a sleepy, but a stirring principle, always inclining us to evil and hindering that which is good.  Sin doth not only make us flexible and yielding to temptations, but doth hurry us thereunto.  Corrupt nature is not a tame thing, that works not, till it be irritated by the suggestions of Satan, or temptations of the world, but is like a living spring, that pours out water of its own accord, it will not let us alone.  The heart of man is evil continually, and so it always hinders us from that which is good.  It blunts the edge of our affections, it seeks to weaken our purposes by unbelieving thoughts, or drawing us away from God by the lure of some sensitive delight, in stealing our hearts from him, in the very duties and solemn address we make to him, distracting our minds with thoughts of the world and so turns our very duties into sin.  Well then, without this salt of the covenant, what shall we do  Have we not need to keep humble and watchful  If sin be stirring, we must be stirring against it and improve the grace of the Holy Spirit upon the account of Christ's death and use all good means that it may be subdued in us.

Consider the sad consequences of letting sin alone, either as to further sin or punishment.

1.       As to further sin.  For Christ speaks here of scandals.  If lust be not mortified, it grows outrageous, it foils us before God, men and angels and exposes us to an open shame or hardens us in a dead, careless course.  Lusts let alone end in gross sins and gross sins in final apostasy.  Love of pleasure will end in drunkenness or adultery or the rage of unclean desires or else in such a vain light frothy spirit as is no way fit for religion.  Judas by his covetousness was brought to betray his master.  Gehazi was first surprised with covetousness then blasted with leprosy and then became a shame and burthen to himself.  The devil tries by lusts to bring us to sin and by sin to shame and by shame to horror and despair.  And in all of us old sins, long since laid asleep may awake again and hurry us into spiritual mischief if we make not use of this holy salt.

2.       As to punishment.  Sins prove mortal, if they be not mortified.  Either sin must die or the sinner.  There is an evil in sin and there is an evil after sin.  The evil in sin is the violation of God's righteous law, the evil after sin is the just punishment of it, eternal death and damnation.  Now those that are not sensible or will not be sensible of the evil that is in sin, they shall be made sensible of the evil that comes after sin.  The unmortified person spares the sin and destroys his own soul, the sin lives but he dies.  In the prophet's parable to the king of Israel, when he had let go the Syrian, saith he, thy life shall go for his life.  So our lives shall go for the life of our sins. The end of these things is death, Rom. vi. 21. and, the wages of sin is death, ver. 23.

Now to make application.

1.           For the reproof of those that cannot abide to hear of mortification.  The unwillingness and impatience of this doctrine may arise from several causes.

1.         From Scottish atheism and unbelief.  They despise all sober, spiritual counsel.  They despise the word of God.  There are some that stand in owe of the word and though their minds be never so much set upon a thing, yet if a commandment stand in the way, it is more than if an angel with a drawn sword stood in the way to keep them back.  But now a careless, unbelieving wretch sets at naught all the precepts, promises and threatening of God, nay he despises his own soul, he only cares for the body, but scarce ever considers whether he has a soul to save, or a soul to lose.  Now it is in vain to speak to these to mortify their pleasing lusts, till their atheism and carelessness be cured.  And their case is the more desperate, because the disease doth not lie in their minds, but in their hearts.  A settled opinion must be vanquished by reason, but a brutish inclination can only be weakened by almighty grace.

2.         It may come from Antinomian principles.

(1).  Some vainly imagine, as if God by Jesus Christ were made more reconcilable to sin, that it needs not so much to be stood upon, or need we keep such ado to mortify the inclinations that lead to it.  They altogether run to the comforts of the gospel and neglect the duties thereof.  Christ died for sinners, therefore we need not to be troubled about it.  Some actually speak out as if all the mortification required were but to quell the sense of sin in the conscience, not to destroy the power of sin in the heart and if they can believe strongly they are pardoned, all is well.  If this were true, then in the hardest heart would be the best faith, for they have the least trouble about sin.  This is to cry up and the merit of Christ, so as to exclude the work of his spirit, yea to set the merit of his death against the end of it and so to set Christ against Christ.  He bear our sins in is body upon the tree, why  That we might be dead to sin, and alive to righteousness, to promote this mortification that we speak of.

(2).  Another sort think such discourses may be well spared among a company of believers, they need not this watchfulness and holy care, especially against grievous sins.  It is well if you become to this height of Christian perfection, that temptations make no impression upon you.  But we must warn you and that of the most gross sins.  Christ thought it fit to warn his disciples, Luke xxi. 34.  Take heed lest your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and the cares of this life.  And the Apostle everywhere warns Christians of malice, of hypocrisy, of envy, of lying, of evil speaking, now is sin grown less dangerous or men more skilful to avoid it, than heretofore  Certainly, he that considers how many scandalous professors there are, that would be accounted the people of God, hath no cause to think so.  If Paul saw need of mortification, 1 Cor. ix. 27. we are not more strong, but more fool-hardy.

(3).  A third sort are such as think believers are not to be scared with threatening, but only oiled with grace.  But then consider, the words of Christ were to his disciples.  And to whom did the apostle write  To believers questionless, if you live after the flesh, ye shall die, but if you through the spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live, Rom. viii. 13.  No part of the spirit's discipline must be omitted.  If one end of Christ's coming was to verify God's threatening and that the curse of the law should not fall to the ground, surely there is use of threatening still.

Let me then persuade you not to neglect the salt of the covenant.  It may be fretting, but it is healthful.  To help you to improve this kind of argument, which our Lord here useth.

1.        Consider, there are but two sorts of men in the world, and you are one of them.  There is no middle state.  There are but two principles that men are influenced by, the flesh and the spirit and there are but two ends men propound to themselves, either the pleasing of the flesh or the enjoyment of God in heaven.  And two places they issue into heaven and hell.  The scripture is peremptory and tells us who shall go to heaven and who shall go to hell.  Rom. viii. 13. If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die, but if ye through the spirit mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.  Gal. vi. 8.  He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, but he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting.  Or consider that, Prov. xiv. 14.  The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways and a good man shall be satisfied from himself.  There are two different persons setting forth in the pursuit of happiness, the backslider in heart and the good man.  The backslider in heart is one that continues in the apostasy of mankind and for a seeming good leaves God, who is the chief good.  But the good men are those who make it their business to keep their hearts chaste and loyal to God.  They both desire to be filed and to be satisfied, the one takes his own way and the other God's counsel. And in the even both are filled.  The backslider in heart hath enough of his own ways, when they have brought him to hell and the good man hath enough, when he comes to the enjoyment of the blessed God.  And there is one truth more there, they are both filled from themselves, their own ways.  The backslider shall have the fruit of his own choice and a good man is satisfied with that course of godliness that he hath chosen.  Prov. I. 31.  Those that turn away from God, shall eat of their own ways and be filled with the fruit of their own devices.  And Isa. iii. 10. say unto the righteous, it shall be well with him, for he shall eat of the fruit of his own doings.

2.        Consider the condition of those that indulge their carnal affections, and that either threatened by God or executed upon the wicked.

(1)   Consider it, as it is threatened by God.  If God threatened so great a misery it is for our profit, that we may take heed and escape it.  There is mercy in the severest threatening that we may avoid the bait when we see the hook that we may digest the strictness of any life rather than endure upon such dreadful evils.  Why did our Lord repeat it three times, where the worm never dies and the fire is never quenched  But that may we have it often in our thoughts, that we may not buy the pleasures of sin at so dear a rate, as the loss of our precious souls.

(2)   Consider the punishment as executed upon the wicked.  How many are now burning in hell for those sins, which are are ready to commit  The serious consideration of this will check the fervor of your lusts.

(3)   Consider which trouble is most intolerable, to be salted with salt, or to be salted with fire, with mortification or the pains of hell, the trouble of physic or of a mortal disease.  Surely to preserve the life of the body, men will endure the bitterest potion why  Their lives lie on it.  And shall we be unwilling to submit to these wholesome severities, which conduce to save you with an everlasting salvation. Here is no remedy, trouble must be undergone.  Surely a strict diet is better than a speedy death, and the pricking of a vein by a surgeon is not so bad as a stab at the heart by an enemy.  Better be macerated by repentance, than broken in hell by torments.  Which is worse, discipline, or execution  Would you have sorrow mixed with love and hope  Or else mixed with despair  Would you have a drop or an ocean  Would you have trouble in the short moment of this life or have it eternal in the world to come

(4)   Be sure you be a sacrifice dedicated to God, really entered into covenant with God and set apart for his use that this may be your end, your business, your scope to please, glorify and enjoy him 2 Cor. i 9.  We can the better speak to you when you are under a covenant engagement.  Christ bound you to this when he died for you,  He sanctified himself that you might be sanctified through the truth that is decimated to God.  John xvii. 19.  And by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified, that is, them that are consecrated to God, or entered into a holy covenant with him.

(5)   You will see a need of denying worldly and fleshly lusts, you will see nothing can be done in the spiritual life without mortification that being dead to all things here below, you may be alive to God.  That this must be your daily work, necessity will sufficiently shew.  Are there no rebellious desires to be subdued  No corrupt inclinations to be broken  Do you feel the bias of corruption drawing you off from God  David did, therefore he saith, incline my heart to thy testimonies, and not to covetousness.  Do not you find the sensitive lure prevail upon you, enticing your minds, and drawing you from the purity of your conversation  Rejoice then tobe seasoned with salt for a while, that you may not be seasoned with fire forever.

**÷**SERMON 5

2Th 3:5.

And the Lord directs your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.

There are two things that keep religion alive in the soul, a love to God and a hearty intent upon the coming of Christ. These are the two necessary graces, which the apostle prays for in the text, the love of God and the earnest waiting for Christ. Love respects God, because he is the chief object of it, the first and chief good, hope or patient expectation respects Christ, who at his glorious coming will give us our full reward. Love is the life and soul of our present duties and by patient expectation we wait for our future hope. The love of God urges us to the duties of religion and hope strengthens us against temptations, whether they arise from the allurements of sense or the troubles of the world. Love is our breastplate that guards the vitals of Christianity and hope is our helmet that covers our head that we may hold up our head in the midst of all the troubles and sorrow of the present life. Both graces are necessary, therefore it will not be unprofitable to insist upon them. I begin with the former, the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God. Where note,

1.      The grace prayed for, the love of God.

2.      The efficiency, which is necessary to produce it, the Lord direct your hearts. The word direct notes sometimes bending or setting strait the thing that is crooked. Conduct and guidance, as we guide men that they may not go wrong. Psalm cxix. 5. Oh! that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes. Ships that are best-rigged need to have their love directed to the best advantage of his glory and service. This for the first signification, guidance and direction. At other times it signifies the bending, inclining or making strait what is crooked, or what bends another way. In this sense, I take it here. Our hearts are distorted and averse from God and all good naturally, yea and after grace received, are apt to wander, and return to their old bias again. Therefore the apostle prays that God would set their hearts strait that they may be fixed towards God. And this prayer he makes for the Thessalonians, whose work of faith and labor of love and patience of hope, he had so much commended before and of whose sincerity he had such confidence and their love might be directed and their hearts more fixedly set towards God.

But what is love to God Love is the complacency of the soul in what is good. Love to God is the complacency of the soul in God as our all-sufficient portion. To open it to you, I shall describe it,

1.      By its internal acts

2.      By its external effects. I shall.

3.      A little, touch upon the properties of it.

1. The internal acts are two, desire and delight. Desire after him and delight in him.

1.       Desire after him. Love affects union with the thing beloved and so love to God implies an earnest seeking after him, in the highest way of enjoyment that we are capable of in this world. This appears partly by the kind of mercies that we affect, and partly by the fervency of our endeavors after him.

(1). By the kind of mercies that we effect. There are some mercies vouchsafed us that lie nearer to God than others do. As his image and favor or his renewing and reconciling grace. When we love God, these are sought in the first place. Psal. iv. 6, 7. The many say, who will shew us any good But Lord, lift up the light of thy countenance upon us and this will put gladness into our hearts. The many, the brutish multitude seek an uncertain good and they seek it from an uncertain author, who will shew us They do not acknowledge God in these common mercies. But the children of God must have his favor, Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. As the beams of the sun cheer and refresh the earth, this is that which doth revive their souls. God's sanctifying spirit witnessing his love to us is the greatest gift can be bestowed in this life and will more witness his love than anything else that can be given us. This the saints seek after, that they may be like God, that they may be accepted and well pleasing unto God, this is all their ambition, 2. Cor. v. 9. Wherefore we labor that whether present or absent, we may be accepted of the Lord. Other things may please the flesh, but that is not their design, those things that bring them nearer to God, take up their mind and heart. Now as this appears by the mercies we effect, so it appears.

(2). By the fervency of our endeavors after these things. For if the image of God and favor of God be sought superficially and the wealth, honors and pleasures of the world earnestly, surely we do not love God. A Christian saith, Psal. ixiii. 8. My soul followeth hard after thee. The whole spiritual life is but a pursuit of the soul towards God and the more constantly and earnestly we seek him, to enjoy his saving graces and benefits, the more we have of the love of God in us. Therefore David expresses this desire, as exceeding all other desires, Psal. xxvii. 4 One thing have I desired of the Lord hat will I seek after, that I might dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to enquire in his temple. He fought not the glory of his kingdom, success in battle, victory over his enemies, so much as converse with God and attendance on his worship. All was nothing to this, that he might have communion with God. Therefore this is the radical act of love, this fervent burning, desire that carries Christians through all duties, ordinances, services they are still making their way to a nearer access to God and larger participation of his grace, till they come to enjoy him in glory.

There is another internal act of love, that is a delight in him, but delighting ourselves in God is a great duty now, for love being the complacency of the soul in God, or a delightful adhesion to God as our all-sufficient portion and happiness, it cannot be imagined that love can be without any delight in God even now. There is not only our hope, but our partial enjoyment of it is matter of happiness to us, his favor is as life and his frown as death, to the soul that loves him. The saints look on God reconciled as the best friend, God displeased as the most dreadful adversary, therefore if they have any taste of his love, their souls are filled as with marrow and fatness, Psal. ixiii. 3, 4, 5. Because thy loving kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee. I will bless thee while I live, my soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips. But yet we are not gone to the bottom of the matter of delighting in God. Those are so well pleased with him, that everything is sweet to them by the relation it hath to God. It is a delight to them to think of God. Psal. civ. 34. I will be glad and rejoice in him my mediation of him shall be sweet. It is a delight to them to speak of God, Eph. v. 4. Not foolish jesting, but giving of thanks. The delight of God's children or that which serves instead of jesting to Christians is the grateful remembrance of the Lord's mercies, especially of our redemption by Christ. To draw nigh to him in ordinances, there this delight is exercised again. There is prayer. A gracious soul cannot be a stranger to it, because it cannot have a greater refreshing, than to embosom himself with God. So for all other Christian duties, Psal. cxxii. 1. I was glad, when they said unto me, come let us go into the house of the Lord, there they entertained commerce with God about matters of the highest concern, nay all their work the whole course of their obedience is sweetened to them, because it is commanded by God and tends to the enjoyment of God. Psal. cxii. 1. Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in his commandments, they not only keep the commandments but delight (and that greatly) to keep them. Psal. xcix. 14. I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches. Delight in God is a great act of love, to which we should not be strangers, even in the house of our pilgrimage for it is a duty of the first commandment, that results from the owning of God as our God.

11.         For the external effects of love, they are doing and suffering his will. When we are contented to do what God will have us do, and be what God will have us be.

1.      For doing. If we love God, we shall be loath to offend him, we shall be desirous to please him. Faith, I confess is a marvelous grace, but it can do no worthy thing for God till it be accompanied with love. Gal. v. 6. When the apostle tells us of that faith, that carries away the prize of justification, he descries it to be a faith working by love. Faith itself serves as the bellows to blow up this flame in our hearts, as the next and immediate principle of action. In short, love is the overruling bent of four souls, the poise upon us that includes us to God. And look as all noble qualities when restrained cannot produce their consummate act, so love suffers a kind of imperfection, till it can thus break forth into some act of thankfulness to God, but when it is perfected. 1 Job. ii. 5. Whosoever keepeth the word, in him the love of God is perfect, that is, hath attained its consummate act that which it aims at. No man certainly can be owned as a lover of God, but he that makes conscience of doing what he commands. None but they have a deep sense of his majesty, none but they have a deep sense of favor, and therefore they dare not hazard it by a breach or neglect of their duty.

2.      For suffering his will. For when the apostle prays here, that God would direct their hearts to love him, he means that they should endure anything, rather than deny the faith and confess Christ, whatever it cost them. As obedience is virtually contained in love, so also courage and resolution. Solomon represents love as a powerful thing as an affection that will not be bribed nor quenched, cant. Viii.7. Many waters cannot quench love, nor can the floods drawn it. If a man would give the whole substance of his house for it, it would be utterly contemned. It is true of love in general much more of love to God. In worldly matters, love is a venomous poison, when it hath invaded the heart, nothing will reclaim us. But in divine matters, it is a sovereign antidote against temptations, both on the right hand and on the left. All riches, pleasures and honors are contemned; they cannot bribe them over from Christ that really love him. All the floods of persecution cannot quench this holy desire. This is the genius and disposition of love, when once the bent of the heart is set towards God and heaven, they are vehemently set against anything that would turn them out of the way and divert them from their purpose.

111.    I come to speak of the properties of it.

1.           It is not a speculative, but practical love, not consisting in lofty, airy strains of devotion, no, it is put upon a surer test, our obedience to God. Again, it consists not in a bold familiarity, but in a humble subjection and compliance with his will. He that hath my commandments, and keeps them, he it is that loves me, God's love is a love of bounty, but ours a love of duty, therefore if we love God, we are careful to please him and fearful to offend him. The scripture declares both, the first, this is love, to keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous. The second Psal. xcvii. 10. ye that love the Lord hate evil. When we love, we are fearful of committing or omitting any thing that may be a violation of his law, a grief to his spirit, or a dishonor to his name. Whatever lofty and luscious strains of devotion, we may please ourselves, with here will our trial rest. He doth not love God, that can soar aloft in contemplation, but he that is awful, serious and conscientious in his duty.

2.           It is a transcendental love we owe to God, we must love him above all other things. For he must be loved as our felicity and end. He must have the chief place in our hearts. If we seek God in order to other things, we do not love him, but our own lusts, nay, if all other things be not sought after in order to God, we do not set him up as our chief good, or last end. He that loves father and mother more than me, is not worthy of me, Luke xiv. 26. All must be subordinated to our supreme happiness or else God is not loved as God.

I would consider, secondly, the nature of that influence upon love, which is expressed by the apostle in the word direct. The Lord direct your hearts in the love of God. What doth this imply

1.       It implies that God works upon us as rational creatures. He changes the heart indeed, but he doth it by direction. He draws us to himself, but it is with the cords of a man. He teaches while he draws. John vi. 44, 45. None can come unto me but those whom the father draws and he proves it by this, because they shall all be taught of God. God's drawing is teaching, it is both by the attractive force of the object and the internal efficacy of his grace, the spirits conduct is sweet, yet powerful, accomplishes the effect, but without offering violence to the liberty of man. There is not a violent compulsion, but an inclination sweetly raised in us by victorious grace or the over-pouring sweetness of his love. For we love him, because he first loved us, 1 John iv. 19. And this love is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, who by giving us a deep sense of his benefits, blows up this holy flame in our hearts. We do not love God, we know not why. An account can be given of all the spirits operations. Look as in an impression, there must be a seal and wax to the seal and the hand that stamps it, so all concur here. The word doth its part, that is the seal and the heart of man receives the impression, but to make it effectual, the hand of God concurs or the power of his spirit. The object is the gospel, wherein God commends his love to us by the incarnation, death and intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ, as also by the new covenant, because he will work upon man after the nature of man, by love he will work upon love. Beside all this, there is an internal powerful agent, the Holy Spirit. The external means cannot do it without the inward cause. Though God's love doth so gloriously shine forth in the gospel, yet the heart of man is not affected with it, till it be shed aboard by the illuminating sanctifying spirit. The heart of man is dark and dead to these things, till changed by grace, and when that is once done, the impression is according to the stamp.

2.       The inclination to God our felicity and end, which is the fruit of this grace, is the inclination of a reasonable creature. So the inclination is necessary, but the acts are voluntary, therefore you must keep them up still. There is an inclination put by God into inanimate things, as in light to move upwards, and in heavy bodies to move downwards, as a stone falls to the earth, but fire ascends. They cannot do otherwise because they have no choice. But in man there is an inclination to God and heaven, which is the fruit of grace. The inclination is necessary, why Because all those whom the spirit sanctifies he begets this tendency in them towards God, therefore they are so often said in scripture to be converted or turned to God. Their hearts were averse before, but then they bend towards him. But the acts are voluntary. There is a duty lying upon us to stir up the gift that is in us, the word is 2 Tim. i. 6. When this holy fire is kindled in our bosoms, we must blow it up, and keep it burning. We must not be negligent, for we cannot reasonably imagine the idle and diligent should fare alike, that the holy ghost will direct our hearts in the love of God, whether we will or not, therefore not only as we are rational agents, but as we are new creatures, we are obliged to use the means and then expect his help and blessing. What is a prayer in the text, the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, to the patient waiting for Christ, is an exhortation, Jude xxi. Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto everlasting life. You must look to your love, that your hearts be kept strait and bent towards God, and not distracted with worldly vanities the blessing is from God, but you must use the means. This direction is not to encourage slothfulness, but industry. We must charge it upon ourselves, as our main work and duty, the spirit stirs and quickens, we must rouse up ourselves.

3.       It implies there are many things would turn our hearts another way, the devil, the world and the flesh. The devil seeks to draw us off from God, to abate the fervor of our love towards him, therefore we are bidden to fly youthful lusts, 2 Tim. ii. 22. That we may not be taken captive by him at his will. Some tamely yield at his temptations and he doth unto them as he listeth, but there is more tugging and drawing to get a serious Christian into his snare. Therefore we are bidden to be sober and watchful, for your adversary the devil, like a roaring lion, goes about, seeking whom he may devour. Sobriety is sparing use of worldly delights and vigilance is a serious diligence in the use of all those holy means whereby temptations may be vanquished, and as the devil, so the flesh Jam. I. 14. A man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his lusts, being enticed, that is by seeking to please his mind and appetite. And the world would pervert us and offers us many baits to that end. The lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh the pride of life, these seem sweet baits, but there is a dangerous hook in them and your love to God may soon be lessened. Well then, this directing is opposed to wavering by reason of any of these temptations on the one or the other side, that we may keep in us that ardent love of God, which of duty we owe to him.

4.       Directing notes the orderliness of the new creature. There is not a more beautiful thing in the world, when the motions thereof are directed by the spirit, for then we are in a due posture both to God, our neighbor and ourselves. To God, for then we are kept in a due subjection to him and all our motions and actions are subordinated to his glory. When we sin, we are in rebellion against God, and set up the creature against him, as if it were more amiable and fitter to content and delight the soul than God and so disturb the order and harmony of the world, abusing both ourselves and all things within our grasp. Look as in the motions of a watch, there is such a proportion in every part, that if one wheel be wrong, the whole is put out of frame. So the world, that was made for us, and we for God, is all disordered when we use the world for ourselves and not for God. So as to our neighbor, self-lovers and self-pleasers will never heartily do good to others. The most sincere commerce in the world is among those that love God. So for ourselves. Till the love of God rule in our hearts all is out of order. Look as in the body, if the feet were the head should be, the disorder and deformity would be great, so it is in the soul, when the beast rides the man, and conscience and reason are made slaves to lust and appetite. But when once a man is gained to love God, everything is in frame again, self-government is restored, due obedience to God is provided for.

I proceed to shew you the necessity of this, both as to persons regenerate and unregenerate.

1.        See the necessity of God's direction to persons unregenerated. They cannot love God till the Lord direct and set their hearts strait. It is a hard thing to say (but we must not mince the matter) that in the carnal state we are all haters of God, Rom. i. 13. Though men may see some reason of love to God, as he is our creator and preserver, yet as he is a lawgiver and a judge, so we all hate him. Three reasons there are of that natural enmity that is in the hearts of men against God. I would have you consider them seriously, that we may feelingly bewail our own aversion from God.

(1). Our inclination to carnal things, which prepossesses our hearts. Naturally men are addicted to sensual delights, for that which is born of the flesh, is flesh, John. iii. 16. Having no principle to incline them to God, they wholly seek to please the flesh. When men once lost original righteousness, they took up with what came next to hand, and so became lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God, 2 Tim. iii. 4. And this inclination we cannot divert ourselves of, till it be cured by grace. Therefore the Lord promises this cure, Deut. xxx. 6. The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart and with all thy soul. The heart must be circumcised before it can love God. We are entangled in the love of worldly things, and so shall remain till God set our hearts right to himself.

(2). The second reason is carnal liberty and so we hate God as a lawgiver, who will bridle our lusts. Because of God's restraint, we cannot enjoy our lusts with that freedom and security we desire. His law is in the way, therefore the heart rises up against God, because he hath made a law to forbid those things that we effect. Rom. viii. 7. The natural mind is enmity to God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither can be. We love sin, therefore we hate God, who forbids it, and makes it so penal and damnable to us.

(3). Slavish fear is the cause of this enmity. This relates to the penalty of the law, thus we hate God, because we fear he will call us to account for our sins. For a condemning God, barely apprehended under that notion, can never be loved by a guilty creature. Thus Adam, when he had sinned, ran away from God. It is in vain to come and tell them of the goodness of God and his perfections till he change their hearts. As you do in vain tell a guilty prisoner of his judge, that he is a discreet person, a man of solid judgment, one well skilled and versed in the law, this sticks, he is one that will condemn him. Therefore the gospel, as a means to induce us to love God, sets him forth as a pardoning God, there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared. Come we 2. to the regenerate. The Thessalonians did excel in all graces and yet the Apostle prays, that the Lord would direct their hearts to the love of God. Why

(1). Because there are many defects of love even in the regenerate. To give some instances.

First, love signifies an earnest bent of heart towards God, as our chief good and last end. Well then, our end is our measure by which we judge of all means of the fitness of what is to be avoided and embraced. The seasonableness of all means must be determined by the end, that all means that are inconsistent with and impertinent to our great end may be cut off. Now all sins are inconsistent with making God our end, and all vain and foolish actions are impertinent thereunto. Judge you by this, if we have a perfect love to God. With how many impertinent actions do we fill up our lives How many purposes, desires, words and action have we that have no respect to our great end How much do we live to ourselves and how little to God How do earthly things occupy and intercept the greatest part of our lives Judge then whether we had not need have the bent kept up and the tendency towards God as our end and happiness. It is the natural disease of man's heart to be loosed from God and to be distracted by a variety of worldly objects, therefore it is not enough for a man once to resign his heart to God as we do when his love is first wrought in us, but we need often to beg that God would reclaim us from this ranging after vanities, that he would direct and keep us strait, and true to our end. The thing is obvious and plain, unless the Lord maintain this love in us, and keep it up, what will become of us

(2). Another instance is our frequent regarding the profits and pleasures of the world too much. We shew too much lothness to cut off the right hand, and to pluck out the right eye. Now this shews a weakness of love. For where love is strong, there is a thorough inclination to God, we dare love nothing above him or against him or without him.

(3). Our backwardness to obedience, and the tediousness we find in it, shews a great imperfection in our love. All goes on easily, sweetly, acceptably, where love is at the bottom. Gen. xxix. 20. Seven years to Jacob seemed as a few days, for the love that he had to Rachel. And so love sweetens our obedience, his commandments are not grievous.

Besides, there needs much to be done about our love, after it is planted in the soul, we need to get it increased, to get it continually excited and kept in act and exercise.

(1). We need to get it rooted. Our first affection to God and heavenly things may hastily put forth itself, as the early blossoms of the spring do, but they are soon nipt and those high tides of affections which we find in our first acquaintance with religion, afterwards sink low enough. Love is more passionately expressed at first, partly by reason of the novelty of the things represented to us and partly because of our great necessity, as men that are in a violent thirst take large draughts with pleasure. And because our love is not as yet dispersed into the several channels of obedience, but wholly taken up with admirations of grace, but this may vanish and decay. Our business is to be rooted and grounded in love, to get a more solid, durable affection.

(2). After it is planted, it needs to be increased, Phil. i. 9. I pray God our love may abound yet more and more. At first love is but weak, there is fire, but it is not blown up into a flame, afterwards God gets a greater interest in our hearts, and then the constitutions of our souls become more holy and heavenly. Love being the heart of the new creature, he that hath most love, hath most grace and is the best and strongest Christian.

(3). After it is planted, it needs to be excited, and kept in act and exercise. This is mainly intended here. For,

1. All religion is in effect but love. Faith is a thankful acceptance of Christ and thankfulness is an expression of love. Repentance is but mourning love, as she wept much, to whom much was forgiven, Luke vii. 47. Diligence in the holy life is but seeking love. Obedience is pleasing love. Self-denial is the mortification of inordinate self-love. Sobriety is a retrenching of carnal love.

2. If true love be not acted and kept at work, carnal work will prevail. The soul of man cannot lye idle, especially our affections cannot. Either they are carried out to God or to worldly things. When divine love ceases, concupiscence ceases not and the love of the world will soon grow superior, in the soul, for while the neglected principle languishes, the other principle gets strength. Oh! then let us seek this benefit from God. That our hearts may be directed into his love.

1. The sanctifying spirit is given us for this end, to stir up love to God, Job. iv. 14. The water I will give him shall be a well of water springing up into eternal life. It is not a dead pool in the heart, but a living spring. And the same is intimated, Job. vii. 38. He that believes in me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water, this he spake of the spirit.

2. The ordinances were appointed for this end. The word to represent God amiable to us, both for the goodness in him and the goodness proceeding from him, especially in our redemption by Christ, and also for those rich preparations of grace. He hath made for us in another world to blow up this holy fire. And this is the end of the sacrament. All the dainties that are set before us in the Lord's Supper favor of love. Our meat is seasoned with love, and our drink flow into our cup out of the winepress of love. Why do we eat of the crucified body of Christ But that we may remember Jesus who loved us, and gave himself for us. The drink that is provided for us at this feast is the blood of Christ, who loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood.

3. All the providences of God tend to this end that we may love God. All God's mercies are as a new fuel to keep in this fire. I will love the Lord, because he has heard the voice of my supplication, Psal. cxvi. 1. And thou shalt love the Lord, who is the strength of thy life and the length of thy days, Deut. xxx. 20. All the mercy we have from God is to refresh and revive our love that it may not languish and die. Nay all the sharp corrections to God sends, are to recover our love to God. Isa. xxvi. 9. My soul hath desired thee in the night, (saith the prophet) and early have I sought thee, and when was that When thy judgments were abroad in the world when great and sharp afflictions were upon them.

**÷**SERMON 6

 2 Thesis 3.5.

And into the patient waiting for Christ.

The words are a prayer. And the apostle prays here for those things, which are most necessary to Christians, love to God and patient waiting for Christ.

Four things I must speak to here,

1.      What this patient waiting for Christ is.

2.      The connection between it, and the love of God

3.      That it hath a great influence upon the spiritual life

4.      The necessity of God's concurrence hereto.

1.        What is this patient waiting for Christ I answer, it is the grace of hope, fortifying our resolutions for God and the world to come that we may continue in our duty, till our work be finished and our warfare ended. The Act of Hope is three ways express. Sometimes by looking, which notes a certain expectation. Tit. ii. 13. Looking for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our savior. Sometimes by loving or longing, which notes a desirous and earnest expectation. 2 Tim. iv. 8. Not to me only, but to all that love his appearing. Sometimes by waiting, which notes a patient expectation, 1 Thess. x. He makes it there the fruit of our conversion. He saith, we are turned to God that we may wait for his son from heaven. This last notion is expressly mentioned in the text, the other are implied: As looking, there can be no waiting for that we do not look for. And longing, for delay is only troublesome to them that earnestly desire his coming. Faith adds certainty and love earnestness and both give strength to patience. Let us open all these things.

1.        There is a longing for the coming of Christ. Phil. iii. 20. Our conversation is in heaven, from where also we look for the savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not a matter of conjecture, but of faith. Reason saith, he may come, but faith saith, he will come. Nature will teach us it is very likely for a guilty conscience fears the judge and the course of things is so disordered in the world, that there needs a review. But scripture tells us, it is certain, he that shall come, will come and will not tarry, Heb. X. 37. Therefore in the eye of faith it is sure and near.

2.        There is a longing for a desirous expectation. 2 Pet. iii. 12. Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God. It is good to observe how differently this coming of Christ is entertained in the world, it is questioned by the atheist, it is dreaded by the wicked and impenitent, but it is longingly expected by the Godly.

To them, it is not matter of terror, but delight, not like the hand-writing on the wall to Belshazzer, but like comfortable tidings to one that expects news from far, they long for it and would hasten it, if they might have their desire. Cant. Viii. 14. Make haste, my beloved and be like a young hart or roe upon the mountains of spices. Christ is not slack but the churches affections are strong, therefore she saith, make haste, so Rev. xxii. 20. Christ saith, I come and the church, like a quick echo takes the words out of his mouth, even so, come Lord Jesus come quickly.

3. There is waiting and here it is expressed by patient waiting, for patient waiting is an Act of Hope, as well as longing expectation. 1 Thess. i. 3. knowing (saith he) your work of faith and labor of love and patience of hope. Faith will break out into practice, therefore the work of faith and love will put us upon labor and hope produces patience. There is a three-fold patience spoken of in scripture, all the branches are near a-kin, for they are all begotten by hope.

1.         The bearing patience, which is constancy in adversity, or perseverance in our duty notwithstanding the difficulties and trials that we meet with. Heb. vi. 12. Be ye believers of them, who through faith and patience have inherited the promises. As we cannot inherit the promises without faith, so not without patience. For our obedience and fidelity to Christ require not only labor but courage and constancy. Heb. x. 36. Ye have need of patience that after ye have done the will of God, ye might inherit the promise. A child of God cannot be without patience, because he must reckon for troubles and molestations. We have indeed our calms as well as our storms, many intermissions but at other times God will exercise us and shew us our fidelity is not sufficiently tried in doing good, but before we go to heaven, we must sometimes suffer evil. God hath something to do by us, and something to do with us. We must be prepared for both, to endure all things and readily and willingly suffer the greatest evil, rather than commit the least sin.

2.         There is a waiting patience, to wait God's leisure. The evil is present, the good is absent, now we long for the good as well as fear the evil. Rom. viii. 25. But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it. This is the work of patience, to wait, to refer it to the good pleasure of God when our warfare shall be accomplished and our troubles at an end and our final deliverance come. The time cannot be long. For what are a few years to eternity This waiting patience is delivered to us under the similitude of a husbandman, Jam. v. 7. Who waiteth for the precious fruits of the earth and hath long patience for it, till he receive the early and the latter rain. The husbandman that hath laid out all his substance in seed-corn, cannot hope for a present harvest, or that he should receive the crop as soon as the seed is cast into the ground, no, it must lie there, it must endure all weathers, before it can spring up in the blade and ear and ripen and be fit to be reaped. So though we venture all upon our everlasting hopes, yet we expect our season till we see the fruit and recompense of it.

3.         There is the working patience, which is a going on with our self-denying obedience, how tedious forever it be to the flesh. Thus we are told, the good ground bringeth forth fruit with patience. So the heirs of the promises are described, Rom. ii. 7. To be those that continued with patience in well doing. And the church of Ephesus, God saith, Rev. ii. 22. I know thy works, thy labor and thy patience. Religion is not an idle sluggish profession; the work of it is carried on by diligence and faithfulness. Lusts are not easily mortified, neither do graces produce their perfect work with a little care. Much labor and serious diligence is required of us, we have many things to conflict with, there is the burden of a wearisome body, the seducing flesh, unruly passions, disordered thoughts and therefore we need much patience, that we may not faint but be accepted of the Lord at his coming. Well then, to live in this constant and patient expectation of Christ is the perpetual necessary duty of all that love him.

11.       I am to shew the connection and assinity between it and the love of God. If a man love God, he will wait for the coming of Christ. The one is infered out of the other, the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and the patient waiting for Christ.

1.       They that love God, level all their thoughts and desires to this, that God may be enjoyed, that God may be glorified.

(1). That he may be enjoyed, in the fullest manner, and measure they are capable of. Now this full enjoyment is the fruit of Christ's coming, then we shall be ever with the Lord. 1 Thess. iv. 17. When Christ shall appear, we shall see him as he is, and be like him, that is, like him in holiness and like him in happiness. Our vision will make a transformation. The desire of Union, which is so intrinsic to love is never satisfied till then. Here we have a little of God in the midst of sin and misery. Sin straitens our capacity from receiving more and God sees fit to exercise us with misery, only affording us an intermixture of heavenly comfort. But our full joy is reserved to the day of Christ's appearing.

(2). They that love God, desire also that God may be glorified, that his truth may be vindicated, his love and justice demonstrated. His truth is vindicated, when his threatening and promises are all accomplished. His love to the saints will then be seen in their full reward, and his justice demonstrated on the wicked in their full punishment. All matters of faith shall then become matters of sense and what is now propounded to be believed shall be felt and God shall be glorified in all.

2.       The saints love Christ as mediator, we love him now though we see him not. 1 Pet. i. 8. Whom having not seen, we love and believing in him, rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. But we desire to see him, as our surest and best friend. We have heard much of him, felt much of him and tasted much of him, but we desire to see him, especially when he shall appear in all his glory. Matt. Xxv. 31. The son of man shall come in his glory and all his angels with him. All clouds about his person shall vanish. He shall appear to be, what he is, the savior and judge of the world.

3.       They have a love for the church and the church shall at that day be adored as a bride for her husband. It is no more eclipsed by its lamentable imperfections, corruption of worship, division of sects or the persecutions of the world, nor polluted by the distempers of its diseased members. All is then holy and glorious. Christ will present it as a glorious church without spot or wrinkle, Eph. ii. 7.

4.       They love themselves in God and their own happiness is then fully to be perfected. All the desires and hopes of believers are then satisfied. They that are now scorned and persecuted shall have the reward of their love to God, be perfectly loved by him. A gladsome day it will be with God's people. 2 Thess. i. 10. It is said, Christ shall be admired in the saints and glorified in all them that believe. Poor creatures that are newly crept out of the dust and rottenness shall have so much glory put upon them, that the angels themselves shall stand wondering, what Christ means to do for them. And then for all their labor, they shall have rest, all their troublesome work shall be over, for their pain and sorrow they shall have delight, 1 Pet. iv. 12. For their shame they shall have glory put upon them both in body and soul.

111.    The waiting hath a great influence upon their spiritual life. That will appear if you take either word in the text, waiting or patience.

Looking to the end of things gives wisdom, Deut. Xxxii. 29. Oh that they were wise, that they would consider their latter end. It is not so much to be stood upon, who is happy now, but who shall be happy at last. If men would frequently consider this, it would much rectify all the mistakes in the world. If we would inure our minds not to look to things as they appear now to such short-sighted creatures as we are, but as they will be judged of at the last day, at Christ's appearing, how soon would this vain shew be over and the face of things changed and that is rich and pleasant, and honorable now, appear base and contemptible at the latter end Then shall we see, that there is an excellency in oppressed Godliness, that exalted wickedness and folly is but shame and ruin. Do but translate the scene from the world's judgment to Christ's tribunal and you will soon alter your opinions concerning wisdom and folly, misery and happiness, liberty and bondage, shame and glory, the mistaking of which pervert all mankind and there is no rectifying the mistake but by carrying our mind seriously to the last review of all things. For then we shall judge things not by what they seem now, but by what they will be hereafter. More particularly, this waiting will much quicken us to repentance. Acts. iii. 19. Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the day of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord. All things shall be reviewed at Christ's coming and some men's sins remain, and others be blotted out. None but those that are converted and turned to God can expect that benefit. Unless we be recovered from the devil, the world and the flesh and brought back again in heart and life to God, there will be no escape. Now those that wait for this day, should prepare for it, that they may stand in the judgment with comfort. The wicked shall have judgment without mercy, but the believer shall be accepted upon terms of grace. Days of torment shall come to the one from the preference of the Lord, and days of refreshing shall come to the other. The state in the world of believing penitents is a time of conflict and labor but this trouble and toil is then over, and they shall enjoy their rest. Consider these things, where would you have your refreshment and in what Many sit down under the shadow of some earthly gourd which soon withers but those that seek their refreshment in the enjoyment of God, shall then be satisfied. Nothing certainly makes us so solicitous about a serous reconciliation with God, as the consideration of this day.

And it engages us to holiness, and put life into our obedience. We that look for such things, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness 2 Pet. iii. 11. Men are secure and careless, either because they do not believe this day or do not seriously think of it. Could we bring ourselves to this, to think and speak and do, as having judgment and eternity in our eye, we should be other manner of persons than ever we have been. What! Believe this day, and be so careless! It cannot be. We should not beat down the price of religion nor serve God so loosely, if we did wait for the coming of Christ, who will bring everything into the judgment, whether it be good or evil, we could not then satisfy ourselves in such a negligent profession and practice of Godliness.

Lastly, it will produce a more heavenly temper and conversation. That is evident from the apostle's words, Phil. iii. 20. Our conversation is in heaven, from where we look for the savior. Looking for this salvation, and this savior, breeds in us the heavenly mind. He comes from heaven to bring us thither, for he comes to receive us to himself, Jo xvi. 3. Therefore if we be not heavenly, our practice will be a contradiction to our faith. You believe that there is a God and a Christ, and a life to come, that this Christ came from God, to bring us to God, that we may enjoy him in the life to come and thereupon you renounce the devil, the world, and the flesh, and give up yourselves to God, believing that this Christ will come again to lead all his sincere disciples into the glory and happiness of the heavenly state. If you believe this, what follows That your conversation must be heavenly, either you must live for heaven, seeking it with all diligence, or live upon heaven, solacing yourselves in the foresight and hopes of it. To profess this faith and yet live as though your happiness were in this world, were to go about to reconcile contradictions.

3.        Patience also hath a great influence upon religion, for that which destroys all religion is making haste. Therefore it is said Isa. xxviii. 16. He that believes shall not make haste. God's promises are not presently affected, and if you cannot tarry, but run to your own shifts, presently you run into a snare. On the other side, it is said, Lam. iii. 26. It is good to hope and quietly to wait for the salvation of God. When we can hope and wait, it mightily secures our obedience. Sense is all for present satisfaction, but faith and hope can tarry God's leisure. Whatever our condition be, afflicted or prosperous, we are in the station where God hath set us, and there we must abide till he bring us to his kingdom. Impatience and precipitation is the cause of all mischief. What moved the Israelites to make a Golden Calf, but impatience, not waiting for Moses, who according to their fancy remained too long with God in the mount. Hasty men are loath to be kept in suspense, and long expectation and so miscarry. Look to all sorts of sinners. The sensual, cannot wait for the time when they shall have pleasures forever more at God's right hand, therefore take up with present delights, like those that cannot tarry till the grapes be ripe, therefore eat them four and green solid and everlasting pleasures they cannot wait for, therefore choose the pleasures of sin, though but for a season. A covetous man will wax rich in a day and cannot tarry their fair leisure of providence, therefore we are told, he that makes haste to be rich, cannot be innocent, Prov. xx. 21. An ambitious man will not stay till God gives true crowns and honors in his kingdom, and therefore he must have honor and greatness here, though his affecting to be built one story higher in the world cost him the ruin and loss of his soul. Men fly to unwarrantable means, because they cannot depend upon God and wait with patience. Look as an impetuous river is always troubled and thick, so is an impatient spirit out of order, full of distemper, a ready prey to Satan.

IV. I am to shew the necessity of divine concurrence. The apostle prays here, the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and the patient waiting for Christ.

And 1. as to the unregenerate. Till their hearts be changed, they can never attain to this patient waiting for Christ.

In the wicked there is no sound belief of these things, for they live by sense and not by faith. Things of another world are too uncertain, and too far off for them to apprehend, so as to be much moved by them. They hear of the coming of Christ and speak by rote of it after others, but they do not believe it, therefore till God enlighten them, how shall they be affected with this matter

And there is an utter unsuitableness of heart to them. Things present, that suit their fancies and please their senses, carry away their hearts. Psal. xiix. 18. Whilst he lived he blessed his soul. And men will praise thee, when thou dost well to thyself. Men bless themselves and the world applauds them in a sensual course of living. They measure all happiness by their outward condition in the world and please themselves with golden dreams, and this being seconded with the flattery and applauses of the world, they are fast asleep in the midst of the greatest danger, and so go down into hell before they think of it.

2.        Even the regenerate need to have their hearts directed to the patient waiting for Christ, for these reasons.

(1). Because we have too dim a sight of these things. How dark a prospect have even God's children of the world to come We may speak of others as unbelievers, but God knows how doubtful our own thoughts often are about eternity and Christ's coming, how little we can shut the eye of sense and open that of faith. Can we always say, 2 Cor. iv. 18. We look not at the things that are seen, that are temporal, but to the things unseen, that are eternal. Alas! we have no thorough sight into another world. We have need to have our eyes anointed with spiritual eye-valve, that our sight may be more sharp and piercing, to beg the spirit of wisdom and revelation, to open the eyes of our mind, that we may see what is the hope of Christ's calling, Eph. i. 17, 18. There are too many intervening clouds between us and eternity, that darken our sight, and obscure our faith.

(2). Our thoughts of these things are strange and dull, too rare and infrequent. How seldom have we any serious thoughts of his coming It was a complaint against Israel, that they put away the evil day, but the complaint against us may be that we put away the good day, when all our desires and hopes shall be accomplished. The world may deny it, and we forget it. Solomon saith to the sensual young man, remember, that for all these things God shall bring thee to judgment. Young men put off these thoughts, lest they should check the fervor of their lusts. But alas! grave men, good men forget these things. When Christ had spoken of his coming to judgment, he saith, Mark xiii. 37. What I say unto you, I say unto all, watch. Watching is keeping up this attentiveness to his second coming with all Christian vigilance and endeavor. But few regard the charge, therefore the Lord direct your hearts.

(3). Because our affections are so cold, and we are no more affected with it, but as if we were senseless of the weight of these things. Some desires we have, but not that lively motion which become hope and love. If nature say, come not to torment us before the time, grace should say, come, Lord Jesus, O come quickly! We are not only to look for his appearing but to love his appearing. Where are these desires that Christ would either come down to us, or take us up to himself, that we may live with him forever.

(4). We need to pray this prayer, because our preparations are too slender for so great a day. Serous preparation is necessary. It is described, 1 Pet. iii. 14. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye of him in peace, without spot, and blameless that is in a state of reconciliation with God. But we live too securely in an unprepared state. If we have the habitual preparation, we do not keep up the actual preparation, by refining our souls from the dregs of sense, by honoring God in the world with greater earnestness, that when our Lord comes, he may find us so doing. We do not stand with our loins girt and our lamps burning, that when our Lord knocks, we may open to him immediately. We do not keep up the turn of a husband after long absence is welcome to his wife, she would have all things ready for his reception and entertainment.

(5). Because our motions are inconstant. We interrupt the course of our obedience, faint in our afflictions, do not keep up the fervor of our affections and follow after salvation with that industrious diligence. We need often the Christian watchword, the Lord is at hand. We lose much of our first love, intermit of our first works. Therefore, the Lord direct your hearts to the patient waiting for Christ.

Let these considerations quicken you to take care of this grace, that you may be constantly exercised in it. While we are upon earth, we should continually be expecting Christ's coming from heaven.

Before Christ's coming in the flesh, the saints waited for him. I have waited for thy salvation O Lord, saith Jacob, Gen. xiix. 18. And Simeon for Christ, the savior of the world, for so it is explained, mine eyes have seen thy salvation. And our Lord tells us, Abraham rejoiced to see my day, Joh. Viii. 56. And it is said of Anna, and others, that they waited for the consolation of Israel, Luke ii. 25, 38. And after Christ was come, the disciples were commanded to wait for the promise of the spirit, Acts i. 4. So by parity of reason we must wait for the coming of Christ, for that is the next great promise to be accomplished and the great thing to put life into our religion.

The people of God are described by this, 1 Thess. i. 10. We wait for his son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come. A man would have thought in those early days, they should have rather than to what was to come, which was at so great a distance. They should have been described by believing Christ was already come in the flesh, rather than waiting for his coming in glory. No, this is proposed as an evidence of their sincerity, waiting for the coming of Christ. And so it is said, Heb. ix. 28. That Christ would appear unto the salvation of them that look for him. That is the property of true believers. But they that look not for his coming cannot expect his salvation. It is an allusion to the people, who upon the day of expiation, when the high priest went into the holiest before the mercy seat, were waiting for his coming out, that he might solemnly bless them. So we must look for Christ's return, now he is gone within the vial of the heavenly sanctuary, that he may come out, and bless us with everlasting blessings.

This waiting for Christ, breeds in us contempt of the world and enduring of the cross.

It breeds in us contempt of the world, because we look for higher and better things to be dispensed to us when Christ comes. Set not your affections on things on earth, but on things in heaven. Why For your life is hid with Christ in God. And when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall you also appear with him in glory. Col. iii. 2, 3, 4. The more the heart is given to one, the other gets the less. Earthly things are little regarded in comparison of that glorious state, both of soul and body, which we shall have at Christ's appearance.

And this gives a quiet temper in all troubles. We may suffer now, but when Christ shall appear, we shall rejoice with exceeding joy, 1 Pet. iv. 13. Then our reward will much exceed the proportion of our sufferings, they are no more to be set against them, than a feather against a talent of lead. I reckon they are not worthy to be compared, saith the apostle, Rom. viii. 18. It would be a disgrace to a man's reason, that these things should bear any competition with our great hopes, these light afflictions, that are but for a moment, with that exceeding weight of glory.

To conclude, if you wait for Christ's coming, look upon it as sure, and as near. Rev. xxii. 12. Behold, I come quickly, and bring my reward with me. We have the promise of the eternal God for it, so attested and made out to us with such evidence, that we have no reason to doubt of the recompenses of religion. But things at a distance, though never so great, will not leave a due impression upon us. Therefore we must look upon this promise with a certainty of persuasion, that it will not be long before its accomplishment. Thus faith lessens the distance between hope and enjoyment and enables us comfortably to wait.

**÷**SERMON 7

 Ecc 9:11

I returned and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding nor yet favor to men of skill, but time and chance happeneth to them all.

The discourse on the subject beginneth, Chap. viii. 16, 17. When I applied my heart to know wisdom and to see the business which is done upon the earth, then I beheld all the works of God, that a man cannot find out the work which is done under the sun, because though a man labor to seek it out, yet he shall not find it, yea, further, though a wise man think to know it, yet shall he not be able to find it. God's providence in the government of the world is secret. When a wise man hath applied his mind to reconcile all the seeming incongruities of it, he cannot get a clear and satisfying account of all the proceedings thereof, but must at last acquiesce in the sovereignty and dominion of God. The footsteps of providence are not easily traced, his judgments are a great depth, Rom. xi. 33. Psal. xxxvi. 6. Psal. xcii.5. they may be adored, but not searched out.

Now two things in our reflection upon providence perplex us.

One is that things are promiscuously dispensed to good and bad men, yea many times the good are afflicted and the bad are advanced. To this he speaketh in the beginning of the chapter, where he sheweth that all outward things are dispensed without great difference. Josiah died in the war and so did Ahab. Is Abraham rich So is Nabal. Is Solomon wise So is Ahitophel. Is Joseph honored by Pharaoh So is Doeg by Saul. Had Isaac long life Gen. xxxvi. 20. So had Ishmael, Gen. xxv. 17. The other perplexity is that events and success do fall out otherwise, than the preparation and ability of second causes do seem to promise, as holiness and unholiness, do not make the difference, so the natural ability and inability of man, the wisdom and folly, the strength and weakness, makes no difference as to their worldly condition. Men of greatest abilities are disappointed of their hopes and ends, which weak and insufficient men do many times obtain. Now this is asserted in the text, I returned and saw.

In which words observe the preface, and observation. Or,

The accurate inspection of the wise man, I returned and saw under the sun. The result of this inspection and observation, propounded negatively and positively.

First, negatively in five particulars.

The race is not to the swift Nor the battle to the strong Nor yet bread to the wise Nor riches to men of understanding Nor favor to men of skill.

Secondly, positively, but time and chance happeneth to them all.

Observe, 1. His accurate inspection. I returned and saw under the sun, that is, besides all the former vanities of the present life. The same phrase is used, Chap. iv. 1. I returned and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun. So ver.7 of that chapter, then I returned and saw vanity under the sun. This phrase is used to shew the great certainty and evidence of his observation, it is a thing I have narrowly observed. The instruments of knowledge are seeing, hearing, observing and deducing inferences from thence, (under the sun) that is, here in this lower world, I considered all human actions, the things which are done in this life among men. He looked about and turned himself everyway.

11. The observation thence resulting.

First, negatively propounded in five instances, which comprehend all the business of common life.

1.       The race is not the swift. This may be understood either of the ordinary race, wherein the swift may sometimes fail, or straining themselves beyond their strength, be mischiefed in their bodies or maimed by some accident and so when he speaketh of the race, he meaneth it of the successful race, as in the next clause, nor the battle to the strong, he meaneth the successful battle, whereby they get the victory. Success is not always on the side of the swift and strong or, secondly, of any course whereby a man endeavors to outrun danger. So Asahel, who was swift of foot as a wild Roe, was slain by Abner, 1 Sam. I. 18, 23. and Jer. xivi. 6. The swift shall not flee away, nor the mighty man escape, they shall stumble and fall. The swift cannot always flee from danger. Isa. Xxx. 16. They that pursue you shall be swift.

2.       Nor the battle to the strong. Rabshakeh tells us, that counsel and strength are for the war, Isa. Xxxvi. 5. But many times great strength is soiled and a small army overcomes a greater. The strength of the mighty doth not always avail them to fight and conquer. Thus was Goliath soiled by David, 1 Sam. xvii. 50. And Gideon's three hundred overthrew the mighty host of Median, Judg. Vii. 7. And we are told, Psal. xxxiii. 16. There is no king saved by the multitude of his host and a mighty man is not delivered by much strength. And 1 Sam. Xiv. 6. There is no restraint to the Lord, to save by many or by few.

3.       Nor yet bread to the wise. Bread is put for all means of subsistence and many wise men have been hard to put it. Certainly, wisdom doth much to get a livelihood in the world, Prov. xxi. 20. There is a treasure to be desired and oil in the house of the wise. Yet many times it falleth out that men of great wisdom scarce get a subsistence. As David was put to desire supplies from Nabal, a fool. And we are told by Solomon, that, folly is set in great dignity, when the wise sit in the low place, Eccles. x. 6.

4.       Nor riches to men of understanding. Experience often verifieth this, that the learned are very poor, when lesser wits mean people get great substance. We read in scripture of a rich fool, Luke xii. 20. and a poor wise man, Eccles. ix. 15. And in the general, that it is the blesing of the Lord maketh rich, Prov. x. 22. He is behind-hand with none of his creatures, he giveth to some wit, to others riches.

5.       Nor favor to men of skill. To attain favor with men it availeth not to be skilful, that is, able and well experienced, unless God add the blessing thereto. Suppose favor in the eyes of princes, or the people. Alas, men of no desert are promoted, as Doeg by Saul. And the populace are carried away with flight person, rather than those of the greatest wisdom and parts.

Secondly, positively. But time and chance happeneth to them all.

1.       Time, whereby is meant occasion and opportunity. There is a certain time, which God hath allotted to every purpose and action, which if men had the wisdom to take hold of, their business would better succeed. But because man knoweth not his time, great is his misery upon earth, therefore he effecteth not the things he goeth about.

2.       The next word is chance, or occurrence, so is the word translated, 1 Kings v. 4. The Lord hath given me rest, so that there is neither adversary nor evil occurrent. It is the same word. The success is such as the counsel of God chooses, yet to us it seemeth to be a mere chance and adventure. That which God sees best shall come to pass, at such a time and likewise in such a manner and by such ways and means as he appoints. Things casual to us are counsels to him. What was chance to others, is the Lord to Job, Chap. i. 21. Therefore not uncertain chance is intended, but such as is ruled and governed by God, who disposes of all occasions and events according to his own good pleasure, either in escaping out of danger or obtaining victory, or being supplied with necessaries or growing rich, or received into favor, it is all as God will order it. The swift, the wise, the strong, though they are best prepared, disposed and do most intend their business, yet the event is in God's hand, who disposes it according to his own will.

Before we draw the doctrine from hence, we shall remove the false inferences that some make.

1.         Some think these words to be spoken in the person of the epicure or atheist, whom Solomon introduces as reasoning against divine providence, but it agrees not with the preface (I returned and saw under the sun) which is usually prefixed before his observations about the vanity and vexation that arises from mere worldly things.

2.         This text must be vindicated from them who set up an idol of the heathen's blind fortune, as if all things were carried by uncertain chance. No, it is occurrence and though it be chance to men, it is providence to God, the universal and first agent, who worketh all things according to the counsel of his will. It is not chance to him for he never misses of his end. For his knowledge is infallible, and his power insuperable.

3.         And it must be vindicated from those who reject the use of means and all operations, dispositions and preparations of second causes as if they moved not, and God did not act or move by them. No, this is a false inference both in naturals and spirituals.

(1). In naturals. For God worketh by means, and by means prepared. Hos. ii. 21, 22. I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth. There is a train of causes governed and influenced by God. The second causes have their operation but they are under the government of the first, who worketh by them and also suspendeth their operations at his pleasure. There are two extremes, one of Durandus, that God gives second causes power to work of themselves and doth only continue this power to them but not work with them. But this is false, for all things depend on God, not only for our being, but working. Acts xvii. 28. In him we live, move and have our being. The other is, that the creature hath no cooperation at all, that the first cause doth only work by the presence of the second. But this is also against the wisdom of God, for if the second causes did no way concur to the producing of their effects, then they are made in vain.

(2). In spirituals. Phil. ii. 12, 13. Work out your salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God that worketh in you both to will and to so of his own good pleasure. God's working is an engagement to us to wait upon him in the use of means, that we may meet with God in his way and God may meet us in our way. In his way. For God hath appointed certain duties to convey and apply his grace to us. We are to lie at the pool till the waters be stirred to continue our attendance till God gives his grace, Mark iv. 24. In our way: For God influences all things according to their natural inclination. God that enlighteneth with and by the sun, burneth with and by the fire, reasoneth with and by man, acts necessarily with necessary causes and freely with free causes. He doth not oppress the liberty of the creature, but preserves the nature and interest of his won workmanship. Hos. xi.4 I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love. He draweth by propounding reasons, which we consider and so betake ourselves to a godly life. In short, we must do what we can, otherwise we are wanting to ourselves, but we must not depend upon our own counsel, wisdom and strength, for the event is not always to the swift, strong and wise.

The true observation contained in these words is this,

That our endeavors are often frustrated when there is the greatest probability of success.

Here Solomon representeth men,

1.      Under several accomplishments of swift, wise, strong

2.      As addressing themselves to some effect to obtain success

3.      As in the issue disappointed. None of these accomplishments alone give the event intended.

4.      That all things depend upon time and chance, namely, as they depend upon God's providence.

Therefore from the whole it appears, that instruments most fitted and most diligent are frustrated of the event which they so earnestly intended. The reasons whereof are,

1.          The best instruments sail out of their ignorance, oblivion and inadvertency from which man cannot altogether quit himself in this life, not only in matters spiritual but secular. This ignorance sheweth itself sometimes in a mistake of instruments whose hearts we know not, or if we know them for the present, we are not sure of futurity, how they may change or be alienated and drawn off from us. Sometimes about time and opportunity, for the beginning, setting on foot or carrying on any good works. Man knoweth not his time. Sometimes in the manner of doing there is some error, for some things we know speculatively, we do not know practically and what we know in the general is to be done, we do not always know in particular cases, what we know habitually we do not know actually, we do not consider it for the time. In short, no man knoweth all the secrets and circuits of human affairs. God only is omnipotent and omniscient hath all creatures in his power and can foresee all events. But it is much for us to understand our duty, we cannot know events for things are carried strangely beyond men's expectation and their likeliest projects crossed.

2.          Because if we have sufficient knowledge, yet God can easily put some impediment from within or without, to hinder the use of our wisdom, power and knowledge.

1.        Within. He can blast our excellencies in an instant, or obstruct the use of them for the time. As though he did not destroy the property of the fire, yet he suspended the burning when the three children were in the furnace. So of a sudden can he blast our strength. Psal. ixxvi. 5,6. The stouthearted are spoiled, they have slept their sleep, none of the men of might have found their hands at thy rebuke the chariot and horses are cast into a dead sleep. Whatsoever strength, courage, wit any man hath God who gave it can take it away when he pleases, or suspend the use of it. All this God can do with a rebuke with a word of his mouth. Now as the strong cannot find their hands. So the wise cannot find their hearts. Job. V. 14. They meet with darkness in the daytime and grope in the noonday as in the night. Who are these The wise and the crafty, whom he speaketh of in the foregoing verses. In the clearest cases they are to seek and so their well-contrived plots come to nothing. There is a blast and plague upon their judgments, so that they involve and confound themselves or by self-conceit and forward self-will, they drive on their designs so precipitately, that they must needs miscarry. They do not seem to have the judgment of ordinary men. Thus, though men be endowed both with wisdom and strength, God can easily take away their power and will to use them.

2.        From without. By casting in some event, which we foresaw not and could not think of. Man cannot foresee all the wheels which move in a business, if he did he is not able to turn them. So that, besides taking away his wisdom, courage and strength, when the work is to be done, God puts some impediment in his way which was unexpected. There are certain sudden accidents which none can foresee or prevent, any of them able to turn the enterprise another way. The most casual things are ordered by God, for the great ends of providence. As for instance, Haman travailed with a design to cut off all the Jews, but his chief spirit was against Mordecai. Now by chance the king could not sleep that night and calleth for the book of memorials, Esther vi. 1. and found the discovery of a treason by Mordecai there recorded, which spoiled all the deep plots of Haman. Ahab intended to avenge himself upon Micaiah and to escape in the battle, changed his royal apparel, and counseled Jehoshaphat to put on his. And a man drew a bow at a venture, 1 Kings xxii. 34. But God directed the arrow to the heart of the king of Israel. Jehoshaphat escapes and he is slain. So that notable instance, the sunshine upon the water, 2 Kin. iii. 22, 23, 24. When the Moabites came to distress Jehoshaphat, when they cried, Moab to the spoil, it was indeed, Moab to a sore destruction.

Many such instances teach us that the most casual things fall out by God's providence and heavenly government. And again, that there is some occurrence, which providence casteth in the way, to disappoint the most likely means so that whatever qualities men are endowed with, yet events are not in their power, but depend on the free concurrence of God. I speak nothing now of the influence of angels upon human affairs, whom God makes use of in the government of the world.

111. The most able instruments often provoke God to disappoint them, whilst their abilities are a means of hardening their hearts in carnal confidence and they often engage in business that proves mischievous to them, I say, in the most lawful business they provoke God to disappoint them because they undertake them without God, but too often being unrenewed and unsanctified, their wit and power is used against God.

1.      It is a great crime to go about any business without God. Prov. iii. 5, 6. Trust in the Lord with all thy heart and lean not to thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. When our wisdom and strength are set up as an idol or image of jealousy, God is obliged to blast it. Therefore they that make their bosom their oracle, their wit their counselor, they seldom carve out to themselves a good portion. In all secret business we must ask his leave, counsel, blessing.

But many times, men of great abilities employ them against God. They are ordinarily the devil's greatest agents and factors for his kingdom. In seducing our first parents he made use of the serpent, which was more subtle than any best of the field. Gen. iii. 1. Now these make God their opposite party, that engage in any such enterprise upon the confidence of their wisdom and strength, and then they are snared by the work of their own hands, Psal. ix. 16. God delighteth to put rubs and stumbling blocks in their way, that their craft and power may turn to their own ruin.

iv.                 To say and do, or to make a thing to be, is the act of Jehovah, which glory will not communicate to any other. Lam. iii. 37. Who is he that saith and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not That is, who is able to bring about what he speaketh and purposes unless God permit and give way thereunto Therefore whatever preparation of means or likelihood there are, we must not be too confident of future events. We cannot bring them to pass by our own power and God doth not always work by likely means. He hides events from men, Isa. xiviii. 7. Lest thou should say, I know them. Now the event could not be hidden, if the Lord went on in a constant course, giving the race to the swift. God carries on his providence so as to leave no footsteps behind him. He goeth not one way so often as to make a path of it, that many may see the plain tendency thereof.

This teaches us,

1.         The nothingness of the creature, and the all-sufficiency of God. That is a great lesson indeed and mightily useful to us throughout the whole spiritual life.

First. It is a notion which the scripture much delighteth in to represent God as all and the creature as nothing. At first, when Moses enquired God's distinctive name God gave him no other but, I AM, Exod. iii. 14. And God said unto Moses, IAM THAT IAM, And I AM hath sent me unto you. What thing is there under the scope of heaven that cannot say, I am that I am The last worm hath its own being. But this, as God's distinctive name, implies that he encloses all being within himself. Secondly, the creature is nothing. Isa. xi. 17. All nations before him are nothing, they are accounted less than nothing, and vanity. Dan. iv. 35. The inhabitants of the world are reputed before him as nothing. All created being must vanish out of sight, when we think of God.

But how are the creatures nothing, which faith teaches us And how something, which sense teaches us Something they are unquestionably in respect of that dependent being which they have from God. We must not establish the Pyrrhonian conceit, that the whole world is indeed nothing and our life but a dream. Nor imagine that sense is so far fallible, that a man of sound understanding may not be sure of the objects presented to his sense. Certainly the skeptical need to be scourged as fools, till they feel themselves something. But yet it is of high importance in the work of godliness to see the creature nothing. And it is Song of Solomon 1. By way of comparison with God. 2. By way of exclusion of God. 3. By way of opposition to God.

1.        By way of comparison with God. So God's name only is, IAM and then there is none besides him. If the creatures be compared among themselves, some are good, strong, wise others not, but they are all nothing in comparison of God. Though there be a difference between the stars in the night, some are brighter and some are darker some of the first magnitude, second, and third, yet in the daytime they are all alike inconspicuous. All are darkened by the sun's glory. When we compare the creatures one with another, we shall find different degrees of perfection and excellency, but by the glorious brightness of the father of lights, all these inferior lights are obscured. God saith somewhere, I am and there is none else, I am alone. I lift my hand to heaven and swear, I live forever. It is counted a usurpation of divine honor for the creature to say I am. Isa. Xivii. 8. Babylon said in her heart, I am. So Nineveh, Zeph. Ii. 15. This is the rejoicing city that dwelt carelessly, that said in her heart, I am and there is none besides me. For us to reckon upon our wisdom, strength, or goodness, is a derogation from God. God in scripture is represented as only wise, only strong and only good, Job. Ix. 19. 1 Tim. i. 17. Mat. Xix. 17. The creature hath but the shadow of these things. As it is but a borrowed kind of speech to call a picture or a statue, a man, so the creatures are but resemblance, when we call them wise, strong, good.

2.        By way of exclusion of God. As the sunbeam is nothing when the sun withdraweth or the sound is nothing when the musician takes away his mouth and breath from the pipe and instrument. So the creature in comparison with God is in reckoning nothing but in exclusion of God, it is in reality nothing. Because all their life, wisdom, strength, and the acting of it is but borrowed from God and held only at God's pleasure. Naturally and spiritually it is true. If any of us say, I am we must add with Paul by the grace of God I am that I am, 1 Cor xv 10. If God withdraw his providential influence and support, we vanish into nothing. Job. Vii. 8 Thine eyes are upon me and I am not. Meaning, that God fastening his eyes upon him in anger, would look him into nothing.

3.        In way of opposition to God. Or to his cause and interest in the world. Isa. xii. 11. Behold all that are incensed against thee, shall be as nothing. The creature beareth a big bulk in the eye of sense, seemeth not only as something, but as all things and as long as a man looks to what is visible, we have no hope and comfort to fasten upon. But what are the swift, the wise the strong to God, or against his providence when God is angry for sin and we use ordinary means to avoid the danger and do not reconcile ourselves to him and take up the controversy between him and us Alas! Human endeavors can avail nothing against his wrath. Those probable means which have prevailed at other times will prove a mere nothing. Be we never so strong and wise, and use never so many politic means to avert the judgment. Amos vi. 13. Ye rejoice in a thing of naught, which say have we not taken to ourselves horns by our own strength They gloried in this that their strength was renewed and increased and so hoped to elude the threatened judgment and to drive away any enemy that might invade them. The glory in a thing of naught, saith the prophet. Alas! What are armies, troops, confederacies, councils Things of naught when God will blow upon them. All things on this side God are of naught and aim to be gloried in when our sins are come to an height and judgments are threatened and near.

The true apprehension of this is useful to us throughout the whole spiritual life. For no one thing keepeth the creature upright, so much as to see all in God and nothing in the creature. This establishes our dependence on God's promises in the most difficult cases. What made Abraham to believe in hope against one and give God so much glory as he did He believed in him that quickeneth the dead and calleth those things that are not as though they were. Again, there is nothing that doth so encourage us in the difficult services which God calleth us unto, as to remember God is all and the creature is nothing. Thus the apostles went to preach the gospel first at Jerusalem, in the very face of opposition. And among the gentiles, possessed of a religion not entailed upon them by the tradition of many ages, and for which they were zealous, the devil stirring up the hatred of man furious spirits against them. The doctrine was novel, and did not count the senses, but persuaded men to row against the stream of flesh and blood. Slighted by the people disputed against by their wise men, persecuted by the powers that then were, had no temporal interest to back it and this to be promoted in the face of the learned world by a few poor fishermen, when all civil disciplines were in their height. What encouraged them to this The apostle telleth you, 1 Cor. i. 26, 27, 28. That though they had not many mighty, not many noble to own them, yet God had chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise and the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty and the things that are not to bring to naught the things that are. In short, that though magistracy and populace were against them, the creature is as nothing, God all in all. This encourages us to depend on God's providence in midst of losses, wants, straits, 2 Cor. vi. 10. As having nothing, yet possessing all things. Again, if we have a due sense of God's being, the tempting baits of the world will scarce be seen the riches honors and pleasures of the world are forgotten, as if they were not. Pro. xxiii. 5. Wilt thou set thine heart upon that which is not It is as if it were not if God will blast them if God will not work by them. It makes us look for a blessing upon all the means, 1 Cor. iii. 7. For neither is he that planteth any thing nor he that watereth but God that giveth the increase. The best and wisest ministers can do nothing, either to plant or water, or to convert or build up, unless God give the blessing and set in with their labors. Again, it keeps us humble in the highest enjoyments, 2 Cor, xi. 5.1 nothing I come behind the chiefest apostles though I am nothing. All is but a borrowed excellency. Thus you see it hath an influence upon our uprightness and sincere dealing from first to last, to look off from the creature to God alone.

And this is the intent of this lesson, which is given us in this place. For wherefore is the race denied to the swift and the battle to the strong, and riches to men of understanding But to shew us that the creature doth not do all, yea, that it is nothing if you exclude God. Why doth the Holy Ghost direct us to this meditation, but to carry up our thoughts to the over-ruling power of the highest cause, disposing of time and chance, that second causes may be seen to depend upon him both in being and operation and that we should not abuse our talents by confiding in them without God, or using them against God, either to oppose his interest, or defeat his judgments

11.        This teaches us in this lottery of human affairs to look after surer comforts. This is the whole drift of this book. For Solomon in his critical search and observation of all things done under the sun, aimeth at this, to direct our hearts to blessings which are more stable and sure. God would leave these things at uncertainty, that our hearts might not too much be set upon them, that we might not pursue after favor, riches and credit, as the best things. If all things here ran in one certain tenor, men that are wrought upon by sense, would look no higher, but there is a nobler pursuit, a better happiness to be found elsewhere. The race is not always to the swift, but in the spiritual race we run not as uncertainly, 1 Cor. ix. 26. There the crown is sure, if we keep running and faint not. Here the battle is not always to the strong, and he that puts on his harness, must not boast as he that putteth it off. But if you fight the good fight of faith, the God of peace will tread Satan under your feet shortly, Rom. xvi. 20. Here bread is not to the wise. Many persons of understanding labor and toil all their days for the meat that perishes and at length can hardly get it. But if you labor for the meat that perishes not, the son of man will give it to you, Joh. Vi. 29. In spiritual and heavenly things choose and have, seek and have, labor and have. But it is not so in worldly things, there many times we have but our pains for our travail.

Again, nor riches to men of understanding. Fools go away with the world and we need not envy them, if we be wise to salvation. Thou, fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee, so is he that heapeth up riches to himself and is not rich towards God, Luk.xii. 20, 21. Earthly things cannot make a man truly rich. The true riches are the heavenly treasure, the graces of the spirit to be rich in faith, James ii. 5. Fruitful in good works, 1 Tim. vi. 18, 19. He that valueth an estate more by the possession than by the use, is a spiritual fool and will at length be thrown into hell for his perverse choice. No matter if you want the riches of this world, so you be rich towards God. Christ gave his spirit to the best disciples, but his purse to Judas, who was a thief and a robber. Once more, nor favor to men of skill. The favor of men, princes or people is a very uncertain thing and the best experienced in affairs do not always light on it, but if we have the favor of God, this breedeth solid joy, Psal. iv. 7. Gladness is sent into the heart when God smileth, though the world frowneth. These spiritual and eternal blessings are dispensed by a sure covenant, the others are promiscuously given.

111.      This teaches us what need there is God should be seen and sought unto in all our designs, about the disposal of ourselves and ours.

1.        What will the use of means and second causes do without God When we have prepared best and consulted best, the intentions we travail with may miscarry for the event is wholly in God's hands, Prov. xvi. 1. The preparations of the heart are from man, but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord. Man propoundeth, intendeth, purposeth, but the success cometh from God.

2.        When we have done our duty, and used such means as God affordeth, then we may quietly refer the success to God, in whose hands are all the ways of the children of men, and upon whose good pleasure the issues of all things depend, Prov. xvi. 13.

IV. The wisest and best of men must not expect always to be successful, for the words are brought in upon this occasion, of rejoicing in our comforts. In an uncertain world we must always reserve a liberty of full and free submission to God's providence, if the event should not answer expectation. For the race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong. We must not be too confident of worldly events, for in these things, God by whose providence all things are governed, would leave us to uncertainty. Alas! many times we mistake and miss the opportunities, and then the best preparations will be lost. And sometimes God interposes and will be glorified by us in an afflicted condition. Therefore you must reserve a liberty to God, to order and govern you according to his own pleasure, as to success in your callings, comfort in your relations, favor with men in your employments. God may make every relation a door to let in affliction. You should often consider the sovereignty of God and the uncertainty of all worldly things. You speak arrogantly when you presume success and take more upon you than you are able to perform. 1 Sam. Ii. 3. Talk no more exceeding proudly, let not arrogance come out of your mouth, that is, presumptuous conceits of absolute success, Jam. Iv. 13, 14. Go to now, ye that say, today or tomorrow we will go into such a city and continue there a year, and buy and sell and get gain. Ye ought to say, if the Lord will, we shall live and do this, or that. Now ye rejoice in your boastings, all such rejoicing is evil. Besides there are certain times when God is resolved to proceed with his people in a judiciary way and then all means we can use will not keep off the stroke, Amos ii. 14, 15, 16. Therefore the flight shall perish from the swift, and the strong shall not strengthen his force, nor the mighty deliver himself, neither shall he stand that handles the bow, nor he that is swift of foot deliver himself, nor he that rides the horse. He that is courageous among the mighty, shall flee away in that day, saith the Lord. No means though never so probable, will avail us in a time of judgments, neither speed of horse or foot, neither strength of body nor courage of mind, nor provision of Armour, nor skill to use it, but the judgments shall reach all they aim at. Then it is plainly fulfilled, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong.

v. This teaches men of the best abilities and sufficiency for any work, to be humble.

1.        Before the event. For many times they meet with more disappointments than those that want them and their best designs miscarry, when meaner persons are carried through their difficulties.

2.        After the event, we must look above second causes, not attribute anything to our own strength or gifts, but to God's blessing. Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, nor the strong. Man glory in his might, and Jer. ix. 23. So Deut. Viii. 17, 18. say not in thy heart, my power and the might of my hand hath gotten me this wealth. Thou shall remember the Lord thy God, for he it is that giveth thee power to get wealth. Let us not sacrifice to our own net. The battle is not to the strong nor bread to the wise. It is God's and he will not be robbed of his glory. And as we should carry it humbly towards God, so also too men, not despising them of mean gifts. Many times God gives them more success in the ministry in ordinary callings, in favor and preferment in the world or esteem in the eyes of the people. It is God only makes the difference and what thou hast above others, thou hast it from God and for God, not to lift up thyself but to exalt God. Therefore give thanks and do not contemn others.

Lastly, this may prevent the discouragement of those that want gifts, or parts or means. Suppose their adversaries be might, it is nothing with God to help with many or them that have no power, 2 Chron. xiv. 11. The less in the creature, the more in God, 2 Cor. xii. 9. His power is perfected in our weakness. God many times passes over the strong, wise and understanding and gets himself most glory in protecting the weak, and providing for them.