

Watson's Words of Wisdom



(Gleanings from the writings of Thomas Watson)

PREFACE

The servant of the Lord, from whose writings these extracts have been culled, prefaced one of his works by saying, "*There are two things which I have always looked upon as difficult: the one is to make the wicked sad; the other is to make the godly joyful.*" Alas! This sad world still holds many a careless sinner, and not a few sorrowful saints, though two hundred and fifty years have passed since these words were uttered. May God so speed this little book, that, in His good hand, it may be the means of arousing some sleeping conscience, and dropping a word of cheer into some sorrowful heart. *Hamilton Smith 1915.*

FRAGMENTS

"A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver." Proverbs 25:11.

Only the believer is the *rich* man; here is his estate summed up, "All things are his."

The creation is but a *theater* to act the great work of redemption upon!

Christ was not only "a Lamb without spot" but "a Lamb slain." Every pardon a sinner has, is *written in Christ's blood*.

If we must be high-minded, let it be in setting our mind upon heavenly things.

If you would get Christ into your heart, let Heaven be in your eye: "Set your affections upon things above" (Colossians 3:2). There needs no exhortation to set our hearts on things below.

Though grace cannot be lost — yet it may be hidden. David so clouded his graces by sin, that others could hardly see the cloth of gold under the filthy garments.

Why is prayer so sweet — but because the soul has private conference with Christ? Why is the word precious, but because it is a means to convey Christ? An ordinance without Christ, is but feeding upon the dish instead of the food!

Here Christ puts His *graces* upon His spouse — in Heaven He will put His *glory* upon her.

Such was Adam's ambition to know more, that by tasting the tree of knowledge — he lost the tree of life.

Unity in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity, where one makes three, and three make but one. This is bad arithmetic — but good divinity!

Divisions are Satan's powder-plot to blow up religion.

The godly man has all his best things to come.

The wicked man has all his worst things to come.

As their *way* is different — so their *end*.

Eternity to the godly is a day which has no sun-setting; and to the wicked, a night which has no sun-rising.

Now is the time of *God's* long-suffering;
after death will be the time of the *sinner's* long suffering.

Do not so look upon your troubles, as to forget your mercies.

He who is proud of his knowledge — the devil cares not how much he knows!

How many have pulled down their souls, to build up their houses.

Let whoever will rule, God *over*-rules.

God can with a word unpin the wheels, and break the axle of the creation. He can stop the lion's mouth, cause the sun to stand still, and make the fire not burn.

How slow is God to anger. He was longer in destroying Jericho, than in making the world.

Christ will not throw away His pearls, for every speck of dirt!

Christ shed tears, for those who shed His blood.

Our *nature* is defiled — how then can the *actions* be pure? If the water is foul in the well, it cannot be clean in the bucket. "We are all as an unclean thing" (Isaiah 64:6).

That which begins in hypocrisy, ends in apostasy.

Take heed lest by growing rich, you grow worth nothing at last.

"When I awake I am still with You" (Psalm 139:18). If you would still be with God, watch over your hearts every day; lock up your hearts with God every morning, and give Him the key!

Toleration is the grave of reformation. By toleration we adopt other men's sins, and make them our own.

God loves a *broken* heart — not a *divided* heart.

If a wicked man seems to have peace at death, it is not from the knowledge of his happiness — but from the ignorance of his danger.

It will be so much the worse to go to Hell, with hopes of Heaven.

An *idle* person is a fit subject for the devil to work upon.

God must light up the lamp of grace in the heart.

Weeds grow of themselves, flowers are planted.

Godliness is glory in the seed, and glory is godliness in the flower.

Look upon a humble Savior, and let your plumes of pride fall off.

A godly man is an heavenly man; Heaven is in him, before he is in Heaven.

Other friends, you cannot keep. God is a friend you cannot lose; He will be your guide in life, your hope in death, your reward after death.

Many parents are careful to lay up *portions* for their children — but they do not lay up *prayers* for them.

We are apt to forget three things — our faults, our friends, our instructions.

True faith will trust God's heart — where it cannot trace His hand!

Such sheep as have most wool, are soonest fleeced.

It is good to find out our sins, lest they find us out.

Our life is a wayfaring life, and a warfaring life.

Affliction is a bitter root — but it bears sweet fruit!

"Surely the wrath of man shall praise You" (Psalm 76:10).
He can reap His glory out of men's fury.

True love is not only at the tongue's end — but at the finger's end; it is the labor of love.

Does Christ appear for us in Heaven, and are we afraid to appear for Him on earth?

It is Satan that makes us have good thoughts of ourselves, and hard thoughts of God.

As we must answer to God for idle words, so for sinful silence.

As the looking-glass shows what the *face* is, whether it be fair or foul — so the words show what the heart is.

Did our thoughts dwell above we should live sweeter lives.

The higher the lark flies, the sweeter the songs.

Heaven is a place where sorrow cannot live, and joy cannot die.

'Tis vain to speak of hopes of salvation, and yet have the marks of damnation!

The world is a flattering enemy, it kills by embracing. Whom the world kisses, it betrays!

The way to overcome, is upon our knees.

The world is enough to busy us, not to fill us. "In the fullness of his sufficiency, he shall be in straits" (Job 20:22).

Immorality begins at infidelity (Hebrews 3:12).

Do you love to see Christ's picture in a saint, though hung in never so poor a frame?

Be more afraid of *sin*, than of *suffering*.

Is Heaven in your eye, and Christ in your heart, and the world under your feet?

How many have perished, by being their own saviors.

To render evil for evil is brutish; to render evil for good is devilish; to render good for evil is Christian.

None so empty of grace, as he who thinks he is full.

Such as would be over-rich, will overreach.

It is a poor thing to have an applauding world, and an accusing conscience.

Saints have their infirmities; but the wicked do not hate them for these — but for their holiness.

Whatever you deny for Christ, you shall find again in Christ.

The sins you commit in haste, you will repent at leisure.

Prayer keeps the heart open to God, and shut to sin.

"Gideon took the elders of the town and taught them a lesson, punishing them with thorns and briers from the wilderness." (Judges 8:16). God by the thorns and briers of affliction, teaches us.

God gives gracious supports in affliction. If He strikes with one hand, He supports with the other. "Underneath are the everlasting arms" (Deuteronomy 33:27).

Prosperity exposes to much evil. It is hard to carry a full cup without spilling, and a full estate without sinning.

God lets us fall into sufferings to prevent falling into snares.

Why should we think to tread only upon roses and violets, when prophets and apostles have marched through briers to Heaven?

If a man begins his voyage to Heaven in the storm of death, it is a thousand to one if he does not suffer eternal shipwreck.

Pride stops the current of gratitude. A proud man will never be thankful; he looks upon all he has, either to be of his own procuring or deserving.

Many pray Agur's first prayer, "Give me not poverty," but few pray his last prayer, "Give me not riches" (Proverbs 30:8).

They that sleep in seedtime, will beg in harvest.

The prayer which lacks a good aim, lacks a good outcome.

God's afflicting rod is a pencil to draw Christ's image more distinctly upon us.

Affliction is God's flail to thresh off the husks, not to consume the precious grain.

Fiery trials make golden Christians (Proverbs 17:3).

God only threshes the precious wheat — but He burns the useless chaff. He chastens the righteous — but He condemns the wicked.

The jewel of assurance, is best kept in the cabinet of a humble heart.

Christ is never sweet, until sin is felt to be bitter.

At Christ's death "the rocks split." Not to be affected with Christ's dying love, is to have hearts harder than rocks!

Conscience is like a bee; use it well, and it will give honey. Use it ill, and it will put forth a sting.

A troubled conscience is the first-fruit of Hell.

Eternity is a sea without bottom or banks — what line or plummet can fathom its depths?

A heathen, exercising much cruelty to a Christian, asked him, in scorn, what great miracle his Master, Jesus Christ, ever did. The Christian replied, "This miracle, that although you use me thus, I can forgive you.

Grace is Christ's portrait drawn on the soul.

He who sins because of God's mercy, shall have judgment without mercy.

Where grace grows, sin cannot thrive.

God makes grace flourish most in the fall of the leaf. "They shall still bring forth in old age" (Psalm 92:14).

The sinner may live in a calm — but he will die in a storm. He who lives graceless, dies peaceless.

He who has no faith in his heart — will have no fear of God before his eyes.

He who believes not in the blood of the Lamb, must feel the wrath of the Lamb.

Sin unrepented of ends in a tragedy. It has . . .
the devil for its father,
shame for its companion,
and damnation for its wages.

When people do not mind what God speaks to them in His word — God as little minds what they say to Him in prayer.

The godly have some good in them, therefore the devil afflicts them; and some evil in them, therefore God afflicts them.

He who is ashamed of Christ, is a shame to Christ.

Those who bear the cross patiently, shall wear the crown triumphantly.

A sinner's heart is the devil's mansion-house. "I will return unto my house" (Matthew 12:44).

A sinner grinds in the devil's mill. "The lusts of your father you will do" (John 8:44).

WARNINGS

Sin is the source of our sorrows — and the grave of our comforts!

Sin is the sinner's bond (Acts 8:23), and the saint's burden (Psalm 38:3).

Little sins yet multiplied, become great. What is less than a grain of sand? Yet when multiplied, what is heavier than the sand of the sea? A little sum *multiplied*, is great.

A little sin, unrepented of, will damn — just as one leak in the ship, if it be not looked to, will sink it. You would think it is no great matter to forget God — yet it has a heavy doom (Psalm 1:22).

It is sad to have both old age and old sins. It is hard to pull up an old tree that is rooted, it is easier to cut it down for the fire.

Procrastination.

When the lamp is almost out, the strength exhausted, and old age comes on — then mourning for sin will be in season.

Men do not argue thus in other cases; they do not say, it is too soon to be rich; they will not put off the getting of riches to old age; no, here they take the first opportunity.

When God calls for mourning and you are deaf — when you call for mercy God may be dumb (Proverbs 1:24, 28). God may take the latter time to judge you in, because you did not take the former time to repent in. *Though true mourning for sin is never too late — yet late mourning is seldom true.* That repentance is seldom true-hearted — which is grey-headed. The mariner in a storm throws his goods overboard, not but that he loves them — but he is afraid they will sink the ship. Just so, when men fall to weeping, work late, and would cast their sins overboard, it is for the most part only for fear lest they should sink the ship and drown in Hell!

Old age is no good age to repent in. A tender plant is easily removed — but it is hard to pluck up an old tree that is rooted. It were a very unwise course for a mariner, while the ship is sound, the tackling strong, the wind favorable, the sea calm, to lie idle at anchor; and when the ship begins to leak, and the tempest to rise — *now* to launch forth and hoist up sails for a voyage. Just so, is he who neglects the time of health and strength, and when old age comes, and his tackling is even broken, now begins his voyage towards Heaven.

How unworthy is this, for men to give the devil their strength and marrow, and then come and lay their old bones upon God's altar? A sinner in the time of his old age, sleeps between death and the devil. It is just, that he who forgets God in the time of health, God should forget him in the time of sickness.

False peace.

"When a strong man armed keeps his palace, his goods are in peace" (Luke 11:21). This is the devil's peace; he rocks men in the cradle of security; he cries Peace, peace, when men are on the precipice of Hell! *The apparent peace a lost sinner has, is not from the knowledge of his happiness — but from the ignorance of his danger!*

True peace is after trouble. God convinces and humbles the soul; then He speaks peace. Many say they have peace — but is this peace *before* a storm, or after it? True peace is *after* trouble. First there was the earthquake, and then the fire, and then the still small voice (1 Kings 19:12). *God pours the golden oil of peace, into broken hearts.*

False repentance.

Many think they repent when it is not the offence — but the *penalty* which troubles them; not the treason — but the

blood-axe. Some think they repent when they shed a few tears, as Saul did for his unkindness to David, "And Saul lifted up his voice and wept. And he said to David . . . you have rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded you evil" (1 Sam. 24:16, 17). But for all this, he follows David again.

Just so, men can lift up their voice and weep for sins — yet follow their sins again. Others *forsake* their sin — but still retain their *love* for it in their hearts, like the snake that casts the coat, but keeps the sting!

"Blessed are those who mourn: for they shall be comforted" (Matthew 5:4). We must go through the valley of tears, to Paradise. Mourning would be a sad subject to treat on — were it not that it has blessedness going before, and comfort coming after.

There is a mourning that is far from making one blessed. Many can weep over a dead child, who cannot mourn over a crucified Savior. Worldly sorrows hasten our funerals. The sorrow of the world works death (2 Corinthians 7:10).

There is a *despairing* kind of mourning; such was Judas' mourning: he saw his sin, he was sorry, he justified Christ, he made restitution. Judas, who is in Hell, did more than many nowadays! Well, wherein was Judas' sorrow blameworthy? It was a mourning joined with *despair*; he thought his wound broader than the plaster; his was not "repentance unto life" (Acts 11:18) — but rather unto death.

There is a *hypocritical* mourning: the heart is very deceitful, it can betray as well as by a *tear*, as by a kiss! Saul looks like a mourner, and as he was sometimes among the prophets (1 Sam. 10:12), so he seemed to be among the penitents, "And Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord" (1 Sam. 15:24). Saul did play the hypocrite in his mourning; for he did not take shame to himself — but he did rather take

honor to himself. "Honor me before the elders of the people." How easy it is for a man to put a cheat upon his soul, and by *hypocrisy* to weep himself into Hell.

There is a *forced* mourning when tears are forced out by God's judgments. Such was Cain's mourning: "My punishment is greater than I can bear!" (Genesis 4:13). His *punishment* troubled him more than his sin. To mourn only for the fear of Hell, is like a thief who weeps for the penalty, rather than the offence. A sinner mourns because *judgment* follows at the heel of sin; but David cries out, "My sin is ever before me" (Psalm 51:3). The prodigal says, "I have sinned against Heaven, and before you." He does not say, "I am almost starved among the husks!" "but I have offended my Father!"

It is an excellent saying of Augustine, "He truly bewails the sins he has committed — who never again commits the sins he has bewailed."

A child of God will confess sin in particular; an unsound Christian will confess sin by wholesale. He will acknowledge that he is a sinner in general; whereas David does, as it were, point with his finger to the sore (Psalm 51:4): "I have done *this* evil"; he does not say, I have done *evil* — but *this* evil.

To die is to be but once done — and after death there is nothing to be done. If you die in your impenitency, there is no repenting in the grave. If you leave your work at death half done, there is no finishing it in the grave (Eccles. 9:10) "There is no work, nor device, nor wisdom in the grave where you go."

God has given you two eyes, if you lose one, you have another; but you have but one soul, and if you are robbed of that, you are undone forever!

The grave buries all a sinner's joy. They have a short feast — but a long reckoning. The time being short, the sinning time cannot be long.

Sinners, the time is shortly coming when the *drawbridge of mercy* will be quite pulled up. "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil" (Ecc. 8:11). God forbears punishing, therefore men forbear repenting. God is not only gracious — but He waits to be gracious (Isaiah 30:18). But though men will not set bounds to their sin — yet God sets bounds to His patience. God says, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." The angel cried, "the hour of His judgment has come!" (Rev. 14:7).

If Felix trembled when Paul preached of judgment (Acts 24:25), how will sinners tremble when they shall see Christ come to judgment!

If God lets men prosper awhile in their sin, His vial of wrath is all this while filling — His sword is all this time whetting. And though God may forbear men a while — yet long *forbearance* is no *forgiveness*. *The longer God is in taking His blow, the heavier it will be at last. As long as there is eternity, God has time enough to reckon with His enemies!*

Knowledge without affection.

Men have mere notions of Christ — but are not warmed with *love* to Christ. Their knowledge is like the moon, it has light in it — but *no heat*. The knowledge that hypocrites have of Christ, has no *saving influence* upon them, it does not make them more holy. It is one thing to have a notion of Christ, another thing to fetch virtue from Christ. The knowledge of hypocrites is a dead, barren knowledge: it is informing — but not transforming; it does not make them a jot the better. "Your wisdom and your knowledge, it has

perverted you" (Isaiah 47:10); the knowledge of most people makes them more cunning in sin; these have little cause to glory in their knowledge. Absalom might boast of the hair of his head — but that *hanged* him; so these may boast of the knowledge of their head — but it will *destroy* them. Many of the old world knew there was an ark — but were drowned, because they did not get into the ark; knowledge which is not *applying* — will but light a man to Hell.

The *show of holiness*. All our pompous show of holiness without sincerity, is but folly set forth in its embroidery; it is but going to *Hell in a more devout way* than others.

The upright man has no subterfuges, his tongue and his heart go together, he is downright upright.

Men are ambitious of credit, and would gain repute in the world, therefore they will dress themselves in the garb and mode of religion, that others may write them down for saints. But alas, what is one the better, to have *others* to commend him, and his *conscience* condemn him? *What good will it do a man when he is in Hell, that others think he is gone to Heaven? Counterfeit piety, is double iniquity.* The hypocrite deceives others while he lives — but deceives himself when he dies! The hypocrite is abhorred of all. Wicked men hate him because he makes a show, and God hates him because he does but make a show. The wicked hate him because he has so much a show of godliness, and God hates him because he has no more (Acts 26:28).

Empty profession. What is a man the better to have Christ's name upon him, if he still retains Satan's image? What is he advantaged to have the oracles of God, and lack the Spirit of God? Think not that an empty profession will save; millions will be sent to Hell in Christ's livery (Matthew 7:22; Matthew 8:12).

The cloak of religion. Sometimes covetousness pretends conscience; Judas fishes for money under a pretense of religion: "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?" (John 12:5). How charitable Judas was! But his charity began at home, for he carried the money bag! Many make religion a cloak for their personal ambition: "Come and see my zeal for the Lord," says Jehu, "for the Lord" (2 Kings 10:16). No, Jehu, your zeal was for the kingdom. It was not zeal — but state-policy. Jehu made religion hold the stirrup, until he got possession of the crown.

Counterfeit piety is double iniquity. A little rusty gold, is far better than a great deal of bright brass. A little true grace, though rusted over with many infirmities, is better than all the glistening shows of hypocrites.

The hypocrite is fair to look on — he has a devout eye but a hollow heart; but he who is sincere, his *inside* is his best side.

Hypocrites will obey God in some things which are consistent either with their credit or profit — but in other things they desire to be excused: like Esau who obeyed his father in bringing him venison, because probably he liked the sport of hunting — but refused to obey him in a business of greater importance, namely, in the choice of his wife.

Hypocrites will not sail in a storm; true grace holds out in the *winter* season. That is a precious faith, which, like the star, shines brightest in the darkest night.

No escape in judgment. If once the sentence of judgment is passed, what will you do? Where will you go? Will you seek help from God? He is "a consuming fire." Will you seek help from the world? It will be all on fire about you. From the saints? These you derided upon earth! From your

conscience? There is the worm that gnaws. From Mercy? The lease is run out.

Whatever God can require for satisfaction, or we can need for salvation, is to be found in Christ. His name is the sweetest music to a Christian's ear, and His blood the most precious balm to a Christian's heart.

It is not money in a rich man's hand, though offered to us, that will enrich us, unless we receive it. So Christ's virtues or benefits will do us no good, unless we receive them by *the hand of faith*.

Faith lives in a *broken* heart. "He cried out, and said with *tears*, Lord, I believe!" (Mark 9:24). *True faith is always in a heart bruised for sin*.

Justifying faith lies in recumbency; we rest on Christ *alone* for salvation. As a man that is ready to drown catches hold on the bough of a tree — so a poor trembling sinner, seeing himself ready to perish, catches hold by faith on Christ, the tree of life, and is saved.

Of all sins, beware of *the rock of unbelief*. "Take heed lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief" (Hebrews 3:12). Men think, as long as they are not drunkards or swearers, it is no great matter to be unbelievers. This is the *gospel sin*. It disparages Christ's infinite merit, as if it would not save; it makes *the wound of sin to be broader than the plaster of Christ's blood*. This is high *contempt* offered to Christ, and is a deeper spear than that which the Jews thrust into His side!

God has *depth* of mercy, it reaches as low as sinners; and height of mercy, it reaches above the clouds. Take heed of abusing the mercy of God. *Suck not poison out of the sweet flower of God's mercy*. Think not that because God is merciful, you may go on in sin; this is to make mercy your enemy. To sin because mercy abounds, is *the devil's*

logic! He who sins because of mercy, is like one that wounds his head because he has a plaster. He who sins because of God's mercy — shall have judgment without mercy. *Mercy abused* turns to *fury*. If "he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of my heart, to add drunkenness to thirst; the Lord will not spare him — but then the anger of the Lord, and His jealousy, shall smoke against that man!" (Deuteronomy 29:19,20).

God has treasures of mercy — prayer is the key that opens these treasures; and in prayer be sure to carry *Christ* in your arms, for all the mercy comes through Christ. "Samuel took a suckling lamb and offered it up as a whole burnt offering to the LORD." (1 Sam. 7:9).

HEALING

"He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds."
Psalm 147:3

Christ is the most skillful physician, there is no disease too hard for Him. "Who heals *all* your diseases" (Psalm 103:3).

Christ shows more love to His patients than any physician besides. This appears in that *long journey* He took from Heaven to earth; and in that He comes to His patients without sending for, "I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me; I was found by those who did not seek me. To a nation that did not call on my name, I said, 'Here am I, here am I.'" (Isaiah 65:1).

Then, this physician lets *Himself bleed* to cure His patient, "He was wounded for our transgressions, and with His stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5). Through His wounds, we may see His affections. Christ Himself drank that *bitter cup* which we should have drunk, and by His taking the potion — we are healed and saved.

Christ is the most *cheap* physician, He takes no fee. "And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years, but no one could heal her. She came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak, and immediately her bleeding stopped!" (Luke 8:43). He desires us to bring nothing to Him but broken hearts; and when He has cured us, He desires us to bestow nothing upon Him but our love.

Christ heals with *more ease* than any other. Christ makes the devil go out with a word (Mark 9:25). Nay, He can cure with a *look!* Christ's look melted Peter into repentance; it was a healing look. If Christ does but cast a look upon the soul, He can save it. Therefore David prays to have a look from God, "Look upon me, and be merciful unto me" (Psalm 119:132).

Christ is the most *tender-hearted* physician. He has ended His *passion*, but not His *compassion*. He is not more full of *skill*, than *sympathy*, "He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds" (Psalm 147:3). Every groan of the patient, goes to the heart of this physician!

Christ *never fails of success*. Christ never undertakes to heal any, but He makes a certain cure, "Those that You gave Me I have kept, and none of them is lost" (John 17:12).

Other physicians can only cure them that are *sick* — but Christ cures them that are *dead!* "And you has He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1). Christ is a physician for the dead; of every one whom Christ cures, it may be said, "He was dead, and is alive again" (Luke 15:32).

Christ is the most *bountiful* physician. Other patients do enrich their physicians — but here the physician enriches the patient.

Christ advances all His patients: He not only *cures* them, but *crowns* them (Rev. 2:10). Christ does not only raise from the bed — but *to the throne*; He gives the sick man not only health, but Heaven!

If Christ is a physician, then let us make use of this physician for our *diseased souls*. "When the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto Him, and He laid His hands on every one of them and healed them" (Luke 4:40). You who have neglected this physician all this while, now when the sun of the gospel, and the sun of your life, is even now setting — bring your sick souls to Christ to be cured.

Christ complains that though men are sick unto death — yet they will not come or send to the physician, "You *will* not come to Me, that you might have life" (John 5:40). But, object poor souls, "I am discouraged to go to Christ to cure me, because of my unworthiness." Who did Christ shed His blood for, but such as are unworthy? "Christ Jesus came into the world to save *sinners*" (1 Timothy 1:15). Christ came into the world as into an hospital among a company of lame, bed-ridden souls. Who was ever yet saved because he was worthy? What man could ever plead this title, 'Lord Jesus, heal me, because I am worthy'?

What worthiness was in Paul before his conversion? What worthiness in Mary Magdalen, out of whom seven devils were cast? But free-grace pitied and healed them. God does not *find* us worthy — but *makes* us worthy. If we never come to Christ to be healed until we are *worthy*, we must never come. This talking of worthiness savors of pride, we would have something of our own; had we such preparations and self-excellencies — then we think Christ would accept us, and we might come and be healed; this is to *fee* our physician. Oh, let not the sense of unworthiness

discourage you; go to Christ to be healed. "Arise, He is calling for you" (Mark 10:49).

Consider what a little time we have to stay here, and let that hasten the cure. Solomon says there is "a time to be *born*, and a time to *die*" (Ecc. 3:2) — but mentions no time of *living*, as if that were so short it were not worth the naming! Oh, hasten the soul's cure, for death is upon its swift march. If death surprises you suddenly, there is no cure to be wrought in the grave. "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, where you go" (Ecc. 9:10). Now is the time of healing, now is the day of grace, now Christ pours out His balsam, "Now is the accepted time" (2 Corinthians 6:2). If we neglect the day of *grace*, the next will be a day of *wrath!* (Romans 2:5).

If men will not receive the offers of grace, Christ grieves (Mark 3:5). He is like a judge that passes the sentence with *tears* in his eyes, "He beheld the city, and *wept* over it" (Luke 19:41). Ah, sinners, I come to save you — but you put away salvation from you! I come with healing under My wings — but you bolt out your physician! I would have you but open your hearts to receive Me, and I will open Heaven to receive you — but you will rather stay with your sins and die, than come to Me and live, "Israel would have none of Me" (Psalm 81:11). *Well, lost sinners, I will weep at your funerals.*

The men of the world see not the beauty of Christ. He does not lack worth — but they lack eyes. O unhappy man (says Augustine) who know all things, but not Christ! *Your knowledge will but serve to light you to Hell.*

But are you healed? Then break forth into thankfulness. "Let the high praises of God be in their mouth" (Psalm 149:6). God expects thankfulness. "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Was no one found to

return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" (Luke 17:17, 18.)

GIVING

"He who gives unto the poor shall not lack." Proverbs 28:27.

"Give, and it shall be given unto you." Luke 6:38.

FAITH alone justifies — but justifying faith is not alone. Good works though they are not the *causes* of salvation — yet they are the *evidences*. Faith must not be built upon works — but works must be built upon faith. Faith justifies; but works testify to faith, "I will show you my faith, by my works" (James 2:18).

"Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it?" (James 2:15, 16).

There are some who perhaps will give the poor good *words*, and that is all. Good words are but a *cold kind of charity*. Let your words be as smooth as oil — they will not heal the wounded; let them drop as the honeycomb — they will not feed the hungry. "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal" (1 Corinthians 13:1). 'Tis better to be charitable as a saint, than eloquent as an angel.

"He shall have judgment without mercy, that has showed no mercy" (James 2:13). Dives denied Lazarus a *crumb of bread*, and Dives was denied a *drop of water!*

"For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink" (Matthew 25:42).

Christ does not say you *took away* My food — but you gave Me none.

Remember that excellent saying of Augustine, "Give those things to the poor which you cannot keep — that you may receive those things which you cannot lose."

The way to lay *up*, is to lay *out*. Other parts of your estate you leave behind — but that which is given to Christ's poor, is hoarded up in Heaven. That is a blessed kind of giving, which, though it makes the *purse* the lighter, makes the *crown* the heavier. You shall have good security; "He who has pity on the poor lends to the LORD, and He will pay back what he has given" (Proverbs 19:17). You shall be paid with interest. For a wedge of gold which you have parted with — you shall have an eternal weight of glory. For a cup of cold water, you shall have *rivers of pleasure* which run at God's right hand for evermore. The *interest* comes to infinitely more than the *principal*.

Your charity must be *free*. "You shall surely give — and your heart shall not be grieved" (Deuteronomy 15:10). That is, you shall not be troubled at parting with your money; he who gives *grievingly*, gives *grudgingly*. Charity must flow like spring water. The heart must be the *spring*, the hand the *pipe*, the poor the *cistern*. God loves a *cheerful* giver.

We must give that which is our own (Isaiah 58:7). "To give your bread to the hungry," it must be bread of your own, "For I the Lord love judgment, I hate robbery for burnt offering."

Do all in Christ. Out of Christ, all our alms-deeds are but the fruit of the wild olive tree. They are not good works, but dead works.

Do all for Christ. As Mary did out of love bring her ointments and sweet spices to anoint Christ's dead body: so out of

love to Christ, bring your ointments and anoint His living body — His saints and members.

Works of mercy are to be done in *humility*. Pride will be creeping into our best things; beware of this *dead fly* in the box of ointment. As the silkworm when she weaves her curious works, hides herself within the silk — so we should hide ourselves from pride and vanity.

The saints are brought in at last as disowning their works of charity. "Then the righteous will answer Him, saying: Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink?" (Matthew 25:37). A good Christian does not only empty his hand of alms — but empties his *heart of pride*. While he raises up the poor *out* of the dust — he lays himself *in* the dust.

Distribute your silver and gold to the poor before "the silver cord is loosed, or the golden bowl is broken" (Ecc. 12:6). Make your *hands your executors*, not as some do, who reserve all they give until their life is ready to expire. And truly what is then bestowed, is not *given* away — but *taken* away by death. 'Tis not charity, but necessity. Be not like the medlar tree, which is never good until it be rotten.

LONGING

"He satisfies the longing soul, and fills the hungry soul with goodness." Psalm 107:9.

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled" (Matthew 5:6).

Though you have not so much righteousness as you would desire — yet you are blessed, because you *hunger* after it. Desire is the best revealer of a Christian, actions may be counterfeit. A man may do a good action, for a bad end — as did Jehu. Actions may be compulsory: a man may

be *forced* to do that which is good — but not to will that which is good. These hungerings after righteousness proceed from love; a man does not desire that which he does not love; if you did not love Christ — you could not hunger after Him.

The hypocrite does not so much desire the *way* of righteousness, as the *crown* of righteousness. His desire is not to be made *like* Christ — but to *reign* with Christ. This was Balaam's desire, "Let me die the death of the righteous" (Num. 23:10). This is the hypocrite's hunger. A child of God desires Christ for Himself. To a believer, not only *Heaven* is precious — but *Christ* is precious (1 Peter 2:7).

Hypocrites' desires are *but* desires, they are lazy and sluggish. "The desire of the slothful kills him; for his hands refuse to labor" (Proverbs 21:25). But true desire is quickened into *endeavor*, "With my soul I have desired You in the night; yes, with my spirit within me, I will seek You early" (Isaiah 26:9).

If we do not thirst here — we shall thirst when it is too late; if we do not thirst as David did, "My soul thirsts for God" (Psalm 42:2), then we shall thirst as Dives did for a drop of water!

"They shall be filled." God never bids us seek Him in vain. "He has filled the hungry with good things" (Luke 1:53). "He *satisfies* the *longing* soul" (Psalm 107:9). God will not let us lose our longing.

A man may hunger after the world — and not be filled; the world is fading, not filling. A man may be filled with the world — but not satisfied. A sinner may take his fill of sin — but it is far from satisfaction, "The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways" (Proverbs 14:14). This is such a filling as the *damned* in Hell have — they shall be full of the fury of the Lord! But he who hungers after righteousness,

shall be *satisfyingly* filled. "My people shall be satisfied with My goodness" (Jeremiah 31:14).

God can fill the hungry soul. "With You is the fountain of life" (Psalm 36:9). The world's *cistern* may be empty and cannot fill us. But the fountain is filling. The fullness of God is an *infinite* fullness, it knows neither bounds nor bottom. It is a *constant* fullness, "You are the same" (Psalm 102:27). God can never be exhausted, His fullness is *overflowing* and *ever-flowing*.

God fills the hungry soul, out of His tender compassion. When the multitude had nothing to eat, Christ was moved with compassion. Let the hungry soul think this, though I am full of needs — yet my God is full of affections.

God will fill the hungry, that He may fulfill His word. "Blessed are you that hunger now: for you shall be filled" (Luke 6:21). Has the Lord spoken, and shall it not come to pass? As "His compassions fail not" (Lam. 3:22), so He will not allow his "faithfulness to fail" (Psalm 89:33). If the hungry soul should not be filled, the *promise* should not be fulfilled.

God will fill the hungry, because He Himself has stirred up the hunger! As in case of prayer, when God prepares the heart to pray — He prepares *His ear* to hear (Psalm 10:17). So in the case of spiritual hunger, when God prepares the heart to hunger — He will prepare His *hand* to fill.

God keeps *open house for hungry sinners* (Isaiah 55:1, 2).

There is no such thing as blind fate — but there is a Providence that guides and governs the world. "The lot is cast into the lap — but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord" (Proverbs 16:33).

Providence is God's ordering all issues and events of things, after the counsel of His will, to His own glory.

The wheels in a clock seem to move contrary one to the other — but they help forward the motion of the clock. Just so, the providences of God seem to be cross wheels; but for all that, they shall carry on the good of the elect.

God is not like a carpenter who builds a house, and then leaves it — but like a *pilot* He steers the ship of His whole creation.

"The eye of the Lord is upon those who fear Him, upon those who hope in His mercy; to deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine" (Psalm 33:18, 19). God by His providential care, shields off dangers from His people, and sets a lifeguard of angels about them (Psalm 34:7). It *bottles their tears* (Psalm 56:8). It strengthens the saints in their weakness (Hebrews 11:34). It supplies all their needs out of its alms-basket (Psalm 23:5). "Truly you shall be fed" (Psalm 37:3). If God will give His people a *kingdom* when they die — He will not deny them *daily bread* while they live.

God, who bounds everything else, is Himself *without bounds*. He sets bounds to the *sea*; "Hitherto shall you come, and no further"; He sets bounds to the *angels*; they, like the cherubim, move and stand at His appointment (Ezekiel 10:16) — but He is infinite — without bounds. He who can span the heavens, and weigh the earth in scales, must needs be infinite (Isaiah 40:22). "Do not I fill Heaven and earth?" (Jeremiah 23:24). The humble heart is His throne, in regard to His *gracious* presence (Isaiah 57:15); and Heaven is His throne, in regard to His *glorious* presence (Isaiah 66:1); and yet neither of these thrones will hold Him, for the Heaven of heavens cannot contain Him!

CONTENTMENT

"I have learned, in whatever state I am, therewith to be content." Philippians 4:11.

"I have *learned*." The Apostle does not say, "I have heard, that in every estate I should be content," but, "I have learned." It is not enough for Christians to *hear* their duty — but they must *learn* their duty. It is one thing to *hear*, and another thing to *learn*; as it is one thing to eat, and another thing to digest food. Christians *hear* much, but, it is to be feared, *learn* little.

If your estate is small — yet God can bless a little. It is not how much *money* we have — but how much *blessing*. He who often curses the bags of gold — can bless the meal in the barrel, and the oil in the cruse. What if you have not the full cupboards? Yet you have a promise, I will "bless her provision" (Psalm 132:15), and then a little goes a great way. A dinner of green herbs, where love is, is sweet; I may add, where the love of *God* is.

Another may have . . .
more estate than you — but more *care*;
more riches, less rest;
more revenues — but withal more occasions of expense.

He has a greater inheritance — yet perhaps God does not give him "power to eat thereof" (Ecc. 6:2); he holds more — but enjoys less. In a word, you have less gold than he, perhaps less guilt.

Discontent keeps a man from enjoying what he does possess. A drop or two of vinegar, will sour a whole glass of wine. Comfort depends upon contentment. It is not trouble that troubles — but *discontent*. It is not the water outside the ship which sinks it — but the water that gets within the leak. It is not outward afflictions that can make the life of a Christian sad — a contented mind would sail above these waters. But when there is a *leak of discontent* open, and trouble gets into the heart, then it is disquieted and sinks.

The discontented person thinks everything he does for God too much, and everything God does for him too little.

There are no sins God's people are more subject to, than unbelief and impatience; they are ready, either to faint through unbelief, or to fret through impatience. When men fly out against God by discontent and impatience, it is a sign they do not believe "that all things work together for good, to those who love God." Discontent is an *ungrateful* sin, because *we have more mercies than afflictions*. Discontent is an *irrational* sin, because afflictions work for good. Discontent is a sin which puts us upon sin. "Fret not yourself to do evil" (Psalm 37:8). He who frets will be ready to do evil: fretting Jonah was sinning (Jonah 4:9). The devil blows the coals of passion and discontent — and then warms himself at the fire!

"We know that God works all things work together for good, to those who love God." Shall we be discontented at that which works for our good? If one friend should throw a bag of money at another, and in throwing it, should graze his head — he would not be troubled much, seeing by this means he had got a bag of money. So the Lord may bruise us by afflictions — but it is to enrich us; these afflictions work for us a weight of glory — and shall we be discontented?

Immoderate care takes the heart off from better things; and usually while we are thinking how we shall do to live — we forget how to die. We may sooner by our care, add a furlong to our grief, than a foot to our comfort.

Remember you are to be here but a day; *you have but a short way to go*, and what need a long provision for a short way? *If a traveler has but enough to bring him to his journey's end — he desires no more.*

How hard it is for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of Heaven! (Luke 18:24). His golden weights keep him from

ascending up the hill of God! Be content then with a little; if you have but *enough* to pay for your passage to Heaven, it suffices.

Humility is like the lead to the net, which keeps the soul down when it is rising through pride; and contentment is like the cork, which keeps the heart up when it is sinking through discouragement.

Is not many a man contented to suffer reproach for maintaining his lust? and shall not we for maintaining the truth? Some glory in that which is their shame (Philippians 3:19); and shall we be ashamed of that which is our glory?

What need he complain of the world's emptiness, who has God's fullness? "The Lord is the portion of my inheritance," says David (Psalm 16:5); then let the lines fall where they will, in a sick bed, or prison, I will say, "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yes, I have a goodly heritage!"

"The God who fed me all my life long unto this day" (Genesis 48:15). Has not God provided liberally for you. You never eat — but *mercy* carves for you; you never go to bed — but *mercy* draws the curtains, and sets a guard of angels about you.

"The Lord is good to all" (Psalm 145:9). Sweet dewdrops are on the *thistle*, as well as on the *rose*.

God's mercy is *free*. To set up merit — is to destroy mercy. Nothing can *deserve* mercy — nor *force* it. We may force God to *punish* us — but not to *love* us. "I will love them freely" (Hosea 14:4).

Every link in the chain of salvation is wrought and interwoven with free grace!

Election is free. "He has chosen us in Him according to the good pleasure of His will" (Ephesians 1:4, 5).

Justification is free, "Being justified freely by His grace" (Romans 3:24).

Salvation is free, "According to His mercy He saved us" (Titus 3:5).

Say not then, I am unworthy; for mercy is free. If God should show mercy to such only as are worthy — He would show none at all.

God's mercy is an *overflowing* mercy; it is *infinite*: "Plenteous in mercy" (Psalm 86:5). "Rich in mercy" (Ephesians 2:4). "Multitude of Your tender mercies" (Psalm 51:1). The vial of wrath *drops* — but the fountain of mercy pours.

God has *morning* mercies, His mercies "are new every morning" (Lam. 3:23). He has night mercies, "In the night His song shall be with me" (Psalm 42:8).

God's mercy is *eternal*, "The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting" (Psalm 103:17). As His mercy is *overflowing* — so it is *everflowing*.

Does God give us a Christ — and will He deny us a crust? If God does not give us what we *crave* — He will give us what we *need*.

Prosperity often deafens the ear against God. "I spoke to you in your prosperity — but you said, I will not hear" (Jeremiah 22:21). *Soft pleasures harden the heart*. Prosperity has its *honey* — and also its *sting*. Anxious care is the evil spirit that haunts the rich man; when his chests are full of money — his heart is full of care. Sunshine is *pleasant* — but sometimes it *scorches*. The spreading of a full table — may be the spreading of a snare. *Many have been sunk to Hell with golden weights!* "They that will be rich fall into many hurtful lusts, which drown men in perdition" (1 Timothy 6:9). The world's golden sands are quicksands.

What if we have less money — we have less snare; if less dignity — then less danger. As we lack the rich provisions of the world — so we lack the temptations. *To give us Christ is more than if God had given us all the world.* He can make more worlds — but He has no more Christs to bestow.

If you have but *daily bread* enough to suffice nature, be content. Consider it is not having *abundance* which always makes life comfortable. *A staff may help the traveler — but a bundle of staves will be a burden to him.* The world is but a great inn. If God give you sufficient to pay for your charges in your inn, you may be content, you shall have enough when you come to your own country.

"What time I am afraid, I will trust in You" (Psalm 56:3). *Faith* cures the trembling in heart; it gets above fear as oil swims above the water. To trust in God makes Him to be a God to us.

God will turn all evils to our good (Romans 8:28). Joseph's imprisonment was a means for his advancement. Out of the bitterest drug, He will distill His glory and our salvation. In short, He will be . . .

our *guide to death*,
our *comfort in death*, and
our *reward after death*.

"Happy is that people, whose God is the Lord" (Psalm 144:15).

POVERTY

"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven." Matthew 5:3.

Some think if they can fill their bags with gold — then they are rich. But they who are poor in spirit are the rich men; this poverty entitles them to a kingdom! How poor are

those who think themselves rich! How rich are those who see themselves poor.

There are some *paradoxes* in religion which the world cannot understand:

for a man to become a fool, that he may be wise (1 Corinthians 3:18),

to save his life, by losing it (Matthew 16:25), and

being poor to be rich — reason laughs at. But "blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom"; under these rags is hid cloth of gold!

"Blessed are the poor in spirit." This poverty is your riches; you may have the world's riches — and yet be poor. But you cannot have this poverty — but you must be rich. Poverty of spirit entitles you to Christ's riches!

Blessedness does not lie in the acquisition of worldly things. Christ does not say, Blessed are the rich, or blessed are the noble; yet too many idolize these things. The *tree of blessedness* does not grow in an earthly paradise! Has not God cursed the ground for sin? Yet many are digging for *felicity* here, as if they would fetch a blessing out of a curse!

That which cannot quiet the heart in a storm, cannot entitle a man to blessedness. Earthly things accumulated, cannot rock the troubled heart quiet, therefore cannot make one blessed. When Saul was sore distressed, could all the jewels of his crown comfort him? "They shall cast their silver in the streets — their silver and their gold shall not be able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the Lord" (Ezekiel 7:19).

That which is but for a season, cannot make one blessed; all things under the sun are but for a season. "The world passes away" (1 John 2:17). Riches and honor are fugitive: while they are with us — they are going away from us, like ice, which melts away while it is in your hand.

Things which do more vex than comfort — cannot make a man blessed; but such are all things under the sun. As riches are compared to "wind" to show their *vanity* (Hosea 12:1), so to "thorns," to show their *vexation* (Matthew 13:22). Thorns are not more apt to tear our garments, than riches are to tear our hearts. They are thorns in the *gathering*, they prick with *care*; and as they pierce the hand with care of getting — so they wound the *heart* with fear of losing.

Those things which (if we have nothing else) will make us cursed, cannot make us blessed. "Those who will be rich fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition" (1 Timothy 6:9). How many have pulled down their souls — to build up an estate! A ship may be so laden with gold that it sinks. *Many a man's gold has sunk him to Hell*. The rich sinner seals up money in his bag, and God seals up a curse with it! "Woe to him ... who loads himself with thick clay" (Hab. 2:6).

To such as are cut short in their allowance, whose cup does not overflow — but their tears: Be not too much troubled; remember these *outward* comforts cannot make you blessed; you might live rich — and die cursed; you might treasure up an estate — and God might treasure up wrath. Be not perplexed about these things; the lack whereof cannot make you miserable, nor the enjoyment make you blessed.

Earthly riches, says Augustine, are full of poverty. They cannot enrich the soul; *oftentimes under silken apparel, there is a threadbare soul!*

The common mercies wicked men have, are not *loadstones* to draw them nearer to God — but *millstones* to sink them deeper in Hell! (1 Timothy 6:9). Their delicious dainties are like Haman's banquet: after all

their lordly fare, death will bring in the reckoning, and they must pay it in Hell!

While Israel fed with delight upon garlic and onions, they never hungered after manna. The love of earthly things will quench the desire of spiritual. "Love not the world" (1 John 2:15); the sin is not in the *having*, but the *loving*.

Godly and earthly is a contradiction. "For many walk, of whom I now tell you, even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose God is their belly, who mind *earthly* things" (Philippians 3:18, 19). We read the *earth* swallowed up Korah alive (Num. 16:32). This judgment is on many: the earth swallows up their time, and thoughts, and discourse. They are buried twice; their hearts are buried in the earth before their bodies!

God allows us the *use* of the world (1 Timothy 6:7) — but take heed of the *love* of it. He who is in love with the world — will be out of love with the cross. "Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world" (2 Timothy 4:10). Before a man can die for Christ — he must be dead to the world. It will be an easy thing to die, when we are dead before in our affections.

How soon we are broken upon the *soft pillow of ease!* Adam in *paradise* was overcome — when Job on the *dunghill* was a conqueror.

"I cannot be poor," says Bernard, "as long as God is rich, for His riches are mine!" Whatever we lose for God, we shall find again in Him. "We have left all," say the disciples, "and have followed You" (Mark 10:28). Alas! what had they left? A few sorry boats and tackling! They parted with perishable goods, for the unchangeable God. All losses are made up in Him. We may be losers for God, but we shall not be losers by Him.

"You have put gladness in my *heart*" (Psalm 4:7). Worldly joys put gladness into the *face*. The rich Corinthians "glory in appearance and not in heart" (2 Corinthians 5:12); but the Spirit of God puts gladness into the heart; divine joys are *heart* joys. "Their heart shall rejoice in the Lord" (Zech. 10:7); "Your heart shall rejoice" (John 16:22).

Christ, who had all riches, scorned *earthly* riches. He was *born* poor — the manger was His cradle, the cobwebs His curtains. He *lived* poor — He had nowhere to lay His head. He *died* poor, He had no money or lands, only His coat was left, and that the soldiers parted among them. And His *funeral* was suitable, for as He was *born* in another man's house, so He was *buried* in another man's tomb.

"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was *rich* — yet for your sakes He became *poor*" (2 Corinthians 8:9). He could have brought down a house from Heaven with Him, or have challenged the high places of the earth; but He was contented to live *poor* — that we might die rich. He, who is now preparing mansions for us in Heaven — had none for Himself on earth; He had nowhere to lay His head.

He was poor — that He might make us rich.

He was born of a virgin — that we might be born of God.

He took our flesh — that might give us His Spirit.

He lay in the manger — that we might lie in paradise.

He came down from Heaven — that He might bring us to Heaven.

AFFLICTIONS

"It is *good* for me that I have been afflicted." Psalm 119:71.

Afflictions quicken our pace in the way to Heaven. It is with us, as with children sent on an errand, if they meet with apples or flowers by the way, they linger and make no great

haste home — but if anything frightens them, then they run with all the speed they can to their father's house. Just so, in prosperity, we are gathering the apples and flowers, and do not much mind Heaven — but if troubles begin to arise, and the times grow frightful, then we make more haste to Heaven, and with David, "run the way of God's commandments" (Psalm 119:32).

God's people have no *writ of ease* granted them, no charter of *exemption from trouble* in this life. While the wicked are kept in sugar, the godly are often kept in brine. God lets His people be in the house of bondage for probation or trial. "Who led you through that great and terrible wilderness . . . that He might humble you, and that He might prove you" (Deuteronomy 8:15, 16).

Affliction is the touch-stone of sincerity. "You, O God, have proved us; You have tried us, as silver is tried . . . You laid affliction upon us" (Psalm 66:10, 11). Hypocrites may embrace the true religion in prosperity — but he is a true Christian who will keep close to God in a time of suffering. "All this is come upon us — yet have we not forgotten You!" (Psalm 44:17).

The stones which are cut out for a building are first hewn and squared. The godly are called "living stones" (1 Peter 2:5). God first hews and polishes them by affliction, that they may be fit for the heavenly building. The *house of bondage* prepares for the house not made with hands.

Afflictions on the godly make them better — but afflictions on the wicked make them worse. The godly pray more (Psalm 130:1). The wicked blaspheme more. "Men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God" (Rev. 16:9). Afflictions on the wicked make them more impenitent; every plague upon Egypt increased the plague of hardness in Pharaoh's heart. Affliction of the godly is like bruising spices, which are most sweet and fragrant.

Affliction on the wicked is like pounding weeds with a pestle, which makes them more unsavory.

A sick bed often teaches more than a sermon; we can best see the *ugly visage of sin* in the looking-glass of affliction.

What if we have more of the *rough file* — if we have less rust! Afflictions carry away nothing but the dross of sin.

When affliction or death comes to a wicked man, it takes away his soul. When it comes to a godly man it only takes away his sin, "We are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world" (1 Corinthians 11:32). Affliction works out sin — and works in grace.

"I will be with him in trouble" (Psalm 91:15). When we are most assaulted, we shall be most assisted. What if we have more trouble than others — if we have more of God with us than others? It cannot be ill with that man with whom God is. *Better to be in prison and have God's presence — than be in a palace without it.*

It is one heart-quieting consideration, in all the afflictions that befall us, that God has a special hand in them: "The *Almighty* has afflicted me" (Ruth 1:21). *Instruments* can no more stir until God gives them a commission — than the *axe* can cut of itself without a hand. Job eyed God in his affliction: therefore, as Augustine observes, he does not say, "The Lord gave — and the *devil* took away," but "The Lord gave — and the *Lord* has taken away." Whoever *brings* an affliction to us, it is God who *sends* it.

Afflictions work for good. "It is *good* for me that I have been afflicted" (Psalm 119:71). Joseph's brethren throw him into a pit; afterwards they sell him; then he is cast into prison; yet all this worked for his good. His abasement made way for his advancement; he was made the second man in the

kingdom. "You thought evil against me — but God meant it unto good!"

Jacob wrestled with the angel, and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint; this was sad; but God turned it to good, for there he saw God's face, and there the Lord blessed him. "Jacob called the name of the place *Peniel* — for I have seen God face to face" (Genesis 32:30). Who would not be willing to have a bone out of joint, so that he might have a sight of God?

King Manasseh was bound in chains, this was sad to see — a crown of gold changed into fetters. But it wrought for his good, for, "When he was in affliction — he besought the Lord, and humbled himself greatly, and the Lord was entreated of him" (2 Chr. 33:12, 13). He was more indebted to his *iron chain*, than to his golden crown; the one made him proud, the other made him humble.

Paul was smitten with blindness; this was uncomfortable — but it turned to his good. God did by that blindness, make way for the light of grace to shine into his soul.

God sweetens outward pain, with inward peace. "Your sorrow shall be turned into joy" (John 16:20). God's afflicting rod has *honey* at the end of it.

David says, "My times are in Your hand" (Psalm 31:15). If our times were in our *own* hand, we would have deliverance too soon. If they were in our *enemy's* hand, we would have deliverance too late. But my times are in Your hand; and God's time is ever best.

Everything is beautiful in its season: when the mercy is ripe, we shall have it. It is true we are now *between the hammer and the anvil* — but do not cast away your anchor. God sees when the mercy will be in season. When His people are low enough, and the enemy high enough, then appears the Church's morning-star.

Let God alone to His time. "My soul waits for the Lord" (Psalm 130:6). Good reason God has for the timing of our mercies, "I the Lord will hasten it in His time." Deliverance may tarry beyond *our* time; but it will not tarry beyond *God's* time.

After a wet night of affliction, comes a bright morning of the resurrection. If our lives are short — our trials cannot be long. Time is short (1 Corinthians 7:29). Though the cross is heavy, we have but a little way to carry it. The time being short, the waiting time cannot be long.

When the hearts of His people are most humble,
when their prayers are most fervent,
when their faith is strongest,
when their forces are weakest,
when their enemies are highest —
then is the usual time that Christ puts forth His kingly power for their deliverance (Isaiah 33:2, 8, 9, 10).

Afflictions work for good, as they conform us to Christ. His life was a series of sufferings, "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief" (Isaiah 53:3). He wept, and bled. Was His head crowned with thorns — and do we think to be crowned with roses? It is good to be like Christ — though it be by sufferings.

"Let none of you suffer . . . as an evil doer" (1 Peter 4:15). I am not of Cyprian's mind, that the thief on the cross suffered as a martyr; no, he suffered as an evil doer. Christ indeed took pity on him, and saved him; he died a saint — but not a martyr. When men suffer by the hand of a magistrate, these do not suffer *persecution* — but *execution*. They die not as martyrs — but as malefactors; they suffer evil — for being evil.

God loves a thankful Christian. Job thanked God when He took all away: "The Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21). Many will thank God when He

gives, Job thanks Him when He takes away, because he knew God would work good out of it.

We read of saints with harps in their hands (Rev. 14:2), an emblem of praise. We meet many Christians who have tears in their eyes, and complaints in their mouths; but there are few with their harps in their hands, who praise God in *affliction*.

Every bird can sing in spring — but some birds will sing in the dead of winter. A good Christian will bless God, not only in the spring — but in the winter of affliction. Well may we, in the worst that befalls us, have a psalm of thankfulness, because God works all things together for our good. If God makes all things turn to our good, how right is it that we should make all things tend to His glory! "Do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31).

"His mercies are new every morning" (Lam. 3:23). Mercy comes in as constantly as the tide; nay, how many tides of mercy do we see in one day. We never *eat* — but mercy carves every bit to us; we never *drink* — but in the golden cup of mercy; we never go abroad — but mercy sets a guard of angels about us; we never lie down in bed — but mercy draws the curtains of protection close about us. Shall we receive so many good things at the hand of God — and shall we not receive evil? Our mercies far outweigh our afflictions; for one affliction we have a thousand mercies. The *sea of God's mercy* would swallow up a few drops of affliction!

Many, to rid themselves out of trouble, run themselves into sin. When God has bound them with the cords of affliction, they go to the devil to loosen their bands. Better it is to stay in affliction, than to sin ourselves out of it.

Affliction quickens the spirit of prayer; Jonah was asleep in the ship — but at prayer in the whale's belly. Perhaps in a time of health and prosperity we pray in a cold and formal

manner, we put no coals to the incense; we scarcely minded our own prayers, and how should *God* mind them? God sends some cross or other affliction to make us take hold of Him. "They poured out a prayer, when Your chastening hand was upon them" (Isaiah 26:15); now their prayer pierced the heavens. In times of trouble we pray earnestly and fervently.

When God puts His children to the *school of the cross*, He deals with them tenderly, because He does not leave them without a promise, "God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted above what you are able." He will not lay a *giant's* burden upon a *child's* back. Nor will He stretch the strings of the instrument too much, lest they should break. If God sees it good to strike with one hand, He will support with the other; either He will make the faith stronger, or render the yoke lighter.

God loves His people, when He is giving the bitter drink of affliction. God's *rod* and God's *love* — they both stand together. It is no love in God, to let men go on in sin, and never smite. God's greatest curse, is when He afflicts not for sin. Let us feel God's *hand* — so that we may have His *heart*.

Afflictions add to the saints' glory. The more the diamond is cut — the more it sparkles. The heavier the saints' cross is — the heavier shall be their crown.

If God be our God, He will give us peace in trouble. When there is a storm without, He will make peace within. The world can create trouble in peace — but God can create peace in trouble.

PERSECUTION

"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven." Matthew 5:10

Persecution is the *beaten road* in which all the saints have gone. The living stones in the spiritual building have been all hewn and polished. Christ's lily has grown among the *thorns*. "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus, *shall* suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12).

"We must through *much tribulation* enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). Though Christ died to take away the *curse* from us — yet not to take away the *cross*. The way to Heaven, though it is full of *roses* in regard of the comforts of the Holy Spirit — yet it is full of *thorns* in regard to persecutions. It is a saying of Ambrose, that there is no Abel, but has his Cain. Put the *cross* in your *creed*.

A true saint carries *Christ* in his heart, and the *cross* on his shoulders. Christ's kingdom on earth, is the kingdom of the *cross*. Christ and His cross are never parted. Persecution is the legacy bequeathed by Christ to His people. "In the world you shall have tribulation" (John 16:33). We are all for *reigning*. "When will you restore the Kingdom?" But the Apostle tells us of suffering *before* reigning. "If we *suffer* — we shall also *reign* with Him" (2 Timothy 2:12). Was His head crowned with thorns — and do we think to be crowned with roses?

Some think there is no persecution, but fire and sword; yes, there is persecution of the *tongue*. Reviling is called persecution, "men shall revile you and persecute you"; this is *tongue persecution*. "His words were softer than oil — yet were they drawn swords!" (Psalm 55:21). You may kill a man as well in his name — as in his person; a good name is as precious ointment. Now to smite another in his name, is by our Savior called *persecution*. Thus the primitive saints endured the persecution of the tongue. They "had trial of cruel mockings" (Hebrews 11:36).

Slandering is tongue persecution, "When men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you *falsely*." Thus Paul was slandered in his doctrine; it was reported that he would preach: men might do evil that good might come of it. Thus Christ, who cast out devils, was charged to have a devil (John 8:48). "They laid to My charge things that I knew not" (Psalm 35:11).

Why there must be persecution:

First, it is God's decree, "We are *appointed* thereunto" (1 Thessalonians 3:3). Whoever *brings* the suffering, God *sends* it. God did bid Shimei curse; Shimei's tongue was the arrow — but it was God who shot it.

Second, it is God's design for the trial of His saints. "Many shall be tried." It separates true saints from hypocrites. Unsound hearts pretend well in prosperity — but in a time of persecution, fall away (Matthew 13:20, 21). Hypocrites will follow Christ to Mount *Olivet* — but not to Mount *Calvary*. Suffering times are *sifting* times. "When He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold" (Job 23:10).

God lets His children be in the furnace — that they may be "partakers of His holiness" (Hebrews 12:10). "I am black, but lovely" (Cant. 1:5). The torrid zone of persecution made the spouse's skin black — but her soul fair.

"Blessed are those who are persecuted." What is that suffering, which will make us blessed?

When we suffer in a good *cause*. Blessed are those who suffer "for righteousness, sake." It is the cause that makes a martyr. "For the hope of Israel, I am bound with this chain" (Acts 28:20).

When we suffer with a good *conscience*. A man may have a good cause — and a bad conscience. Paul, as he had a just cause, so he had a pure conscience. "I have lived in all good

conscience before God until this day" (Acts 23:1). A good conscience will make a man suffer with comfort.

When we have a good *call*. When "you shall be brought before governors and kings" (Matthew 10:18). If God by His providence opens a door, a man may fly in time of persecution (Matthew 10:23). But when he is brought before kings, and the case is such that either he must suffer, or the truth must suffer; here is a clear call to suffering.

When we have good *ends* in our suffering. "When you shall be brought before governors and kings for My sake." The primitive Christians burned more in love than in fire; when we look at God in our sufferings, and are willing to make His crown flourish, though it be in our ashes — this is that suffering which carries away the garland of glory.

When we suffer *as Christians*. "If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed" (1 Peter 4:16).

When we suffer *with patience*. "Take, my brethren, the prophets for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience" (James 5:10).

When we suffer with *cheerfulness*. Thus Moses suffered cheerfully. Moses, when he was come to years, chose rather "to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season" (Hebrews 11:25). "He *chose* to suffer affliction," the cross was not so much *imposed*, as *embraced*. "They departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name." They rejoiced that they were so far graced, as to be disgraced for the name of Christ. Christ's marks in Paul's body, were prints of glory.

When we suffer and *pray*. "Pray for those who despitefully use you, and persecute you." Stephen prayed for his persecutors, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge."

Augustine says that the Church of God was indebted to *Stephen's prayer* for all that benefit which was reaped by Paul's ministry.

God with us in trouble. "I will be with him in trouble" (Psalm 91:15). What if we have more afflictions than others — if we have more of God's company! "I will deliver him and honor him" (Psalm 91:15). He who can strengthen our faith — can break our fetters. "Your *sorrow* shall be turned into *joy*" (John 16:20). There is the *water* turned into *wine*. "Be of good cheer, Paul." In time of persecution, God broaches the wine of consolation; cordials are kept for fainting.

Christ has been exemplary in suffering. Consider what Christ endured for us. Christ's whole life was a series of sufferings: Christian, what is your suffering? Are you *poor*? So was Christ: "The Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head" (Matthew 8:20). Are you surrounded with *enemies*? So was Christ: "Against your holy Servant Jesus . . . both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together" (Acts 4:27). Do our enemies lay claim to religion? So did His: "And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood" (Matthew 27:6). Religious persecutors!

Are you *reproached*? So was Christ: "The reproaches of those who reproached you are fallen upon Me" (Psalm 69:9). Are you *slandered*? So was Christ: "The Pharisees said, He casts out devils through the prince of the devils" (Matthew 9:34). Are you ignominiously used? So was Christ: "Then some began to spit at him; they blindfolded him, struck him with their fists, and said, 'Prophecy!' And the guards took him and beat him!" (Mark 14:65).

Are you *betrayed* by friends? So was Christ: "Jesus said unto him, Judas, do you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?"

(Luke 22:48). Is your estate confiscated? And do the wicked cast lots for it? So Christ was dealt with: "They parted My garments among them, and upon My vesture did they cast lots" (Matthew 27:35). Do we suffer *unjustly*? So did Christ: His very judge did acquit Him: "Then said Pilate to the chief priests and to the people, I find no fault in this man!" (Luke 23:4). Are you barbarously dragged and hauled away to suffering? So was Christ: "And when they had bound Him, they led Him away" (Matthew 27:2). Do you suffer death? So did Christ: "And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they *crucified* Him" (Luke 23:33).

Did the Lord Jesus endure all this for us — and shall not we suffer persecution for His name? Our *cup* is nothing compared to the cup which Christ drank. His cup was mixed with the wrath of God; and if He bore *God's wrath* for us, well may we bear *man's wrath* for Him.

Our sufferings are *light*. "Our light affliction" (2 Corinthians 4:17). It is heavy to flesh and blood — but it is light to faith. It is light in comparison of sin; he who feels sin heavy — feels suffering light. *Affliction* is light in comparison of *Hell*. What is *persecution* compared to *damnation*? What is the fire of *martyrdom* compared to the fire of the *damned*? "Who knows the power of Your anger?" (Psalm 90:11). Affliction is light in comparison with glory. The *weight of glory* makes persecution light.

Sufferings are *short*. "After that you have suffered a little while" (1 Peter 5:10). Our sufferings may be *lasting* — but not everlasting. Persecution is sharp, but brief; though it has a *sting* to torment — yet it has a *wing* to fly. "Sorrow and sighing shall flee away" (Isaiah 35:10). It is but a while when the saints shall have a writ of ease granted them, they shall weep no more, suffer no more.

Support in suffering. While we suffer *for* Christ — we suffer *with* Christ: "If so be that we suffer with Him" (Romans 8:17). Oh, says the Christian, I shall never be able to hold out! But remember that you suffer with Christ, and He helps you to suffer: "My grace is sufficient for you" (2 Corinthians 12:9). "Underneath are the everlasting arms" (Deuteronomy 33:27). If Christ put the yoke of persecution over us — He will put His arms under us. The Lord Jesus will not only crown us when we conquer — but He will enable us to conquer.

Persecution and the love of God. They are blessed whom God loves — but persecution cannot hinder the love of God. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution?" (Romans 8:35). The goldsmith loves his gold as well when it is in the fire, as when it is in his bag. Just so, God loves His children as well in adversity, as in prosperity. "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten" (Rev. 3:19). God sweetens their sufferings: "As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds by Christ" (2 Corinthians 1:5). As the mother having given her child a bitter pill, gives it afterwards a lump of sugar.

The *reward* of suffering. "Great is your reward in Heaven" (Matthew 5:12). A Christian may lose his life — but not his reward; he may lose his head — but not his crown. Not that we can merit this reward by our sufferings. "I will *give* you a crown of life." The reward is the legacy which *free-grace* bequeaths. Alas! what proportion is there between a *drop* of blood — and a *weight* of glory? But though we have no reward by merit, we shall have it by grace; so it is in the text, "Great is your reward in Heaven."

Look upon the crown and faint if you can; the reward is as far above your *thoughts*, as it is beyond your *deserts*. A man that is to wade through a deep water, fixes his eyes

upon the firm land that is before him. While Christians are wading through the deep waters of persecution, they should fix the *eyes of their faith* on the land of promise; "Great is your reward in Heaven." Those who bear the cross patiently — shall wear the crown triumphantly.

God brings us low, before He raises us — as water is at the lowest ebb before there is a spring tide. When God would bring Israel to Canaan, a land flowing with milk and honey, He first led them through a *sea* and a *wilderness*. When He intended to advance Joseph to the second man in the kingdom, he cast him first into prison, and the iron entered into his soul. He usually lets it be darkest, before the morning-star of deliverance appears.

Many desire to be *glorified* with Christ — but they are not content to *suffer* for Him. "If we *suffer* with Him, we shall also *reign* with Him" (2 Timothy 2:12).

The wicked first *reign* — and then suffer.

The godly first *suffer* — and then reign.

Afflictions are safe guides to glory. The storm drives the ship into the harbor. Blessed storm that drives the soul into the heavenly harbor! Is it not better to go through affliction to eternal glory — than through pleasure to eternal misery?

TEMPTATION

"Blessed is the man who endures temptation, for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to them that love Him." James 1:12.

Satan's method in tempting. He observes the temper and constitution. Satan will not tempt contrary to the natural disposition and temperament. He makes the wind and tide go together. That way which the natural tide of the heart runs — that way the wind of temptation blows. Though the

devil cannot know men's thoughts — yet he knows their *temper*, and accordingly he lays his *baits*.

Satan observes the fittest time to tempt in; as a cunning angler casts in his hook when the fish will bite best. Satan's time of tempting, is usually after an ordinance. When we have been at solemn duties, we are apt to think all is done, and we grow remiss, and leave off that zeal and strictness as before; just as a soldier, who after a battle leaves off his armor, not once dreaming of an enemy. *Satan watches his time, and, when we least suspect, then he throws in a temptation!*

Satan makes use of near relations; the devil tempts by a proxy: thus he handed over a temptation to Job by his wife, "Do you still retain your integrity?" (Job 2:9). *A wife in the bosom, may be the devil's instrument to tempt to sin.*

Satan tempts to evil by those who are good; thus he gives *poison in a golden cup*. He tempted Christ by Peter. Peter dissuades Him from suffering. Master, pity Yourself. Who would have thought to have found the tempter, in the mouth of an apostle!

Satan tempts to sin, under a pretense of religion. He is most to be feared when he transforms himself into an angel of light. He came to Christ with Scripture in his mouth: "It is written." *The devil baits his hook with religion.*

Peter was tempted to self-confidence, he presumed upon his own strength; and when he would needs stand alone — Christ let him fall: but this wrought for his good — it cost him many a tear. "He went out and wept bitterly" (Matthew 26:75). And now he grows more modest, he dared not say he loved Christ more than the other apostles. "Do you love Me more than these?" He dared not say so, *his fall broke the neck of his pride.*

Satan tempts to sin *gradually*: as the gardener digs about the root of a tree, by degrees loosens it, and at last it falls. Satan steals by degrees into the heart. He is at first more plausible; he did not say to Eve at first, 'Eat the apple'; no — but he goes more subtlety to work; he puts forth a question, "Has God said?" (Genesis 3:1). Surely, Eve, you are mistaken; the bountiful God never intended to debar you one of the best trees of the garden. "Has God said?" surely, either God did not say it; or, if He did, He never really meant it. Thus by degrees, he wrought her to distrust — and then she took of the fruit and ate. O, take heed of Satan's first motions to sin, which seem more plausible. Oppose the beginnings of evil. He is first a *fox* — and then a *lion*.

It is hard to climb up the hill of God, with too many golden weights. Those who want the honors of the world — want the temptations of it. *The world is a flattering enemy.* The world never kisses us — but with an intent to betray us! "Love not the world" (1 John 2:15). The sin is not in the using of the world — but in the loving it. Living fish swim against the stream; so we must swim against the world, else we shall be carried down the stream, and fall into the Dead Sea of damnation.

"What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch!" (Mark 13:37). We must ever keep sentinel. Sleep not upon your guard: our sleeping time — is the devil's tempting time. When you have prayed against sin — then watch against temptation.

Satan, in tempting, baits his hook with religion. He can hang out Christ's colors, and tempt to sin under *pretenses of piety*. Sometimes he is the *white devil*, and transforms himself into an angel of light. He wraps his *poisonous pills* in sugar!

Satan does not tempt God's children because they have sin in them — but because they have *grace* in them. Had they

no grace he would not disturb them, for where he keeps possession, all is in peace (Luke 11:21). A thief will not assault an *empty* house — but where he thinks there is treasure. Though to be tempted is a trouble — yet to think why you are tempted, is a comfort.

If you would not be overcome by temptation, flee the "occasions of sin." Occasions of sin have great force to awaken lust within. He who would keep himself free from infection — will not come near an infected house. The Nazarite who was forbid wine, might not eat grapes, which might occasion intemperance. Come not near the borders of temptation. Many pray, "Lead us not into temptation," and yet run themselves into temptation!

If you would not be overcome by temptation, be much in *prayer*. Prayer is *the best antidote against temptation*. Christ prescribes this remedy, "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation" (Mark 14:38). When Paul had a "messenger of Satan to buffet him," he betook himself to prayer. "For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me." (2 Corinthians 12:8). When Satan assaults furiously — let us pray fervently.

If you would not be overcome by temptation, be *humble* in your own eyes. They are nearest falling, who presume on their own strength. The doves, says Pliny, take pride in their flying high, until at last they fly so high, that they become a prey to the hawk. Just so, when men fly high in pride and self-confidence — they become a prey to the tempter.

If you would not be foiled by temptation, do not enter into a dispute with Satan. When Eve began to argue the case with the serpent, the serpent was too hard for her. The devil by his logic disputed her out of Paradise! If you enter into a parley with him, you give him half the victory.

If Adam, in a few hours, sinned himself out of Paradise — then how quickly would we sin ourselves into Hell, if we

were not kept by a greater power than our own! But God puts His everlasting arms underneath us.

Christian, you can not believe that evil which is in your heart, and which will break forth suddenly — if God should leave you!

"You will burn their strongholds, slay their young men with the sword, dash their infants in pieces, and rip up their pregnant women. And *Hazael* answered: What is your servant, only a dog, that he should do this monstrous thing!" (2 Kings 8:12, 13, 15). Hazael could not believe he had such a root of bitterness in his heart, that he should rip up women with child. Is your servant a dog? Yes, and worse than a dog, when that corruption within is stirred up.

If one had come to Peter and said, "Peter, within a few hours you will deny Christ," he would have said, "Is your servant a dog, that he should do such a monstrous thing?" But alas! Peter did not know his own heart, nor how far that corruption within would prevail upon him.

The sea may be calm and look clear; but when the wind blows, how it rages and foams! Just so, though now your heart seems good, yet, when temptation blows, how may sin reveal itself, making you foam with lust and passion. Who would have thought to have found . . .

adultery in David,
and drunkenness in Noah,
and cursing in Job?

If God leave a man to himself — how suddenly and scandalously may sin break forth in the holiest men on the earth! "I say unto all, Watch" (Mark 13:37). A wandering heart, needs a watchful eye!

CONTENTION

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! For there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore." Psalm 133:1, 3.

God the Son is called the *Prince of Peace* (Isaiah 9:6). He came into the world with a song of peace: "On earth peace!" He went out of the world with a legacy of peace, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you!" (John 14:27). Christ's earnest prayer was for peace — He prayed that His people might be one. Christ not only *prayed* for peace — but *bled* for peace: "Having made peace through the blood of His cross" (Colossians 1:20). He died not only to make peace between *God* and man — but between *man* and man. Christ suffered on the cross, that He might cement Christians together with His blood. As He *prayed* for peace, so He *paid* for peace.

If there is but one God, as God is one — so let those who serve Him be one. That is what Christ prayed for. "That they all may be one" (John 17:21). How sad is it to see religion wearing a coat of divers colors; to see Christians of so many opinions, and going so many different ways! *It is Satan that has sown these tares of division*. He first divided men from God, and then one man from another.

In the primitive times, there was so much love among the godly, as set the heathens a-wondering; and now there is so little, as may set Christians a-blushing!

The saints are Christ's lambs. For a dog to worry a lamb is usual — but for one lamb to worry another is unnatural.

Lack of love among Christians, does much silence the spirit of prayer; hot passions make cold prayers; where animosities and contentions prevail, instead of praying one for another, Christians will be ready to pray one against another.

Why does the Lord bring His people together in affliction — but to bring them together in affection. Metals will unite in a furnace; if ever Christians unite, it should be in the *furnace of affliction*. God's rod has this loud voice in it, "Love one another!" How unworthy is it when Christians are suffering together, to be then striving together!

"Speak not evil one of another" (James 4:11). Unmerciful men know how to boil a quart to a pint; they have the devilish art so to extenuate and lessen the merit of others, that it is even boiled away to nothing. Some, though they have not the power of *creation* — yet they have the power of *annihilation*. They can sooner annihilate the good which is in others, than imitate it.

Put on "the breastplate of love" (1 Thessalonians 5:8). This breastplate is insuperable, it may be shot at — but it cannot be shot through. "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it."

Love will be the perfume and music of Heaven. As perfect love casts out fear, so it casts out envy and discord. Those Christians who could not live quietly together on earth (which was the blemish of their profession) in Heaven shall be all love; the fire of strife shall cease; there shall be no vilifying, or censuring one another, or raking into one another's sores — but all shall be tied together with the *heart-strings of love*. Satan cannot put in his cloven foot there, to make divisions. There shall be perfect harmony and concord, and not one jarring string in the saint's music.

PREACHING

"My preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom — but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." 1 Corinthians 2:4.

Truth is most lovely when it is in the plainest dress. The star shines brightest, in its native luster. Who goes to embroider a pearl? or paint over gold? It is a sign of a wanton Christian to look most at the fringing and garnishing of a truth. Many like the dressing — but loathe the food. When men preach rather words than matter, they catch people's ears, not their souls; they do but court — not convert.

To let others go on in sin securely, is not charity but cruelty! If a man's house were on fire, and another should see it, and not tell him of it for fear of waking him — would this not be cruelty?

Some ministers love to soar aloft, like the eagle, and fly above the people's capacities, endeavoring rather to be *admired* than *understood*. Ministers should be *stars* to give light — not *clouds* to obscure the truth. It is cruelty to souls when we go about to make *easy things hard*. Many are guilty of this in our age, who go into the pulpit only to *tie knots*.

If a man were invited to a feast, and there being music at the feast, he should so listen to the music, that he did not mind his food, you would say, Surely he is not hungry. So when men are for jingling words, and like rather gallantry of speech than spirituality of matter — it is a sign they have surfeited stomachs, and itching ears.

Oftentimes God crowns his labors, and sends most fish into his net — who though he may be *less skillful*, is *more faithful*; and though he has less of the brain — yet has more of the heart.

It is better to have God approve — than the world applaud. There is a time shortly coming when a smile from God's face will be infinitely better than all the applauses of men. How sweet will that word be, "Well done, good and faithful servant! Enter into the joy of your Lord." (Matthew 25:21).

What pains some men take to go to Hell, "They weary themselves to commit iniquity" (Jeremiah 9:5). The devil blows the horn, and men ride post to Hell, as if they feared Hell would be full before they would get there! Do men take all these pains for Hell — and shall we not take pains for the kingdom of Heaven? The more pains we take for Heaven — the more welcome will death be to us. He who has spent his time in serving God, can look death in the face with comfort. He was wholly taken up about Heaven, shall be taken up to Heaven. He traded before in Heaven, and now he shall go to live there.

Christ teaches the *heart*. Others may teach the *ear*, Christ the heart. "Whose *heart* the Lord opened" (Acts 16:14). All that the dispensers of the word can do, is but to work *knowledge* — Christ works *grace*. They can but give the *light* of the truth; Christ gives the *love* of the truth. They can only teach what to believe — Christ teaches how to believe. Christ gives us a taste of the word. Ministers may set the food of the word before you, and carve it out to you; but it is only Christ can cause you to *taste* it. "If so be you have tasted that the Lord is gracious," (1 Peter 2:3). "Taste and see that the Lord is good" (Psalm 34:8). It is one thing to *hear* a truth preached, another thing to *taste* it. David had got a taste of the word. "You have taught me: how sweet are Your words to my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" (Psalm 119:102, 103).

Some speak much of the light of reason improved. Alas! the plumb-line of reason, is too short to fathom the deep things of God; the light of *reason* will no more help a man to believe, than the light of a *candle* will help him to understand.

"The natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he *cannot* understand them" (1 Corinthians 2:14). He may

have more insight into the things of the world than a believer — but he does not see the deep things of God. A *swine* may see an acorn under a tree — but he cannot see a star!

If you will have the teachings of Christ, walk according to the knowledge you have already. Use your little knowledge well — and Christ will teach you more. "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of Myself" (John 7:17).

Lay aside those dispositions which may render the preached word ineffectual — such as **curiosity**. Some go to hear the word preached, not so much to get grace, as to enrich themselves with notions. Having "Itching ears" (2 Timothy 4:3). "You are unto them as a very lovely song of one that has a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument" (Ezekiel 33:32). Many go to the word to feast their *ears* only; they like the melody of the voice, and the *novelty of the opinions* (Acts 17:21). This is to love the *garnishing* of the dish — more than the food. It is to desire to be pleased rather than edified.

Lay aside **prejudice**. The Sadducees were prejudiced against the doctrine of the resurrection. Sometimes prejudice is against the *truths* preached, and sometimes against the *person* preaching. "There is yet one man, Micaiah, by whom we may inquire of the Lord — but I hate him!" (1 Kings 22:8). This hinders the power of the word. If a patient has an bad opinion of his physician, he will not take any of his medicines, however good they may be.

Lay aside **covetousness**. Covetousness is not only getting worldly gain unjustly — but *loving* it inordinately. This is a great hindrance to the preached word. The seed which fell among *thorns* was choked. The covetous man is thinking on the world, when he is hearing; his heart is in his shop. "They sit before you as My people, and they hear your

words. . . . but their heart goes after their covetousness" (Ezekiel 33:31).

Lay aside **partiality**. Partiality in hearing is when we like to hear *some* truths preached — but not *all*. We love to hear of Heaven — but not of self-denial; of reigning with Christ — but not of suffering with Him. "Speak unto us *smooth* things" (Isaiah 30:10), such as may not grate upon the conscience. Many like the *comforts* of the word — but not its reproofs.

Lay aside **ensoriousness**. Some, instead of judging themselves for sin, sit as judges upon the preacher; his sermon had either too much gall in it, or it was too long. They would sooner censure a sermon than practice it.

Lay aside **disobedience**. "All day long I have stretched forth My hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people" (Romans 10:21). If, when God speaks to us in His word, we are deaf — when we speak to Him in prayer, He will be dumb!

PRAYING

"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit." Ephesians 6:18

A godly man is a *praying* man. "Every one that is godly, shall pray unto You." As soon as grace is poured into the heart — prayer is poured out. Prayer is the soul's traffic with Heaven. God comes down to us by His Spirit — and we go up to Him by prayer.

A spiritual prayer is a **believing** prayer: "Whatever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive" (Matthew 21:22). The reason why so many prayers suffer shipwreck, is because they split against the *rock of unbelief*. *Praying without faith is shooting without bullets.*

A spiritual prayer is a **holy** prayer: "Therefore lift up *holy* hands (1 Timothy 2:8). *Prayer must be offered on the altar of a pure heart.* Sin lived in, makes the heart hard, and God's ear deaf. Sin stops the mouth of prayer, it does as the thief to the traveler, puts a gag in his mouth, that he cannot speak; "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Psalm 66:18). It is foolish to pray against sin — and then to sin against prayer.

A spiritual prayer is an **humble** prayer: "Lord, you have heard the desire of the *humble*" (Psalm 10:17). Prayer is the asking of an alms, which requires humility. It is lovely to see a *poor nothing* lie at the feet of its Maker; "Behold, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes" (Genesis 18:27). The lower the heart descends — the higher the prayer ascends. God accepts broken expressions — when they come from broken hearts.

A spiritual prayer is when we have **spiritual ends** in prayer. There is a vast difference between a spiritual prayer, and a carnal desire. The ends of a hypocrite are carnal; he looks a-squint in prayer; it is not the sense of his spiritual desires which move him — but rather lust; "You ask amiss, that you may consume it upon your lusts" (James 4:3). The sinner prays more for food, than grace; this God does not interpret praying — but *howling*. "They *howled* upon their beds: they assemble themselves for corn and wine" (Hosea 7:14). Prayers which lack a good aim — lack a good answer. A godly man drives the trade of prayer, that he may increase the stock of grace.

Prayer delights God's ear, it melts His heart, it opens His hand. God cannot deny a praying soul.

How hard is it sometimes to get leave of hearts to seek God! *Jesus Christ went more willingly to the cross — than we do to the throne of grace!*

Christ was in an agony at prayer (Luke 22:44). Many when they pray are rather in a *lethargy*, than in an agony. When they are about the world — they are all fire; when they are at prayer — they are all ice.

The joint stock of the prayers of saints works for good to the godly. "Prayer was made *without ceasing* of the church unto God for him. . . . And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him . . . and raised him up, . . . and his chains fell off" (Acts 12:5-7). *The angel fetched Peter out of prison — but it was prayer fetched the angel.*

"Effectual fervent prayer prevails much" (James 5:16). Cold prayers, like cold suitors, never speed. Prayer without fervency, is like a sacrifice without a fire. Prayer is called a "pouring out of the soul," to signify vehemence (1 Sam. 1:15). *Formality starves prayer.*

If you would keep your *mind* fixed in prayer, keep your *eye* fixed. "Unto you lift I up my eyes, O you who dwells in the heavens" (Psalm 123:1). Much *vanity* comes in at the eye. When the *eye* wanders in prayer — the *heart* wanders. *Love is a great fixer of the thoughts.* He who is in love, cannot keep his thoughts off the object. He who loves the world, has his thoughts upon the world. Did we love God more, our minds would be more intent upon him in prayer. He who gives himself liberty to have vain thoughts out of prayer — will scarcely have other thoughts in prayer.

He who leaves off prayer, leaves off to fear God. "You cast off fear, and restrain prayer before God" (Job 15:4). A man that has left off prayer, is fit for any wickedness. When Saul had given over inquiring after God, he went to the witch of Endor.

Faith is the breath of prayer; prayer is dead unless faith breathes in it. "Let him ask in faith" (James 1:6). "Whatever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive"

(Matthew 21:22). Without faith, it is only speaking, not praying. Faith must take prayer by the hand, or there is no coming near to God. A *faithless* prayer is *fruitless*. "They could not enter in because of unbelief," is as true of prayer; it cannot enter into Heaven because of unbelief.

MEDITATION

"His delight is in the law of the Lord; and in His law does he meditate day and night." Psalm 1:2.

Meditation is the soul's retiring of itself, that by a serious and solemn thinking upon God, the heart may be raised up to heavenly affections.

*Meditation is opposed by the **devil**.* The devil is an enemy to meditation; he cares not how much people read and hear. But he knows that meditation is a means to compose the heart, and to bring it into a gracious frame — now the devil is against that. Satan is content that you should be hearing and praying Christians, just so that you be not meditating Christians. He can stand your small shot, provided that you do not put in this bullet of meditation.

*Meditation is hindered by the **world**.* A Christian when he goes to meditate, must lock up himself from the world. The world spoils meditation. Christ went "apart" into the mount to pray — so you should go apart when you are to meditate. "Isaac went out to meditate in the field (Genesis 24:63). He sequestered and retired himself, that he might take a walk with God by meditation.

The world's music will either play us asleep, or distract us in our meditations. When a mote is gotten into the eye, it hinders the sight. Just so, when worldly thoughts, as motes have gotten into the mind, which is the eye of the soul — it cannot look up so steadfastly to Heaven by contemplation. When Abraham went to sacrifice, he left his servant and the

donkey at the bottom of the hill (Genesis 22:5). Just so, when a Christian is going up the *hill of meditation*, he should leave all secular cares at the bottom of the hill, that he may be alone, and spend time in Heaven. This is the first thing — lock and bolt the door against the world!

Meditation hindered by roving thoughts. There must be in meditation, a fixing the heart upon the object. Weak Christians are like quicksilver which cannot be made to fix; their thoughts are roving up and down and will not fix; like the bird that hops from one bough to another, and stays nowhere. David was a man fit to meditate: "O God, my heart is *fixed*" (Psalm 108:1). In meditation there must be a staying of the thoughts upon the object: "Mary kept all these things, and *pondered* them in her heart" (Luke 2:19).

Meditation and memory. The meditation on a thing has more sweetness in it, than the bare remembrance. The memory is the chest or cupboard to lock up a truth, meditation is the palate to feed on it! When David began to meditate on God, it was sweet to him as marrow (Psalm 63:5, 6). There is as much difference between a truth *remembered*, and a truth *meditated* on — as between a cordial in a glass, and a cordial drunk down.

Meditation and study. Meditation and study differ. Study is a work of the brain — meditation of the heart. Study sets the brain on work — meditation sets the affections on work. Study is the finding out of a truth — meditation is the spiritual improvement of a truth. The one *searches* for the vein of gold — the other *digs out* the gold. Study is like a *winter sun* that has little warmth and influence. But meditation leaves one in a holy frame — it melts the heart when it is frozen, and makes it drop into tears of love.

The **necessity** of meditation. Without meditation, the truth of God will not stay with us. The heart is hard, and the memory slippery, and without meditation, all is lost.

Meditation imprints and fastens a truth in the mind. Without meditation, the truths which we know will never affect our *hearts*, "These words which I command you this day shall be in your *heart*" (Deuteronomy 6:6). How can the word be in the heart, unless it be worked in by meditation? *As an hammer drives a nail to the head — so meditation drives a truth to the heart.* Without meditation the word preached may increase *notion*, not *affection*. Meditation fetches *life* in a truth. There are many truths which lie, as it were, in the heart dead — which when we meditate upon, they begin to have light and *heat* in them.

The **time** for meditation. The best time to converse with God is, before worldly occasions stand knocking at the door to be let in. The *morning* is, as it were, the *cream of the day* — let the cream be taken off, and let God have it. Wind up your heart towards Heaven in the beginning of the day — and it will go the better all the day after. He who loses his heart in the morning in the world — will hardly find it again all the day. O! Christians, let God have your *morning* meditations. He takes it in disdain to have the world served before Him.

Suppose a king and a servant were to dine in the same room, and to sit at two tables. If the servant should have his food brought up, and be served first, the king might take it in high disdain, and look upon it as a contempt done to his person.

Just so, when the world shall be served first, all our morning thoughts attending it, and the Lord shall be put off with *the dregs of the day*, is not this a contempt done to the God of glory?

God deserves the first of our thoughts; some of His first thoughts were upon us; we had a being in His *thoughts* before we had a being. He thought upon us "*before* the foundations of the world." Before we fell — He

was thinking how to raise us. We had the morning of His thoughts. We have taken up His thoughts from eternity. If we have had some of God's first thoughts — well may He have our first thoughts.

"In the morning, the dew fell" (Ex. 16:13). The dew of a blessing falls early; now we are likeliest to have God's company. If you would meet with a friend, you go early in the morning before he is gone out for the day.

I would not by this, wholly exclude evening meditation. Isaac went out to meditate in the eventide (Genesis 24:63). When business is over, and everything calm, it is good to be with God in the evening. God had his evening sacrifice, as well as His morning sacrifice (Ex. 29:39) — as the *cream* at the top is sweet, so the *sugar* at the bottom.

The **length of time** to meditate. Meditate until you find your heart grow warm. If when a man is cold, you ask how long he should stand by the fire? Surely, until he is thoroughly warm, and made fit for his work. So, Christian, your heart is cold; never a day, no, not the hottest day in summer — but your heart freezes. Now stand at the *fire of meditation* until you find your affections warmed, and you are made fit for spiritual service. David mused until his heart waxed hot within him: "While I was musing, the fire burned" (Psalm 39:3).

The SPIRITUAL GAIN of meditation:

Meditation is an excellent means to **profit by the Word**. Reading may bring a truth into the *head* — but meditation brings it into the *heart*. Better to meditate on one sermon — than hear five.

There is a disease in children called the rickets, when they have great heads — but their bodies are small and do not thrive. Many professors have the *spiritual rickets*, they have great heads, much knowledge — but yet they thrive not in

godliness, their heart is faint, their feet feeble, they walk not vigorously in the ways of God! The cause of this disease, is the lack of meditation. Knowledge without meditation — makes us no better than devils! Satan is an angel of light — yet *black* enough!

Meditation makes the heart serious. Some Christians have light hearts: "Her prophets are light" (Zeph. 3:4). A light Christian will be blown into any opinion or vice — you may blow a feather any way. There are many feathery Christians; the devil no sooner comes with a temptation, but they are ready to take fire! Now, meditation makes the heart serious. Meditation solidifies a Christian. Solid gold is best — the *solid Christian* is the only metal that will pass current with God.

Meditation is the bellows of the affections. We light our affections, at this fire of meditation, "while I was musing the fire burned" (Psalm 39:3). Illumination makes us shining lamps, meditation makes us burning lamps.

Meditation fits for prayer. Meditation first furnishes with *matter* to pray — and then furnishes with a *heart* to pray. "I muse on the work of Your hands, I stretch forth my hands unto You" (Psalm 143:5, 6). The musing of his *head* — made way for the stretching forth of his *hands* in prayer. Prayer is the child of meditation: meditation leads the van, and prayer brings up the rear.

Meditation is a strong antidote against sin. Sin puts a worm into conscience, a sting into death, a fire into Hell! Did men meditate of this, that after all their dainty dishes, death will bring in the reckoning in Hell, they would say as David in another sense, "Let me not eat of their dainties" (Psalm 141:4). The devil's apple has a bitter core!

Meditation is an excellent means **to lessen our esteem of the world.** Great things seem little to him who stands high — if he could live among the stars, the earth would seem as

nothing. He who is catching at a crown, will not fish for gudgeons.

DIRECTIONS for meditation:

Read before you meditate. "Give attendance to reading" (1 Timothy 4:13). Then it follows, "meditate on these things" (5:15). Reading does furnish with matter; it is the oil that feeds the lamp of meditation. Be sure your meditations are founded upon Scripture.

Reading without meditation is unfruitful.
Meditation without reading is dangerous!

Do not meditate on too many things at once. One truth driven home by meditation, will most kindly affect the heart. Drive but one wedge of meditation at a time — but be sure you drive it home to the heart! Those who aim at a whole flock of birds, hit none.

Pray over your meditations. Prayer fastens meditation upon the soul. Prayer is a-tying a knot at the end of meditation that it does not slip.

Let meditation be reduced to practice. Live over your meditation. "This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth; but you shall meditate therein day and night, that you may *observe* to do according to all the law" (Joshua 1:8). Meditation and practice, like two sisters, must go hand in hand. The end of meditation, is action. Those who meditate in God's Word, and do not practice it — are no better than the devil; he knows much — but still he is a devil!

DEATH

"The time of my departure is at hand." 2 Timothy 4:6.

"I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far!" Philippians 1:23.

"But this I say, brethren, the time is short" (1 Corinthians 7:29). If we reckon that for time which is *well spent*, then time is brought into a narrow compass indeed. A great part of our time lies fallow: subtract from our life all the time of eating, drinking, sleeping, besides idle impertinences — and then how short is our time! How little is the time wherein we can truly say, "This time I have lived!" O how little is the time *lived* — but time *lost*. The time is short, why should we love that over-much, which we cannot keep over-long?

The world rings changes, it is never constant but in its disappointments. The world is but a great inn, where we are to stay a night or two, and be gone — what madness is it so to set our heart upon our inn, as to forget our eternal home?

The world is a great inn; we are *guests* in this inn. Travelers when they are met in their inn, do not spend all their time in speaking about their inn — they are to lodge there but a few hours, and they are gone. But they are speaking of their home, and the country where they are traveling. So when we meet together, we should not be talking only about the world; we are to leave this presently — but we should talk of our heavenly country (Hebrews 11:16).

We are travelers who take up our lodgings here for a night; and Paul longed to be out of his inn. "I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far!" The apostle does not say, "I *must* depart"; but, "I *desire* to depart." All men *must* depart. There is a *dying principle* in all. Nebuchadnezzar's image, though it had a head of gold — yet had *feet of clay* (Dan. 2:43). The strongest man stands upon feet of clay, and must moulder away in time; death will come at last.

The apostle does not say, Having a desire to *die* — but "to *depart*." What a wicked man fears — a godly man hopes

for. "I desire," says Paul, "to depart". A sinner cries, "I am loath to depart."

David calls death a going out of the world (Psalm 39:13). A wicked man does not *go* out — but is *dragged* out. If a wicked man were put to his choice, he would never come where God is; but would choose the serpent's curse, to eat dust (Genesis 3:14) — but not to return to dust.

A soul enlivened with grace, looks upon the world as a wilderness, wherein are fiery serpents — and he desires to get out of this wilderness. Simeon, having taken Christ in his arms, cries out, "Lord, now let you Your servant depart in peace" (Luke 2:29). He who has taken Christ into the arms of his faith — will sing Simeon's song, "Lord, let Your servant depart." *The bird desires to go out of the cage, though it be made of gold.*

Death will dry up a believer's tears. "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes" (Rev. 7:17). Weeping is nothing but a *cloud of sorrow* gathered in the heart, dropping into water. Ever since we looked upon the tree of knowledge — our eyes have watered. Death shall stop the bottle of tears — and open the gate of paradise. A believer's dying day, is his ascension day to glory.

The apostle Paul had three great desires, and they were all centered in Christ:

One was to be *found* in Christ (Philippians 3:9);
the other was to *magnify* Christ (Philippians 1:20);
the third was to be *with* Christ (Philippians 1:23).

Paul does not say, I desire to depart, and be *in Heaven* — but to be *with Christ*. It is Christ's presence which makes Heaven. It is not the cherubim or seraphim which make paradise; but "the Lamb in the center of the throne" (Revelation 5:6).

There had been little comfort in departing, if the apostle had not put in this word, "to be with Christ." Death will make a glorious change to a believer; it is but crossing the *Dead Sea* — and he shall be with Christ. Death to a child of God is like the whirlwind to the prophet Elijah; it blew off his mantle — but carried the prophet up to Heaven! Just so, death is a boisterous wind which blows off the mantle of the flesh (for the body is but the mantle which the soul is wrapped in) — but it carries the soul up to Christ! The day of a believer's dissolution, is the day of his *coronation*.

Though death is a bitter cup, there is sugar at the bottom! Though the flesh calls death the *last enemy* (1 Corinthians 15:26) — yet faith calls it the *best friend* — it brings a man to Christ, which is far better.

To be with Christ implies we shall see Him as He is; here on earth we see Him but through a glass darkly. To be with Christ implies we shall not only see Him but *enjoy* Him: "Enter you into the joy of your Lord" (Matthew 25:21); not only see it — but enter into it. To be with Christ implies *duration*; "So shall we be with the Lord forever" (1 Thessalonians 4:17). The fashion of this world passes away (1 Corinthians 7:31). Earthly comforts, though they may be *sweet* — they are swift. This privilege of being with Christ, runs parallel with eternity! So shall we be with the Lord forever!"

To a believer it is a *happy* departing. To a wicked man it is a sad departing — there is nothing but departing; he departs out of this life, and he departs from Christ! "Depart from Me, you cursed" (Matthew 25:41).

If we are *in* Christ while we live, we shall go *to* Christ while we die. We must be *in* Christ, before we can be *with* Christ.

This is that which makes Heaven to be Heaven, "We shall be with the Lord forever!"

"Enter into the joy of your Lord" (Matthew 25:21). Oh amazing! The saints enter into God's own joy! They have not only the joy which God *bestows* — but the joy which God *enjoys*.

God is a *constant* Friend. "His compassions never fails" (Lam. 3:22). God is a friend forever. "Having loved His own, He loved them unto the end" (John 13:1). He loves to the end — and there is no end of that love. How *invincible* is the love of Christ! "It is as strong as death" (Cant. 8:6). Death might take away our life, but not His love. And that which makes this love of Christ the more stupendous, is that there was nothing in us to excite or draw forth His love. He did not love us *because* we were worthy — but by loving us He *made* us worthy.

Christ's love does cease at the hour of death. We write on our letters, "Your friend *until* death"; but Christ wrote in another style, "Your friend *after* death." Christ died once — but lives forever. He is now testifying His affection for us, He is interceding for us. When He was done dying — He was not done loving.

"Enter into the joy of your Lord" (Matthew 25:21). Here on earth, joy enters into the saints — in Heaven the saints enter into joy. There can be no more sorrow in Heaven — than there is joy in Hell.

Why should we shed tears immoderately — for those who have tears wiped from their eyes? Why should we be swallowed up of grief for them — who are swallowed up of joy? They are gone to their kingdom. They are not lost, but gone a little before us. They have not perished — but are glorified.

Death may take away a few worldly comforts — but it gives that which is better. It takes away a short lease — and gives a glorious inheritance. If the saints possess a kingdom when they die — they have no cause to fear death. A prince

would not be afraid to cross the sea, though tempestuous, if he were sure to be crowned as soon as he came to shore.

CROWNING

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day — and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing!" 2 Timothy 4:7-8

We must run the *race* — before we wear the *crown*. If you set the crown on Christ's head while you live — He will set the crown on your head when you die.

Behold, what manner of love is this, that Christ should be arraigned — and we adorned; that the curse should be laid on His head — and the crown set on ours.

"Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness." A Christian's best things are *to come*. We are here as Princes in disguise, the world knows us not; but there is a crown laid up for us. While we are laying out for God — He is laying up for us.

If you would wear the crown of righteousness, then *walk* in the way of righteousness. "In the way of righteousness is life" (Proverbs 12:28). But, alas, this is a very *untrodden* way.

Some *know* the way of righteousness — but do not walk in it.

Others *commend* the way of righteousness — but do not walk in it.

Others instead of walking in the way, they are good only at *crossing* the way; they *oppose* the way of righteousness; such are persecutors.

Others walk a few steps in the way — and then go back

again. These are apostates, as if they were going to Heaven backwards.

Others walk half in the way, and half out. These are loose professors who under a notion of Christian liberty, walk carelessly, crying up *justification* — that they may weaken the power of *sanctification*. Surely were there none other Bible to read in — but the lives of some professors, we should read but little Scripture there!

Others instead of walking in the way, traduce and slander the way of righteousness. The way of truth shall be evil spoken of. (2 Peter 2:2).

Others creep in the way, they do not walk they go on but very slow. Those who look on can hardly tell whether they make any progress or not!

O! all you who would *wear* the crown of righteousness — *walk* in the way of righteousness. Live so that if we could suppose the Bible to be lost, it might be found again in your lives!

If you would wear the crown of righteousness, put on the armor of righteousness (2 Corinthians 6:7). If you will have this crown, you must fight for it (2 Timothy 4:7, 8).

"The time is short," says the apostle. We are ready to strike sail, we are almost ashore, and then we shall be crowned. The crown is near by, you sail apace. Though we bear the *cross*, we shall wear the *crown*.

A Christian's *work* is soon over — but not his *reward*. How great is that reward which thoughts cannot measure, nor time finish.

In the future life, the saints shall be out of the noise of the drum and cannon, and not one stroke shall be struck more; then shall they not appear in their *armor* — but their *white robes*.

The cross is *heavy* — but the *sharper* the cross, the brighter the crown!

"Love never fails" (1 Corinthians 13:8). Faith is the staff we walk with in this life. "We walk by faith" (2 Corinthians 5:7). But we shall set this staff at Heaven's door, and only love shall enter.

Heaven itself is not a saint's reward — Jesus is. "Whom have I in Heaven but You?" (Psalm 73:25).

"Hold up my goings in Your paths that my footsteps slip not" (Psalm 17:5). "Lord, hold me up — that I may hold out. You have set the crown at the end of the race, let me run the race, that I may wear the crown." It was Beza's prayer, and let it be ours, "Lord, perfect what You have begun in me, that I may not suffer shipwreck when I am almost at the haven."

Love takes possession of glory — but faith gives a title to it. Love is the crowning grace in Heaven — but faith is the conquering grace upon earth. "This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith."

"Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed" (Romans 13:11). You are within a few days' march of Heaven. Salvation is near to you. Christians, it is but a little while — and you will be done weeping and praying — and be triumphing. You shall put off your mourning clothes — and put on white robes. You shall put off your armor — and put on a victorious crown.

Only Heaven's glory is commensurate to the vast desires of an immortal soul. The soul is never satisfied — until it has God for its portion, and Heaven for its haven. The glory of Heaven is pure and unmixed. There, gold has no alloy. There, the rose of Sharon grows without thorns. There, is ease without pain, honor without disgrace, life without death. Physicians there are out of date: no distemper there,

no passing funeral bell, or bill of mortality. "Neither can they die any more" (Luke 20:36).

The glory is distributed to *every* saint. In an earthly kingdom, the crown goes but to one, a crown will fit but one head; but above the crown goes to all (Rev. 1:6). All the elect are kings. The land is settled chiefly upon the heir — but in Heaven all the saints are heirs. "Heirs of God, and co-heirs with Christ!" (Romans 8:17). God has land enough to give to all His heirs!