Heaven and Hell Epitomized

George Swinnock, 1627-1673

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The Epistle Dedicatory

To my esteemed friend, Richard Beresford.

This small treatise (part whereof was formerly preached in your ears at the funeral of your dear mother) presents itself this second time to your eyes, not for your protection, (divine truths desire none from men, and human errors deserve none from any,) but for your direction. It contains that in it which is able to make you wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

You have a double right to the dedication of this book: partly in regard of the occasion of it; partly in regard of my obligation unto you, which is great, for your liberality; but far greater for your encouraging of, and exemplariness in, the truth and life of Christianity.

I did not think myself a little bound to that providence which gave you relation to that parish whereof I was once the minister, and I suppose not without cause, when the power of godliness has few such considerable patrons. Men of your rank, though sometimes, to stop the mouth of conscience, or for their credit, they take up a form and profession, yet do usually neglect, if not cursedly deride—the strictness and power of religion. They are too often, like the moon, furthest from, and in direct opposition unto, the Sun of righteousness, when they are at the full of outward plenty, and receive most light of divine bounty from him; *their carnal hearts, as the sea, turn the showers of mercy from Heaven, and fresh streams from the earth—into the **salt** waters of corruption*. In our natural bodies, the more fat there is, the less blood in the veins, and, by consequence, the less life. Greatness and goodness are beautiful and happy, but rare conjunctions. You know who has said, 'Not many such are called,' 1 Corinthians 1:26; and experience teaches us, that they are like stars of the first magnitude, thinly scattered in the firmament of a country. How much therefore are you engaged to that distinguishing love of Christ, which enables you to look after the things of a better life!

I shall take the liberty, which I know you will give, to speak a few words to you by way of advice.

First, My counsel will be, that you would more and more ensure your effectual calling. We say: where men intend to live long, they build strong. I am confident all that your desires, for your endless condition in the eternal world, depends, under Christ, upon your inward change. And if ever any wires had need to be firm and strong, then questionless they upon which such heavy weights hang as your eternal, unchangeable estate.

You have a large room in the hearts of many who are holy. But, alas, sir, the best man's confidence of me would prove but a bad evidence for Heaven! He is not approved whom man commends, but whom the Lord commends.

The great affection which you bear to the souls of the people among whom you were born, is worthy of imitation; and so is your care and cost in scattering some practical and home treatises in several families, whereby souls may be converted, and wherein you may have comfort at the day of Christ; for *soul-charity is the soul of charity*. But the best charity begins at home, though it never ends there; your main business lies within your own doors, to make sure of that good work within you which shall be perfected hereafter.

The ordinary security which most men trust to, will not serve when they come in the nest life to lay their claims, and show their deeds for the inheritance of the saints in light. Many flaws will then be found in their evidences, which now, through their willful blindness, they neither see nor fear. He had need to have armor of proof, that would enter the list with his enemy *death*, and not be foiled. The heart not ballasted with renewing grace, may hold out in the calm of life, and shallows of time; but when it meets with the storm of death, and launches into the ocean of eternity, it suffers a desperate and everlasting shipwreck. The lack of this is the leak which sinks many a precious vessel (the soul) in the gulf of perdition!

There is as much difference between a nominal and a real Christian, as between a lifeless picture and a living person. True Christianity, which consists in the soul's humble, sincere acceptance of, and hearty resolved dedication unto Christ, as Savior and sovereign—is a riddle to most. There are many professing Christians, as Salvian complained in his time, without Christ; but they who know experimentally what the sanctification of the Holy Spirit means, are few indeed. The *moralist* in his best dress of civility, the *formalist* in his gaudy attire of ceremonies, and the *hypocrite* in all his royalty—is not arrayed like one of these. I do not write these things as in the least suspecting your sincerity, but to quicken you to a godly jealousy over your own soul. If the apostles and disciples needed such rousing cautions: 'Take heed lest that day come upon you unaware,' Luke 21:34; 'Take heed lest any man fail of the grace of God,' Hebrews 12:15—then much more you and I, who are more drowsy and prone to slumber—require awakening considerations.

Secondly, That you would walk exemplarily. Man is a creature which is led more by the eye than the ear—by patterns rather than by precepts. Great men therefore, which are copies after which many write, had need to be exact. You are the looking-glasses by which others dress themselves; the heads of the people, Deuteronomy 1:15; now the whole body will go along with the head.

You are like beacons upon a hill, visible to all. The sun may as soon go unseen, as you unobserved. A small star may be darkened, and none take notice of it; but if the great luminaries are eclipsed or obscured—then a thousand eyes will be gazing on them. A little spot in silk or scarlet, is more looked on than a great one in russet or sackcloth. A crack in a pebble is nothing so eyed or harmful as a small flaw in a jewel. Satan does therefore plant his strongest batteries against the royal forts of magistracy and ministry, (whoever are spared, David and Peter shall be sifted,) knowing that he gains a double advantage by their miscarriage, example, and scandal—by which two wings it will soar higher, and fly much further. An ordinary tradesman may become bankrupt without much noise; but if an alderman or merchant, that had a name for a great estate, breaks— then the city and country ring of it. The honor of God and credit of the gospel are much engaged in the carriage of a gentleman that is a professor. The many eyes that look upon you, the many feet that follow after you, and the glory of the blessed God which is concerned in you—all call aloud to you, to have your eyes in your head, (as the wise man's phrase is, Ecclesiastes 2:14,) to make straight paths for your feet, and to walk nobly, exactly, worthy of the Lord, even unto all well-pleasing.

Besides, *honor is apt to be a snare and temptation, and therefore requires the greater care and circumspection*. Places of honor are like strong meats, which, being well concocted, yield much good nourishment, bring much glory to God, and good to souls—but they are of very difficult digestion. He must have a strong brain that will bear much wine, and he much grace who will walk humbly and closely with God in a high condition.

In a word, your time is little, your work is great; your talents are many, your account will be weighty; your Savior observes every moment how tender you are of his honor, who was so tender of your eternal welfare; how you testify your thankfulness to him for all the bitter agony and ignominy which he suffered for you. You shall shortly never more have the least opportunity (though you would give a thousand worlds for it) to do anything in, for God's glory, your own and others' good. Work therefore the work of him who sent you into the world, while it is the day of your life—for the night of death is hastening on you, wherein you cannot work. Up and be doing, and may the Lord be with you!

Sir, I have no more to speak to you, but that the hearer of prayers may hear often from you, that I may take heed to the ministry which I have received from the Lord, and fulfill it, and to assure you that my prayers at the throne of grace shall be, that you and your pious wife may continue to dwell together as fellow-heirs of the grace of life; and your hopeful children may be planted with, and grow up in, grace, until they shall be transplanted into the true paradise, the kingdom of glory. This, through the help of God , shall be the petition of

Your sincere servant in the ever blessed Savior,

George Swinnock

To the Reader

Christian Reader,
There are two things which should be of highest regard with us: a holy life, and a comfortable death; and they are both so inseparably conjoined, that in vain do we hope for the one without the other. Which of these is to be preferred, was a doubt which put the apostle to an anxious disquisition. On the one side there was service, on the other side there was gain. If he lived, he would preach Christ; if he died, he would enjoy Christ, and remain with him forever; therefore Paul was at a stand-still, and knew not what to choose. Surely he had a holy heart that could thus set duty against enjoyment, and think his service worthy to come into competition with his spiritual and eternal interests! That which made Paul so indifferent as to the means, was the resolved fixing of his scope—his end and scope was Christ's glory! Now, it was all one to him how God would use him to such a purpose; as a man who is resolved upon a journey, takes the way as he finds it, fair or foul—it is enough that it leads him to his journey's end. So that Christ might be glorified, either by his ministry, or by martyrdom—Paul was indifferent; it was enough that Christ should be glorified. None have such a sincere respect to Christ's glory, but those who live in the communion with him.

Men's *tendency* is according to the *principle* by which they are acted; carnal men, that act by their own life, and live upon their own root, bring forth fruit to themselves. Water rises no higher than its fountain. But those that have life from Christ, use it for him; to them to live is Christ; as they live in him, and by him, so they live for him, and to him.

We need then to take all occasions to press men to get into Christ, that they may live in the communion with him, and in his strength and influence, be carried out to his glory. This is that which will make life serviceable, and death sweet; and to this we need to be pressed by all kind of arguments both those which are taken from God's relation to us, as also those which are taken from our expectations from him, Romans 14:8. We are all the Lord's by every kind of right and title, and therefore owe all manner of service to him, even though nothing should come of it; but they that do the Lord's *work* will not lack his *wages*; though he might require our service out of mere sovereignty, yet he condescends to propound a reward, and that so full and ample, that it should ravish our hearts every time we think of it.

These considerations, which I have here loosely discoursed of, are notably improved in the ensuing treatise, which being communicated to me by a friend of the author, I could not but return it with this character, that it is a grave and judicious discourse, and yet quickened with such warmth and vigor of illustration, as that it may be of great use to awaken men unto more seriousness in the great concernments of their souls, among which nothing can be more momentous than our living in Christ, that we may live *to* him, and then *with* him for evermore. This being signified, I leave you to the work itself, which I cannot but judge to proceed from one both of a good head and heart, and profess myself,

Yours in the service of the gospel,
Thomas Manton

The Preface and Epistle to the Reader

I have sometimes considered with myself, (not without some remorse and grief of spirit,) the multitudes of men and women, that even in those places where the Word of God is plainly and powerfully taught, run headlong in the broad way which leads to destruction! And, indeed, if my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night, (though every tear were a tear of blood,) I could never sufficiently bewail the slain of the daughter of my people, of that parish to which the providence of God has called me.

That the lying vanities of this world should by most be so greedily pursued, and the real mercies relating to a better world so wretchedly despised;

that a brutish flesh, which must shortly be food for worms, should be so highly prized and constantly gratified;

that an angelical spirit, the soul, which must live forever, be so basely slighted and unworthily neglected;

that every soul-damning lust should be so heartily embraced, and the soul-saving Lord but coldly and casually entertained;

that the road to Hell should be so exceedingly filled, and the way to Heaven almost wholly unoccupied

—surely this ought to be for a bitter lamentation! And oh, what sea of blood is enough to bemoan this horrid wickedness!

It has seemed to me, therefore, a matter worthy of diligent inquiry—what special malefactors should be indicted for these many soul-mischiefs, and soul-murders which are committed among us. And truly, by that acquaintance which I have with the Word of God, and experience of the soul-affairs of men, I find, though many accessories might be named, that ignorance ought to be arraigned and condemned as one of the principals: 'The people perish for lack of knowledge!' Hosea 4:6. Inner darkness is the beaten path to utter darkness—to the blackness of darkness forever. Men in this mist of ignorance, like ships, run upon those rocks which split them eternally.

As the Indians prefer every toy and trifle before their mines of gold; so they prefer every sensual, sinful pleasure, every foolish, perishing creature, before . . .
the beautiful image of God,
the unsearchable riches in Christ,
the endless happiness in Heaven;
because they know not the vanity and emptiness of the former, the excellency and preciousness of the latter. Did men know the gift of God, and who it is that speaks to them, and what he offers—-they would ask of him, and he would give them living waters! John 4:10.

What is the reason that so many make a mock of sin, and dance merrily over the infernal pit, and play with the unquenchable fire—but ignorance? The child does not know that the fire will burn him. As horses rush into the battle—so the ungodly fight against their own life, knowing it will be to their destruction and utter damnation. These *Balaam's* run greedily after the wages of unrighteousness, not seeing the angel who stands *in the way with a drawn sword in his hand ready to kill them. Did they know what they were doing when they willfully break God's law, they would sooner leap into a furnace of scalding lead, than provoke so jealous a God!* But sin goes in a disguise, and thence is welcome. Like Judas, it kisses and kills! Like Joab, it salutes and slays! The foolish sinner sees the pleasant streams of Jordan, but not the Dead Sea, into which they will certainly empty themselves to their utter ruin.

What is the reason that the devil carries so many captive at his will, leads them where he pleases, but ignorance? They are ignorant of his wiles, of his evil devices. They know not, as drunken Lot of his daughters, when he comes, nor when he goes. The prince of darkness takes up his throne in their dark understandings: 'The God of this world blinds their minds,' 2 Corinthians 4:4, 'lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine upon them.' *How easy is it for the Deceiver to lead blind men out of the way, and then to destroy them!* As Pliny says the eagle deals with the deer, she lights upon his horns, and there flutters up and down, filling his eyes with dust borne in her feathers, that at last he may cast himself from the rock, and so be made a prey unto her. In the same way, the wicked one binds a blindfold over men's eyes, and then turns them off the ladder, and executes them!

What is the cause of men's scandalous practices, but ignorance? 'The dark corners of the earth are full of the habitation of cruelty,' Psalm 74:20; the *flood-gates of wickedness* are open, when the *door of knowledge* is shut. The cause why there was no mercy nor truth in the land, but swearing, and lying, and stealing, committing adultery, and blood, was ignorance! Hosea 4:1, 2. Ignorance is the root of bitterness on which those cursed fruits grow; this is the blind captain which, like Zilpah, has a *Gad*—a troop of enormities following him. Paul blames his ignorance for his blasphemy and persecuting the church, 1 Timothy 1:13. The reason why the heathen did not *call* on God, was because they did not *know* him, Psalm 79:6. The most ugly and monstrous wickedness which ever was hatched or brought forth—calls ignorance *mother*. 'Had they known, they would never have crucified the Lord of glory,' 1 Corinthians 2:8; Acts 3:15, 17.

What Augustine says of *original sin*, is, in some respects, true of ignorance; it is a sin as contrary to the law of God, which requires men to know him, 1 Chronicles 28:9; Leviticus 5:15, 18. Ignorance is the *punishment* of sin, just as it is the fruit of our apostasy from God. Ignorance is the *cause* of sin, as toads and serpents grow in dark cellars. As hidden ale-houses are sinks and sources of all villainies—so are dark and blind hearts. They are 'strangers to the life of God through the *ignorance* that is in them,' Ephesians 4:18.

What is the cause of men's erroneous principles, but ignorance? *They err, not knowing the Scriptures*, Matthew 22:29. Impostors, like cozening tradesmen, when they have men in a dark shop, put what rotten, deceitful ware they please into their hands; they lead captive silly women who are ever learning, and never coming to the knowledge of the truth, 2 Timothy 3:6, 7. Heretics, like nurses, may put meat or poison into their mouths, who are babes in understanding. Those who are *children* in knowledge will be tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine. *The blind man eats many a fly, and the ignorant man swallows many an error.* Men will easily be brought to deny the truths which they understand not, and to 'speak evil of the things which they know not,' Jude 10.

What is the reason that men put God off, either with no service or worship at all—or else with a few cold, superficial, lazy duties, without either heat or life—but their ignorance? They know not the majesty, purity, jealousy, and severity of God. They worship whom they do not know, and therefore they worship him, they care not how. Their altars are of any slight form or fashion, because, like the Athenians, they are dedicated to the unknown God; those who know not their master's will cannot obey it. Some cry up their good meanings to excuse their ignorance; but ignorant devotion is like feet without eyes, which the farther they carry men, the greater is their wandering and woe!

What is the reason that men take up short of Christ and renewing grace; that they please themselves with the shadow instead of the substance of religion; that they cry *peace, peace* to their souls, only upon some outward privileges, or a few inward good meanings, as they call them, when they are in a most damnable condition, and sudden destruction is ready to seize on them, as travail on a woman with child, which they cannot escape! Surely it is ignorance of the nature of Christianity and sanctification; they know not what regeneration is, and what faith and repentance are, which are the conditions upon which salvation may be had. Therefore they rest in *religious forms*, which will fade, when their hearts and lives deny the power of godliness. This is not as papists would persuade their deluded votaries, the *mother of devotion*—but the monster which causes such hideous births of corruption. This is the epidemic disease that reigns all the year long, and kills, I fear, more souls than any of our new distempers does bodies! 'For the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on those who know not God, and who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. They shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power!' 2 Thessalonians 1:7–9. Ignorance of God and his gospel is the source of men's sins on earth, and eternal sufferings in Hell!

But one would think such truths as these might be seasonable in Turkey or India, or in Spain and Italy, where the tree of knowledge is forbidden fruit, where they may not read their Father's mind in their mother tongue. But is it possible that in England, where the will and Word of God is more powerfully preached, more practically applied, more clearly discovered, than in any nation of the world, that there should be any ignorant people? Alas, alas! we find by woeful experience that there are many, very many, Indians and heathen, for ignorance, in England—men and women who know as little of God and holiness, of Christ, his natures, offices, of true faith and repentance—as if they had been born and bred up all their time in Turkey or India! I am ashamed to write what I know of the sottish, stupid, hellish ignorance of many—and some who are aged too, that are going to die—and yet never knew what it was to live, either to God or their souls. May the good Lord affect my heart more with the danger and dreadfulness of their eternal conditions!

Oh how sad is it that so many precious souls should lie lazing on their beds of security and idleness, and though the sun shines brightly in upon them, they will not draw their curtains and open their eyes to behold it! That in a valley of vision, a Goshen, a land of light, thousands should live and die in worse than Egyptian darkness; that the Bible should be a sealed book to them, and almost every one have the dark side of that glorious pillar towards him!

Reader, to cure this soul-murdering distemper, I have endeavored, according to the trust committed to me, and the grace bestowed on me, to reveal in this treatise the life in Christ, or true Christianity, with the matchless, endless felicity that accompanies it; as also the nature and danger of unregeneracy, with the means to come out of it, by which you may see that many cozen their souls with counterfeit coin (false evidences for Heaven) instead of true, which will not abide the touchstone of Scripture; and so, like Uriah, they carry those letters about them, though they know it not, which will at last cost them their lives, and cause their eternal deaths. That there is no fool like the sinner who sells his soul for a song; his Savior, his eternal happiness, the unspeakable pleasures at God's right hand for evermore, for the perishing, empty profits, and base, brutish pleasures of sin, which are but for a season. That, though sin be delightful in the act, to carnal wretches, yet it will be bitterness in the end. It will be a bittersweet to all its lovers, when for their momentary pleasure they shall be recompensed with eternity of intolerable, inconceivable pain; that it is not for nothing that ministers call so loudly and earnestly to you to kill those lusts which would kill you, and to 'follow after holiness, without which no man shall ever see the Lord,' Hebrews 12:14. It will teach you that God and Christ, Heaven and Hell, your soul and eternity, death and judgment, are not things to be dallied with; believe it, you will one day find that it is bad jesting with such edged tools. Surely the greatest seriousness that is imaginable is too too little for them. Oh had you but the thousandth part of that seriousness about them which they deserve and call for at your hands, you would have other manner of thoughts of them, and carriage towards them, than now you have. Well, I have four special things at present from the living God to commend to you, and leave with you, in order to your eternal good, (I know not how soon I may be taken from you.) If you love your soul, practice them faithfully; if not, answer the contrary when you and I shall meet in the eternal world, at the great and terrible day of the Lord Jesus.

First, Do you labor for the knowledge of God and his Son, yourself, and the duty which you owe to your Maker and Redeemer. Have you not read the doleful consequence of ignorance? and does it not nearly concern you to get out of that damnable condition?

Without this you can never be religious, notwithstanding all your pretenses that you meanest well, and have as good a heart as the best: 'If you know not the God of your fathers, you can never serve him with a perfect heart,' 1 Chronicles 28:9. All your worship will be but wild, and wandering from God; all your services but the sacrifice of a fool. The foundation of obedience must be laid in knowledge, Malachi 1:8; until then you offers up to the Lord, the lame and blind, which he will not accept. God expects reasonable services, Romans 12:1; such for which you can give a good reason out of his word, which must be the warrant of your worship. Be not therefore in shape a man, a reasonable creature, and, as Nebuchadnezzar, in heart a beast; be not as the horse and mule, which has no understanding, Psalm 32:9.

Without knowledge you can not be saved: 'If the gospel be hid, it is hid to them that perish,' 2 Corinthians 4:3. Willful ignorance is a sad sign that you are in God's black bill. If God will ever have you to be saved, he will bring you to the knowledge of this truth, 1 Timothy 2:4. When Haman's face was covered, his execution was near. Do not delude and destroy your soul by presuming that your ignorance will not damn you; for if you are without knowledge, he who made you will not save you, and he who formed you will show you no mercy, Isaiah 27:11. Mark, reader, but this one place, Psalm 95:10, 11, where the God of truth confirms it by an oath, that they which do not know his ways shall not enter into his rest. One would think that a prisoner should be both earnest and diligent to learn his neck verse, who knows he must be hanged if he cannot read; and do not you read in broad characters, in the Word of God , that you must be an eternal monument of divine fury in Hell, if you do not learn to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent? Does it not then behoove you to be diligent for knowledge?

1. How should you wait on the Word of God , which enlivens the mind, and makes wise the simple! Psalm 19:7, 8. David had more understanding than the ancients, because God's word was his meditation, Psalm 119:98, 99. Watch at wisdom's gate, with a humble, hungry soul, and God may fill you with good things. God makes manifest the savor of his knowledge by his ministers in every place, 2

Corinthians 2:14. If you would see, go where the sun shines.

2. Ply the throne of grace with incessant prayers, that God would enlighten your mind in the knowledge of his will. If any man lack wisdom or knowledge, let him ask it of God, who gives liberally, and upbraids not, James 1:5. Entreat him to open your eyes, that you may see the wonderful things contained in his law, Psalm 119:18. 'If you cry after knowledge, and lift up your voice for understanding; if you Seek her as silver, and search for her as for hid treasure; then shall you understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord gives wisdom; out of his mouth comes knowledge and understanding,' Proverbs 2:3–6.

3. Take heed of sinning against those commands which you know. Hold not the truth in unrighteousness. Do not wanton away the light, lest God give you up to judiciary darkness. You know you should pray with your family, and in secret; make conscience of the Lord's day, instruct your children, forbear drunkenness, swearing, lying, impurity, and the like. Be sure you do not shut up this knowledge in your conscience, and deny it in your conversation, lest, as a candle pent up in a dark lantern, it go out quickly: 'If any man will do my will, he shall know my doctrine whether it be of God or no,' John 7:17. To practice what you know is the way to know what to practice. Knowledge is the mother of obedience, it breeds it; and obedience is the nurse of knowledge, it feeds and nurtureth it. If you improve your little stock well, doubt not but God will add to it and increase it; leave no means untried for the obtaining this purchase. I have offered to instruct you to my power in the mysteries of Christ, appointed also days for that end; it may be you are one of those many that are too old to learn, that scorn to be taught. I would ask you one question, and think of it, Are you not too old to be saved? Do you not scorn to go to Heaven? Surely you do; by despising the way, you scorn the end. Well, take heed you do not die without knowledge; for if you do, all the world cannot keep you one quarter of an hour out of Hell, and then you will have time enough to befool yourself for refusing a good offer, and willfully rejecting, through your pride, those things which concerned your eternal peace. I shall conclude this head with the words of that eminent and pious writer:

How long, says he, may a poor minister sit in his study before any of the ignorant sort will come upon that errand—that is, to learn the knowledge of God and themselves? Lawyers have their clients, and physicians their patients; these are sought after, and called up at midnight for counsel; but, alas! the soul, which is more worth than clothing and body too, that is neglected, and the minister seldom thought on until both these be sent away. Perhaps, when the physician gives them over for dead, then we must come and close up their eyes with comfort, which were never opened to see Christ in his truth, or else be counted cruel because we will not sprinkle them with this holy water, and anoint them for the kingdom of Heaven, though they know not a step of the way that leads to it. Ah, poor wretches, what comfort would you have us speak to those to whom God himself speaks terror! Is Heaven ours to give to whom we please? or is it in our power to alter the laws of the Most High, and save those whom he condemns? Do you remember the curse that is to fall upon his head that makes the blind to wander out of the way? Deuteronomy 27:18; what curse then would be to our portion if we should confirm such blind souls as are quite out of the way to heaven—encouraging them to go on, and expect to reach Heaven at last, when, God knows, their feet stand in those paths that lead to eternal death? No, it is written, we cannot. God will not reverse it; you may read your very names among those damned souls which Christ comes in flaming fire to take vengeance on, 2 Thessalonians 1:8. And therefore, in the fear of God, let this provoke you, of what age or gender, rank or condition soever you be, to labor for the saving knowledge of God in Christ, whom to know is life eternal, John 17:3.

Secondly, Do not rest in bare knowledge, but endeavor to get your will, affections and heart renewed. A clear head must be accompanied with a clean heart; saving knowledge is ever a sanctifying knowledge. Content not yourself with anything short of regeneration and the power of godliness. Mr Robert Bolton, when dying, told his children that he truly believed none of them dared think to meet him at the great tribunal in an unregenerate estate; so I am confident that none of you can with any comfort, nay, without unspeakable horror and sorrow, meet me at the bar of Christ in your natural estates. Oh how sad will it be for you that are now asleep in sin, to awake, like the jailer, at the midnight of death, and to find this inward change, this new creation, this life in Christ missing! what a heart-quake will possess you! how pale and trembling will you spring into the presence of Christ in the eternal world for your particular judgment! Consider, your profession will not serve turn; the storm of death will wash out all colors of profession that are not laid in the oil of renewing grace, Matthew 25:8.

Your privileges will not do it; circumcision is nothing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature, Galatians 6:15. You may enjoy Scripture, and Sabbaths, and sacraments, and many seasons of grace, and Hell at last; nay the higher your exaltation, in regard of these privileges, if you die unconverted, the greater your condemnation will be. None go to such chambers of utter darkness as they that are lightened thither with the torches of ordinances. Heathen will keep holiday in Hell in comparison of those that are now lifted up to Heaven and perish. If the sweetest wine make such sharp vinegar, and the cold lead when melted be so hot and scalding, how pure and weighty will that wrath be which shall be extracted out of abused love and mercy! Grace is the sweetest friend, but the bitterest enemy. If you waste the riches of grace, God will recover out of you riches of glory. Your performances also can be no infallible evidence of your good estate. The pharisees prayed, fasted, did, many of them, abound in outward acts of charity, righteousness, and holiness (which are commanded by God, and must be minded by all that will be saved); and yet Christ tells us expressly, that except our righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, we shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of Heaven, Matthew 5:20. There was in them, as in the young man, one thing wanting, and that was the regeneration of their natures, the actual predominancy of the interest of God and Christ in their hearts, above all interest of the flesh and world. I beseech you, therefore, make sure of the new birth, without which it is impossible for you to escape the second death. I have in the third use of this treatise endeavored to awaken you to, and to direct you about, this great work, as in the first use I have discovered the unspeakable endless misery of them that die before it be done. Those which had the sweating sickness, died assuredly if suffered to sleep; those were their best friends that kept them waking, though they possibly had little thank for it. It may be you may think I am too sharp; but, truly, the wound is deep, dangerous, yes, deadly, and therefore, though I put you to pain by lancing it, I am forced to it, otherwise you will not be cured. Sin, and Hell, and holiness, and sanctification are other manner of things than the sleepy world dreams of.

The Lord give you a heart to obey his counsel in order to your conversion, and then I am sure you will have cause to give him thanks that I would not let you sleep quietly on a bed that was in a flame, nor in a condition that was next door to infinite misery and eternal desperation.

Thirdly, Exalt godliness in your family. If once Christ be chief in your heart, I am confident he will, to your utmost power, be so in your house—that you are really, which you are relatively. Labor that your children and servants may know and serve God: 'Dwell with your wife as a man of knowledge, as heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers be not hindered,' 1 Peter 3:7. 'Bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,' Ephesians 6:4. Teach your servants their duty to God and their own souls. Consider, these are the laws of the righteous God; and before long, when you shall leave all the dying and lying vanities of this world, you must give an account in the eternal world how you have obeyed them. God has committed a great trust to you, even the charge of the souls of all in your family; and does not your heart tremble to think of soul-blood, of soul-murder! I assure you, you may be as truly and really guilty of their deaths and damnations by starving them, as by poisoning them. I mean by not instructing, catechizing, and founding them in the things of God; by not praying with them, and overseeing that they mind the worship of God, as in making them drunk, and teaching them to steal and swear.

For your children, do you not know that they are born children of wrath, and heirs of Hell? and can you be quiet until you see in them some signs and hopes of regeneration, an interest in Christ, and thereby a right to Heaven? When you read of Herod, how he murdered poor children, you condemn him; you think, Ah, hard-hearted Herod! but do not you do ten thousand times worse, in murdering the souls and bodies of your dear children forever? Ah, hard-hearted, ah bloody father! Herod was a man of affections, a merciful man to you. Is it any wonder to hear, says one, of that ship sunk, or dashed upon a rock, that was put to sea without card or compass? nor is it a wonder to hear children sinking in perdition, who are thrust into the world, which is a sea of temptations, without any knowledge of God and their duty. One would think, every time you read and hear of the extremity and eternity of hell's torments, of the multitudes that must undergo them, of the few even of those within the visible church that shall be saved, and of the difficulty of obtaining salvation, that your loins should tremble, and your joints smite together; that your head, yes, heart, should ache, for fear any of your dear children should be among those many that must drink that cup of the Lord's pure wrath; and that you should be restless night and day in wrestling with God, and instructing them in using all means to prevent their endless ruin; surely, if you had a spark of true love to your children, thus it would be with you.

And for your servants, unless you are careful that they serve the Lord, they are but little indebted to you for your service. You give them, possibly, food and outward things convenient, but do you not do as much for your cattle? And is it, think you, enough to do no more for those souls which must live in unspeakable pain or pleasure forever, than for your beasts? If he who provides not for the bodies of his family, be worse than an infidel, 1 Timothy 5:8, surely he who provides not for their souls is kin to a devil. Say not, They are stubborn and will not be taught. Have not you power in your hands either to teach them, or turn them out of doors? Let none serve you that will not serve God. You will not keep a servant that knows not how to do your work, at least, if he will not learn, and then follow it with diligence. Now, let your conscience be judge: Is not God's work, the pleasing and glorifying his infinite Majesty, of far greater concernment than your greatest and weightiest work? and dare you keep one that neither knows how to do it, nor will learn? Follow the man after God's own heart: Psalm 101:2, 7, 'I will walk within my house with a perfect heart. Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful in the land, that they may dwell with me. He that walks in a perfect way, he shall serve me.' It is said of Constantine, that in this he was truly great, that he would have his whole court gathered together, and cause the Scriptures to be read to them, and instruction to be given them from the Word of God .

Besides, if you did but regard your own temporal good, you would instruct your servants and children in spiritual things; for they that are unfaithful to their Master and Father in Heaven, will be unfaithful to their master and father on earth. They that make no conscience of their duty to God, but rob him of his service and worship, will never make conscience of their duty to you, but if they have opportunity, will rob you of your time, service, and goods.

Be sure that you perform family duties, as praying, reading, and the like, morning and evening. Do not serve the flesh and the world all day, and then put off God with a few sleepy petitions at night: the command is 'Pray continually,' 1 Thessalonians 5:17. Daniel was at it three times a day, Daniel 6:10; David seven times a day, Psalm 119:164. God's mercies are renewed on you every morning, and should not your prayers and praises be renewed every morning? Does not the preservation of your family every night deserve family acknowledgment in the morn? Wearisome nights are appointed to others; the beds of others prove their graves; you and your might have awaken in Hell; does this distinguishing mercy deserve no thanks? Is not your family every day liable to many dangers, both bodily and spiritual? Does it not need pitying, sanctifying, pardoning, directing, preventing mercy every day, nay, every moment? and is not all this worth a prayer? Upon no account neglect the offering up of these morning and evening sacrifices. Let your prayers, and of the rest in the family, come up before the Lord in the morning like incense, and the lifting up of your hands at night as an evening sacrifice.

Do not say, as sometimes I have heard of you, that you can not spare time for these duties; your family is great, and you can not get them altogether; your business is great, and a little time spent this way may wrong you; I answer you,

1. Can you get all your family together twice a day to set meals for their bodies, and can not you get them together twice a day for set meals, family duties, for their souls?

2. What greater or weightier business can you have, than the working out the salvation of your own, and the souls committed to your charge? Are not the most important affairs you can possibly deal about but toys and trifles to this?

3. Was not David's family greater than your, and his occasions weightier? and yet he could find time, though a king, for family duties, Psalm 119:164. He and his queen did both instruct their child in the things of God, 1 Chronicles 28:9; Proverbs 4:3–10, and 31. If you are poor, and say you are to provide for your family, see an answer to that in this book, though God will give you both another manner of answer to your foolish pretenses, when you appear at the judgment-seat of Christ.

Have a special care also of the sanctification of the Lord's-day in your family. Remember the living God commands you that you, your son, your daughter, your man-servant, and your maid-servant, and all within your gate keep that day holy. Do not make the sins of others your by your pattern or permission; let not that queen of days be deflowered or profaned by idleness, earthly thoughts, words, or actions. Spend the whole time which you sparest from the public ordinances in secret and private duties, as praying, reading, singing, catechizing, taking an account of your children and servants, what they know of the mysteries of Christ, and particularly what they have learned that day. Esteem it a special privilege, a great mercy, that you and your may upon that day sequester yourselves wholly from worldly employments, and enjoy communion with the blessed God in the means of grace. This I shall be bold to tell you, that religion, and the service of the most high God in your family, depends much, yes, very much, upon your observation of the Lord's-day. You may expect its increase or decrease according to the sanctification or profanation of it. You pretend to be a Christian, make conscience of every minute of that day of Christ. Be sure that you, and as many of your family as can possibly be spared, attend with all diligence and reverence at the public place of worship. There God receives greatest praises, and there he bestows the choicest mercies: 'Oh blessed are they that dwell in his house; blessed are they that wait at wisdom's gates; that watch at the posts of her doors,' Proverbs 8. In all things show yourself a pattern to them that are under your care and charge; the people committed to your government will sooner imitate your doings than obey your sayings. Sin comes in at first by propagation, but is increased exceedingly by imitation. You that have your children and servants following you, either to Heaven or to Hell, have need choose a right path, even the narrow way that leads to life. Weigh your words, considering that they will learn your language. Avoid those sinful expressions of faith and truth—let your yes be yes, and your nay be nay, for whatever is more is evil—of repeating others' oaths, of speaking irreverently of the great God and his word, of wishing evil to any man; for the command is, 'Bless them that curse,' Matthew 5:44. Let no evil communication proceed out of your lips, but let your speech be seasoned with grace, that it may administer good, and be exemplary to the hearers. Look well to your works, that they may be agreeable to the Word of God .

In your religious performances especially manifest all reverence, fervency, and seriousness, that your children and servants may see that you are in earnest about soul affairs, about eternity concernments. You little know how profitable such a pattern may be unto them. Do your utmost, use all means commanded you to save yourself and those that dwell with you.

Be confident that shortly Christ will say to you, as Eliab to David, 'With whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness?' What is become of the children and servants which I entrusted you with? Will it be enough, think you, for you then to answer, Lord, for my children, I brought them up without any charge to the parish; or, Lord, I bred them gentlemen; or, I put them out to trades; or, I left them competent estates; and for my servants, I paid them their wages, gave them their meat and drink, according to my agreement with them? When Christ shall reply, Man, what is become of their souls, which I created capable of the immediate fruition of myself, which I redeemed with my precious blood? What shame will then cover your face, and what horror fill your heart, when the blood of their souls shall be required of you! Oh therefore let Joshua's practice and resolution be your, that 'you and your house will serve the Lord,' Joshua 24:15.

Fourthly, Make religion, and the worshiping and glorifying the great God, the great business of your whole life. Improve all your time, power, estate, interest, and talents whatever to the utmost, for the honor of God and your own everlasting good. Look on yourself as created, preserved, supplied with nightly, daily, hourly mercies—not for the service of the flesh, no, that end were mean and low, but that you might be enabled unto and encouraged in the service of the glorious God. Surely, says that noble Lord du Plessis, if all the world were made for man, then man was made for more than the world. All the favors you enjoy are but baits laid by God to catch your soul; as they come all from him, so let them be improved all for him. It is godliness alone that will hold out when you come to the greatest hardships at the day of affliction and the hour of your dissolution. The good man and his godliness are like Saul and Jonathan, lovely in their lives, and in their deaths they are not divided; therefore exercise yourself unto godliness. It may be you are one to whom God has given much in the world; I must tell you that much will be required of you. The greater your receipts are, the greater your returns must be, and the larger your disbursements for God: 'Make to yourself friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when that fails you may be received into the celestial habitation.' The way to get that which you can not part with, is by charity to part with that which you can not keep. You can not carry your bags to Heaven; it is good to take bills of exchange from the poor, whereby you may receive there what you could not carry thither. It is storied of Alexander, that having given away almost all he had, one of his friends asked him where his treasure was, he answered, pointing to the poor, In his heart.

Let your charity especially relate to the souls of people. What were it for you to maintain four or six poor children at school, whereby they may come to read, and learn to know the way to life? Does it not grieve you to understand the gross ignorance of many? And what do they tell us, when we reprove them for it? that they are not book learned, they could never read! What were it for you, that have possibly several hundreds per annum, to give twenty pounds a year this way? I tell you that God expects more than this for his service; and I am confident you may have more comfort in such acts of soul-charity than in ten times the value bestowed on the world and the flesh. I am sure God keeps an exact account how you employ your revenues; and think of it again and again, what you will do in such an hour, when you shall stand naked at the judgment-seat of Christ, and all your receipts and disbursements shall be declared and mentioned before the Lord, angels, and men.

When, imprimis, pride comes with her tailor's long bill of so many thousands for new fashions, foolish fancies, or gaudy attire for you or your, when the poor members of Christ were ready to perish with nakedness; item, gluttony, or drunkenness, or luxury, so many thousands; item, so many hundreds for hawks, or hounds, or gaming; item, so many hundreds for idle, needless expenses; item, for propagating the gospel, relieving the poor, exalting the interest of Christ, so many pounds, or only some few scraps, which the knight, or esquire, or gentleman could spare, after he had made full provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof. Believe it, you will wish then you had done more for God and his interest, and less for the flesh. It was a wise speech of Lycon the philosopher, when a wealthy merchant bragged to him of the multitudes of his ships and furniture for sea, how he was able to trade into all parts, I esteem not that to be felicity which hangs upon ropes and cables. Sure I am your wealth has wings, and will within a few days take an eternal flight from you. The way to make the best of it is not to lay it up, but to lay it out as may be most for the glory of God.

Whoever you are, whether poor or rich, make an absolute dedication of yourself and your all unto Christ, if you would attain salvation by Christ. He who cannot live of himself, must not live to himself; for if he does, he dies eternally, he loses himself forever. If Heaven might be had upon men's cursed terms of liberty for their lusts, Christ would have customers enough; but he who bought the purchase is fittest to set the price.

Reader, I set before you in this treatise life and death, Heaven and Hell; if you are a true Isaac, and have a spiritual appetite, I dare promise you such savory meat as your soul loves; but if, Gallio-like, you care for none of these things, or, as the two tribes and a half, desire your portion on this side the land of Canaan; if, as Spira, you will put your relations and possessions, honor and pleasure, and outward good things, in one scale, and God, and Christ, and Heaven in the other, and then choose the former, and refuse the latter, I hope I shall never envy your happiness, nor desire to eat of your dainties, or drink of your cup, but pray that the Lord would have mercy on you, and change your heart; only let me tell you, if you would avoid the inconceivable endless misery of the damned; if you would attain the eternal matchless felicity of the saved; if you would have all your former rebellions blotted out through the blood of the Son; if you would have your person reconciled to the Father; if you would have God in Christ to stand by you when none of your friends or comforts shall own you; if you would appear at the dreadful bar of Christ with comfort, when thousands and millions shall weep and wail; if you would not have me nor this book to be a witness against you before the Lord, angels, and men, then turn from sin speedily, cleave to your Savior sincerely, give up yourself to all the commands of Christ unreservedly. 'Today if you will hear his voice, harden not your heart, lest he swear in his wrath that you shall never enter into his rest,' Hebrews 3.

Reader, I shall detain you but a little longer in the porch, only to give you a brief account of this ensuing tractate; though I confess I never liked large apologies for any publications; for if men's books are like to be serviceable to the honor of the infinite God, and the welfare of the souls of men, a small apology will serve; if they are not, why do they trouble the world with them? It is not all the image and superscription, which their excuses can stamp on them, shall ever make them current coin with me. I was called to preach a sermon at Borden, in Kent, October 17, 1658, at the funeral of a grave, religious gentlewoman, (one that, as I am informed, was a tender mother of her children, and a dutiful daughter to the Father of spirits,) Mrs Beresford, widow of Mr Michael Beresford, a learned, painful, godly minister of the Lord Jesus Christ, who had a good report of all men that feared God and knew him, and of the truth itself. He was minister of the above-named parish above twenty years.

I was, after the preaching of it, requested to publish it, and promised that a considerable number should be freely scattered in several families, whereby, through the blessing of God, some poor souls might be turned from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God. Before I had prepared the sermon for the press, I was entreated to enlarge it into a treatise. All which desires I was willing to satisfy, partly out of the great respect I did bear to one especially that earnestly begged it, but chiefly out of the weak desire I had to be instrumental for the conversion of the souls of them to whom the sermon was preached, and of the parish which the Lord had committed to my charge. I considered with myself, that by reason of my sickly and infirm body I was not likely to continue long with that people to which the providence of God did at first join me, and from which far greater things could never divorce me; and therefore it might not be needless to leave to them some testimony of my sincere desires of their eternal welfare. Who knows what this mean piece may do, if the divine power please to accompany it? Possibly out of the seed that is here sown, when the gardener is dead, a harvest may be reaped of glory to God and good to souls.

Reader, if you gain any spiritual profit by it, let God have the praise; and let him be remembered in your prayers who is

Your servant for Christ's sake,
George Swinnock

CHAPTER 1.

The division of the chapter, and interpretation of the text

"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain!" Philippians 1:12

It is a memorable observation of that Christian heathen, as he has been sometimes called, that the two great lessons which every man has to learn in the whole time of his life, are, how to live, and how to die; how to live virtuously, and how to die valiantly. These two weighty questions are clearly and fully answered in this text. It declares and delivers such directions about life as could never be learned in the school of nature, improved to the utmost. It prepares and provides such a cordial against death as could never be extracted out of all the creatures distilled together. And indeed herein the excellency of the Christian religion appears above all religions in the world. None enjoins such pious precepts, none subjoins such precious promises, none sets the soul about so noble a work, none satisfies it with such an ample reward.

The scope of the apostle in this epistle is, first, To confirm the Philippians in the faith of Christ, against the scandal of the cross; and, secondly, To exhort them to such godliness as might be answerable to the gospel.

In this first chapter, Paul encourages them greatly to be content in Christianity.

1. From the nature of God, who never does his work by halves, but performs what he promises, and perfects what he begins, verse 6.

2. From his own prayer, which was for their increase and perseverance in grace, and that inoffensively to God's glory, verse 9, 10.

3. From the happy fruits of his sufferings for the faith. The rod with which he was scourged, like Aaron's rod, blossomed. First, The gospel was the more propagated, verse 12. The more the gardeners were dispersed, the more the seed of the word was scattered; and the deeper the ground was ploughed, it took the better root, and brought forth the greater fruit. Secondly, The ministers of the gospel were the more emboldened, verse 14. True zeal, like the fire, burns hottest in the coldest season; and sincerity, like the stars, though it may be hid in a warm day, yet it will be sure to show itself in a frosty night. Thirdly, Paul himself should be much advantaged, verse 19, which latter he amplifies by acquainting them with the reason of that hope—namely, the assistance of the Spirit of Christ, verse 19, and the assurance God had wrought in him, from his experience of what God had done for him, that his Savior should be honored, and his salvation furthered, both by his life and death, verse 20, 21.

The text, considered relatively, contains the ground why the Philippians should not be troubled so much at Paul's trials: 'For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain,' that is, If I be a gainer in all conditions, why should you be discouraged by my afflictions? If sufferings advantage the pastor, why should they dishearten the people? The children may well enjoy a calm in their spirits, when their spiritual father is safe, nay, a gainer in the greatest storm.

Take the words absolutely, and they include, first, the character of a Christian while he lives,—'To me to live is Christ;' and secondly, The comfort of a Christian when he dies,—'and to die is gain.' Or you may take notice of the piety of a saint in life: 'To me to live is Christ;' and his profit by death, 'To die is gain.'

For the meaning of the words.

"To me" That is, who am the mark at which Hell and the world shoot their arrows of persecution; to me whose life has been a ring of miseries ever since my conversion; to me who am set to undergo both men's and devils' opposition; yet to me there are spiritual and inward consolations. 'For to me to live is Christ.'

"To me to live is Christ" That is, To me who am in Christ, 'to me to live is Christ.' I live not only the life of nature, but I live also the life of grace. I have not only a being from Christ as a man, but likewise a well-being in Christ as a Christian; as I did receive my life from Christ, so I do improve my life for Christ; his honor is my utmost desire, and my greatest endeavor.

"And to die is gain" That is, I have had no other object, no employment but Christ and his service in my life, shall certainly have an eternal advancement at my death. Or Christ is my life here by grace, and hereafter by glory. He is both the author and the end of my life. I live for him, I live to him, I live in him, I live by him; and if I be put to death, that shall no way damage me, but rather bring me great advantage, in regard that thereby I shall gain Heaven for earth, and happy, eternal life for this miserable mortal life; so our larger annotations sense it. Some, indeed, read the words, Christ is my gain both in life and death, and therefore the apostle was little troubled at, but rather indifferent to, all conditions.

In the words you may see the sign of a saint, to him to live is Christ; and his solace, to him to die is gain; his holy description in the former, his happy condition in the latter.

The text being thus explained affords this truth, taking both parts of it together.

CHAPTER 2.

The doctrine, That such as have Christ for their life, gain by death, with the explication of the phrase, 'To me to live is Christ.'

That such as have Christ for their life, shall have gain by their death.

He who lives in Christ on earth, shall live with Christ in Heaven.

Where the soul has the seed of holiness, it shall reap a harvest of happiness.

The apostle, when he sums up the estate of a believer, counts death as a part of his riches: 'Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death; all are yours,'

1 Corinthians 3:22, 'and you are Christ's.' He who can say, I am Christ's, may as truly say, Death is mine. If you can say, I am Christ's servant, I am Christ's subject, you may say, Death will be my preferment, death will be my advancement.

For the explication of this doctrine, I shall show, first, What is meant by that phrase, 'to me to live is Christ;' and, secondly, Wherein it will appear that death to such a man is gain.

For the former, 'To me to live is Christ,' may imply these four things:

First, Christ is the principle of my life. All living creatures have an inward principle by which they live, and according to which they act. Plants have a principle of vegetation, and beasts have a principle of sense; men have a principle of reason, and their lives are different, answerable to their different principles. But a Christian has a higher principle—that is, Christ dwelling in his heart by faith, Ephesians 3:17—and thence it is that he lives a higher life. As the body lives by its union with the soul, so the Christian lives by his union with Jesus Christ. Christ is the fountain and spring of life, the soul of his soul, and the life of his life. 'I live,' says the apostle, Galatians 2:20; 'yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God.'

As the branches they live, but it is by the root; they derive sap from it, and so live by it. So the believer, he lives spiritually; but it is by Christ; he derives the sap of grace from this true vine, and so lives by him.

The water in the rivers does not more depend upon the ocean, nor the light in the air upon the sun, than the life of a Christian depends on Jesus Christ. And therefore the Holy Spirit tells us, 'He who has the Son has life; and he who has not the Son has not life,' 1 John 5:12.

I have sometime read that the lioness brings forth her whelps dead, until after some time the lion roars aloud, and then they live. This is certain, every man and woman is born dead; dead to God, dead in sins and trespasses, until this Lion of the tribe of Judah utters his voice, then they arise from the dead, and Christ gives them life. When the soul, like the body of Lazarus, has been dead so long that it stinks and is unsavory, when it has been many days, nay, many years, rotting in the grave of corruption, then if Jesus Christ calls effectually, 'Lazarus, come forth,' sinner, come forth of your carnal, unregenerate estate; then, and not until then, the soul hears the voice of the Son of God and lives.

Grace is of a divine birth, John 3:3; it is the seed of God, 1 John 3:9; an unction from the holy one, 1 John 2:27; called dew, which is of a celestial extraction, Psalm 110:3; and light, 1 John 1:7. The fountain of water is in the earth, but the fountain of light is in the heavens.

The web of godliness was never spun out of man's own affections. As none can see the sun but by its own light, so none can with an eye of faith see the Sun of righteousness, but by the light of grace derived from him.

'We are his workmanship,' says the apostle, Ephesians 2:10, 'created in Christ Jesus unto good works.' His workmanship, not only in our natural capacity as men; as creatures; and in our civil capacity as rich or poor, high or low; but also in our spiritual capacity as Christians, as new creatures.

Secondly, 'To me to live is Christ,' that is, Christ is the pattern of my life; my life is not only from him, but according to him. Christ is the rule according to which I walk, the copy after which I write. As sin and disobedience is a resemblance of the first, so grace and holiness is a resemblance of the second Adam.

True Christianity consists in nothing but our conformity to, and imitation of, Jesus Christ. And, indeed, as the child in generation receives from the parent member for member, part for part; and the paper from the press, word for word, letter for letter; and the wax from the seal, figure for figure; so in regeneration Christ is formed in the soul, and it receives, according to its proportion, grace for grace.

One end of Christ's incarnation and life in the flesh was to set an exact pattern for our lives in the Spirit: 'He left us an example, that we should follow his steps,' 1 Peter 2:21. All the actions of Christ are instructions to a Christian. His actions were either moral or mediatory; in both the Christian imitates him. In the former, doing as he did, exercising the same graces, performing the same duties, resisting the same temptations, forbearing the same corruptions; in the latter, by similitude, dying to sin, as he died for sin, rising to a spiritual life, as he rose again to a natural life. None indeed can parallel the life of Christ, but every new creature imitates Christ in his life; 'he walks as Christ walked,' 1 John 2:6. The same mind is in all the saints, so far as they are regenerated, that was in Christ; the same will, the same affections; they love what he loves; they loathe what he loathes; what pleases him, pleases them; what grieves his spirit, grieves their spirits. As the wicked are like their father the devil, unholy as he is unholy; so the children of Christ are like their everlasting Father, holy as he is holy; only with this difference, in Christ there is a fullness, in them a measure—in Christ pureness, in them a mixture.

Thirdly, 'To me to live is Christ,' that is, Christ is the comfort of my life. Though I have many crosses, yet I have Christ for my comfort. He is the comfort of my life, and the life of all my comforts. All my joys come in at this door, all my contentments come swimming in this stream.

Piscator observes that 'the consolation of Israel' is the periphrasis of Jesus Christ, Luke 2:25; because all the consolation of a true Israelite, as Jacob's in Benjamin, is bound up in Christ. If he be gone, the soul goes down to the grave with sorrow. As all the candles in a country cannot make a day-no, it must be the rising of the sun that must do it; so all the health, wealth, honors, pleasures, relations, possessions, nay, the greatest confluence of comforts that the whole creation affords, cannot make a day of light and gladness in the heart of a believer; no, it must be the rising of this Sun of righteousness. The light of his countenance causes more joy than all the corn, and wine, and oil of this world can. He says, as Luther, Christ lives, or otherwise I would not desire to live one moment. Or, as that noble Marquis of Vico says: Their money perish with them that think all the wealth in the world worth one hour's communion with Jesus Christ.

His comfort ebbs and flows as Christ manifests himself to him, or withdraws himself from him. Like the marigold, he opens and shuts with the rising and setting of this sun. When the bridegroom is taken away, the children of the bride-chamber mourn. The voice of the true dove is ever doleful in the absence of her mate. Many a long look has this gracious soul after its absented Savior. Many a time does it sigh out, for lovers' hours are full of eternity, Why is his chariot so long a-coming? why tarry the wheels of his chariot? Make haste, my beloved, and be you like the deer and roe upon the mountain of spices. It, like Zacchaeus, climbs up into the sycamore tree of the ordinances, that it may have a sight of its beloved; for it hears that he uses to pass that way; and when it spies him afar off, for love is quick-sighted, coming towards it, hearken how the soul calls aloud to faith to lift up the gates, to lift open the everlasting doors, that the king of glory may enter in. Desire, like Joseph, makes ready its chariot to go forth to meet this God of Jacob; and when he draws near, it comes down hastily, and receives him joyfully. It cries out, with the martyr, in a flame of love, He is come, he is come. Now, like Mary, it closes with him, cleaves to him, clings and clasps about him, and thinks it can never have enough of him, or be near enough to him. Who can express the welcome which this pious soul gives him; what warm affection it has to him; what delight and delight it has in him; what enlarged egress of spirit it has after him? If the wise men were so glad when they saw the star that led to him, how glad is this soul in seeing this Sun! If the babe in the womb of Elizabeth sprang for joy when the mother of the Lord came to her, how does the heart of this Christian spring with joy when the Lord of that mother comes to it! And out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks, Dearest Jesus, why came you no sooner? why tarry you no longer? Sweetest Savior, why should this meeting ever, ever part? Be you like a bundle of myrrh, lodging all night between my breasts; yet be not like a wayfaring man, to tarry with me but for a night, but do you abide in me, and dwell with me forever. Good Lord, how good is it to be here! Oh, how blessed are they that dwell in your house! They ever, and not without infinite cause, praise you. Lord, grant me this happiness, whatever you deny me, that my heart may be your everlasting home. Ah, what a holy emulation has this saint at the spirits above, that they should have so much and he so little; that they should drink full draughts out of the rivers of pleasures, and he can only taste God to be gracious. Ah, what a heavenly vexation has he at the necessities of his body and family here below, that they must call him away, and hinder his communion with his beloved! Oh, how willingly would this soul be separated from its dearest wife, that it might more nearly be conjoined to its dearer husband! Surely such a soul would with cheerfulness die in these embraces of Christ, breathing out, with Augustine, Lord, since no man can see you and live, oh let me die that I may see you.

This, indeed, is the foretaste of the saints' future happiness, their morning of glory, the suburbs of the new Jerusalem, the first-fruits of their great and eternal harvest, the joy that strangers intermeddle not with, Proverbs 14:10. It may better be conceived and felt, than described or expressed; and therefore is most fitly by the apostle called joy unspeakable and glorious,

1 Peter 1:8. Thus Christ is the comfort of a Christian.

Fourthly, 'To me to live is Christ,' that is, Christ is the end of my life. Christ is both the author and the end of my life; as my life is from Christ, so my life is for Christ. The great care of the apostle was to magnify Christ, both by his life and death, Phil 1:20. All the gain I aim at, both in life and death, is Christ, namely, to glorify him by my service.

According to the principles of a man, such are his end. He who acts from self, acts for self. That obedience which arises from the creature, will be terminated in the creature. Solomon says, Ecclesiastes 1:7, 'All the rivers run into the sea;' unto the place from whence the rivers came, thither they return again; so the life of a Christian coming from Christ, must necessarily tend to Christ. A sincere saint does not, like the hypocrite, look asquint at self-applause, self-profit, and such beggarly ends, but his eyes look straight on at the glory of Jesus Christ. If Christ be glorified, though he be disgraced, he is satisfied. When Christ has honored the soul by giving it grace, the soul honors Christ by giving him glory. Grace is the most curious work, and therefore no wonder if it be for the credit of the workman. Trees bear fruit for the owner, Canticles 4:16. Of him and through him are all things, therefore to him be glory forever and ever, Romans 11:36.

It is confessed the flesh will propound other ends, but the spirit carries the vote. As some write of the heavenly orbs, that they have a proper motion of their own, yet in obedience to this first mover, they follow its motion; thus it is with the unregenerate part of a man; it has proper ends of its own, pride, and flesh-pleasing, and the like, contrary to the ends of the spirit; but in obedience to the regenerate part, the Christian leaves the former ends, and follows the ends of the latter.

The honor of Christ is exceeding dear to a true Christian. It is dearer than his name. Lord, says a father, use me for your shield, to keep off those wounds of dishonor which would fall on your Majesty. Let the reproaches with which they would reproach you fall upon me. And Luther is called a devil, says Luther, in an epistle to Spalatinus; but be it so. So long as Christ is magnified I am well paid. Nay, the honor of Christ is dearer than life to a believer. Paul, as one says of him, stood a-tiptoe to see which way he might glorify Christ most, whether by life or death. 'Neither count I my life dear unto me, so I may finish the ministry I have received of the Lord Jesus,' Acts 20:24.

CHAPTER 3.

What PRIVATIVE gain the Christian has by death

I come now to the second thing promised, and that is, to manifest wherein the Christian that has Christ for the principle, pattern, comfort, and end of his life, shall be a gainer by death. And truly, reader, in speaking of this gain, I shall acknowledge myself at an unspeakable loss. When I have spoken my utmost, I must entreat the reader, as once Cicero did his, when he spoke of Socrates and Lucius Crassus: That they should imagine some far greater matter than they find written. Though my tongue were as the pen of a ready writer, it could never express it, and if my pen were as the tongue of a ready speaker, it could never describe it. The land of Canaan, notwithstanding all the helps we have, is still for the most part terra incognita, an unknown land. The sights there are light, inaccessible as to mortal eyes, 1 Timothy 6:16; and the sounds there are words not audible as to mortal ears, 2 Corinthians 12:4; words which may not, or cannot be uttered, or both.

One being asked what God was, answered that he must be God himself before he could know God fully. I am sure it is requisite that that Christian should be in Heaven first who would know Heaven fully. Fame, which in other things is too free and prodigal, in this is too sparing and penurious, and that in so great a degree that, reader, after you have heard it set forth by the holiest, heavenliest man alive, though of the greatest capacity and oratory, yet if ever you get thither, you will find cause to speak, as the queen of Sheba did in another case, 1 Kings 10:6, 7, 'It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of your glory and your excellency. Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came, and my eyes had seen it; and, behold, the half was not told me: the delight and happiness exceeds the fame which I heard.' There it is indeed that God does more for the believer than he is able to ask or think. As the loss of the damned will be beyond the most melancholy man's fear, so the gain of the saved will be above the strongest Christian's faith. The eye of a man may see much good, the ear of a man may hear more, the heart of a man may conceive most of all; but yet neither has 'eye seen, nor ear heard, nor can it enter into the heart of man to conceive, what God has prepared for them that love him,' 1 Corinthians 2:9. They which have written most of this subject, might have added at the end of their books, as in other treatises some have done. More is desired, or more is wanting. It is as easy, says one, to compass the heavens with a span, to contain the ocean in a nutshell, as to relate Heaven's happiness.

Reader, I shall speak to this subject but briefly. Set the Holy Land before you, as it is in a map, in a little room, yet by what I shall speak in this place, and in the last use, as the spies by the clusters of grapes, you may gather, the land is good, it flows with milk and honey, and this is some of the fruit of it, Numbers 13:27.

The Christian's gain by death will appear in these two particulars: He shall gain a freedom from all evil, the fruition of all good; and is not this man a gainer?

First, He shall by death be freed from all evil. The immediate and full presence of the chief good which the believer shall enjoy after death will cause the absence of all evil. The influences of that sun will scatter every mist, and disperse all clouds which now darken the conditions of pious souls. The day of a Christian's dissolution will be the day of his redemption, Luke 21:28. This may be the reason why the apostle places redemption last, says an expositor: 1 Corinthians 1:30, Now we have Christ made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, but then redemption. When the saint is passed through the red sea of death, and landed at the true Canaan, he shall then see all his bodily and spiritual enemies dead on the shore. In the middle region there are storms and tempests, and so here below; but above, all is calm and quiet. While the Christian is upon earth, evils, like Job's messengers, follow him, one upon the heels of another; but when he leaves the earth, every evil will take its eternal leave of him.

There are two evils, which are indeed the only evils, though the first is by much the worst: the evil of sin, or defilement, and the evil of suffering, or chastisement. Now a believer by death should be freed from both these.

First, From the evil of sin; and in this take notice, that death will deliver the Christian both from the commission of it, and from all suggestions tending to it.

First, Death will free the saint from the commission of sin. In Hell there is nothing but wickedness, in Heaven there is nothing but holiness. The unregenerate man is never so wicked as after death: now sin is in its minority, then it will be in its maturity; now it is but the sinner's evening, but then it will be a perfect night of blackness, of darkness. The godly man is never so holy as after death: grace is now in its infancy, then it will attain to its full age; now it is as the morning light, then it will attain to its noonday brightness. Sin is now by a spiritual life mortified, that it does not reign; but then by death it shall be nullified, that it shall not so much as remain in a believer.

The ungodly after death shall be perfectly like the devil, (the Indians, some write, have a conceit that death will transform them into the ugly shape of the devil; and therefore in their language they have the same word for a dead man and a devil,) and the godly after death shall be perfectly like God.

They are now partakers of the divine nature, and so like him, yet how much unlike him! but when they shall see him in Heaven, then they shall be like him indeed, 1 John 3:2. Vision causes an assimilation in nature, Genesis 30:37, 38; in grace, 2 Corinthians 3:18; so here in glory.

The schoolmen put the question, how the angels and souls of men in Heaven come to be impeccable, or without sin? and answer that it is by the beatifical vision. The apostle seems to intimate as much in the fore-quoted place: 'When he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.' As the pearl, by the often beating of the sunbeams upon it, becomes radiant; so the Christian, being ever beheld by the Lord, and always beholding the face of his Father in Heaven, shall be more like him than ever child was to father on earth. Then that profession of Christ will be abundantly verified,' Behold, you are fair my love; behold, you are fair. You are all fair, my love; there is no spot in you,' Canticles 4:1, 7. Then the end of Christ's passion shall be fully attained, when he shall present to himself a glorious church, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, Ephesians 5:27; not only in regard of imputed righteousness, or justification, but also in regard of imparted righteousness, or sanctification.

Here the heart of a Christian is like Rebekah's womb—it has twins struggling in it; the appearance of the church is, as it were, the company of two armies, Canticles 6:13; the old man and the new man, flesh and spirit, the law in the members warring against the law of the mind. As there was war between Asa and Baasha all their days, so there is between the regenerate and unregenerate part all the time of this life; but this gracious conflict shall then end in a glorious conquest, when the death of the body shall quite destroy this body of death. Sin in the heart is like the leprosy in the house, which would not out until the house was pulled down,

Leviticus 14:44, 45. But when soul and body shall be parted for a time, sin and the soul shall be separated to eternity.

And as the heart, so the life of a Christian is like a book which has many errata in it. The whitest swan has her black feet; the best gold must have its grains of allowance: 'There is no man that lives upon earth, and sins not,' Ecclesiastes 7:20. All of us offend in many things, and many of us in all things, James 3:2. 'Our righteousness is as a filthy rag,' Isaiah 64:6. Our graces not without their defects: 'Lord, I believe; help mine unbelief,' Mark 9:24. Our duties not without their defaults: 'When I would do good, evil is present with me,' Romans 7:21. The purest fire has some smoke, the richest wine some dregs, but death will turn sin out of all its holds, and leave it not so much as a being in the Christian. The bodies of men have usually a mighty shoot at death; but oh what a shoot will the soul of a saint have, when it shall be carried by angels to the place where the spirits of just men are made perfect! Hebrews 12:23.

Secondly, The soul alive in Christ, shall be freed at death from all temptations to sin. Then a Christian shall be above the reach of all Satan's batteries; then that promise will be performed, that the God of peace will tread Satan under the saints' feet, Romans 16:20. Now Peter is winnowed, Paul is buffeted, David is stirred by the wicked one to number the people; if Joshua be ministering unto the Lord, Satan will be at his right hand to resist him, Zechariah 3:1. It is no small unhappiness to a saint, that he is here followed with unwearied assaults, that the prince of darkness is restless in casting in his fire-balls, to put the soul into a hellish flame; though he should never be conquered, yet for the Christian to have his quarters beaten up night and day, must needs disquiet him. To have blasphemous thoughts of a God infinitely great and gracious, to have mean and vile apprehensions of a Savior incomparably precious, cast into him, though he close not with them, cannot but wound him to the heart; as for a chaste matron that loathes the thoughts of dishonesty, to be continually solicited to folly, is a sore vexation. The temptations of our Lord Jesus were a sad part of his humiliation.

But death will ease the soul of this trouble: as in Heaven there shall be no tinder of a corrupt heart to take, so no devil like steel and flint to strike fire. The crooked serpent could wind himself into the terrestrial, but shall never creep into the celestial paradise. His circuit is to go to and fro in the earth, he cannot enter the confines of Heaven; when he fell from his state of integrity, he left that place of felicity, and cannot possibly recover it again. The saints on earth indeed are militant, fighting with him, but the saints in Heaven are all triumphant, wholly above him: 'More than conquerors, through him who loves them,' Romans 8:37. There the children of God are gathered together, and no Satan among them; there the Son of David delivers his true Israelites from all their fears of this uncircumcised Philistine. When the heavenly Mordecai comes to be a chief favorite in that high and holy court, he shall be freed from all his frights about this enemy and adversary, this wicked Haman.

The ark and Dagon could not stand together in one house, much less can light and darkness, Michael and the dragon, God and the devil, dwell together in one Heaven.

If Ireland, as some write, be so pure a soil, that it will not nourish any venomous creature, I am sure Heaven is so pure, that into it can in no wise enter anything that defiles, Revelation21:27; it will not harbor those poisonous serpents.

Heaven once, says an author, spued them out, and it will not return to its vomit, or lick them up again; no such dirty dog shall ever trample on that golden pavement. There is such a cursed irreconcilable contrariety in their natures, to the blessed company and exercises in Heaven, that certainly they cannot desire, much less delight in that place; if the presence of Christ were such a torment to them in his estate of humiliation, what a torment would it be in his estate of exaltation! It is observable they left their own habitation, Jude 6; the word seems to imply, that when they lost their primitive purity, they willingly lost that habitation of spiritual pleasures. But whether he will or no, he shall be banished those coasts; though he now dog the saint at, and disturb him in, every duty, he shall do it no more: 'The accuser of the brethren shall be cast down, neither shall his place be found any more in Heaven,' Revelation12:8, 9.

Secondly, A Christian by death shall not only be freed from the evil of sin and defilement, but also from the evil of suffering and chastisement: the cause being taken away, the effects will cease. Sin is that great-bellied mother, or rather monster, which conceives and brings forth all those losses, crosses, diseases, disgraces, sorrows, and sufferings whatever, that befall the children of men. Though man may be the butt, yet sin is the mark at which the arrows of divine displeasure are shot; man weaves a spider's web of sin out of his own affections, and then is entangled in it. Wickedness alone is the original cause of all woe, Lamentations 3:39; Romans 6:23. But now, at the death of a saint, the fountain of sin will be dried up, and therefore the streams of sufferings must be dried up also. The fuel being taken away, the fire will go out of itself; sin and sorrow were born, do live, and shall die together.

As sin is the original cause of all, so it is the final cause of most, afflictions. Sometimes they are for probation—as we shoot at good armor that we may prove it, and that we praise it—but most commonly they are for purgation, to amend something that is amiss: the fathers of the flesh chastise for their pleasure, but the Father of spirits for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness, Hebrews 12:6. The quiet fruits of righteousness blossom from the correcting rod; bitter aloes purge the worms; winds and thunder clear the air; frosts and showers whiten cloth; the gardener uses the flail to separate the chaff, and the refiner the fire to consume the dross. But when the wheat shall be clean, there will be no need of the flail; when the gold pure, no use of the fire. 'Now,' says the apostle, 'if need be, you are in heaviness,' 1 Peter 1:6. Mark, now, if need be; now men have hard knots, and therefore need sharp wedges; now men have strong corruptions, and therefore need strong corrections; now the rod is as necessary as our daily bread. Chastisements are to teach men in God's law, Psalm 94:12; to search and heal their spiritual sores. But now at death the scholar in Christ's school will have perfectly learned his lesson, and therefore there will be no need of a rod: then the wounds of the soul will be perfectly cured, and these plasters will fall off of themselves. Death will make him whole that he can sin no more; and so no worse or so bad thing shall come to him.

There are three evils of affliction which I shall mention:

The first on the name.

The second on the body.

The third on the soul.

From all which a believer shall be freed by death.

First, Death will free the saint from ignominy on his name. Here, if the world cannot make the Christian wound his conscience, they will be sure to wound his credit. Elijah is counted the troubler of Israel; Nehemiah a rebel against the king; David the song of the drunkards and the scorn of the gluttons, Psalm 69:12, and 35:16; Isaiah and his children for signs and wonders, Isaiah 8:18; Jeremiah is a man of contention, Jeremiah 15:10; the Son of man a wine-bibber and a glutton; Paul a pestilent fellow and a mover of sedition, Acts 24:5. The most upright saint is marked for a hypocrite in the world's calendar. If they cannot smite him with their hands—their arms are not long enough always—they will not fail to smite him with their tongues. What a precise fool, say they, is such a fellow; he dares not take up his cups as we do; but could we see his heart, it is as bad as the worst of ours. He will do as bad or worse when nobody sees him; he will not swear, but he will lie, I'll warrant you. He spends his time in nothing but going to sermons and meetings, and is as arrant a dissembler as lives. Such a one of the same society was guilty of such a sin, and they are all alike: these are your professors! Thus the corruption of their hearts break out at their lips, and they most wretchedly wound even Christ through the sides of the Christian.

But Heaven will not only wipe away all tears from the Christian's eyes, but also all blots off from his name. Upright Hezekiah in Heaven is above the sound of cursed Rabshakeh's tongue, which was set on fire of Hell. Now holy David is got up that heavenly hill, that mount Zion, he hears not the railings and revilings of sinful Shimei. The most spiteful scorner of them all cannot throw that dirt so high with which he bespatters the saints' reputation here below.

Secondly, As death will free the Christian from ignominy in his name, so likewise from infirmities in his body. Diseases cause death, but death will cure all diseases! In this life Job had his botches, Hezekiah his boil, David his wounds and sores, the poor widow her issue of blood; one man wastes away with a consumption, like a candle, until all the matter is spent; another labors under a continual ache, that, like the importunate widow, will give him no rest day nor night; this man spends his days in pain, that man has wearisome nights appointed to him. In some the bridle is taken off the fire, and they burn with a fever; in others the flood-gate is taken up from the water, and they are like to be drowned with a dropsy. The patient man complains, 'My breath is corrupt, my days are extinct, the grave is ready for me,' Job 17:1. The upright man cries out, 'My wounds stink and are corrupt; my loins are filled with a loathsome disease.' In one, the keepers of the house tremble with a palsy or lameness; in a second, the sound of grinders is low through weakness; in a third, those that look out of the windows are darkened through blindness; in a fourth, the daughters of music are brought down with deafness. Oh what an army, not only of moral, but natural adversaries, has every man in his own affections, constantly set in array against him, marching up, sometimes one, sometimes another, as the Lord of hosts gives the word of command. Physicians tell us that two thousand diseases annoy man's body, whereof two hundred affect the eyes; so that indeed man's body is a hospital, for diseases. But death will help all this. As the blind man told the lame, when they met at the stake, Brother, you may cast away your staff, death will cure us both. The physician of souls will by death heal all the diseases of the saints' bodies. There are some diseases which cannot be cured; but none incurable by Christ—he heals all whom he undertakes. If the higher a house stands on earth, it be esteemed the healthier, surely then the highest heavens must be a pure air and all health,

Revelation21:4: there shall be no more death, nor any more pain, for the former things are passed away. So that every Christian that dies in the faith, how diseased soever he were before, shall then immediately, as in the Gospel, be made every whit whole, John 7:23.

Thirdly, As death will free the believer from diseases in his body, so also from sorrows in his soul. The Christian lives upon earth as in a valley of tears, and often mingles his drink with weeping. As he is a man, he is born to sorrows as the sparks fly upward: he comes into the world crying, and goes out groaning; and his whole life from the womb to the tomb is in some regard a living death, or a dying life. But as he is a Christian, he drinks deepest of this cup of sorrows. The world is a tender mother to her children, but a stepmother to strangers. Sometimes the afflictions of the good cause high water in the saint's heart: by the rivers of Babylon he sits down and weeps when he remembers Zion, Psalm 137:1. He cannot but sympathize with the miseries of his fellow-members, as being himself in the body. He is not as a wooden leg, senseless of the other members' sufferings. Sometimes the transgressions of the bad clothe him with mourning: like Crœsus' son, though dumb before, yet he cries out when his father is wounded. 'As with a sword they pierce his bones, when they blasphemously say unto him, Where is your God?' Psalm 42:10. 'Rivers of tears run down his eyes, because the wicked forsake God's law,' Psalm 119:136. Sometimes his own corruptions, like so many daggers, stab him to the heart, that he should abuse such an ocean of unspeakable love by so unsuitable a heart and so unanswerable a life. He confesses his iniquities, and is sorry for his sins, Psalm 38:18. Sometimes divine desertions darken and cloud all his comforts: 'When God hides his face, he is troubled,' Psalm 30:7. As there are no joys like to those joys with which God revives him in the day of his favor, so there is no sorrow like to those sorrows with which God depressed him in the day of his anger. Thus his life is a circle of sorrows; but death will be the funeral of his sorrows and resurrection of his joys: now he sows in tears, but then he shall reap in joy. The day of death is a saint's marriage-day. Samson's wife indeed wept on her wedding-day, Judges 14:16; but when the soul, which in this life is contracted, shall at death be solemnly espoused, and more nearly conjoined unto Jesus Christ, 'all tears shall be wiped from its eyes; there shall be no more sorrow,' Revelation21:4. At that marriage-day Christ will turn all water into wine, all mourning into mirth, all sighing into singing, and cause the bones which he has broken to rejoice. Now the saints' sorrows are not perfect sorrows; to the believer—it shines and showers at the same time. He sorrows not as they which have no hope; but his joy at death shall be perfect joy, fullness of joy, Psalm 16:11, and permanent joy; when they shall see Christ at death, their hearts shall rejoice, and their joy shall no man take from them, John 16:22. 'Then the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away,' Isaiah 35:10.

So much for the privative gain of a Christian by death, or his freedom from evil.

CHAPTER 4.

What POSITIVE gain a Christian has by death

There is a second thing, which is positive; and that is the fruition of all good, which a believer shall gain by death, and in this head I shall observe these three gradations:

First, A believer, by death, shall gain the company of perfect Christians. Death will exempt him from all commerce with sinners, and teach him fully the meaning of that article, the communion of saints. In the field of this world the tares and the wheat grow together, but in that heavenly garner they are parted asunder. There is no treacherous Judas among the apostles; no covetous Demas among the disciples; no Amorites to be pricks in the eyes and thorns in the sides of the Israelite; no bestial Sodomite to vex righteous Lot with their unclean conversation; no flattering Doeg sets his foot in that heavenly sanctuary. David does not there complain, 'Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar! my soul has long dwelt with him who hates peace,' Psalm 120:4, 5; nor Isaiah, that he dwells among a people of unclean lips, Isaiah 6:5; nor Elijah, that he is left alone. Hell holds none but sinners, and Heaven has only saints. He who dies in the Lord goes to the congregation of the first-born, 'to the spirits of just men made perfect,' Hebrews 12:23. And questionless the sweet company will be part of our felicity. If Platinus the philosopher could say, Let us make haste to our country, there are our parents, there are all our friends; and if Cicero the orator could say, Oh what a brave day will that be when I shall go to the counsel and company of happy souls, to my Cato, and other Roman worthies! How much better will it be with the Christian, when he shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of Heaven; when he shall leave the rout and rabble of wicked ones, and be admitted into the society of all that died in the faith, and be joyfully welcomed by the melodious choir of angels, and be heartily embraced by the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, yes, all the saints! Surely if ever that proverb were true, it is here, The more the merrier. The fair streams there will never be drawn dry, though it be divided into many channels; the music there is not the less harmonious, because many hear it; nor the light of the Sun of righteousness the less pleasant, because many see it; and oh what a gain will this be, to enjoy the company of them that are holy! If Aaron, when he met Moses on earth, was glad at his heart, certainly there was greater joy at their meeting in Heaven. If David placed all his delight, Psalm 16:3, in the saints here below, when they shined a little, with the light of purity, like the moon, and had their spots in them, what delight does he take in them above, now they have perfect purity, and shine like the sun in the firmament of their Father! Matthew 13:43. If it were so lovely a sight to see Solomon in his rags of mortality, that the queen of Sheba came so far to behold it, what will it be to see him in his robes of glory!

I remember I have sometimes heard an able holy minister, now with Christ, say, that that sight of five hundred saints, and Jesus Christ among them, 1 Corinthians 15:6, was one of the bravest, goodliest sights that ever eyes beheld on earth. Sure I am they that are in Heaven see a far better, beholding Jesus Christ in the midst of many thousands.

Secondly, A Christian shall gain by death the nearest communion with the Lord Jesus Christ; and oh what happiness is included in this head! The presence of Christ on earth can make a mean cottage a most delightful court: to the three children it turned the fiery furnace into a delectable palace; what will it do then in Heaven? Bernard says he had rather be in his chimney-corner with Christ, than in

Heaven without Christ. Luther says he had rather be in Hell with Christ, than in Heaven without Christ. Communion with Christ can sweeten the bitterest condition. Christ alone is the salt which seasons all the saint's comforts, without which nothing is savory to the spiritual taste. A duty without Christ is like a body without a soul, which has neither loveliness nor life in it. Communion with Christ is one great motive which entices the saint to, and encourages him in, the ordinances of God. He attends on Scriptures because they are they that testify of Christ; the pearl of price is hid in that field; in them the lips of Christ, like lilies, drop sweet-smelling myrrh, Canticles 5:13; and oh how his heart burns within him with love to Christ, while Christ is opening to him the Scriptures! He frequents prayer, because therein Christ and his soul converse together; in that ordinance he enjoys much of Christ's quickening presence; he speaks to Christ by holy supplications, and Christ to him by heavenly consolations: he minds fasting, because therein his soul may with Jesus Christ have a spiritual feast; or the greatest cause of his weeping is, with Mary, 'They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.' The means of grace are therefore so desirable and delightful, because they are the galleries wherein he walks, talks, feeds, and feasts with the Lord of glory.

The highest duty without Christ, is as a dish without meat, from which he goes as empty and unsatisfied as he came to it. It is to him as Tully's letter to Augustine, of little worth if the name of Jesus be not there.

If he love the saints with a love of delight, it is because they are Christ's seed; if he love the sinner with a love of pity, it is for Christ's sake. His affections are contracted or enlarged towards anything, as it has less or more relation to Christ; and nothing is of true value or worth in his esteem which has not something of Christ in it.

Now consider, reader, if the presence of Christ be so precious, so pleasant to the Christian here, when he can see so little of his excellent beauty, and receive so little of his infinite bounty, what will it be when he shall appear to the soul in all his royalty, and fill the water-pots of the soul up to the brim with the riches of grace and glory.

Demarathus of Corinth says, they lost the chief part of their life's happiness that did not see Alexander sit on the throne of Darius. If that were such a happy sight, what a sight shall the saints have to see Christ on his Father's throne! Oh how much is included in these few words, 'to be with Christ,' which is the description of the saint's gain by death! Philippians 1:23. This was the great legacy and portion which Christ bequeathed his in his last will and testament: John 17:24, 'Father, I will that those which you have given me be with me where I am.' This was the great promise and sweetmeats which the tender Father provided to comfort his fainting children with at his own funeral:

John 16:22, 'I will see you again, and your hearts shall rejoice.' This was the great prayer which Paul makes for his beloved Timothy: 2 Timothy 4:22, 'The Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.' This was the enlivening cordial which the good physician administered to the dying patient: Luke 23:43, 'This day you shall be with me in paradise.' This is the great reason for which the godly long for death: Philippians 1:23, 'I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ.' I desire death, says Melanchthon, that I may enjoy the desirable sight of Christ. And oh when will that blessed hour come! when shall I be dissolved? when shall I be with Christ? said holy Mr Robert Bolton on his deathbed. Surely, then, this gain is great which the saint shall have by death. He who has Christ with him by grace, may say with Peter, 'Master, it is good to be here;' but he who is with Christ in glory, may say with Paul, 'To be with Christ is far better;' without doubt best of all. They were blessed which saw him in his estate of debasement, Luke 10:23, but much more blessed will they be that shall see him in his estate of advancement.

Thirdly, The saint by death, shall gain the full and immediate fruition of God. The former were excellent; but this, as the sun among the planets, surpasses them all. The other were as rivers, this is the ocean. They were as branches bearing goodly fruit, but this is the root upon which they grow. They all as lines meet in this center; this is the top-stone of the celestial building, this is the highest stair, the apex of the saints' happiness. This is the greatest gift which the creature can possibly ask, or the infinite God bestow. The boundless God cannot give a greater mercy than this. Is anything, yes, are all things in Heaven and earth equal to God? God alone is the highest object of faith, 1 Peter 1:21, and therefore the greatest ground of joy and satisfaction to the soul, Psalm 17:15. The vision of God is the beatifical vision, 1 John 3:3, and therefore the fruition of God will cause perfection in the soul. The enjoyment of God is the great desire and delight of the saints on earth, Psalm 42:1, 2; nay, it is the happiness of the human nature of the Lord Jesus, Psalm 16:5, 6. Without question then it will be the Heaven of heavens. That excellent description of Heaven mentioned by the apostle, 1 Thessalonians 4:17, is a being ever with the Lord. This is all. The most fluent tongue must be here silent, and the most capacious understanding will be soon at a stand, in the consideration of the felicity which flows from the fruition of God. In speaking of God we speak not what we ought, but what we are able, said Gratianus the emperor in his epistle to Ambrose.

The presence of this King will make the court indeed. For the Lord to be with us is our chief security: 'Though I walk in the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me,' Psalm 23:4. But for us to be with the Lord, will be our chief felicity: 'In his presence is fullness of joy; at his right hand are pleasures for evermore,' Psalm 16:11. God is not wealth, or honor, or comfort, or friends, or earth, or Heaven, but something infinitely beyond all these. God is an immense ocean of all excellencies and perfections, without either banks or bottom. God is virtually, eminently everything, all things. As in the wars between Charles the Fifth and Francis the First, king of France, when the emperor's herald had bid defiance to the king, from Charles, emperor of Germany, king of Castile, Leon, Arragon, and Naples, archduke of Austria, with the rest of his titles, the king commanded the heralds to return the challenge from Francis, king of France, commanding them to repeat France as many times as the other had petty earldoms in his style, intimating that one France was worth them all;2 so truly one God answers all things. He is health and strength, riches and relations, joy and pleasures, light and life, and much more, all the excellencies scattered and shadowed in the creature, are united and realized in the Creator, who is blessed forever. One God is worth more than all his creatures can sum up in millions of ages.

This is the gain of a saint by death, he shall gain the fruition of God. He who has lost God, has nothing more to lose—he has lost all; the loss of God is Hell, 2 Thessalonians 1:9. But he who has gained God, has nothing more to gain—he has got all; the gain of God is Heaven.

It is worthy our observation, that Job, speaking of God, Job 13:16, says, 'He shall be my salvation.' An expositor observes on that text, Job does not say, He shall give me salvation, but 'He shall be my salvation.' It more pleases a saint that he enjoys God than that he enjoys salvation. As nothing that a godly man gives God will content him, unless he give God himself, so nothing which God gives a godly man will satisfy him, unless God gives himself to him. His request is Lord, not yours, but you. He is better pleased that God is his salvation, than that he saved him. Whom have I in Heaven but you, says he. There are saints, angels, archangels, says Musculus, but in the presence of this glorious sun those stars must vanish and disappear. What are saints, what are angels without God? And it is true of things as well as people: What is the glory, what the pleasures, what the joys of Heaven without God? What is all the robes and riches, what is all the crowns and comforts, what is all the delights, the delicacies, the diadems of Heaven, without the God of Heaven, but as the funeral banquet for some eminent prince, where is large provision and great cost, but no cheer? No, it is God alone that is the center to which the saint moves, and in which he rests.

Oh what happiness shall the holy man have at death, to be ever with God! If that queen could say of Solomon's attendants, 'Happy are your men, happy are these your servants, which stand continually before you, and hear your wisdom,' 1 Kings 10:8. How happy are they that dwell in God's mansion-house, ever beholding his face, and hearing his voice! It is reported of Eudoxius, that he was so extremely desirous to be near the natural sun, that he might see it, and know its nature, that he professed, so he might obtain his desire, though but for one hour, he would willingly be burnt up by it the next hour. How much worth then is the sight and knowledge of this Sun of righteousness; and what gainers are they by death, that come thereby to see him as he is, and to know him, as they are known of him, 1 John 3:2; 1 Corinthians 13:12.

But the Christian shall not barely enjoy God after death, for that he does in this life, but he shall enjoy God fully. Now the saints enjoy a little of God, and oh how refreshing is it to his weary soul! But then he shall have as much of God as his heart can wish or hold. In this life there is a communication of God, answerable to the capacities of men; and the fault is in us, not in God, that we receive no more of him on earth. The ground is not in the sun, but in the narrowness of our windows, that we partake no more of its light; the cause is in the smallness of our vessels, not in the well, that we carry away no more of its water. If our mouths were never so wide opened, God would fill them now. But then the windows of the soul shall be widened, and the vessels of the heart enlarged, and so fitted for, and filled with, a greater participation of God. There is not the least complaint of want; all the patriarchs' sacks are there filled with corn. There David's cup runs over indeed; there the holy Ephesians are filled with all the fullness of God. In that Father's house there is bread enough, and to spare, for all his children. There is given to all good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, Luke 6:38.

We say there is no fishing like to the sea, because the sea has the greatest plenty, and the vastest capacity; there are fish enough to fill all our nets, and lade all our ships. I may more truly say, there is no fruition like to the fruition of God. He has enough not only to supply all our needs, and to satisfy all our necessities and desires, but he can do abundantly for us, above what we are able to ask or think, Ephesians 3:20. God has enough to fill himself, as boundless a being as he is; surely then he has enough to fill the limited soul of man. That which can fill the ocean, may well fill a spoon.

Now a Christian is described by his hungering and thirsting, his panting and breathing after a perfect conformity to God, that thereby he may be prepared for perfect communion with God; but blessed are they which now thus hunger and thirst, for then they shall be filled, Matthew 5:6. Well filled, as beasts are after a good bait, as the word used by our Savior signifies. He who drinks of that water which God shall there give him shall thirst no more. That God, who fills the bellies of his enemies on earth with the hidden treasures of common bounty, will surely fill the souls of his children in Heaven with the precious treasures of special mercy. The soul, that now sips of the water of life, shall then drink a full draught out of the rivers of God's pleasures. The Christian, who can now only taste God to be gracious, shall then have a full meal, when he shall eat bread in the kingdom of God. 'They are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he who sits on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters,' Revelation7:15–17.

Observe, reader, I say a Christian shall gain by death a full immediate fruition of God. Now the saint drinks the waters of life, and they are pleasant, though through the conduits and cisterns of ordinances; but with what joy will he draw water immediately out of the well of salvation. We read in

Joshua 5:12, when Israel came to Canaan manna ceased, and they did eat of the fruits of the land. While the saint is in the wilderness of this world, he needs, and feeds on the manna of the word, sacraments, prayer, and the like; but when death shall land him at that place, of which Canaan was but a type, the manna of ordinances shall cease, he shall eat the fruits of that land. Ordinances are necessary for, and suitable to, our state of imperfection. Jacob drove his flocks as they were able to go, so does Christ his sheep.

Here we are in a state of impurity, and therefore want water in baptism to wash us, says an eminent divine; in a state of darkness, and therefore want the light of the word to direct us; in a state of weariness, and therefore want a Lord's-day of rest to refresh us; in a state of weakness, and therefore want bread in the supper to strengthen us; in a state of sorrow, and therefore want wine to comfort us; in a state of beggary, and therefore want prayer to fetch some spiritual alms from the beautiful gate of God's temple.

While the saint is as a child, he thinks as a child, speaks as a child, understands as a child; but when he shall come to be a perfect man, he shall put away these childish things. When every earthly member shall be mortified, and the body of death wholly destroyed, when the faculties of the soul shall be enlarged, and the sanctification of the inner man perfected, when the rags of mortality shall be put off, and grace swallowed up in glory, the sun shall be no more your light by day, nor the moon your light by night, but the Lord your God, your everlasting light, and your God your glory, Isaiah 60:19.

Apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, are for the perfecting of the saints, for the edifying of the body of Christ, no longer than until we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, Ephesians 4:11–13. When God shall be all in all, then, and not until then, ordinances will be nothing at all. When the saint comes to his journey's end, he may throw away his staff. Now, how much will this add to the former, that the Christian shall without ordinances enjoy God! How lovely is the face of God, though it be but in the glass of the gospel! 2 Corinthians 3:18. This was the one thing which David begged, that he might dwell in the house of the Lord, to see the beauty of his face, Psalm 27:4. Ah how lovely will he be, when the Christian shall see him face to face! 1 Corinthians 13:12.

If it be so good to draw near to God on earth, Psalm 73:28, and if they are blessed that watch at wisdom's gates, and wait at the posts of her doors, Proverbs 8:34, how good will it be to draw near to God in Heaven; and how blessed are they that wait not at the door, but dwell in that house!

How pleasant will it be for the soul, when its eyes shall be strengthened to see God as he is, without the spectacles of ordinances. We esteem that honey sweetest that is sucked immediately out of the comb, though honey out of a dish is sweet; and we do with more delight eat that fruit which we gather ourselves from the tree, than we do that which is brought to us through other hands. The enjoyment of God is so sweet in the dish of a duty, that a Christian would sooner lose the best friend he has than it. But oh how sweet will it be in the comb of immediate communion! This fruit is very delightful and pleasant as it is conveyed through the hands of ministers, (though the liquor will scent of the cask,) but oh with what delight, (Christian, can you read it and your heart not warm with joy?) with what pleasure will you with your own hands gather this fruit from the tree of life, that stands in the midst of paradise! Revelation22:2.

Thus I have given you a little of that great gain which a saint has by death; death will free him from all evil, both of sin and suffering; it will give him the fruition of all good, in the enjoyment of perfect saints, and the blessed Savior, and in full immediate communion with the infinite God, who is blessed, and blessing his forever. This is the heritage of a righteous man from God, and this is the portion of his cup: thus shall it be done to the man whom the King of Heaven delights to honor. There is but one thing more required to make the Christian perfectly happy, and that is the eternity of all this; but I shall speak to that in the last use. I now proceed to the application of the point.

CHAPTER 5.

The difference between a sinner and a saint at death

The first use which I shall make of this doctrine shall be by way of information. If such as have Christ for their life shall have gain by their death, it informs us of the difference between the death of the sinner and the saint: the one is an unspeakable gainer, the other an inconceivable loser by death. Death to the good is the gate through which they go into the kingdom of Heaven; death to the bad is the trap-door through which they fall into Hell. The godly dies as well as the wicked; but the wicked man dies not so well as the godly. The metal and the dross go both into the fire; but the metal is refined, and the dross consumed. As the cloud in the wilderness had a light side to the Israelite, but a dark side to the Egyptian: so death has nothing but light and comfort for the Israel of God; nothing but darkness and sorrow for the sinful Egyptians. Death to every one is a messenger sent from the Lord of life; it comes to the regenerate, as the young prophet to Jehu, 'I have an errand to you, O captain.' And what was his errand? He poured the oil on his head, saying, 'Thus says the Lord, I have anointed you king over Israel,' 2 Kings 9:5, 6. It is a messenger from God, to call the Christian to a kingdom which cannot be shaken. But it comes to the unregenerate, as Ehud to Eglon: 'And Ehud said, I have a message from God unto you.' And what was his message? Judges 3:20, 21, 'And Ehud put forth his left hand, and took the dagger from his right thigh, and thrust it into Eglon's belly,' It is a messenger from God, with a mortal, wounding, killing, stabbing message to a sinner. The pale white horse of death rides before, and the red fiery horse of Hell follows after.

The people of God pass safely through the red sea of death, which his enemies assaying to do are drowned—are damned.

There is a great disagreement in the lives of the holy and unholy; but oh what a vast difference is there in their deaths! they are like two parallel lines; how far soever they go together, they never touch in a point. Their ways differ, and therefore their ends must necessarily differ. Every man's end is virtually in his way; their ways differ as much as light and darkness, and therefore their ends must differ as far as Heaven and Hell. The one walks in his own ways, Proverbs 14:14; in the ways of his own heart, Ecclesiastes 11:9; in the broad way of the flesh and the world, Matthew 7:13; and so his end is damnation, Philippians 3:19; his latter end is, that he shall be destroyed for ever, Numbers 24:20. The other walks in the way of the Lord, Psalm 119:1; in the way of his testimonies, verse 14; in the narrow way of self-denial, mortification, and crucifying the flesh, Matthew 7:14; and so his end is peace, Psalm 37:37. Such as the seed is sown, such is the crop which is reaped. The unregenerate man sows to the flesh, and of the flesh reaps corruption; the sanctified soul sows to the spirit, and of the spirit reaps life everlasting, Galatians 6:6, 7.

The blind world, indeed, as it sees not their difference in life, (the life of a saint is a hidden life; Colossians 3:3, 'Our life is hid with Christ in God,' The king's daughter is all glorious, but it is within, Psalm 45:13; the jewels of her graces are laid up in that privy drawer, the hidden man of the heart,) so it beholds not the difference in their death. As dies the wise man, so dies the fool, to the eye of sense, and they want the eye of faith, Ecclesiastes 2:16. We see no difference, say they, between the death of them you call profane, and your precise ones; they die both alike to our judgments.

But this conceit, reader, if you are such an atheist, proceeds from your blindness and unbelief. You are probably in the chamber when a drunkard, a swearer, or a civil, moral, yet unsanctified neighbor departs this life; you see his body trembling, panting, groaning, dying; but you do not see the ten thousand times worse condition his poor soul is in. You see his kindred or relations weeping; but you do not see the infernal spirits rejoicing; you do not see the greedy devils that waited by the bedside, like so many roaring lions, for their desired and deserved prey; you do not see when the soul left the body how it was immediately seized on by those frightful hell-hounds in a most hideous, horrible manner, and hauled to the place of intolerable and eternal torments; you do not see the shoutings of those legions in Hell, at the coming in of a new prisoner, to bear a part in the undergoing of divine fury, in their blasphemies against Heaven's majesty, and in their estate of hopelessness and desperation.

Men, says a modern writer, like silly fishes, see one another caught, and jerked out of the pond of life; but they see not, alas! the fire and pain into which they are cast who die in their sins. Oh, it had been better surely for such if they had never been born, as Christ said of Judas, than to be brought forth to the murderer (that old man-slayer) to be hurled into Hell, there to suffer such things as they shall never be able to avoid, or abide.

On the other side, you stand by a scorned, persecuted saint, when he is bidding adieu to a sinful world; you see the strugglings and droopings of his outward man, but you see not the reviving cordial the physician of souls is preparing for his inward man; you do not see those glorious angels which watch and wait upon this heaven-born soul.

That wagon or chariot, which the son of Joseph sends to fetch his relation to a true Goshen, the inheritance of the saints in light, is as invisible to you, as those chariots of fire on the mountain were to the servant of the prophet. Never Roman emperor rode in such a chariot of triumph, as the saint does to Heaven. When the soul bids the body good-night, until the morning of the resurrection, you do not see those ministering spirits, sent down for the good of this heir of salvation, presently solacing and saluting it. You do not see how stately it is attended, how safely conducted, how gladly received into the bosom of Abraham, into the father's house, into that city, whose builder and maker is God. You do not see the soul putting off, with the clothing of the body, all sin and misery, and putting on the white linen of the saints, even perfect purity, matchless joy, and eternal felicity. When you can see these things with the eye of faith, you will easily grant a vast difference between the death of the gracious and graceless.

Reader, if you are dead in your sins, and unacquainted with this spiritual life, which I have before described, nothing of that endless gain which the godly shall enjoy at death belongs to you; none of that fullness of joy, of those rivers of pleasures, of that eternal weight of glory, shall you partake of. I may say to you, as Simon Peter to Simon Magus, 'You have no part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God.' You may, like the madman at Athens, lay claim to all the vessels that come into the haven; but the vessels of the promises, richly laden with the treasures of grace and love, do not at all appertain to you. If, like a dog, you snatch at the children's bread, you are more bold than welcome, and will one day be well beaten for your presumption. If you are unregenerate, and so die, look to yourself, for your lot must fall on this side the promised land.

You may, like a surveyor of land, take a view of another's manor, and bring a return, how stately the house is, how pleasant the gardens, how delightful the walks, how fruitful the pastures, how finely it is seated, how fully it is wooded, how sweetly it is watered, how fitly it is every way accommodated; but as long as the pronoun is wanting, it can be but little comfort, it is none of your.

So you may read and hear much of that comfort, joy, and richness of that incomparable kingdom, which the holy shall immediately upon their deaths enter into; but what is all this to you, when you must be without it forever? You may see Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom, but between him and you there will be a great gulf.

As a stranger, you may hear the last will and testament of Christ read, and therein the fair, rich, and large portions which he has bequeathed to his children, John 17:24; Luke 12:32, but not the least mention made of any good for you. Look from the beginning of Genesis, to the end of the Revelation, and see if there be one good word spoken to you, while you are in your natural estate. Moses-like, you may, by the prospective of scripture, have a Pisgah sight of Palestine, of that good land flowing with milk and honey; but, as God is true, if you die in unregeneracy, you shall never enjoy one foot of it.

The worst of a saint is past when he dies, but your worst, O sinner, is to come. There are some dregs in the bottom which you are yet to drink down. You have your good things here, and he his evil things; but at death he is comforted, and you are tormented. He has all his Hell upon earth, his Heaven is to come; you have all your Heaven on earth, and your Hell is to come when you pass into another world. The Hell of a saint is an easy Hell; but ah, how hot is that Hell in Hell, how fiery is that furnace, how terrible those torments! I may conceive somewhat, the damned feel most, but no tongue can express them.

But it may be, friend, you are one that thrive in this world, and therefore do not trouble your head, much less your heart, with the things of another world. You are unwilling to put a spoonful of those thoughts into your sauce, lest it should make your meat unsavory: it would mar your mirth and spoil your sports. As Sigismund the emperor did not love the pronunciation of the Greek Zeta, because it represented the gnashing teeth of a dying man; so you are resolved to banish such enemies, as you think, out of your coasts, and, like a bear, to go down that steep hill of death backward.

But know you, O man, that whether you will consider of your death beforehand or no, it is hastening upon you. Though you put it far from you, whether you will or no, it draws near to you. The ship moves not so fast in the waters, nor the sun in the heavens, as you are hastening towards your long, your everlasting home, and then death will bring you up a reckoning for all your sweet morsels, merry-meetings, time and talents whatever. Believe it, then, you will have sour sauce for all your sweetmeats; your presumption will prove but like Haman's banquet before execution.

What advantage, then, will your sunshiny morning of common mercies bring you, when, as on Sodom, it will be followed with flakes of fire and brimstone before night? Do you not know, that when the wicked flourish, it is that they may be destroyed for ever? Psalm 92:7. The higher you ascend on this ladder, the greater your fall when death turns you off. You are but ripening for ruin, and fatting on earth to fry in Hell, all the while you are flourishing in a course of sinning; nay, you may be much nearer Hell than you are aware of.

The metal, when it shines brightest in the fire, is nearest melting. You, like a candle, may give a blaze when you are going out of the world, into blackness of darkness forever. The hawk flies high, and is as highly prized, being set upon a perch, and set out with the jingling bells of encouragement, and carried on his master's fist; but being once dead, and pitched over the perch, is cast upon the dunghill as good for nothing. The hen scrapes in the dust, nothing rewarded while she lives, but being dead, is brought as a choice dish to her master's table. Thus wicked men in this life are set in high places, godly men lie groveling with their mouths in the dust; but being dead, the former is cast into Hell, the latter brought to Heaven's table.

But that I may awaken your conscience, O secure sinner, and make you look about you, while there is time and hope, if the gracious and powerful God please to assist, I shall give you an estimate of the sinner's losses by death, by which you may see what a difference there is between the death of the titular and the real Christian.

And here, reader, you may help me with your conceptions, for I shall come infinitely short in my expressions. As none can endure it, so none can declare it; for who knows the power of God's wrath? Psalm 90:11.

The orator, when he would describe the violent death of the cross, does it by an aposiopesis: What, says he, shall I say of the death of the cross? Much more cause have I to speak so of this death, What shall I say of this eternal death?

CHAPTER 6.

The sinner's PRIVATIVE MISERY at death

By death you shall lose all your earthly delights and carnal contentments. The table of your life possibly is richly spread with variety of outward enjoyments, riches, relations, honors, pleasures, beauty, and bravery; but death will come in with a voider, and take all away. It is called an unclothing, 2 Corinthians 5:4, and indeed it will strip you naked of all such garments and ornaments. Your eye shall no more see good, Job 7:7; that is, the good things of this life, they will all die with you, as to your use and comfort. It is a doleful expression of Abraham to Dives, You had, or you received, your good things in your lifetime, Luke 16:25. Oh what a cutting word was that to his heart, when he was passed into another world, Remember there was a time when you and they were joined together, but now you are parted forever. To have been happy was no small aggravation of his misery. It is with you, while in this world, as it was with the Jews, in the vineyards and fields of their neighbors, pluck and eat they might, while there, but pocket up, and carry away, they might not, Deuteronomy 23:24, 25.

Death is the great thief which will rob you of your riches. The wealthiest emperor, the next moment after death, has no more than the poorest beggar. As you came forth of your mother's womb, naked you shall return, to go as you earnest, and shall take nothing in your hand of all your labor, Ecclesiastes 5:15. That gold which you love, and trust more than God, these pebbles which you value above the pearl of price, that treasure on earth, which your heart is set upon more than on the true treasure in Heaven, will all leave you when death finds you. Mr Rogers, in his Treatise of Love, tells us of one, that being near death, clapped a twenty shilling piece in his mouth, saying, Some wiser than some, I will take this with me, however; but alas! poor fool he could not be so good as his word. The Holy Spirit excellently terms rich men, rich in this world, because riches will not make men rich in another world, 1 Timothy 6:17.

Death will seal a lease of ejectment, and turn you out of all your possessions; and death will give you a bill of divorce, and separate you from all your relations. The relations of husband and wife, parents and children, are calculated only for the meridian of this world, and shall not outlive this life. Your dear husband, or your loving wife, and your most dutiful children, will all serve you as Orpah did Ruth, chapter 1:14, follow you while you are full, but forsake you when you are empty; cleave to you in your health and life, but leave you in your greatest danger at death. And your birth and breeding, honor and respect, will serve you in the like kind; they are but a shadow, which will not be seen when the sun of your life is set. The great distinctions in the eternal world will be holy or unholy, not noble or ignoble.

'Be not afraid when one is made rich, when the glory of his house is increased; for when he dies he shall carry nothing away; his glory shall not descend after him,' Psalm 49:16, 17. Death is the great leveler, making princes and peasants equal.

All your sinful pleasures will also be lost. The sweet taste you found in your mouth will be gone, though they will rise in your stomach, and after in your belly be more bitter than gall. Your merry meetings, jovial companions, witty jests, sporting, recreations, pictures for your eyes, music for your ears, dainties for your taste, your eating and drinking, and all these delights on earth, which you solace your sensual soul with, desiring no other Heaven, will all, like leaves in the autumn of your death, fall off from you. Though in the short summer of your life you are richly laden with them, yet in your long, your everlasting winter, you shall be stripped naked of them.

You may say to all the aforementioned delights of riches, relations, honors, and pleasures, and whatever it is which you foolishly rejoice in, as Charles the Fifth, emperor of Germany, whom the world counted most happy, did to his trophies, treasures, and things of the like nature: Be gone, get you far out of my sight. Be assured, that as a false harlot leaves her lovers when they are arrested for debt, and follows other customers, so this painted strumpet, the deceitful world, that now lays open her fair breasts, to allure you to go a-whoring after her, and commit spiritual fornication with her, when death shall arrest you by a writ from Heaven, will wholly forsake you, and follow them that survive. Now, what a loss will this be!

But it may be you comfort yourself against this, that all, even good as well as bad, will join with you in this loss. But, reader, do you not consider, that they who enjoy the stars all night, and come in the morning instead thereof to enjoy the glorious sun, are no losers; the sun has all the light of the stars, and far more. Neither can the godly be properly called losers of these comforts, because they enjoy them all, and infinitely more, in the blessed God: 'As money answers all things,' Ecclesiastes 10:19. Money is equivalently sheep, oxen, corn, meat, drink, cloth; whatever you want in this life is virtually in money. So God to a gracious soul after death will answer all things; he will be eminently and virtually father, mother, wife, child, wealth, honor, pleasure, and all things; though he loses them here, he will find them there, and much more; but when you, O sinner, lose them in this world, they shall never be made up to you in another world. You lose not only the streams, but the fountain; not only the beams, but the sun; and therefore your portion will be scorching drought and dismal darkness. Besides, these things are not the portion, the all, of a good man; they are not his estate or inheritance, they are but an additional overplus, cast in over and above. So much the words of Christ imply, Matthew 6:33, 'And all other things shall be added to you.' As when a father gives his son a thousand pounds worth of ware, he casts in paper and pack-thread; or one thousand yards of cloth, he does not stand upon the breadth of the thumb which is to be allowed in measuring. So God, having given himself and his Son to his saints out of his vast bounty, casts in the creatures as an overplus; they are not their estate, or portion, or all. No; when a godly man, at the great and terrible day of the Lord Jesus, shall see his house, and land, and outward good things in that common flame which shall burn up the earth, he may then behold it with comfort, and say with the philosopher, I have my all still.

But, sinner, your loss of them will be a loss indeed; for these things are your all—they are all your God, and all your Christ, and all your happiness, and all your Heaven; they are all the fullness of joy, and all the rivers of pleasures, and all the weight of glory which you shall enjoy; they are all your riches, all your inheritance, all your consolation, all your reward, all your portion, and all you shall be worth forever. Look Luke 16:24. They have received their consolation, (cold comfort, indeed,) you have your reward, Matthew 6:2. It is one of the saddest speeches in the book of God, 'whose portion is in this life,' Psalm 17:14. Ah! poor portion. You have no other paradise but your garden, no other mansion but your beautiful building, no other inheritance but your land, no other kindred but your wife and children, no other honor but the stinking breath of your flattering neighbors, no other God but your gold, no other Heaven but the earth; all your estate is in dust, rubbish, and lumber; surely, then, it will be a loss with a witness to lose all that in a moment, and that forever, wherein all your happiness consists. Will it not be a sad sight for you to stand, as it were, upon the shore, and to see the vessel in which is embarked all your treasures, all your near and dear relations, all your respect and esteem, all your joy and delights, sinking before your eyes, and lost for ever? or to see that house, in which is your plate and jewels, your wife and children, and all that ever you are to be worth, in a flame, and nothing possible to be recovered; would not your eyes affect your heart with unspeakable horror? Now this, O reader, will be your case if you are unsanctified at death. When you lie upon your death-bed, and are going out of the world, you may take your leave of your friends, estate, honor, and delights in such language as this: Farewell, my dear wife, children, and all my friends; farewell forever. I am going where lovers and friends will be put far from me; I must never, never have any friend more, but shall remain friendless to all eternity. Farewell my house and land, my silver and gold; farewell forever. I shall from henceforth and forever be a beggar, and though I beg but for one drop of water to cool my tongue, when this whole body shall be in unquenchable flames, I must everlastingly be denied. Farewell my honors and delights; farewell forever. I shall never more be respected or comforted; confusion of face and easeless pains are to be my endless and unchangeable portion. Thus, man, you will most miserably even outlive your felicity, and when you come to live indeed, that is, in the eternal world, want all your comforts and joys.

You shall lose by death all your spiritual preferment. It is now no mean mercy to you, had you a heart to prize and improve it, that you enjoy the ordinances of God, the means of grace, many golden seasons for the good of your soul; that you may sit at God's feet, and hear his voice out of Scripture, fall down on your knees and seek his face by prayer; but know to your sorrow, death will rob you of all these jewels. Now you have the offers of mercy, the entreaties of the minister, the motions of the Spirit, the invitations of Christ, liberty to cast yourself down at the footstool of Heaven's Majesty, and to be as fervent and instant as you will for mercy, but then the gate will be shut, and there will be no praying, or hearing, or preaching, in the place where you are going: Psalm 88:11, 'Shall your loving-kindness be declared in the grave? or your faithfulness in destruction?' The interrogation is a strong negation. There is no preaching of God's clemency or fidelity either in the grave or Hell. All the lectures read in the former are by worms, of man's mortality; and all the sermons heard in the latter are of man's misery and God's severity. Reader, I assure you from the living God, that though in this life you are now and then bungling about a duty, and giving God your stinking breath, a few cold, lazy petitions, which proceed from your corrupt lungs, your cursed heart, you shall do so no more after death. As the saints shall be above this mediate enjoyment of God, so you shall be below it. And truly, had you ever had communion with God in a duty, this loss would go near you. How amiable is the worshiping of God to a gracious soul! he prizes ordinances, because they are the means of it in this world, above his estate, and food, or whatever is dear to him, Psalm 119:14, 72, 111; Job 23:12; Psalm 84:1–3. And this privilege he shall have by death, to be employed still about the same work of pleasing, glorifying, worshiping, and enjoying God; only he shall do it in a more excellent and more delightful way.

He continues, as it were, in the same school; death only removes him to a higher form, or, if you will, death sends him from the school, in which he was fitted and prepared, to the university of Heaven. But, O sinner, you must be deprived of this happiness; indeed, now you esteem the ordinances of God a burden; as precious as they are to others, they are tedious to you. The church is your jail, the Sabbath is your ague-day, the commands of Christ are bonds and fetters to you, Psalm 72:3. The voice of your carnal heart is, When will the glass be out? when will the duty be done? when will the Sabbath be over, that you may follow the world? Amos 8:5. You think the prayer is too long, the sermon is too long, the Sabbath is too long, the duties are all too long; well, be patient but a little, a short time, and you shall never be troubled with these long duties more. The night is coming when there is no working, John 9:4. There is no enjoying Sabbath, or sacraments, or seasons of grace; no wisdom, knowledge, or device, in the grave to which you are hastening, Ecclesiastes 9:10.

Now the minister exhorts you to cast away your sins, and come to your Savior, to reject your soul-damning lusts, and accept of a soul-saving Lord. The Father commands you by his sovereignty over you, and propriety in you as your Creator. The Son entreats you by presenting his bloody sweat and sufferings unto you, as he is your Redeemer. The Spirit stirs you to pity your precious soul, and to mind your unchangeable estate; to consider seriously in this day of God's patience the things which concern your eternal peace. The gospel is a treasure of inestimable value, freely offered you, upon condition you will but heartily embrace it and the easy yoke of Christ together. The Word of God charges, invites allures, beseeches, promises, threatens; all these, like so many trumpets, do loudly sound a retreat, to call you off from your slavery to the world and flesh unto the glorious liberty of the sons of God; but you are as deaf as the adder, and will not hear the voice of these heavenly charms; as hard as the rock—the waves of threatenings which dash unweariedly against you stir you not; the showers and dews of promises which fall on you continually make no impression; neither mercies nor judgments, neither men nor God, can prevail with you. Well, sinner, think of it again and again—and your heart is hardened with a witness if it do not tremble to think of it—the hour is approaching when you shall never have these offers, these invitations, these means, these motions more; though you shall earnestly and incessantly desire them, and willingly accept of them if they could be granted you, after you have fried as many millions of years in Hell as there are stars in the heavens, piles of grass on the earth, and sands on the sea-shore, yet your entreaty upon such a hard condition shall be denied. Then you will befool yourself to purpose for staying until the day after the fair, for not accepting when you were well offered; then mercy will be mercy indeed, then grace will be grace indeed, then the gospel will be glad tidings indeed, when by the want of them you shall fully know the worth of them.

Now God holds the candle of his word to you, and instead of working, you play. Instead of working out your own salvation, instead of working the works of him who sent you into the world, you play the fool, the drunkard, the beast, the hypocrite, the atheist; well, you shall go into utter darkness, where those lights which you now enjoy will never shine.

Plutarch observes of Hannibal, He might once have taken Rome, and would not; afterwards he would, and could not. Now God offers you Heaven, you chose earth; and notwithstanding he assures you that now is the only acceptable time, now is the only day of salvation, yet you will not hear when he calls. I tell you the day is near when you would, but God will not; when you shall call, but he will not hear; and then you shall find no place for repentance, though, Esau-like, you seek it carefully with tears. When once your particular judgment is passed, it will be in vain to beg a psalm of mercy, Hebrews 9:27.

You shall at death lose the society of all the godly, even of those excellent ones, in whom is the delight of Christ, Proverbs 8:31, and all the delight of Christians, Psalm 16:3. It is a blessing to you upon earth, did the Lord but sanctify it to you, that your lot is cast in a land, in a parish, in a family, where those holy ones are, that you may hear their gracious prayers, see their pious patterns, and enjoy their precious precepts. A saint is, as the proverb is in Africa, A man whose coming is prosperous. This churlish Laban could confess, Genesis 30:27, and the heathenish Egyptian found by experience, Genesis 39:2. All the country fares the better for a good and rich Christian; he eats not his morsels alone, but keeps open house for all comers.

He both desires and endeavored that others might be not almost, but altogether as he is. None are more spiritually covetous to make proselytes than the true Israelites. As the wall which receives heat from the sun reflects it on the passengers, so he wishes so well to the worst, that they were made partakers of the same grace, that they may have fellowship with the Father, and Jesus Christ his Son, 1 John 1:3. Like the bee, he goes to this and that flower, to this and that ordinance, and sucks some sweetness, some spiritual good, and carries all home to his house, to his hive. As sin is diffusive,—'a little leaven leavens the whole lump,' 1 Corinthians 5:6. Some say, they that have the plague are very desirous to infect others;—so is grace, like oil spreading, the gracious desire to go to an innumerable company of angels with a numerous company of saints.

Their examples are amiable, and sometimes instrumental for the conversion of others, 1 Peter 3:1; 1 Corinthians 7:16. Justin Martyr confesses of himself, that beholding the saints' piety in life, and patience at death, he gathered their doctrine to be the truth, and was converted. Their prayers are desirable, and that in the esteem of profane and ungodly men, Exodus. 8:28, and 9:28; Acts 8:24.

In a word, the saints are clouds which water the earth, Hebrews 12; the salt which keeps the world from putrefaction, Matthew 6. That place, Proverbs 10:25, 'But the righteous is an everlasting foundation,' the Hebrews expound, the righteous are the foundation of the world, which but for their sakes would soon shatter and fall to ruin. 'I bear up the pillars thereof,' says David, Psalm 75:3. It is for the sake of the good that the bad are spared, Acts 27:24. All that sailed with Paul were saved for his sake. How many a time have they stood in the gap, and diverted a flood of wrath from breaking in! Psalm 106:30; Numbers 14:20. How many a mercy has come flying to the world upon the wings of their prayers!

But, O sinners, herein will be a part of your misery, that you shall forever be banished their company. Now possibly you think the parish the worse for such strict inhabitants, your dwelling the worse for such precise neighbors, your family the worse for such a humble, zealous wife, child, or servant. Now you do not know what you gain when you have their society, but you shall know what you lose when you have lost them to eternity.

If Cicero did so bewail his banishment from the Roman moralists, that though the countries through which he traveled did him much honor, yet he would often look towards Italy with sighs and tears; and if the disciples wept so much for the loss of Paul—they fell about his neck, and kissed him, and wept, sorrowing most of all for the words which he spoke, that they should see his face no more in this world, Acts 20:37, 38—how will you sigh and sob, weep and wail, when you shall be parted from them in the eternal world!

Did the devout men make such great lamentation for the loss of one good man for a little time, Acts 8:2, what lamentation shall you make for the loss of all good men to eternity! Surely, as in Ramah, there will be a voice heard, lamentation, weeping, and mourning, for the loss of these children of God.

When you die, you shall lose all your hope, or presumption rather. Your dead hope, for saints only have a lively hope, 1 Peter 1:3, will fail you at death. As you have no true holiness, so you can have no true hope; but something it is likely you have, upon which you relies as to your future estate. It may be you have the good things of this life, and thence concludes your right to a better life; as if because the great housekeeper of the world throws some bones to the dogs, therefore he must love them with a paternal love. You do not consider, their houses may be full of gold whose hearts are empty of grace, and whose souls shall assuredly come short of glory, Job 22:17, 18; Psalm 17:13, 14.

It may be it is your profession of religion that holds you up by the chin, and keeps you from sinking; as if, because a stage player is dressed in the robes, and for a quarter of an hour acts the part of a king, he must therefore have a real right to the dignity, dominions, and revenues of the regal office, not believing that these colors of the form which are not laid in oil, in the power of godliness, will be washed off at death, Matthew 25:8. Or it is likely you enjoy the privileges of the gospel; Sabbaths, sacraments, and the seasons of grace are the bladders, with the help of which, without an inward change, you think to swim to Heaven. Do you not know that many go to hell-fire with font-water on their faces, and from the table to the tormentor? Matthew 22:13; that Esau, a castaway, and Ishmael, an outcast, had both Abraham to their father? And so had they whom truth itself assures, that they were of their father the devil, John 8:44. 'Circumcision avails nothing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature,' Galatians 6:15. All such things are but lying words, where an internal work of grace is wanting, Jeremiah 7:4–6.

Or possibly you are a man of many performances; you mind secret, family, relation duties, which too too many neglect, praying, reading, hearing, Christian communion. Like the spider, you weave a curious web out of your own affections, and therewith make you a house in which you rest quietly; but, O friend, God has a broom of death which will sweep this down, Job 8:14, 15. This, and all the rest, as near as they seem to be to Heaven, will prove but a castle in the air. Whether any, or all these, or something else, be the pillars by which your hope is upheld in life, they will fail you at death; and then the rotten props being taken away, the house of your hope will fall. These are all but a sandy foundation, and therefore when that great storm comes, they will down to the ground, Matthew 7:26, 27.

It is possible you may hope all the time you live, but your life and hope will depart together. Like your neighbors, you may be full of hope even when you are going into the pit of despair, and die in peace, though you are going unto the place of eternal war; but the next moment after death, your hopes will take wings and fly away: Proverbs 11:7, 'When a wicked man dies, his expectation shall perish; and the hope of unjust men perishes.' He died perhaps with his head full of hopes and expectations, as those seemed to have done that came bouncing at Heaven's gate with, 'Lord, Lord, open to us;' but soon were their hearts filled with desperation when they heard, 'Depart from me, you workers of iniquity, I know you not.' His great hope shall be little worth. A false heart and false hope can never hold out in such a real hardship: Job 27:8, 'What is the hope of the hypocrite, though he has gained, when God shall take away his soul?' An expositor glosses on it thus: The anchor of a wicked man's hope enters not within the veil, as a godly man's does, closing with God himself in Christ, Hebrews 6:19, which anchor in all storms is sure and steadfast, but is cast upon false and loose ground, and therefore, when the storm comes, his anchor drives, and is unsteadfast; and so his hope and heart fail together. The stoutest unregenerate man alive will droop at last when God comes to take away his soul; then his crest falls, and his plumes flag: 'The wicked is driven away in his wickedness,' Proverbs 14:32.

He being arrested by death as a cruel sergeant, in the devil's name, is hurried away, and hurried into Hell. As syrens are said to sing curiously while they live, but to roar horribly when they die; so you that are high in hope on earth, will be the lower in grief in Hell, when you shall see all your hopes, like Absalom's mule, to fail you in your greatest extremity.

We say, If it were not for hope the heart would break; what will you do then, when your hope shall depart, and your heart continue?

How sad will your condition be, when you shall fall from the high pinnacle of your presumption into the bottomless gulf of desperation! Surely your raised expectation disappointed will prove a sore vexation. How extremely will you be perplexed, when you shall fall as low as Hell, whose hopes were raised as high as Heaven! If hope deferred make the heart sick, Proverbs 13:12, then hope of such happiness wholly frustrated will kill it with a thousand deaths.

When a gracious man dies, his hope is perfected in the fruition of all, and ten thousand times more, than he hoped for. When a graceless man dies, his hope perishes in an utter disappointment of all that he, though with little reason, so much expected.

You shall lose by death your precious soul. This will be a loss indeed. The price of this pearl is not known to you on earth, but it will be fully known in Hell. This one head, reader, did you but understand what is included in it, would stab you to the heart, and the thought of this one loss would be enough to embitter the comforts of your whole life. The soul of man is called the man,

Job 4:19—though not in a natural, yet in a moral, consideration, says one upon that place, it being the most noble, the most excellent part of man; and it is usual to denominate the whole from the better part. The body is but a house of clay, its foundation is in the earth; but the soul, the inhabitant of this house, is of an angelical, spiritual nature. The generation of this was from Heaven, Zechariah 12:1.

The operations of this are most noble; the redemption of this cost the blood of God, Psalm 31:5; Acts 20:28. This is that part of man which is capable of the image of his Maker, Colossians 3:10; Ephesians 4:24. The working out the salvation of this is the whole of a saint's care and labor, Philippians 2:14. It is upon the welfare of this that the body depends for its unchangeable estate. What a loss then will the loss of this be!

A heathen can tell us that it is an easy matter to bear the loss of an earthly house for our bodies when we die; but certainly it will be hard to bear the want of a heavenly habitation for your soul. Let him who bought this ware speak to its worth and your loss: 'What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?' Matthew 16:26. Behold what an incomparable, what an irreparable, loss is here! It is such a loss there is none like it. The gain of the whole world cannot balance the loss of one soul. If a temporal life be more worth than meat, and the body than clothing, what is an immortal, eternal soul worth? Could you set your soul to sale for all the world, yet for that you would be a loser, nay, as the rich man, a beggar. This is an irrecoverable loss. If you lose one eye, you have another; if you lose one limb, you have more; if you lose your estate, you may recover it again; if you lose your life, you may be a gainer by it, you may find it again, Matthew 16:25; but if you lose your soul at death, you have no more; there is no second throw to be cast, no after-game to be played; you are gone, you are undone forever. Here is a loss, man, that may make your hair stand an-end; your head, yes, your heart, to ache when you read or think of it. Do not your ears tingle and your loins tremble to hear of it?

When God would smite the rich fool under the fifth rib, as it were, and strike him so home as that there need not a second thrust, he does it in those words, 'You fool, this night your soul shall be required of you,' Luke 12:20. Ah sad sentence! wherein every word speaks woe, every syllable sorrow and sighs. Had it been, You wise man, the message might have been welcome, and death desirable as a passage to eternal life; but it is 'You fool.' Had it been this year, or this month, nay, had it been this week, the man might have been forewarned and forearmed; but it is, 'This night your soul shall be required of you.' Had it been, This night your riches shall be required of you, how harsh would it have sounded in his ears, who had no other God but his gold; who, like a mole, lived in the earth as his element! Oh how hard would it be to part this covetous muck-worm and his mammon of unrighteousness; but it is not your silver, but your soul shall be required of you. Had it been, This night your relations shall be required of you, your wife and children, and all your kindred, shall be required of you, what heavy tidings would it have been to his heart, that had no kindred in Heaven! with what wringing of hands, and watering of cheeks, and sighs and sobs, would such news have been entertained! Many an eye would a tender husband and father have cast upon his loving wife and lovely babes, and oh how would his eye have affected his heart with grief and sorrow, to consider that these thriving, hopeful plants must be removed into another soil, that this near conjugal knot must be untied, and he and his dear relations, who had so often and so much rejoiced together, so suddenly be separated, and that forever! But it is not your wife that is one flesh with you, but your spouse that is a spirit within you: 'Your soul shall be required of you.' Had it been, This night all the means of grace shall be required of you, it had been worse than the loss of a limb to him who had any spiritual life. The ordinances of God to a soul, are as the sun to the world, without which, notwithstanding all his earthly delights, it would be but a place of darkness and of the shadow of death, Matthew 4:16; but it is your soul. The former might have spoken the man's condition very dangerous, but this speaks it altogether desperate, 'You fool, this night your soul shall be required of you.' The former, although sad, are yet nothing to this, not so much as the noise of a pop-gun to the noise of a cannon. This is the great ordnance which includes, and yet drowns, those smaller pieces.

Could you, says one, upon the forfeited text, purchase a monopoly of all the world, had you the gold of the west, the treasures of the east, the spices of the south, the pearls of the north, all is nothing to this incarnate angel, this invaluable soul. O wretched worldling, what have you done thus to undo your soul! Was it a wedge of gold, a heap of earth, a hoard of silver, to which you trust? see, they are gone, and your soul is required. Alas, poor soul! where must it go? To Heaven? No; there is another place for wandering sinners: 'Go you into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.' Thither must it go, with heaviness of heart, into a kingdom of darkness, a lake of fire, a prison of horrible confusion and terrible tortures.

Reader, if you are not new-born, put this case to yourself, and ask your soul what it will do in such an hour, when the grave shall come for your body, and the devil will come for the soul; when your soul shall leave this dwelling of your body, and pass, naked of all its comforts, into a far country, where devils and damned spirits are the inhabitants, where screeching, yelling, and howling is the language, where fire and brimstone is the meat, and a cup of pure wrath, without the least mixture, is the drink; where weeping and wailing is their calling, where a killing death is all their life. Assure yourself, if you die unsanctified, you will find far more and worse than all this.

O my soul, says Bernard, what a terrible day shall that be, when you shall leave this mansion, and enter into an unknown region! Who can deliver you from those ramping lions? who shall defend you from those hellish monsters?

Now you most unworthily undervalue your precious soul, little caring what flaws by sin you causes in this diamond. Like the rooster on the dunghill, you know not the worth of this jewel, but prefer your barleycorns before it. I have read that there was a time when the Romans wore jewels on their shoes. You do worse; you trample this matchless jewel under your feet. While your dying body is clothed and pampered, your everlasting soul is naked and starved. Some write of Herod, (I suppose because of that infant massacre,) it was better be his swine than his son; for when his superstition hindered him from slaying his hogs, his ambition helped him to kill his child. I say, it were better to be your beast than your soul. You can, every morning and evening, whatever happen, take care that your beasts be watered and foddered, and many times in the day look abroad after them, to see what they ail, and accordingly take order for their supply; and yet, O man, or rather O brute, you can let your soul go a whole day, and never feed it with the set meals of prayer, Scripture, and meditation; yes, and in a whole day (nay, it may be a whole week) not ask your soul in good earnest how it does, what it lacks, what sins it has to be mortified, what grace it has to be bestowed or increased, what spiritual necessities to be supplied.

Reader, is it not so? Let conscience speak; and can you read these lines without blushing and heart-breaking, that you should spend more time and strength upon your beasts than upon that soul, which truth itself says is more worth than a world? Matthew 16:26; which is created capable of such a high work as pleasing, glorifying, and enjoying God, and of such a happy reward as the immediate and eternal fruition of, and communion with, his infinite Majesty in Heaven. Well, this soul thus despised, when lost, though then too late, will be esteemed. Hell will read you such a lecture of your soul's worth, that it will make you understand it, and believe it, whether you will or no, and then you shall have time enough (in that eternity in which your soul shall be lost) to befool yourself for your desperate madness in gratifying your brutish flesh, and thus basely neglecting your soul, that heaven-born spirit.

You shall by death lose the infinitely blessed God. This is the loss of losses, the misery of miseries, the very Hell of Hell, such a loss as there was never the like before, nor ever shall be again after it; such a loss as no tongue can express, as no heart can conceive, yet such a loss as you shall know fully, when experimentally. The four first losses might have been borne with comfort and delight by the person that had but gained this good, and the fifth could not have been without this. The eternal death of the soul consists in its farthest separation from that God whose favor is far better than life. This is the lowest round in that ladder by which you shall descend into the bottomless pit. This is the foot of this black, bloody account, the head of that arrow which pierces the heart of the damned.

This is the worst effect and fruit of sin, that it is privative of our union with, and fruition of, God. 'Depart from me' is as terrible a word as 'everlasting fire.' Ah, where do they go that go from him, when he alone has the power of eternal life? How dismal, how dark must that dungeon be where this sun will not shine in the least degree with the light of his countenance! Well may it be called 'blackness of darkness forever,'

Jude 13. The Hell of the hypocrites, which will be hottest of all, is set out by this: Job 13:16, 'The hypocrite shall not come before God.' Could you have all the mercies that the world can give, yet in this want of God you would be completely miserable. Ten thousand words cannot speak a soul more unhappy than those two words, without God, Ephesians 2:12. You may be without riches, without friends, without health, without liberty, nay, without all outward blessings, and yet blessed; but if without God, you are cursed with a curse. When God would couch all arguments in one to persuade to duty, this is instead of all, 'Obey my voice, and I will be your God,' Jeremiah 7:23; when he would dissuade and drive them from iniquity, this is the stinging whip, 'Be instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from you,' Jeremiah 6:8; when he would strike Israel dead with a blow, this is it, 'Woe unto them when I depart from them,' Hosea 9:12. How sad a saying is that of Saul, 'I am sore distressed,' (and well he might;) 'the Philistines are upon me, and God is departed from me,' 1 Samuel 28:15.

If a partial eclipse of the sun cause such a drooping in the whole creation, what will a total eclipse of this Sun cause? How mournfully does Micah bemoan the loss of his dunghill deity! 'You have taken away my gods, and what have I more? and what is this you say unto me, What ails you?' Judges 18:24. Surely the damned, as they will have infinitely more cause, so they will with more horror and anguish bewail the loss of the true God, though all the tears in Hell are not sufficient to bewail the loss of this Heaven. If the body from which the soul is parted be such a deformed, sad spectacle, what shall the condition of that soul be from which God is parted forever?

How unable are the children of God to bear the absence of God in this life, though it be but in part, and for a short time! Take Heman, Psalm 88:14, 15, 'Lord, why cast you off my soul? why hide you your face from me? I am afflicted, and ready to die; while I suffer your terrors, I am distracted.' Observe, the good man is at death's door, and no wonder, where as to his apprehension the life of his soul had left him; for though no man can see the essential face of God and live, yet no saint can live unless he see the providential face of God. Consider Job, a man of courage, one that had entered the list against Satan, and foiled him. The Sabeans and Chaldeans were too hard for his servants, and captivated his cattle; but Job was too hard for them; he conquered them. The wind that blew down the house on his children could not blow down the tower of his confidence, his hold on Christ; yet when this valiant warrior comes to encounter with the withdrawings of God, how exceedingly is his courage withdrawn: Job 13:24, 'Wherefore hide you your face, and hold me for your enemy?' Why, Lord, are all the appearances from Heaven so black and lowering? Why is it that I see not the former smiles of your face? Oh, what is the cloud that hinders the light of your countenance from shining on me? What sin is the mist which is gathered about the true Sun, impeding my sight of you? 'Wherefore hide you your face, and count me for your enemy?'

Behold our Lord Jesus himself, that could bear the spiteful buffetings of some, the bloody scourgings of others, the scorn and derisions of many; that could suffer the treason of one apostle, the denial of another, and the unkindness of them all, without complaining; yet when the deity did but withdraw itself for a time, that the humanity might suffer for our sins, how mournfully does he sigh out that expression, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' Matthew 27:46. It was not his torturing from men, nor the terrors of devils, not the presence of all the powers of darkness, that Christ complained so much of, as the absence of God: 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'

Now meditate, O sinner, if the departure of God, though partial and temporal, were so terrible to his saints, to his Son, how intolerable will the loss of God be to you, when it shall be total and eternal! Do they mourn so bitterly when for a small moment he forsakes them, though with great mercies he gathers them; when in a little wrath he hides his face from them, though with everlasting kindness he has mercy on them? Isaiah 54:7, 8.

How bitterly will you complain when he shall forsake you to eternity, when he shall hide his face from you forever, and not bestow on you the least mercy, or smallest kindness! This will be a woe with a witness. Suffering may be the portion of saints, but separation from God the punishment of devils. As the face and comfortable presence of God is the greatest felicity of the saved, so the full withdrawings or absence of God will be the greatest misery of the damned.

Now you do not value the enjoyment of God; you think often that he is too near you; the coming of God to you is as to the devils, a torment, Matthew 8:29. If he draw near to you sometime in a sermon, in a private instruction, in a motion of his Spirit, or in a conviction of your conscience, you wish him farther off with his precise laws, that you might have more liberty for your fleshly lusts. The voice of your hellish heart unto God is, 'Depart from me, I desire not the knowledge of your ways,' Job 21:14. Well, your petition shall be granted to your destruction, and God will take you at your word, and give you your wish to your woe, when your doom shall be to depart from him, Luke 13:27; Matthew 25:41, and then you shall know the incomparable worth of him. Your understanding shall be cleared, though not changed, that your knowledge may increase your sorrow. You are now willfully ignorant of him and his will, (some never look up to the sun but in an eclipse,) but then you shall know so much of him to grind you with tormenting grief for your loss of him.

As a prisoner through the grates may see the costly apparel, the precious liberty, the pleasant and plentiful provision which others enjoy, while he is vexed with hunger, nakedness, cold, and bondage, so you shall see bread enough in the Father's house, and the children sitting round about his table eating and feasting in the kingdom of Heaven, while you are perishing with hunger. You shall see those rivers of pleasures wherein the godly bathe their souls, those soul-ravishing delights which they enjoy in God, the fountain of all good, while you are sentenced to an eternal separation from him.

CHAPTER 7.

The POSITIVE part of a sinner's misery at death

Now, tell me whether the sinful wretch be not a loser by death, when he shall lose all his wealth, friends, and opportunities of grace, the company of all the saints, all his false hopes of Heaven, his precious soul, and the ever blessed God; and tell me whether sin, how sweet soever it be in the commission, will not be bitter in the conclusion; whether, in such an hour, the devil will not pay you your full wages for all your wicked works; whether it be worth the while to continue in your unregenerate estate, though you could gain never so much, when it will certainly end in such inestimable loss. In a word, answer me whether the greatest pleasure you can gain for your flesh, the greatest addition you can gain to your estate, by a sinful, irreligious life, can countervail the everlasting loss of God and your soul?

But this is not all, sinner; I have not done with you yet. I have told you a little of your loss; for the whole of it no tongue can tell, no pen can write. I will now tell you your gain by death, and then do you cast up your account, and tell me whether your wickedness will not end in woe.

First, By death you shall gain a cursed ripeness, perfection of sin, if it may be called perfection. Upon earth the most notorious sinner is a lion chained up, and kept in; but in Hell he will be let loose, and then his ravenous nature, and cruel disposition, will appear to purpose.

You yet stand in a soil, says that accurate writer, not so proper for the ripening of sin, which will not come to its fullness until transplanted unto Hell. You who are here so maidenly and modest, as to blush at some sins out of shame, and forbear the actings of others out of fear, when there you shall see your case as desperate as the devil does his; then you will spit out your blasphemies, with which your nature is stuffed, with the same malice that he does.

The vilest man in this world is like a swine in a fair meadow; but in the eternal world, there will be the wallowing in the mire. Your heart now is like the sea, which cannot rest, but is ever casting up mire and dirt of sin, foaming out your own shame, yet still it is shut up with bars and doors of restraining grace: 'Hitherto shall you come, and no further; and here shall your proud waves be stayed.' But then the doors will be opened, the banks broken down, and the flood-gates taken up; and oh what a deluge, what an overflow of sin will be there!

Here if God should not put a bridle into the mouth of these unruly beasts, and hold them in, there would be no living for a saint among them; but then, when the good shall be parted from them, the reins shall be laid, in some respect, on their own necks, and then they will run to the same excess of riot and sin with the very devils.

All the weeping in Hell will not wash you a whit the cleaner, and all the fire there will not consume the least of your dross. He who is filthy at death, will be filthy still; and he who is unjust then, shall be unjust forever, Revelation22:11.

Hell may fitly be called Pompey's theater, the glory of old Rome, a sty of filthiness. Every bottle of wickedness will be there filled with those bitter waters; you that now make a match with mischief, shall then have your bellyful. Here sin is your sin and defilement, but there it will be your Hell, your punishment. Here you sport with it, but there you shall smart for it. Now it is your pleasure, but then it will be your everlasting pain.

Sin is ugly to a saint on earth, notwithstanding all her gaudy attire, and painted face; but oh what a deformed monster she will be in Hell, when she shall be stripped of all her ornaments of pleasure and profit, and when all her paint shall be washed off with rivers of brimstone! I thus preach, and thus think, says Chrysostom, that it is more bitter to sin against Christ than to suffer the torments of Hell. And holy Anselm says, that if the evil of sin were offered to him, and the torments of Hell, he had rather choose Hell than sin. Thus odious sin is to a godly man in this world, and surely it will not be amiable to a wicked man in the eternal world; but they who now glory in their shame, will then be ashamed of their glory, and find their lusts more burdensome to them, how lightly soever now they go with them, than ever prisoners did their chains and fetters.

If your soul be so unhealthy in so pure an air as this, comparatively, is among the saints of God, how diseased will it be in that misty region of darkness, in that pest-house, among devils and infectious spirits!

Secondly, You shall gain by death a fullness of sorrow. When your sins come to their highest degree, then will your sorrows likewise, both in regard of intension and duration.

1. In regard of intension; and how great this will be I am not able to tell you. When one was desired to paint the Spanish inquisition, he took a table and besmeared it with blood, implying the torments were so cruel and bloody that his pencil could not delineate them. Sure I am Phalaris's bull, Low-Country racks, and all outlandish tortures whatever, are but plays and bugbears to the sufferings of the damned. There are no sorrows like to their sorrows, with which the Lord afflicts them in the day of his fierce wrath. If the wrath of God be kindled but a little, and a spark thereof light into the conscience of a saint, what a work does it make. There is no rest in his flesh, nor quiet in his bones. When the arrows of the Almighty stick within him, the poison thereof soon drinks up his spirits, Psalm 38:3; Job 6:4. What will their condition then be, against whom God shall stir up all his wrath! Psalm 78:39. Hell is said to be prepared for the devil and his angels, Matthew 25:41; as if the almighty and infinite God had sat down and studied the most exquisite torments that could be to inflict on them.

As when he would glorify the riches of his mercy, on them that love him and keep his commands, he provides fullness of joy, and greater pleasures than the heart of man can possibly conceive; so when he would glorify his justice, in the highest degree, on them that hate him, and willfully break his laws, he prepares fullness of sorrow, and greater pain than any, yes, than all the men in the world can possibly comprehend. A melancholy man may fancy, says one, vast and terrible fears, fire, sword, tempests, racks, furnaces, scalding lead, boiling pitch, running bell-metal, and, being kept alive in all these, to feel their torments; but these come far short of the wrath of God.

For (1.) There are bounds set to the hurting power of the creature. The fire can burn, but it cannot drown; the serpent can sting, but not tear in pieces.

(2.) The fears of the heart are bounded within those narrow apprehensions which itself can frame of the hurts which may be done. But the wrath of God proceeds from an infinite justice, and is executed by an omnipotent and unbounded power, comprising all the terror of all the creatures, as the sun does all other light, eminently and excessively in it. It burns, and drowns, and tears, and stings, and can make nature feel much more than reason is able to comprehend.

'A wounded spirit who can bear?' Proverbs 18:14. The wise man gives a challenge to the whole creation, to find out a person that is strong enough to undergo such a burden, and certainly none ever dared to accept the challenge. How intolerable has such a weight been to them that are lions for strength and courage! This caused David's broken bones and watered couch. This made Heman at his wits' end, Psalm 88:15. This made Spira, that seven years' monument of God's justice, as Mr Shepherd, in his Sincere Convert, calls him, to roar so horribly out of anguish of spirit. This made Daniel choose rather to be cast to the cruel lions, than to carry about with him such a ravenous lion in his conscience. This made some of the martyrs to feel a very Hell in their consciences after their recantation. No wolf in the breast, no worm in the affections, no frenzy so outrageous as a gnawing, corroding conscience.

If the wrath of a king be as the roaring of a lion, oh what is the wrath of God! And if his wrath be so terrible in this world, where there is ever some mixture of mercy with it, what will it be in the eternal world, when the soul shall have a cup of pure wrath to drink, when God shall show the inconceivableness of his strength, in tormenting the creature, and preserving it to feel those torments? 'Who knows the power of his anger?' Psalm 90:11. There will be tribulation and anguish, indignation and wrath, on the soul of every man that does evil, Romans 2:8, 9. There is fire to burn, and brimstone to choke, Matthew 12:40, and chains to bind, and serpents to sting, and worms to gnaw, Mark 9:44; Jude 12, and darkness to affright; there is variety, universality, and extremity of torments.

Augustine admires it, and says, that for vehemence of heat it exceeds our fire, as much as ours does fire painted on the wall. But the sufferings of your soul, will be the soul of your sufferings; the worm that never dies, will be the killing death. When you shall remember all your former sinful pleasures, of which nothing remains but your present shame and pain; when you shall reflect upon the former offers you have had, of all the dainties which others feed on in Heaven, and despair now of ever obtaining the least crumb that falls from the master's table; when you shall foresee the great and terrible day of the Lord Jesus, the reuniting of your body to your soul, the easeless and endless torments which soul and body must endure together; your sins past will horribly perplex you, your present shame will lamentably confound you, your future tortures will unspeakably affright thee.3

Oh it will be a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God! Hebrews 12:29. One touch of it made a man at arms to cry out sadly, 'Have pity upon me, my friends, have pity upon me, for the hand of God has touched me,' Job 19:21. One blow of it broke the backs of the angels, Jude 6. Alas! sinner, what will you do under the whole weight of it? how will your heart endure, or your hands be strong, in this day that the Lord shall thus deal with you? The Lord has spoken it, and he will do it, Ezekiel 22:14.

Now you can hear, and read, and talk of Hell, and be no more troubled than physicians are at the many diseases which affect their patients; nay, it may be you do jeer, when you should fear; like leviathan, laugh at the shaking of the spear. If a minister come to you, as Lot to his sons-in-law, and warn you to leave the Sodom of your sinful, sensual life, and tell you that otherwise the Lord will destroy you, that fire and brimstone will be your portion; he seems to you (as Lot to them, Genesis 19:14) as one that mocks; you think that he is in jest, but they feel what they would not fear. Now they are suffering the vengeance of eternal fire, Jude 7; and so will you, if God prevent not by renewing your heart, and reforming your life. And though now you are so senseless, that the seat you sit in, and the pillar you leanest on, are as much affected with the threatenings and denunciation of the judgments of God as you are, yet then you will be sensible enough; and your eyes, so dry now, will weep enough when they come to that place, where is nothing but weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, Matthew 24:51. As the love of God is a known unknown love, Ephesians 3:18, 19; none know it fully, but they that enjoy it in glory; so the anger of God is a known unknown anger, Psalm 90:11; none can know it perfectly, but they that shall feel it eternally.

2. It will be full in regard of duration: all your sad losses, and all your sorrowful gains, will be forever. There was nothing else wanting to make you completely miserable, but the everlasting duration of them; and, lo, here it is. The positive part of your punishment will be permanent; there the worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched, Mark 9:44; and the privative part also shall be perpetual—you shall suffer everlasting perdition from the presence of the Lord, 2 Thessalonians 1:9.

Whatever relates to the torments of the carnal is eternal. God, who damns them, is eternal: 1 Timothy 1:17, 'Now, to the King eternal, immortal, the only wise God,' etc. The fire which torments them is eternal—Jude 7, 'suffering the vengeance of the eternal fire;' the chains which bind them, the worm which gnaws them, the judgment given against them, are all eternal, Jude 7; Hebrews 6:2. You sin in your eternity, and God will make you suffer in his eternity.

You sin against an infinite God, and therefore your punishment must be infinite; which, because it cannot be in regard of intension, your back being not strong enough to bear an infinite stroke, therefore it must be in duration. Infinite power cannot inflict greater or longer pains than infinite justice does call for. The debt you owe to the righteousness of God will be ever paying and never paid, and therefore you shall not escape out of that prison, until you have paid the uttermost farthing, Matthew 5:23.

The command of Caius Caligula to the executioner, after he had condemned a malefactor, was so to strike that they might feel themselves dying, and endure the pains of an enduring death. Such will be the everlasting death of the damned: they will be ever, ever dying, and never dead; they shall seek death, but not find it; follow after it, but it will flee from them, Revelation9:6.

The same author reports of one that requested of Tiberius Caesar death rather than long imprisonment, how he was answered by the emperor, You and I are not yet friends. The truth is, the punishment there must needs be long, yes, eternal, because God and the sinner shall never be friends. In this life God treats with the soul by his ambassadors upon terms of peace; nay, he beseeches the sinner to be reconciled, 2 Corinthians 5:20; the carnal man still continues in his enmity against God, walking contrary to him, and fighting against him. God continues many a day, to some many a year, offering peace, desiring there may be a league made; only it must be offensive and defensive. It must be a holy peace and league against the devil, the world, and the flesh. Upon this the sinner breaks off; he will not be an enemy to his old cursed friends. Now at death this treaty dies; and the breach then continuing, it is irrecoverable forever. Then the King of kings causes his terrors to set themselves in array against the sinner, and proclaims open and eternal war.

Reader, for your soul's sake let me beseech you to ponder this but one half quarter of an hour every morning, that the pain which sin brings will be eternal. Oh how may it take off the edge of your love to your most pleasing lusts! Endless misery must needs be easeless; no condition so intolerable as a miserable condition that is unalterable. It is a comfort to a woman in travail, in the midst of her sharp throes and bitter pangs, to think these will have an end; the hope of that does much help her to hold out; but, woe and alas! they whose end is damnation, shall have damnation which has no end.

It does much support the saints under the anger of God, that, though it be sharp, it will be but short; his anger endures but for a moment, Psalm 30:5. But then, will not the heart of the sinner be rent in pieces with rage and despair, to know that the wrath of God must abide on him? John 3:36.

The Egyptians' three days darkness was esteemed a sore plague; but what will your punishment, O sinner, be, when you shall suffer utter darkness, blackness of darkness? Jude 13. Ah, wounding word, Ever, Ever! the most cutting word in comparison of this is healing; the bitterest word in respect of this is sweet. Despair will be the cutting off of all hope; to have hope, the anchor of the soul, cut off, will be the deepest cut in the world; then the vessel of your soul will be liable to all storms and tempests imaginable.

Suppose that one of your hands were to continue burning in one of our fires as many millions of years as there has been minutes since the creation, could you undergo it with any patience? What think you of it? Alas! this were a mercy, a Heaven to the misery of men in Hell. What will you do when your whole man shall suffer the vengeance of eternal fire? Jude 7. 'Who can dwell with the devouring fire? Who can dwell with everlasting burning?' Isaiah 33:14.

It is storied of one Roger, Bishop of Salisbury, that being in prison extremely tortured, live he would not, and die he could not. Truly such will the case be of rebellious ones: they shall long for death, but it will not come; and dig for it more than for hid treasures. Oh how would they rejoice and be glad if they could find a grave! But a being must be given to them that are in misery, and life to the bitter in soul. It is called death indeed, because life is neither desired there, nor can it properly be said to be enjoyed: it is a living death, or a dying life; such a death as shall never taste of life, and such a life as shall never taste of death. After the murderer of his soul has continued in that lake of fire as many thousand years as there are fish in the mighty ocean, and as there are creatures great and small upon the whole earth, and as there are stars in the heavens, and after this as many millions of ages as there are hours in all the aforementioned time, yet, after all this, his torment will not be one moment nearer to an end. Oh eternity, eternity, eternity, what are you? to what shall I liken you, or with what comparison shall I compare you? You are like a vast ocean which has no banks, like an outrageous fire which knows no bounds, like the grave that is never satisfied, like the barren womb that never says, It is enough; in respect of God, you are like Melchizedek, without father, without mother, having neither beginning of days nor end of life. In respect of the good, like a day which had a morning, but shall never have an evening; in respect of the bad, like a night which had an evening, but shall never have a morning. In you it is that the justice and severity of God, the sinfulness and malignity of sin, the deceitfulness and vanity of the world, the madness and desperate folly of sinners, will sufficiently be demonstrated. In time men are whipped, but in you it is that they are executed. In you it is that men must suffer long for all their abuse of the long-suffering of God. In you it is that the swearer shall have enough of wounds, and oaths, and blasphemies, when he shall have devils wounding his soul with their fiery darts, and when he shall blaspheme the name of God through extremity of torments. In you it is that the adulterer will have enough of lust and lasciviousness, when he shall embrace deformed devils, and lie down in a bed of fire instead of feathers, surrounded with curtains of frightful fiends. In you it is that the drunkard will have enough of his cups, when a cup of the pure wrath of an infinitely incensed God shall be presented to him, and be forced to drink it all up, though there be eternity to the bottom. In you it is that the Sabbath-breaker shall have enough of disturbing God's rest, when he shall be tormented, and have no rest day nor night forever and ever, Revelation20:10. In you it is that the atheist in his family shall have enough of his prayerlessness and regardlessness of God, when he shall be ever, ever praying with his whole heart for a drop of water to cool his tongue, and God shall never, never show the least regard towards him. In you it is that the hypocrite will have enough of putting off God with a painted holiness, when he shall find a real Hell. In you, lastly, it is that the covetous worldling, that, like Korah, is swallowed up of earth alive, and yet has never enough, shall have fire enough, pain enough, and wrath enough in Hell.

Consider this, you that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, when there is none to deliver you, Psalm 50:22. Good God! where is man fallen? what desperate hardness has seized on his heart, that he should be every moment liable to such a boundless, bottomless sea of scalding wrath, and yet as insensible of it as if it did no whit concern him. Ah, did but the seduced world believe your word, they would mind other works than now they do.

But, reader, what is that judgment? is not the mirth of every sinner that makes a mock of sin worse than madness? Should not the sting in sin's tail deter you more than the false beauty of its face allure you? Shall you look henceforward upon the most delightful sin, as any better than Claudius did mushroom, pleasant, and poison! Well, whoever you are that read this use, be confident all this, and ten thousand times more, is your birthright; you are by nature an heir to this estate, that lies in the valley of Hinnom. All this is the wages due to you for your service to sin; sin pays all that die its servants in such black money; and should you go out of this world before you are new-born, you shall as certainly find and feel more than all this in the eternal world, as there is a God in Heaven, and as you are a living creature on earth. The God of truth has spoken it, and who shall disannul it? Matthew 18:3, and 5:10; John 3:3. Though you are not actually under it, yet you are every moment liable to it; this cloud of blood hangs night and day over your head, and you know not how soon it may break, and shower down upon you. The decree and sentence is already passed in Heaven, that you who turn not in time, shall burn to eternity; and you can not tell how soon God may seal the warrant for your execution.

Bellarmine is of opinion, that one glimpse of hell-fire were enough to make a man turn, not only Christian, but monk, and to live after the strictest order. Drexelius tells us of a young man given to his lust, that he could not endure to lie awake in the dark; and on a time, being sick, he could not sleep all night; and then he had these thoughts, What! is it so tedious to lie awake one night—to lie a few hours in the dark? what is it then to lie in everlasting chains of darkness? I am here in my house, on a soft bed, kept from sleep one night; oh to lie in flames, and in darkness everlasting, how dreadful will that be! This was the means of his conversion.

Oh that, reader, what I have written might work such an effect upon your soul! how abundantly should I be satisfied for all my pains! how heartily should I bless that God, who by his providence called me to this task! Shall I entreat you, as you have the least spark of true love to your dying body, to your immortal soul, to your eternal peace, to break off your sins by repentance, and fly all ungodliness as Hell; for do you not perceive out of the word of the living and true God, that though your lust may be sweet in the act, 'yet her end is as bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps take hold on Hell,' Proverbs 5:4, 5.

And in order hereunto, I desire you to observe faithfully those directions I shall give you in the third use; for I would not only open the sore, and show its danger, but also, by the help of the physician of souls, prepare a plaster. The Lord enable you to apply it for your cure!

Take a man who is most addicted to his pleasures, and bring him to the mouth of a furnace red hot and flaming, and ask him, How much pleasure would you take to continue burning in this furnace for one day? he would answer undoubtedly, I would not be tormented in it one day, to gain the whole world, and all the pleasures of it. Ask him a second time, What reward would you take to endure this fire half a day? Propound what reward you will, there is nothing so precious which he would buy at so dear a rate as those torments; and yet how comes it to pass, O God, that for a little gain, and that vile; for a little honor, and that fugitive; for a little pleasure, and that fading, men so little regard hell-fire, which is eternal.

By this time I hope it is day in your understanding, and you see clearly that there is a difference between the death of the righteous and the wicked; that as the same perfume, which is mortal to the ravenous vulture, is refreshing to the true dove; that as the same herb which cures men stung with serpents, kills beasts; so the same mortal disease which cures the godly of all their spiritual and bodily distempers, kills the wicked; they are killed with death, Revelation6.

Heaviness to a saint may endure for the night of this life, but joy will come in the morning of death; whereas the freshest streams of sinful delights will end in a salt sea of sorrows and tears. The most prosperous sinner is but like a thief that goes through a pleasant meadow to the gallows.

CHAPTER 8.

A second use of trial, with motives to enforce it

I come now to a second use, and that will be by way of examination.

If it be so, that they who have Christ for their life shall have gain by their death, then examine whether you are one of them, to whom to die will be gain. Like a merchant, cast up the accounts between God and your soul, and see how much you are worth for another world. It is good husbandry to know the state of your flock, Proverbs 27:23; but there is a greater necessity of knowing the state of your soul, of communing with your own heart, Psalm 4:4. Is it not a thousand pities to live known to others, and to die unknown to yourself? to speak so much, and so often, to others, and yet, in the many years that you have lived, never to have spent one hour in serious discourse with yourself about your eternal condition, what shall become of you forever?

Friend, it may be you have been very solicitous to know what shall befall you while you live; is there not more cause for you to be inquisitive what shall befall you when you die? I think it concerns you to be faithful and diligent about this work of examining your soul, whether Jesus Christ be your life, when all your happiness hangs on this hinge, even your estate for eternity. Trivial matters may be passed over slightly, but things of weight must be minded seriously.

Reader, had you ever a matter of greater or equal concernment to your unchangeable and eternal estate? Are not your following your trade, your providing for your family, your eating, drinking, sleeping, and the most necessary things you can imagine about your outward man, but rattles and babies, but toys and trifles, in comparison of this?

Suppose the title I am speaking of did but concern an estate in land of one hundred pound per annum, which you were buying, would you not consult with this and that man, whether the title were good or no? Would you think two or three days ill spent in searching and advising, to prevent the cozenage of you and your children? And does not your soul, your eternal estate, deserve more care, more time, more pains, more consulting, searching, and questioning, for fear of an everlasting miscarriage? Let your reason be judge. Had not those wires need to be strong, that have such a weight as your eternal welfare hanging on them? should not that anchor be cast sure, which is entrusted with a vessel so richly laden as with your soul, that jewel of inestimable value, more worth than a world? Can that foundation be too firmly laid, that has such a building as eternity of happiness depending on it? Without question, those deeds and evidences, if ever any, had need to be unquestionable, that convey the inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, reserved in Heaven.

And the rather should you try your soul thoroughly, because, should you content yourself with a counterfeit title to Heaven, as most men and women among us do, by virtue only of some deeds which the devil and your carnal heart have forged, and would so die, you would assuredly be dealt with as a cheat, and cast into the prison of Hell, and then your condition will be most lamentable, because it will be irrecoverable.

If you miss at all when you die, you miss forever and forever. An error then can never be mended; there can be no second throw cast, no second edition can come forth to correct the errors of the former; but the great work for which you were born not being done, you are undone to eternity; and then, as godly men befool themselves in this world, while they live, Psalm 73:2, for their corruption, so you will befool yourself in the eternal world, when you die, for your presumption, Jeremiah 17:11, that you should think the rotten props of a little profession, of a few outward privileges, and inward good meanings, as you call them, could bear the weight of your soul, and your endless state, that you should build so slightly for a dwelling of perpetuity. 'Set your heart therefore to all the words that I speak unto you; for it is not a vain thing, but it is for your life,' Deuteronomy 32:46, 47.

Well, friend, the great question which I shall put to you will be this: Can you say, to you to live is Christ? Your gain by death depends on this. Examine yourself thoroughly, prove yourself whether you are in the faith or no, 2 Corinthians 13:5. The eagle tries her young ones by the sun whether they be of the right brood or no, as some affirm. Do you try yourself by this Sun of righteousness, by this life in Christ, by your ingrafting into Christ. Ask your soul whether it be acquainted with the new birth, the new creation, the divine nature, the renewing in the spirit of your mind, the sanctification of the Spirit, the walking after the Spirit, the image of God, the writing of his laws in your heart, the law of the spirit of life in Christ, effectual calling; unless you have that one thing signified by all these things, you have nothing; then, and not until then, you have crossed the line, shot the gulf, are safely landed in Christ, and have attained that which ever accompanies salvation.

But because this self-trial, though it be a necessary duty, yet is a work of much difficulty—it is easier for a man to speak to the stateliest king in the world, than to himself as he ought to speak—and because, naturally, men's sores and corruptions make them so unwilling to be searched for fear of pain, I shall annex two or three quickening motives to persuade you to this much-neglected duty.

The first motive

Consider how easy and ordinary it is to be deceived, though it be in a work of such infinite weight; now where the business is weighty, and the mistake ordinary and easy, it requires you to search thoroughly. It is one of the most ordinary and easy things in the world for a child of disobedience to live and die asleep in sin, and never dream of Hell, until he come to awake in the eternal world in a bed of fire. Your deceitful heart will be night and day inclining you to sleep, and the devil will be sure to keep the cradle rocking.

Alas! how very few are there that will be persuaded to cast up their spiritual accounts; but, like men that we say are worse than naught, loathe the thoughts of looking into or summing up their estates; or like some women, when they come to be old, turn the back side of their looking-glasses toward them, as unwilling to see their own wrinkles and deformity.

And of those that do sometimes examine themselves, how many are there that do it slightly and superficially, contenting themselves with false marks, quickly believing what they would have, even all to be well, until they are sent to be undeceived in Hell.

Maude, mother to King Henry the Second, being besieged at Oxford, she got away with white apparel in the snow, undiscovered. So do many hypocrites, with their profession of snow-like purity, pass among men; but God knows the heart.

All is not gold that glitters, nor is all grace that makes a fair show in the flesh. There is much counterfeit coin in the world, that goes current among men, as if it were as good as the best; so there is a great deal of counterfeit holiness in the world, a great deal of civility, of morality, of common grace, which is taken (or rather mistaken) by men for true saving grace; much fancy is taken for faith, presumption for hope, self-love for saint-love, and worldly sighs for godly sorrow.

What can the saint do, but as, to the outward appearance, the sinner may do the same? As the devil is God's ape, so is the self-deluding soul not seldom the saint's ape.

Does the saint abstain from gross sins? so does he whose religion consisted so much in negatives, Luke 18:11. Does the saint pray? so do the pharisees, and make long prayers too, Matthew 23:14. Do the saints fast? Nehemiah 1:4; Daniel 9.; so do they, Matthew 6:16, and 9:14; and it may be twice in one week, Luke 18:12. Do the saints give alms? Acts 10.; so do they, Matthew 6:1, 2. Do the saints confess sin? the sinner can do it in the very same words, 1 Samuel 15:24. Does Ephraim repent? Jer 31:18; so does Judas, Matthew 27:3. Does Abraham believe? Romans 4.; so does Simon Magus, Acts 8:13. Does Hezekiah humble himself? 2 Chronicles 32:26; so does Ahab, and walk softly into the bargain, 1 Kings 22:15. Does the man after God's own heart fulfill all God's will? Acts 13:22; you shall hear that a Jehu shall do very much, and that by a testimony from God's own mouth: 2 Kings 10:30, 'You have done well in executing that which was right in my eyes; you have done unto the house of Ahab according to all that was in mine heart.' What a great resemblance is there in all these outwardly, but a vast difference inwardly! The ungodly sometimes do attain to the outward actions, but never to the inward sanctified affections of the godly; as the painter may paint fire, but he cannot paint heat—that is beyond his skill. Many titular Christians are like the onyx-stone, of which naturalists write, that it is clear and bright in the superficies, but dark and muddy at the center: men of civil conversation, but not of sanctified actions. Now all this calls aloud to you, to try yourself whether you go beyond them, that do all before-mentioned, and yet come short of Heaven.

Besides, it is not seldom that a true Christian, for want of a prudent trial, judges himself unsound. As the face of Moses, so his heart shines with grace, and he knows it not; Christ is in him, as he was with the two disciples, and he, as they, is ignorant of it. Many Christians, like Hagar, weep and mourn that they must die for thirst, when the water of life is by them, yes, within them.

There is that makes himself rich, full of peace and joy from assurance of God's favor and his salvation, yet has nothing—not one jot of grace or true ground of joy; there is that makes himself poor—persuades himself to be in a most wretched estate—and yet has great riches, Proverbs 13:7, is highly in God's favor, and has great store of saving grace.

But most commonly the error is on the other side. How does every swaggering, or, at best, civilized sinner, presume that he is a saint! How often has he blear-eyed Leah lying by him all night, and he thinks it is beautiful Rachel, until the light of the morning discover the contrary! How many have the devil and the world lodging in their arms and embraces, and think it is Christ, the fairest of ten thousand, until upon examination it be found otherwise!

Reader, take heed this be not your case; that you, like Uriah, carry letters about you, importing your own execution, and yet you not know of it. It is ordinary for men to think they are spiritually rich, and increased with goods, and to have need of nothing, and not to know that they are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, Rev 3:17. They cry, like Agag, 'Surely the bitterness of death is past;' there is no fear of death, of wrath, of Hell, or damnation, when they are liable every moment to be hewn in pieces before the Lord, to be torn in pieces by the roaring lion. Oh, how many a precious vessel (soul I mean) has been split upon this rock of presumption! Does it not therefore concern you to be serious and faithful in searching your heart, lest you should, as the most, deceive yourself about a business of such unspeakable consequence?

The second motive

Consider the fewness of them that have Christ for their life, or that live this spiritual life. Every one almost that lives within the visible church is ready to say that Heaven is his inheritance, and he shall escape the wrath to come, when the Word of God and the works of men do clearly and fully speak the contrary.

The devil has his droves: all the earth wander after the beast, Revelation17:8. 'The whole world lies in wickedness,' 1 John 5:19. 'The enemies of God cover the earth like grasshoppers for multitude,' Judges 7:12. They fill the country, when the Israelites are like two little flocks of kids, 1 Kings 20:27. The good and the true shepherd calls his flock a little flock, Luke 12:32, nay, a little, little flock, there being in the original two diminutives, to show their fewness. When four, if not five cities were destroyed, one righteous Lot with his small family is delivered, Genesis 19:15. When a whole world is drowned, a few, that is, eight souls, are saved, 1 Peter 3:20. Therefore the children of God are called a remnant, Micah 7:18—two or three yards remaining of forty or fifty; and compared to the gleanings after the vintage, Isaiah 17:6—one or two bunches may he left under some thick or utmost bough; but what are they to the many basketfuls that were gathered before? The saints are jewels: now, how few are there of such pearls, in comparison of pebble? Malachi 3:17; and strangers, Psalm 119:19, how small is their number to natives, which are the world's own, John 15:19. The church of Sardis has a few names only that have not defiled their garments, Revelation3:4.

Some have divided the world into thirty parts, and have affirmed nineteen of those to be without Christ, in whose name alone is salvation; and six of the remaining eleven to be papists, which certainly are in no safe way to Heaven; and five parts of thirty only to be Protestants, among whom they that read of their way of worship beyond the seas will find many of these to be but mongrel Protestants. But, to waive this, and to come to England, where it is generally by godly men believed that God has as numerous an issue of new-born children as in any such quantity of ground in the world, and, reader, take the public congregation you do join with in the solemn worship of the ever-blessed God upon his own day; and suppose one should come and sweep out of it, in the first place, all notorious sinners—drunkards, swearers, adulterers, extortioners, liars, railers, scoffers at godliness, Sabbath-breakers, and the like, upon whom, whoever looks with Scripture spectacles may see the devil's mark on their foreheads, Hell written on them in great letters, they continuing impenitent—would not such a broom sweep away much dust, even a great part of the people of the parish where you live? But suppose one should come, in the second place, and purge out your civil and moral, yet unsanctified men and women—such, I mean, as are fair and just in their carriage and dealings; you cannot say, black is their eye; they pay to every man his due; these are good second-table men and women; their religion consists altogether in their righteousness towards men; they will not for a world wrong their neighbor of a farthing, but they make no conscience of robbing God of the great fear, chief love, choice delight, strong trust, which are due to his Majesty; they know not what it is to know him and his will, to acknowledge him by religious performances of prayer, reading, and the like, in their families and closets; they can scarce tell you what God is, or what Christ is, or what the Lord Jesus has suffered or purchased for sinners. As old as many of them are, they are more ignorant of the natures, offices, states of Christ, of regeneration, justification, and sanctification, than little children; and yet they are too old to learn. The minister cannot persuade them to come to him, and be instructed by him in the principles of the oracles of God; nay, and they will not believe that ignorance is a damning sin, though God has spoken so peremptorily, that Christ shall come 'in flaming fire to render vengeance on them that know not God,' 2 Thessalonians 1:8, and he has told them expressly, that men perish for want of knowledge, Hosea 4:6; Proverbs 1:22, 29.

Suppose, I say, one should purge out all these civil, righteous, yet ignorant and irreligious people—questionless he would purge out two parts of three of the remaining diseases—how very many would that blind captain, ignorance, lead out of a congregation!

But suppose one came, in the third place, again, and take away them that are righteous in their dealings with men, and seem religious in their duties, towards God; that pray, and hear, and read, and fast, and instruct their families, and call upon God in secret, and yet are only so good to the eye of man, being, like some fruit, fair in the outside, but rotten at core, having self-ends and carnal principles in all they do, Matthew 23 and 6.

After three such sweepings, how few, think you, would be left in a congregation, or in a parish. If Christ should come with his whip of cords, and scourge all these out of his temple—whom the Word of God clearly condemns—would not Jesus be left almost quite alone, as he was in John 8:9?

Besides all those aforementioned, how many are there whose religion consists merely in opinions, or heresies, or schism, and separation from the people of God and public worship, and from the good old way of faith and repentance, that mind neither Sabbath, nor sacraments, nor family duties, and trust for salvation to the light within them, even until they come to utter darkness, 2 Peter 2:1, 2; Jude 11, 12; 1 John 2:19. Oh, how few are there that shall be saved! If Ulpian complained there were few true philosophers, have not we more cause to complain there are few true believers? for 'who has believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?' Isaiah 53:1.

The terms of denying a man's self, or crucifying the flesh with the affections and lusts thereof, or cutting off right hands, and plucking out right eyes; of hating father, mother, wife, child, name, house, and lands—without which Christ will not save the soul—are so irksome, and contrary to the sensual, brutish man, that rather than admit them, they will take their leave of both Savior and salvation. 'Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leads to life, and few there be that find it,' Matthew 16:24; Galatians 5:24; Mark 9:43; Luke 14:26; Matthew 7:14.

Reader, I take not delight to number the people of God, much less to lessen their number. The Lord knows I have not written this head without some sorrow of heart; my prayer is like that of Joab's, The Lord add unto his people an hundredfold, and grant that his sons may come from far, and his daughters from the ends of the earth, that the dominions of his Son may be from sea to sea, and from one end of the land unto the other, 2 Samuel 24. But, without all controversy, they are comparatively very few; and why does the Word of God mention it so much but to make you more diligent and violent for the kingdom of Heaven, Matthew 7:13, 14. If there were but few damned, and many saved, out of the places where we live, I think it would behoove you to try upon what ground you stand, lest you should be one of those few that must suffer the vengeance of eternal fire; but when so many, when such multitudes, go in the broad way that leads to destruction, when the love of many waxes cold, and it is but an he almost that shall endure to the end, and be saved, Matthew 24:12, how much, how much does it concern you to look about you that all things are right within between God and your soul.

The third motive

Thirdly, Consider the profitableness of a serious faithful examination of your estate; if you have this spiritual life, your comfort depends upon the knowledge of it. He who has true grace, shall go to Heaven certainly; but he only that knows it, shall go to Heaven comfortably. What the lawyers say of civil things, I may say of spiritual: Things that appear not, are all one as if they were not at all in being. What comfort has he who is heir to a vast estate, until he know of it, more than he who has nothing to do with it? What comfort is it to you that you are a child of God, a member of Christ, an heir of Heaven, unless you know it upon Scripture grounds? If twenty or thirty are condemned, and one be pardoned, this man torments himself with fears and terrors as much as the rest, until he knows of his pardon. Does not many a Christian, like Jacob, go down to the grave with sorrow, and refuse to be comforted, only upon a false supposition, that the Joseph of their soul is dead, when indeed he is alive, and in favor in the heavenly court, as they upon a true search and inquiry will find? The saints have known their good estate. I do not put you upon the labor in vain, Galatians 2:20; 2 Corinthians 5:1; and the profit will answer your pains. And how contented will you be in all conditions, when you have once attained the knowledge of the good estate God-ward. You will bid every messenger welcome for his sake that sends him; you need not fear any servant can night or day knock at your door with ill news. How willing will you go to duty, and with what alacrity perform them, knowing the God whom you draws near to is your loving Father; the Christ, in whose name you approach, is your lovely Savior; nay, how joyfully may you think of death, as the portal through which you shall go into your Master's joy and endless life. Believe it, your life will be a Heaven upon earth. And should you find your estate lost, will it not be an infinite mercy to you, that you did know it before it was too late? How will it awaken you out of your security, and affrighten you upon the apprehension of your misery! how will it quicken you to mind your duty, in loathing yourself, in leaving your sins, and in flying to your Savior! Sound conversion begins at self-examination: first we 'search and try our ways, and then turn to the Lord,'

Lamentations 3:40. The way to have our sores cured, is first to have them thoroughly searched: 'I considered my ways, and turned my feet to your testimonies,' Psalm 119:59. If you would have your face clean, look into the glass of the law, and view your spots. He who knows not that he is in a wrong path, will not turn back, though the farther he goes, the greater is his deviation and danger. Jeremiah 31:19, 'After I was instructed,' or after I was made known to myself, 'I repented.' As Abigail said to David,' If you hearken to your servant, it will be no grief of mind hereafter to my lord, that you are kept from shedding of blood.' So say I to you, If you will faithfully examine yourself, it will be no cause of sorrow hereafter to you, that you were thereby kept from a further shedding the blood of your soul. I will conclude this motive with the meditation of the learned and holy bishop, now with Christ.

"That which is said of the elephant, that being guilty of his deformity, he cannot abide to look on his face in the water, but seeks for troubled and muddy channels, we see in well moralized men of evil conscience, who know their souls are so filthy, that they dare not so much as view them, but shift off all checks of their former iniquity, with the excuses of good fellowship. Whence it is that every small reprehension galls them, because it calls the eye of the soul home to itself, and makes them see a glimpse of what they would not. So have I seen a foolish and timorous patient, which knowing his wound very deep, would not endure the surgeon to search it; whereon what can ensue, but a festering of the part, and a danger of the whole body. So have I seen many prodigal wasters run so far in books, that they cannot abide to hear of a reckoning. It has been an old and true proverb, Oft and even reckonings make long friends. I will oft sum my estate with God, that I may know what I have to expect and answer for; neither shall my score run on so long with God, that I shall not know my debts, or fear an audit, or despair of pardon."

CHAPTER 9.

The marks of a true Christian from the text

I come to the touchstone, by which you must be tried, whether you are true gold or counterfeit. It is likely you Presume your estate is good; well, are you willing the Word of God —that must, whether you will or no, judge you for your eternal life or death at the last day—should try you at this day? If your wares be right and good, you will not be afraid to bring them out of your dark shop into the light. If your title be sound and good, I know you will be ready for a fair trial at law, even at the law of God.

I shall try you two ways, though both will lead to the same place. I must first entreat you to put those four particulars to your soul, which in the beginning I told you were included in that expression, 'To me to live is Christ.'

The first mark

Ask your soul what is the principle of your religious performances, what is the spring of your obedience. Men indeed judge of others' principles by their practices, because they cannot discern the heart, whether it be right in a duty or no; but God judges of men's practices by their principles, as we may see by his speech of Paul, 'Behold he prays,' Acts 9:11. Paul was a Pharisee, one of the strictest of them, and they were much in prayer. But God, who knew his heart was wrong in former duties, takes not any notice of them. Now behold he prays; he might say a prayer before, but he never prayed a prayer until now. When he had a right principle, being regenerated by the Holy Spirit, then, and not until then, he made a right prayer. Until the tree be good, the fruit can never be good, Matthew 7:16. Now friend, what is the principle of your duties? is it fear of men, hope of honor, desire of gain, or merely the stopping the mouth of conscience, or custom? are these the weights that make your clock to go? and if these were taken off, would your devotion stand still? then your heart is not right in the sight of God; entreat him, for the Lord's sake, that the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. Or do your pious actions flow from a renewed will, and renewed affections? Does the outward correspondence of your life to the law of God, proceed from an inward conformity in your heart to the nature and law of God, from the law written within? If it be thus, your condition is safe; for the deeper the spring is from whence the water comes, the sweeter the water is, and your services the more acceptable to God.

Speak yourself, whether you pray, read, hear, sing from the divine nature within, from love to the infinitely amiable God, from the delight you take in communion with him in duties. Oh how sweet is that honey, that drops of its own accord from the comb! and how pure is that wine which flows freely from the grape! So grateful and acceptable is that sacrifice to God, which is seasoned with sincere love: 'Blessed is the man that fears the Lord, and delights greatly in his commandments,' Psalm 128:1.

Or do you worship God from the same principle the Sadducees do, who deny the resurrection—only from a desire it may go well with you in this life? or from the same principle from which the Persians do the devil—only from fear lest he should do you hurt? Surely that service will be sour, which like juice is squeezed out of the crabs. To serve God with a filial fear is commendable, but to serve him from a servile fear is unacceptable.

The upright Christian works from an inward principle, the new creation within; and thence it is that spiritual things are so natural and delightful to his regenerate part; as we see in David, 'I delight to do your will, O my God.' How comes this to pass, but from an inward principle? 'Your law is within my heart,' Psalm 40:8; or as it is in Hebrew, Your law is in the midst of my affections. But now, a hypocrite usually acts from some outward principle, as the pharisees did, Matthew 23:14, 27, and 6:1, 5. The wind from without makes their mill to go; some goads, or whips, force them forward; hence it is that, like tired jades, they are presently weary, and desire nothing more than to rest, and cease from such unpleasant labor.

The second mark

Ask your soul what is the pattern of the life; whom do you labor to imitate? is it Christ or your neighbor? Do you set your watch by the town clock, or by the dial of Scripture, because that never fails of going according to the Sun of righteousness? A man dead spiritually, like dead fish, ever swim down with the stream of the times; will follow a multitude to do evil, cannot endure to be singular. Like the planet Mercury, at best, if in conjunction with good, he is good; if with bad, he is bad; or, like water, takes the figure of the vessel, whatever it be, into which it is put. But now a living Christian does not dress himself by the glass of the times; while he is in the wilderness of this world, he may follow the cloud of faithful witnesses, but it must be no farther than they follow Christ, 1 Corinthians 11:1. Christ is the great standard by which he measures and tries, and which he endeavored to imitate in his thoughts, words, and actions. He does use such words and money as is current at present, but lives after that example which was in times past. The patterns of godly men bear much sway with him; but he knows there are some things in their lives, which are sea-marks to be avoided, and not land-marks to direct us. Therefore, like the eagle, he looks most at the sun, Christ himself. Now, Christian, examine yourself, whom do you look upon for your pattern; is it your desire and care to regulate your family and life, as such a knight, or esquire, or gentleman in the parish where you live orders his, or as the profane, irreligious neighbors do theirs? or do you look upon, and labor to resemble Jesus Christ, to govern your house and heart as he did his, praying with his apostles, instructing them in the mysteries of the kingdom of Heaven, and the like? Matthew 6. 'Walking humbly, inoffensively, and worthy of the Lord, even unto all well-pleasing,' Hebrews 7:26; 1 Peter 1:19.

It is reported of Jerome, that having read the religious life and death of Hilarion, he cried out, holding up the book, Hilarion shall be the champion whom I will follow. So when you read in the Scripture of the heavenly pious life, and holy patient death of the Redeemer, how he did all things well, and none could convince him of sin; is your soul so ravished with the beauty and luster of those many graces, which shined so eminently in him, that it breathes out, Oh that I were like him! oh that I could be as meek and lowly as Christ, that I could deny myself, and despise the world, and glorify God as much as Christ did, that the same mind were in me that was in Christ Jesus! And though to your hearty sorrow, you see how far short you come of a perfect conformity to him, yet you resolve to use all means appointed, that you may be more like him, and concludes, Well, Christ shall be the only champion whom I will follow. Answer your conscience within you, whether it be thus or no; for if you are a living member, you will resemble your head: 'Those whom God did foreknow, he did predestine to be conformable to the image of his Son,' Romans 8:29. As the image in the glass resembles the face, in figure, feature, and favor, so does the true Christian after his proportion resemble Jesus Christ.

The third mark

Is Christ the comfort of your life? When trouble, like frosty weather, overtakes you, which is the fire at which you warmest your heart? Is it this friend, or that place of preferment, or any outward comfort whatever? or is it your relation to Christ, and his affection to you? When damps arise out of the earth, is it the joy of your soul that light springs down from Heaven; or do you trust to the candle of the creature, which will burn blue and go out? Is Christ, man, or the world the door through which your joys come in, the dish on which you feed with most delight? If Christ should give you the long life of Methuselah, the strength of Samson, the beauty of Absalom, the wisdom, wealth, and renown of Solomon, and deny himself to you, can you contentedly bear his absence, or would you say, as Haman in another case, and Absalom; 2 Samuel 14:24, 'All this avails me nothing, so long as I may not see the king's face.' As Artabazus, when Cyrus gave him a cup of gold, and kissed Chrysantas, told the king, The cup you gave to me, was not half so good gold as the kiss you gave Chrysantas; so says the living saint, when Christ blesses him outwardly, and withdraws himself from the soul: Lord, the cups, the wife and children, the food and clothing, the pleasures and treasures, all the earthly mercies you give to me, are not a quarter so good gold as the kiss of your love which you give unto your favorites. 'O kiss me with the kisses of your mouth, for your love is better than wine,' Canticles 1. 'Remember me, O Lord, with the favor that you bear unto your children: O visit me with your salvation; that I may see the good of your chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of your nation, that I may glory with your inheritance,'

Psalm 106:4, 5. 'Look you upon me, and be merciful unto me, as you use to do unto those that love your name,' Psalm 119:132. These are the holy petitions of a gracious soul for a child's portion. Common mercies will never content them that have special grace, nor satisfy them that are sanctified indeed.

As the needle touched with the loadstone is restless, until it points toward the north, so the saint that is touched effectually by the Spirit of God, is unquiet until he turn unto, and have fellowship with, Jesus Christ. He may flutter up and down, like the dove, over the waters of this world, but can find no rest for the soles of his feet, until he return to Christ, the true ark—until Christ put forth his hand and take him in, Genesis 8:9. Then, and not until then, he cries out, with the psalmist, 'Return to your rest, O my soul, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you.'

Now, reader, what say you? how is it with you? Do your affections, as the water of Jordan, overflow their banks at the time of your earthly harvests? Joshua 3:13; or, like the bird, do you then sing most merrily when you are mounting up to Heaven? Are you willing to be served as the children of Abraham's concubines, put off with ordinary gifts? or must you, like Isaac, have all, even Jesus Christ, or else you esteem yourself to have nothing? Genesis 25:5, 6.

The fourth mark

Is Christ the end of your life? Is it your main scope to live to him who died for you? Does the compass of your soul without trepidation stand right to this pole, the glory of Jesus Christ? 'For none of us lives to himself,' says the apostle, 'and no man dies to himself. But whether we live, we live unto the Lord, and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live therefore or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of dead and living,' Romans 14:7–9. A sincere Christian dedicates his body, soul, name, estate, relations, interests, and his all to the glory of Christ, and wishes he had something better to consecrate to him. As the Grecian told the emperor, If I had more, more would I give you. So the saint desires that he may believe more, and repent more, and hate sin more, and for this end, that he may exalt Christ more. The philosopher tells us that means move by the goodness of their ends; not by any absolute goodness of their own, but by their relative goodness, the goodness of their ends. As we take physic, not for physic's sake, but for health's sake; so duties and ordinances move a Christian to mind them, not so much for their own sake, as for their end's sake. He prays, fasts, reads, meditates, that he may thereby and therein please, glorify, and enjoy the Lord Jesus Christ.

But now, a professor without the power of godliness has another end. He goes to church, but it is as the cut-purse, not to seek God, but his prey. He performs duties, but either for self-credit, Matthew 6:2—as Pliny observes of the nightingale, that she will sing much longer and louder when men are by, than when they are not;—or else for self-profit, Matthew 23:14. As that emperor who commanded all golden idols to be pulled down out of churches, not out of hatred to the idols, but out of love to the gold; and like him in the comedy, that cried out, O heavens, but pointed to the earth. Religion is either this man's stirrup, by which he hopes to get into the saddle above his neighbors, or else it is his stalking horse, which he contentedly follows all day, because it may bring him in some gain at night. Like Satan, he may assume the shape of Samuel, but it is only upon some particular errand, and for his own ends. This man is not holy, but crafty, and does not serve God, but himself of God. Reader, search whether you are one of these: You are but an empty vine, if you bring forth fruit to yourself, Hosea 10:1. Oh how many a work, materially good, being flyblown with self, proves formally bad, and so becomes stinking and unsavory in the nostrils of God! Self is the pirate which too too often intercepts the golden fleet of religious performances, that they cannot return freighted with blessings. It concerns you therefore to observe your ends; what are your ends in your eating and drinking, and all your natural and civil actions? Is your end to please and gratify the flesh, or is it that you may get health and strength, and thereby be the more serviceable to your Maker and Redeemer? What is your end in your spiritual undertakings? is duty the end of duty, or is obedience to the honor of, and communion with, Christ the end of your performances? Make a pause! before you read farther, and answer the Lord, who commands you to examine and know the state of your soul.

CHAPTER 10.

Other marks of saints

But because I would willingly find you out, whoever you are, and have you fully acquainted with your spiritual condition, I shall desire you to try your spiritual condition by the efficient cause of it, and that is the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of life, Romans 8:2, and indeed he only has this spiritual life that has this Spirit of life. As all the members of the natural body are actuated and enlivened by the same human spirit from the head; so all the members of the mystical body are quickened and actuated by the same divine Spirit from their head, the Lord Jesus Christ. Mark, therefore, that one place in Romans 8:9, how full it is to this purpose; for upon that place the weight of all I have to speak further about this use of trial will depend. The words are these: 'But you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be the Spirit of God dwell in you.' Mark, 'Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.' Observe, I beseech you, 'If any man,' let him pretend never so much, let his privileges be never so many, let his profession be never so great, and his performances never so numerous, yet if he have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his; so that if the Spirit of Christ have not its habitation in you, you have no spiritual relation to Jesus Christ.

Now I shall teach you to know whether the Spirit be in you or no, by two of its effects or properties; the first will be more general, the second more special.

The first mark

The Spirit of God, if it be in you, will purify you, for it is a purifying Spirit. Sanctification is the proper work of the Spirit of Christ. It is called the Holy Spirit; and it is holy, not only subjectively, but effectively; it works holiness, and makes men holy, 1 Corinthians 6:11. It Infuses holy habits and principles into the soul, whereby it is enabled to fight with, and by degrees to foil, its corruptions; it changes the understanding by illumination, the will by renovation, and the affections by sanctification; it does not infuse new faculties into the soul, but it does renew the old; it turns the same waters into another channel—they ran before after the world and the flesh, but now after God and his ways; it is, as it were, the same viol, only it is new tuned; before it could make no music in praying or singing, but now it is so melodious that it delights the heart, and ravishes the ear of God himself. The old moon and the new moon are the same, only the new has a new endowment of light from the sun which it had not before; so it is here, the purified person is the same man he was before, only he has a new endowment of the light of holiness which he had not before.

Now thus the Spirit ever works where it dwells; it is therefore called a river of living waters, John 7:38, not a pond of dead, but a river of living, waters. A pond will suffer dirt and mud to continue in it without opposition; but a river of living waters purges out, and casts up, its mire and dirt, its foam and scum, Isaiah 57:20. So the spirit of the world and flesh will let atheism, pride, and unbelief to lodge and lurk in the soul without resistance, unless it be a little from a natural conscience; but the Spirit of God works out these gradually, as generous wine works out lees and dregs. The Spirit is also called fire, Acts 2.; Matthew 3:11; for as fire fights with the cold water that is over it, and by degrees conquers it, and reduces the water to its own likeness of heat, in some measure; so the Spirit lusts and fights against the flesh, and by degrees overcomes the interest of it, captivates the soul to the obedience of Christ, and conforms the whole man, in some measure, to the image of God.

Examine your soul by this; does the Spirit within you combat with and conquer your corruptions? Does it enable you to cast them away with shame and detestation? Has it turned the bent of your heart and stream of your affections after spiritual and heavenly things? The waters of the sea, as some write, though by their natural course they follow the center, yet in obedience to the moon are subject to her motion, and so turn and return, ebb and flow. So though you by nature did follow the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life, yet in obedience to the Spirit do you now follow its motions? Has the interest of the Spirit an actual predominancy in your soul above the interest of the flesh? Can you say that the interest of the Spirit and the interest of the flesh do often meet together on a narrow bridge, where both cannot go forward together, and usually you suffer the Spirit to go forward, and the flesh to go back? When two masters walk together, and a servant follows after, it is not easy to know to which of the two the servant belongs; but when the masters part, the servant is discovered whose he is. When religion and the world have their interests together, you may be hid; but when your credit and Christ, your pleasure and the Spirit, come in competition, as they will very often, you may discover yourself clearly whose servant you are. Speak, friend, and let your conscience witness whether it be thus or no. You may deceive, and thereby undo yourself, but you can not deceive God; for if the Spirit do not sanctify you, the Son will never save you. Pharaoh's court admitted of frogs and lice, and Noah's ark received unclean beasts into it; but no such vermin can crawl into the heavenly court: 'Into it can in no wise enter' (observe, reader, in no wise) 'anything that is defiled or unclean,'

Revelation21:27. These are the words of the true and living God. Can you think that you have the Spirit of God, and shall be a gainer by death, who are a servant of unrighteousness, who have vainglory, covetousness, hypocrisy, carnal-mindedness within you, and never mourn under them, as one heavy laden with them, nor longest after, nor use diligently the means for deliverance from them? Do you live a spiritual life, that, instead of being dead to sin, are dead in sin? and shall you arrive at Heaven, who walk in the road to Hell? I assure you, a king will sooner admit dunghill-rakers and privy-cleaners, in their nastiest, filthiest pickle, into his bed, than God will take you, if you be such a one, into Heaven. No; Heaven is for the holy, and for them only.

The second mark

The Spirit of God is a praying spirit: it is called the spirit of grace and supplication, Zechariah 12:10; the spirit of adoption, Romans 8:15; and of his Son, whereby they that have it cry, Abba, Father, Galatians 4:6.

As Christ in Heaven makes intercession for them without them, Hebrews 7:25, so the Spirit of Christ on earth makes intercession for them within them. God never had any still-born children. The fathers after the flesh sometimes have dumb children, but the Father of spirits never had any such. Man's invocation of God presently follows upon God's effectual vocation of him. One of the first signs of spiritual life in Paul was spiritual breathing: 'Behold he prays,' Acts 9:11; and it is observable that prayer is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending almost of all his epistles. And David was three times a day, Psalm 55:17, nay, seven times a day, at this blessed duty, Psalm 119:164; yes, he was so wholly employed in it, that he speaks as if he were altogether made up of it, Psalm 109:4. But I [give myself unto] prayer, as it is read in our translations, is added for explanation, as the different character shows, as if prayer had been his essential constitutive part.

Some write of Latimer, that he would pray so many hours, that he was not able to rise. Nazianzen says of his sister Gorgonia, that she prayed so much, that her knees seemed to be grown to the very ground. Paul the hermit was found dead kneeling upon his knees, holding up his hands, and lifting up his eyes. Constantine the emperor would not have his effigies set up as other princes had, in his armor, leaning, but in a posture of prayer, kneeling. Thus all the children of God are frequent at asking their heavenly Father's blessing. It is the character of the worst of sinners they call not on God, Psalm 14:4; a man once speechless is near unto death.

Now ask your soul, Does the Spirit of God bring you often upon your knees? Are you one of the generation of seekers? Psalm 24:6. Are you one of God's suppliants? Zephaniah 3:10. Do you know what it is to be poor in spirit, to be a beggar, and to live altogether upon the alms-basket of Heaven's bounty? Is there a constant trade driven between God and your soul—God sending down mercies, and you sending up prayers? This is the daily exchange. Can you better live without your daily bread than this daily duty? When your heart is big with grief, where do you go? Is this your great ease, that you may empty your soul into God's ears?

Are your prayers fervent prayers? Is this holy fire put to your daily sacrifices? Is your prayer made without ceasing, or instantly? Acts 26:7; not so much in the length of the petitions, as in the acting of holy affections.

Do you labor in prayer? Colossians 4:12, that is, wrestle with God, as the word imports, bending and straining every joint of the new man in the soul, that they may all help to prevail with God. Are all the heavenly forces within you united when you pray, that, if possible, you may take the kingdom of Heaven by storm, by violence? Matthew 11:12.

What say you, reader? Do you, like the importunate widow, take no denial, but use a humble impudence, as the word of Christ includes, when you are entreating the divine Majesty for spirituals? Or do you pray, but it is as if you prayed not—so dully and coldly, that you can hardly hear yourself? only, as it were, between sleeping and waking, you mumble over a few petitions, either out of custom, or to stop the mouth of conscience, never regarding whether God answer your requests or no.

Did you but consider the dreadful majesty of that God to whom you pray, the invaluable worth of the soul, and endless state for which you pray, and the poor pittance of time, upon which your eternity depends, that you have to pray in, it might rouse you out of your security.

Common beggary, as it is the poorest, so it is the easiest trade. A whispering devotion is seldom answered with a loud echo from Heaven, (Dr Arrow., Sermon on 1 Samuel vii:12, p. 15;) but this special, as it is the richest, so it is the hardest. The fervent prayer is the prevalent prayer, James 5:16. The bullet will fly no farther than the force of the powder will carry it. That arrow of prayer that would hit the mark must be drawn with full strength. He who in prayer for grace, through a humble dependence on Christ, will not be denied, shall not be denied.

Lip labor does no more than a windy instrument, makes a loud noise, and that is all. Prayer without the travail of the soul is but the cold carcass of a duty, and no wonder if it be unsavory in God's nostrils. How many among us are there that pray every day for pardon and holiness, and yet shall die without them, and perish eternally for want of them, and all because they never begged them in good earnest, but were always indifferent whether God heard them or no. I would have such know that the blessed God values his special ware at a higher rate than to bestow it on such as will not esteem it something answerable to its worth.

It were easy to instance how fierce and fervent the children of God, in whom was this Spirit of God, (which is compared to fire,) have been in their supplications. Look Genesis 32:24, 25; Psalm 5., 77., and 88. Jacob wrestled with God, and would not let him go unless he blessed him. Christ seemed willing to shake him off: 'Let me go,' says Christ; 'I will not let you go unless you bless me,' says Jacob.

My limbs may go, my life may go, but no going for you without a pawn, without a blessing. Thus, indeed, does the seed of Jacob seek the face of their God, and thence are called Israelites; for, as princes, they have power with God, and prevail, Genesis 32:26, 27.

No day passed wherein Luther spent not three hours in prayer. Once it fell out that I heard him, says Vitus Theodorus of him. Good God, what a spirit, what a confidence was in his very expressions! with such reverence he prayed as to a God, with such assurance as to a father or friend. The child has escaped many a stripe by his loud cry. Heartless motions do but bespeak a denial, whereas fervent suits offer a sacred violence both to earth and Heaven.

And this is the difference between the prayer of a living and a dead Christian: the prayer of the former is instant and fervent, not discouraged, but rather increasing, by opposition, as lime, by water cast upon it, burns the hotter; see Matthew 15:22, and 25:27: the latter is flat and indifferent, easily put off, though it be with a crumb instead of a crown, with a bubble, a butterfly, instead of the everlasting fruition of God.

Any temporal good is satisfying to them that have no true spiritual good in them, Psalm 4:5; and the reason is clear. The breath of a pair of bellows is cold, because it does not proceed from a living principle within; but the breath of a man is warm, because it comes from a principle of life within. So the prayer, the breath, of a hypocrite is cold, because it does not flow from the Spirit of God, the only inward principle of spiritual life; but the prayer, the breath, of a sincere saint is warm, is fervent, because it proceeds from this living principle, the Spirit of Christ within.

Indeed the Christian knows not how to pray as he ought, but the Spirit helps his infirmities with sighs and groanings which cannot be uttered, Romans 8:26.

Do you pray constantly? That duty which is done out of conscience will be done with perseverance. A godly man will seek God's face evermore, Psalm 105:4, and 116:2; he calls upon God as long as he lives. Breathing heavenward in prayer is the beginning and ending of his spiritual life upon earth, as we see in Paul, Acts 9:6; and Stephen, Acts 7:60. Paul begins his life with prayer, and Stephen ends his with it.

He never takes his leave of prayer until he is entering into the place of praise. Prayer is his element; he cannot live without it, and communion with God in it. Prayer is the vessel by which he is continually trading into the holy land; he sends it out fraught with precious graces,—faith, hope, desire, love, godly sorrow, and the like; and it comes home many times richly laden with peace, joy, and increase of faith.

But now a hypocrite, Job says, will not pray always; he will not always call upon God, Job 27:10. Possibly he may sometimes cry out, as a scholar under the rod, or a malefactor upon the rack, for deliverance out of some affliction; but when God opens his hand, and bestows the mercy, his mouth is shut, and his heart too, that you shall hear but little more of this duty.

If he pray on his sick-bed, and God raise him up, he leaves his prayers sick a-bed behind him. His prayer was but a messenger sent about some particular errand; when that is done, the messenger returns.

As that story of the friar speaks, how, when he was a poor friar, he went ever sadly casting his eyes upon the ground; but being abbot, he went merrily, looking upward. One of his companions asked him the reason of that alteration: he answered, that when he was a common friar, he went dejected by looking downward for the keys of the abbey, which now he had found, and therefore left that posture.

So when a hypocrite has the temporal good thing he desires—for that usually is most desired by him—he has his ends, and his prayer an end too.

Or if God do not hear him presently, he will not submit patiently, but often flings away in a rage, with that wicked king, Why should he wait upon the Lord any longer?

If there come not in present profit, he will give over his trade as Tully said to his brother, that he would pray to the gods, but that they have given over to hear. Whereas a godly man will cry in the day, and not be silent in the night; he will direct his prayer to God, and look up, Psalm 5:3. He will pray and wait, wait and pray, as you see beggars in some places; they will beg and knit, knit and beg, and continue still begging and knitting. So a right beggar at God's door, he will pray and work, work and pray; he will believe and pray, hope and pray, read and pray, wait and pray; he knows that it is not good to limit the Holy One of Israel; but it is good that a soul should hope, and quietly wait for the salvation of God, Lamentations 3:26.

A divine gives me this simile, which does excellently illustrate our present subject: Take some draught-horse, and he will draw when the load is coming; but if he feel it not coming, he will trample, and not draw; but take a horse of a right breed, and put his traces to a tree or a post, he will strain and strain, and die upon the place, before he will give over, though nothing comes.2 So a rotten Christian, if he find no present gain coming, he gives over duty, fearing all is lost; but a right Christian will pray continually, 1 Thessalonians 5:17, whether God hear him presently or no; he knows that both the command of God and his own wants call upon him never to give over.

Besides, this spirit of prayer abides in him forever, John 14:14, 16.

Examine your heart by these marks faithfully, and do not, by flattery or self-love, or rather self-hatred, deceive your soul—no deceit like soul-deceit—but pass sentence upon yourself impartially, and if you find your condition good, bless God, keep close to Jesus Christ, and labor that you may walk worthy of the Lord, even unto all well-pleasing, Colossians 1:10. The great and extraordinary privileges bestowed on you do call aloud for gracious and extraordinary practices from you.

How exemplary should you live among them, who are to live eternally with God! What singular things will you do for that God, for that Savior, that has done such singular things for your soul! Can any love be too much; can any labor be too great; can any honor be too high; can any service be too holy, for that God to whom you are by millions of eternal obligations thus infinitely, infinitely bound?

Oh, let the fruitfulness of your heart and life in holiness proclaim your abundant thankfulness for such mercies, as for weight and worth exceed the very thoughts of men and angels. How abundant should you be in the work of the Lord, when you know that your labor shall not be in vain in the Lord.

When you are confessing your sins, meditate on the choosing, calling love of that God against whom your sins are committed, and try whether the heat of that burning love will not thaw your heart, and dissolve it into tears when it is most hard and icy. When you are backward to a duty that has some difficulty in it, consider Jesus Christ was not backward to his bitter, bloody sufferings for your sins.

As the soldier told Augustus when he denied his petition, I did not serve you so at the battle of Actium; so say to your soul, Jesus Christ did not serve you so when he was to drink the cup of his Father's fierce wrath for you; and see whether such melting persuasions will not prevail with you to subject yourself to the hardest precept.

When you are departing away from God by any sinister course, or insincere carriage, remember who you art—one that are called not to sin, but sanctity; not to impurity, but holiness.

As Antigonus, being invited to a place that might probably prove a temptation to sin, asked counsel of Menedemus what he should do; he bade him only remember he was a king's son. So do you remember your high and heavenly calling, and do nothing unworthy of the God that has enrolled your name in the book of life, that has ransomed your soul with the precious blood of his Son, and has sanctified you by the effectual operations of his Spirit, but walk worthy of the vocation with which, and whereunto, you are called, Ephesians 4:1.

It is an excellent meditation of Eusebius Emissenus: Though the devil, says he, should be damned for many sins, and I but for one, yet mine would exceed the devils' impiety. They never sinned against a God that became an angel for them; they never sinned against a Mediator that was crucified for them; but miserable and wretched I—and it is wonderful that my heart melts not when it thinks on it—I have sinned against a God that became a man for me, against a God that died an ignominious death for me; against a God that has left me an example of love and holiness. I am more unworthy than the devils.

Consider it, friend: no sins admit of higher aggravation, nor are matter of deeper provocation, than the sins of those that are interested in God's special distinguishing affection. In a word—for I had not thought to have told you so much; it was for the sake of others principally that I append this piece—since it shall be your reward to be like an angel in happiness, ever to behold the face of the Father, let it be your work and endeavor to be like an angel in holiness, to do the will of God on earth as it is in Heaven, readily, heartily, and universally.

But if you find, upon a thorough search, that you are a stranger to this spiritual life, if conscience, sent to inquire, bring in this verdict, that this purifying, praying Spirit dwells not in your soul, let me beseech you, in the fear of the Lord, to bethink yourself what is like to become of you forever.

One of the martyrs put his finger into the candle, to try how he could endure the fire in which he was afterwards to be burnt. Do you but read over again the former use of information, and consider whether you are able to undergo that loss, and that terrible intolerable, eternal wrath of an omnipotent God, which is therein declared, and by Scripture proved, to be the portion of all that live and die in your condition.

Suppose you should hear a voice this hour, as that wicked pope did, Come, you wretch, unto your particular and eternal judgment, what would you do? where would you appear? and where would you leave your glory? Isaiah 10:3. I would not for a world take your turn. How is it possible that you can eat, or drink, or sleep with any quietness of mind; that in the day your meat is sauced with sorrow, and your drink mingled with weeping; that in the night you are not scared with dreams, and terrified with visions, when your whole eternity depends upon that little thread of life, which is in danger every moment to be cut asunder, and you to drop into Hell?

Are you a man who have reason, and can you be contented one hour in such a condition? Are you a Christian, that Believe the Word of God to be truth, and can you continue one moment longer in that Sodom of your natural estate, which will be punished with fire and brimstone?

I tell you, did you and the rest of your carnal neighbors but give credit to Scripture, you and they too would sooner sleep in a chamber where all the walls round, the ceiling above, and floor below, were in a burning-light flame, than rest quietly one moment in your estate of sin and wrath. But for your sake, your condition yet not being desperate, though very dangerous, that you might avoid the easeless misery of the sinner, and attain the endless felicity of the saint, I have purposely written the next use, which I request you, as you love your life, your soul, your unchangeable good, nay, I charge you, as you will answer the contrary at the great and dreadful day of the Lord Jesus, that you read carefully, and that you practice faithfully, the means and directions therein propounded out of the Word of God .

CHAPTER 11.

The third use—namely, Exhortation to mind spiritual life

Thirdly, My third use shall be of exhortation to those that are dead in sins to labor for this spiritual life. Whoever you are that would have gain by your death, then get Christ to be your life. Have you read of that fullness of joy, of those rivers of pleasures, of that exceeding and eternal weight of glory, of that kingdom that cannot be shaken, of that enjoyment of Christ, of that full immediate fruition of God, and in him of all good, of that perfect freedom from all evil which they, and only they, shall be partakers of who have this spiritual life? And is not your heart inflamed with love to it? your soul enlarged in desire after it? your will resolved to venture all, and undertake anything, for it? Surely, if you are a man, and have reason, your will and affections will be carried out after things that are good; but if you have but a spark of Christianity, you can not but be exceedingly ravished with things so eminently, so superlatively, so infinitely good. The historian observes that the riches of Cyprus invited the Romans to hazard dangerous fights for the conquering it. How many storms does the merchant sail through for corruptible treasures! How often does the soldier venture his limbs, nay, his life, for a little perishing plunder! Reader, I am persuading you to mind the true treasure, durable riches, even those which will swim out with you in the shipwreck of death.

Stephen Gardiner said of justification by faith only, that it was a good supper doctrine, though not so good a breakfast one. So the power of godliness, this spiritual life, though it be not so pleasant to live in as to the flesh, yet it is most comfortable to die with.

When Moses had heard a little of the earthly Canaan, how earnestly does he beg that he might see it: Deuteronomy 3:25, 'I pray you, let me go over, and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon.' You have read a little of the heavenly Canaan, and have you not ten thousand times more cause to desire it?

Plato says, If moral philosophy could be seen with mortal eyes, it would draw all men's hearts after it. May not I more truly say, If the gain of a saint at death could be seen with spiritual eyes, with the eye of faith, it would make all men in love with it, and eager after it. Balaam, as bad as he was, did desire to die the death of the righteous; and surely they that dislike their way, cannot but desire their end. But God has joined them both together, and it is not in the power of any man to put them asunder; therefore, if you would die their deaths, you must live their spiritual lives. Holiness is the seed out of which that harvest grows. If you would be safe when you shall launch into the vast ocean of eternity, if you would be received into the celestial habitation, when you shall be turned out of your house of clay, make sure of this life in Christ, Isaiah 2:12. If a heathen prince would not admit virgins to his bed before they were purified, can you think the King of kings will take you into his nearest and dearest embraces before you are sanctified? Believe it, Heaven must be in you before you shall be in Heaven. Unless the Spirit of God adorn your soul, as Abraham's servant did Rebecca, with the jewels of grace, you are no fit spouse for the true Isaac, the Lord of glory.

The brutish worldling, indeed, would willingly live profanely, and yet die comfortably; dance with the devil all day, and sup with Christ at night; have his portion in this world with the rich man, in the eternal world with Lazarus. As the young swaggerer told his graceless companion, when they had been with Ambrose, and seen him on his death-bed, nothing affrighted at the approach of the king of terrors, but triumphing over it, Oh that I might live with you, and die with Ambrose! But this cannot be. A happy death is the conclusion of a holy life. The God who gives Heaven has in great letters written in his word upon what terms, and no other, it may be had: 'He chooses to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth,' 2 Thessalonians 2:13.

It is as possible for you to enjoy the benefit of the Son's passion, without the Father's creation, as without the Spirit's sanctification. Believe the word of truth: John 3:3, 'Truly, truly, I say unto you, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God;' and Hebrews 12:14, 'Follow holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.' Consider, friends, this is the word of the true and living God; and this law, this standing law of Heaven, is like the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be altered; not one jot or tittle of it can possibly go unfulfilled, Matthew 5:18. Dare you think that the God of truth will be found a liar for your sake, as he must be if he save you in your sinful, unconverted state? I tell you, the God of holiness and justice will send millions of such carnal wretches as you are to Hell, there to suffer the vengeance of the unquenchable fire, before he will stain his honor in the least. No, he is more tender of his glory than so. Though you care not how much you trample his honor in the dust by the willful breach of his commands, yet he is exceeding jealous of his great name; and when his very being is engaged for the accomplishment of his word, he will not ungod himself to glorify you in an unsanctified condition; and therefore do not delude your soul in presuming that he who made you will not damn you; for he says himself, that unless you are new made, and have that true understanding to fear his majesty, and depart from iniquity, he who made you will not save you, and he who formed you will show you no mercy, Isaiah 27:11. I hope, therefore, you are fully convinced that it highly concerns you to be night and day, with the greatest diligence imaginable, laboring for this spiritual life, when your everlasting comfort in the eternal world, your eternal life, depends so much upon it.

Are you rich? hearken to this word of counsel from God, look after these durable riches, Proverbs 8:18. Your earthly riches are not forever, Proverbs 27:24. Though your heart possibly is more set upon your houses and hoards than upon Heaven, yet you must take your everlasting leave of them before long; when these unsearchable riches in Christ, which I am persuading you to mind, outlive the days of Heaven, run parallel with the life of God and line of eternity, Proverbs 8:18; nay, until you live this spiritual life, all your wealth is want, all your glory is ignominy, all your comforts are crosses, yes, curses to you, Proverbs 1:32; Psalm 69:22.

All your outward comforts, like the rainbow, show themselves in all their dainty colors, and then vanish away; or, if they stay with you until death, then they die with you. Oh how has the moon of great men's plenty often been eclipsed at the full, and the sun of their pomp gone down at noon!

Through the corruption of your heart they prove but fuel for your lusts on earth; and if you should die, having only this world's goods, they will feed the eternal fire in Hell. It is storied of Heliogabalus that he had silken halters to hang himself with, ponds of sweet water to drown himself in, and gilded poison to poison himself. Truly more hurtful are the world's trinity, riches, honors, and pleasures, to them that have great estates in the world, but no estate in the covenant. Poison works more furiously in wine than in water, and so does corruption many times manifest itself more in plenty than, in poverty. It is sad that you should not be led to God by that which came from God. But oh how lamentable is it that you should, Jehu-like, fight against your Master with his own soldiers; like the dunghill, the more the sun shines on it, it sends forth the more stinking savor; that you should, by the riches which his Majesty has given you, only have this cursed advantage, to be the greater rebel. Many good works has Christ done for you; for which do you stone him? John 10:32; for which of them do you stone him out of your house? By oaths, or drunkenness, or gaming, or by atheism and irreligion, or at least by putting him off with a few short, cold, formal prayers, and that but now and then neither. Many good works has he done for you; for which of them do you stone him out of your heart? By letting the world, and the things of the world, have the highest seat there, the throne your chief esteem, warmest love, and strongest trust? What say you? is it not thus? And is this to be led by his goodness to repentance? Oh consider your body's mercies are holy baits laid by God to catch your soul. He tries the vessel with water, to see whether it will hold wine. Do not, like the foolish fly, burn yourself in this flame of love; turn not his grace into wantonness, but let the kindness of God be salvation unto you. You should, by those cords of love, be drawn nearer unto him, and by those bands of mercies be tied closer to his commands. How should you gather; if the streams of creatures be so sweet, what sweetness is there in God, who is the fountain. If he be so good in temporals, surely he is better in spirituals, and best of all in eternals. How unsatisfied should you be with all these outward gifts, which may consist with his everlasting hatred, and resolve, with Luther, not to be put off with the blessings of his left hand, of his footstool. You have the more cause to look about you, because few of your rank are truly religious. A little godliness will go a great way with great men, though of all men they have most obligations from God. See James 2:5, God 'chooses the poor of the world rich in faith, and heirs of his kingdom;' and Christ tells us, 'it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of Heaven,' Matthew 19:24. Our Savior, indeed, does not speak of an impossibility, but of the difficulty of it, and the rareness of it. Job unfolded the riddle, and got through the needle's eye with three thousand camels. But it is hard to be wealthy, and not wanton; too too often are riches, like bird-lime, hindering the soul in its flight towards Heaven. A load of earth has sunk many a soul to Hell; and the enriching of the outward occasioned the impoverishment of the inward man. A rich man is a rare dish at Heaven's table. Blessed be God there are some, but surely few rich of those very few that shall be saved, 1 Corinthians 1:26. The weighty burden in a vessel, though it consisted of the most precious commodities, has not seldom caused its miscarriage, when otherwise it had arrived safely at its desired haven. As the moon, when she is at the full, is farthest from, and in most direct opposition to, the sun, so it is the temper of most in your condition to be farthest from, and most opposite to, Christ, when they receive the most light of prosperity from him, and are fullest of the blessings of his goodness. Take heed you be not like the horse and mule, Psalm 32:9, to drink plentifully of the streams, and never look to the fountain; but let your eyes, as the church's, be doves' eyes. When the dove has pecked her corn, she turns her eyes Heaven ward; she looks up, Canticles 1:15.

It is reported of the Spartans, that they use to choose their king every year, during which year he lives in all abundance, but is, after the year be expired, banished into some remote place for ever. One king, knowing this, being called to be king, did not, as others, prodigally spend his revenues, but heaped up all the treasure he could get together, and sent it before to that place where he should be banished; and so, in the year of his government, made a comfortable provision for his whole life. So wise are they that lay up a treasure in Heaven against the time of their departure out of this world.

Are you poor? Labor for this spiritual life; it will make you rich indeed. You have little on earth, but you may have a treasure in Heaven. God offers you grace, Christ, and life, as freely as others; take heed you neglect them not, and think, as they in Sweden, that it is only for gentlemen to keep the Sabbath; that it is only for gentlemen to mind religion. You have a soul to save, an endless estate to provide for, a Hell to escape, a Heaven to attain, a dreadful day of judgment to prepare for, as well as they. It is a great mercy, that though God difference you from others in temporals, yet not in spirituals. Among the Israelites, the price for their ransom was equal, half a shekel; and the rich shall not give more, nor the poor less,

Exodus. 30:12, 15, 16, thereby signifying, that the same price was paid by Christ for the redemption of all, poor as well as rich, and that the virtue and merits of Christ's passion belong equally to all. Your outward condition does not exclude you from an interest in Christ's death and intercession. Poor Lazarus may lie in the bosom of rich Abraham. The poor may be gospelised, as that Matthew 11:5 is sometimes read; not only have the gospel preached to them, but be changed by it. God accepted the lamb and dove in sacrifice, when he rejected the lion and eagle. But you must be one of God's poor, not of the devil's ragged regiment. Will it not be sad for you to have two hells; one on earth, in cold, hunger, thirst, and wants, and another in Hell, in heat and unspeakable woe? How many of your condition serve the devil and the world all their days in drudgery and slavery, and are turned into Hell as a sumpter horse at the night of death, after all his hard travel, with his back full of galls and bruises.

A low man, if his eye be clear, may look as high as the tallest; the least pigmy may from the lowest valley see the sun as fully as a giant upon the highest mountain. Christ is now in Heaven; it is not the smallness of our person, nor the baseness of our condition, that can let us from beholding him. The soul has no stature, neither is Heaven to be had with reaching. If God clear the eyes of our faith, we shall be high enough to behold him.

Do not say, you are to provide for your wife and children, and have no time to regard your soul in a solemn, serious performance of duties. Remember the same God that commands you to follow your particular calling as a man, enjoins you likewise to follow your general calling as a Christian; and that, in the first place, 'Seek first the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof, and all other things shall be added to you,' Matthew 6:33; and also with the greatest labor: John 6:27, Philippians 2:12, 'Labor not for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to everlasting life.'

Where our Savior does not indeed absolutely forbid labor for the body, but comparatively; labor for the food that perishes is not prohibited, but labor for the meat which endures to everlasting life is preferred. Your labor for your soul should be so much, so great, that your labor for your body should be no labor at all, not deserve the name of labor in comparison of it. Now consider what answer you will make to the great God when he shall plead with you for the breach of these commands; besides, have not you many spare hours in many evenings, and on wet days, wherein you might go to God in secret, and with your family, and humble your soul in a mournful confession of your sins, and sensible apprehension of the wrath which is due to you, and wherein you might be importunate for pardon and grace, without which you are lost forever? Nay, the Lord knows how many Lord's days you have enjoyed, which days he has set apart, as well out of mercy as out of sovereignty, not only for the glory of his name, but also for the good of your soul, wherein you might both publicly, privately, and secretly, have furthered your spiritual and eternal good. But how do you squander away those precious hours, sometime in corporal labor, always in spiritual idleness, in sleeping, or sitting at your door, or talking with your neighbors, and yet you have no time for your soul.

But, lastly, Tell me, have you time to eat, and drink, and work, and sleep, and no time to work out your salvation, to fit your soul for death, for judgment, for eternity? If your house were in a flame, you would not let it burn, and say, I have no time to quench it. If your neighbor call you to sit, or talk, or dine, or, it may be, to go to the alehouse with him, you do not answer him, I must provide for my family, I have no time; but when your Maker and preserver, the blessed God, calls upon you, by his Spirit and word, to be diligent for the making your calling and election sure, 2 Peter 1:10, you must provide for your family, you have no time for this. Foolish worm, leave off your vain and cursed pretenses, and set upon the business for which you were sent into the world, even the glorifying and obeying the Lord, or you shall have another manner of answer to your simple excuses from the judge of quick and dead, when, for your want of time to serve him in, he shall give you an eternity to suffer in.

Reader, I have two things to desire of you, before I deliver you the directions which I have received of the Lord for you; and indeed unless you grant me, or rather God and your soul, these two requests, all that I have to say will be to no purpose at all. My requests are, that you would follow the counsel of God, in order to the recovery of your soul out of its bottomless misery with all speed and with all diligence. Now, because they are of such exceeding importance, that, if you are once persuaded to them, my work will be half effected; and because delays and laziness are the two great gulfs in which such multitudes of souls are drowned and perish, I shall speak the more to them.

CHAPTER 12.

The life in Christ must be minded speedily, with the grounds of it

My first request to you is, that you would presently set about the affairs of your soul. We say of things that must he done, there needs not any deliberation about them. Is not this the one thing necessary, to prepare for the last hour, to make sure of your everlasting welfare? If you Believe the Word of God , you will not give the flesh so much breath as to debate it, much less will you, as Felix did, put off the thoughts of righteousness and judgment to come, until you are at better leisure, until you have a more convenient season.2 What more weighty work have you to do, than to work out your own salvation? Is the following your calling, hoarding up a heap of earth, feeding, clothing that flesh which shall shortly be food for worms; is any of these half so necessary as your provision for eternity?

If you are old, it is high time to begin to prepare for your latter end. You have the feet of your body almost already in the earth, in the grave; and had you not need have the feet of your soul, your affections, in Heaven? You have but a little time to converse with men; does it not behoove you to be much in communion with God? Death often, possibly, knocks at your door by the hand of sickness, and warns you to look after another habitation, for you are to be turned out of your house of clay. Do you take warning? what will you do if you should die before you did ever begin to live—if the sun of your life should set before the sun of righteousness has arisen on you? All the while you live you are dead, and you live long to add to your torments, as others have died soon to hasten them. You are but like stubble, laid out a-drying to burn the better in Hell, all the while you continue a stranger to the new birth.

You have every day been treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath, Romans 2:5; been gathering, as it were, more wood to increase those flames in which you, if you thus die, shall live for ever. 'Because judgment against an evil work is not speedily executed, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. Though a sinner do evil a hundred times, and his days be prolonged, it shall not go well with the wicked,' Ecclesiastes 8:11, 12, 13. 'The sinner an hundred years old shall be accursed,' Isaiah 65:20.

I have read of the Circassians, a kind of mongrel Christians, that they divide their time between the devil and God, dedicating their youth to robbery, and their old age to repentance. How much time have you spent in the service of sin! how little time have you lost for the service of God and your soul! Is it not high time for you to number your days, and to apply your heart unto wisdom speedily?

Old sinner, do you not tremble to think that there is but a step between you and death! nay, between you and Hell. Oh the time, and talents, and opportunities which you have to reckon for more than others! Happy, happy had it been for you to have been turned out of the womb into Hell, rather than to die an old man, and not a babe in Christ. If you have a spark of love to yourself, mind your inward change presently, lest your change come, even death, and send you to unchangeable misery.

If you are young, mind the gathering the manna of godliness in the morning of your age; present the first-fruits of your life to that God who desires the first ripe fruits, Exodus. 22:29. The firstlings are his darlings, Genesis 4:4; and that cloth will keep color best that is dyed in the wool; the vessel will scent longest of that liquor with which it is first seasoned. Let your soul, like Gideon's fleece, drink up early the dews of grace. As young as you are, your life is every moment at the mercy of the Lord. There is a saying, that in Golgotha there are skulls of all sizes. In the churchyard you may see graves of all sorts, and some of your very length; you are concerned, therefore, to remember your Creator in the days of your youth. Aquinas tells us, the young man has death at his back, the old man before his eyes, and that is the more dangerous enemy that pursues you, than that which marches up towards your face. This calls for the greater care and watchfulness. In the Isle of Man the maids spin their winding-sheets the first thing they spin; do you in youth and health ponder and prepare for your death, lest, as young and strong as you are, death trip up your heels and throw you, and it prove your everlasting overthrow.

Besides, can you imagine that such a sinner deserves favor, who comes in to serve God at last, when he can serve his lust no longer? Is it equal (be your own judge) to give the flower of your age, the spring of your life, the best of your time, your health and strength, to the devil and your brutish flesh, and to give the dregs, the snuff, the bottom of all this, to the infinitely glorious God, whose creature you are, at whose cost and charge you live every day and night, and who calls upon you for your service, not for the need he has of you, but because of the need you stand in of him, all whose happiness does consist in the pleasing and enjoying his majesty?

Whoever you are, of whatever age, either set speedily about your soul work, or answer these few questions the Lord shall put to you, or be speechless and without excuse at the day of Christ.

First, Has not God waited upon you long enough already? Would have him, whom the heavens and Heaven of heavens cannot contain, who has millions of glorious angels waiting on his majesty, to wait on you, miserable worm, always?

I tell you, all the while you are sinning his eyes behold you, his heart is incensed against you, and his hand can reach you and avenge him on you every moment, How many has he sent into Hell that never tasted of his patience, as you have done. The angels sinned, and were not waited upon one hour for their repentance; yet how many years has he endured you with much long-suffering, and still waits upon you, that he may be gracious unto you! Isaiah 30:18. The last oath you did swear, he could have cursed and rotted your tongue. The last time that you went prayerless to your rest, he could have sent you to little ease, to the place where there is no rest day or night. The last time you did quench the motions of his Spirit, and stifle the convictions of your conscience, he could have taught you by experience what is the meaning of the worm that never dies, and the fire that goes not out; and yet he spares you, stretching out his hands all the day long to a rebellious child, Isaiah 65:2. Should not his long patience quicken you to speedy repentance? Answer God whether he has not waited enough, been long-suffering enough already; and if he have not, continue in your ungodly course, and see who shall suffer longest at last, he or you. It is one thing to forbear a debt, another thing to forgive the debtor. The longer God is in fetching his hand about, the heavier his blow will be when he strikes. The threatening is like a child, the longer it is kept in the womb the bigger it grows, and it will put you to the more pain when it comes to the birth of its execution; therefore, bethink yourself before the decree bring forth, before the day pass as the chaff, before the fierce anger of the Lord come upon you, Zephaniah 2:2.

Do you not see in the Scriptures many examples of God's severity upon the abuse of his patience? What became of Sodom and Gomorrah, when God waited in the days of Lot? Are they not suffering the vengeance of eternal fire? Jude 7. What became of the Jews, upon whom Christ waited, calling upon them, and crying to them to return and reform? is not wrath come upon them to the utmost? 1 Thessalonians 2:16. Are not these like the mast of a ship sunk in the sands, standing up to warn you to avoid their course, lest you sink eternally? Have not these the same inscription on them with Sennacherib's tomb, Look on me, and learn to be godly? Do not the Sodomites seem to say, Look on us, and learn to be godly? Do not your atheistical neighbors in Hell, that thought they had had time enough before them, and futured their repentance, cry, Oh look on us and learn to be godly, and that with speed! Friend, take example by others, lest you be made an example to others. Today, after so long a time, if you will hear his voice, harden not your heart, Hebrews 4:7.

My second question which I desire you to answer is, Have you not served the world and the flesh long enough already? Is it not yet time to serve God? has not lust had too much of your heart, and the flesh of your life, already? may not the time past of your life suffice you to have wrought the will of the flesh? 1 Peter 4:3. Can you have the face to say, with the sluggard, a little more slumber, a little more sleep, a little more drunkenness, a little more swearing, a little more wickedness? Is not the debt which you owe to divine justice great enough? Is not the heap of wrath and fury which you have provided for yourself against death and judgment big enough? Do you think that you may serve the flesh too little, and the Lord too much? It may be you have served the devil twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, or seventy years, and know not whether you shall have so many hours to serve God in, and is it not yet time to begin? Answer me, Have you not wallowed long enough in the mire of atheism, worldliness, and sensuality? 'Will you not yet be made clean? ah, when shall it once be?' Jeremiah 13:27.

3. If one should offer you a house and land, or a bag of money, would you not presently accept it? would you say, I am not yet at leisure, hereafter will be time enough? And is there not infinitely more reason why you should presently close with Christ, and leave your sins, and seek the kingdom of Heaven? Is not Heaven more worth than earth? are not the fruits of Christ better than silver, and his revenues than choice gold? Proverbs 3:15.

When gold is offered you, says Ambrose, you do not say, I will come again tomorrow and take it, but are glad of present possession; but salvation being offered to our souls, few men haste to embrace it.

Is it not a sordid slighting of Jesus Christ the Lord of glory, for you to be more ready and hasty to take a little perishing wealth, than his most precious blood?

Can you read the story of Pope Gregory the Seventh, how he made the emperor Henry the Fourth, with his wife and child, to stand bare-feet and bare-legged three days and three nights in a cold frosty season, before he would admit them into the house, and your heart not rise against the pope's pride and wickedness? And why does it not rise against your own obstinacy and vileness, that have suffered the King of kings to stand knocking at the door of your heart until his head has been wet with the dew, and his locks with the drops of the night? and though he has waited thus many years, yet you have denied him entrance, and are not to this hour resolved to give him speedy acceptance.

4. Do you not find by experience that the longer you delay, the farther you wander from God and holiness, and the more unfit you are for, and the more unwilling unto, the work of conversion? Is it not time therefore to turn with speed, when continuance in sin insensibly hardens your heart, and gradually indisposes it more to the work of repentance? As the ground, so is your heart; the longer it lies fallow, not ploughed up, the harder it will be. Will you go one step farther from God, when you must certainly come back every step, and that by Weeping-cross all the way, or be damned forever? The purchase of Heaven is like buying the sibyl's prophecies, the longer you hold off, the dearer. A stain which has been long in clothes is not easily washed out; a house that has long run to ruin will require the more cost and labor for its reparation; diseases that have been long in the body are cured, if at all, yet with much difficulty. The devil which had possessed the man from his infancy was hardly cast out, and not without much renting and raging, Mark 9:21, 26. Satan thinks his evidence as good as eleven points at law, now he has once got possession; and the longer he continues commander-in-chief in the royal fort of your heart, the more he fortifies it against God, and strengthens himself against the Almighty. All the while you delay, God is more provoked, the wicked one more encouraged, your heart more hardened, your debts more increased, your soul more endangered, and all the difficulties of conversion daily more and more multiplied upon you, having a day more to repent of, and a day less to repent in.

5. Can you promise yourself the next hour to repent in, and dare you defer it to another hour? You say you will mind these things when you are old; but what if you die while you are young? you defer it until tomorrow, but suppose you die today, and God say to you, as to the rich fool, 'This night your soul shall be required of you?' 'Boast not yourself of tomorrow; you know not what a day may bring forth,' Proverbs 27:1.

It is a good saying of Aquinas, That though God promise forgiveness to repenting sinners, yet God promises not tomorrow to repent in. Think how many hundred casualties you are liable to, how many others die suddenly, and take the counsel of Michal to David, Save yourself tonight, tomorrow you may be slain. Save your soul today, tomorrow you may be damned.

6. Are you sure that God will accept you hereafter, if you should now delay and dally with his Majesty? It is good seeking the Lord while he may be found, and calling upon him while he is near, Isaiah 55:6. There is a time when men shall call, but God will not hear; cry, but he will not answer; and that because when God called they would not hear, but did set at nothing his counsel, Proverbs 1:24, 29. While your eyes are open, the things which concern your peace may be hid from them, Luke 19:42. You may live to have your soul buried long before your body, Ezekiel 24:13, 14. God would purge you now, and you will not; take heed he clap not the same curse upon you, which he did on some others, that you shall never be purged until you die. The Spirit of God probably now stirs you to turn presently, and offers you its help; if you love your soul, do not now deny it, lest the Spirit serve you as Samuel did Saul; Saul disobeyed him, and Samuel came no more to Saul to the day of his death, 1 Samuel 15:35, that is, never. So take heed of quenching this motion of the Holy Spirit, lest it depart in a distaste, taking its everlasting leave of you, and you never feel it more to the day of your death: 'Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation,' 2 Corinthians 6:2. 'This day if you will hear his voice, harden not your heart, lest he swear in his wrath that you shall never enter into his rest,' Psalm 95:7–11.

CHAPTER 13.

This life in Christ must be minded diligently, with some motions to it

My second request is, that you would make the attaining this spiritual life the whole business of your natural life, that you would esteem it as the great end of your creation, preservation, and of all the mercies and means of grace which God bestows on you, as the great end why God is so patient towards you, so provident over you, so bountiful unto you, that you might repent and return unto him from whom you have gone astray.

Shall I entreat you, for the sake of your poor soul, to let your greatest labor be for your eternal welfare! Is not this a business of the greatest necessity, of the greatest excellency, and of the greatest commodity and profit that you did ever undertake? To be everlastingly in Heaven or in Hell, to enjoy endless and matchless pain or pleasure, are other manner of things than men dream of. Good Lord! that men did but believe what it is to be happy or miserable forever, how then would they fly from the wrath to come, and strive to enter in at the strait gate! Matthew 7:14. Surely things of the greatest weight call for the strongest work; matters that concern your unchangeable felicity, require the greatest industry.

The philosopher would not buy repentance at too dear a rate; sure I am you can never buy this inheritance too dear, though you spend all your time, and strength, and sell all you have to purchase it. Friend, if ever you are saved, you must work out your own salvation, Philippians 2:12. God gives the earth to the meek and patient, but Heaven to the strong and violent, Matthew 5:5, and 11:12. It is a saying of Lombard, God condemns none before he sins, nor crowns any before he overcomes. The blind, carnal world thinks that a man may go to Heaven without so much ado. As Judas said of the ointment, so they of diligence in duties, 'To what purpose is this waste?' Matthew 26:8. They tell us it is waste time to pray so frequently, and it is waste strength to pray so fervently: 'To what purpose is this waste?' They presume that godly men might spare a great deal of their pains heavenward. As Seneca told the Jews that they lost a seventh part of their time by their sanctification of the Sabbath; so the earthly-minded man will tell us that such and such men spend all their time almost in reading, or hearing, or praying, or instructing their families, or neighbors, and they count it but lost time. These men, if you will believe them, have found out an easier and a nearer way to Heaven than ever Jesus Christ did; they are the right brood of wicked Jeroboam, that told the people, 1 Kings 12:28, it was too much to go up to Jerusalem to worship; he had found out a cheaper and an easier way of worship. The calves at Dan and Bethel would save them much labor, and, in his conceit, serve to as much purpose. Thus they delude themselves that their lazy, cold trading God-ward, their slight indifferent prayers, will bring them in as much gain as the most zealous performances of the saints. But, reader, I hope you will obey the voice of God, and not of men, in this: consider his promise is to the laborious, 'They that seek him early, shall find him,' Proverbs 8:17.

'He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him,' Hebrews 11:6; so Proverbs 2:3, 4. His precept is for labor. 'Strive to enter in at the strait gate,' Matthew 7:13. 'Be diligent to make your calling and election sure,' 2 Peter 1:10; so John 6:27. Nay, he curses them that put him off with their lame sacrifices: 'For I am a great king, says the Lord of hosts, and my name is dreadful,' Malachi 1:14. Further, he is peremptory that the slothful shall be for utter darkness, Matthew 25:26. The Egyptian king would have men of activity and industry to be his servants; and will God, think you, who is a pure act, accept of those that are not active? Can you imagine that he should ever bestow pardon of sin, eternal life, the sanctification of the Spirit, the precious contents of his own promise, the invaluable fruits of Christ's purchase, upon those that do not judge them worthy of all their strength and time, and hearts and pains, and ten thousand times more? Besides, for what reason do you suppose God to have given you these things? Surely you can not be so brutish as to think that the great God made you, and serves you daily with such variety of mercies, health, strength, food, clothing, influences of Heaven, and fruits of the earth, only, or chiefly, that you should eat and drink, and follow your calling, and provide for your family. Were such low ends the ground of his kindness? Or is it not that you might ravish that pure and virgin inheritance, by a holy and heavenly violence, that you might employ them and improve them to the utmost about his service and your own salvation?

Reader, I must desire you to consider and grant me these two or three suppositions, in prosecution of this my second request to you.

1. Suppose you had seen the Son of man, who now sits at his Father's right hand, rising from his place, and attended with the thousand thousands that are before him, and with the ten thousand times ten thousand that minister to him, coming and sparkling so gloriously through the firmament, that he dazzles the very eyes of the sun, and makes him to hide his head for shame, and sitting down in the clouds, with the glory of his Father, 'a fire devouring before him, and behind him a flame burning.'

Conceive now with me, that you hear him call to the archangel, Sound the last trumpet, that the dead may arise and come to judgment. Hark to the sound of the trump!—how it rends rocks, melts mountains, breaks in pieces the bands of death, and bursts asunder the gates of Hell; how it pierces the ocean, and fetches from the bottom of the sea the dust of Adam's seed; how it descends into the belly of the earth, and forces it to vomit up all the bodies which it had ever taken down; how it opens the marble tombs of princes and potentates, and makes their highness and majesty stoop as low as the meanest to the King of glory.

Do you not see the bodies of the saints? Look how they fly upon the wings of the wind to their souls, and both to the bosom of their beloved Savior. See how the spirits of unregenerate ones leave for a little while the dark vault of Hell, and enter, though most unwillingly, into the stinking carrion of their bodies, and both hauled by angels to the judgment-seat of Christ.

When the court is thus set, conceive the commission read, wherein Jesus Christ is authorized, in his human nature, by his divine power, to be judge of the quick and dead. The law is produced, both of nature and Scripture. The books are opened, both of God's omniscience and man's conscience, by which all men are to be tried for their everlasting lives and deaths.

The holy ones are now called; their people, through the righteousness of Christ, acquitted by public proclamation, before God, angels, and men; their performances, duties, graces, services, sufferings, punctually related to their glory, and infinitely rewarded in their perfect freedom from all evil, and eternal fruition of the chief good.

Behold, how the unholy are with violence dragged to the bar, examined strictly by the covenant of works, have all their sins, secret, open, personal, relative, of nature, and practice, in thoughts, words, and deeds, revealed publicly, and aggravated fully with all their crimson-dyed, bloody circumstances. Hark how pitifully they plead what poor evidences they had for salvation, what sorry excuses for atheism and abominations; their conscience, instead of a thousand witnesses, accuses them, the law casts them, the judge pronounces against them a most severe sentence of condemnation, the devils seize on them for its speedy execution. Now what confusion and shame of face, what lamentation and sorrow of heart, possesses them! What doleful screechings! What bitter yellings are heard among them! Here is the body cursing the soul for being so ungodly a guide, and the soul cursing the body for being so unready an instrument; and both cursing the time that ever they met together, and wishing, though in vain, that they might forever be parted asunder.

Now the worldling curses his flocks and his farm, his gold and his silver, that had more of his heart, and of care and time, than his precious soul. Now the lazy Christian curses his madness and folly, that he should think a little formal preparation were sufficient for such a strict examination. A bloody husband have you been to me, says the wife; you mind provision for me for a little time, and never regards my instruction about the things of eternity. A cruel father have you been to me, says the child, for generating me a child of wrath and heir of Hell, and never endeavoring my regeneration, whereby I might have been a child of God and an heir of Heaven: and thus cursing, crying, roaring, raging, they are sent to the place where is mourning without mirth, sorrow without solace, darkness without light, death without life, pure wrath without mixture, perfect pain without measure, nothing but weeping and wailing, sighing, sobbing, and gnashing of teeth, forever, ever, ever.

Suppose, I say, that you had heard and seen all this, and God should after it try you in this world forty years, would you not night and day be struggling and striving with God by prayer, watching over your own heart, waiting upon your Savior? With what earnestness would you pray! With what seriousness would you read and hear! With what exactness and exemplariness would you live! How diligent and laborious would you be in a faithful improvement of all your time, talents, and opportunities, that you might find mercy at such a day, even the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life! Would you after such a sight think any time too much, or any pains too great, for your eternal good? Could you give the world and the flesh the choicest place in your heart, and the chief part of your life, as now you do? Should you dare to be nibbling again at the devil's baits, or to be playing with the eternal fire, or to put off God with a few cold, formal prayers, and that by fits, instead of hearty, fiery, continual supplication? Or to put off Jesus Christ with a compliment, that you wear his livery, and profess yourself a Christian, instead of a sincere, resolved dedication of heart and life to his word and law? What say you, man, and why will you not be diligent and as holy now? You may in the glass of Scripture see all that I have spoken, (for the substance of it at least,) if you have but an eye of faith; and, without question, the sight of faith is as sure and true as a sight of sense. What reason can you have why you should not work as industriously to escape Hell and obtain Heaven as if you had known these things experimentally, when the word of the living and true God speaks them so expressly? Look

2 Corinthians 5:10; Acts 17:13; Ecclesiastes 12:14.

2. Suppose you were sure to die this day come month, and take possession of your eternal estate, to do that which you never did before, nor shall ever do again, even to throw your last cast for eternity, would you not then lay aside all other matters, and make it your only business to ensure an interest in Christ, and to make sure of a regenerated, sanctified nature? would you not then think, Well now, there is no daubing, no dallying any longer. I am now going to my long, long, everlasting home: if I now deceive myself with anything instead of the power of godliness, and mistake at death, I shall miscarry forever; if I be not then right, I shall be wrong forever. Now or never, now and ever.

Would you not highly prize every week of that month, every day of those weeks, every hour of those days, yes, and every minute of those hours, and say, Ah, desperate folly to leave a work of such infinite weight, for which my whole life was little, little enough, to so short a space; and yet, oh infinite mercy, that I have any seasons of grace left, wherein I may yet work out my salvation with fear and trembling? How would you labor as for life in this duty, and that ordinance, hanging on those breasts, and tugging hard for some spiritual good! Would you not, with Jacob, wrestle with God, weep, and make supplication? would you not, with the Ninevites, cry mightily unto God for mercy? How would your prayers proceed from the very bottom of your heart! and with what force would they pierce the very heavens! How would you, with the Bereans, search the Scriptures, and see upon what terms Christ and Heaven may be had! Would you not strive to break your heart with the hammer of the law, and to melt it with the sunshine of the gospel, that you might repent? Would you not encourage your soul, from the freeness of God's mercy, and fullness of Christ's merit, to believe? Oh, what sad thoughts would you now have of your soul and your sins! what serious thoughts would you have of God and Christ, of Hell and Heaven, of death and judgment! Surely other manner of thoughts than now you have.

Thus, friend, it will be with you if you were to leave this world within a month, or you were worse than a madman. And why shall it not be thus with you now, when you are so far from insuring your life for a month, that you can not promise yourself the next hour? Do you not believe that your foundation is in the dust? Job 4:19; that man at his best estate is altogether vanity? Psalm 39:5; that one dies in his full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet, his breasts being full of milk, and his bones moistened with marrow? Job 21:23, 24. You are not a tenant at your own will while you dwell in your house of clay. You cut large thongs of God's time if you assure yourself another week. But look, reader, do you not see that eternity is at the very threshold of your house, that there is but a step, a thin paper wall of life, between you and eternity! Is there not much more reason that you should be more industrious for your soul and salvation, when you are not sure to live a day, than if you were sure to live a month?

There is a bird peculiar to Ireland, called the rooster of the wood, remarkable for its fine flesh and folly; all the difficulty to kill them is to find them. They fly in woods in flocks; and if one be shot, the rest remove not but to the next tree, and there stand staring at the shooter until the whole covey be destroyed; yet, as foolish as this bird is, it may be the emblem of most wise men in point of mortality; death sweeps away one and one, and one and another, and all the rest remain no whit moved, until at last they are destroyed, and then their folly is, though too late, bewailed.

3. Suppose you could speak with your carnal, unregenerate neighbors or friends that are now under endless remorse, frying in those unquenchable flames, and should ask them what caused them to miscarry forever, and how they came to that place of torment; and they should tell you, O friend, I thought Heaven might have been had without so much ado, that there had been no need of that seriousness and laboriousness which a few precise ones practiced, and which ministers so much pressed. I thought I might do well enough with a formal, lazy, outside serving of God, because my neighbors did no better. I presumed, that because God was merciful, and Christ meritorious, and I enjoyed the outward privileges of the gospel, and gave God some of the time I could spare from the world and the flesh in a little heartless devotion, that I should be saved; never looking at that inward renovation and outward reformation which, I see now to my sorrow, are required in all to whom the special mercy of God and merit of Christ shall be extended, and now we, and, alas! I, am tormented in these flames.

After such a hearing from Hell, would you not be diligent to prevent your damnation? Would you not take heed of those knives of negligence, idleness, and formality, resting in a few good means, which did cut the throat of others' souls? Would you, after this, jest at Heaven and Hell, or trifle about regeneration or the new birth? Would you again mock God, or cozen yourself with a form, a shell, a carcass of religion? Would not the word you had lately heard be always sounding in your ears, and piercing your heart, and quickening you to be sedulous and industrious about your soul affairs? And why will not you do as much now, when I can assure you from the mighty possessor of Heaven and earth, that this is as true—namely, that many souls are eternally sunk by reason of those quicksands—as if you had heard it from the mouth of Hell; nay, it is possible a damned wretch may deceive you, but it is impossible that the blessed God-who speaks as much with his own mouth—should deceive you. Look 1 Thessalonians 5:3; Matthew 7:21–23 and 5:20.

4. Suppose you had, with Moses, had a sight of the back parts of the infinite God—about whose service I am persuading you to be diligent-or, with Isaiah, had seen some extraordinary manifestation of his glory; or had been with the disciples at the transfiguration of Christ. Or suppose you had been in Heaven, and seen the royalty and majesty of God in those glorious angels and saints which continually wait upon him, and in the glorified Savior who sits at his right hand, and represents him as lively and fully as is possible to the eyes of men. Suppose you had taken strict notice of the number—how many millions!—and order of God's servants there, how high and noble their work is; how holy and pure their worship, and had known the infinite power, holiness, wisdom, and justice of God as they do, and God should turn you again into this world, would you slobber over your duties, and play with his ordinances, as now you do? Would you pray to this God as if you prayed not? or hear from his Majesty as if you heard not? or attend on him carelessly, as if you did not attend on him at all? or would you not rather think, I can never be too serious in the service of such a God; I can never wait on him with humility enough, and with watchfulness enough, with uprightness enough, and with care and diligence enough?

Should you not be laborious in the service of such a good God? Give me leave to urge this thought a little farther, and to give you a scripture or two which, through the free grace of God, have sometimes helped me against deadness and dullness in duties. The one is 2 Chronicles 2:5, where Solomon tells us, The house I am to build must be great—mark the reason—for great is our God above all gods. If God be so great a God, how greatly is he to be reverenced! Can you do too much service for him, or give too much glory to him? Can your love to him be too great, or can your fear of him be too great, or can your labor for him be too great, when this God is so great, that he measures the ocean in the hollow of his hand, and metes out the heavens with a span, and comprehend the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighs the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? Behold, the nations are as a drop of the bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he takes up the isles as a very little thing. And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt-offering. All nations before him are as nothing, and they are counted to him as less than nothing, and vanity, Isaiah 40:12, 15–17. God is a great God, and therefore greatly to be feared, Psalm 89:7. God is a great God, and therefore greatly to be praised; for his greatness is unsearchable, Psalm 145:3.

If he be a great God, he may well require a great house to be his material temple; and if he be a great God, may he not justly call for a great part of, yes, all your heart, to be his spiritual temple? It is likely the son Solomon learned this of his father David, who gives us this as the reason why he danced before the ark of the covenant of the Lord of the whole earth with all his might, 2 Samuel 6:14, 21. It was, he says, before the Lord; as if he had said, Had it been before men only, or in their service, I might have been cold and careless, slothful and sluggish; but it was before the Lord, the infinite, incomprehensible, and holy God, to whom I am unspeakably obliged for his distinguishing mercy in choosing me before your father's house; and therefore all my might and all my strength was little enough for such a God. I might mind you further, that you have wrought hard in your slavery to the world and your flesh, in your drudgery to the devil and your lusts, whose reward and wages is nothing but disappointment and vexation, Hell and damnation; and should you not be fervent, fiery—seething hot, as the word signifies—in spirit when you are serving the Lord, Romans 12:11. I might also ask you to whom you owe your whole strength and your whole heart, if not to God? Are you so much indebted to the world and your flesh, those enemies of your salvation, as you are to the blessed God? and who will at last pay you best for your strength and time, God or the world, Christ or the flesh? But I may speak more to this in another place.

Well, reader, have I yet, or rather the Lord by me, persuaded you to set about this great business, upon which your eternal felicity depends, timely, that is, presently, and thoroughly, that is, with all your strength, as the main, chief, and only work you have to do? Are you resolved to do your utmost endeavor, and through the strength of Christ faithfully to follow the directions which I shall commend to you from the Lord, in order to your recovery out of that bottomless misery into which you have plunged yourself? Is there not abundant reason in what you have read? Are they the words of a sinful dying man, or of the jealous, ever-living God? Is it I only that call upon you to mind this spiritual life, or do not the daily and nightly mercies which you, unworthy wretch, enjoy? Do not the dreadful judgments which others feel, and you have too much cause to fear? Do not your sweet babes, your dear children, cry often and aloud in your ears, 'O that there were a heart in our father, in our mother, to fear the Lord, and keep all his commandments always, that it might go well with them and with their children forever'? Deuteronomy 5:29. Nay, does not the almighty God, who observes all your wickedness, in whose hands you are every hour, who can with a word speak you into that place of woe, where the worth of grace and holiness is better known, and where the weight of sin and ungodliness is more felt? Well, in hope that you will not be such an enemy to the God that made you, that you will not do that despite to the Spirit that moves you, that you will not be such a willful murderer of your precious soul as to neglect them, I shall set them down; the Lord set them home to your heart!

Come along with me, and I will show you the bride, the lamb's wife, how she must be trimmed and adorned for the marriage.

CHAPTER 14.

The first direction for the attaining a spiritual life, illumination

First, Get your understanding enlightened in the knowledge of your sins and misery. The knowledge of your disease and danger must precede your recovery and cure. Oh how many thousand souls have miscarried in the dark of ignorance! Did men know, surely they would not daily by their sins crucify the Lord of glory. Did they know their misery, they would not be so merry as they are in ways of iniquity; they rush into sin as the horse rushes into the battle, not knowing it will be to their death, to their destruction. I have sometimes read a story of a king that was ever pensive, and never seen to smile, and being asked by his brother the cause of it, he put him off until the next day for an answer; and in the meantime caused a deep pit to be made, commanding his servants to fill it half full with fiery coals, and then causes an old rotten board to be laid over it, and over the board to hang a two-edged sword by a small slender thread, with the point downwards, and close by the pit to set a table full of all manner of delicacies. His brother coming next day for an answer, was placed at the board, and four men with drawn swords about him, and with all the best music that could be had to play before him. Then the king called to him, saying, Rejoice and be merry, brother; eat, drink, and laugh, for here is pleasant being. But he replied, O my lord and king, how can I be merry, being in such danger on every side? Then said the king, Look how it is now with you, so it is always with me; for if I look above me, I see the great and dreadful judge, to whom I must give an account of all my thoughts, words, and deeds; if I look under me, I see the endless torments of Hell, whereinto I shall be cast if I die in my sins; if I look behind me, I see all the sins which I have committed, and the time which I have spent unprofitably; if I look before me, I see death every day drawing nearer and nearer unto me; if I look on my right hand, I see my conscience accusing me of all the evil I have done, and good I have left undone in this world; and if I look on my left hand, I see the creatures on their Maker's behalf, crying out for vengeance against me a rebel. Now, then, cease hereafter to wonder why I cannot rejoice in the things of this world.

This is the condition of every unsanctified man and woman, and did they but know it, they would see but little cause to spend their days in pastimes and pleasure; but what the eye sees not, the heart grieves not. Had Haman known he had been so near his funeral, he would hardly have boasted so much to his friends; but it is the policy of the God of this world to blind men's eyes, lest they should see and avoid damnation. As when a malefactor is for some capital crime cast at the assize, he is then carried into a dark dungeon, and thence to execution. So the devil, knowing that all the sons and daughters of Adam are cast by the law of God, the law shutting them all up under sin and wrath, endeavored to keep them in the dungeon of ignorance until the day of their execution. When Nebuchadnezzar had conquered Zedekiah, 2 Kings 25:7, he put out his eyes, bound him in fetters, and then carried him away to Babylon. Thus Satan, as soon as he enters into the soul, labors to put out the eyes of the understanding, and so to lead them hoodwinked to Hell. Did men know what they had done against God, and how they had undone themselves, they would be restless until they attained a remedy; did the sinner but know the purity, jealousy, power, and justice of that God, whom he daily provokes; did he but know the love and kindness, the blood and affections of that Savior, whom he undervalues; did he but know the pleasures, and joy, and happiness in Heaven, which he neglects; did he but know the beauty and amiableness, the delights and comforts of grace and holiness, which he despises; did he but know the emptiness and vanity of this deceitful world, which he so heartily embraces; did he but know where sin is in the premises, sorrow and Hell, without faith and sanctification, must be in the conclusion; did men, I say, but know these things, how quickly would they turn from sin unto God, giving a bill of divorce to their most beloved lusts, and entering into a most solemn covenant with the Lord! But having their understandings darkened, they are alienated from the life of God, that is, a life of holiness, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts, Ephesians 4:18. Observe how expressly the Spirit of God speaks ignorance to be the reason why men are such strangers to the power of religion.

Reader, you may by all this see the necessity of knowledge, if ever you would be converted and saved. The devil, as I said before, carries men hoodwinked to Hell; but God will never carry you blindfold to Heaven: 'The end of a saint is the inheritance in light,' Colossians 1:12; and the way thither is a way of light: 'The path of the just is as a shining light,' Proverbs 4:18; and surely in respect of knowledge as well as in other respects. Do not please yourself, that though you are not book-learned, yet you have as good a heart as others, as your foolish, ignorant neighbors will prate, for when you thus speak, you speak beside your book; for the book of God tells us otherwise.

The soul without knowledge is not good, Proverbs 19:2. There may be a clear head without a clean heart, the light of knowledge without the heat of grace; but a gracious heart in a grown person not distracted, was ever accompanied with a competency of knowledge in the head. And indeed knowledge is so near akin to grace, that it is often in the Word of God put for it: John 17:3, 'It is life eternal to know you to be the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent,' So 1 Corinthians 2:2; Philippians 3:8; Isaiah 53:11.

If you would be sanctified and saved, get knowledge: 'Seek knowledge as silver, and search for it as for hid treasure,' Proverbs 2:3, 4. This is the first thing to be done; it is first in the minister's commission. 'I send you,' says God to Paul, 'to open the eyes of the blind, and to turn men from darkness unto light,' Acts 26:18. And this is first in the Spirit's operation on the soul. It convinces the man of his sins, John 16:10, 11. It presents to the understanding a catalogue of its many and bloody provocations. Imprimis, Thus guilty in Adam of high treason against Heaven's Majesty, and thereby of want of original righteousness, and of a deep deadly pollution in the whole nature: Item, So many hundred ungodly actions, so many thousand unholy and idle expressions, so many millions of evil thoughts and suggestions: Item, So many omissions and so many commissions: Item, So much precious time mis-spent, a moment of which cannot be recalled or purchased with the revenues of the world: Item, So many talents of health, strength, food, clothing, esteem, riches, and the like misemployed: Item, So many sacraments, sabbaths, seasons of grace misimproved: Item, So much incorrigibleness under afflictions, so much unprofitableness under mercies. Thus the Spirit enlightens the sinner's mind to see his sins with their circumstances, and black aggravations; as also what is like to be the fruit and effect of sin, even nothing less than suffering everlasting perdition from the presence of the Lord. It may be the Spirit may cause him, as it were, to see the smoke that ascends from the bottomless pit, to smell the scent of that infernal brimstone and fire, to hear the roarings and howling of the damned; nay, possibly, to feel a very Hell in his own conscience. The Spirit indeed is a free agent, and works in what manner and measure he pleases. But this is certain, he convinces all of their sins and miseries; conviction does go before conversion. The physician of souls will heal none but such as know both their distemper and their danger, and thereby how infinitely they are obliged to him for their cure. As in the first creation one of the first things God made was light; so, in the forming the new creature, illumination is before sanctification. Every one is able to say in Christ as he in the Gospel, 'This I know, whereas I was blind, now I see,'

John 9:25.

This is absolutely necessary in order to the second direction I have to commend to you, which is the sincere humiliation of your soul. There must be a daybreak of light in the understanding, before there can be a heartbreak of sorrow in the affections; until sin and wrath be discerned by knowledge in the mind, they will be no burden to the conscience, nor grief to the spirit. As no good enrapt up in darkness excites desire, so no evil swathed up in ignorance strikes terror. We may observe this by the holy apostle's expression, 'I was alive without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died,' Romans 7:9, that is, the time was that I was ignorant both of the law's strictness and my own sinfulness, and then I thought myself to be very safe; my conscience was very quiet, and my heart full of hope, or more properly, presumption, about my future eternal happiness; thus I was alive without the law. But when my eyes were enlightened, to see how exceeding broad the commandments of God were, and that once I compared my crooked race with that straight rule, and took notice how far short I came of that obedience which the law required, I was then dead, a lost man: I quickly pulled in my plumes, and took down my sails, with which I was hastening in my conceit to Heaven; for I found that I was in very deed in the road to Hell. When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. There was then life enough in my lusts to wound me unto death, for I died.

Reader, if you are convinced so far of the absolute necessity of conversion, as to desire it sincerely, let me request you, for the sake of your poor soul, to set some considerable time apart; your body has had many years, surely your soul deserves one day, and that speedily, to be serious in about its endless estate, and to compare your wicked life with the pure law of God, and observe how exceedingly you have swerved from the precepts therein commanded. Consider not only its outward and literal, but likewise its inward and spiritual meaning, and you may presently discern that your whole conversation for so many years as you have lived, has been a continued aberration and wandering from the Lord and his laws. If you look aright in that glass, it will discover all the spots, all the dirt, that has been in the face of your heart and life, James 1:23. 'By the law is the knowledge of sin,' Romans 3:20.

Consider also, that your breach of the law makes you liable to the curse of the law, which is the infinite eternal wrath of the lawgiver: 'Cursed is every one that continues not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them,' Galatians 3:10.

The law must be satisfied; since not in its accomplishment, it will in your punishment.

If God cast the glorious angels out of Heaven, and reserved them in chains of darkness to the judgment of the great day for one sin, and that, as some think, in thought, into what a Hell may he cast you, whose iniquities for weight are like the sand of the sea, and for number like the sparks of a furnace, and the stars in the firmament! Think of it with all possible seriousness; you hang over the mouth of Hell every moment by a small thread of life, and if that should be cut asunder, the whole world cannot save you from dropping into it.

CHAPTER 15.

The second help to a spiritual life, humiliation

II. In the next place, labor to get your heart deeply and thoroughly affected with your sins and misery. Humiliation must follow illumination. It is not enough for this knowledge of the transgressions you have committed, and the wrath you have deserved, to swim in your head—it may be there as fire in the flint, to no profit—but it must sink down into your heart, and be beaten out into an application of, and lamentation for, your guilt and wickedness.

Man is so sinfully subtle, that he can bear the historical knowledge of these things in his understanding; he can hear the name of sin and Hell, and be no more troubled than at a painted devil, or a tale of purgatory; but when God brings down sin from being a notion to be an obligation, and enters an action against the soul within itself, then it will begin to melt and mourn under the sense of its sins and sufferings. Thus, after the Spirit of God has been a spirit of conviction, it becomes a spirit of bondage: that eye which was before enlightened to see the lewdness of his heart and life, comes now to affect his heart with grief and sorrow. This we find in those converts, Acts 2:37, when they had heard of their sin and guilt they began to recant and repent: 'When they heard those things, they were pricked to the heart.' The nails which had pierced Christ's hands now pierce their hearts. It was with them, says one, as if the sharp points of daggers had been stuck or fastened in their hearts. They wounded themselves with sorrow, that ever they had wounded the Lord Jesus with their sins.

The whole life indeed of a true Christian is, in some respects, a life of repentance. He is often grieving God's Spirit, and therefore he is often grieved in his own spirit. As long as the ship leaks, the pump must go. Though the Christian does not paddle or wallow in the mire of sin every day, as graceless ones do, yet he finds that daily his hands contract dirt and his soul guilt, therefore he must daily wash with faith and repentance.

Some report of Mary Magdalene that she spent thirty years in Galba in weeping for her sins; and Tertullian says of himself that he was born for repentance. Anselm tells us, that with grief he considered the whole course of his life. I found, writes he, the infancy of sin in the sins of my infancy, the youth and growth of sin in the sins of my youth and growth, and the ripeness of all sin in the sins of my ripe and perfect age; and then he breaks out into this pathetical expression, What remains for you, wretched man, but that you spend your whole life in bewailing your whole life?

But especially at the time of a Christian's conversion he is to mind contrition: when the vessel is newly tapped, then it runs most freely and plentifully. None might approach the king of Persia's court in sackcloth and mourning, Esther 4:2; but no wandering sinner may draw near to the King of Heaven without it. 'Except you repent, you shall perish.' God is resolved to break the sinner's heart on earth, or his back in Hell. He will have the wound searched and the pains of it felt before it be bound up and cured. The wicked prodigal must come to his Father with compunction in his soul, as well as confession in his mouth.

Look, therefore, O sinner, into the book of your conscience, and read over the black lines that still are in your cursed heart, and the bloody leaves of your wicked life, how long you have lived to little purpose, yes, to the killing of your soul forever; how far you have been from accomplishing the end for which you were born, and the errand for which you were sent into the world. Keep a petty assize in your heart; prefer a large bill of indictment against yourself; accuse and condemn yourself, not only verbally, but cordially, if ever you would have Christ to acquit you. You have spent many years in sinning, and should you not spend some hours in sorrowing? You did make the soul of Jesus Christ sorrowful unto death; shall not therefore your soul be sorrowful when your sorrow may be unto life? Did the rocks rend when he died for sin, and shall not your rocky heart that you have lived in sin? He bled for you, and will not you weep for yourself? You have filled God's bag with your sins, and have you no tears for his bottle?4 Have you so long broken the holy commandments of God, and shall not your heart now at last be broken? The damned feel sin; it lies heavy on their souls: could you lay your ear to the mouth of that bottomless pit, you might perceive by their yellings and howlings that sin is sin in Hell, how lightly soever it is regarded by men upon earth. The Lord Jesus felt sin: had you been in the garden, and seen his blessed body all over in a gore blood, beheld those drops, yes, clods of blood that trickled down his face, surely you would have believed that it was some heavy weight indeed which caused such a bloody sweat in a cold winter night.

And are not you yet weary and heavy-laden? Do I speak to a man or a beast? to a living creature, or to a rock that will never be moved? If you have a disease in your body you can grieve and complain, and why not for the diseases of your soul? Are not they far more deadly, more dangerous? If you lose a child, oh what crying and roaring, what wringing of hands and watering of cheeks! Nay, if you lose a place of profit, a house, or a beast, you can mourn, and think of it often with sorrow; and does it not grieve you that you have lost, not your child or cattle, but your Christ, your Savior, your soul, your God, to eternity? If you miss a good bargain that was offered you, whereby you might increase your estate, or if you buy or hires at too dear a rate, how do you befool yourself for it! Have you not ten thousand times more cause to be really and highly displeased with yourself, and to abhor yourself in dust and ashes, that you should have all the riches, and glory, and pleasures of the eternal kingdom offered to you with many entreaties, and yet you have refused them for the lying vanities of this world, and for the pleasures of sin, which are but for a season? You have denied Heaven's happiness for a bubble, a butterfly; all things for nothing. Did ever any fool buy so dear, and sell so cheap? Like Saul, busy himself in seeking donkeys when a kingdom sought him; like Shimei, seek his servant, and thereby lose himself? No fool like the sinner, that embraces a shadow which will certainly flee from him, and neglects the substance which endures to eternity.

Honorius the emperor, hearing that Rome was lost, cried, Alas, alas! very mournfully, fearing it had been his hen so called, which he exceedingly loved; but hearing it was the famous city of Rome that was become a prey to his cruel enemies, he made a tush at it. Thus too too many can grieve sufficiently for the loss of vanities, for toys and trifles, but not at all for the loss of God, and Christ, and enduring felicities.

Well, friend, repent timely and truly of this your folly; for I must tell you, shortly it will be too late. If repentance be hid from your heart now, repentance will be hid from God's eye then, by whose law you are now a condemned man already. If your heart be hardened now in sinning, the heart of God will before long be hardened in sentencing you to an eternity of suffering.

It is an infinite mercy that God yet allows you liberty for second thoughts; that notwithstanding you have shipwrecked your soul, yet you may swim out safe upon the plank of repentance. Oh therefore think no pains too great to break your stony heart; it is worth the while, when free grace has promised a vast reward to that heaven-born work. Had you once offered up to God the sacrifice of a spirit truly sorrowful, out of love to God, and self-loathing because of sin, I could tell you as good, as joyful news, as ever your ears heard. The Father of mercies and God of comforts would be reconciled to you in the Lord Jesus. Your prayers for pardon and life would pierce God's ears, and find acceptance, if they proceed from a broken heart, from sincere repentance. A penitent tear is a messenger that never went away without a satisfactory answer. Prayers with such tears are prevalent; yes, in Luther's phrase, omnipotent. Music upon the waters sounds most pleasantly. You have heard the voice of my weeping, says David, Psalm 6:8.

Augustus Caesar having promised a great reward to any that could bring him the head of a famous pirate, did yet, when the pirate heard of it, and brought it himself and laid it at his feet, not only pardon, but reward him for his confidence in his mercy. The God of affections and compassion would do more for you upon your sincere submission.

As Antipater was answered by Alexander, You have written a long letter against my mother; but do you not know that one tear of hers will wash out all her faults? When the returning sinner weeps, the tender-hearted Father smiles. As he rejoices and laughs at obstinate sinners' destruction and ruin, Proverbs 1:26, so he rejoices and smiles at the penitent sinner's conversion. He will do something for a hypocritical humiliation, to assure us that he will do anything upon a sincere humiliation. See you, says God, how Ahab humbles himself? This judgment shall not be in his days, but in his son's days, 1 Kings 21:29. A pitiful humiliation it was, God knew; he looked sadly, like a fox in a trap, merely to get out; yet God takes notice of it, and defers the judgment upon it. If God set such a price upon counterfeit, what will he upon true gold? Fierce Esau relents towards submitting Jacob, though he came against him ready and resolved to destroy him. Surely, then, the God of compassions—to whose pity and mercy the affections of all the creatures are but as a drop to the ocean—who calls those that go from him, will not cast away those that come to him.

Reader, little do you think how much he longs for your conversion and humiliation. Little do you know what kisses and embraces, what robes and rings, what mercies and merits, what a Heaven and happiness, what a God, and Christ, and grace, and glory, are all ready for you, and wait only for your readiness and preparedness for them, by your humiliation for, and an aversion from, your deceitful corruptions.

Alexander's Macedonians having offended him, laid by their arms, put on mourning apparel, came running in troops to his tent, where for almost three days together they remained with loud cries and tears to testify their remorse for offending him; and will not you do as much for offending God?

As you therefore love the life of your soul, endeavor to get your heart thoroughly humbled for your sins; take a view of your sins in the Word of God , in the glass of his law, how in its nature it is contrary to his blessed nature and perfect law, and for its effects it makes you obnoxious to all the threatenings of the word, to all the vials of God's wrath, to all the miseries of this life, and to all the torments of Hell forever.

Consider, while you live in your estate of impenitency, you are a cursed sinner, and if you die in it, you are a damned creature: the hand of God, which is lifted up in the commination and threatening, will fall down in execution. If the wrath of a king be as a messenger of death, oh what then will the wrath of a God be! As that Christian king of Hungary told his brother, that sprang into his presence pale and trembling, because of the executioner and death's—man, that had sounded his trumpet at his chamber door in the dead time of the night to call him away to execution, O brother, you have loved me, and never offended me, and is the sight of my executioner so dreadful to you? How then should I, a grievous sinner, fear to be brought to judgment before Jesus Christ! Consider the day of the Lord's wrath is coming, and who shall abide it? This terrible fire is kindled, this horrible tempest is gathered, and ready to fall on your head every moment. Do not put these things far off, as many do, who thereby deprive themselves of the happy effects which these thoughts might produce. A cannon afar off, though never so great, does no execution; men will not tremble and fall down for fear of it, when once they apprehend it many miles off. Things afar off, though very big, will seem very small; a star that is bigger than the whole earth, seems no bigger than a torch, being many miles from us. Look therefore on all that misery that is treated of in the first use as your portion, and as near to you, even at the very door; like a sergeant, it waits continually to arrest you, and hale you to the prison of Hell. There is not a night in which you lie down to sleep, but this roaring lion of the wrath of God lies down before you, and is ready, when you are asleep, little dreaming of it, to rend you asunder, and tear your soul in pieces. In the morning when you rise it waits upon you, dogging you all the day long, whatever you do, and following you like a bloodhound wherever you go; you may as soon fly from yourself as from it, until you are effectually humbled for your sins, the cause of it. And be not insensible of it, because it is invisible to you. The influences of the sun are hottest among the minerals in the affections of the earth, where it is not at all visible, nor they sensible: so the fire of divine fury is hottest where it is not visible, nor the person sensible. Though you may see it as plainly in the Scripture as the sun at noon-day: 'God is angry with the wicked every day,' Psalm 7:11. There is wrath prepared for the workers of iniquity, and it will assuredly and speedily be inflicted, if you are not timely and truly humbled and converted.

I would also desire you to ponder much the free grace of God, which is discovered in the gospel. What affections of compassion in the Father to give his Son! what infinite affection in the Son to give himself for the reconciliation and salvation of his enemies! It is probable the heat of this unknown love may melt your frozen spirit; the flint itself is broken with the hard hammer and the soft pillow: this is the most sincere sorrow that is never to be sorrowed for, which springs from the consideration that you have sinned against so good, so pure, so perfect a God, in conformity to whom, and communion with whom, all your happiness consists. The law indeed is of excellent use to open the sore, to search the wound, to make the patient feel his need of, and set a price upon, his physician; thus it is a schoolmaster to drive the soul to Christ; but winter fruits are more harsh and sour, when summer fruits are sweet and pleasant. God takes most delight in those tears and sorrow which are the fruits of hot love to his blessed Majesty. And could I see them once in you, I dared joy you of the babe of grace, the new creation. They are at least the kindly bearing throes of one in travail, very near her hour of delivery, as also often the after-pains. A stroke from guilt, from wrath, broke Judas' heart into despair; a look from love, from Christ, broke Peter's into tears. That sap and moisture which in frost and snow lies hid and buried in the earth, shows itself pleasantly in the fruits of the trees, when it is called forth by the warmth of the sun.

Even Saul himself will lift up his voice and weep, when he sees a clear testimony of the love and undeserved kindness of David.

Have you never beheld a condemned prisoner dissolved into tears, upon the unexpected and unmerited receipt of a pardon, who all the time before was as hard as a flint? The hammer of the law may break the icy heart of man with terrors and horror, and yet it may remain ice still, unchanged; but when the fire of love kindly thaws its ice, it is changed and dissolved into water—it is no longer ice, but of another nature. Where the sun is most predominant, there are the sweetest spices, the richest mines, and the costliest jewels. Do you therefore meditate much on the love of God and Christ to your unworthy soul: think what love is it that still spares you, notwithstanding all your God-daring and soul-damning provocations, and that when others, probably better than yourself, are every day and night sent to that place, where God has large interest for his long patience. What love is it, not only to forbear you, but also to do you good! You his enemy are hungry, he feeds you; you are thirsty, he gives you drink. 'If a man find his enemy, will he let him go?' 1 Samuel 24:19. But lo, God finds you every moment. As all your sins are within the reach of his eye, so you yourself are continually within the reach of his arm; he can as easily turn you into Hell, as tell you of Hell: and yet he lets you go, and more than that, does you good. You spend every hour upon the stock of mercy. God is at great charge and much cost in continuing meat and drink, and health and strength, and time which you do ravel out, and wanton away unprofitably.

What love was that in the Father which sent his own Son to die, that you might live! Well might the beloved disciple say, 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in him might not perish, but have everlasting life,'

John 3:16. In this the affections of divine love are naked, as in an anatomy: in other things the love of God is as the beams of the sun scattered, which are warm and comfortable; but in this it is as the beams of the sun united in a burning glass, hot, fiery, burning love. God so loved the world, so dearly, so entirely, so incomparably, so infinitely—a pattern which can never be paralleled. 'In this God commended his love towards us, in that when we were sinners Christ died for us,' Romans 5:8. When God sent his Son into the world, he did, as it were, say to him, My dear Son, you Son of my chief love and choicest delight, go to the wicked, unworthy world, commend me to them, and tell them, that in you I have sent them such a love-token, such an unquestionable testimony of my favor and good-will towards them, that hereafter they shall never have the least color of reason to suspect my love, or to say, 'Wherein have you loved us?' Malachi 1:2.

What love was that in the Son of God, which moved him to become the Son of man, that you might become the son of God! What love was that which made him so willingly undergo the scorns, and flouts, and derisions of wretched men, the rage, and malice, and assaults of ravenous devils, the wrath and fury of a righteous God; such pangs and tortures in his body as no mouth can express, such sorrows and horror in his soul as no mind can conceive; and all that you might escape such misery, and obtain everlasting mercy!

'Greater love than this has no man, that a man lay down his life for his friend,' John 15:13. The passion of Christ was the greatest evidence of his affection. The laying down of life did abundantly proclaim his love. His love before was like wine in a cask, hardly seen; but oh how did it sparkle and cast its color in the glass of his sufferings! This diamond, before hid in the shell, does shine radiantly in the ring of his death. If his tears did so much speak his love to Lazarus, that the Jews who saw him weeping, cried out, 'Lo, how he loved him!' surely his heart-blood does far more demonstrate his love to his members. They that beheld him bleeding in the garden, had far more reason to say, Look, lo how he loved his!

What love is that which did all this for such a worm as you art—such a sinner, such a rebel? what would God lose if you were eternally lost? the least tittle of his happiness would not be diminished. This sun is no loser when men shut their eyes, and will not behold its light; what gains God, if he gain you to himself, to his service? you can not add the least cubit to the stature of his perfections. The refreshment is to men, not to the spring, when the weary passengers drink of it. He does not command you to repent from any need he has of you, but from the pity he has to you. He entreats you to return, not that he may be blessed and happy, but that he may be bountiful and liberal in bestowing on you those blessings which accompany salvation. Methinks the apprehension of God's great love and goodness should have such an impression on you as to make you little and low in your own thoughts. Is it not a wonder that God should grant a gracious look upon such a clod of earth, a piece of clay, as you are? but what admiration can answer this love and condescension, that God should wait and entreat to lift you up, who would cast him down?—that an emperor should sue to a traitor; that majesty should thus stoop to misery; that the Lord of life and glory should prepare for you exceeding rich and precious promises, a crown of life, a purchased possession, and beseech you to accept of them! Were your heart never such hard metal, one would think that such a hot fire of burning love should melt it. I have in two or three authors read of five men that met together, and asked each other what means they used to abstain from sin? The first said, the thoughts of the certainty of death, and uncertainty of the time, moved him to live every day as if it were his last day. The second said, he meditated of the day of judgment, and the torments of Hell, and they frightened him from meddling with his dangerous enemy, sin. The third considered of the deformity of sin, and beauty of holiness. The fourth, of the abundant happiness provided in Heaven for holy ones. The last continually thought of the Lord Jesus Christ and his love, and this made him ashamed to sin against God.

Reader, if you have but any ingenuity, the abuse of such love and kindness should work upon you. Some say, the blood of a goat will soften an adamant; shall not then the blood of this true goat dissolve your adamantine heart? Beasts themselves have been won by kindness, and will you be worse than a beast, that such philanthropy and kindness of God shall no whit stir you or humble you?

There is a twofold necessity of a deep, serious humiliation, for which cause I have been the more large upon it, though indeed I have added very much more than I first intended, in order to the two next directions which I shall prescribe you.

First, In order to your hearty acceptance of Jesus Christ. Humiliation is like John Baptist, to prepare the way of Christ before him. Christ will not be a Savior to them that do not set a high valuation upon him; now an unhumbled sinner is a man conceitedly whole, seeing no need of, and therefore setting little price upon, the physician of souls. Until men see that they are cast by the law of God, and condemned men, they will never heartily desire and value a psalm of mercy. According to a man's sense of misery, such is his estimation of mercy. When Paul saw himself the chief of sinners, then that saying, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, was worthy of all acceptance, 1 Timothy 1:15. This sharp sauce of repentance does commend Christ exceedingly unto the spiritual palate. The more bitter and irksome sin is, the more sweet and welcome Jesus Christ will be to the soul. When the sinner sees that he is lost in himself, then, and not until then, will he truly request to be found in Christ; the prodigal did not prize the bread in his father's house until he was ready to perish for hunger. Ministers preach much of the infinite excellencies that are in Christ, of the unspeakable misery of sinners without Christ, of the absolute necessity that men and women stand in of Christ, and yet preach to little purpose. Most prize their shops and their lands, their relations, yes, and their sensual lusts, above the Lord Jesus, notwithstanding all their pretenses to the contrary; they see no such need of him, nor such worth in him, as the preachers and Scriptures speak of. What is the reason of it? truly this, they were never sensible of the stings of the fiery serpents; if they had, they would look up to the brazen serpent with an eye of greater respect. They were never pricked to the heart, and therefore cry not out, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do to be saved?' But when God discovers his wrath to the soul, and shuts the soul up under it; when he commands conscience in his name to arrest the soul for all its debts which it owes to divine justice; and when, in pursuance thereof, conscience does, in the name of the dreadful God, charge on the sinner the guilt of all his sins, and hales him to the judgment-seat of God, where he sees nothing but frowns and fury, fire and brimstone, and feels nothing but tribulation and anguish, indignation and wrath; now the sinner cries out in bitterness of spirit, O wretched, miserable man, alas, alas! I am undone! What desperate madness possessed my soul, thus to provoke the almighty God by my sins? Into what a sea of misery have I brought myself by mine iniquities! The God whom I see is angry; the wrath which I feel is heavy; the torments which I fear are infinite; the law which shows no mercy is violated; the God who will have full satisfaction for the breach of his law is incensed; conscience, which is his jailer, is commissioned to wound and terrify me, and where shall I go? There is wrath above me, wrath below me, wrath without me, wrath within me, wrath round about me. A world, mark now, for a surety to discharge me of these debts; a thousand worlds for that balm which can heal this wounded conscience; ten thousand thousand worlds for a Jesus that can deliver from the wrath to come. When sin comes to be sin indeed, then, and not until then, a Savior will be a Savior indeed.

Secondly, Humiliation is necessary in order to the soul's hearty resignation of itself to every law and command of Christ. According to a man's humiliation, such will his subjection to Christ be. Humiliation is, in some sense, the foundation of a Christian's obedience, and the strength of the building depends upon the strength of the foundation. The reason why the religious buildings of hundreds of professors in our days, though they have been very fair and beautiful to the eye, have miscarried, is this, the want of this foundation, their hearts were never thoroughly humbled. The reason why the stony ground did not bring forth good fruit, was this, the plough had not gone deep enough, it did not take deep root, Matthew 13:20, 21.

Men would never dally with God as they do, or halt, as the Israelites, between two opinions—be sometimes for God, and sometimes for the world; holy by fits and girts—if they had ever felt the weight of sin. Christ, when he comes into the soul as a Savior, will come also as a sovereign to command and govern the whole man. He is the true Sun, and he will have the whole Heaven, the whole heart, to himself; he will allow no writ of partition; his law forbids inhabitants as well as man's. Now, against this, the natural carnal man rises and rebels exceedingly; he has ever at this time some lust or other which he values as his limbs, some right hand that he desires may not be cut off, some right eye which he would not have plucked out, some Herodias that must not be meddled with, some Absalom that the sinner entreats Christ to spare, and deal gently with for his sake. Therefore, before the Lord of hosts can make an absolute conquest, before he can persuade the besieged soul to surrender itself wholly and altogether to his government, he is forced, by the thundering cannons of the law's curse, and God's wrath, to fire and fright it out of all its sinful holds. Then it will come up to those excellent terms of the Lord, which are most honorable for the Savior, and most profitable for the soul. Now he sees most certainly such a sting in sin's tail, that he dares plead no longer for the beauty of its face; now he feels it as a dart in his liver, as an arrow sticking in his heart, as a coal of fire in his hand; he is heartily willing, yes, thinks himself much indebted to that Redeemer that will pluck out this dart, this arrow. Oh how readily does he throw away this coal of fire, fearing to be burnt by it any more! We have two famous instances of this in Scripture. The one is in Paul,

Acts 9:6; when Paul, that was posting in the road to Hell, comes to be knocked down, and to feel those tremblings and terrors in his spirit, he cries out, 'Lord, what will you have me to do?' He had probably heard much before of God, but he regarded it not, until now he receives a word and a blow—a word from without, and a wound within to set it home; now it is, 'Lord, what will you have me to do?' Before it was, What will the high priest, the scribes and pharisees, have me to do? and what will the vain imaginations and high thoughts which exalted themselves against God and Christ have me to do? But now it is, Lord, what will you have me to do?' Before, his heart was like hard wax, it would take no impression from God; but now it is softened by this fire of inward humiliation, it is ready for any stamp. God may imprint what he pleases; 'Lord, what will you have me to do?' The other instance is in the cruel, rough, hard-hearted jailer. After the earthquake and the heart-quake which God had caused, he springs trembling in, and fell down before Paul and Silas, crying out, 'Sirs, what shall I do to be saved?' Acts 16:29, 30. Observe, now, the man is heartsick indeed, he is willing to take the most bitter pills; as if he had said, Sirs, do but tell me what I must do for salvation; though the terms be never so hard, the conditions never so unpleasant, the price never so much, the pains never so great, yet I will submit to anything, to all things, for salvation. 'What must I do to be saved?'

When the Israelite first sets out towards Canaan there is a mixed multitude, as when they marched out of Egypt, of carnal affections, which desire and endeavor to bear him company; now, because God knows that the land is too good for such evil inhabitants, and, besides, that they will cause many mutinies in the way, he brings therefore the Israelite into the wilderness, to humble him and to cut them off.

Before the soul be thoroughly humbled it dodges with Christ, it plays fast and loose, off and on; this it likes, and that it dislikes; this part of the yoke is uneasy, this burden is too heavy, and such and such commandments are grievous; gladly it would have Christ and his precious promises, but loath it is to forego its old friends, its beloved lusts; but when God is pleased to take the sinner by the throat, and to shake him out of his security, by showing him sin and wrath in their colors, making him sensible of the one, and terrifying him with a fearful expectation of the other, laying him at the pit's brink, within the smoke of Hell, within the smell of that brimstone, within the scorchings of that eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels, now the sinner sees that God is in earnest, and therefore dares not halt or halve it any longer; now he is in a boisterous storm, and casts all those goods, his darling sins, into the sea, perceiving that he must perish if he do not.

God is necessitated to lance men's wounds, and put them to pain, because otherwise they cannot be cured. When the metal is thus melted, God may cast it into what mold he pleases. Oh thrice happy is that heart which has been deeply and truly humbled! it shall hold out in those tempests wherein many others shall make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience.

CHAPTER 16.

The third help to a spiritual life, Application of, or affiance on, Jesus Christ

Thirdly, If you have been faithful in following my former advice, to get your mind enlightened to see, and your heart thoroughly humbled for your sin and misery, your next work is to rest and rely upon the Lord Jesus Christ for pardon, grace, and salvation; to look upon him as one appointed by the Father, given by himself, sanctified by the Spirit, and revealed in the word of truth, the gospel, to be the only and all-sufficient Savior of lost souls. It is now the proper time for you to cast your soul, your sins, your eternal estate, upon the infinite meritoriousness of the blessed Redeemer. Experience shows, that it is very easy for an unbroken sinner to presume, but surely it is very hard for a humbled sinner that has had all his vileness and unworthiness displayed before his eye, and the infinite wrath of God, like a mountain of lead, oppressing his conscience, to believe, and therefore I have prepared some choice cordials for such fainting spirits, which I shall give you anon. But my work now is to beseech you, broken heart, that you take heed of thinking to lick yourself whole. I know the devil and your heart will be both busy and diligent to get you to make a Christ of your contrition, and a Savior of your humiliation. Oh how unwilling is man, when he has shipwrecked his soul, to commit himself naked to the sea of Christ's blood! how earnest is he to have the chains and jewels of his earthly affections along with him, and to swim out upon the rotten boards of his own works!

Reader, now therefore especially, if your soul be in a flame, be careful out of what well you draws the water to quench it. This is one of the chief, nay, the chief of all, fundamentals in religion, and therefore it behooves you to be very tender. Now you are near drowning, near sinking in the ocean of divine fury, you had need to make sure that the bough or stake, or whatever it be by which you hold, be strong enough, and able to bear your weight. It is likely, nay it is certain, if you are humbled as aforesaid, you pray, you mourn, you sigh, you loath yourself for your wickedness, you admire God for his forbearance, you longest after help and deliverance. Be sure that you do not look on these as so much money with which you may purchase your pardon, and buy off your guilt; for believe it, if you do, as white as your silver is, it will draw black lines; instead of wiping off your old score, you will thereby run further into debt. Evangelical humiliation is required, not so much to make you acceptable to Christ, as to make Christ acceptable to you. It is a good evidence of the beginnings of sanctification, but it is a bad advocate for your justification. It is as truly dangerous to appear before God in the rags of your own righteousness as in your sinful nakedness.

If ever you receive the blessing of pardon and love from your heavenly Father, it must be by appearing in the garments of your elder brother. He makes his accepted, but it is in Christ the beloved, Ephesians 1:6. Nothing but perfect righteousness will pacify God's anger, or satisfy his justice, please those eyes which are purer than to behold the least iniquity. And this righteousness is only in Christ, who was made sin for you, that you might become the righteousness of God in him, 2 Corinthians 5:21.

Do not therefore, when you cease to be an atheist, begin to be a papist, in relying upon your good works; for though God will not save you without them, yet he will never save you for them.

Can you, says an eminent minister now with Christ, make yourself a Christ for yourself? Can you bear, and come from under an infinite wrath? Can you bring in perfect righteousness into the presence of God? This Christ must do, else he could not satisfy and redeem. And if you can not do this, and have no Christ, desire and pray until Heaven and earth shake, until you have worn your tongue to the stumps; endeavor as much as you can, and others commend you for a diligent Christian; mourn in some wilderness until doomsday; dig your nails, weep buckets full of hourly tears, until you can weep no more; fast and pray, until your skin and bones cleave together; promise and purpose, with full resolution to be better; nay, reform your head, heart, life, and tongue; and some, nay, all sins; live like an angel, shine like a sun, walk up and down the world like a distressed pilgrim going to another country, so that all Christians commend and admire you; die ten thousand deaths, lie at the fire-back in Hell so many millions of years as there be piles of grass upon the earth, or sands upon the sea-shore, or stars in the firmament, or motes in the sun. I tell you, not one spark of the wrath of God against your sin shall be, can be quenched by all these duties, nor by any of these sorrows, for these are not the blood of Christ.

It is both unacceptable and unprofitable for you to approach God, either in himself or in yourself. I dare not meddle with an absolute God, says Luther. God in himself is a consuming fire, but in his Son a loving Father. Do you, therefore, now you know yourself and sin, labor to know Jesus Christ, and him crucified, 1 Corinthians 2:2, and count all things dung and dross for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus your Lord, Philippians 3:8. Read, and pray, and weep, and pant, and thirst, that you may be found in him: 'Not having your own righteousness, which is according to the law; but that which is through the faith of him, the righteousness which is of God by faith,' Philippians 3:9. Take a view of him in the gospel, where he is crucified before your eyes, and behold him displayed in both his natures, and all his offices, and therein his suitableness unto, and sufficiency for all the wants and necessities of your dying soul. Do you see a cloud of judgments gathering apace, and ready to pour down on your head? Run to him for shelter; he is both a shadow from the heat, and a shelter from the storm, Isaiah 25:4. Is your conscience wounded with your sins? Hasten to the wounds of the Savior: by his stripes you may be healed, Isaiah 53. Do the murdering pieces of the law's curses threaten to destroy you? Fly like the distressed dove to the clefts of the Rock of ages, the bored hands and feet, the pierced side of your blessed Redeemer; there your soul may be sure of safety. He is the only ark wherein you may be saved, when the whole world that lies in wickedness shall be drowned, shall be damned. He is the little Zoar where you may retire, and your soul shall live, when fire and brimstone, yes, Hell, shall be rained from Heaven on ungodly ones. He is the true city of refuge, wherein you may assuredly escape the wrath of God, which, like the avenger of blood, pursues you. A hearty, thankful acceptance of Jesus Christ, as he is offered in the gospel, will at the day of judgment be a plea as acceptable unto God, and profitable unto you, as perfect subjection to all the commands of the law.

Consider how full his merits are; he is a horn of salvation, Luke 1:69, that is, strong to save, the strength of the noble beasts lying in their horns. There is no sinner so black but the blood of this Savior can make white, Revelation7:14. There are some diseases which other physicians cannot cure, but he heals all diseases. All are dangerously, but none desperately sick whom he undertakes. You owe a vast debt to justice, but the Lord Jesus is an able surety: 'He is able to save to the uttermost those that come unto God by him,' Hebrews 7:25.

Oh what is it that you lack, which perfect righteousness and infinite meritoriousness cannot procure? Do you want remission? God forgives sin for Christ's sake, Ephesians 4:32; 'the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses from all sin,' 1 John 1:7. He was a great sinner, as Luther observes, by imputation, that you might be innocent through condonation and pardon. Do you want reconciliation with God? He makes peace through the blood of his cross, Colossians 1:20. God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself, 2 Corinthians 5:20. He endured his Father's frowns and fury, that you might enjoy his smiles and favor. Do you want sanctification? His blood is sanctifying as well as justifying, Hebrews 9:14. He did not only buy off your score of guilt, but also purchased a new stock of grace for his bankrupt creature to set up with again.

The oil of grace was abundantly poured on the church's head, that it might fall down on the skirts and members. Of his fullness you may receive grace for grace, John 1:16. Do you want salvation? He has the power and gift of eternal life, John 10:28, and 17:24. He is the author of eternal salvation, Hebrews 5:9. You may have boldness, through the blood of Jesus, to enter into the Holy of holies, Hebrews 10:19, 20. He paid an infinite sum to purchase the Father's house for your everlasting home. Whatever your need be, he is able to supply it, for he is a universal treasure which can never be spent, a spring that can never be drawn dry: 'In him dwells the fullness of the Godhead bodily,' Colossians 2:9.

Consider also how free his mercy is, as well as his merits full. You may 'drink of the water of life freely,' Revelation22:17. If you will buy his benefits, you must leave your money behind you; his wine and milk is to be had without money and without price, Isaiah 55:1. Do not hold off, thinking to carry worthiness to Christ, but believe on him, and you may fetch worthiness from Christ. The same free grace which gave Christ for you without your prayer, will, at your desire, give Christ to you. Do not always lie poring upon your unworthiness, but if you are sensible of it, and sorrowful for it, believe it you are worthy enough to divine acceptance, though not to divine satisfaction. As his omnipotency answers your weakness, and his fullness your wants, so does his free grace all your unworthiness. The natural sun does not enlighten more freely, than this Sun of righteousness does enliven all that come under the shadow of his wings.

Ponder how universal his offers of grace are. Jesus Christ, with all his merits, are offered to all. The proposals of divine mercy and love are general and universal. 'Go preach the gospel,' observe, 'to every creature. He who believes shall be saved.' 'Ho every one that thirsts,' Isaiah 55:1. 'If any man,' let him be poor or rich, high or low, 'thirst, let him come to me and drink,' John 7:37.

It is a great encouragement that, in the offers of pardon and life, none are excluded; why, then, should you exclude yourself. 'Come to me all you that are weary and heavy-laden,' Matthew 11:28. Mark, poor sinner, 'all you.' Are not you one of that all? Is not your wickedness your weight, and your corruption your burden? Then you are called particularly as well as generally. Jesus Christ takes you aside from the crowd, and whispers you in the ear, O poor sinner, that are weary of the work, and heavy-laden with the weight of sin, be entreated to come to me; I will give you rest. Why does your heart suggest that he does not intend you in that call? Does he not, by that qualification, as good as name you? Ah, it is an unworthy, a base jealousy, to mistrust a loving Christ without the least cause.

Once more, meditate how willing he is to heal your wounded spirit, and be not faithless, but believing. He is willing to accept of you, if you are willing to accept him. What mean his affectionate invitations? He seeks to draw you with cords of love, cords that are woven and spun out of his heart and affections: Canticles 4:8, 'Come away from Lebanon, my sister, my spouse; from the lions' den, from the mountains of leopards.' Christ's love is hot and burning; he thinks you tarry too long from his embraces: 'Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled,' Canticles 5:2. Christ stands begging for entrance: Lost man, do but suffer me to save you; poor sinner, suffer me to love you. These are the charms of gospel rhetoric. None sings so sweetly as the bird of paradise, the turtle that chirps upon the church's hedges, that he may cluck sinners to himself. What mean his pathetical expostulations, 'Why will you die?' Ezekiel 33:11. What reason have you thus to run upon your death and ruin? 'What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me?' Jeremiah 2:5; what harm have I ever done them? what evil do they know by me, that they walk so contrary to me? But one place for all: Micah 6:3, 4, 'O my people, what have I done unto you? and wherein have I wearied you? testify against me. For I brought you out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed you out of the house of servants.' O my people, remember now what affections of love are here sounding in every line; what fiery affection is there in such sweet expostulations! Oh admirable condescension!

What means his sorrow for them that refuse him for their Savior? 'He is grieved because of the hardness of men's hearts,' Mark 3:5.

He shed tears for them that shed his blood. When he came near that city, which was the slaughter-house of the prophets of the Lord, and of the Lord of the prophets, he wept, Luke 19:41: 'If you had known, even you, in this your day.' The brokenness of his speech shows the brokenness of his spirit. He is pitiful towards their souls that are so cruel to themselves, and weeps for them that go laughing to Hell.

What means his joy at the birthday of the new creature, when he is received with welcome into the sinner's heart? The mother is as much pleased that her full breasts are drawn as the child can be. The day of your cordial acceptance of him will be the day of the gladness of his heart. At such an hour he rejoiced in spirit, says the evangelist, Luke 10:21. He wept twice, and he bled, as some affirm, seven times; but we never read of his rejoicing, if I mistake not, but in this place. And surely it was something that did extraordinarily take the heart of Christ, which could, in the time of his humiliation, tune his spirit into a merry note, and cause this man of sorrows to rejoice. Ah, sinner, believe it, he would never so willingly have died such a cursed, painful death, if he had not been willing that sinners should live a spiritual and eternal life.

What mean, I say, his invitations, expostulations, grief upon refusal, joy upon acceptance, his commands, entreaties, promises, threatenings; his wooing you by the ministers of his word, by the motions of his Spirit, by his daily, nightly, hourly mercies, by his gracious providence, by his unwearied patience, but to assure you that he is heartily willing to accept you for his servant, for his son, if you are heartily willing to accept him for your Savior and for your sovereign? He would never present you with such costly gifts, if his offer of marriage were not in earnest. Besides, broken-hearted sinner, for it is to you that all this while I have been speaking how dare you any longer entertain such a traitor against the King of saints in your breast, as a thought that the Lord Jesus can be guilty in any of the aforementioned particulars of the least in sincerity?

Do not, therefore, like the silly deer, go ever up and down moaning and bleeding with the arrow in your side, your sins sticking in your heart, but desire his helping hand to pluck them out, and without question you shall have it. He had a special command and commission from his Father to remember and redeem you: Isaiah 61:1–3, 'To bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captive, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound, to comfort them that mourn;' and do you think it possible for him to be unfaithful in his office or to his Father? No certainly; he keeps all his Father's commandments, and continues in his love, John 15:10, 11.

When he was upon earth, like a physician, he was in his element when among sick and diseased people, so much did he love to heal and cure. And now he is in Heaven, though he be free from passion, yet not from compassion; his heart pities you most tenderly, and his hand will help you effectually. Cheer up at last, O drooping soul, and look up with an eye of faith to this Lord of life, to this brazen serpent. I may say to you, as Martha to Mary, 'The Master is come, and he calls for you.' Hark how loudly he proclaims his general tender of grace: 'Ho, every one that thirsts, come to the waters,' Isaiah 55:1; how lovingly he beseeches: 'As though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be you reconciled to God,' 2 Corinthians 5:20. See how cheerfully he looks, out of hope that you will by believing receive him into your heart: 'His countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars. His mouth is most sweet; yes, he is altogether lovely,' Canticles 5:15, 16. How hastily he runs to meet you more than half-way! love's pace is very swift: 'Behold, he comes leaping over the mountains, skipping upon the hills!' Canticles 2:8. Observe how bountifully he provides for your entertainment: 'A feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined,'

Isaiah 25:6. 'Behold he stands at the door and knocks; if you hear his voice, and open to him, he will come in and sup with you, and you with him,' Revelation3:20.

CHAPTER 17.

The fourth help, Dedication to God

Fourthly, Dedicate yourself, soul and body, and all you have, unto the service and glory of Jesus Christ. If you have been sincere in the practice of the former directions, I doubt not in the least your willingness to this. If your sorrow for sin has been sincere, like a burnt child you will dread that fire. The sense of former unkindness to Christ is fresh in your heart; and a very glutton, in pain under a distemper, dares not but forbear such meats as will feed it. If your marriage to Christ has been hearty, you have given a universal bill of divorce to other lovers, and have accepted him for your head and husband, to govern and command you, as well as to protect and provide for you, and instate Heaven as a jointure upon you. If you expect an immortal life from him, you must consecrate your mortal life to him. I hope then you are contented to take Jesus Christ, for better, for worse; with his shameful cross, as well as his crown of glory; with his trials, as well as his triumphs; with his gracious precepts, as well as his gracious promises: nay, I hope you see so much equity in his commands, so much beauty in his ways and worship, so much of your soul's felicity enrapt up in holiness, in order to its perfection and happiness, that you would much rather choose the easy yoke, the light burden of Christ, than the drudgery of the world, or the bondage of corruption. Truly thus it must be with you, if ever you are saved; and thus I thought to have found you by this time, at least to leave you.

One excellently compares holiness and happiness to those two sisters, Leah and Rachel. Salvation or happiness, like Rachel, seems the fairer—even the carnal heart may fall in love with that; but sanctification or holiness, like Leah, is the elder, and beautiful also, though in this life it appears with some disadvantage, her eyes being bleared with tears of repentance, and her face furrowed with the works of mortification. But this is the law of that heavenly country, that the younger sister must not be bestowed before the elder. We cannot enjoy fair Rachel, Heaven and happiness, except first we embrace tender-eyed Leah, holiness, mortification, self-denial, and all those severe duties which the church's lawgiver enjoins.

Friend, sit down and consider what it may cost you to be a Christian. It must cost you the absolute denial of your sinful, carnal self, of the body of death and its earthly members, which are expressly forbidden in the Word of God ; and your main work must be every day to crucify and mortify them. Sin must die, though it may be never so dear to you, or your soul cannot live. If you let any sin go, since every one is appointed by God to destruction, your life must go for its life, as the prophet told Ahab, 1 Kings 20:42. When Christ came in the flesh, sin crucified him; but when Christ comes in the spirit, he will crucify it. As Samson, an eminent type of Christ, pulled down the house upon the heads of the lords of the Philistines, that he might slay them, and so be avenged on them for his two eyes; so Jesus Christ, if he be your Savior, is resolved to pull the house in which sin harbors itself down about its ears, and by its slaughter, to be revenged on it for his two eyes, for all the ignominy and shame, agony and pain, which sin put him to. He will teach you better than to beg the life of those Barabbases, those foul murderers and robbers of God of his glory. And surely ingenuity will learn you otherwise than to expect such infinite favors from this King, and yet to entertain in your heart any that are rebels against his Majesty.

Thus it will cost you the absolute denial of your sinful self. It must cost you the conditional denial of your natural self, and all that is outwardly dear unto you. Nay, it may cost you the actual loss of relations, possessions, honor, pleasure, liberty, limbs, life, and all these for Jesus Christ. You must resolve, whenever they come in opposition unto, or competition with Christ, his glory, kingdom, and command, to let them go. As when Levi's relations came in competition with the glory of God, he did not know his father, nor would he acknowledge his brethren, Deuteronomy 33:9. When Moses' glory and pleasures came in competition with a precept of God, he chooses 'to suffer affliction with the people of God, rather than to enjoy the pleasures of the court,' Hebrews 11:25. When Paul's liberty and life come in competition with the kingdom of Christ, he is ready, not only to be bound, but to die for the name of the Lord Jesus, Acts 20:24. They all willingly left their own comforts to obey God's call and commands. In conversion, as one well observes, the use and the property of all we have is altered. All our vessels, all our merchandise must be inscribed with a new title: 'Holiness to the Lord,' Isaiah 23:18; Zechariah 14:20, 21. Then men's chief care will be to honor the Lord with their substance, Proverbs 3:9: to bring their sons, their silver, their gold, to the name of the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, Isaiah 60:9. All we are, or have, we have it on this condition: to use it, to leave it, to lay it out, to lay it down, unto the honor of our Master, from whose bounty we received it.

It was a notable saying of a noble lord of this land, that that person may be deceived, who thinks to save anything by his religion more than his soul; and surely he who saves his soul, saves all that is worth saving. He meant that his religion might cost him the loss of all other things. There is certainly, if you will be a Christian indeed, a necessity of laying your health, strength, time, estate, name, friends, interests in the world, your calling and comforts whatever, at the feet of Christ, to be employed wholly in his service, and improved altogether for his glory, and to be denied or enjoyed, in whole or in part, according to his call and command. This may seem a hard saying to carnal minds, that rather than break, and leave off all show of trading with God, to which their stirred consciences will by no means yield, would willingly compound and give Christ a part, and the world and flesh the other part; but as Christ is worthy of, so he will have, all acceptance. The gods of the heathen are good fellows, and share their honor among themselves; but this Lord over all, who is God blessed forever, will not give his glory to others; he will not suffer that superlative esteem, trust, and love of the soul, to be bestowed on any but himself, or to be divided between himself and any other. He will allow no superior, nay, no equal. As Alexander answered Darius, when Darius sent to him about peace, because there were empires enough in the world to satisfy them both, The whole world could endure but one sun, but one Alexander. So the heart of man must have but one general, but one commander-in-chief, and that must be Jesus Christ.

Truly, reader, I hope that these things will not discourage you from the ways of God. Do but rationally consider them; is it not most just and equal, that since all these things come freely from him, that they should be laid out purely for him? You give your servant a little meat, and drink, and money, or rather God by you, and what service do you require of him? You are instrumental, under God, to the birth and breeding of your children, and what duty do you expect from them? Are not you ten thousand times more engaged to Jesus Christ, for every bit of bread and breath of air, for every night's sleep and day's supply, for every mercy that your enjoy, for every moment's abode on this side Hell, for every soul-favor, and body-kindness.

In him you live, move, and have your being; the light does not so much depend on the sun, as your life and all your comforts depends on Christ. Now, be your own judge, what service, what obedience, may the Lord Jesus look for at your hands? If the world or the flesh could do half so much for you, you were more excusable, than now you are in doing so much for them.

Again, when the question arises, whether Christ or the flesh, Christ or the world, should have your greatest esteem, or love, or trust, or the most of your time, and strength, and talents. One would think you should be ashamed to put such a question, or, at least, that the very mention of it would be a sufficient answer to it. Alas! what are all the honors and pleasures, riches and relations, delicacies and diadems, of the whole world to Jesus Christ, but as pebbles to pearls, dirt to diamonds, dross to gold, nothing to all things? there surely is no comparison. The whole world of Heaven and earth does not so far excel a feather, as Jesus Christ does the whole world.

Besides, this request of mine should rather encourage you, in regard this absolute resignation of yourself to Christ tends to the perfection and happiness of your soul. Your misery by your fall is chiefly in this, that you have thereby lost the image of God. Your want of conformity to him, is the cause why you have not communion with him. Beasts do not converse with men, nor trees with beasts, because they do not live the life of each other. Sense must fit trees to converse with beasts, and reason must fit beasts to converse with men, and grace and holiness must fit you to converse with God. When you once live the life of God, as this unreserved soul-resignation or sanctification is called, Ephesians 4:18, you may then bathe your soul in his love.

Now this is the way to it. The life of Christianity consists in a hearty dedication of yourself and all you have to Christ. When you have done this, you are a Christian indeed.

The excellency of everything stands in two things: first, The perfection of beauty in which it was made, and the perfection of use for which it was made. Now the beauty of man consists in this, that he was made like unto God,

Genesis 1:26; and his end and use is this, that he was made for God; first to serve him, and after to enjoy him, for the Lord has set apart him who is godly for himself; therefore to recover the image of God, which consists in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, to work to the service and glory of God, to aspire to the possession and fruition of God, must needs be man's greatest good.

By what has been largely spoken before in this use, you may perceive that there is no going to Heaven by leaping out of a dirty and stinking life into the presence of the glorious God. There is a being made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, Colossians 1:12, which is by sanctification. As clothes are by lighter colors fitted to receive a deep scarlet dye, so you must, by this spiritual life of holiness, be fitted for the eternal life of glory. Observe, 2 Corinthians 5:5, the apostle tells us, He who has wrought us for the self-same thing (that is, Heaven) is God. Man is a rugged piece of timber, an unhewn stone; now the stone must be polished, and the timber squared, before it can be fit for the heavenly building wrought for it.

Joseph, when he was sent for to Pharaoh out of prison, changed his clothing, and trimmed himself, and then appeared before the king.

And as there must be regeneration, or the beginning of grace, so there must be a proficiency or growth in grace, to prepare the soul for the weight of glory. There is a double right which every child of God has to Heaven.

1. A hereditary right, and that is at regeneration, when he is put into Christ, and made a co-heir with him of his inheritance, having grace begun in him, which shall be perfected in glory, and was given as a principle ordained to such a perfection.

2. A right of fitness, whereby we are qualified to receive such a mercy; and that as an heir has a right of inheritance in his non-age, but he has not a right of fitness until he come to years, and be able to manage his estate when he has received it. Reader, in both these respects there is a necessity that you presently make a deed of gift of yourself and your all unto Jesus Christ; and that you never more look upon yourself, or anything you have, as your own, but as a servant entrusted with them for your Master's use and advantage.

Well, reader, I suppose you do before this fully understand the conditions upon which your soul may be contracted unto Christ. My work is to treat with you about this marriage. I am commanded by the Lord, as Abraham's steward by his lord, Genesis 24, to provide a wife for my Master's Son. I do here, in the presence of the living God, by commission from his Majesty, tender you the most honorable, profitable, delightful match that was ever offered to mortals. It is the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of life and glory, the only-begotten of the Father, the fairest of ten thousands, to be your head and husband: hereby you shall have the King of kings, the Lord of Heaven and earth, for your Father; a queen, the church, for your mother; the saints, those truly excellent, noble, illustrious ones, higher than the kings of the earth, for your brethren and sisters: the covenant of grace, in comparison of which all the gold of the Indies is but dirt and dung, for your treasure; glorious angels for your servants, the flesh of the Son of God for your meat, and his precious blood for your drink; perfect righteousness, which is more beautiful than the unspotted innocency of Adam or angels, for your clothing; a palace of pleasures, a place of glory, a building of God, a house not made with hands, but eternal in the heavens, for your habitation. And all this only upon these terms, that you will be a loving, faithful, and obedient wife, which the poorest beggar in the country expects from his wife; that you will heartily give up yourself and all you have to his service and glory; and this he desires also for your good and benefit, that he may make you a more excellent creature, and render you more acceptable to God, and more capable of his dearest love and eternal embraces. As the rain is sent up from the earth in thick and foggy vapors, but the heavens return it in pure and silver showers, so though you give an unbelieving, hard, earthly heart unto Christ, he will return it unto you again, believing, tender, heavenly, such a heart as shall be more pleasing both to God and yourself; and for this he is pleased—though ten thousand suns united into one are but darkness to him, so great is his glory—to condescend to become a suitor to you, to beseech you to accept of him, who knows your portion to be misery and beggary, who sees your person to be full of ugliness and deformity, who gains no addition to his happiness by your acceptance of his love, nor suffers the least diminution by your refusal. Well, what say you to this match? Are you heartily willing to take Jesus Christ for your wedded husband, to protect and direct you, to purify and pardon you, to sanctify and save you, to guide you by his counsel, and afterwards to receive you to glory? And will you here, in the presence of the Lord, and before your conscience, which is as ten thousand witnesses, promise and covenant to obey him universally, to love him sincerely, to resign up yourself and all you have to his disposal unreservedly? What say you? Are you willing or no? Take heed of dallying in a match that is so unquestionably and infinitely for your advantage. Believe it, you shall not have such offers every day. Do not stick at any of his precepts, for he can require nothing but what is equal, excellent, and honorable. Do not trifle or defer it, if you love your soul, for this may be the very last time of asking. If you will deal kindly and truly with my Master, tell me; or, if not, tell me, that I may return an answer to him who sent me, Genesis 24:49.

These four directions which I have laid down already are without question the whole of Christianity; and that soul shall be certainly saved by whom they are uprightly practiced: yet there are two special means which God has appointed for the enabling the soul to perform them, which I shall speak briefly to, and for method sake join them altogether.

CHAPTER 18.

Two other helps, the Word and prayer

Fifthly, If you would attain this spiritual life, be much conversant with the Word of God ; be often reading it, meditating on it, but especially frequent it in public where it is preached; by losing one sermon, for anything you know, you may lose one soul.

Death at first entered into the world by the ear, Genesis 3., and so does life. Faith comes by hearing, Romans 10:17. You see in the gospel that faith and repentance are this spiritual life, Mark 16:16; Galatians 2:20; and you may see as clearly that they are both the fruits of the ministry of the word; for faith, that fore-quoted place, Romans 10:17, is full; and for repentance, that of Acts 2:37 speaks home, 'When they heard these things, they were pricked to the heart:' mark, 'When they heard these things.' The Word of God is a hammer with which God is pleased to break the stony heart, and a fire with which he melts the hard metal, Jeremiah 23:29. In this respect it is that the minister is called the father of some converts, namely, those whom he begets through the gospel, 1 Corinthians 4:15.

There is a resurrection of souls at this day, when ministers lift up their voice like a trumpet, Isaiah 58:1; Acts 2:37, as well as there shall be a resurrection of bodies at the last day by the trumpet of the archangel. This is the net which God is pleased to cast into the sea of the world, and with which he has caught many a soul, three thousand at one draught, Acts 2:41. Spiritual life is the gift of God, as well as eternal: the gift of all grace is of grace; but ordinarily of his own will he begets souls by the word of truth, James 1:18. If you will have wisdom's dole, you must wait at wisdom's gate, for there it is given, Proverbs 8:34.

Grace is the law written in the heart, and usually the ministry of the word is the pen with which the Spirit of God writes it.

That is the bed wherein the children of God are begotten, Canticles 1:16; that is the school wherein the disciples are taught of God, and learn the truth as it is in Jesus. The minister's commission does abundantly evince this: I send you, says God to Paul, to open the eyes of the blind, and to turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to the living God.

God indeed is a most free agent, and can work when and how he pleases; but it has pleased him to make the gospel of Christ his own power unto salvation, Romans 1:16; and it pleases him by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe, 1 Corinthians 1:21. Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, to the eye of sense may seem better than all the waters of Israel; but Jordan can cleanse and heal when those cannot, because it has a divine precept and promise annexed to it. Nay, observe how God is pleased to dignify his word, and to honor his own ordinance. When he has begun the work of conversion himself immediately, he will not perfect it without the ministry of his word. He sends Paul to Ananias, Acts 9:15, to learn what he should do; and bids Cornelius by an angel—for an angel must not do that work—to send for Peter, and from him to hear words whereby he and his house should be saved, Acts 10:5, 6. David, who was wiser than the ancients, than his enemies, than his teachers, lies many months asleep on the bed of security, until a prophet is sent to call him up and awake him; then, and not until then, he minds cleansing, as appears plainly by the title and body of the 51st Psalm. So David's heart smote him for numbering the people: but mark the means of it. For, says the text, when David was up in the morning, the word of the Lord came to Gad, and commanded him to go to David, 2 Samuel 24:10–12.

Yes, the very honor of saving souls, the Most High ascribes to the ministry of his word, 1 Timothy 4:16. Timothy is spoken of as saving himself and them that hear him, that is, instrumentally; thus highly God does magnify his ordinances, though many men vilify them. Do not you therefore forsake the assemblies of the saints, as the manner of some is,

Hebrews 10:25, but lie constantly at the pool, praying and waiting for the troubling of the waters of the sanctuary; the angel of the covenant may move there, and your diseased soul thereby be healed. Some that have come to church to sleep, as Mr Latimer says, have been taken napping. As you would learn that lesson whereby you may be wise to salvation, do not play the truant, but frequent that school where the prophet of the church teaches. As you would not quench the Spirit, despise not prophesying, 1 Thessalonians 5:19, 20. They that came to catch the preacher, have been caught by the sermon, as Augustine by Ambrose. And they that come to see fashions, as Moses came to the bush, may be called as he was. The soldiers or officers that went to apprehend Christ were probably apprehended by Christ, John 7:46. When Henry Zatphen was preacher at Breme, the papists sent their chaplains to hear, that they might entrap him, but God converted by his ministry many of them.

If you would have your heart thoroughly humbled, make use of the word; you may read of a bad, hard, cursed heart indeed humbled by this, 2 Chronicles 33:12, 19. Manasseh in his affliction humbled himself greatly; for God sent unto him prophets and seers, that spoke unto him in the name of the Lord; so 2 Samuel 24:10–12.

Would you rest upon Jesus Christ for salvation? Mind the word: 'Every one that has heard and learned of the Father comes unto me,' John 6:45.

Would you have your inward man renewed and changed? This may be done by the blessing of God accompanying his word; therefore it is called the engrafted word, James 1:21. To teach us that, as the scion of a good apple grafted into a crab tree stock, has virtue to change the nature of it; so has the word preached,—for of that he speaks, as is manifest, verse 19–23,—virtue to change the heart of man.

Reader, let me persuade you to have a reverent esteem of, and to be very familiar with, the Word of God , reading it constantly, and hearing it frequently, as the Lord shall give you opportunities; but take heed how you hear, Luke 8:18, how you read. Attend on the word, having first laid aside all superfluity of naughtiness; weeds must be rooted up before the ground of man's heart is fit to receive the seed of the word. 1. With meekness of spirit, James 1:21. The humble sinner is fittest to be Christ's scholar. 'The meek he will teach his way; the meek he will guide in judgment,' Psalm 25:8, 9. When the heart is tender, it is most teachable; it is like white paper for any inscription, like soft wax for any impression. A proud person is too good, in his own conceit, to be taught; he quarrels and rages, either at the person that preaches, or at the plainness of the sermon, but to his own ruin. He rejects the counsel of God, but it is against himself, to his own hurt, Luke 7:30. The weak corn, which yields to the wind, receives no damage by it, but the proud, sturdy oak, which resists it, is often broken in pieces.

2. Attend on the word, with a resolution to obey whatever the Lord shall in his word command you. Oh it is excellent to sit at God's feet, hearing his voice purposely that you might do his will; like a servant, to go to your master and know his mind, that you may fulfill it; when you can say, I am here present before the Lord, to hear and do the things that are commanded me of God, Acts 10:33; like the Romans, to deliver up yourself wholly to that form of doctrine, which God has delivered down unto you, as metal for any stamp and mold, Romans 6:17.

3. With self-application. Do not think this concerns such a man, and now the minister hits such a one; but consider, now God speaks to my soul, and this truth does nearly concern me. If the word be not mixed with faith, it will not be profitable to them that hear it, Hebrews 4:2. While truths rest in generals, little good will be done, but when they come to be particularly applied, and to sink down into the heart, then they work effectually for the soul's salvation. Truths generally received are like the charging a piece, but the particular application of them discharges it, and does the execution upon sin.

4. With supplication before and after reading or hearing. Begin with God: 'Lord, open my eyes, that I may see the wonderful things of your law,' Psalm 119:18. Begin duty with duty: 'The preparation of the heart in man is from the Lord,' Proverbs 16:1. And after you have heard or read, pray, as the disciples after they had heard, Lord, open to us this parable, Matthew 15:15. This scripture, 'Write your law in my heart, and your truth in mine inward parts; teach me your way, lead me in your righteousness. Give me under standing, and I shall keep your law; yes, I shall observe it with my whole heart,' Psalm 119:33, 34.

Urge your soul with the necessity of this duty, that you must be converted or condemned; and it is the law of the Lord that is perfect, converting the soul, Psalm 19:7. That you must know your misery, or feel it eternally; and it is the precept of the Lord that is pure, enlightening the mind, Psalm 19:8. That you must repent or be ruined; and it is by hearing that men come to be pricked at the heart, Acts 2:37. That you must believe or perish; and how shall you believe on him of whom you have not heard? Romans 10. As ships will ride a long time in a roadstead, when they might be in the haven, for this end, that they may be in the wind's way to take the first opportunity that shall be offered for their intended voyage; so do you ride in the road of God's ordinances, waiting for the gales of the Spirit. You know not how soon that wind may blow on the waters of the sanctuary, and drive the vessel of your soul swiftly, and land it safely at the haven of happiness, of Heaven.

Sixthly, If you would attain this spiritual life, be frequent and fervent at the throne of grace, that the God of all grace would infuse grace into you, and breathe into your soul the breath of this spiritual life. As Abraham pleaded for Ishmael, Genesis 17:18, 'Oh that Ishmael might live before you!' so do you for your soul, Oh that my soul might live before you! And as the ruler for his son, Lord, come down quickly before my soul die, yes, before it die eternally.

Go to God with a sense of your own unworthiness and iniquities, that though you come to his Majesty for the greatest favors, yet you are less than the least of all his mercies, acknowledging that you have sinned heinously against Heaven, and before him, and are unworthy to be called his son. Confess your original, actual, heart, life sins, with their bloody aggravations, and entreat him to pardon and purify you. Oh with what humility, reverence, and self-abhorrency should such a guilty prisoner approach the judge of the whole earth! Arraign, accuse, and condemn yourself and your sins, if ever you would have God to acquit you.

Pray also with a sense of your own impotency and weakness. That though there be a necessity of humiliation, if ever you would escape damnation, yet you can as soon fetch water out of a rock, as tears from your eyes, or sorrow from your heart, for your sins; until the wind of the Spirit blows, those waters will never flow. It is God that must give to you, a poor Gentile, repentance unto life, Acts 11:18. That you must believe, or you can not be saved; yet you can as easily cause iron to swim, as your soul to believe in the Son of God. Faith is the gift of God, Philippians 1:29; Zephaniah 3. It is as hard a work to believe the gospel, as to keep the law perfectly. Nothing less than omnipotency can enable the soul to either. As your first birth and generation, so is your second birth and regeneration, from the Lord. Men and means may be instrumental and subservient, but their efficacy and success depends on God.

When you have, through the strength of Christ, wrought your heart to some sense of your weakness and unworthiness, then look into the Scriptures, and fetch arguments from God's own mouth, weapons from his own armory, whereby you may prevail with him, and overcome him. Beseech him to consult his glorious name and gracious nature; mind him who he is the Lord, the Lord God, gracious, merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, Exodus. 34:6. Tell him who he delights not in the death of sinners; that he takes more pleasure in unbloody conquests, in the cheerful services, than in the painful sufferings of his creatures; that he had much rather have trees for fruit than for the fire. Say, 'Have mercy upon me, O God, according to your loving-kindness; and after the multitude of your tender mercies blot out mine offences,' Psalm 51:1. O you that are rich in mercy, for the great love with which you love souls, quicken me in Christ, that by grace I may be sanctified and saved. Since you delight in mercy, be pleased, Lord, to delight both yourself and your servant, by extending your hand of mercy to pluck me out of this bottomless depth of misery. Entreat God to consult his own honor, as well as his gracious nature. Mind him, that if he condescend to convert and save you, he shall have the glory of his patience, in waiting thus long to be gracious; the glory of his providence, in causing all things to work together for your good; the glory of mercy, in pitying and pardoning such a grievous sinner; the glory of his justice, in that noble satisfaction it shall have from the death of his Son; the glory of his power, in bringing such a rebellious heart into subjection unto Jesus Christ. Entreat his Majesty to consider, that he may pardon and cleanse you, through Christ, without the least diminution to his glory; nay, that far more revenues will come to his crown from your salvation, than from your damnation; that the forced confessions of them that perish, as of malefactors upon the rack, do not sound forth his praises so much, nor so well, as the joyful hearty acclamations of his saved ones. Say, Lord, if you suffer me to continue in my filth and pollution, and never wash me by the blood and Spirit of your Son, and suffer me to perish eternally, you are righteous; but, Lord, if I perish I shall not praise you; your glory will rather be forced out of me with blows, as fire out of a flint. You delight to see poor creatures volunteers in your service; the damned do not celebrate your praise, they that go into the infernal pit give you no thanks,

Psalm 30:9. The living, the living, they shall praise thee—they that live spiritually, and they that live with you eternally, Psalm 88:10, 11; Isaiah 38:19. Oh what hosannas and hallelujahs! What honor, and glory, and blessing, and praise do they give to the Lord, and to the Lamb that sits upon the throne forever! Oh let my soul live, and it shall praise you. Your is the kingdom and power, do you work within me by your grace, and your shall be the glory.

Desire God to consider his own promise as well as his praise. Urge his own word, that they that ask shall receive, that seek shall find, that knock shall have Heaven opened; that if men know how to give good gifts to them that ask, how much more will the Father in Heaven give his holy Spirit to them that ask; that he will circumcise the hearts of men and women to love him, Deuteronomy 30:6; that he will put his fear into their hearts, and they shall never depart away from him, Jeremiah 32:40; that he will write his law in their hearts, Jeremiah 31:33. Go in to him when you are full of heaviness, as Bathsheba did to David, 1 Kings 1:17, 18, and say, Did not my Lord promise thus and thus, and is it your mind that your word should go unfulfilled? Lord, are not these your own words, your own handwriting? Whose staff and bracelet is this? If you had not promised, I should not have found in my heart to pray; and if you should not perform, where would be the glory of your truth? 'Your mercy, O Lord, is great unto the heavens, and your truth unto the clouds,' Psalm 57:10. 'My soul cleaves unto the dust, quicken you me according to your word,' Psalm 119:25. 'Remember your word unto your servant, upon which you have caused me to hope,' Psalm 119:49.

Beseech him to consider your mercy. Like a beggar, uncover your nakedness, show your sores and wounds to move him to pity. Tell him, that in regard of your spiritual condition you are at present wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked, Revelation3:17; without God, without Christ, without hope, an alien from the commonwealth of Israel, and a stranger from the covenants of promise; and that your eternal state is like to be the worm that never dies, the fire that never goes out, among devils and damned ones, in blackness of darkness forever. Say, Lord, open your eyes, and see your poor creature weltering, wallowing, polluted in his own soul-blood; and now I am in my blood, open your mouth and say unto me, Live; yes, now I am in my blood, say unto me, Live, Ezekiel 16:6. Since no eye pities me to do any good unto me, open your heart, and let your affections yearn towards me. Let this time be your time of love; spread your skirt over me, and cover all my nakedness. Enter into a covenant with me, and enable me to become your forever. Since you behold all the wants and necessities of my poor soul, open your hand and supply all my spiritual need. There is bread enough, and to spare, in the Father's house, oh let not my dying soul perish for hunger. Open your ears and hear the prayers and supplications which your servant pours out before you night and day. You have the key of David, and open, and no man shuts; open the iron gate of my heart, which will never open of its own accord, that the King of glory may enter in. You did open the rock, and cause it to send forth water. Bow the heavens and come down; break open this rocky heart and come in, and take an effectual, universal, eternal possession of my soul. Consider your bottomless mercy, Christ's infinite merits, my unspeakable misery, and let your heart be opened in pity, and your hand in bounty, that my lips may be opened, and my mouth may everlastingly show forth your praise.

Only in your prayers be instant, constant, and look up to Jesus Christ. Beg hard, though humbly, when you are begging for Heaven.

Have you never heard a malefactor, condemned to he hanged, begging for a reprieve or pardon? With what tears and prayers, what bended knees, watered cheeks, strained joints, he entreats for his mortal life! You have much more cause to be earnest when you are begging for spiritual life. Think of it; your soul, your eternal condition, are engaged and at stake in your prayer. Oh how should all the parts and faculties of your body and soul work and unite in prayers that are of such concernment! What fervency should you use, considering that, if you are denied, you are undone! If your prayers be lost, your God is lost, your soul is lost, your happiness is lost forever.

Pray constantly; resolve to give God no rest day nor night, until he give you rest in his Son. Besides set times every day, (for which you can not offer so little as two hours a day, it being soul-work, God-work, eternity-work, and in which I would desire you to be as serious and solemn as is possible;) you may often in the shop, or in the field, in your journeying, on your bed, you may turn up your heart to Heaven, in some ejaculations (it is your great privilege, wherever you are, you may find God out) such as these, 'O when will you come unto me?' Psalm 101:2. Hear me speedily, O my God, make no tarrying, Psalm 40:17. Shall I never be made clean? good Lord, when shall it once be? 'Save me, Master, or I perish.'

But be sure, in all your addresses to God, you look up to Jesus Christ as your advocate with the Father, as the only master of requests, to present and perfume all your prayers, and thereby make them prevalent. Through him we have access with confidence unto the Father, Ephesians 2:18. It is possible you may have seen a child going to be scourged for its faults by a stern mother, the tender father sitting by; and how the child, seeing the rod taken down and the mother in earnest, casts a pitiful, lamentable look upon its father, both longing and expecting to be saved by his mediation. Go you and do likewise; and know, for your encouragement, that if David heard Joab, whom he loved but little, for rebellious Absalom, and if Herod heard Blastus, a servant, for those of Tyre and Sidon who had offended him, then, without doubt, God will hear the Son of his infinite love for you. And if you are but sensible of your soul-sickness, you may be confident that your spiritual physician, who is authorised by his Father to practice, and delights exceedingly in the employment, will come and heal you. Your sickness shall not be unto death, but for the glory of God, and your eternal good.

CHAPTER 19.

Motives to mind this spiritual life:

It is the most honorable, most comfortable, most profitable life

I shall, in the next place, only annex three properties of this spiritual life, as motives to encourage you to a laborious endeavoring after it, and then leave both you and this exhortation to the blessing of God.

First, This spiritual life is the most honorable life. No life has so much excellency in it as the life of godliness. If I had my wish, says Luther, I would choose the homely work of a rustical Christian before all the victories of Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar. The excellency and dignity of every life depends upon the form which is its principle. Therefore the life of a man is more noble than the life of a beast, because it has a more noble form, a rational soul, which distinguishes it specifically from, and enables it to act more nobly and highly than a beast. And truly, therefore, the life of a Christian is more honorable and excellent than the life of any other man, because he has a more noble form—which is the principle of it, and differences it specifically from the life of graceless men—Jesus Christ, the Lord of life and glory, dwelling in his heart by his Spirit, as the principle of his spiritual life. If there be an excellency in that body which is united to a soul, what excellency is there in that soul which is united to a Savior! It is called the life of God, Ephesians 4:18. Surely no life can be more honorable than the life of God; yet in their measure the sanctified ones live the very same life that the glorious God, the fountain of all true honor, lives. David, though a king, thought himself honored by being God's subject; and therefore as others, before their works, mention those titles which belong to them, and speak their honor, David styles himself, before the six and thirtieth Psalm, a servant of God, as his most honorable title—'A Psalm of David, a servant of the Lord.' If it be such an honor to serve an earl, a king, what is it to serve the King of kings and Lord of lords!

Godliness is called a walking with God, Genesis 5:24; a conversing or having fellowship with the Father, and Jesus Christ his Son, 1 John 1:3. For God to walk and converse with us is his greatest humiliation; but for us to walk or converse with God is our highest exaltation.

The righteous, says the wise man-who had judgment to set a due price upon people-is more excellent than his neighbor, Proverbs 12:26. Let him live by never so rich or great men, yet if they want grace, they are not comparable to him.

The godly man has the most honorable birth—he is born of God, John 1:13; the most honorable breeding—he is brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; the most honorable tutor and teacher, the good Spirit of God, John 14:16; the most honorable attendants, the glorious angels; the most honorable employment—his main work is to wait upon and worship the most high God.

The most honorable relations: a king for his father, 2 Corinthians 6:18; a queen for his mother, Galatians 4:26; the excellent of the earth, Psalm 16:3; lords in all lands, Psalm 45:16; higher than the kings of the earth, Psalm 89:27; those worthies, of whom the world is not worthy, for his brethren and sisters.

Numa, second king in Rome, though a heathen, could say that he held it a higher honor to serve God than to rule over men.

The Jews say that those seventy souls which went down into Egypt were more worth than all the seventy nations of the world beside. If the glorious angels in Heaven are more honorable than the devils, sure I am it is holiness that makes the difference.

The most gaudy and goodly fruits of morality, springing from the soil of nature, manured and improved to the utmost; the heavens bespangled with those glittering stars, and adorned with that illustrious sun, are nothing glorious in comparison of the heart of a poor Christian that is embroidered with grace. It is godliness alone that adds worth and value to all our civil and natural things; as the diamond to the ring. Nothing does really debase and degrade a man but sin; and nothing does truly advance or ennoble the soul but holiness. Job scraping himself on the dunghill, and Jeremiah sinking in the mire, were more honorable and glorious than Ahab and Ahaz on their thrones with their crowns. If the respect we have from others makes us honorable, then they that are most precious in God's sight are most honorable, Isaiah 43:4. If it be some internal excellency that makes men honorable, then they that have the image of God must be most honorable.

It is worthy our observation that sin is so ignoble and base, that those wicked ones who love it most, are ashamed to own it openly; but because of the excellency of holiness, will set that forth for their colors, their banners, though indeed they fight Satan's battles. That forlorn hope for Hell, 2 Timothy 3:5, of covenant-breakers, blasphemers, men without natural affection, yet they will have a form of godliness; though they do sin's drudgery, yet they are ashamed of their base master, and therefore wear the saints' livery, having a form of godliness. Nay, the devil himself will appear in Samuel's mantle, and transform himself into an angel of light.

But holiness is so excellent that God is pleased to esteem it as his own beauty and glory. How often is he called the Holy One of Israel! The angels ascribe holiness to him by way of eminency: 'Holy, holy, holy,' Isaiah 6:3. We read not in Scripture of any of God's other attributes thrice repeated, to show that the dignity of God consists in this. And so do the saints in Heaven praise him for it as his excellency, Revelation6:10, and the saints on earth, Exodus. 15:11. Holiness is the character of Jesus Christ; the image of the infinitely glorious God; nay, it is called the divine nature. Surely, then, they that have most of it are most honorable; and they which want it, how full soever they are of all other excellencies, are base and contemptible.

Secondly, As this spiritual life is most honorable, so it is most comfortable. There is no life so pleasant and delightful as the life of a saint. The merry fops and jolly gallants of the world, whose sinful mirth is worse than madness, will needs tell us, that godliness makes men dull and melancholy; that when once we salute religion, we take our leave of all delight and consolation; whereas, indeed, there never was true peace born, but it had purity for its parent; all other is spurious and illegitimate. But the world, like the primitive persecutors, put Christians into the skins of bears and bulls, and then bait them, as if they were really such. And the hand of the devil is in all this, who, like the Indians, makes great fires to fright mariners from landing at such coasts as would be most for their comfort and contentment. Believe, reader, the true and faithful witness, 'His ways are ways of pleasantness, and all his paths are peace,' Proverbs 3:17. It is not sanctity, but their want of it, or mistake about it, which makes them sorrowful.

It is confessed saints may be sad; they do not cease to be men, when they begin to be Christians. It was in your company, it may be, O sinner. No wonder. Fish cannot sport themselves when they are out of their element. Birds do not sing on the ground, but when they are mounting on high towards Heaven. And probably their hearts were heavy out of compassion to you, whom they observed to be hastening to Hell, and dancing merrily over the very pit of destruction and easeless misery. You see their sorrows sometimes, your eyes may behold their tears; but you do not see their joys, your heart cannot conceive them.

St Augustine relates concerning a heathen that showed the father his idol gods, saying, Here is my God, where is your? and then pointing up to the sun, he said, Here is my God, but where is your? I showed him not my God, says Augustine, not because I had none to show, but because he had no eyes to see him. Thus the joys of a saint are invisible to the wicked, because they are inward spiritual joys, though they are joys unspeakable and glorious.

They have such joy as you are not to intermeddle with, Proverbs 14:10; they have meat to eat which you know not of. Their life is a hidden life, Colossians 3:3, and their comforts are hidden comforts. Their secret meals fatten their souls, and their bread eaten in secret, how pleasant is it!

The kingdom of God, which is this spiritual life, consists not in meats and drink, but in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit, Romans 14:17; and besides, it comes not with observation, Luke 17:20; the world takes no notice of it. It does not consist in the laughter of the face, in the smiles of the brow, but in the tranquility of the mind, solid contentment in the breast.

Christ takes his spouse apart from the crowd of the world, and then gives her the sweetest kisses, the dearest embraces, yes, her very fill of love. Many a loving visit has the saint from the Savior; when Christ came in at the back door, the neighbors neither saw when he came, nor when he went away. A true Christian has the most heart-cheering wine, though he hangs out no bush, makes no show of it in the world; the wealthy merchant, that is worth thousands, does not cry his commodities up and down the city.

The parlor, wherein the Spirit of Christ entertains the Christian, is an inner room, not next the street, for every one that goes by to smell the feast: 'The stranger does not meddle with his joy,' Proverbs 14:10. Christ and the soul may sit at supper within, and you not see one dish go in, nor hear the music that sounds so sweetly in the Christian's ears. Perhaps you think he wants peace, because he does not hang out a sign in his countenance of that peace and joy within. Alas, poor wretch! may not the saint have a peaceful conscience, with a solemn, yes, sad countenance, as well as you and your companions have a sorrowful heart, when there is nothing but fair weather in your faces?

Whether they have the greatest comfort or no, do you judge. Sure I am, there are none in this world that have so much ground to be comfortable as they have. They have the most delightful company; they walk with God, they sup with Christ; their fellowship is with the Father, and Jesus Christ his Son, which is the only good fellowship, 1 John 1:3. They have the most delightful food; they eat of the bread that came down from Heaven, and drink of that love which is better than wine. They are abundantly satisfied with the fatness of God's house, and made to drink of the rivers of his own pleasures, Psalm 36:8, and are bidden welcome with, Eat, O friends, drink abundantly, O beloved! These are exceeding indeed; but, if it be not their own fault, they have them often, besides their every hour's fare of a good conscience, which is a continual feast. They have the most delightful music, they hear the joyful sound of the gospel of peace, the glad tidings of pardon, adoption, salvation, and so may rejoice in hope of glory; many a time surely their hearts are warmed, and their ears ravished, at the hearing of the affection which Christ bears to them, and the benefits he has bought for them. They have the most delightful lodging; they lie all night between Christ's arms, in the chamber of the great King. They have the richest mercies, the special love of the Father, the precious blood of the Son, and the divine graces of the Spirit, when others have only the blessings of the footstool, of the left hand, such giftless gifts, as one calls them, as may consist with an eternal separation from God. They have the mercies of the throne, of the right hand, the blessings of his own children, and such as do accompany salvation. No wonder that they sit under Christ's shadow with great delight, and his fruit is sweet unto their taste, Canticles 2:3.

The child of God, by virtue of a good conscience, in the midst of the waves of affliction, is as secure as that child which in a shipwreck was upon a plank with his mother, until she awaked him then securely sleeping, and then, with his pretty countenance sweetly smiling, and by and by sportingly asking a stroke to beat the naughty waves. At last, when they continued boisterous for all that, sharply chiding them as if they had been his playfellows. Oh the innocency, oh the comfort, of peace of conscience!

It is likely, indeed, that when they wander from Christ, they may come home by Weeping-cross, as outlying deer are full of fear, and therefore, it is observed, seldom fat, but they run the ways of God's commandments with enlarged hearts. And whatever be the cause of their sorrow, whether their own sins, or your, or others', or the afflictions of the church, whatever it be, their mourning is better than your carnal mirth.

And this I dare undertake for them, that in their most disconsolate condition, they shall not change with the most prosperous prince in the world that is out of Christ. Alas! the comfort of a sinner, as it is but short, like the crackling of thorns under a pot, so it is but shallow, skin-deep at most, like a sudden storm of rain which wets the surface of the earth, but never sinks to the root. Their joy may smooth the brow, but cannot warm the breast; their looks may be sometimes lively, but their hearts are always heavy: 'For there is no peace to the wicked, says my God,' Isaiah 57:21. Their mirth is like some juicy plums, which have stones with a bitter kernel. It is not the great cage that makes the bird sing, nor the great estate that brings real comfort. The stateliest and best accommodated houses of unsanctified men, are but like the nests of wasps, where there may be curious combs, but no honey, many outward mercies, but no true inward mirth, no sweetness. When the voice of joy and salvation is in the tabernacle of the righteous,

Psalm 118:15, they only have the strong consolations, Hebrews 6:18, the joy unspeakable and glorious, 1 Peter 1:8, the peace of God which passes all understanding, to garrison their hearts and minds through Christ Jesus, Philippians 4:7.

As they have more afflictions than others—the disciple of Christ must take up his cross—so they have more consolations than others; and their soul comforts are not seldom the sweetest, when their bodily crosses are greatest, (as the sweetest roses grow nearest the most stinking weeds,) although the blind world see them not. As a man standing, says a divine, upon the sea-shore, sees a great heap of waters, one wave riding upon the neck of another, and hears the loud roarings thereof, but though he sees the waters, yet he does not see the wealth, the infinite riches, that lie buried in them; so wicked men see the waters, the afflictions, the conflicts, but not the wealth, the comforts, the inward joy of the children of God.

Thirdly, As this spiritual life is the most honorable and comfortable, so it is the most profitable life. No calling brings in such advantage as Christianity: 'Godliness is profitable unto all things,' 1 Timothy 4:8. There is a universal gainfulness in real godliness. Plutarch tells us that the Babylonians make above three hundred several commodities of the palm-tree; but there are many thousand benefits which godliness brings. No merchant ever had his vessels returned so richly laden, as he who trades heavenward.

Observe, reader, after the apostle's affirmation, his full confirmation of it: 'Godliness (says he) is profitable unto all things; it has the promise of this life, and that to come,'—that is, It has Heaven and earth entailed on it, and therefore it must needs be profitable. It gives the Christian much in possession—the promise of this life; but infinitely more in reversion—the life that is to come.

The promises of God are exceeding great for their quantity, and precious for their quality, and they all belong to a godly man; he is called an heir of the promises, Hebrews 6:17. Whenever the tree of the Scripture is shaken, whatever fruit of those precious promises falls down, it falls into the lap of a godly man. If at any time that box of costly ointment be broken, and sends forth its fragrant scent and virtue, it is to the refreshment only of the saints.

Godliness is profitable to yourself: 'If you are wise, you are wise for yourself; and if a scorner, you alone shall bear it,' Proverbs 9:12. The sinner is nobody's foe so much as his own; the murdering pieces of sin which he discharges against God miss their mark, but do constantly recoil and wound himself. The saint is nobody's friend so much as his own; others fare the better for his great stock of grace, but the propriety in all, the comfort of all, and the profit by all, is his own. It enables him to give away the more at his door, but how rich a table does he thereby keep for himself and his own family!

Godliness is profitable for your children: 'The just man walks in his integrity, and his children are blessed after him,' Proverbs 20:7. Personal piety is profitable to posterity, yet not of merit, but mercy. Though grace come not by generation, but donation, and though God has mercy on whom he will, yet the seed of the saints are visibly nearer the quickening influences of the Spirit, than the children of others. When God says he will be a God to the godly man and his children, I believe he intends more in that promise for the comfort of godly parents than most of them think of, Acts 2:36, Genesis 17:7. The children of believers are heirs-apparent to the covenant of grace in their parents' right. Godliness is profitable in prosperity; it gives a spiritual right to temporal good things. A gracious man holds his mercies in Christ, as Christ is a joint-heir of all things, he being married to him by this spiritual life is a joint-heir with him. He enjoys earthly things by a heavenly title; and one penny enjoyed by special promise is far more worth than millions which ungodly men enjoy by a general providence, as the beasts of the field do their provender. It is godliness that causes a sanctified improvement of mercies. Grace alone, like Christ, turns water into wine, corporal mercies into spiritual advantages. The more God oils the wheels, the more cheerfully and swiftly he moves in the way to Heaven. The more showers of Heaven fall down upon him, the more fruitful and abundant he is in the work of the Lord, as we see in that gracious king Jehoshaphat: 2 Chronicles 17:5, 6, 'The Lord established the kingdom in his hand; and all Judah brought presents unto him, and he had riches and honor in abundance. And his heart was lift up in the ways of God.' Mark, the more God's hand was enlarged in bounty, the more his heart was enlarged in duty. The more highly God thinks of David, the more lowly he thought of himself, 2 Samuel 7:18. Outward mercies to a believer are a ladder by which he mounts up nearer to Heaven. Thus godliness, like the philosopher's stone, turns iron and everything into gold; but the want of this spiritual life causes a cursed, hellish use of mercies. Ungodly men, like the spider, suck poison out of those flowers out of which the bees, the saints, suck honey. Their mercies are like cordials to a foul stomach, which do but increase the peccant humor. He feeds on such plenty, that he surfeits himself because of their abundance, Job 21:7–14, 'Therefore they say unto the Almighty, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of your ways.' Like the Israelites, they make of the jewels which God gives, a golden calf, and worship that instead of God.

Godliness is profitable in adversity; it makes a Christian, like a rabbit, to thrive the better in frosty weather. The child of God learns the better for the rod: 'Before he was afflicted he went astray, but now he keeps God's word,' Psalm 119:67. Well may grace be called the divine nature, for it can bring not only light out of light, spiritual comfort and good out of outward good things, but also light out of darkness, good out of evil, gain out of losses, life out of death. It will, like Samson, fetch meat out of the eater; like the ostrich, digest stones; like Mithridates, fetch nourishment out of poison; when wicked men, like Ahaz, in their distress sin more against the Lord. As fire, the more it is kept in in an oven, the more it rages, so does corruption; but godly men, far otherwise, are by the fire of affliction the more refined and purified for their Master's use.

Godliness is profitable to you while you live. In doubts it will direct you, as a light to your feet, and a lantern to your paths; in dangers it will protect you, by setting you on high, and giving you for a place of defense the munition of rocks; in wants it will supply you, by affording you bread in the word, when you have none on the board; and money in the promise, 1 Timothy 4:8, which is by thousands the better, when you have none in your purse; in your pain it will ease you; in disgrace it will honor you; in sorrows it will comfort you; in sickness it will strengthen, by causing you to count the crosses of this life as nothing, and unworthy to be compared to the pleasures and glory which shall be revealed; in all distresses it will support you, and make you more than a conqueror over all, through him who loves us, Romans 8:37.

Lastly, Godliness will be profitable to you when you die. Death, which is the terrible of terribles to others, will be the comfortable of comfortables to you. You need never fear ill news in your ears, having Christ and grace in your heart; others shall not be such unspeakable losers by death, but you shall be as great a gainer.

When you lie on your death-bed, where all your friends, and riches, and earthly comforts will fail you, this spiritual life is the good part which shall never be taken from you. You may look upward, and see, as it were, God smiling on you in the face of Christ, and hear him call to his angels to go and fetch you, his child, who have been all this while at nurse, home to the Father's house. You may look downward on your relations, and with much faith and cheerfulness commit your fatherless children to God, and bid your weeping widow trust in him, who will be infinitely better to them than ten thousand of the richest, tenderest fathers and husbands in the world. You may look without you into Scripture, and behold it as a garden full of sweet flowers, comforting cordials, refreshing, heart-reviving promises; and though it be an enclosure to others, it is open and free to you. You may pick and choose, cull and gather, where you please, and need not fear to be children. In the multitude of those perplexing thoughts which at that time may be within you, you may find choice comforts there to refresh your spirit. If you look within you, you shall not have your conscience, like an unquiet wife, frowning on you, and scolding at you; but you shall hear a little bird singing merrily and sweetly in your breast, 'Lord, now let you your servant depart in peace according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation.'

How joyfully may you leave your dearest wife, to go to your infinitely dearer husband! How willingly may you forsake your lovely children, to go to your loving God and Father! How freely may you part with all your friends, honors, and pleasures, to go to the congregation of the first-born, those rivers of pleasures, and eternal weight of glory! How cheerfully may you bid adieu to nothing for all things, to stars and streams at best, for a full, immediate, eternal enjoyment of the Sun himself, and an immense ocean of happiness! With what a lively color in your face, and true comfort in your heart, may you behold that pale-faced messenger death, the thought of whom, though afar off, is death to others, entering into your chamber, and coming up to your bedside! How heartily welcome may you bid him, as knowing that he comes purposely to give you actual possession of fullness of joy, unspeakable delights, a kingdom of glory that is eternal in the Heaven! Oh the gain of godliness, the profit of piety! surely the price of this pearl is scarce known in this world!

A merchant will in the morning gain five hundred pounds by a bargain, whereas poor people work hard a whole day for a shilling. Such a rich trade drives the godly man. Godliness brings in thousands and millions at a clap, when the moral and civil, yet unsanctified man, may work hard, and yet earn but some poor business, some outward blessing God may give them, and his eternal wrath at last.

Now, reader, consider if here be not abundant encouragement for you presently and diligently to labor for this spiritual life. Is it not the most gainful calling that ever was followed, the richest trade ever was driven? 'Why do you spend your strength for what is not bread? and your labor for that which will not satisfy? hearken to me, and eat you that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.'

As Saul said to his servants, 'Hear now, you Benjamites; will the son of Jesse give you fields and vineyards, and make you all captains of thousands, and captains of hundreds?' 1 Samuel 22:7. So say I to you, Hearken, O friend; will a sensual, fleshly life give you such honor as to be the son of the infinite God, such comfort as to drink of the pure rivers of God's own pleasures, and will it make you bold at death, and confident at judgment, an heir of Heaven, and so happy in every condition? Can it do this? Can it give you, as godliness can, so much in hand, and infinitely more in hope? If it can, I will give up my cause, and leave you to your choice; but if it cannot, as doubtless you are convinced, so, unless you are a heathen among Christians, why do you labor so much and so eagerly for the pampering and pleasing your flesh, for the food that perishes, and so little and so lazily for this food, which will endure unto everlasting life?

It was an excellent answer of one of the martyrs, when he was offered riches and honors if he would recant, Do but offer me somewhat that is better than my Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall see what I will say to you.

Reader, could the world, or the flesh, show you anything that were better, nay, equal, nay, that were but ten thousand degrees inferior to Christ and godliness, you might have some color for your gratifying the flesh, and unwillingness to walk after the Spirit; but when the disproportion is so vast, that the one is not worthy in the least to be compared with the other—when the difference is as great as between a sea of honey and a spoonful of gall; a whole world of pearl, and a little heap of dirt; a Heaven of happiness and a Hell of horror—is it not inconceivable madness, and inexcusable folly, to choose that life which is after the flesh, and refuse that which is after the Spirit?

Reader, if you would be truly honorable in the esteem of God himself, who is the fountain of all honor; if you would have those spiritual consolations, which can warm the heart in the coldest night of affliction; if you would be profitable to your dear children, to your own soul, be a real gainer in prosperity, in adversity, while you live, when you die; if you would, when your wealth, and friends, and flesh, and heart shall fail you, have God in Christ to be the strength of your heart, and your portion for ever; if you would, in your greatest extremity, when your soul shall be turned, naked of all earthly delights, out of your body, escape the fury of roaring devils, and unquenchable burnings; if you would in that hour of your misery find mercy, and be received into the place of endless bliss, then get this spiritual life, this true wisdom, to fear God and depart from evil. Get wisdom, get understanding; forget it not; above all your gettings get wisdom. 'Happy is the man that finds wisdom, and the man that gets understanding. For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies: and all the things you can desire are not to be compared to her. Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honor. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to all that lay hold upon her; and happy is every one that retains her,' Proverbs 3:13–18.

And now, reader, I have done this large use of exhortation, which is of such infinite concernment to your precious soul; but what you will do, or what use you will make of it, I know not. Could I have told what other holy bait to have laid, which had been more likely to have caught your soul, it is probable I should have laid it. I appeal to your conscience, whether there be not unspeakable weight, and unquestionable truth, in the particulars which are laid down. Well, what say you to them, and what effect have they wrought upon you? Are you resolved, through the help of Heaven, speedily and diligently to practice the directions which I have from the almighty God enjoined you? Is it not a thousand thousand pities that such endless, matchless happiness should be so graciously offered by God, and so unworthily neglected by men? that an empty, perishing world should be so eagerly pursued, and heartily embraced, when the unsearchable riches in Christ, the image of the blessed God, the eternal weight of glory, are basely undervalued, and wretchedly despised? Good Lord, what tears of blood are sufficient to bewail this monstrous unthankfulness? Friend, if you are truly resolved to obey the counsel of God, you will have cause to bless that providence which called me to this task; and I may rejoice in you, and you in me, at the day of Christ. But if you either delay the work until you are more at leisure, or dally about it, doing it as if you did it not, I am sure the greatest wrong will be to yourself; for, behold, you sin against the Lord, and be confident, your sins will sooner or later find you out.

CHAPTER 20.

Comfort to true Christians

I come, in the next place, to my last use, which will be of consolation. If they who have Christ for their life, shall have gain by their death, what comfort is here to the new-born creature! Here is wine indeed to make glad the heart of every one that is holy. Reader, are you sanctified and alive in Christ? then you are freed from all the misery which is mentioned in the first use, as the portion of the ungodly. I may say to you, as Gryneus, when he had been reproving and threatening sinners, would, turning to the saint, say, Good man, all this is nothing to you. Though they are losers, you shall be a gainer by death. Come but with the mouth of faith, and you may suck much honey from this comb, you may draw much milk of consolation from this breast; to you to die shall be gain. Surely here is enough to ballast your soul, and keep it steady, in the most tempestuous condition, and to balance and weigh down the greatest, the heaviest affliction.

If you had hope only in this life, you were of all men most miserable; but because you have hope beyond this life, you may be of all men most comfortable.

'Should such a man as I flee?' Nehemiah 6:11. Should such a man as you fear, that are heir to a crown, to a kingdom? Luke 12:32, 'Fear not, little flock; it is your Father's pleasure to give you a kingdom.' In your greatest losses this may support you, that death will be your gain, by giving you possession of a life which will make amends for all. If a heathen could say, it is unfitting a Roman spirit to cry out, I am undone, while Caesar was safe, sure it is more uncomely for a Christian to complain, as if he were undone, when his soul is safe, his eternal estate is secure.

For your help, I shall digest this use into this method briefly.

First, To show you against what it is comfortable. Secondly, Wherein it is comfortable.

CHAPTER 21.

Comfort against the world's fury, and Satan's rage

For the first, it is comfortable, first, Against the opposition of the world: 'The world will hate you, because you are not of the world,' John 15:19. She is a paradise to her children and lovers, but a purgatory to aliens and strangers. While you are in the stormy sea of this world, you are a ship bound for the straits. He that goes towards the sun, shall have his shadow following him; but he who goes from it, shall have it fly before. He who goes towards the Sun of righteousness, shall be sure to have these shadows, these afflictions, at his heels.

Infinite wisdom sees fit to embitter the breasts of the creatures to wean you from them. Trouble upon earth is one legacy which your Savior has left you: 'In the world you shall have trouble,' John 16:33. The soldiers were to have his garments; Joseph was to have his body; his Father was to have his soul; he had his cross left, and that he bequeaths to his disciples. But be of good cheer, he did not only leave you his cross, but has also made you heir to a crown: 'I give to them eternal life.'

He never looked over the threshold of Heaven, that cannot more rejoice that he shall be glorious, than mourn in present that he is miserable.

Oppose your future felicity to your present misery, your happiness at death to the hardships you meet with in life; this will be the way to counterpoise the temptation, and to keep you from fainting in tribulation, while you look not at the things which are seen, which are temporal, but at the things which are not seen, which are eternal, 2 Corinthians 4.

I have read of one Giacopo Senzaro, an Italian, who having been long in love, and much crossed about his match, filled a pot full of black stones, only one white stone among them, and being asked the reason, answered, There will come one white day (meaning his marriage day) which will make amends for all my black days. So whatever poverty, nakedness, hunger, cold, pain, shame, losses, you undergo here in this world, how many soever your black days are of trials and troubles, of persecutions and opposition, you may say, There is one white day of death, one long day of eternity coming, which will make amends for all.

It was a brave speech of Luther, when he was demanded where he would be when the emperor should with all his forces fall upon the elector of Saxony, who was the chief protector of Protestants; he answered, Either in Heaven, or under Heaven.

Why should you be discouraged at any loss, considering you have a treasure in Heaven, a more enduring substance? at any disgrace, considering you are heir to a crown of glory? at any pain or sorrow, when you are entitled to fullness of joy and pleasures for evermore.

No storm should disquiet you, that shall shortly enjoy an everlasting calm. What a pitiful thing that was, that Alexander, that was lord almost of the world, should be troubled that ivy would not grow in his garden at Babylon; and is it not a poor thing for you, that are a child of God, the spouse of Christ, the temple of the Spirit, an heir of the most glorious, rich, and delightful kingdom that ever was, to lie whining and pining if your head do but ache, or your estate decrease, or your friend forsake you? For shame; remember who you are, and to what you are called, and say, as the martyr, Hold out faith and patience, your work is almost at end. You shall before long leave this world, and all its evils, and go where there is neither sorrow nor sin, and indeed there can be no affliction there, because there will be no corruption there, which is the original of all miseries. As there cannot be any thunder or lightning in the upper region, because the vapors which are the materials of it cannot ascend so high; so, because no unclean thing can be there, therefore no sorrow, no suffering, can be there.

How may this comfort you! Basil tells us how the martyrs, that were cast out naked in a winter's night, being to be burned the next day, solaced their souls with these words: Sharp is the cold, but sweet is paradise; troublesome is the way, but pleasant shall be the end of our journey. Let us endure cold a little, and the patriarch's bosom shall soon warm us; let our feet burn a while, that we may dance forever with angels.

2. It is a comfort against the temptations of the devil. While you live in this world, you are liable to his wiles. If you will go to Heaven, so boundless is his malice that he raises all the powers of Hell against you, and forces you to fight every foot of the way. He is the strong man that has full possession of carnal, unregenerate ones, and therefore all is at peace with them, Matthew 12. What need a captain bend his forces against a town which has delivered up itself into his hands? What need he plant his cannons and batteries against these gates which are already set open to him? This jailer does not trouble himself much about those prisoners which are fast in his dungeon, with his irons on their legs, and are led captive by him at his will, 2 Timothy 2:26; but for you, who have by the help of Christ broken prison, and in part got out of his power, he raises all the country with hue-and-cry to bring you back to your old place of bondage. But be comforted, Christ has conquered him already in his own person as your head; is daily conquering him in you, his member, by his Spirit; and will shortly crush him fully under your feet, Romans 16:20. Some refer that shortly to the day of judgment, which will come shortly, and wherein Satan shall be utterly crushed under all the saints' feet forever. And it is as true of the day of death, in reference to every particular saint. As when a man dies, all those vexatious lawsuits, with which he was before molested, do cease; so when the believer dies, all those false actions which Satan had commenced against him in the court of his conscience, and all that inward trouble which did arise thereupon, do all cease.

It is no sign now, O Christian, if you resist, that you are assaulted by the wicked one. A thief will not break into a house that is empty. A pirate will not fight but for some considerable prize. A father will not seek to destroy his own children. Temptation is no sign of God's hatred, but of the devil's. But let this be your solace, that within a few days you shall be at rest, not only from your own labors, but also from Satan's snares and suggestions. God does you much good by them now; the noise of those guns causes the comes to hasten to their burrows, and the birds to their places of refuge. The more the tops of sound trees are shaken with the wind, the more deeply their roots are fixed in the earth; the more eagerly Satan follows you, the faster you flee, and the closer you cling to Jesus Christ. But God will do you the greatest good without them; and when that shall be, you shall be wholly freed from them. Since the devils were cast out of Heaven, we read of their being sometimes in the sea, Matthew 8:33; sometimes in the earth, Job 1:7; and sometimes in the air, Ephesians 2:3; and they are called principalities and spiritual wickednesses in high places, Ephesians 6:12, but never in Heaven. They aspire to get as high as they can, but they can get no further than the air; Satan and his angels find no more place in Heaven, Revelation12:8.

Now what comfort is this, O Christian, that you shall serve the Lord without distraction, without temptations!

CHAPTER 22.

Comfort against our own corruptions, our own or other believers' dissolution

3. It is comfortable against the corruptions of your own heart. What is it now that is your greatest sorrow? Is it not your sin? These are the weights which hang on the clock of your heart, and will not suffer it to rest day or night. Well, rejoice in hope; at death all these Achans, which are the troublers of your peace, shall be stoned to death; all these Jonahs, which cause such storms in your soul, shall be cast overboard; all these Hamans, which seek the ruin of you and your people, shall be executed.

Now it is your great care in every ordinance to kill your sins. Do you not, like Joab, set the Uriah of your beloved lust in the forefront of every duty, and retire from it, out of pious policy, that it may be slain? And when at any time it pleases the captain of your salvation to send the supplies of his Spirit, and wound mortally your corruption, that it lies gasping and dying before you, do you not look up to Christ and say, as Cushi to David concerning dead Absalom, 'Would to God that all the enemies of my lord the king, and all that rise against you to do you hurt, were as that young man is.' Lord, that all my sins might drink of the same cup, and be served the same sauce? Blessed be the Lord my God, which has avenged me this day of mine enemy. If God should thrust the knife of mortification up to the haft in the very hearts of all your sins, that you could see your pride, distrust, unthankfulness, hardness of heart, and every corruption in a gore-blood, fetching their last breath, would it not be a lovely sight to you? Would you not look upon it with as much content as Hannibal did upon the blood of men, when he cried out, O beautiful sight! Or as that queen, that cried out, when she saw her subjects lie dead before her eyes, the goodliest tapestry that ever she beheld! At death all this shall be done for you. One touch of Jesus Christ at death will quite dry up that issue of corruption. Death will give you a writ of ease from all those weights and sins which do so easily beset you. You shall be without fault before the throne of God, Revelation14:5.

Will it not indeed be a brave world with you in the eternal world, when you shall have as much holiness as your heart can wish or hold? If God should grant you such a request upon earth, that you should have as much of his image and of his Spirit as you could desire, would you not think yourself the happiest man alive? I am confident you would; and also that nothing less than perfect purity would be your prayer. Well, death will help you to this: 'When I awake, I shall be satisfied with your likeness,' Psalm 17:15.

Now you have enough to stay your stomach, but then you shall have a full meal. When the Israelites went out of Egypt towards Canaan, there was not one feeble person among them. When the Christian enters into the true Canaan, he who is feeble among them at that day shall be as David, nay, as the angel of the Lord before him.

When your frame of nature shall be ruined, your frame of grace shall be perfected and raised to the height of glory.

4. It is comfortable against your dissolution. To you to die is gain; death will be your passage into eternal life. You need not fear death as a foe; it will be one of your best friends. How did this hope of happiness at death hold up the martyrs' heads above water, and carry them through those boisterous waves of violent and cruel deaths, with the greatest serenity and alacrity of spirit.

Agesilaus, king of Sparta, used to say, that they which live virtuously are not yet blessed people, but they had attained true felicity who died virtuously.

What is there in death, that you are so afraid of it? Will you fear a bee without a sting? Do you not know it had but one sting for Christ and Christians, and that was left in Christ the head; whereby now, though it may buzz and make a noise about their ears, yet it can never sting or hurt the members. The waters of Jordan, though tempestuous before, yet were calm, and stood still, when the ark was to pass over.

If you had been banished many years from your dear relations, whom you loved as your own soul, and from your rich possessions and comforts, which might have made your life pleasant and delightful, into a place of bondage, a valley of tears, a prison where your feet were fettered with irons, and your face furrowed with weeping; would you be afraid of a messenger that came to knock off your shackles, and fetch you out of prison, and carry you to those friends and comforts? And why are you afraid of death, which comes to free you from your bondage to Satan, sin, and sorrow, and to give you present possession of the glorious liberty of the sons of God? Are you afraid to be rid of your corruptions? of Satan's temptations? of the world's persecutions? Are you afraid to go to saints, where are no sinners, to Christ without his cross, to the full, immediate, eternal fruition of the blessed God? Then why are you afraid to die, and do not rather desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ, knowing that while you are present in the body, you are absent from the Lord? 2 Corinthians 5:6. Well, the best of it is, you are more afraid than hurt.

It is well observed by a judicious expositor, that the periphrasis of death, mentioned John 13:1, where it is called a departing out of the world, and a going to the Father, does belong to all the children of God; it is to them but a going out of the world to their dear and loving Father. And questionless this was that which made the saints so desirous of death. Basil, when the emperor's lieutenant threatened to kill him, said, I would he would, for then he would quickly send me to my Father, to whom I now live, and to whom I desire to hasten. Calvin, in his painful sickness, was never heard to complain, but often lifting up his eyes to Heaven, to cry out, 'How long, Lord! how long, Lord!'

It is reported of a heathen, Epaminondas, that when he was wounded with a dart at Mantinea, in a battle against the Lacedemonian, and told by the doctors that when the dart was drawn out of his body he must needs die, he called for his squire, and asked him whether he had not lost his shield? He told him no; whereupon he bade them pull out the dart, and so died. Surely, Christian, you have more cause to die with courage, when you have not lost your God, nor your soul, nor anything that was worth the keeping.4

5. It is comfortable against the death of your friends and relations which die in the Lord: 'To die is gain.' If it be their gain, why should it be your grief? Nature will teach you to mourn, but grace must moderate that mourning. We may water our plants, but must not drown them. We may sorrow, but not as they which have no hope, lest we sin.

When Anaxagoras was told that both his sons were dead, he boldly answered the messenger, I knew that I begat mortal creatures.

The people were enraged and perplexed at the death of Romulus, but were afterwards quieted and comforted with the news which Proclus brought, that he saw him in glory riding up to Heaven; so when you are sorrowing for the death of your child or husband, or father or mother, or brother or sister, that sleep in Jesus, you should hearken to the news which faith brings, that it saw them filled with joy, mounting up to Heaven, and there enjoying rivers of pleasures and a weight of glory; and surely if after such news you should continue weeping, it should be for joy.

Friend, this text contains choice sweetmeats for you to feed on at the funeral of your dearest godly friend.

I suppose if your relation died out of Christ, you have not a little cause of sorrow; and probably that was the sharp edge of the sword which wounded the soul of David for the death of Absalom, that he died in his sins: his fear was that his son died, not only in rebellion against the father of his flesh, but also against the Father of spirits. But when your relation dies in the Lord, you have surely more cause to rejoice that you ever had such a friend, or relation, who shall to eternity be employed in the cheerful glorifying and beatifical vision of God, than to mourn that you have lost him for a little time. It was a memorable speech of William Hunter's mother, when her son was to die a violent death, (for he suffered martyrdom under Bonner:) I am glad, says she, that ever I was so happy as to bear such a child, that can find in his heart to lose his life for Christ. And then, kneeling down on her knees, she said, I pray God strengthen you, my son, to the end; I think you as well bestowed as any child that ever I bore.

Take the counsel of the Spirit, not to sorrow as others which have no hope; and know this for your comfort, that 'those which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For the Lord himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord: wherefore comfort one another with these words,' 1 Thessalonians 4:13 to the end.

CHAPTER 23.

The excellency of Heaven

I shall show you farther in what respects it is comfortable, and then conclude.

First, It is comfortable if you consider the excellency of this gain. As David said of Goliath's sword, so I may of this gain of a saint by death, There is none like it. Nicephorus tells us of one Agbarus, a great man, that hearing so much of Christ's fame, by reason of the miracles that he wrought, he sent a painter to take his picture, and that the painter, when he came, was not able to do it, because of the radiancy and divine splendor which sat on Christ's face. Whether this be true or no I leave to the author; but, without controversy, there is such a radiancy on the glorified head and members in Heaven that none can conceive it, much less describe it.

There are three things which will speak a little how great the gain of every godly man is by death.

1. The foretastes of it do show that it is excellent. Saints here have the first-fruits, Romans 8:23, and they do speak what the harvest will be.

The Jewish Rabbis report that when Joseph, in the years of plenty, had gathered much corn in Egypt, he threw the chaff into the river Nilus, that so, flowing to the neighbor countries, they might know what abundance was laid up for themselves and others. So God is pleased, that we might know the plenty in Heaven, to give us some sign, some taste of it here upon earth. He enables us to conclude, if his ways are ways of pleasantness, how pleasant will the end be! If his people have songs in their pilgrimage, in their banishment, surely they have hallelujahs in their country, in their Father's house. If there be so much goodness laid out upon them in this valley of tears, how infinite is that goodness which is laid up for them in the Master's joy.

Christian, did you never taste and see that the Lord is gracious? Did you never in your closet enjoy fellowship with the Father, and with Jesus Christ his Son. Did you never find one day in God's courts, nay, one hour, better than a thousand elsewhere? Did the Lord Jesus never call you aside from others, and carry you into his banqueting-house, and cause his banner over you to be love? Did he never kiss you with the kisses of his lips, and embrace you in his dearest arms? Have you not sometimes seen the smiles of his face, and found them better than life? and hearing his voice, known your heart burning toward him with love? Do you not remember at such a time he took you up into his chariot, and gave you a token for good, showing you a glimpse of your future glory, solacing your soul with a sense of his favor, ravishing your heart with hopes of your eternal happiness; when you did wonder exceedingly at the creature's emptiness, and befool yourself for doting so much upon nothing; when you did see sin in its opposition and contrariety to the divine nature, and your own welfare, and did curse your lusts with the most bitter curses, whereby you had offended so gracious a Lord; when you did behold the Lord Jesus in all his embroidery and glory; oh how lovely was he in your eyes! how sweet was he to your taste! how precious was he in your esteem! how closely was your soul joined to him! how largely was your spirit drawn out after him! how earnestly did you desire to be ever with him, when you thought, What joy is there in being with Christ, if there be so much in Christ's being with me! How happy are they that enjoy the fountain, if some small streams are so pleasant! when you said, 'Master, it is good to be here, let us build a tabernacle. My soul is filled with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise you with joyful lips. One thing do I desire of the Lord, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord forever and ever.' This is the foretaste of glory; by this you may conceive what Heaven will be. As Fulgentius, when he beheld the beauty and bravery, the glory and gallantry, of Rome, cried out, If earthly Rome be so glorious, how glorious is heavenly Rome! So you may gather, if you have so much joy when you have Heaven only in hope, what joy shall you have when you shall have it in hand.

If the seed-time be so joyous, how great will the joy of harvest be! If the promise can stay one that is ready to die, surely the performance will be better than life from the dead.

If Jerusalem below be paved with gold, then, questionless, Jerusalem above is paved with diamonds.

2. The price paid for it speaks the excellency of it. Where there is honesty and righteousness in the seller, and wisdom in the buyer, there the price of a thing will speak its worth. Now, here there was infinite righteousness in God the seller, and the treasures of wisdom and knowledge in Christ the purchaser; therefore the price laid down for Heaven will speak the excellency of it. If the price were very great, the place must be very glorious.

Heaven is called the purchased possession, Ephesians 1:14, because it was bought with the blood of the Son of God. Reader, wonder at this price, and at this place: 'We are bold to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,' Hebrews 10:19.

When you hear of a purchase on earth that costs a hundred thousand pounds or a million, would not you presently conclude, Surely that must be an incomparable seat for delight! what pleasant springs, what stately rooms, what curious contrivances, what unheard-of excellencies, must be there! without question all things imaginable for richness, glory, and comfort. But when you read in Scripture of a purchase which cost the blood of God, to which all the wealth in the world is as dirt, as nothing, sit down and consider what a house, what a Heaven that must be, if you consider God did infinitely love his Son, and was not so prodigal of his blood as to let one drop more be shed than Heaven was worth.

Besides, can you think that the Lord Jesus would humble himself to such a contemptible birth, live such a miserable life die such a lamentable, painful death, to purchase low, mean things, or anything less than eminent, excellent, unspeakable, inconceivable happiness?

3. The titles given to it do abundantly speak the excellency of it. The holy men of God do, as it were, strive for expressions and words to set out the glory, richness, joy, magnificence of this gain.

To the weary it is rest, Isaiah 2:5–7; Revelation14:13. To the hungry, it is hidden manna, Revelation2:17. To the thirsty, rivers of pleasures, Psalm 36:8. To the sorrowful, the joy of the Lord, Matthew 25:21; fullness of joy, Psalm 16:11. To the disgraced, glory, Romans 8:18; a crown of glory, 1 Peter 5:4; a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, 2 Corinthians 4:17. To them that walk in darkness and see no light, it is the inheritance of the saints in light, Colossians 1:12. To them that are dying, it is life, Colossians 3:3; yes, eternal life, John 10:28. It is a kingdom, Luke 12:32; a kingdom that cannot be shaken, Hebrews 12:28. Where all the inhabitants are kings and queens, Revelation1:5; with palms and scepters in their hands, Revelation7:9; crowns on their heads, James 2:5; sitting on thrones, Revelation3:21, and shall reign with Christ forever and ever, Revelation22:5.

It is a being in Abraham's bosom, Luke 16:22; a being with Christ, Philippians 1:23; a being ever with the Lord, 1 Thessalonians 4:17; a seeing God as he is, 1 John 3:2; a seeing God face to face; a knowing God as we are known of God, 1 Corinthians 13:12; and many more expressions does the Spirit of God use to describe the excellency of the saints' happiness, and why in such variety of phrases, but to assure us that whatever is requisite or desirable in order to happiness it is there? The Holy Spirit does gather, as it were, a posy of the most sweet, beautiful, pleasant, choice flowers that grow in the whole garden of this world, and tells us this is Heaven. Do but abstract all the imperfections that attend the riches, and honor, and pleasures of earthly kingdoms, and they may be dark resemblances to shadow out the glory and excellency of the heavenly kingdom. The philosophers could say, that happiness must consist in such a state wherein was an aggregation of all good things; so that though a man had all good things, and wanted but one, he could not be called a happy man. Therefore in Scripture the Hebrew word for happiness is in the plural number, because not twenty or forty things can make a man happy, but there must be all good things; and for this reason the Holy Spirit uses such variety of resemblances to represent this blessedness, to show that it has all desirable good things.

Reader, when you are feeding on all those glorious descriptions of Heaven that are set before you on the table of the Scripture, do not swallow them altogether, but chew them severally, and you may get much spiritual nourishment out of them. As, for example, it is called the joy of your Lord, or the Master's joy, Matthew 25:21. Now, what joy must that be? What infinite, inconceivable joy has the blessed God, the fountain of all joy, and the God of all consolations! You shall partake of the very same joy according to your capacity; you shall sit at the same table, drink of the same cup, and feed on the same dainties with his Majesty. Can it then enter into your heart to imagine either the pureness or fullness of your Lord's joy? Is not the best joy of the servants on earth sorrow, and their greatest mirth mourning, to the Master's joy in Heaven? 'Enter you into the joy of your Lord;' a joy too big to enter into us, we must enter into it. A joy more meet for the Lord than the servant; yet such a Lord do we serve as will honor his servants with his own joy.

Again, it is called a city whose builder and maker is God, Hebrews 11:10; hence you may gather, that structure must he beautiful indeed which has such a builder. What a glorious fabric must that be which has such a workman as he is, who has infinite wisdom to contrive, who has infinite richness to adorn, infinite bounty to bestow, and infinite power to erect! What a city must that be! If poor mortals can set up such stately buildings, what a place, what a palace, must that be whose builder and maker is God!

Besides, it is called the Father's house. Here I might expatiate, and tell you that great princes have great seats often for their servants, but they have glorious ones indeed for themselves. In their own houses they manifest all their wealth and worth, their bounty and bravery, their honor and magnificence. What a house, then, has the King of kings for his mansion-house! If the several excellencies of all the princes' palaces in the world were united in one; suppose it had the foundations of marble, the floors of pearl, the ceilings of wrought gold, all the varieties of Babel, the glory of Solomon's house, the richness of the temple at Jerusalem; suppose it had the stateliest rooms, the pleasantest music, the greatest dainties, the richest furniture, that this inferior world could afford; suppose all the choice perfections of the whole creation here below were extracted, and the quintessence of them all bestowed upon it yet after all this it would be but like a house of dirt made by children, in comparison of the Father's house, of that house not made with hands, but eternal in the heavens. But, Christian, I leave these titles to be considered and enlarged in your own meditations.

CHAPTER 24.

The certainty that saints shall obtain Heaven

Secondly, It is comfortable if you consider the certainty of it. It is not only excellent, but certain. Though it were never so excellent, yet if it were not certain, it would be but little comfort; but know, to the joy of your heart, that as Heaven is a place of unspeakable excellency, so your enjoyment of it, O new-born creature, is of unquestionable certainty. It is worthy our admiration how many ways the most high God, out of condescension to our capacities, and compassion to our infirmities, does confirm and insure this gain by death to believers.

1. By his promise: Luke 12:22, 'Fear not, little flock; it is your Father's pleasure to give you a kingdom;' so John 3:16. 'Now all the promises of God are yes and amen,' 2 Corinthians 1:20; they are as good as performances. Not one good thing fails of all the good things which the Lord promises, Joshua 23:14. But mark, friend, one place for many: Titus 1:2, 'In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, has promised.' God's people are a people that will not lie, Isaiah 63:8, but God is a God that cannot lie; it is impossible for God to lie. Every lie proceeds either from weakness or from wickedness. Some are weak—they would be as good as their words, but cannot; others are wicked—they can be as good as their words, but will not. Neither of these can be charged on the blessed God; he is able to perform his promise, for he is the almighty God, Genesis 17:1. 'I know that you can do all things,' says Job, chapter 13:2. Omnipotence never met with a difficulty too hard for it. The promises of God will eat their way through all the Alps of opposition, because he is a God of infinite power; and as he is able, and free from weakness, so he is righteous and holy, and so free from wickedness: 'There is no unrighteousness in him,' Psalm 92:15. 'He is light, and in him is no darkness at all,' 1 John 1:5. There is not the least spot in this sun; his truth reaches unto the heavens, and his faithfulness is above the clouds.

2. By an oath God has confirmed it: Hebrews 6:17, 18, 'Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation.' You would take the word of a good man, and will you not take the word of a God? But wonder at his goodness; he offers further security by his oath, nay, by the greatest oath imaginable. Having no greater to swear by, he swore by himself, Hebrews 6:16.

3. By his seals. We have the broad seal of Heaven, the seals of the covenant, to confirm this to us. The sacraments are seals of the covenant of grace, Romans 4:11; and we have the privy seal of the Spirit, Ephesians 4:30. So that if the hand and seal of a God will do it, Heaven is insured to all that are sanctified.

4. By an earnest, that makes a bargain sure: 'Who has sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts,' 2 Corinthians 1:22.

When Christ went from us, he left his Spirit with us, to assure us that he would come to us; and took our flesh with him, to assure us that we shall come to him.

5. By first-fruits, Romans 8:23, which did assure the Jews of their harvest.

6. By the death of Christ. Heaven is given to the holy by testament, by will: John 17:24, 'Father, I will,' says the then dying Savior, 'that they whom you have given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory.' Now, because a testament or will is of no force while the testator lives, therefore Christ died to make his will valid, Hebrews 9:16, 17.

CHAPTER 25.

The eternity of the saints happiness in Heaven

Thirdly, It is comfortable if you consider the eternity of it. Though it were never so excellent and certain, yet if it were for a short time only, it would afford but little comfort; nay, the greater our joy were in the possession of it, the greater our sorrow would be in our separation from it. The very thought of ever losing such incomparable happiness would be a deep wound to a Christian's heart, and without question abate much of his joy while he did enjoy it. Nothing less than eternity can perfect the saint's felicity. And, lo, here it is; your gain is not only of unspeakable excellency, and unquestionable certainty, but also durable even unto eternity.

The pleasures of the saints are for evermore, Psalm 16:11. The pleasures of the wicked on earth are like a standing pool, quickly dried up by the scorching heat of God's wrath, leaving nothing behind save the mud of vexation; but the pleasures of the godly in Heaven are rivers of pleasures, running over, and running ever, because they flow from the fountain of living waters.

The joy of the sinner is like the crackling of thorns under a pot—it may make a bustling noise, but quickly goes out; but the joy of a saint will be like the fire upon the altar, which never goes out, day nor night: 'Their joy shall no man take from them,' John 16.

The glory of a Christian there will be an eternal weight of glory. The shame of a Christian here is transitory, like a cloud upon the face of the sun, which will soon be scattered; and the honor of a graceless man here is short, like a fleeting shadow; as Sejanus was one day adored like a God, and a little after, with the greatest ignominy, committed to the jail. But the honor of a Christian there is an eternal noontide of glory. Heaven is an everlasting home to the saints, Luke 16:9; 2 Corinthians 5:1, when their earthly tabernacles are dissolved, they enjoy the building of God,' an house not made with hands, but eternal in the heavens.'

They enjoy the society of the good forever; they sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of Heaven, Matthew 8:11. Standing is a posture of going, or at least of but staying little; but sitting is a posture of staying long. They shall enjoy God forever; they shall ever be with the Lord, 1 Thessalonians 4:17. The saints shall in Heaven be like angels, Matthew 20:30. Now angels always behold the face of their Father, Matthew 18:10. Now God sometimes shows himself unto, and sometimes hides his face from, his children, that a godly man may say to Christ, as Jacob to his wives, 'I perceive that your Father's countenance is not towards me as at other times,' Genesis 31:5. Some sin or other, like a cloud, interposes, and hinders the light of his gracious countenance; but there will be no cloud, or mist of sin, and the Sun of righteousness will ever behold the soul with the same favorable aspect. And therefore the joy and happiness of the saint will be ever like the moon at the full, because that Sun will ever look upon him with the same lightsome countenance.

Oh what a long day will eternity be to the damned, and what a short day to be saved! Eternal pain will make every moment seem eternity; eternal pleasure will make eternity seem but a moment; the joys there will be so great and many, that the days there will seem small and few; the delights there will spring every moment so fresh and full, that a Christian, like Jacob, will think them but few days, for the love he will bear to them.

Reader, if you are in Christ, ponder much in time the eternity of pleasure which is prepared for you. Consider, if there be so much felicity in seeing the lovely face of God in the glass of his ordinances for one hour, what will there be when you shall see him face to face, and always behold the face of your Father!

When Christ and your soul meet sweetly in a duty on the Lord's day, and you sit under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit is sweet unto your taste, you think the duty is done too soon, and the Sabbath is too short; you could wish the sun would stand still, as in the days of Joshua, and that day to be longer; but be encouraged, though your Sabbaths now begin and end, yet within a few days you shall begin that eternal Sabbath which shall never end.

Certain it is, says Mr Robert Bolton, in his epistle before Discourse of True Happiness, that if a man were crowned with the royal state, and imperial command of all the kingdoms upon earth, if his heart were enlarged to the utmost of all created capacities, and filled with all the exquisite and unmixed pleasures that the reach of mortality and most ambitious curiosity could possibly devise, and might without any interruption or distaste enjoy them the length of the world's duration, they were all nothing to the precious and peerless comforts of the kingdom of grace but for one hour. I speak the truth in Christ, and use no hyperbole—the Spirit of all comfort, and consciences of all true Christians, bearing me witness. What then will it be, my friend, to enjoy the inconceivable comforts of the kingdom of glory for ever? If one day in God's courts on earth be better to you than a thousand elsewhere, how happy will you be when you shall dwell in the heavenly house of the Lord, and that forever, ever! when you shall be a pillar in the temple of your God, and shall go no more out forever! Revelation3:12. Oh sweet word, ever, ever! you are music to the ear, and honey to the taste, and melody to the heart indeed; to be free from all evil, both of sin and suffering, and to be forever free from them, to be with the Lord, enjoying all good imaginable, and ever to be with the Lord. Oh how much worth does this one word ever add to the saints' portion in the eternal world!

Mortality is a flaw in all earthly tenures, which abates their price, and embitters their pleasures; but eternity is a diamond which sparkles most radiantly in the crown of glory, and makes it beyond all expression or comparison weighty.

Christian, how may this persuade you to be exact in your walking with God, when in doing of his commands there is such great reward! Your temporal obedience shall have an eternal recompense. If Zeuxis, the famous painter, was so curious in drawing his lines, because he painted for eternity, how exact should you be in all your duties, how curious in the whole course of your life, when you do all for eternity!

How may this support you in the greatest dangers! Your sufferings are temporal, but your solace shall be eternal. If Saul, when called to an earthly kingdom for a short time, could hold his peace, when men despised and derided him, surely you may be steady in the greatest storm, and in all hardships bear up your spirit with the lively hope of that heavenly eternal kingdom to which you are called. Do you not know that all the suffering of this life, though all the sufferings of the mystical body of Christ were laid on your back, are not worthy to be compared to that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, Romans 8:18.

Thus your felicity in Heaven will be complete felicity, and your consolation in the forethoughts of it may well be a full consolation, since for its perfections it is unspeakable, your fruition of it is unquestionable, and your condition in it will be unchangeable and eternal. When you have filled your heart with that fullness of joy, and bathed your soul in those rivers of pleasures, as many millions of years as there have been minutes since the creation, and after that as many thousand ages as there are creatures great and small in Heaven, earth, and sea; and after that as many thousand millions of ages as all the men in the world can reckon up all the time of their lives; yet, after all this, you shall not have one moment less to continue in Heaven, and enjoy that perfect happiness. The very greatest and highest numerations and multiplications of time are but drops, yes, ciphers, and nothing, to this boundless, bottomless, ocean of eternity.

FINIS.