HEAVEN ON EARTH

Thomas Brooks, 1667

A serious discourse concerning a well-grounded assurance.

Assurance has amazing transforming powers.
It changes iron to gold, ignominies to crowns,
and all sufferings to delights!

Choice selections from Thomas Brooks,
"**Heaven on Earth**" 1667

The trifles which God gives

The emperor Augustus, in his great feasts, gave **trifles** to some—but **gold** to his favorites.

Just so—honors, riches and worldly pleasures are **the trifles which God gives** to the worst of men.

God gives His gold—His special love and grace—only to His people.

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A transforming knowledge

"And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being **transformed into His likeness** with ever-increasing glory." 2 Corinthians 3:18

Saving knowledge is **a transforming knowledge**, which metamorphoses the soul. Divine light beating on the heart, warms it and betters it; transforms and changes it; moulds and fashions it into the very likeness of Christ!

The naturalists observe that the **pearl**, by the often beating of the sunbeams upon it, becomes radiant. Just so, the often beating and shining of the Sun of righteousness, with His divine beams, upon the saints, causes them to glisten and shine in . . .
holiness,
righteousness,
heavenly-mindedness,
humbleness, etc.
Divine light casts a general beauty and glory upon the soul; it transforms a man more and more into the glorious image of Christ!

Look! as the child receives his features from his parents; just so, the beams of divine light and knowledge shining into the soul, stamp the living image of Christ upon the soul.

Mere **notional** knowledge may make a man excellent at *praising* the glorious and worthy acts and virtues of Christ; but that **transforming** knowledge which accompanies salvation, will work a man divinely to *imitate* the glorious acts and virtues of Christ.

When a beam of divine light shined from heaven upon **Paul**, ah, how did it change and metamorphose him! How did it alter and transform him! It made his rebellious soul, obedient: "Lord, what will You have me to *do*?" Acts 9:6. Divine light lays upon a man *a happy necessity of obeying God.* Divine light makes . . .
this lion—into a lamb,
this persecutor—into a preacher,
this destroyer of the saints—into a strengthener of the saints,
this tormenter—into a comforter,
this monster—into an angel,
this notorious blasphemer—into a very great admirer of God,
and the actings of His free grace.

Just so, when a spark of this heavenly fire fell upon the heart of **Mary Magdalene**, oh what a change, what a transformation does it make in her! Now she loves much, and believes much, and repents much, and weeps much. Oh what a change did divine light make in **Zacchaeus**, and in the **jailor**!

Truly, if your light, your Biblical knowledge does not better you, if it does not change and transform you, if, under all your light and knowledge you remain as vile and base as ever; your light, your knowledge, your notions, your speculations, will be like fire! That knowledge which is not a transforming knowledge—will torment a man at last more than all the devils in hell; it will be . . .
a sword to cut him,
a rod to lash him,
a serpent to bite him,
a scorpion to sting him, and
a vulture, a worm eternally gnawing him!

God at last will own no knowledge, but that which leaves the stamp of Christ, the print of Christ, the image of Christ upon the heart; but that which changes and transforms the soul, which makes a man a new man, another man than what he was before divine light shined upon him.

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The hypocrite's hope

"For what *hope* do the godless have, when God cuts them off and takes away their life?" Job 27:8

"When the wicked die, their *hopes* all perish." Prov. 11:7

That *assurance* is but presumption, which allows men . . .
to play with sin,
to be bold with sin,
to make light of sin,
to walk on in ways of sin.

Such 'assurance' will never bring a man to heaven; it will never keep him from dropping into hell; yes, **it will double his damnation**, and make him the most miserable among all damned, wretched, forlorn spirits.

"So are the paths of all who forget God; and **the hypocrite's hope shall perish**." Job 8:13

Ah, Lord! from such *false hopes* deliver my soul; and give me more and more of that divine hope which makes sin to be more hateful than hell.

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Kisses

"Oh, that He would kiss me with the **kisses** of His mouth! For Your love is more delightful than wine." Song 1:2

Not with **a kiss**—but with the **kisses** of His mouth. A soul once kissed by Christ, can never have enough of the kisses of Christ; His lips drop myrrh and mercy. No kisses, compared to the kisses of Christ. The more any soul loves Christ, the more serious, studious, and industrious will that soul be, to have the love of Christ discovered, confirmed, witnessed, and sealed to it.

A soul once kissed by Christ, would gladly have . . .
her *drop* turned into an ocean;
her *spark* into a flame;
her *penny* into a pound;
her *mite* into a million.

A soul who truly loves Christ . . .
can never **see** enough,
nor ever **taste** enough,
nor ever **feel** enough,
nor ever **enjoy** enough
of the love of Christ. When once they have found His love to be better than wine, then nothing will satisfy them but the kisses of His mouth.

"May you experience the love of Christ, though it is so great you will never fully understand it." Eph. 3:19

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The sweetest joys are from the sourest tears

Sin is a turning the back upon God—and the face towards hell. **Repentance** is a turning the back upon sin—and a setting the face towards God!

True repentance is a sorrowing for sin because it is offensive to God. Peter was sorry for his **sin**; Judas was sorry his for **punishment**. Peter grieves because Christ was grieved; Judas grieved because he would be damned.

As Noah's flood drowned his nearest and his dearest friends, so the flood of penitent tears drowns men's nearest and their dearest lusts! Be they Isaacs or Benjamins, be they right eyes or right hands, true repentance puts all to the sword; it spares neither father nor mother, neither Agag nor Achan.

Repentance is a turning from all sin, without any reservation or exception. One stab at the heart kills, one hole in the ship sinks her, one act of treason makes a traitor. Just so, one sin not forsaken, not turned from, will undo a soul forever.

A true penitent looks upon every sin as poison, as the vomit of a dog, as the mire of the street, as the menstruous cloth, which of all things in the law was most unclean, defiling, and polluting. He looks thus upon every sin, turns his heart against every sin, and makes him not only to refrain from sin—but to forsake it, and to loathe it more than hell.

True repentance breaks the heart with sighs, sobs, and groans—that . . .
a loving Father is offended,
a blessed Savior crucified, and
the sweet Comforter grieved.

Penitent Mary Magdalene weeps much, as well as loves much. Tears, instead of jewels, were the ornaments of penitent David's bed. Surely that sweet singer never sang more melodiously, than when his heart was broken most penitentially.

The sweetest joys are from the sourest tears; penitent tears are the breeders of spiritual joy. The bee gathers the best honey off the bitterest herbs. Christ made the best wine of water; the strongest, the purest, the truest, the most permanent, and the most excellent joy is made of the waters of repentance.

"Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy."
Psalm 126:5

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Loathsome thoughts

"You will remember your conduct and all the actions by which you have defiled yourselves, and **you will loathe yourselves** for all the evil you have done." Ezekiel 20:43

True repentance includes a loathing and abhorring of sin, and of ourselves for sin.

The sincere penitent loathes his sins, and he loathes himself also because of his sins. He cries out, "Oh these wanton **eyes**! Oh these wicked **hands**! Oh this deceitful **tongue**! Oh this crooked **will**! Oh this corrupt **heart**! Oh how do I loathe my sins, how do I loathe myself! My sins are a burden to me, and they make me a burden to myself! My sins are abhorrent to me, and they make me abhor myself in dust and ashes!"

A true penitent has not only low thoughts of himself, but **loathsome thoughts** of himself. None can think or speak so vilely of a Christian—as he thinks and speaks so vilely of himself. "Behold, I am vile!" Job 40:4

"They will loathe themselves for the evil they have done and for all their detestable practices." Ezekiel 6:9

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To sin and not to blush!

Only those things which are sinful, are shameful.

"Then, when I make atonement for you for all you have done, you will remember and be **ashamed** and never again open your mouth because of your humiliation, declares the Sovereign Lord." Ezekiel 16:63

When the penitent soul sees his sins pardoned, the anger of God pacified, and divine justice satisfied, then he sits down ashamed.

Sin and **shame** are inseparable companions.

A Christian cannot have the *seeming sweet* of sin, but he shall have the *real shame* which accompanies sin. These two God has joined together, and all the world cannot put them asunder.

It was the vile and impenitent Caligula who said of himself, "that he loved nothing better in himself, than that he could not be ashamed."

A soul who has sinned away all shame, is a soul ripe for hell—and given up to Satan! A greater plague cannot befall a man in this life, than **to sin and not to blush!**

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Soul-mollifying

Saving faith is soul-softening, it is **soul-mollifying**. Peter believes soundly—and weeps bitterly. Mary Magdalene believes much—and weeps much.

Faith sets . . .
a wounded Christ,
a bruised Christ,
a despised Christ,
a pierced Christ,
a bleeding Christ
—before the soul, and this makes the soul sit down and weep bitterly: "They will **look** on Me whom they have pierced and mourn for Him (all gospel-mourning flows from believing), as for an only son. They will grieve bitterly for Him as for a firstborn son who has died." Zechariah 12:10.

Oh! the sight of those wounds which their sins have made—will wound their hearts through and through! It will make them lament over Christ with a bitter lamentation. Ah! nothing will kindly, sweetly, and effectually break the hardened heart of a sinner, but faith's beholding the blood of Christ trickling down His sides!

That Christ should love man when he was most unlovely; that man's extreme misery should but inflame Christ's affections of love and mercy—this melts the believing soul.

That Christ should leave the eternal bosom of His Father; that He who was equal with God—should come in the form of a servant; that He who was clothed with glory—should be wrapped in rags; that He whom the heaven of heavens could not contain—should be cradled in a manger; that from His cradle to His cross—His whole life should be a life of sorrows and sufferings; that the Judge of all flesh should be condemned; that the Lord of life should be put to death; that He who was His Father's joy—should in anguish of spirit cry out, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?' that that **head** which was crowned with honor—should be crowned with thorns; that those **eyes** which were as a flame of fire, which were clearer than the sun—should be closed up by the darkness of death; that those **ears** which were used to hear nothing but hallelujahs—should hear nothing but blasphemies; that that **face** which was white and ruddy—should be spit upon by the beastly Jews; that that **tongue** which spoke as never any man spoke, yes, as never any angel spoke—should be accused of blasphemy; that those **hands** which swayed both a golden scepter and an iron rod, and those **feet** which were as fine brass—should be nailed to the cross—and all this for man's transgression, for man's rebellion! Oh! the sight of these things, the believing of these things, makes a gracious soul to break and bleed, to sigh and groan, to mourn and lament!

True faith is a heart-breaking, a heart-melting faith.

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A heaven unto me!

That knowledge which accompanies salvation, is a **heart-affecting knowledge**. It affects the heart with Christ, and all spiritual things. Oh, it does wonderfully endear Christ and the things of Christ to the soul.

"Oh, feed me with Your love—Your 'raisins' and Your 'apples'—for I am utterly lovesick!" Song 2:5 "Oh," says the spouse, "my heart is taken with Christ, it is ravished with His love; my soul is burning, my soul is beating towards Christ. Oh, none but Christ, none but Christ! I cannot live in myself, I cannot live in my duties, I cannot live in external privileges, I cannot live in outward mercies; I can live only in Christ, who is . . .
  my life,
  my love,
  my joy,
  my crown,
  my all in all.
Oh, the more I come to know Him . . .
  in His natures,
  in His names,
  in His offices,
  in His discoveries,
  in His visits,
  in His beauties,
the more I find my heart and affections to prize Christ, to run after Christ, to be affected with Christ, and to be wonderfully endeared to Christ!

Oh, God forbid that my heart should be affected or taken with anything in comparison with Christ.
The more I know Him, the more I love Him;
the more I know Him, the more I desire Him;
the more I know Him, the more my heart is knit unto Him.
His beauty is captivating,
His love is ravishing,
His goodness is attracting,
His manifestations are enticing,
His person is enamoring,
His lovely looks please me,
His pleasant voice delights me,
His precious Spirit comforts me,
His holy word rules me;
All these things make Christ to be **a heaven unto me!**

Oh, but all that *mere notional* knowledge, that speculative knowledge, which leaves a man short of salvation—never affects the heart; it never draws it, it never endears the heart to Christ, or to the precious things of Christ. Hence it is that such men, under all their notions, under all their light and knowledge, have . . .
  no affection to Christ,
  no delight in Christ,
  no workings of heart after Christ.

"If anyone does not love the Lord, that person is cursed."
  1 Corinthians 16:22

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When Brutus went to stab Julius Caesar

"For I know my transgressions, and **my sin is always before me**." Psalm 51:3

Sin most afflicts a gracious soul.

The **deer** feeling within her the working of the serpent's poison—runs through the thorns and thickets, and runs over the green and pleasant pastures—that she may drink of the fountain and be cured.

Just so, gracious souls, being sensible of the poison and venom of sin, run from the creatures, which are but as thorns and thickets; and run over their own duties and righteousness, which are but as pleasant pastures—to come to Christ the fountain of life—that they may drink of those waters of consolation, of those wells of salvation which are in Him, and cast up and cast out their spiritual poison, and be cured forever.

Believers know that their sins do most pierce and grieve the Lord. The sins of God's people, provoke Him most, and sadden Him most—and this makes them sigh and groan it out, "What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?" Romans 7:24

If a **snake** were to sting your dearly beloved spouse to death—would you preserve it alive, warm it by the fire, and hug it in your bosom? Would you not rather stab it with a thousand wounds?

When Brutus went to stab Julius Caesar, he cried out, "What, **you** my son Brutus!" So may God well cry out, "What, **you** My son! What, will you stab Me with your sins! Is it not enough that others stab My honor? but will you, My son?"

You are wise, and know how to apply it.

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Grace, grace!

"That no flesh should glory in His presence." 1 Corinthians 1:29

God does not look for any goodness or merit in the creature to draw His love—but He will justify, pardon, and save for His name's sake. All the motives which move God to show mercy are in His own bosom.

Salvation is only from free grace, and not from anything good **in** us, or **done by** us.

God is free to bestow His promises upon whomever He pleases.
He often steps over the rich, and chooses the poor;
He often steps over the learned, and chooses the ignorant;
He often steps over the strong, and chooses the weak;
He often steps over the sweet nature, and chooses the wicked nature;
He often steps over the noble, and chooses the vile; etc.,
that no flesh may glory, and that all may shout out "**Grace, grace!**"

"By the grace of God I am what I am!" 1 Corinthians 15:10

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Devour me, devour me!

Assurance will sweeten the thoughts of **death**—and all the aches, pains, weaknesses, sicknesses, and diseases—which are the forerunners of death; yes, it will make a man look and long for death.

Nazianzen said to the *king of terrors*, "**Devour me, devour me!** Death cures all diseases, the aching head, and the unbelieving heart!"

Assurance makes a man smile upon the *king of terrors*. The assured soul knows that death shall be the funeral of . . .
  all his **sins**,
  all his **sorrows**,
  all his **afflictions**,
  all his **temptations**.

He knows that death shall be the resurrection of his joys. He knows that death is both an outlet and an inlet; an outlet to sin; and an inlet to the soul's clear, full, and constant enjoyment of God! And this makes the assured soul to sing it sweetly out, "O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory? "I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far!" "Make haste, my beloved." "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!"

Now death is more desirable than life. Now says the soul, "let him fear death, who is averse to go to Christ."

The Persians had a certain day in the year, in which they used to kill all serpents and venomous creatures. The assured Christian knows that the day of death will be such a day to him—and that makes death lovely and desirable. He knows that sin was the midwife which brought death into the world; and that death shall be the grave to bury sin. And therefore death is not a terror—but a delight unto him. He fears it not as an enemy—but welcomes it as a friend.

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Pambus wept when he saw a harlot

What labor and pains worldlings take to obtain the vain things of this life—to obtain the poor things of this world, which are but shadows and dreams, and mere nothings!

Oh! how should this stir and provoke Christians to be up and doing, to labor as for life—to make sure of spiritual and eternal things! Is earth better than heaven? No! Oh then be ashamed, Christians, that worldlings are more studious and industrious to obtain **pebbles**, than you are to obtain **pearls**! They labor to obtain those things which at last will be their burden, their bane, their plague, their hell. You are to labor to obtain those things which will be your joy and crown in life, in death, and in the day of judgment.

Pambus wept when he saw a harlot dressed with much care and cost—partly to see one take so much pains to go to hell; and partly because *he* had not been so careful to please God, as she had been to please her sluttish lovers.

Ah, Christians! what great reason have you to sit down and weep bitterly—that worldlings take so much pains to make themselves miserable—and that you have taken no more pains to get more of Christ into your hearts!

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The mortifying of your darling sins

Most professing Christians have not the right art of mortifying sin. All their attempts are to **hide** a lust, not to **quench** it.

A great motive to provoke you to **the mortifying of your darling sins**, is solemnly to consider, that the conquest and effectual mortifying of one bosom sin, will yield a Christian more glorious joy, comfort, and peace—than ever he has found in the gratifying and committing of all other sins.

The pleasure and sweetness which follows victory over sin, is a thousand times beyond that *seeming* sweetness which is in the gratifying of sin. The joy which attends the subduing of sin—is a noble joy, a pure joy, a special joy, an increasing joy, and a lasting joy. But that joy which attends the committing of sin—is an ignoble joy, a corrupt joy, a decreasing joy, a dying joy.

The truth is—if there were the least real joy in sin, there could be no hell-torments, where men shall most totally sin, and be most totally tormented with their sin.

Ah! Christians, be restless, until, in the spirit and power of Jesus, you have brought under control, that sin which sticks so close unto you!

Remember this, nothing below the conquest of bosom sins can make a jubilee in the heart. It is not a man's whining and complaining over sin—but his mortifying of sin, which will make his life a paradise of pleasure!

If, notwithstanding all that has been said, you are still resolved to dally with sin, then you must resolve to live as a stranger to God; you must expect sad trials without, and sore troubles within; this shall be your just wages for playing with sin! **If you like the wages**, then dally with sin still; if otherwise, then **sacrifice your Isaac!**

Ah! souls, of all unpardoned sins, your bosom sins will be presented by **God**, **conscience**, and **Satan** at last —as the most filthy and ugly, as the most terrible and dreadful. Your bosom sins at last will appear to be those monsters, those fiends of hell—which have most provoked God against you, which have shut up Christ's affections of love and compassion from you, which have armed conscience against you, which have barred the gates of glory against you, which have prepared the hottest place in hell for you, and which have given Satan the greatest advantage eternally to triumph over you!

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The unsearchable riches of Christ!

There is everything in Christ to encourage the greatest
sinners to believe on Him, to rest and lean upon Him for
all happiness and blessedness. Christ is . . .
  the greatest good,
  the choicest good,
  the chief good,
  the most suitable good,
  the most necessary good;
  a pure good,
  a real good,
  a total good,
  an eternal good,
  a soul-satisfying good!

Sinners, are you **poor**? Christ has gold to enrich you.

Are you **naked**? Christ has royal robes, and white clothing to clothe you.

Are you **blind**? Christ has eye-salve to enlighten you.

Are you **hungry**? Christ will be manna to feed you.

Are you **thirsty**? He will be a well of living water to refresh you.

Are you **wounded**? He has a balm under his wings to heal you.

Are you **sick**? He is a physician to cure you.

Are you **prisoners**? He has laid down a ransom for you.

"**The unsearchable riches of Christ!**" Ephesians 3:8

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Peccatum est Deicidium

"The deceitfulness of sin." Hebrews 3:13

Sin . . .
  has its original from a deceitful subtle serpent,
  is the ground of all the deceit in the world,
  is the great deceiver of souls.

Sin . . .
  debases the soul of man,
  defiles and pollutes the soul of man,
  renders the soul most unlike to God,
    who is the best and greatest;
  renders the soul most like to Satan,
    who is a very sea and sink of sin!

Sin robs the soul of . . .
  the image of God,
  the holiness of God,
  the beauty of God,
  the glory of God,
  the righteousness of God.

Sin is ***peccatum est Deicidium***—a killing of God!

"But they kept shouting—Crucify Him! Crucify Him!"
    Luke 23:21

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Whining and whimpering?

"My Beloved is mine, and I am His!" Song 2:16

"I know," says the spouse, "that **Jesus Christ
is mine!** I can with the greatest confidence
and boldness affirm it. He is . . .
  my Head,
  my Husband,
  my Lord,
  my Redeemer,
  my Justifier,
  my Savior.
And I am His!
I am sure that I am His.
I am His by purchase;
I am His by conquest;
I am His by election;
I am His by covenant;
I am His by marriage;
I am wholly His;
I am specially His;
I am universally His;
I am eternally His!"

A well-grounded assurance will make a man . . .
  patient in waiting,
  courageous in doing,
  cheerful in suffering.
It will make a heaven in a man's heart—on
this side heaven; and make him go singing
into paradise, despite all of life's calamities
and miseries—as he realizes that he is . . .
  everlastingly chosen and beloved of God,
  that God's heart is set upon him,
  that his name is written in the book of life,
  that there is laid up for him a crown of righteousness,
  and that nothing shall be able to separate him from
  Him who is his light, his life, his crown, his all in all.

Ah, Christians! only remember what Christ **has** done for
you, and what He **is** still a-doing for you in heaven, and
what He **will** do for you to all eternity—and you will **not** be
able to spend your days in **whining and whimpering**.

Christians, your mercies are greater than your miseries!
One hour's being in the bosom of Christ, will recompense
you for all your trouble and travail on earth! Why, then,
do you spend more time in sighing, than in rejoicing?

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A precious commodity in hell

Most men spend the greatest part of their **time**
on things that are that are of little or no value;
as Domitian, the Roman emperor, who spent his
time in catching of flies.

Make a speedy and a thorough improvement of all
opportunities of grace and mercy. **Do not trifle
away your golden seasons**. You have much
work to do in a short time. You have . . .
  a God to honor,
  a race to run,
  a crown to win,
  a hell to escape,
  a heaven to obtain,
  weak graces to strengthen,
  strong corruptions to weaken,
  many temptations to withstand,
  afflictions to bear,
  many mercies to improve,
  and many services to perform, etc.

He who neglects a golden opportunity, does
but create to himself a great deal of misery.

"**Time**," says Bernard, "would be **a precious
commodity in hell**, and the use of it most
gainful; where for one day a man would give
ten thousand worlds if he had them."

When men trifle away their precious time, and golden
opportunities, **playing and toying with this vanity
and that vanity**; we may ask whether these men
have—no Christ, no Scripture, no promises, no
blessed experiences, no hopes of heavenly glories
—to enjoy and take delight in?

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A very little worm

A well-grounded assurance is always attended with humility.

David, under assurance, cries out, "I am a *worm* and no man!"
The Hebrew word which is here rendered worm, signifies **a very
little worm**, which a man can hardly see or perceive. Psalm 22:6.
Abraham, under assurance, cries out, that he is but "dust and
ashes!" **Jacob**, under assurance, cries out, "I am not worthy of
all the faithfulness and unfailing love You have shown to me!"
Job, under assurance, "abhors himself in dust and ashes!"
Moses had the honor and the happiness to speak with God
"face to face;" and yet "Moses was a very humble man, more
humble than anyone else on the face of the earth." Num. 12:3.
The great apostle **Paul**, under all the revelations and glorious
manifestations of God to him, counts himself "less than the
least of God's people." Eph. 3:8.

That is mere presumption, that is a delusion of the devil, and
no sound assurance—which puffs and swells the souls of men
with pride; which makes men prize themselves above others,
above the value which God has put upon them.

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The regal gate

"Pray without ceasing." 1 Thessalonians 5:17

A man may always pray habitually; he may have
his heart in a praying disposition in all estates and
conditions, in prosperity and adversity, in health
and sickness, in strength and weakness, in wealth
and wants, in life and death. The Christian needs . . .
  mercy to pardon him,
  grace to purify him,
  balm to heal him,
  divine favor to comfort him,
  power to support him,
  wisdom to counsel him,
  goodness to satisfy him.

Our daily weaknesses, our daily wants, our daily
fears, our daily dangers, our daily temptations,
etc., call for our daily prayers.

Prayer is **the regal gate** by which the Lord enters
into the heart, comforting, quieting, strengthening,
quickening, and raising of it. By it,
  faith is increased,
  hope strengthened,
  the spirit exhilarated,
  the heart pacified,
  the conscience purified,
  temptations vanquished,
  corruptions weakened,
  the affections inflamed,
  the will more renewed, and
  the whole man more advantaged.

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Birds' nests

Saving faith will make a man set his feet, where other
men sets their hearts. Faith looks with an eye of scorn
and disdain upon the things of this world. "What," says
faith, "are earthly treasures, compared to the treasures
of heaven? What are stones compared to silver; dross
compared to gold; darkness compared to light; hell
compared to heaven? No more," says faith, "What are
all the treasures, pleasures, and delights of this world
—compared to the influences of God's grace?"

Faith will make a man write *'worthless'* upon the best of
worldly things; it will make a man trample upon the pearls
of this world, as upon dross and dirt, Hebrews 11:24-26.
Faith deadens a man's heart to the things of this world:
"I am crucified to the world, and the world is crucified to
me," says Paul, Phil. 3:8; Gal. 6:14. "This world," says faith,
"is not my house, my habitation, my home; I look for a
better country, for a better city, for a better home,"
2 Cor. 5:1-2. He who is the heir to a crown, a kingdom
—looks with an eye of scorn and disdain upon everything
below a kingdom, below a crown. Faith tells the soul that
it has a crown, a kingdom in reversion; and this makes
the soul to scorn the things of this world, 2 Tim. 4:8.

The view of Lucian is very interesting, who, going to the
top of a high mountain, saw all the affairs of men, and
looked on their greatest, richest, and most glorious cities,
as little **birds' nests**! Faith sets the soul upon the hill of
God, the mountain of God, which is a high mountain;
and from thence, faith gives the soul a sight, a prospect
of all things here below. And, ah! how like **birds' nests**
do all the riches, honors, and glories of this world look
and appear to those whom faith has set upon God's high hill.
Faith set Moses high, it set him among invisibles; and that
made him look upon all the treasures, pleasures, riches,
and glories of Egypt, as little **birds' nests**, as molehills,
as dross and dirt, as things that were too little and too low
for him to set his heart upon. Truly, when once faith has
given a man a sight, a prospect of heaven, all things on
earth will be looked upon as little and despised.

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In the beams of this heavenly light

"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners
 —and **I am the worst of them**." 1 Timothy 1:15

Divine and heavenly knowledge brings a man near to God;
it gives a man the clearest and fullest sight of God; and the
nearer any man comes to God, and the clearer visions he has
of God, the more low and humble will that man lie before God.
None so humble as those who have nearest communion with
God. The angels that are near unto Him cover their faces with
their wings, in token of humility. Divine knowledge makes a
man look inwards; it anatomizes a man to himself; it is a
mirror which shows a man the spots of his own soul, and
this makes him little and low in his own eyes.

In the beams of this heavenly light,
a Christian comes to see his own . . .
  pride,
  ignorance,
  impatience,
  unworthiness,
  conceitedness,
  worthlessness,
  frowardness
  nothingness.

That knowledge which swells you with self importance, will undo you. That knowledge which puffs you with pride, will sink you. That knowledge which makes you delightful in your own eyes, will make you despicable in God's eyes.

* * *

The scholar's knowledge

What is **the scholar's knowledge** of the strength, riches, glories, and sweetness of far countries, obtained by maps and books—compared to their knowledge, who daily see and enjoy those things?

Truly, that knowledge which is only notional, speculative, and general; which is gathered out of books, discourses, and other outward advantages, is such a knowledge that will make men sit down in hell, as it did Judas, Demas, the scribes and pharisees, etc.

A man who has that **experimental knowledge** which accompanies salvation, will from his experience tell you, that **sin** is the greatest evil in the world—for he has found it so, Rom. 7; that **Christ** is the one thing necessary—for he has found Him so, Psalm 27:4; that **the favor of God** is better than life—for he has found it so, Psalm 63:3; that **pardoning mercy** alone makes a man happy—for he has found it so, Psalm 32:1-2; that **a wounded spirit** is such a burden that none can bear—for he has found it so, Prov. 18:14; that **a humble and a broken heart** is an acceptable sacrifice to God—for he has found it so, Psalm 51:17; that **the promises** are precious pearls—for he has found them so, 2 Pet. 1:4; that **the smiles of God** will make up the lack of any outward mercies—for he has found it so, Psalm 4:6-7; that only **communion with God** can make a heaven in a believer's heart—for he has found it so, Psalm 48:10; that if **the Spirit** is pleased and obeyed, He will be a comforter to the soul—for he has found it so, John 16:7; but if His motions and laws are slighted and neglected, He will stand far off from the soul, He will vex and gall the soul—for he has found it so, Lam 1:16; Isa 63:10-11.

That knowledge which is not experimental, will only increase your guilt and torment, as it did the Scribes' and Pharisees'.

* * *

I am about to desecrate My sanctuary

"This is what the Sovereign Lord says: **I am about to desecrate My sanctuary**—the stronghold in which you take pride, the delight of your eyes, the object of your affection." Ezekiel 24:21

Many are much **in** and **for** church ordinances and activities, whose hearts are very carnal, and whose lives are very vain.

It is nothing to be much in those **religious duties and performances** wherein the worst of sinners may go beyond the best of saints. The most refined hypocrites labor only to be seen by others in their praying, fasting, talking, hearing, giving, etc. Let them have but man's eye to see them, and man's ear to hear them, and man's tongue to commend them, and man's hand to reward them—and they will sit down and bless themselves.

They say of **the nightingale**, that when she is solitary in the woods, she is careless of her melody. But when she perceives that she has any auditors, or is near houses, then she composes herself more harmoniously and elegantly. Truly, this is the frame and temper of the best of hypocrites.

"My people come to you, as they usually do, and sit before you to listen to your words, **but they do not put them into practice!** With their mouths they express devotion, but their hearts are greedy for unjust gain. Indeed, to them you are nothing more than one who sings love songs with a beautiful voice and plays an instrument well, for **they hear your words but do not put them into practice.**"
Ezekiel 33:31-32.

* * *

Because you ate the loaves

"Unto you therefore who believe, He is precious."
1 Peter 2:7

Christ is only precious to those who believe.

As Christ is the Father's chief jewel, so He is your choicest jewel, is He not? Yes!

The true Christian prizes Christ . . .
above all duties,
above all privileges,
above all mercies,
above all graces,
above all contentments,
above all his enjoyments.

The true believer loves Christ for Christ; he loves Christ for His personal excellencies.

What Alexander said of his two friends, is applicable to many in our day; says he, "Haehestion loves me as I am Alexander; but Craterus loves me as I am *King* Alexander." One loved him for his **person**, the other for the **benefits** he received from him.

So true Christians love Christ for His person,
for His personal excellency,
for His personal beauty,
for His personal glory.
They see those perfections of grace and holiness in Christ, which render Him very lovely and desirable in their eyes; though they should never get a kingdom, nor a crown by it. But most of those who **profess** to belong to Christ, do it only in respect of the benefits they hope to receive from Him. When one asked Cato's daughter why she would not marry again, she being young when her husband died, answered, 'Because she could not find a man that loved her more than her goods.' Few there are, who love Christ more than His benefits.

"I tell you the truth, you are looking for Me, not because you saw miraculous signs but **because you ate the loaves** and had your fill." John 6:26

It was Augustine's complaint of old, that 'scarcely any love Christ, but for His benefits.' Few follow Him for love; but many follow Him for loaves. Few follow Him for His inward excellencies, many follow Him for their outward advantages. Few follow him that they may be made godly by him; but many follow him that they may be great by him.

Certainly, you are the bosom friends of Christ, you are in the very heart of Christ—who prize Christ above all. This is a work too high and too hard, too great and too noble, for all who are not true Christians, who are not twice born, who are not of the blood-royal, who are not partakers of the divine nature.

* * *

Totes oculus

They say of the **nightingale**, that when she is solitary in the woods, she is careless of her melody; but when she perceives that she has any auditors, or is near houses—then she composes herself more harmoniously and elegantly. Truly, this is the frame and temper of the best of hypocrites.

Oh! but a sincere Christian labors in all places, and in all times, to approve himself to God. He labors as much to approve himself to God in a forest, where no eye sees him—as he does when the eyes of thousands are fixed upon him.

The **sun** would shine bright, though all men were asleep at high noon, and no eyes open to see the glory of his beams. Just so, a sincere heart will shine, he will labor to do good; though all the world should shut their eyes; yet he will eye his work, and eye his God. He knows that God is ***totes oculus***—**all eye**, and therefore he cares not though others have never an eye to observe him, to applaud him. Let God but secretly whisper to him in the ear, and say, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" and it is enough to his soul, enough to satisfy him, enough to cheer him, and enough to encourage him in the ways and the work of his God.

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You take the goods

"As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?" Psalm 42:1-2

The rattle without the breast, will not satisfy the child, the house without the husband, will not satisfy the wife, the cabinet without the jewel, will not satisfy the maiden, nor will the world without Christ, satisfy the soul.

The hungry soul will not be put off with any bread but with the bread of life; the thirsty soul will not be put off with any water but with the wellsprings of life.

As the king of Sodom said once, "**You take the goods**, give me the people," Gen. 14:21. Just so, says the hungry soul, "**You take the goods**—take your honors, and riches, and the favor of creatures, take the grain, the oil, and the wine; give me Christ, give me the light of His countenance, give me the joy of His Spirit, etc."

* * *

The world and I am well agreed

Assurance will keep the heart from an inordinate running out after the world, and the glory thereof. Moses, having an assurance of the recompense of reward, and of God's love and favor, could not be drawn by all the honors, pleasures, and treasures of Egypt. He slights all, and tramples upon all the glory of the world, as men trample upon things of no worth, Heb. 11:24-27.

So after Paul had been in the third heaven, and had assurance that nothing should separate him from the love of God in Christ, he looks upon the world as a crucified thing: "The world is crucified to me," says he, 2 Cor. 12:1-3, and Rom. 8:38; "and I am crucified unto the world," Gal. 6:14. The world is dead to me, and I am dead to it: **the world and I am well agreed**—the world cares not a pin for me, and I care not a pin for the world.

I have read of Lazarus, that after he was raised from the grave, he was never seen to smile. The assurance that he had of more glorious things, deadened his heart to the things of this world; he saw nothing in them worthy of a smile. Ah! were there more assurance among Christians, there would not be such **tugging for the world**, and such greedy hunting and pursuing after it, as is in these days, to the dishonor of God, the reproach of Christ, and the shame of the gospel.

So when God gave Galeacius, that Italian marquis, an assurance of everlasting happiness, he withstood many golden temptations, and cried out, 'Cursed be he who prefers all the glory of the world to one day's communion with Christ!'

* * *

He strives to make all as miserable and unhappy as himself

Satan knows that **assurance** is the Christian's . . .
manna in a wilderness,
water out of a rock,
a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.
He knows that assurance is . . .
a salve for all sores,
a medicine for all diseases,
a remedy against every malady.
He knows that assurance is the Christian's . . .
anchor at sea,
shield upon land;
staff to support him,
sword to defend him,
pavilion to hide him,
cordial to cheer him.
And therefore it is that he labors, both as a *lion* and as a *serpent*, to keep poor souls from a well-grounded assurance.

This *son of the morning* has **fallen from the top of glory to the bottom of misery**, and therefore **he strives to make all as miserable and unhappy as himself**.

Ah! Christians, have not you need to seek assurance with all your might, who have to do with so mighty an adversary, who cares not what torments he heaps upon himself, so that he may prove your tormentor, by keeping your souls and assurance asunder? Oh that this very consideration might make you restless, until you have got this "white stone" in your bosoms!

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Be strong and courageous

God is glorious in power,
and wonderful in counsel,
and infinite in mercy,
and admirable in goodness,
and rich in grace,
and unsearchable in understanding.

"I will never leave you nor forsake you. **Be strong and courageous**." Joshua 1:5-6

When God puts His people upon weighty services, He assures them of His presence, and of His assistance. He assures them that He will stand by them, and strengthen them, and support them, and uphold them. He assures them that . . .
His **power** should be theirs to defend them,
His **wisdom** should be theirs to direct them,
His **goodness** should be theirs to supply them,
His **grace** should be theirs to heal them,
His **mercy** should be theirs to pardon them,
His **joy** should be theirs to strengthen them,
His **promise** should be theirs to cheer them,
His **Spirit** should be theirs to lead them.

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The chief

"My Beloved is white and ruddy, **the chief** among ten thousand." Song of Songs 5:10

Christ is the chief good.

All good is in the *chief* good.

Christ is all things to Christians. He is . . .
bread to feed them,
a fountain to refresh them,
a physician to heal them,
a rock to shelter them,
a light to guide them, and
a crown to crown them!

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A kind of omnipotency in it

Faith is an appropriating grace.

Faith looks upon **God**, and says with David, "This God is my God forever and ever, and He shall be my guide unto the death."

Faith looks upon **Christ**, and says with the spouse, "I am my beloved's, and His desire is towards me."

Faith looks upon an **immortal crown**, and says "Henceforth is laid up for me a crown of glory."

Faith looks upon the **righteousness of Christ**, and says, "This righteousness is mine to cover me."

Faith looks upon the **mercy of Christ**, and says, "This mercy is mine to pardon me."

Faith looks upon the **power of Christ**, and says, "This power is mine to support me."

Faith looks upon the **wisdom of Christ**, and says, "This wisdom is mine to direct me."

Faith looks upon the **blood of Christ**, and says, "This blood is mine to save me."

Faith has **a kind of omnipotency in it**; it is able to do all things.

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Books may preach . . .
when the author **can**not,
when the author **may** not,
when the author **dares** not,
yes, and which is more,
when the author **is** not.

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A heaven here and a heaven hereafter

To be in a state of true grace, is to be miserable no more; it is to be happy forever. A soul in this state is a soul near and dear to God. It is a soul much beloved, and very highly valued by God. It is a soul housed in God. It is a soul safe in God's everlasting arms. The being in a state of grace makes a man's condition happy, safe, and sure.

But the seeing, the knowing of himself to be in such a state, is that which renders his life sweet and comfortable. The being in a state of grace will yield a man a heaven hereafter; but the seeing of himself in this state will yield him both **a heaven here and a heaven hereafter**. It will render him doubly blessed—blessed in heaven, and blessed in his own conscience.

Assurance is the beauty and apex of a Christian's happiness in this life. It is usually attended with the strongest **joy**, with the sweetest **comforts**, and with the greatest **peace**. It is a pearl that most want—a crown that few wear. His state is safe and happy, whose soul is adorned with grace, though he sees it not, though he knows it not. To have grace, and to be sure that we have grace, is **heaven on this side heaven**.

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A commentary upon Christ's life

"Let your light shine before men, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven." Matthew 5:16

Christians are distinguished from all others, by their lives and by their examples.

Be exemplary to those among whom you live.

Precepts may instruct, but examples persuade.

Truly, your examples will have a very great influence upon those who are under you. Therefore you had need be angelic in your walkings and actings. You are lights upon a hill, and therefore every eye will be upon you. Those who can find no ears to hear what you **say**, will find many eyes to see what you **do**. Oh therefore, be exemplary both in lip and life, in word and work. **Oh see that your lives are a commentary upon Christ's life**.

"Leaving you an example, so that you should follow in His steps." 1 Peter 2:21

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Feast the slave, and starve the wife?

Make it more and more your chief work to make plentiful provisions for the eternal welfare of your souls. Your souls are more worth than ten thousand worlds. All is well—if your soul is well. If that is safe, all is safe. If that is lost, all is lost—God, Christ, and glory is lost—if the soul is lost.

Is it madness to **feast the slave, and starve the wife?** and is it not greater madness to feast the body and starve the soul? to make liberal provision for the body, and none for the soul? Do not they deserve double damnation, who prefer their bodies above their souls? Before all, and above all—look to your souls, watch your souls, make provision for your souls. When this is done—all is done. Until this is done, there is nothing done which will yield a man comfort in life, joy in death, and boldness before the judgment.

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Two heavens

Communion with God is that which will make you stand fast, and triumph over all enemies, difficulties, dangers, and deaths. Communion with God will make a man as courageous and bold as a lion, yes, as a young lion which is fearless of any creature.

Communion is a reciprocal exchange between Christ and a gracious soul. Communion is **Jacob's ladder**, where you have Christ sweetly descending down into the soul—and the soul by divine influences sweetly ascending up to Christ.

Communion with God is . . .
a shield upon land,
an anchor at sea,
a sword to defend you,
a staff to support you,
balm to heal you,
a cordial to strengthen you.

High communion with Christ will yield you **two heavens**, a heaven upon earth, and a heaven after death.

He enjoys nothing, who lacks communion with God. He lacks nothing, who enjoys communion with God. Therefore above all **gettings**, get communion with Christ; and above all **keepings**, keep communion with Christ. All other losses are not comparable to the loss of communion with Christ. He who has lost his communion, has lost his comfort, his strength, his all, and it will not be long before the Philistines capture him, and put out his eyes, and bind him with fetters of brass, and make him grind in a prison, as they did Samson, in Judges 16:20-21.

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Take heed of **tasting forbidden fruit!**
Remember what Adam lost by a taste!

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'God' stamped and printed upon the soul

Christians! Your happiness on earth is your holiness; and in heaven your highest happiness will be your perfect holiness.

Holiness differs nothing from happiness—but in name. Holiness is happiness in the bud, and happiness is holiness at the full.

Happiness is nothing but the quintessence of holiness.

Holiness is the very marrow and quintessence of all true religion.

Holiness is **'God' stamped and printed upon the soul**.

Holiness is Christ formed in the heart.

Holiness is our light, our life, our beauty, our glory, our joy, our crown, our heaven, our all. The holy soul is happy in life, and blessed in death, and shall be transcendently glorious in the morning of the resurrection, when Christ shall say, "Lo, here am I, and My holy ones, who are My joy! Lo, here am I, and My holy ones, who are My crown! Upon the heads of these holy ones will I set an immortal crown!"

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No sins of God's children, make any alteration in His love to them. Just so—none, no, not even God's sharpest dispensations, should make any alteration in our thoughts and affections towards Him.

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I have seen your tears

"This is what the Lord says—Set your affairs in order, for you are going to die. You will not recover from this illness." 2 Kings 20:1

The tears of God's people have such a kind of omnipotency in them, that God Himself cannot withstand them. "**I have seen your tears.** I will heal you, and three days from now you will get out of bed and go to the Temple of the Lord." 2 Kings 20:5

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The humble man's heart

"For thus says the high and lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy—I dwell in the high and holy place, with him who is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."
Isaiah 57:15

God makes **the humble man's heart** his house to dwell in. The highest heavens and the lowest hearts are the habitations wherein the Holy One delights to dwell. Now this phrase, "I will dwell with the humble," includes several things:
1. It includes God's superintending the humble.
2. It includes God's assisting and strengthening of the humble.
3. It includes God's protection; I will dwell with the humble, that is, I will protect him and secure him, Job 22:29.
4. It includes God's sympathizing with the humble.
5. It includes God's applying all suitable good to the humble, Isaiah 57:18, and Isaiah 63:9.
6. It includes God's ruling and overruling the heart and the affections of the humble.
7. It includes God's teaching and instructing of the humble.
8. Lastly, it includes and takes in a clearer, a fuller, and a larger manifestation and communication of God to humble souls.

"Ah!" says God, "I will dwell with the humble; that is, I will more richly, more abundantly, and more gloriously manifest and make known My grace and glory, My goodness and sweetness, My loving-kindness and tenderness—to humble souls!"

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What He has done for my soul

"Come and hear, all you who fear God, and I will tell you **what He has done for my soul**." Psalm 66:16

I will acquaint you with the soul blessings, with the soul favors, which God has crowned me with.

I was darkness—but He has made me light.

I was unrighteousness—but He has made me righteous.

I was deformed—but He has made me complete.

I was full of sores, and spots, and blemishes—but He has washed me, and made me all fair, without spot or wrinkle.

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Soul-purifying

"And everyone who has this *hope* in Him *purifies* himself just as He is pure." 1 John 3:3

True hope is **soul-purifying**. It runs out into holiness. He who has the purest and strongest hopes of being saved, is most studious and laborious to be sanctified.

Now hope purifies the heart and life thus—by keeping the purest objects, as God, Christ, the word, and the soul together; and by making the soul serious and conscientious in the use of all soul-purifying means; and by being a fire in the soul to burn up all those corruptions and principles of darkness which are contrary to that purity and glory, which hope has in her eye; and by working the soul to lean upon Christ, to live in Christ, and to draw purifying virtue from Christ—who is the spring and fountain of all purity and sanctity. And thus hope purifies those who expect to be like Christ in glory.

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That rich and royal robe

"I desire to be found in Christ, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith." Phil. 3:9

Paul would not be found in a legal righteousness, for he knew all his legal righteousness was but as "filthy rags." All his legal righteousness, sewed together, would but make up a coat of patches, a beggar's coat, which is good for nothing but to be cast away; therefore he desired to be found in the righteousness of Christ by faith. He knew that Christ's righteousness was . . .
  a pure righteousness,
  a spotless righteousness,
  a matchless righteousness,
  a complete righteousness,
  a perfect righteousness,
  an absolute righteousness,
  a glorious righteousness.

Faith loves to fix her eye upon **that rich and royal robe**, that blameless and spotless righteousness of Christ, with which the soul stands gloriously clothed before God, as being all beauteous, as being without spot or wrinkle in the divine account.

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Divine knowledge

"The discerning heart *seeks* knowledge." Proverbs 15:14

Saving knowledge is always attended with holy endeavors, and with heavenly desires, thirstings, and pantings after a **further** knowledge of God, after clearer visions of God. The Hebrew word that is here rendered "seeks" signifies an earnest and diligent seeking; to seek as a **hungry** man seeks for food; or as a **covetous** man for gold—the more he has, the more he desires; or as a **condemned** man seeks for his pardon; or as the **diseased** man seeks for his cure. The word signifies to seek studiously, laboriously, industriously; to seek by pleading, praying, inquiring, and searching up and down, that we may find what we seek; to seek as men do for hidden treasure. A man who is divinely taught, will set his heart and his ear, his inward and outward man, to know more and more.

Divine knowledge is marvelous, sweet, pleasing, comforting, satisfying, refreshing, strengthening, and supporting; and souls who have found the sweetness and usefulness of it, cannot but look and long, breathe and pant after more and more of it. The newborn babe does not more naturally and more earnestly long for the breasts, than a soul who has tasted that the Lord is gracious, does long for more and more tastes of God.

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Preach forth the virtues of Christ

"For you are a chosen people. You are a kingdom of priests, God's holy nation, His very own possession. This is so you can show others the goodness (or virtues) of God, for He called you out of the darkness into His wonderful light." 1 Peter 2:9

When God causes His divine light, His marvelous light, to shine in upon the soul, then a Christian will **preach forth the virtues of Christ** in an imitable practice; and until then a man, under all other knowledge, will remain an incarnate devil.

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Oh dash these brats of Babylon in pieces!

"Cleanse me from secret faults." Psalm 19:12

The Christian's greatest and hottest conflicts, are against those inward pollutions, and secret sins, which are only obvious to the eye of God and their own souls.

The hypocrite combats with those sins which are obvious to every eye. But **it must be a supernatural power and principle**, which puts men upon conflicting with the inward motions and secret operations of sin.

"O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Romans 7:24. A sincere heart weeps and laments bitterly over those secret and inward corruptions, which others will scarcely acknowledge to be sins.

The Persian kings reign powerfully, and yet are seldom seen in public. **Secret sins** reign in many men's souls powerfully and dangerously, when least apparently.

Oh! but a true Christian mourns over the inward motions and first risings of sin in his soul, and so prevents an eternal danger. Upon every stirring of sin in the soul, the believer cries out, "O Lord, help! O Lord, undertake for me! **Oh dash these brats of Babylon in pieces!** Oh stifle the first motions of sin, that they may never conceive and bring forth!"

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His angelic robes

A hidden enemy is far worse than an open enemy.

The devil has put **his angelic robes** upon many of his chief agents, that they may the more easily and the more effectually deceive and delude the souls of men.

Ah! what multitudes are there, that to some bleary eyes appear as angels of light, and yet in their principles and practices are but servants to the prince of darkness, laboring with all their might to make proselytes for hell, Matt. 23:15, and to draw men to those wild notions, opinions, and conceits which will leave them short of heaven, yes, bring them down to the hottest, darkest, and lowest place in hell, if God does not prevent it by a miracle of grace.

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Vincentius

Vincentius, by his patience and constancy in suffering, angered his tormentors. Therefore they stripped him stark naked, whipped his body all over to a bloody gore, sprinkled salt and vinegar over all his wounds, set his feet on burning coals, then cast him naked into a loathsome dungeon, the pavement whereof was sharp shells, and his bed to lie on a bundle of thorns. All which this blessed martyr received, without so much as a groan!

Persecution brings death in one hand and life in the other; for while it kills the body it crowns the soul.

The most cruel martyrdom is but a detour to escape death, to pass from life to life, from the prison to paradise, from the cross to the crown!

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Such a smoke in the soul

A man may have true grace and yet lack assurance, and this may arise from that smoke and clouds, those fears and doubts which corruption raises in the soul. Just so, that the soul cannot see those excellent graces which otherwise might be discerned. Though there may be many precious gems and jewels in the house, yet the smoke may hinder a man from seeing them sparkle and shine. So though there may be many precious graces in the souls of saints, yet corruption may raise such a dust, **such a smoke in the soul**, that the soul is not able to see them in the beauty and glory.

The well of water was near Hagar—but she saw it not until her eyes were opened by the Lord, Gen. 21:19-20. So grace is near the soul, yes, in the soul sometimes, and yet the soul does not see it, until God opens the eye and shows it. "The Lord was in this place," says Jacob, "and I knew it not." So many a precious soul may say, grace was in my heart, and I knew it not, I saw it not.

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Satan promises the best

Satan promises the best—but pays with the worst!

He promises honor—and pays with disgrace!

He promises pleasure—and pays with pain!

He promises profit—and pays with loss!

He promises life—and pays with death!

But God pays as he promises, all His payments are made in pure gold.

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As the bee does upon the flower

Let your hearts dwell on truth, **as the bee does upon the flower**; every Scriptural truth being a flower of paradise, which is more worth than a world.

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Suffering times

"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven!" Matthew 5:11-12.

Suffering times are times wherein the Lord is pleased to give His people some sense of His favor. When they are in sufferings for righteousness' sake, for the gospel's sake—then usually God causes His face to shine upon them. Now they shall hear best news from heaven—when they hear worst from earth. God loves to smile most upon His people when the world frowns most. When the world puts their iron chains upon their legs, then God puts His golden chains about their necks. When the world puts a bitter cup into their hands, then God drops some of His honey, some of His goodness and sweetness into it. When the world is ready to stone them, then God gives them the white stone. When the world is a-tearing their good names, then He gives them a new name, that none knows but he who has it, a name that is better than that of sons and daughters. When the world cries out, "Crucify them, crucify them," then they hear that sweet voice from heaven, "These are My beloved ones, in whom I am well pleased." When the world clothes them with rags, then the Lord puts on His royal robes, and makes a secret proclamation to their spirits, "Thus shall it be done to the men whom the King is pleased to honor." When the world gives into one hand a cup of water, God gives into the other a cup of nectar, a cup of ambrosia. When the world gnashes upon them, and presents all tortures before them, then the Lord opens paradise to them, as He did to Stephen.

When Paul and Silas were in prison for the gospel's sake, then God fills them with such unspeakable joy, that they cannot but be singing when others were sleeping, Acts 16:23-24. God turns their prison into a palace, a paradise; and they turn His mercies into praises. Paul and Silas found more pleasure than pain, more joy than sorrow, more sweet than bitter, more day than night—in the prison.

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It will suck sweetness out of every flower

Faith is the key which unlocks paradise, and lets in a flood of joy into the soul. Faith is an appropriating grace, it appropriates all to itself; it looks upon **God**, and says with the psalmist, "This God is my God forever and ever," Psalm 63:1, and Psalm 48:14. It looks upon **Christ** and says, "My beloved is mine, and His desires are towards me," Song 7:10. It looks upon the precious **promises** and says, These "precious promises" are mine, 2 Pet. 1:4. It looks upon **heaven** and says, "Henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness," 2 Tim. 4:8; and this fills the soul with joy and peace.

Faith has an influence upon other graces, it is like a silver thread that runs through a chain of pearl, it puts strength and vivacity into all other virtues. It made Abraham to rejoice; and it made Noah sit still and quiet in the midst of a deluge.

Faith is the first pin which moves the soul; it is the spring in the watch which sets all the golden wheels of love, joy, comfort, and peace a-going. Faith is a root-grace, from whence springs all the sweet flowers of joy and peace.

Faith is like the bee, **it will suck sweetness out of every flower**; it will extract . . .
  light out of darkness,
  comforts out of distresses,
  mercies out of miseries,
  wine out of water,
  honey out of the rock,
  meat out of the eater, Judges 14:14.

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When we give the devil the kernel

"My son, give Me your heart." Proverbs 23:26

"You have **obeyed from the heart** that form of doctrine which was delivered you." Romans 6:17

Christian obedience is cordial and hearty. The believer knows that no obedience but hearty obedience, is acceptable to Christ. He knows that nothing takes Christ's heart—but what comes from the believer's heart. 'Christ was hearty in His obedience for me,' says the believer; 'and shall not I be hearty in my obedience to Him?' Christ will lay His hand of love, His hand of acceptance—upon no obedience but what flows from the heart. The heart is the presence-chamber of the King of heaven, and that upon which His eye, His hand, His heart, is most set.

The scribes and Pharisees were much in the outward obedience of the law—but their hearts were not in their obedience; and therefore all they did signified nothing in the account of Christ, who only accepts outward actions as they flow from the heart and affections. Their souls were not in their services, and therefore all their services were lost services. They were very glorious in their outward profession—but their hearts were as filthy sepulchers. Their outsides shined as the sun—but their insides were as black as hell, Matt. 23. They were like the Egyptian temples—beautiful without, but filthy within. Well! remember this: No action, no service, is accepted in heaven—but that which is sealed up with integrity of heart. **God will not be put off with the shell, when we give the devil the kernel**.

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Those spots which a Christian finds in his own heart

"Purifying their hearts by faith." Acts 15:9

True faith purifies the heart from sin. Faith has two hands, one to lay hold on Christ, and another to sweep the heart, which is Christ's house. Faith knows that Christ is of a dove-like nature; He loves to lie clean and sweet. Faith has a neat housewife's hand, as well as an eagle's eye. Faith is as good at purging out sin, as it is at discovering sin. There is a cleansing quality in faith, as well as a healing quality in faith. Sound faith will purge the soul from the **love** of sin, from a **delight** in sin, and from the **reign** and **dominion** of sin. "Sin shall not have dominion over you; for you are not under the law—but under grace," Rom. 6:14,21.

Faith purifies the heart from sin, by engaging against sin in Christ's strength, as David engaged against Goliath, not in his own strength—but in the strength and name of the Lord Almighty. Faith leads the soul directly to God, and engages God against sin—so that the combat is changed, and made now rather between God and sin, than between sin and the soul; and so sin comes to fall before the power and glorious presence of God.

Look! as a child who is attacked by one who is stronger than he, cries out to his father to help him, and to fight for him against his enemy; just so, faith, being sensible of its own weakness and inability to get the victory over sin, cries out to Christ, who is stronger than the strong man, and so Christ binds the strong man, and casts him out. Faith tells the soul that all purposes, resolutions, and endeavors, without Christ, will never set the soul above its sins, they will never purify the heart from sin; therefore faith engages Christ, and casts the main of the work upon Christ, and so it purges the soul from sin.

Staupicius acknowledged, before he came to understand the free and powerful grace of Christ, that he vowed and resolved a hundred times against some particular sin, and could never get power over it; he could never get his heart purified from it, until he came to see that he trusted too much to his own resolutions, and too little to Jesus Christ; but when his faith had engaged Christ against his sin, he had the victory.

Faith purifies the heart from sin, by the application of Christ's blood. Faith makes a plaster of Christ's blessed blood, and lays it on upon the soul's sores, and so cures it. Faith makes a heavenly purgative of this blessed blood, and gives it to the soul, and so makes it vomit up that poison which it has drunk in. Faith tells the soul, that it is not all the tears in the world, nor all the water in the sea, which can wash away the uncleanness of the soul; it is only the blood of Christ which can make a blackmoor white; it is only the blood of Christ which can cure a leprous Naaman, which can cure a leprous soul. 'This fountain of blood,' says faith, 'is the only fountain which can wash heart from all uncleanness and filthiness of flesh and spirit.' Zech. 13:1. **Those spots which a Christian finds in his own heart, can only be washed out in the blood of the Lamb, by a hand of faith.**

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A world-conquering grace, a world-overcoming grace

"For whoever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory which overcomes the world, even our faith." John 5:4

True faith is **a world-conquering grace, it is a world-overcoming grace.** Faith overcomes the **frowning** world, the **fawning** world, the **tempting** world, and the **persecuting** world.

Faith overcomes the world, by outbidding sights. Faith outbids the world, and so makes the soul victorious. The world set honors, pleasures, etc., before Moses—but his faith outbid the world. Faith presents the recompense of reward, it brings down all the glory, pleasures, and treasures of heaven, of the eternal world, and sets them before the soul; and so it overtops and overcomes the world by outbidding it.

Faith overcomes the world, by telling the soul that all things are its own. Says faith—This God is your God, this Christ is your Christ, this righteousness is your righteousness, this promise is your promise, this crown is your crown, this glory is your glory, these treasures are your treasures, these pleasures are your pleasures. "All things are yours," says the apostle, "things present are yours, and things to come are yours," 1 Cor. 3:22. Thus the faith of the martyrs acted, and so made them victorious over a tempting and a persecuting world, Heb. 11:35.

Faith overcomes the world, by valuing the things of this world as they are. Most men over-value them, they put too great a price upon them; they make the world an idol, and then they cry, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" Oh but faith now gives all things their correct value; faith presents all worldly things as impotent, as mixed, as mutable, as momentary—in comparison with the soul, and so makes the soul victorious. Faith makes a man to see the prickles which are on every rose, the thorns which are in every crown, the scabs which are under every royal robe, the poison which is in the golden cup, the snare which is in the delicious dish, the spot which is in the shining pearl—and so makes a Christian count and call all these things, as indeed they are, "vanity of vanities!" And so the believing soul slights the world, and tramples upon it as dirt and dross.

Faith overcomes the world, by presenting Jesus Christ to the soul as a most excellent, glorious, and comprehensive good, as such a good which comprehends all good. Christ is that one good which comprehends all good; that one excellency which comprehends all excellencies. All the beauties, all the rarities, all the excellencies, all the riches, all the glories of all created creatures—are comprehended in Christ. As the worth and value of many pieces of copper are less than one precious jewel; so all the whole volume of perfections which is spread through heaven and earth, is epitomized in Christ; and the sight and sense of this makes the soul to triumph over the world. Faith presents more excellencies and better excellencies in Christ, than can be lost for Christ, and so it makes the soul a conqueror.

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Your unworthiness and unfitness

The apostle Paul tells you of some monstrous miscreants who were unrighteous, fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, homosexuals, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, extortioners; and yet these monsters of mankind, through the infinite goodness and free grace of God, are washed from the filth and guilt of their sins, and justified by the righteousness of Christ, and sanctified by the Spirit of Christ, and decked and adorned with the precious graces of Christ, 1 Cor. 6:9-11. Therefore do not say, O despairing soul, that you shall die in your sins, and lie down at last in everlasting sorrow. Did it make for the honor and glory of His free grace to pardon them, and will it be a reproach to His free grace to pardon you? Could God be just in justifying such ungodly ones, and shall He be unjust in justifying of you? Did not their unworthiness and unfitness for mercy turn the stream of mercy from them? No! Why then, O despairing soul, should you fear that **your unworthiness and unfitness** for mercy will so stop and turn the stream of mercy, as that you must perish eternally for lack of one drop of special grace and mercy?

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The only ground of God's love

The Lord Jesus Christ is a gift of free grace. Christ is the greatest, the sweetest, the choicest, the chief gift which God ever gave; and yet this gift is given by a hand of love. **The only ground of God's love** is His love. The ground of God's love is only and wholly in Himself. There is neither portion nor proportion in us to draw His love. There is no love nor loveliness in us that should cause a beam of His love to shine upon us. There is that enmity, that filthiness, that treacherousness, that unfaithfulness, to be found in every man's bosom, which might justly put God upon glorifying himself in their eternal ruin, and to write their names in His black book in characters of blood and wrath.

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Matchless and incomparable riches of free grace

God will have all blessings and happiness to flow from His free grace:

(1.) that the worst of sinners may have strong grounds for hope and comfort;

(2.) for the praise of His own glory;

(3.) that vain man may not boast;

(4.) that our mercies and blessings may be sure to us.

Truly, seeing all happiness and blessedness comes in a way of free grace, and not in a way of doing, not in a way of works, you should arise, O despairing souls! and cast off all despairing thoughts, and drink of the waters of life freely, Rev. 21:6; Rev. 22:18. What though your heart is dead, and hard, and sad; what though your sins be many, and your fears great. Yet behold! Here is glorious grace, rich grace, wondrous grace, **matchless and incomparable riches of free grace** spread before you.

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A precious book

As every precious gem-stone has a rich virtue in it, so has every promise. The promises are **a precious book**, every leaf drops myrrh and mercy; and upon these precious promises, precious faith looks and lives. From these breasts, faith sucks comfort and sweetness. Psalm 119:49-50, "Remember Your word (that is, your promise) unto Your servant, upon which You have caused me to hope. This is my comfort in my affliction, for Your word has quickened me." It would be an endless thing to show you how the faith of the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and other saints has been acted and exercised upon promises of sanctification, upon promises of justification, upon promises of salvation, upon promises of glorification, upon promises of protection, upon promises for direction, upon promises for support, etc. Look! as the lamp lives upon the oil, and the child upon the breasts, so does faith upon the promises.

In your looking upon the promises, mind most, eye most, spiritual promises, absolute promises. These spiritual and absolute promises are of nearest and greatest concernment to you; these carry in them most of the heart of Christ, the love of Christ, the goodwill of Christ; these are of greatest use to satisfy you, and to settle you when you are wavering; to support you when you are falling; to recover you when you are wandering; to comfort you when you are fainting; to counsel you when you are staggering, etc. Therefore make these your choicest and your chief companions; especially when it is night within your souls; when you are sensible of much sin and but a little grace; of much corruption but of little consolation; of much deadness but of little quickness; of much hardness but of little tenderness; of many fears and but a little faith. O beloved, there is much marrow and fatness, there is much honey and sweetness, much grace and glory wrapped up in the promises. Oh press them, and squeeze them until you have obtained all the riches and sweetness which is in them.

Ah, Christians! did you but do this, God would be more honored, the promises more prized, your graces more strengthened, your fears more abated, your hearts more warmed and engaged, and your lives more regulated, and Satan more easily and frequently vanquished.

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Faith realizes eternal realities

Faith should set and fix upon that glory, blessedness, and life, which God has laid up for those who love Him. The things of eternity are the greatest things, they are the most excellent things. They are most excellent in their natures, in their causes, in their operations, in their effects, in their ends; and upon these faith looks and lives. **Faith realizes eternal realities**; it makes absent things present. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen," Heb. 11:1. Faith makes absent glory present, absent riches present, absent pleasures present, absent favors present. Faith brings an invisible God, and sets Him before the soul. Moses by faith saw Him who was invisible. Faith brings down the recompense of reward, and sets it really though spiritually before the soul. Faith sets divine favor before the soul. It sets peace with God, it sets pardon of sin, it sets the righteousness of Christ, it sets the joy of heaven, it sets salvation, before the soul; it makes all these things very near and obvious to the soul.

Faith makes invisible things, visible; absent things, present; things which are afar off, to be very near unto the soul. Faith trades in invisible things, in eternal things. Its eye is always upwards, like the fish *uranoscopos*, which has but one eye, and yet looks continually up to heaven.

Faith enters within the veil, and fixes her eye upon those glorious things of eternity, which are so **many** that they exceed number, so **great** that they exceed measure, so **precious** that they are above all estimation. Says faith, "The spangled skies are but the footstool of my Father's house; and if the footstool, the outside, is so glorious, oh how glorious is His throne! Truly, in heaven there is that **life** which cannot be expressed, that **light** which cannot be comprehended, that **joy** which cannot be fathomed, that **sweetness** which cannot be dissipated, that **feast** which cannot be consumed; and upon these pearls of glory I look and live!"

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Saving faith

Saving faith puts the soul upon **grieving** for sin, upon **combating** with sin, upon **weeping** over sin, upon **trembling** at the occasions of sin, upon **resisting** temptations that lead to sin, upon **fighting** it out to the death with sin, Zech. 12:10. Saving faith puts a man upon walking with God, upon waiting on God, upon working for God, upon wrestling with God, upon bearing for God, and upon parting with anything for God. Faith makes pious duties to be easy to the soul, to be delightful to the soul, to be profitable to the soul. Faith makes the soul to be serious and conscientious in doing, to be careful and faithful in doing, to be delightful and cheerful in doing, to be diligent and faithful in doing.

That faith which is not a working faith is not saving faith; that faith which is not a working faith is a dead faith; that faith which is not a working faith is a deluding faith; that faith which is not a working faith is a worthless faith; that faith that is not a working faith will leave a man short of heaven and happiness in the latter day.

That faith which accompanies salvation is a working faith, a lively faith, and not such a dead faith as most please and deceive themselves with forever.

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True repentance

True repentance works a change in the whole man; in all the qualities of the INWARD man, and in all the actions of the OUTWARD man. The **understanding** is turned from darkness to light; the **will** from a sinful servility to a holy liberty; the **affections** from disorder into order; the **heart** from hardness into softness. Likewise in the outward man, the lustful **eye** is turned into an eye of chastity; the wanton **ear** is turned into an obedient ear; the **hands** of thievery are turned into hands of liberality; and the wandering **feet** of vanity are turned into ways of purity.

That repentance which changes a man in only some part—but not in every part; which only makes a man a Herod, or an Agrippa, a *half* Christian, an *almost* Christian—that repentance will never bring down heaven into a man's bosom here, nor never bring a man up to heaven hereafter!

True repentance is a total turning, as well as a universal turning, from all sin, without any reservation or exception. "I hate and abhor every false way—but I love Your law," Psalm 119:163. So in Ezek. 18:30, "Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, everyone according to his ways, says the Lord God. Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions. Just so, iniquity shall not be your ruin." So in Ezek. 33:11.

Ezek. 14:6, "Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord God, Repent, and turn yourselves from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations." He who looks upon both *God*, and at the same time looks upon any *sin* with a leering eye, has not yet reached unto true repentance; his repentance and profession cannot secure him from double damnation. He who serves God in some things, and his lusts in other things, says to God as David said to Mephibosheth concerning his lands, "You and Ziba divide the lands," 2 Sam. 19:29. Just so, you and Satan divide my soul, my heart between you. Ah! does not such a soul deserve a double hell?

Introduction

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HEAVEN ON EARTH

Thomas Brooks, 1667

A serious discourse concerning a well-grounded **assurance** of men's everlasting happiness and blessedness. Discovering the nature of assurance, the possibility of attaining it, the causes, springs, and degrees of it; with the resolution of several weighty questions.

"The greatest thing that we can desire—next to the glory of God—is our own salvation; and the sweetest thing we can desire, is the assurance of our salvation. In this life we cannot get higher, than to be assured of that which in the next life is to be enjoyed. All saints shall enjoy a heaven when they leave this earth; some saints enjoy a heaven while they are here on earth. That saints might enjoy **two heavens**, is the project of this book." Joseph Caryl.

"That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding." Col_2 2.

Epistle Dedicatory

To the Generals of the Fleets of the Commonwealth,
The better anything is, the more communicative it will. There are two sorts of goods; there are goods of the throne, as God, Christ, grace, assurance, etc.; and goods of the footstool, as honor, riches, etc. A man may have enough of the goods of the footstool to sink him, but he can never have enough to satisfy him. Man's happiness and blessedness, his felicity and glory, lies in his possessing the goods of the throne, which that you may, I humbly desire you seriously to view over the ensuing treatise.

It was an excellent saying of Lewis, emperor of Germany, 'Such goods are worth getting and owning, as will not sink nor wash away, if a shipwreck happens; but will wade and swim out with us.' Such are the goods that are here presented in this following discourse. In all storms, tempests, and shipwrecks, they will abide with the soul, they will walk and lie down with the soul, yes, they will go to the grave, to heaven, with the soul they will in the greatest storms be an ark to the soul.

I have observed in some terrible storms that I have been in, that the mariners' and the passengers' want of assurance, and of those other pearls of price that in this treatise are presented to public view, has caused their countenance to change, their hearts to melt; it has made them to "stagger and reel to and fro like drunken men, like men at their wits' ends," Psalm 76 5; whereas others who have had assurance, and their pardon in their bosoms, etc., have born up bravely, and slept quietly, and walked cheerfully, and practically have said, as Alexander once did, when he was in a great danger, "Now," says he, "here is a danger fit for the spirit of Alexander to encounter with." So they now, here are storms and dangers fit for assured, pardoned souls to encounter with, etc.

Gentlemen, This following discourse I do not present to you as a thing which needs your protection, for truth stands in the open fields, and it will make the lovers of it to stand, triumph, and overcome. Great is truth, and shall prevail. But, upon these following grounds, I render it to you

First, You have honored the Almighty, by helping him against the high and mighty; and he has honored you, by owning of you, by standing by you, by acting for you, and by making of you prosperous and victorious over a near enemy, a powerful enemy, an enraged enemy, a resolved enemy, a subtle enemy, a prepared enemy, a lofty enemy; and therefore I cannot but desire to honor you by dedicating the following treatise to the service of your souls, 1 Sam 2 30, "I will honor those who honor Me, but those who despise Me will be disgraced."

Secondly, Because you are my friends, and that cordial love and friendship which I have found from you has stamped in my affections a very high valuation of you.

The ancients painted *friendship* as a fair young man, in a poor garment. His bosom was open, so that his heart might be seen, whereupon was written 'a friend at hand and afar off.' Verily, your undeserved love and respects have made me willing to open my bosom to you in this epistle, and in the following treatise, as to friends that I love and honor. **Faithful friends are an invaluable treasure, and the rarity of them does much enhance their worth.**

Thirdly, Because of its exceeding usefulness and suitableness to your conditions. I have been some years at sea, and through grace I can say, that I would not exchange my sea-experiences for England's riches. I am not altogether ignorant of the troubles, trials, temptations, dangers, and deaths that do attend you. And therefore I have been the more stirred in my spirit to present the following discourse to you, wherein is discovered the nature of assurance, the possibility of attaining assurance, the causes, springs, degrees, excellencies, and properties of assurance; also the special seasons and times of God's giving assurance, with the resolutions of several weighty questions touching assurance. Further, **in this treatise, as in a glass, you may see these ten special things clearly and fully opened and manifested.**

1. What **knowledge** that is, which accompanies salvation.

2. What **faith** that is, which accompanies salvation.

3. What **repentance** that is, which accompanies salvation.

4. What **obedience** that is, which accompanies salvation.

5. What **love** that is, which accompanies salvation.

6. What **prayer** that is, which accompanies salvation.

7. What **perseverance** that is, which accompanies salvation.

8. What **hope** that is, which accompanies salvation.

9. The difference there is between true assurance, and that which is counterfeit.

10. The wide difference there is between the witness of the Spirit, and the hissing of the old serpent.

Gentlemen and Friends, You have your lives in your hands, there is but a short step between you and eternity. I would gladly have you all happy forever; to that purpose, I humbly beseech you, spare so much time, from your many great and weighty occasions, as to read this treatise, that in all humility I lay at your feet, and follow this counsel that in all love and faithfulness I shall now give unto you. For my design in all is your happiness here, and your blessedness hereafter.

First, **Get and keep communion with God.** Your strength to stand, and your strength to withstand all assaults—is from your communion with God. Communion with God is that which will make you stand fast, and triumph over all enemies, difficulties, dangers, and deaths. Communion with God will make a man as courageous and bold as a lion, yes, as a young lion which is in his hot blood, and fearless of any creature, Prov 28 1. Now the proverb is, It is more likely that deer will get victory with a lion as their leader; than lions with a leading deer. Joshua, captain of the Lord's battles, must be of a lion-like courage, and what will make them so, but communion with God? It was the saying of the old Earl of Essex, that he was never afraid to fight—except when he was conscious of some sin with which he had provoked God and lost communion with God.

While **Samson** kept his communion with God, no enemy could stand before him, he goes on conquering and to conquer, he lays heaps upon heaps; but when he has fallen in his communion with God, he falls presently, easily, and sadly before his enemies.

So long as **David** kept up his communion with God, no enemies could stand before him; but when he was fallen in his communion with God, he flies before the son of his affections.

Job keeps up his communion with God, and conquers Satan upon the ash-heap.

Adam loses his communion with God, and falls before Satan in paradise. Communion is the result of union.

Communion is a reciprocal exchange between Christ and a gracious soul. Communion is Jacob's ladder, where you have Christ sweetly descending down into the soul, and the soul by divine influences sweetly ascending up to Christ. Communion with God is a shield upon land, and an anchor at sea; it is a sword to defend you, and a staff to support you; it is balm to heal you, and a cordial to strengthen you. High communion with Christ will yield you two heavens, a heaven upon earth, and a heaven after death. He enjoys nothing, who lacks communion with God; he lacks nothing, who enjoys communion with God; therefore above all gettings, get communion with Christ, and above all keepings, keep communion with Christ. All other losses are not comparable to the loss of communion with Christ. He who has lost his communion, has lost his comfort, his strength, his all, and it will not be long before the Philistines take him, and put out his eyes, and bind him with fetters of brass, and make him grind in a prison, as they did Samson, Judg 16 20-21.

Secondly, **Make a speedy and a thorough improvement of all opportunities of grace and mercy.** Sleep not in harvest-time; do not trifle away your golden seasons; you have much work to do in a short time. You have a God to honor, a Christ to rest on, a race to run, a crown to win, a hell to escape, a heaven to obtain. You have weak graces to strengthen, strong corruptions to weaken; you have many temptations to withstand, and afflictions to bear; you have many mercies to improve, and many services to perform, etc. Therefore take hold on all opportunities and advantages, whereby you may be strengthened and bettered in your noble part. Take heed of crying, 'Tomorrow, tomorrow!' when God says "**Today**, if you will hear my voice, harden not your hearts," Heb_3 7-8.

Manna must be gathered in the *morning*, and the orient pearl is generated of the *morning* dew. It is a very sad thing for a man to begin to die before he begins to live. He who neglects a golden opportunity, does but create to himself a great deal of misery, as Saul, and many others, have found by sad experience. He who would to the purpose do a good action, must not neglect his season.

The men of Issachar were famous in David's account for wisdom, because they acted seasonably and opportunely, 1Ch_12 32. God will repute and write that man a wise man, who knows and observes his seasons of doing. Such there have been, who by giving a glass of water opportunely, have obtained a kingdom, as you may see in the story of Thaumastus and king Agrippa.

'Time,' says Bernard, 'would be a precious commodity in hell, and the use of it most gainful; where for one day a man would give ten thousand worlds if he had them.'

One passing through the streets of Rome, and seeing many of the women playing and delighting themselves with monkeys and baboons, and such like trivial things, asked "whether they had no children to play and delight themselves with?" So when men trifle away their precious time, and golden opportunities, playing and toying with this vanity and that vanity, we may ask whether these men have no God, no Christ, no Scripture, no promises, no blessed experiences, no hopes of heavenly glories—to enjoy and take delight in? Certainly, we should not reckon any time into the account of our lives, but that which we carefully pass, and well spend.

I have read of one Barlaam, who, being asked how old he was, answered, Forty-five years old; to whom Josaphah replied, "You seem to be seventy." "True," says he, "if you reckon ever since I was born; but I count not those years that were spent in vanity."

Most men spend the greatest part of their time on things that are that are of little or no value; as Domitian, the Roman emperor, spent his time in catching of flies; and Artaxerxes spent his time in making handles for knives; and Archimedes spent his time in drawing lines on the ground when that famous city Syracuse was taken; and Myrmecides spent more time to construct a bee than some men do to build a house.

Sirs, I beseech you remember that it was Cato, a heathen, who said "that account must be given not only of our labor, but also of our leisure." And in affirming this, he affirms no more than what the Scripture speaks. But oh what a sad account, then, have some to make! Well, as Cleopatra said to Mark Antony, "It is not for you to be fishing for gudgeons; but for towns, forts, and castles;" so say I, 'beloved, it is not for you to spend your time about poor, low, contemptible things, but about those high and noble things that make most for the interest of Christ.' Chilo, one of the seven sages, being asked what was the hardest thing in the world to be done, answered, 'To use and employ a man's time well.'

It was Titus, a pagan emperor, who uttered this memorable and praiseworthy apophthegm, 'My friends, I have lost a day!' when he had spent it in company, without doing good.

The Egyptians drew the picture of time with three heads, to represent the three differences. The first of a greedy wolf, gaping for time past, because it has ravenously devoured even the memory of so many things past recalling; the second of a crowned lion, roaring for time present, because it has the principality of all action, for which it calls aloud. The third of a deceitful dog, fawning for time to come, because it feeds fond men with many flattering hopes, to their own undoing.

I have read of a man who upon his dying bed would have given a world for time, he still crying out day and night, "Call time again, call time again." So Queen Elizabeth on her deathbed cried out, "Time, time, a world of wealth for an inch of time."

One Hermanus, a great courtier in the kingdom of Bohemia, being at point of death, did most lamentably cry out "that he had spent more time in the palace than in the temple, and that he had added to the riotousness and vices of the court, which he should have sought to have reformed," and so died, to the horror of those who were about him.

I have been the longer upon this, because I have been a sad spectator of men's misspending their time and trifling away golden opportunities; and though I thus speak, yet "imitation hope better things of you," to whom I dedicate it, "even such as do accompany salvation," Heb 6 9.

Thirdly, **Take no truths upon trust, but all upon trial.** 1 John 4 1, "Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to determine if they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world." This age is very full of impostors; therefore test the spirits, as jewelers do their stones, or as goldsmiths do their metals. An imitation stone may look as well as a genuine diamond, and many things glisten besides gold.

It was the glorious commendations of the Bereans, "that they searched the Scriptures daily," whether those things that Paul and Silas had delivered "were so;" and this act of theirs made them "more noble than those of Thessalonica," Acts 17 10-11. Christian nobility is the best and truest, where God himself is the top concern, and religion the root; in regard whereof all other things are but shadows and shapes of nobleness.

A father who had three sons was desirous to test their discernment, which he did by giving to each of them an apple that had some part of it rotten. The first eats up his, rotten and all; the second throws all his away, because some part of it was rotten; the third picks out the rotten, and eats that which was good. The third was the wisest. Some in these days swallow down everything, rotten and sound together; others throw away all truth, because everything that is presented to them is not truth; but surely they are the wisest that know how to choose the good and refuse the evil, Isa 7 15.

Fourthly, **Be exemplary to those among whom you live**, and over whom you command. A good leader makes a good follower. **Precepts may instruct, but examples persuade.** Truly, your examples will have a very great influence upon those who are under you. It is natural to inferiors to mind more what their superiors do, than what they say; therefore you had need be angelical in your walkings and actings. You are lights upon a hill, and therefore every eye will be upon you. Those who can find no ears to hear what you **say**, will find many eyes to see what you **do.** Scripture and experience do abundantly evidence that good men's examples have done a world of good in the world, and truly the evil examples of great men especially are very dangerous. The errors and evils of great men bring with them great perturbations and evils to the places and persons where they live. Oh therefore, be exemplary both in lip and life, in word and work, that others "seeing your good works, may glorify your Father who is in heaven," Matt 5 16. **Oh see that your lives be a commentary upon Christ's life.** Talk not of a good life, but let your life speak, said the philosopher.

Alexander willed that the Grecians and the Barbarians should no longer be distinguished by their garments, but by their manners; so should **Christians be distinguished from all others, by their lives and by their examples**; 2 Sam 23 3, "He who rules over men must be just, ruling in the fear of the Lord." An excellent master is always better than an excellent law. Let your laws be ever so good, if the lawmakers are bad, all will come to nothing. The people's eyes are much upon that Scripture, "Have any of the rulers believed on him?" John 7 48, etc. Abraham was an example of righteousness in Chaldea, Lot was just in Sodom, Daniel was an example of holiness in Babylon, Job was an example of uprightness in the land of Uz, which was a land of much profaneness and superstition, Nehemiah was an example of zeal in Damascus, and Moses was an example of meekness among the muttering and murmuring Israelites. Above all examples, Christ was exemplary in all piety and sanctity, in all righteousness and holiness, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. And why then should not you be exemplary among those poor creatures, among whom you live?

It was a good law that the Ephesians made, that men should propound to themselves the best patterns, and ever bear in mind some eminent man. The Arabians, if their king be sick or lame, they all feign themselves so.

It was the saying of Trajanus, a Spaniard, the first stranger that reigned among the Italians, 'subjects prove good, by a good king's example.' So do soldiers, so do sailors, by the good examples of their superior commanders. Such commanders as are examples of righteousness and holiness to others, are certainly high in worth, and humble in heart; they are the glory of Christ, and the honor of the Christian religion.

Fifthly, As you are in public places, so **lay out yourselves impartially for the common good** of all who have interest in you, or dependence upon you. So did Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Nehemiah, Ezra, Daniel, but above all, Christ himself. You are more for the people's sake, than the people are for yours. Magistrates are *rulers* over the people, but they are *servants* to the good of the people; as it is the duty of all to serve them, so it is their office to serve all. It is no paradox to affirm, that rulers are the greatest servants. The ancients were accustomed to place their statues of their princes by their fountains, intimating that they were, or at least should be, fountains of the public good.

The Counselor says, "That a man in public place should give his will to God, his love to his master, his heart to his country, his secrets to his friends, his time to business." *It is a base and unworthy spirit, for a man to make himself the center of all his actions.* The very heathen man could say, "A man's country, and his friends, and others, deserve a great part of him." The sun, which is the prince of lights, does impartially serve all, the peasant as well as the prince, the poor as well as the rich, the weak as well as the strong; you must be like the sun. The Sun of righteousness was of a brave public spirit he healed others, but was hurt himself; he filled others, but was hungry himself; he laid out himself, and he laid down himself for a public good. "That navigator dies nobly," says Seneca, "who perishes in the storm with the helm in his hand." It is really your praise among the saints, that you have ventured killing, burning, drowning, and all to save the ship of the commonwealth from sinking.

Sirs! Be not weary of public work. It is honor enough that God will make any use of you to carry on his design in the world. He is a faithful paymaster; **heaven at last will make amends for all**. "You shall reap, if you faint not," Gal 6 9. I do truly believe, God will make use of you to do greater things on the sea, than yet have been done. The Lord has now begun to set a foot upon the sea; let his enemies tremble. God will not allow his glory to be buried in the deeps. He is shaking the nations, and will not leave shaking them, until He who is the desire of all nations come. The Lord has said, "That he will overturn, overturn, overturn, until he comes, whose right it is to wear the crown, and the diadem, and he will give it him," Ezek 21 25-27. Until then, there will be little else, but plucking up and breaking down, Jer 45 4. Therefore be courageous, and follow the Lamb wherever he goes. You need fear no enemies, who have Christ the conqueror on your sides.

Sixthly, and lastly, **Make it more and more your chief work to make plentiful provisions for the eternal welfare of your souls.** Your souls are more worth than ten thousand worlds. All is well, if your soul is well; if that be safe, all is safe; if that is lost, all is lost—God, Christ, and glory is lost—if the soul is lost. Though others play the courtiers with their souls, yet do not you. The courtier does all things late he rises late, and dines late, and sups late, and repents late.

Sirs! Is it madness to feast the slave, and starve the wife? and is it not greater madness to feast the body and starve the soul? to make liberal provision for the body, and none for the soul? Do not they deserve double damnation, who prefer their bodies above their souls? Methinks our souls should be like to a ship, which is made little and narrow downwards, but more wide and broad upwards. Before all, and above all, look to your souls, watch your souls, make provision for your souls. When this is done, all is done; until this is done, there is nothing done which will yield a man comfort in life, joy in death, and boldness before the judgment.

Callenuceus tells us of a nobleman of Naples, that was accustomed profanely to say, "he had two souls in his body, one for God, and another for whoever would buy it." Truly, they will make but a bad bargain, that, to gain the world, shall sell their souls.

Dear sirs, I had much more to say, but I am afraid that I have already kept you too long from sucking of the honeycomb, from drinking at the fountain. I have held you too long in the porch; and therefore I shall only ask that you will bear with my plainness, and overlook my weakness; remembering that other addresses would savor more of flattery than of sincerity, more of policy than of piety, and would be both unkind in me, and displeasing to you.

Now the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ bless you and yours with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, and make you yet more and more instrumental for his glory, and this nation's good, that your names may be forever precious among his people, that they may bear you still upon their hearts before the Lord. This is the earnest and constant prayer of him who is,
Yours in all Christian service,
Thomas Brooks

EPISTLE TO THE SAINTS

To all saints who hold to Christ the head, and who walk according to the laws of the new creature; grace, mercy, and peace be multiplied from God the Father, though our Lord Jesus Christ.

Beloved in our dearest Lord,

You are those worthies "of whom this world is not worthy," Heb 11 38. You are the princes "who prevail with God," Gen 32 28. You are those "excellent ones" in whom is all Christ's delight, Psalm 16 3. You are his glory. You are his picked, culled, prime instruments which he will make use of, to carry on his best and greatest work against his worst and greatest enemies in these latter days. You are "a seal" upon Christ's heart, you are "engraved on the palms of his hand;" your names are written upon his heart, as the names of the children of Israel were upon Aaron's breastplate; you are the "epistle of Christ;" you are the "anointed" of Christ; you have "the spirit of discerning;" you have "the mind of Christ." [Isa 4 5; Rev 17 14, and Rev 19 8,14; Song 8 6; Isa 49 16; Exod 28 29; 2 Cor 2 8; 1 John 2 27; 1 Cor 1 10,12,15-16]

You have the greatest advantages and the choicest privileges to enable you to try truth, to taste truth, to apply truth, to defend truth, to strengthen truth, to uphold truth, and to improve truth. And therefore to whom should I dedicate this following discourse, but to yourselves? You have the next place to Christ in my heart; your good, your gain, your glory, your edification, your satisfaction, your confirmation, your consolation, your salvation—has put me upon casting in my little, little mite into your treasure.

Beloved, you know that in the time of the law, God did as kindly accept of goats' hair and badgers' skins, of turtledoves and young pigeons—they being the best things that some of his children had then to offer—as he did accept of gold, jewels, silk, and purple from others. I hope you will show out the same God-like disposition towards me, in a kind accepting of what is offered in this treatise to your wise and serious consideration. I could wish it better for your sakes, yet such as it is, I do in all love and humility present you with, desiring the Lord to make it an internal and eternal advantage to you.

I shall briefly acquaint you with the **REASONS** which have moved poor me, unworthy I,—who am the least of all saints, who am not worthy to be reckoned among the saints, to present this following discourse to public view; and they are these that follow

First, **To answer the desires, and gratify the earnest and pious requests of several precious souls**, who long to have these things printed upon their hearts, by the hand of the Spirit, which are printed in this book. God speaks aloud through the serious and affectionate desires of the saints; and this has made me willing to answer their desires. If great men's desires are to be looked upon as commands, why should good men's desires be looked upon with a squint eye? Seneca, a heathen, could say 'that the very looks of a good man delight me.' How much more then should the desires and requests of a good man overcome me?

Secondly, The good acceptance which my labors of the like nature have found among those who fear the Lord, especially that treatise called "Precious Remedies against Satan's Devices," has encouraged me to present this to public view, not doubting but that the Lord will bless it to the good of many, as I know he has done the former. Which that he may, I shall not cease to pray, that my weak service may be accepted of the saints, and that their "love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all discernment," Phil 1 9-11. That they may approve things that are excellent; that they may be sincere, and without offence until the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

Thirdly, **It is exceeding useful to the saints at all times, but especially in such changing times**, in times wherein everyone calls out, "Watchman, what of the night? watchman, what of the night? and the watchman answers, The morning comes, and also the night," Isa 21 11-12. Ah! Christians, the Lord is a-shaking heaven and earth; he is a-staining the pride of all glory; he is a-staining his garments with the blood of his enemies; [Joel 3 16; Hag 2 6; Isa 23 9; Isa 58 2-3] he is renting and tearing, he is burning and breaking, he is pulling up and throwing down, Jer 45 4-5. Now in the midst of all these convolutions and revolutions, thrice happy are those souls who have gained a well-grounded assurance of celestial things, Heb 10 34. Such souls will not faint, sink, nor shrink in an hour of temptation. Such souls will keep their garments pure and white, and will follow the Lamb wherever he goes, Rev 3 4, and Rev 14 4.

Assurance is a believer's ark, where he sits, Noah-like, quiet and still in the midst of all distractions and destructions, combustions and confusions. They are doubly miserable, who have neither heaven nor earth, temporals, nor eternals, made sure to them in changing times, Psalm 23 3-4; Rev 6 12.

The fourth ground of my presenting this treatise to public view, is, that **little well-grounded assurance which is to be found among most Christians**. Most Christians living between fears and hopes, and hanging, as it were, between heaven and hell, sometimes they hope that their state is good, at other times they fear that their state is bad now they hope that all is well, and that it shall go well with them forever; anon they fear that they shall perish by the hand of such or such a corruption, or by the prevalency of such or such a temptation; and so they are like a ship in a storm, tossed here and there, etc. Now that these weak souls may be strengthened, that these unstable souls may be established, that these disconsolate souls may be comforted, etc., I have presented this tract to the world, not doubting but that if the Lord shall draw out their spirits to a serious perusal of it, they shall find, through the blessing of Jehovah, that it will contribute very much to their attaining of a full assurance of their everlasting happiness and blessedness, as also to the keeping and maintaining of that full and blessed assurance; which that it may, I shall follow it with my prayers.

Fifthly, I have published this following discourse, **remembering that my life is but a vanishing vapor, James 4 14, and that the time of my sojourn in this world will be but short**, Psalm 39 12. Man's life is so short, that Austin doubts whether to call it a dying life, or a living death. Man's life is but the shadow of smoke, the dream of a shadow. This present life is not life, but a motion, a journey towards life (Bernard.) The life of a Christian is rather a step towards life, than life. Yet do I believe that that is not a death, but life, that joins the dying man to Christ; and that is not a life, but death, that separates the living man from Christ.

I know I shall not speak long to friends, saints, or sinners; therefore I was the more willing to take the opportunity of **preaching to you when I am dead**. As Abel by his faith, he being dead, yet speaks, Heb 11 4, so this treatise may speak and live, when I shall return to my long home, and fall asleep in the bosom of Christ. [Eccles 12 5; Acts 7 60] The prophets and apostles, though they are now in heaven—yet by their doctrines, examples, and writings, they still preach to the saints on earth.

Zisca desired his skin might serve the Bohemians in their wars, when his body could no more do it. Oh that poor I, who have been but a little serviceable to the saints in my life, might by this, and my former weak labors, be much serviceable to them after my death! **BOOKS** may preach, when the author **can**not, when the author **may** not, when the author **dares**, yes, and which is more, when the author **is** not!

Sixthly, **To testify my cordial love and affection to all the true lovers of Christ**, and to let them know that they are all, though under different forms, precious in my eyes, and very near and dear unto my heart. I bless God I am, and I desire more and more to be, one with everyone who is one with Christ, Phil 4 21; Col 1 4; 2 Thess 1 3. I would sincerely have as free, as large, and as sweet a heart towards saints, as Christ has. For a wolf to worry a lamb is usual, but for a lamb to worry a lamb is unnatural; for Christ's lilies to be among thorns, is ordinary, but for these lilies to become thorns, to tear and fetch blood of one another, is monstrous and strange. Ah, Christians! can Turks and Pagans agree? can Herod and Pilate agree? can Moab and Ammon agree? can bears and lions, can wolves and tigers agree? yes, which is more, can a legion of devils agree in one body? and shall not the saints agree—who must live together in heaven at last?

Pancirolus tells us, that the most precious pearl the Romans had, was called 'union'. Oh the union of saints is an unvaluable pearl! The heathen man, by the light of nature, could say, "That the thickest wall of a city in peace, and the safest stronghold in war, is unity. Truly all saints are one in Christ, all saints partake of the same spirit, promises, graces, and privileges. All saints are fellow-members, fellow-soldiers, fellow-travelers, fellow-heirs, fellow-sufferers, and fellow-citizens; and therefore I cannot, dare not but love them all, and prize them all; and to evidence it, I have dedicated this treatise to the service of their souls.

Seventhly and lastly, **To fence and fortify the souls of real, serious Christians against those brainsick notions**, and those airy speculations, and imaginary revelations, and enthusiastical fancies, etc., with which many are sadly deluded and deceived.

Thus have I given you a brief account of the reasons which have prevailed with me to publish this treatise to the world, and to dedicate it to yourselves. **Let your hearts dwell on truth, as the bee does upon the flower; every Scriptural truth being a flower of paradise, which is more worth than a world.**

Now the God of all grace fill your hearts and souls with all the fruits of righteousness and holiness, that you may attain unto a full assurance of your everlasting happiness and blessedness; which that you may is the sincere, earnest, and constant desire of him who is your soul's servant,
Thomas Brooks.

THE PREFACE

To be in a state of true grace, is to be miserable no more; it is to be happy forever. A soul in this state is a soul near and dear to God. It is a soul much beloved, and very highly valued by God. It is a soul housed in God. It is a soul safe in God's everlasting arms. It is a soul fully and eminently interested in all the highest and noblest privileges. [Psalm 144 15; Mal 3 17; Rom 8 16-17; Deut 33 26-27; 1 Cor 3 22-23] The being in a state of grace makes a man's condition happy, safe, and sure. But the seeing, the knowing of himself to be in such a state, is that which renders his life sweet and comfortable. The being in a state of grace will yield a man a heaven hereafter, but the seeing of himself in this state will yield him both a heaven here and a heaven hereafter; it will render him doubly blessed, blessed in heaven, and blessed in his own conscience.

Now **assurance** is a reflex act of a gracious soul, whereby he clearly and evidently sees himself in a gracious, blessed, and happy state; it is a sensible feeling, and an experimental discerning of a man's being in a state of grace, and of his having a right to an eternal crown of glory; and **this rises from the seeing in himself the special, peculiar, and distinguishing graces of Christ**, in the light of the Spirit of Christ, or from the testimony and report of the Spirit of God, "the Spirit bearing witness with his spirit, that he is a son, and an heir-apparent to glory," Rom 8 16-17.

It is one thing for me to have grace, it is another thing for me to see my grace; it is one thing for me to believe, and another thing for me to believe that I do believe; it is one thing for me to have faith, and another thing for me to know that I have faith. Now assurance flows from a clear, certain, evident knowledge that I have grace, and that I do believe, etc.

Now this assurance is the beauty and apex of a Christian's happiness in this life. It is usually attended with the strongest **joy**, with the sweetest **comforts**, and with the greatest **peace**. It is a pearl that most want, a crown that few wear. His state is safe and happy, whose soul is adorned with grace, though he sees it not, though he knows it not.

Assurance is not of the essence of a Christian. It is required to the **well**-being, to the comfortable and joyful being of a Christian; but it is not required to the **being** of a Christian. A man may be a true believer, and yet would give all the world, were it in his power, to **know** that he is a believer. To have grace, and to be sure that we have grace, is glory upon the throne, it is heaven on this side heaven.

Every unsettled Christian is a terror to himself, yes, his life is a very hell; fears and doubts are his chief companions, and so he judges himself unfit and unworthy to live, and yet he is afraid to die; and truly this is the sad condition of most Christians.

A man may be God's, and yet not know it; his estate may be good, and yet he not see it, Eph 1 13; 1 John 5 13; Gal 4 6. It is one thing to be an heir, and another thing to know that one is an heir. The child in the womb or in the arms, may be an heir to a crown, and yet understands it not. But more of these things you will find in the following discourse—to which I refer you.

CHAPTER 1

Showing that believers may in this life attain unto a well-grounded assurance of their everlasting happiness and blessedness. **By the following ten arguments it will evidently appear, that believers may in this life attain unto a well-grounded assurance of their everlasting happiness and blessedness.**

First, **The GROUND on which the apostle Paul builds his assurance**, is not any special revelation—but such a foundation as is common to all believers, as clearly appears from Rom 8 32-34, "He who did not spare his own Son—but gave him up for us all--how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died--more than that, who was raised to life--is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us."

It is clear from these words, that this blessed apostle had not that glorious assurance that he speaks of in the two last verses of this chapter [Rom 8 38-39] by immediate revelation, for he concludes it from such arguments as are general or common to all the godly; and therefore it roundly follows,

First, That **believers may in this life attain unto a well-grounded assurance of their everlasting happiness and blessedness**. So Hezekiah's assurance did spring from a principle which is common to all believers, 2 Kings 20 3. Consequently,

Secondly, **It is the very scope and end of the Scripture to help believers to a well-grounded assurance of their everlasting happiness and blessedness.** "These things," says John, "have I written unto you who believe on the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life," 1 John 5 13. These precious souls did believe, and they had eternal life, in respect of the promise of eternal life, Titus 1 2, and in respect of Christ their head, who had taken up their rooms aforehand in heaven, and who as a public person does represent all his people, Eph 2 6; and they had eternal life in respect of the beginnings of it; for what is **grace** but glory begun? and what is **glory** but grace perfected? **Grace** is glory in the bud, and **glory** is grace at the full. Now, though they had eternal life in all these respects, yet they did not know it; though they did believe, yet they did not believe that they did believe; therefore the apostle, in those precious epistles of his, does make it his business, by variety and plenty of arguments, to help all—but especially such as are weak in the faith, to a well-grounded assurance of their eternal welfare. Surely glory is nothing else but a bright constellation of graces; happiness is nothing but the quintessence of holiness.

Assurance produces such strong consolations, as swallows up all worldly griefs. As Moses' serpent did the sorcerers' serpents, or as the fire does the fuel.

It is the very drift and design of the whole Scripture, to bring souls first to an acquaintance with Christ, and then to an acceptance of Christ, and then to build them up in a sweet assurance of their actual interest in Christ which made Luther to say, "That he would not live in paradise, if he might, without the word—but with the word he could live in hell itself." Gregory calls the Scripture, the heart and soul of God. No histories are comparable to the histories of the Scripture for,
1, Antiquity;
2, rarity;
3, variety;
4, brevity;
5, perspicuity;
6, harmony;
7, verity.

The word evidences truth, it unmasks falsehood; it fights against folly, it opens the God's heart of mercy, and it assures believing souls of eternal felicity. That is a precious word in Hebrews 6 18, "God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged." God has given us his word, his oath, his seal, that our consolation may be strong, and that our salvation may be sure.

Now, what comfort can a believer have without assurance? It is the assurance of my interest in the land of Canaan, in gospel cordials, in precious promises, and in a precious Christ, which comforts and delights my soul. It is not enough to raise strong consolation in my soul, barely to know that there are mines of gold, mountains of pearl, heaps of treasures, a land flowing with milk and honey; but it is the knowledge of my personal interest in these, which raises joy in my soul. To know that there are such things, and that I have no interest in them, is rather a vexation than a consolation to me. To know that there is a feast of choicest delicacies—but not a taste for me; that there are pleasant fountains and streams—but I must perish for thirst in a wilderness; to know that there are royal robes for such and such—but I must die in my rags; to know that there is a pardon for such and such—but I must be turned off the ladder of life; to know that there is eternal glory for such and such—but I must still lie with Lazarus at Dives' door; such knowledge as this may well add to my vexation—but it will not add to my consolation.

It was rather matter of sorrow than joy to the men of the old world, to know that there was an ark, when they were shut out; and to the Israelites, to know that there was a brazen serpent set up, whereby others were cured, when they died with the stinging of the fiery serpents. Spira cried out, 'Christ is to me a grief, a torment, because I despised him, I rejected him, and I have no part in him.'

So how can it comfort me to know that there is peace in Christ, and pardon in Christ, and righteousness in Christ, and riches in Christ, and happiness in Christ, etc., for others—but none for me! Ah, this knowledge will rather be a hell to torment me than a ground of joy and comfort to me. But now **God has in the Scripture discovered who they are that shall be eternally happy**, and how they may reach to an assurance of their felicity and glory; which made Luther to say, "That he would not take all the world for one leaf of the Bible." The Bible is a Christian's magna charta, his chief evidence for heaven. Men highly prize, and carefully keep their charters, privileges, conveyances, and assurances of their lands; and shall not the saints much more highly prize, and carefully keep in the closet of their hearts, the precious word of God, which is to them instead of all assurances for their maintenance, deliverance, protection, confirmation, consolation, and eternal salvation.

Thirdly, **Other believers have in an ordinary way attained to a sweet assurance of their everlasting happiness and blessedness.** "We know," says the apostle, in the name of the saints, "that, if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven," 2 Cor 5 1-2. Their assurance sets them in triumph upon the throne. We have a house, a house above, a house in heaven, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. We have a house, a heavenly house, a house made by the greatest wisdom and the highest love; a house, that for honor, pleasures, riches, safety, stability, glory, and perpetuity, transcends all the royal palaces in the world. It is a house "not made with hands—but eternal in the heavens."

So the church Solomon's Song 2 16, "My beloved is mine, and I am his." I know, says the spouse, that Jesus Christ is mine. I can with the greatest confidence and boldness affirm it he is my head, my husband, my Lord, my Redeemer, my Justifier, my Savior; "and I am his. I am as sure that I am his, as I am sure that I live. I am his by purchase, and I am his by conquest; I am his by donation, and I am his by election; I am his by covenant, and I am his by marriage. I am wholly his; I am peculiarly his; I am universally his; I am eternally his. This I well know, and the knowledge thereof is my joy in life, and my strength and crown in death. [Eph 1 22-23; 1 Cor 1 30; 1 Cor 6 20; Psalm 110 3; John 10 29; John 15 16; Ezek 16 8; Hos 2 19-20]

So the church Isa 63 16, "You, Lord, are our Father; from ancient times, Your name is our Redeemer." David could say, "The Lord is my portion forever," Psalm 73 25-26; and at another time he could sweetly sing it out, "I am yours, save me!" Psalm 119 94. Job could look through the darkest cloud, and see that his Redeemer lives, Job 19 25. Thomas cries out, "My Lord, and my God!" John 20 28. And Paul trumpets it out, "That nothing could separate him from the love of Christ," Rom 8 38-39; and that he had "fought a good fight, and finished his course; and that there was laid up for him a crown of righteousness," 2 Tim 4 7-8.

By what has been said, it clearly appears that other believers have obtained assurance in an ordinary way, and therefore believers now may attain to a sweet assurance of their everlasting happiness and blessedness. Certainly, God is as loving, and his affections of compassion are as strong towards believers now, as ever they were to believers of old; and it makes as much for the honor of God, the lifting up of Christ, the stopping of the mouths of the wicked, and the rejoicing of the hearts of the righteous—for God to give assurance now, as it did for God to give it then.

Fourthly, **God has by promise engaged himself to assure his people of their happiness and blessedness.** "The Lord will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from those who walk uprightly," Psalm 84 11. If he will withhold no good thing, then certainly he will not always withhold assurance, which is the great good thing, the only thing, the chief thing, the peculiar thing that believers seek after. So Ezek 34 30-31, "Thus shall they know that I the Lord their God am with them, and that they, even the house of Israel, are my people, says the Lord God. And you my flock, the flock of my pasture, are men, and I am your God, says the Lord God." So John 14 21,23, "He who has my commandments, and keeps them, he it is who loves me; and he who loves me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." "If any man loves me," says Christ, "he will keep my words and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." Now has the Lord spoken it, and shall it not come to pass? Men say and unsay, they eat their words as soon as they have spoken them—but will God do so? Surely not! He is faithful, who has promised, "All the promises of God in him are yes, and in him amen," 2 Cor 1 20; that is, they are stable and firm, and shall really be made good. The promises are a precious book, every leaf drops myrrh and mercy, therefore sit down and suck at these breasts, warm yourself at this fire. [Isa 64 4; 1 Cor 2 9; Psalm 21 3; Isa 65 24]

God has been always as good as his word, yes, he has sometimes been better than his word; he has ever performed, and he has over performed. He promised the children of Israel only the land of Canaan—but he gave them, besides the whole land of Canaan, two other kingdoms which he never promised, Ah! how often has God blessed us with his bounties, and has given us in such mercies as have been as far beyond our hopes as our deserts. How has God, in these days of darkness and blood, gone beyond the prayers, desires, hopes, and confidences of his people in this land, and beyond what we could read in the book of the promises.

Satan promises the best—but pays with the worst! He promises honor—and pays with disgrace; he promises pleasure—and pays with pain; he promises profit—and pays with loss; he promises life—and pays with death. But God pays as he promises, all his payments are made in pure gold; therefore take these promises wherein God has engaged himself to assure you of his love, and spread them before the Lord, and tell him that it makes as well for his honor as your comfort, for his glory as for your peace, that he should assure you of your everlasting happiness and blessedness.

Fifthly, **There is in all the saints the springs of assurance, and therefore they may attain to assurance.**

Precious **FAITH** is one spring of assurance, and this is in all the saints, though in different degrees, 2 Pet 1 1. "Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them who have obtained like precious faith with us, through the righteousness of God, and our Savior Jesus Christ." Faith in time will, of its own accord, raise and advance itself to assurance. Faith is an appropriating grace; it looks upon **God**, and says with David, "This God is my God forever and ever, and he shall be my guide unto the death," Psalm 48 14. It looks upon **Christ**, and says with the spouse, "I am my beloved's, and his desire is towards me," Song 7 10. It looks upon an **immortal crown**, and says with Paul, Henceforth is laid up for me a crown of glory," 2 Tim 4 8. It looks upon the **righteousness of Christ**, and says, "This righteousness is mine to cover me." It looks upon the **mercy of Christ**, and says, "This mercy is mine to pardon me." It looks upon the **power of Christ**, and says, "This power is mine to support me." It looks upon the **wisdom of Christ**, and says, "This wisdom is mine to direct me." It looks upon the **blood of Christ**, and says, "This blood is mine to save me," etc. I may say of faith, as Luther says of prayer it has a kind of omnipotency in it, it is able to do all things.

As faith, so **HOPE** is another spring of assurance. Col 1 27, "Christ in you," says Paul, "the hope of glory." So Heb 6 19, "We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain." Hope takes fast hold upon heaven itself, upon the holy of holies. A Christian's hope is not like that of Pandora, which may fly out of the box, and bid the soul farewell, as the hope of hypocrites do; no, it is like the morning light, the least beam of it shall commence into a complete sunshine; it shall shine brighter and brighter until perfect day. The hypocrite's hope is like the morning dew, Job 8 13-14, "the hope of the godless will perish. His source of confidence is fragile; what he trusts in is a spider’s web."

When Alexander went upon a hopeful expedition, he gave away his gold; and when he was asked what he kept for himself, he answered, 'the hope of greater and better things.' So a Christian will part with anything rather than with his hope; he knows that hope will keep the heart both from aching and breaking, from fainting and sinking; he knows that hope is a beam of God, a spark of glory, and that nothing shall extinguish it until the soul is filled with glory. Souls which are big in hope, will not be long without sweet assurance. God loves not to see the hoping soul go always up and down sighing and mourning for lack of a good word from heaven, for lack of possessing what it hopes in time to enjoy. Hold out hope and patience "a little longer, and he who has promised to come, will come, and will not tarry," Heb 10 37.

Again, A **GOOD CONSCIENCE** is another spring of assurance 2 Cor 1 12, "For our rejoicing is this—Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, in the holiness and sincerity that are from God. We have done so not according to worldly wisdom but according to God's grace." So 1 John 3 21, "Beloved, if our heart condemns us not, then have we confidence towards God." A good conscience has sure confidence; he who has it sits, Noah-like, in the midst of all disruptions and turmoils, in sincerity and serenity, uprightness and boldness. A good conscience and a good confidence go together.

What the probationer-disciple said to our Savior, Matt 8 19, "Master, I will follow you wherever you go," that a good conscience says to the believing soul—"I will follow you from duty to duty, from ordinance to ordinance; I will stand by you, I will strengthen you, I will uphold you, I will be a comfort to you in life, and a friend to you in death; though all should leave you, yet I will never forsake you." **A good conscience will look through the blackest clouds, and see a smiling God.** Look! as an evil conscience is attended with the greatest fears and doubts, so a good conscience is attended with the greatest clearness and sweetness. And as there is no hell in this world compared to an evil conscience; so there is no heaven in this world compared to a good conscience. He who has a good conscience has one of the choicest springs of assurance, and it will not be long before God will whisper such a man in the ear, and say unto him, "Son, be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven!" Matt 9 2.

Again, real **LOVE TO THE SAINTS** is another spring of assurance, and this spring is a never-failing spring. This spring is in the weakest as well as in the strongest saints 1 John 3 14, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He who loves not his brother abides in death." The apostle does not say, We think, we hope, etc., that we are translated from death to life—but "we know" that we are translated from death to life, because we love the brethren. We know certainly; we are as certain of it as we are certain that we live. Love to the brethren is not the cause of our passing from a natural state to a spiritual state, from hell to heaven—but an evidence thereof. I confess it is very sad to consider how this precious stream of love is even dried up in many.

It was accustomed to be a proverb, 'one man is a God to another;' but now it may be truly said, 'one man is a devil to another.' He who lacks love to his brethren, lacks one of the sweetest springs from whence assurance flows. A greater hell I would not wish any man, than to live and not to love the beloved of God.

Now is it not as easy a thing as it is pleasant—for a man who has several sweet springs in his garden, to sit down, draw water, and drink? John 4 14. O believing souls! there are springs, there are wells of living water not only near you—but in you; why, then, do you, with Hagar, sit down sorrowing and weeping, Gen 21 15-19, when you should be a-tasting or a drinking not only of the springs above you—but also of the springs within you? A man who has fruit in his garden may both delight his eye and refresh his spirit with tasting of it, Gal 5 22-23. Certainly we may both eye and taste the fruits of the Spirit in us, they being the first fruits of eternal life. I think none but mad souls will say that grace is that forbidden fruit that God would have us neither see nor taste. We ought not so to mind a Christ in heaven, as not to mind "Christ in us the hope of glory," Col 1 27. Christ would not have his spouse so to mind her own blackness, as to forget that she is all fair and glorious within, Song 1 5; Song 4 7, and Psalm 45 11.

Sixthly, **The Holy Spirit exhorts us "to give all diligence to make our calling and election sure**," 2 Pet 1 10, and presses us to look to the obtaining of a "full assurance." Therefore believers may attain unto an assurance of their everlasting happiness and blessedness "Therefore brethren," says the apostle, "give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if you do these things, you shall never fall." The Greek word translated "give diligence" signifies two things (1.) All possible haste and speed; (2.) All manner of seriousness and intention in doing. Make it your main business, your chief study, your greatest care, to "make your calling and election sure," says the apostle. When this is done, your all is done. Until this is done, there is nothing done. And to show the necessity, utility, excellency, and possibility of assurance, the apostle says it is the one thing necessary; it is of an internal and eternal concern to make firm and sure work for your souls.

Assurance is a jewel of that worth, a pearl of that price, that he who will have it must work, and sweat, and weep, and wait to obtain it. He must not only use diligence—but he must use all diligence; not only dig—but he must dig deep, before he can come to this golden mine. Assurance is that "white stone," that "new name," that hidden manna, which none can obtain but such as labor for it as for life. Assurance is such precious gold, that a man must win it before he can wear it. Win gold, and wear gold, is the language both of heaven and earth.

The riches, honors, languages, and favors of this world cannot be obtained without much trouble and effort, without rising early and going to bed late; and do you think that assurance, which is more worth than heaven and earth, can be obtained by cold, lazy, heartless services? [Psalm 127 1-2; Luke 5 6; Prov 14 23] If you do, you do but deceive your own souls. There are five things that God will never sell at a cheap rate Christ, truth, his honor, heaven, and assurance. He who will have these must pay a good price for them, or go forever without them.

And as Peter exhorts you to "give all diligence to make your calling and election sure," so Paul presses you to look to the obtaining of full assurance, which does clearly evidence that there is a possibility of attaining unto a full assurance of our happiness and blessedness in this life. And "we desire," says the apostle, "that everyone of you do show the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the end, that you be not slothful—but followers of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises," Heb 6 11-12. We must not only strive after assurance—but we must strive and show all diligence to the attaining of that rich and full assurance which will scatter all fears and doubts, which will make a soul patient in waiting, courageous in doing, and cheerful in suffering, and which will make a heaven in a man's heart on this side heaven, and make him go singing into paradise, despite all of life's calamities and miseries.

And certainly it can never stand with the holiness, righteousness, faithfulness, and goodness of God, to put his people upon making their calling and election sure, and upon obtaining full assurance, if there were not a possibility of obtaining a full and well-grounded assurance of their happiness and blessedness in this life; and therefore it does undeniably follow that they may attain unto a blessed assurance of their felicity and glory while they are in this valley of misery. The contrary opinion will make a man's life a hell here, though he should escape a hell hereafter.

Seventhly, **The Lord has, in much mercy and love, propounded in his word the ways and means whereby believers may obtain a well-grounded assurance of their everlasting happiness and blessedness**; and therefore it may be obtained. Take three scriptures to evidence this.

The first is in 2 Pet 1 13. If you turn to the words, you shall find that the Lord does not only press them to "give all diligence to make their calling and election sure;" but he shows them plainly the way and means whereby this may be done, namely, by adding "to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge," etc.

The second scripture is that 1 Cor 11 28, "But let a man examine himself; and so let eat of that bread, and drink of that cup." By examination the soul comes to see what right it has to Christ and all the precious things of his house; and believingly to eat so of that bread of life, that heavenly manna, as that it may live forever.

The third scripture is that 2 Cor 13 5, "Examine yourselves whether you be in the faith; prove yourselves; know you not your own selves how that Christ is in you, except you be reprobates?" or unapproved, or rejected. By a serious examination of a man's own estate, he may know whether he has faith or not, **whether he is Christ's spouse or the devil's strumpet**, whether there be a work of grace upon his heart or not. And certainly it cannot stand with the glorious wisdom, unspotted righteousness; and transcendent holiness of God, to put men upon the use of such and such means in order to the obtaining of such and such an end, if that end could not be obtained by the use of the means prescribed, Exod 15 11, "Lord, who is like You among the gods? Who is like You, glorious in holiness, revered with praises, performing wonders?"

Man, who has but a spark of that wisdom, righteousness, and holiness which is in God, will not not labor to use of such or such means for the obtaining of health, wealth, or the like—unless there is a proper tendency in the use of those means prescribed to reach such ends. [cf. Job 38 6,18,21,33] And will God, who is wisdom, righteousness, and holiness in the abstract? Surely not! God is one infinite perfection in himself—which is eminently and virtually all perfections of the creatures; and therefore it is impossible that God should act below the creature, which he should do if he would put the creature upon the use of those means that would not reach the ends for which the means were used.

Thus you see clearly by this seventh argument that believers may in this life attain to a well-grounded assurance of their everlasting happiness and blessedness.

Eighthly, **It was the principal end of Christ's institution of the sacrament of the Supper that he might assure them of his love**, and that he might seal up to them the forgiveness of their sins, the acceptance of their persons, and the salvation of their souls, Matt 26 27-28. The nature of a seal is to make things sure and firm among men; so the supper of the Lord is Christ's broad seal, it is Christ's privy-seal, whereby he seals and assures his people that they are happy here, that they shall be more happy hereafter, that they are everlastingly chosen and beloved of God, that his heart is set upon them, that their names are written in the book of life, that there is laid up for them a crown of righteousness, and that nothing shall be able to separate them from him who is their light, their life, their crown, their all in all. [Dan 6 8; Matt 27 66; 2 Tim 4 8; Col 3 11]

In this sacrament Christ comes forth and shows his love, his heart, his affections, his blood—that his children may no longer say, Does the Lord Jesus love us? does he delight in us? etc.; but that they may say with the spouse, "I am my beloved's, and his desire is towards me," Song 7 10. The Hebrew word signifies, 'His desirous affection is towards me, as the wife's greatest affection is towards her dear husband.'

Many precious Christians there are who have lain long under fears and doubts, sighing and mourning; who have run from minister to minister, and from one duty to another, etc., and yet could never be persuaded of the love of Christ to their poor souls; but still their fears and doubts have followed them, until they have waited upon the Lord in this glorious ordinance, by which the Lord has assured them of the remission of their sins, and the salvation of their souls. In this ordinance God has given them manna to eat, and a white stone, and new name, which no man knows but he who receives it, Rev 2 17. Tell me, you precious, believing souls, whether you have not found God in this ordinance often whispering of you in the ear, saying, "Sons and daughters, be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven!" Matt 9 2. I know you have.

Those scriptures that do expressly require saints to be abundant and constant in rejoicing and in praising of God, to have always harps in their hands, and hallelujahs in their mouths, do clearly evidence that believers may attain to a well-grounded assurance in this life. How can they rejoice and glory in God, that do not know whether he will be an everlasting friend—or an everlasting enemy to them, whether he will always breathe out love—or wrath upon them? How can they but hang their harps on the willows, who do not know but that they may live in a strange land, Psalm 137 2; yes, in a land of darkness all their days? How can they be cheerful or thankful, who do not know but that they may at last hear that heartbreaking, that conscience-wounding, that soul-slaying sentence, "Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels!" Matt 25 41.

Now, there is no duty in the whole book of God that is more frequently and abundantly pressed upon believers than this of joy and rejoicing, of praise and thanksgiving, as all know who know anything of the Scripture 1 Thess 5 16, "Rejoice evermore." God would not have his children always a-putting finger in the eye. Ah, Christians! remember what Christ has done for you, and what he is still a-doing for you in heaven, and what he will do for you to all eternity—and you will not be able to spend your days in whining and mourning. It would be an endless business to cite every scripture wherein this duty is enjoined. It is a duty that is much pressed in both Testaments, and as little practiced by all whimpering Christians.

Psalm 32 11, "Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, you righteous; and shout for joy, all you who are upright in heart." Psalm 33 1, "Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous; for praise is lovely for the upright." 'The word notes a fair and lovely grace, for which a thing is to be liked and desired.' Ainsworth.

Christians, are not your mercies greater than your miseries? Yes! Are your greatest sufferings comparable to the least spark of grace or beam of glory revealed in you or to you? No! Will not one hour's being in the bosom of Christ recompense you for all your trouble and travail? Yes. Why, then, do you spend more time in sighing than in rejoicing; and why do you, by your not rejoicing, sadden those precious hearts that God would not have saddened, and gladden those graceless hearts that God would not have gladdened? Their joy lasts forever, whose object of joy remains forever.

A beautiful face is at all times pleasing to the eye—but then especially when there is joy manifested in the countenance. Joy in the face puts a new beauty, and makes that which before was beautiful, to be exceeding beautiful. It puts a luster and glory upon beauty; so does joy in the face, heart, and life of a Christian, cast a general splendor and glory upon him, and the ways of God wherein he walks. The joy of the Lord is not only the strength—but also the beauty and glory of Christians, Neh 8 10.

Joy and rejoicing is a consequence and effect of assurance, as many believers by experience find; and therefore, without all question, believers may attain unto a well-grounded assurance of their everlasting happiness, else it would be impossible that they should "rejoice evermore;" so that by this argument, as by the former, it clearly appears that believers may in this life be assured of their eternal well being. Katherine Brettergh, under the power of assurance, cries out, "Oh the joys, the joys, the inconceivable joys my heart is filled with!"

Tenthly, The tenth and last argument, to prove that believers may in this life attain to a well-grounded assurance, is this, That **God would never have made such a broad difference in the Scripture** between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, between the righteous and the wicked, between saints and sinners, between sons and slaves, sheep and goats, between lions and lambs, between wheat and chaff, light and darkness, etc., **if it were impossible for men to know which of these two estates they are in**. [Gen 3 15; Ezek 18 19, seq.; Matt 25 1, seq.; Matt 3 12; 2 Cor 6 14] Therefore they may know whether they are in a state of life or in a state of death, in a state of misery or in a state of felicity, in a state of wrath or in a state of love, Matt 13 1, seq.

Oh! it is much below the grace of God, it is repugnant to the wisdom of God, to make such a wide difference between his own children and Satan's, John 8 44, if it were not possible for every child to know his own father. "You shall call me *my father*." Isa 63 16, "Doubtless You are our Father, even though Abraham does not know us and Israel doesn't recognize us. You, Lord, are our Father; from ancient times, Your name is our Redeemer." The saints' motto is, 'No father is like our Father!' The weakest saint can say, "Abba, Father!" Rom 8 15; the Lord will not leave his children comfortless, or as orphans, or fatherless children, as it is in the Greek. God has no child so young—but can more or less call him Father. Though the salvation of believers does not depend upon their knowledge of God to be their father, yet their consolation does; therefore the Lord will not be only a father to Israel—but he will make Israel know that he is his father Jer 3 4, "Will you not from this time cry unto me, *My Father, you are the guide of my youth?*" We say he is a wise child, who knows his father; such wise ones believers are.

By these ten arguments it does evidently appear, that believers may in this life attain unto a well-grounded assurance of their everlasting happiness and blessedness. I shall apply this a little, and then close up this chapter.

USE. This precious truth thus proved, looks sourly upon all those who affirm that believers cannot in this life attain unto a certain well-grounded assurance of their everlasting happiness and blessedness—as papists and Arminians all know that their writings and teachings, are in arms against this Christ-exalting, and soul-cheering doctrine of assurance. "I know no such thing as assurance of heaven in this life," says Grevinchovius the Arminian. Assurance is a pearl that they trample under feet; it is a beam of heaven that has so much light, brightness, and shining glory in it, that their bleary eyes cannot behold it.

Assurance is glory in the bud, it is the suburbs of paradise, it is a cluster of the land of promise, it is a spark of God, it is the joy and crown of a Christian; the greater is their impiety and folly who deny assurance, who cry down assurance under any names or notions whatever. They are rather tormenters than comforters who say, 'poor souls may know that there is a crown of righteousness—but they must not presume to know that they themselves shall have the honor to wear that crown; and that makes God like King Xerxes, who crowned his helmsman in the morning, and beheaded him in the evening of the same day.

Arminians are not ashamed to say, that God may crown a man one hour, and uncrown him in the next; they blush not to say that a man may be happy and miserable, under love and under wrath, an heir of heaven and a firebrand of hell, a child of light and a child of darkness—and all in an hour. Oh what miserable comforters are these! What is this but to torment the weary soul? to dispirit the wounded spirit, and to make them most sad whom God would have most glad? Ah! how sad is it for men to affirm, that wounded spirits may know "that the Sun of righteousness has healing in his wings," Mal 4 2; but they cannot be assured that they shall be healed. The hungry soul may know that there is bread enough in his Father's house—but cannot know that he shall taste of that bread, Luke 15 17. The naked soul may know that Christ has robes of righteousness to cover all spots, sores, defects, and deformities of it—but may not presume to know that Christ will put these royal robes upon it, Rev 3 18. The impoverished soul may know that there be unsearchable riches in Christ—but cannot be assured that ever it shall partake of those riches, Eph 3 8. All that these men allow poor souls, is guesses and conjectures that it may be well with them. They will not allow souls to say with Thomas, "My Lord, and my God," John 20 18; nor with Job to say, "My Redeemer lives," Job 19 25; nor with the church, "I am my beloved's, and his desire is towards me," Song 7 10. And so they leave souls in a cloudy, questioning, doubting, hovering condition, hanging, like Mahomet's tomb at Mecca, between two loadstones; or like Erasmus, as the papists paint him, hanging between heaven and hell. They make the poor soul a terror to itself.

What more uncomfortable doctrine than this? What more soul-disquieting, and soul-unsettling doctrine than this? You are this moment in a state of spiritual life—you may the next moment be in a state of spiritual death; you are now gracious—you may the next hour be graceless; you are now in the promised land—yet you may die in the wilderness; you are today a habitation for God—you may tomorrow be a synagogue of Satan; you have today received the white stone of absolution—you may tomorrow receive the black stone of condemnation; you are now in your Savior's arms—you may tomorrow be in Satan's paws; you are now Christ's freeman—you may tomorrow be Satan's bondman; you are now a vessel of honor—you may suddenly become a vessel of wrath; you are now greatly beloved, you may soon be as greatly loathed; this day your name is fairly written in the book of life—tomorrow the book may be crossed out, and your name blotted out forever. This is the Arminians' doctrine, and if this be not to keep souls in a doubting and trembling, and shivering condition, what is it?

Well, Christians, remember this is your happiness and blessedness, that "none can pluck you out of your Father's hand," John 10 29; that you are "kept," as in a garrison, or as with a guard, "by the power of God through faith unto salvation," 1 Pet 1 5. "That the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but the kindness of the Lord shall not depart from you, neither shall the covenant of peace be removed, says the Lord that has mercy on you," Isa 54 10. "That Christ ever lives to make intercession for you," Heb 7 25; and that men and devils are as able, and shall as soon, make a world, dethrone God, pluck the sun out of the firmament, and Christ out of the bosom of the Father—as they shall pluck a believer out of the everlasting arms of Christ, or rob him of one of his precious jewels! Deut 33 26-27.

I shall close up this chapter with an excellent saying of Luther "The whole Scripture," says he, "Both principally aim at this thing, that we should not doubt—but that we should hope, that we should trust, that we should believe, that God is a merciful, a bountiful, a gracious, and a patient God to his people."

CHAPTER 2

Containing several weighty propositions concerning assurance.

I. The first proposition that I shall lay down concerning assurance is this, That **God denies assurance for a time to his dearest and choicest ones, and that upon many considerable grounds.**

(1.) As, first, **for the exercise of their grace**. A gracious soul would always be upon mount Tabor, looking into Canaan; he would always be in his Father's arms, and under his Father's smiles; he would always be in the sunshine of divine favor; he would always have the heavens open, that be might always see his Christ and his crown; he would with Peter be always upon the mount; he is loath to walk through the valley of darkness, through the valley of Baca. As the king of Sodom said once to Abraham, "Give me the people, and take the goods to yourself," Gen 14 21. Just so, gracious souls are apt to say, "Give me joy, give me peace, give me assurance; and take trials, afflictions, and temptations to yourselves!" But really—what use would there be of the stars, if the sun did always shine? Why, none. Why, no more use would there be of your graces, if assurance should be always continued; therefore the Lord, for the exercise of his children's faith, hope, patience, etc., is pleased, at least for a time, to deny them assurance, though they seek it by earnest prayer, and with a flood of penitent tears. If saints should always have assurance, they would be too apt to say, 'it is good for us to be here.'

(2.) The Lord denies assurance to his dearest ones, **that he may keep them in the exercise of those religious duties that are most costly and contrary to flesh and blood**—such as mourning, repenting, self-judging, self-loathing, self-abhorring, and self-searching; as Lam 1 16, "For these things I weep my eye, my eye runs down with water, because the comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me." Lam 3 2-3, "He has led me, and brought me into darkness, not into light. Surely against me he is turned; he turns his hand against me all the day." Lam 3 17, "And you have removed my soul far off from peace I forgot prosperity." Now, what this sad dealings of God puts the church upon you may see in Lam 3 40. "Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord." That is, "Bring back my soul," or "fetch again my soul," that is comfort, refresh, and rejoice me as in former times. These two Hebrew words are joined together, to intimate to us that diligent, narrow, and accurate inquiry that they should make into their ways, to search as men do into the bowels of the earth, for the discovery of rich mines and treasures.

And if you look throughout the book, you shall find the church much in self-examining, self-judging, self-loathing, etc., upon this ground, that God had hidden his face, and drawn a curtain between him and them, and stood at a distance from them, and would not speak comfortably and friendly to them.

Now, if you ask me **why God will put his children upon those duties of religion which are most costly and contrary to flesh and blood?** I answer,

1. That his strength and power may appear in their weakness, 2 Cor 12 7-9.

2. To discover not only the *reality*—but also the *strength* of their graces. A *little* grace will put a man upon those religious duties that are easy and pleasing to flesh and blood, and rather profitable and pleasurable; but it must be *strength* of grace that puts man upon those services that are costly and cross to the *old man*.

3. That they may be more fully and eminently conformable to Christ their head, who, from first to last, who, even from the cradle to the cross—was most exercised in those duties and services that were most costly and cross to flesh and blood, as is most evident to all who study the writings of the Holy Spirit, more than the writings of men.

4. Because in the performance of such duties they do in a more singular way bear up the name and credit, the honor and glory of God, Christ, and the gospel in the world. The very world will cry out, "Ah, these are Christians indeed!"

5. Because the more they are in the exercise of such duties, the greater at last will be their reward, Heb 11 7.

6. That Satan's plots and designs may be the better prevented, and the wicked world more justly condemned, who do not only despise the hardest duties of religion—but also neglect the easiest, Matt 25 4-6.

(3.) The third reason why God denies assurance to his most precious ones, is **that they may be the more clearly and fully convinced of that exceeding sinfulness and bitterness that is in sin**, "Your wickedness will punish you; your backsliding will rebuke you. Consider then and realize how evil and bitter it is for you when you forsake the Lord your God and have no awe of me," declares the Lord, the Lord Almighty." Jeremiah 2 19.

"Ah Lord," says the soul which is sighing and mourning under the lack of assurance, "I see now that sin is not only evil—but the greatest evil in the world, in that it keeps me from an assurance of my interest in you, who is the greatest good in the world, and from an assurance of that favor of yours—which is better than life, and from the light of your sweet countenance—which is better than food, and wine, and oil; and from those joys and comforts—which can only make a paradise in my soul, Psalm 4 7; Psalm 63 3-4. Ah, Lord! now I find sin not only to be bitter—but to be the very quintessence of bitterness. Ah! no bitterness so bitter as sin—which keeps my soul from that sweet assurance, which is not only the top and crown of mercy—but also the sweetener of all mercy, misery, and glory. Oh what unspeakable evil do I now see in that evil which keeps me from the most desirable good! Oh what bitterness do I now find in that which Satan, the world, and my own deluded heart, told me I should find sweetness in? Ah, now I find by experience, that to be true, which long since the faithful messengers of the Lord have told me; namely, that sin debases the soul of man, that it defiles and pollutes the soul of man, that it renders the soul most unlike to God, who is the *optimum maximum*—the best and greatest; who is *omnia super omnia*—all, and above all; and renders it most like to Satan, who is a very sea and sink of sin! Ah, now I find by experience, that sin has robbed the soul of the image of God, the holiness of God, the beauty of God, the glory of God, the righteousness of God, and that keeps the soul from wearing this golden chain of assurance!"

"The deceitfulness of sin." Hebrews 3 13. Sin has its original from a deceitful subtle serpent, and is the ground of all the deceit in the world, and is the great deceiver of souls. Yes, sin is *peccatum est Deicidium*—sin is a killing of God. "But they kept shouting--Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" Luke 23 21

(4.) A fourth reason why God denies assurance to his dearest ones, is, because **they seek assurance more for themselves—than they do for his honor and glory**; more that they may have joy without sorrow, comfort without torment, peace without trouble, sweet without bitter, light without darkness, and day without night—than that God may be exalted and admired, and his name alone made great and glorious in the world. The glory of God must consume all other ends, as the sun puts out the light of the fire.

Many Christians are like the bee which flies into the field to seek honey to eat—but brings it not into the master's hive. So they seek for assurance, that they may feed upon that sweet honeycomb, more than to fill their Lord and master's hive with thanks and praise.

That servant who minds his wages more than his work—must not wonder if his master is slack in paying; no more should he who minds his comfort more than obedience, who minds assurance more than divine honor—wonder that God delays the giving in of assurance, though it be sought with many prayers and tears. He who is most tender for God's honor, shall find by experience that God is most mindful of his comfort. God will not see that soul sit long in sackcloth and ashes, who makes it his business to set God up upon his throne. He who minds God's glory more than his own good, shall quickly find that God will even obscure his own glory to do him good. If we are not lacking in giving God glory—he will not long be lacking in giving us joy.

It was a notable saying of Nazianzen, "Let me be cast into the sea, let me lose my peace—rather than the name of Christ should suffer;" so tender was he of the honor and glory of Christ.

(5.) A fifth reason why God denies assurance to his children, is, **That when they have it, they may the more highly prize it, the more carefully keep it, the more wisely improve it, and the more affectionately and effectually bless God for it.** None sets such a price upon light, as he who has lain long in a dungeon of darkness. Just so, none sets such a price upon assurance, as those children of light who have walked most in spiritual darkness. Ah! how sweet was the light to Jonah, that had been in the belly of hell, Jon 2 2. Just so, is assurance to those who, through slavish fears and unbelief, "have made their beds in hell," as the psalmist speaks, Psalm 139 8. Gold which is fetched from afar, and dearly bought—is most esteemed. Just so, is that assurance which costs the soul most pains and patience, most waiting and weeping, most striving and wrestling—is most highly valued, and most wisely improved. Socrates prized the king's countenance above his coin, his good looks above his gold. Just so, do saints prize assurance above all worldly enjoyments.

As, by the lack of *temporals*—God teaches his people the better to prize them, and improve them when they enjoy them. Just so, by the lack of *spirituals*—God teaches his people the better to prize them, and improve them when they enjoy them. Ah! how sweet was Canaan to those who had been long in the wilderness! How precious was the gold and earrings to Israel, who had been long in bondage in Egypt; and the gifts and jewels to the Jews that had been long in bondage in Babylon! Just so, is assurance precious to those precious souls who have been long without it—but at last come to enjoy it, Num 14 33-34; Exod 11; Ezra 1.

After the Trojans had been sailing and wandering a long time in the Mediterranean Sea, as soon as they espied land—they cried out with exulting joy, "Italy, Italy!" Just so, when poor souls shall come to enjoy assurance, who have been long tossed up and down in a sea of sorrow and trouble—how will they with joy cry out, "Assurance, assurance, assurance!" "The longer I wait for the empire," said the emperor's son, "the greater it will be." Just so, the longer a saint waits for assurance, the greater at last it will be.

(6.) The sixth reason why God denies assurance to his dearest ones, at least for a time, is, **That they be kept humble and low in their own eyes**; as the enjoyment of mercy gladdens us—so the lack of mercy humbles us. David's heart was never more humble, than when he had a crown only in hope—but not in hand. No sooner was the crown set upon his head, but his blood rises with his outward good, and in the pride of his heart be says, "I shall never be moved," Psalm 30 6.

Hezekiah was a holy man, yet he swells big under mercy. (2 Chron 32. The whole chapter is worthy of reading.) No sooner does God lift up his house higher than others—but he lifts up his heart in pride higher than others. When God had made him high in honors, riches, victories, yes, and in spiritual experiences—then his heart flies high, and he forgets God, and forgets himself, and forgets that all his mercies were from God's *free* mercy, that all his mercies were but *borrowed* mercies. Surely, it is better to lack any temporal mercy—than a humble heart; it is better to have no temporal mercy—than lack a humble heart. "As I get good by my sins, so I get hurt by my graces," said Mr. Fox, they being accidental occasions of pride to him. Augustine says that the first, second, and third virtue of a Christian—is humility.

A little, little mercy, with a humble heart—is far better than the greatest mercies with a proud heart. I had rather have Paul's poor coat with his humble heart—than Hezekiah's lifted-up heart with his treasures and royal robes. Well, Christians, remember this, God has two strings to his bow; if your hearts will not lie humble and low under the sense of sin and misery, he will make them lie low under the lack of some desired mercy. The lack of assurance tends to bow and humble the soul, as the enjoyment of assurance does to raise and rejoice the soul; and therefore do not wonder why precious souls are so long without assurance, why Christ's chariot, *assurance*, is so long a-coming, Judg 5 28. God has two hands—a hand *open* and a hand *shut*; and he makes use of both to keep souls humble.

(7.) The seventh and last reason why God denies assurance, for a time, even to his dearest ones, is, **That they may live clearly and fully upon Jesus Christ, that Jesus Christ may be seen to be all in all.** It is natural to the soul to rest upon everything below Christ; to rest upon creatures, to rest upon graces, to rest upon duties, to rest upon divine manifestations, to rest upon celestial consolations, to rest upon gracious evidences, and to rest upon sweet assurances. Now the Lord, to cure his people of this weakness, and to bring them to live wholly and solely upon Jesus Christ, denies comfort, and denies assurance, etc., and for a time leaves his children of light to walk in darkness. Christians, this you are always to remember, that though the *enjoyment of assurance* makes most for your consolation; yet the *living purely upon Christ in the lack of assurance*, makes most for his exaltation. There s no Christian compared to him who, in the lack of *visible* divine consolations—can live upon an *invisible* God; who in thick darkness—can live upon God as an everlasting light. *All* good is in the *chief* good. Christ is all things to Christians. He is—bread to feed them, a fountain to refresh them, a physician to heal them, a rock to shelter them, a light to guide them, and a crown to crown them!

He is happy that believes upon seeing, upon feeling—but thrice happy are those who believe when they do not see; who love when they do not know that they are beloved; and who in the lack of all comfort and assurance, can live upon Christ as their only all. [Heb 11 27; Isa 60 19; Mic 7 7-9; John 20 28-29] He who has learned this holy art, cannot be miserable; he who is ignorant of this are cannot be happy.

II. The second proposition is this, That **the Scripture has many sweet significant WORDS to express that well-grounded assurance by, which believers may attain to in this life.**

Sometimes it is called a **persuasion**.

(1.) There is a **natural** persuasion natural principles may persuade a man that there is a God, and that this God is a great God, a beauteous God, etc.—but this will not make a man happy;

(2.) there is a **moral** persuasion;

(3.) there is a **traditional** persuasion;

(4.) there is a **divine** persuasion which flows from divine principles and causes.

"For I am **persuaded**, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 8 38-39.

It is rendered **a clear and peculiar manifestation of Christ to the soul**, John 14 21-24.

It is often rendered, **to know**, as 1 John 3 14,19,24, and 1 John 5 13,19, etc.

But the word that the Scripture does most fully express this by **full assurance**. That is, when the soul, by the Spirit and word, is so fully persuaded of its eternal happiness and blessedness, that it is carried, like Noah's ark, above all waves, doubts, and fears; and, Noah-like, sits still and quiet; and can, with the apostle Paul, triumph over sin, hell, wrath, death, and Satan.

This is sometimes called "full assurance of **understanding**;" sometimes it is called "full assurance of **hope**;" and sometimes it is called full assurance of **faith**;" because these are the choice and pleasant springs from whence assurance flows, Col 2 2; Heb 6 11,18-19; Heb 10 22.

Now though this full assurance is earnestly desired, and highly prized; and the lack of it much lamented; and the enjoyment of it much endeavored after by all saints—yet it is only obtained by a few. Assurance is a mercy too good for most men's hearts; it is a crown too weighty for most men's heads. Assurance is optimum maximum—the best and greatest mercy; and therefore God will only give it to his best and dearest friends.

The emperor Augustus in his great feasts, gave trifles to some—but gold to others. Just so—honors, riches and worldly pleasures are the trifles which God gives to the worst of men. But assurance is that "tried gold," Rev 3 18, that God only gives to tried friends. Among those few who have a share or portion in the special love and grace of God, there are but a very few who have an assurance of his love. Most saints, I believe, can give a loud testimony to this truth. I shall rejoice when their experiences shall confute it.

It is one mercy for God to love the soul; and another mercy for God to assure the soul of his love. God writes many a man's name in the book of life, and yet will not let him know it until his hour of death—as the experience of many precious souls does clearly evidence. Assurance is a flower of paradise that God sticks but in a few men's bosoms. It is one thing to be an heir of heaven—and another thing for a man to know or see himself an heir of heaven. The babe may be heir to a crown, a kingdom—and yet not understand it. Just so many a saint may be heir to a crown, a kingdom of glory—and yet not know it. As the babes which passes the pangs of the first-birth do not presently cry, "Father, father;" so the newborn babes in Christ, who have passed the pangs of the second-birth, do not presently cry "Abba, Father;" they do not presently cry out, "Heaven, heaven is ours! Glory, glory is ours!" Rom 8 16-17; 1 Pet 2 2.

III. The third proposition is this, That **a man may have true grace—who has no assurance of the love and favor of God, or of the remission of his sins and salvation of his soul.**

A man may be truly holy—and yet not have assurance that he shall be eternally happy. A man may be God's—and yet he not know it; his estate may be good—and yet he not see it; he may be in a safe condition—when he is not in a comfortable condition. All may be well with him in the court of *glory*—when he would give a thousand worlds that all were but well in the court of *conscience*. The blind man in the Gospel called his faith—unbelief.

The Canaanite woman showed much love, wisdom, zeal, humility, and faith; yes, such strength of faith as makes Christ admire her, and yield to her, grace her, and gratify her; and yet she had no assurance that we read of, Matt 15 22,29.

So Paul, speaking of the believing Ephesians, says, "In whom you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation in whom also, after you believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise." Eph 1 13.

First, they **heard** the word; and then

secondly, they **believed**; and then

thirdly, they were **sealed**; that is, fully assured of a heavenly inheritance, of a purchased possession.

So 1 John 5 13, "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life." So Isa 50 10, "Who among you fears the Lord and obeys the word of his servant? Let him who walks in the dark, who has no light, trust in the name of the Lord and rely on his God." So Mic 7 8-9, "Do not gloat over me, my enemy! Though I have fallen, I will rise. Though I sit in darkness, the Lord will be my light. Because I have sinned against him, I will bear the Lord's wrath, until he pleads my case and establishes my right. He will bring me out into the light; I will see his righteousness."

Asaph was a very holy man, a man eminent in grace; and yet he was without assurance, as may be seen at large, Psalm 77. Heman, doubtless, was a very precious soul, and yet from his youth up, he was even distracted with terrors, Psalm 88. There are thousands of Christians who are in a state of grace, and shall be saved—who lack assurance and the proper effects of it—as high joy, pure comfort, glorious peace, and vehement longings after the coming of Christ. [Isa 8 17; Isa 49 14-16; Isa 54 6-11]

Assurance is requisite to the *well*-being of a Christian—but not to the *being* in a state of grace. It is requisite to the consolation of a Christian—but not to the salvation of a Christian. It is requisite to the well-being of grace—but not to the mere being of grace. Though a man cannot he saved without faith—yet he may be saved without assurance. God has in many places of the Scripture declared, that without faith there is no salvation—but God has not in any one place of the Scripture declared, that without assurance there is no salvation. God never said, "Except you be assured I will pardon you—I will never pardon you; except you are assured I will save you—I will never save you." This is language God never spoke; and why, then, should men speak it?

A man must first be saved before he can be assured of his salvation, for he cannot be assured of that which is not. And a man must have saving grace before he can be saved, for he cannot be saved by that which he has not. Again, a man must be ingrafted into Christ, before he can be assured of forgiveness or salvation—but this he cannot be before he has faith, therefore—there may be grace where there is no assurance. Christ went to heaven in a cloud, and the angel went up to heaven in the smoke and flame of the sacrifice; and so I doubt not but many precious souls do ascend to heaven in clouds and darkness, Acts 1 9; Judg 13 20.

Now a man may have grace, and yet lack assurance; and this may arise from these causes.

(1.) First, **From his caviling spirit, and from his siding with the old man against the new, with the flesh against the spirit, with corruption against grace**, with the house of Saul against the house of David, with the work of Satan against the work of God. Sin is Satan's work; grace and holiness are God's work; yet such is the weakness, yes, madness of many poor souls, that they will fall in and side with Satan's work, rather than with God's, against their own souls. Cease caviling, you weak soul, and say, "O Lord, forgive what I have been, correct what I am, direct what I shall be."

Ah! Christians, will you condemn that judge for injustice and unrighteousness, who shall open his ears to the complaints of the plaintiff—but stops his ears against the answers of the defendant; and will you not condemn yourselves for that you do with both ears hear what sin and Satan has to say against the soul—but have not one ear open to hear what the Spirit, what grace, what the new man, what the noble part of man, what the regenerate man, can say for the justification, satisfaction, and consolation of the soul.

Just before John Prostiborski was laid on the rack, he, with a heroic indignation, cut out his tongue, and cast it away. Being demanded why he did so, set down his answer with a quill on the wall "I did it because I would not be brought by any tortures, to say anything that is false." Ah! caviling souls, I had almost said that you were better cut out your tongues than allow them to be caviling against the grace of God, the image of God, which is stamped upon you.

Let me tell you, O you caviling soul! that it is your wisdom and your duty to remember that command of God, which does prohibit you from bearing false witness against your neighbor. That same command does enjoin you not to bear false witness against the work of grace upon your own heart, against the precious and glorious things that God has done for your soul. And you should make as much conscience of bearing false witness against anything the Lord has wrought *in* you, and *for* you, as you do make conscience of bearing false witness against your neighbor. It cannot but be sad with the soul—but be night with the soul—when it makes much conscience of the one, and no conscience of the other.

Many heathens have been so loving and faithful one to another, that they would rather die, than they would bear false witness one against another. How dare you then, caviling souls, to bear false witness against your own souls, and the gracious work of the Lord upon them! If this is not the way to keep off assurance, and keep the soul in darkness, yes, in a hell—I know nothing.

(2.) In the second place, a man may have grace, and yet lack assurance; **which may arise in from the exceeding littleness and weakness of his grace**. [Matt 14 30-31; Mark 9 24] A little candle yields but a little light, and a little grace yields but a little evidence. Great measures of grace carry with them great and clear evidences—but little measures of grace carry with them but little evidence. Some stars are so small that they are scarce discernible. Just so, some saints' graces are so small, that they can hardly see their graces to be graces. A little fire will yield but a little heat; a little grace will yield but a little comfort, a little evidence. A little grace will yield a man a heaven hereafter—but it is a great deal of grace that must yield us a heaven here. A little stock will bring in but a little profit; a little grace will brink in but a little peace. A little jewel yields but a little luster; no more does a little grace. This is the reason why Christians who have but a little grace, have but a little of the shine and luster of assurance; they have but little spiritual joy and comfort.

Yet that the spirits of weak Christians may not utterly faint, let me give them this HINT, namely—that the weakest Christian is as much justified, as much pardoned, as much adopted, and as much united to Christ—as the strongest Christian. The weakest Christian has as much interest and propriety in Christ, as the highest and noblest Christian who breathes; though he cannot make so much advantage and improvement of his interest and propriety as the strong Christian, who has a greater degree of grace.

The babe in the cradle has as much propriety in the father as he who is grown up to ripe years, though he cannot make such improvement of it as the other. A *child's* hand may receive a pearl, as well as the hand of a *giant*. Just so, may a weak faith receive Christ—as well as a strong faith.

Hierom observes upon the beatitudes, that there are many of the promises made to weak grace Matt 5 3-4,6, "Blessed are the poor in spirit blessed are those who mourn blessed are those who hunger and thirst." Weak saints, remember this the *promise* is a ring of gold, and *Christ* is the precious tried stone in that ring; and upon that stone must you rest, as you would have grace to thrive, and your souls to be safe and happy. Weak souls, remember this as Joseph sent chariots to bring his father and his brethren to him, Gen 45, so God would have your weak graces to be as chariots to bring you to himself, who is the nourisher, strengthener, and increaser of grace. He who makes his graces to be servants and handmaids to convey him to Christ, the fountain of grace—he shall find the greatest sweetness in grace, and the greatest increase of grace.

(3.) Thirdly, A man may have true grace, and yet lack assurance, and **this may arise from the resurrection of old sins**. Ah! when those sins which were long since committed, and long since lamented, and long since loathed, and long since crucified; when those old sins, which has cost a soul many prayers and many tears, and many sighs, and many groans, and many complaints, when those sins which have been long buried shall be again revived, and meet the soul, and stare upon the soul, and say to the soul, "We are yours, and we will follow you; we are yours, and we will haunt you!" Ah, how will this cause a man's countenance to be changed, his thoughts to be troubled, his joints to be loosed, and his heart to be amazed!

David and Job meeting with the sins of their youth, long after they were lamented and pardoned, makes their hearts startle and tremble, Psalm 25 7; Job 13 26. Upon the new risings of old sins, the soul begins to question all, and thus to expostulate the case "Surely my estate is not good, my pardon is not sealed; if it is, why are these sins revived, and remembered? Has not God engaged himself in the promises of grace, that those sins which are pardoned, shall never be remembered? Isa 43 25; Jer 31 34, and surely if these sins are not pardoned, I have reason to fear that others are not pardoned; and if my sins he not pardoned, how shall I escape being destroyed? Surely my repentance was not sound, my sorrow was not sincere; the blow, the wound I gave sin, was not mortal. If it was sincere, how does it come to pass, that it now meets me like an armed enemy?" Thus, these new risings of old sins keeps many a man's soul and assurance asunder.

(4.) Fourthly, A man may have grace and yet lack assurance, and **this may arise from his falling short of that maturity which the word requires, and that other saints have attained to.** "Ah!" says such a soul, "surely I have no grace! Oh how short do I fall of such and such righteous rules, and of such and such precious Christians! Ah! how clear are they in their light! How strong are they in their love! How high are they in their attainments! How are their hearts filled with grace, and their lives with holiness! All their motions towards God, and towards man, speak out grace, grace; they pray indeed like saints, and live indeed like angels"

Now many poor souls, comparing themselves with the perfect rule of righteousness found in Scripture, and with those who are in the highest forms in Christ's school, and who are the noblest and choicest patterns for purity and sanctity, and finding such a vast disproportion between their hearts and the rule, between their actions and lives, and the actions and lives of others—they are apt to sit down saddened and discouraged. Remember this—though your consolation depends upon degrees of grace, yet your salvation depends upon the truth of grace.

Suetonius reports of Julius Caesar, that seeing Alexander's statue, he fetched a deep sigh, because he at that age had done so little. Just so, many precious souls sit down sighing and weeping—that they have lived so long, and done so little for God, and for their own internal and eternal good. This wounds and sinks their spirits, that they are so unlike to those in grace, whom they desire to be like unto in glory; and that they are so far below such and such in spirituals, whom they are so far above in temporals.

(5.) Fifthly, A man may have true grace and yet lack assurance, and **this may arise from that smoke and clouds, those fears and doubts which corruption raises in the soul**. Just so, that the soul cannot see those excellent graces which otherwise might be discerned. Though there may be many precious gems and jewels in the house, yet the smoke may hinder a man from seeing them sparkle and shine. So though there may be many precious graces in the souls of saints, yet corruption may raise such a dust, such a smoke in the soul, that the soul is not able to see them in the beauty and glory. The well of water was near Hagar—but she saw it not until her eyes were opened by the Lord, Gen 21 19-20. So grace is *near* the soul, yes, *in* the soul sometimes, and yet the soul does not see it, until God opens the eye and shows it. "The Lord was in this place," says Jacob, "and I knew it not," Gen 28 16. So many a precious soul may say, grace was in my heart, and I knew it not, I saw it not.

Blessed Bradford in one of his epistles says thus, "O Lord, methinks I feel it so with me, sometimes as if there were no difference between my heart, and the heart of the wicked; my mind is as blind as theirs, my spirit as stout, stubborn, and rebellious as theirs, and my thoughts as confused as theirs, and my affections as disordered as theirs, and my services as formal as theirs," etc. Ah, Christians! have not many of your souls found it so? Surely yes! No wonder then, that though you have grace, yet you have not seen it sparkling and shining in your souls; as some have thought that their fields have had no corn, because they have been so full of weeds; and that their heap has no wheat, because nothing has appeared but chaff; and that their pile has no gold, because it has been covered with much dross. So some have thought that their hearts have been void of grace, because they have been so full of fears and doubts. **Peter** at one time believes and walks, at another time he doubts and sinks, Matt 14 30. **Abraham** believes and offers up Isaac at one time, he fears and falls at another time. "Say you are my sister, lest they kill me," Gen 20 2. So **David** and **Job**, they had their shufflings, tremblings, faintings, shakings, and questionings, Psalm 116 11; Psalm 31 22. It is not always high water with saints, sometimes they are reduced to a very low ebb. The best of saints are like the ark, tossed up and down with waves, with fears and doubts; and so it will be until they are quite in the bosom of Christ.

(6.) Lastly, A man may have grace, and yet not see it, yet not know it; and **this may arise from his non-searching, his non-examining, his non-ransacking, of his own soul**. There is gold in the mine, and men might find it, if they would but dig and search diligently after it. Worthless daisies grow in sight upon the surface of the earth—but the precious and richest rarities are hidden within the bowels of the earth. You are wise, and know how to apply it.

There is grace in the heart, and you might see it, if you would but take the candle of the Lord, and look narrowly after it. Look! as many a man upon a diligent search may find his temporal estate to be better than he fears; so many choice souls upon a diligent search may find their spiritual estate to be far better than they conceived or judged it to be. Therefore souls, cease from complaining, cease from rash judging and dooming of yourselves to hell, and be diligent in inquiring what the Lord has done, and what the Lord is a-doing, in you and for you. Compare the books together, compare his working upon you and others together. What! Have you no light, no love, no longings, no hungerings, no thirstings after God? What! Have you no sighing, no complaining, no mourning, under the sense of sin, and under the lack of divine favor? Surely if you search, you will find some of these things; and if you do, prize them as jewels that are more worth than a world. God will not despise "the day of small things," [Zech 4 10] and will you? Will you, dare you, say that that is little, which is more worth than heaven? **The least spark of grace shall at last be turned into a crown of glory!** Well! remember this, that as the least grace, if true and sincere, is sufficient to salvation, so the sense of the least grace should be sufficient to your consolation.

IV. The fourth proposition is this, namely, **That God may deny assurance long, and yet give it in to his children at last, after patient waiting.** God appears to David, and brings him out of "a horrible pit and sets his feet upon a rock, and puts a new song into his mouth," Psalm 40 1-4.

After the church in the Canticles had run through many hazards and hardships, many difficulties and dangers, she finds "him whom her soul loved," Song 3 5.

The prophet sits down and bewails his sad condition thus Psalm 69 3,20, "I am weary of my crying; my throat is dried my eyes fail while I wait on my God. And I am full of heaviness; and I looked for some to take pity—but there was none; and for comforters—but I found none." Yes, but at last God appears, and then says he "I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving," Psalm 69 30.

Job sighs it out "I go east, but he is not there. I go west, but I cannot find him. I do not see him in the north, for he is hidden. I turn to the south, but I cannot find him." Job 23 8-9. But after this sighing, he sings it out "But he knows the way that I take; when he has tested me, I will come forth as gold." Job 23 10. Experience does abundantly evidence, that this is the manner of God's dealing with abundance of those precious souls of whom this world is not worthy. I could say much to this point from my own knowledge—but I must forbear lighting a candle to see the sun at noon.

Mr. Frogmorton was as holy and as choice a preacher as most was in England in those days, and he lived seven and thirty years without assurance, and then died, having assurance but an hour before he died. He died in full assurance of the justification of his person, the remission of his sins, and the salvation of his soul. God denied assurance a great while to Mr. Glover, though he sought it with many prayers and tears; and yet when he was in sight of the fire, the Lord shined forth in his favor so sweetly upon him, that he cries out to his friend, "He is come, he is come!" So Mrs. Katherine Bretterge, after many bitter conflicts with Satan the day before she died, she had sweet assurance of that unshakable kingdom, of those incorruptible riches, and of that unfading crown of righteousness.

I have read of three martyrs that were bound and brought to the stake, and one of them falls down upon the ground, and wrestles earnestly with God for the sense of his love, and God gave it him then at that instant, and so he came and embraced the stake, and died cheerfully and resolutely a glorious martyr.

Now God does delay the giving in of assurance to his dearest ones, and that partly **to let them know that he will be waited on, and that assurance is a jewel worth waiting for**. The least smile from God when our hour-glass is running out, will make our souls amends for all their waiting.

And partly that we may know that **God is free in his workings**, and that he is not tied to any preparations or qualifications in the creature—but is free to come when he will, and go when he will, and stay as long as be will, though the soul sighs it out, "How long, Lord, how long will it be before my mourning is turned into rejoicing?"

Again, God delays the giving in of assurance, not because he delights to keep his children in fears and doubts, nor because he thinks that assurance is too rare, too great, too choice a jewel to bestow upon them; but it is either because he thinks **their souls do not stand at a sufficient distance from sin; or because their souls are so taken up and filled with creature enjoyments** as that Christ is put to lodge outside; or else it is because they pursue not after assurance with all their might; they give not all diligence to make their calling and election sure; or else it is because their hearts are not prepared, are not low enough, for so high a favor. [Isa 59 1-2; Jer 5 25; Luke 2 7; 2 Pet 2 5]

Now God's delaying assurance upon these weighty grounds should rather work us to admire him, to justify him, and quietly to wait for him—than to have any hard thoughts of him, or to think it unkind in him, or impatiently to say, "Why is his chariot so long a-coming?" Judg 5 28.

V. The fifth proposition is this, **That those choice souls who have assurance may lose it, they may forfeit it.** The freshness and greenness, the beauty, luster, and glory of assurance may be lost.

It is true, believers cannot lose the **root** of grace; yet they may lose assurance, which is the beauty and fragrancy, the crown and glory of grace, 1 John 3 9; 1 Pet 1 5. These two lovers, grace and assurance, are not by God so nearly joined together but that they may by sin on our side, and justice on God's, be put asunder. *The keeping of these two lovers, grace and assurance, together, will yield the soul two heavens, a heaven of joy and peace here, and a heaven of happiness and blessedness hereafter; but the putting these two lovers asunder will put the soul into a hell here, though it escape a hell hereafter.* This Chrysostom knew well, when he professed that the lack of the enjoyment of God would be a far greater hell to him than the feeling of any punishment. It is very rare, for a soul that ever had a well-grounded assurance not to experience this truth sooner or later. A separation between the body and the soul will not so torment the soul as separation between grace and assurance.

As you would keep your Christ, as you would keep your comfort, as you would keep your crown, keep grace and assurance together, and neither by lip nor life, by word nor works, let these be put asunder. It is possible for the best of men so to blot and blur their evidences for felicity and glory, as that they may not be able to read them nor understand them. They may so vex and grieve the Spirit either by gross enormities, or by refusing his comforts and cordials, or by neglecting or slighting his gracious actings in themselves, or by misjudging his work, as calling faith fancy, or sincerity hypocrisy, etc., or by fathering those brats upon him that are the children of their own distempered hearts, as that he may refuse to witness their interest in him, though he be a witnessing Spirit, and refuse to comfort them, though he be the only Comforter. The Holy Spirit is a very sensitive being.

The best believer may have his summer-day turned into a winter-night, his rejoicing into sighing, his singing into weeping, his wedding-robes into mourning garments, his wine into water, his sweet into bitter, his manna, his angels' food, into husks, his pleasant grapes into the grapes of Sodom, his fruitful Canaan, his delightful paradise, into a dry and barren wilderness. Look! as faith is often attended with unbelief, and sincerity with hypocrisy, and humility with vainglory, so is assurance with fears and doubts.

Blessed Hooker lived near thirty years in close communion with God, without any considerable withdrawings of God all that while; and yet, upon his dying bed, he went away without any sense of assurance, or discoveries of the smiles of God, to the wonder of the expectation of many precious souls.

Look! as many a man loses the sight of the city when he comes near to it, so many a choice soul loses the sight of heaven, even then when he is nearest to heaven. **Abraham**, you know, had assurance in an extraordinary way concerning his protection from God; and yet says Abraham, "Say you are my sister; for otherwise they will kill me," Gen 12 13, and Gen 20 2. Ah! how had the freshness, the greenness, the beauty and glory of his assurance worn off—that he should, out of slavish fears, expose his wife to other men's lusts, and himself and others to God's displeasure; that he should wound four at once, the honor of God, his wife's chastity, his own conscience, and Pharaoh's soul.

David, you know, sometimes sings it out sweetly "I love you, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge. He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold." Psalm 18 1-2. At other times you have him sighing it out "Why are you cast down, O my soul? why are you disquieted in me? why have you forgotten me?" Psalm 42 5. "For your arrows have pierced me, and your hand has come down upon me. Because of your wrath there is no health in my body; my bones have no soundness because of my sin. My guilt has overwhelmed me like a burden too heavy to bear. My wounds fester and are loathsome because of my sinful folly. I am bowed down and brought very low; all day long I go about mourning. My back is filled with searing pain; there is no health in my body. I am feeble and utterly crushed; I groan in anguish of heart." Psalm 38 2-6. "You hid your face, and I was troubled," Psalm 30 7. "Restore to me the joy of my salvation, that the bones that you have broken may rejoice," Psalm 51 12.

His heart was more often out of tune than his harp. He begins many of his psalms sighing, and ends them singing; and others he begins in joy, and ends in sorrow. So that one would think, that those psalms had been composed by two men of a contrary temperaments. Yes, it is very observable, that though David had assurance in an extraordinary way that he should be king, being anointed by that great prophet Samuel, yet the luster and glory of this assurance wears off; and he, overcome by slavish fears, cries out, that "All men are liars," (even Samuel as well as others), and that "he shall one day perish by the hand of Saul." It is true, says David, I have a crown, a kingdom in a promise; but I must swim to the crown through blood, I must win the crown before I wear it; and the truth is, I am likely to die before I attain it. Yes, and after he was king, when king Jesus did but hide his face, he was sorely troubled; so that neither his glorious throne, nor his royal robes, nor his golden crown, nor his glistering courtiers, nor his large revenues, nor his cheerful temper, nor his former experiences, could quiet him or satisfy him when God had turned his back upon him. Look! as all candles cannot make up the lack of the light of the sun, so all temporal comforts cannot make up the lack of one spiritual comfort.

So **Job** sometimes sings it out, "My witness is in heaven, and my record is on high; and my Redeemer lives," etc., Job 16 19, and Job 19 25. At other times you have him complaining, "The arrows of the Almighty stick fast in me, and their poison drinks up my spirit," Job 6 4; "The terrors of God set themselves in array against me." And Job 29 2-5, you have him sighing it out thus "Oh that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me; when his candle shined upon my head, and when by his light I walked through darkness; as I was in the days of my youth, when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle; when the Almighty was yet with me!" etc. "The whole life of a good Christian is an holy wish," said one.

Now, by all these clear instances, and by many other saints' experiences, it is evident that **the choicest saints may lose their assurance, and the luster and glory of it may decay and wither**. What the soul should do in such a case, and how it should be recovered out of this sad state, I shall show you towards the close of this discourse.

VI. The sixth proposition is this, **That the certainty and infallibility of a Christian's assurance cannot be made known to any but his own heart.** He can say as the blind man once said, "This I know, that once I was blind—but now I see," John 9 25. Once I was a slave—but now I am a son; once I was dead—but now I am alive; once I was darkness—but now I am light in the Lord; once I was a child of wrath, an heir of hell—but now I am an heir of heaven; once I was Satan's slave—but now I am God's freeman; once I was under the spirit of bondage—but now I am under the spirit of adoption—which seals up to me the remission of my sins, the justification of my person, and the salvation of my soul. [Rom 8 6,11,13; Eph 5 8, and Eph 2 3; John 8 36; 2 Cor 3 17; Gal 1 1,13; Eph 1 13-14] All this I know, says the assured saint; but I cannot make you know it certainly and infallibly if you would give me a thousand worlds. Can you compass the heavens with a span, or contain the sea in a nutshell? Only then may you fully evidence your assurance to others.

What I have found and felt, and what I do find and feel, is wonderfully beyond what I am able to express. I am as well able to count the stars of heaven, and to number the sand of the sea, as I am able to declare to you the joy, the joy, the unconceivable joy, the assurance, the glorious assurance, that God has given me.

Severinus, the Indian saint, under the power of assurance, was heard to say, O my God! do not so over-joy me; if I must still live, and have such consolations, take me to heaven, etc. So say souls under the power of assurance Lord! we are so filled with joy and comfort, with delight and content, that we are not able to express it here on earth; and therefore take us to heaven, that we may have that glory put upon us, that may enable us to declare and manifest those glorious things that you have wrought in us.

Parents do by experience feel such soundings, such meltings, such rollings, such sweet workings of their affections and hearts towards their children, that for their lives they cannot to the life describe to others what it is to be a father, to be a mother; what it is to have such depths of affections towards children. Assurance is that white stone that none knows but he who has it Rev 2 17, "To him who overcomes will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knows, but he who receives it." White stones were in great use among the Romans.

(1.) In white stones they used to write the names of such as were victorious and conquerors. Just so, in that text, "To him who overcomes, will I give a white stone."

(2.) They used to acquit the innocent in courts of justice, by giving them a white stone; and so here the white stone points out absolution and remission. They gave black stones to note their condemnation.

(2.) They used to give a white stone to those who were chosen to any places of honor. Just so, the white stone of assurance is an evidence of our election, of our being chosen to an unshakable kingdom, incorruptible riches, and an unfading crown of righteousness. And thus much for this sixth proposition, namely, that the certainty and infallibility of a Christian's assurance cannot be made known to any but his own heart, Heb 12 28; Matt 6 20; 1 Pet 1 4.

VII. The seventh proposition is this, **That there are some special seasons and times, wherein the Lord is graciously pleased to give to his children a sweet assurance of his favor and love**, and they are these that follow.

I. First, Sometimes, I say not always, **at first conversion**, the Lord is pleased to make out sweet manifestations of his love to the penitent soul. When the soul has been long under guilt and wrath, when the soul has been long under the frowns and displeasure of God, and has long seen the gates of heaven barred against him, and the mouth of hell open to receive him; when the soul has said, 'Surely there is no hope, there is no help, surely I shall lose God, Christ and heaven forever!' then God comes in and speaks peace to the soul, then he says, "I will blot out your iniquities for my name's sake, and will remember your sins no more!" Isa 43 25. "Hark, soul, hark!" says Christ, "My thoughts are not as your thoughts, nor my ways as your ways. My thoughts towards you are thoughts of peace and thoughts of love. Hark, soul! here is mercy to pardon you, and here is grace to adorn you; here is righteousness to justify you; here is eyesalve to enlighten you, and gold to enrich you, and white raiment to clothe you, and balm to heal you, and bread to nourish you, and wine to cheer you, and happiness to crown you, and myself to satisfy you!" Ah, souls! have not some of you found it so? surely you have. [1 Cor 1 30; Rev 3 18; Isa 25 6]

God deals sometimes with rebellious sinners, as princes do with those who are in open rebellion against them. You know princes will put such rebels hard to it they shall fare hard, and lie hard; chains, and racks, and what not, shall attend them; and yet after the sentence is passed upon them, and they are upon the last step of the ladder of life, and all hope of escape is gone, then the prince's pardon is put into their hand. So the Lord brings many poor souls to the last steps of the ladder, to a hopeless condition, and then he puts their pardon into their bosoms; then he says, "Be of good cheer, I have received you into favor, I have set my love upon you, I am reconciled to you, and will never be separated from you."

You know how God dealt with **Paul** after he had awakened and convinced him, after he had unhorsed him and overthrown him, after he had amazed and astonished him—then he shows himself graciously and favorably to him, then he takes him up into the third heaven, and makes such manifestations of his love and favor, of his beauty and glory, of his mercy and majesty, as he is not able to utter!

So upon the **prodigal's** return, the fattened calf is killed, and the best robe is put upon his back, and the ring is put on his hand, and shoes on his feet, Luke 15 22-23. Some understand by the robe, the royalty of Adam, others, the righteousness of Christ; and by the ring, some understand the pledges of God's love, rings being given as pledges of love; some the seal of God's Spirit, men using to seal with their rings. I think in this parable God sets forth his goodness and our happiness in restoring to us more by the death of the second Adam, than we lost by the sin of the first Adam.

Among the Romans, the ring was an ensign of virtue, honor, and nobility, whereby those who wore them were distinguished from the common people. I think the main thing intended by all these passages, is to show us, that God sometimes upon the sinner's first conversion and returning to him, is graciously pleased to give him some choice and signal manifestations of his love and favor, of his goodwill and pleasure, and that upon these following grounds

(1.) The first ground, **That they may not be swallowed up of sorrow, under the pangs and throes of the new birth.** An awakened conscience is like Prometheus's vulture, it lies ever gnawing. Ah! did not the Lord let in some beams of love upon the soul, when it is Magormissabib, a terror to itself; when the heart is a hell of horror, the conscience an Aceldama, a field of black blood; when the soul is neither quiet at home nor abroad, neither at bed nor board, neither in company nor out of company, neither in the use of ordinances nor in the neglect of ordinances; how would the soul faint, sink, and despair forever! But now when it is thus night with the soul, the Lord sweetly comes in and tells the soul, that all is well, that he has found a ransom for the soul, that the books are crossed, that all debts are discharged, and that his favor and love upon the soul is fixed, Job 33 24. And so God by his sweet and still voice, speaking thus to the soul, quiets and satisfies it, and keeps it from sinking and despairing.

(2.) The second ground. God gives in assurance sometimes at first conversion, **that he may the more raise and inflame their love and affections to him**. Ah! how does a pardon given when a man is ready to be condemned, draw out his love, and raise his affections to that prince that shows affections of mercy, when he is upon the brink of misery! So when a poor sinner is upon the last step of the ladder, upon the very brink of hell and misery, now for God to come in and speak peace and pardon to the soul, ah! how does it inflame the soul, and works the soul to a holy admiration of God, and to a spiritual delighting in God!

King Antigonus, pulling a sheep with his own hands out of a dirty ditch, drew his subjects exceedingly to commend him and love him. So King Jesus, pulling poor souls out of their sins, and as it were out of hell, cannot but draw them to be much in the commendations of Christ, and strong in their love to Christ. Christ has nothing more in his eye, nor upon his heart, than to act towards his people in such ways and at such seasons as may most win upon their affections. And therefore it is, that sometimes he gives the strongest consolation at first conversion.

(3) The third ground, Christ sometimes at first conversion grants to his people the sweetest manifestations of his love, **that they may be the more active, fervent, abundant, and constant in ways of grace and holiness**. He knows that divine manifestations of love will most awaken, quicken, and engage the soul to ways of piety and sanctity.

Look! What wings are to the bird, oil to the wheels, weights to the clock, a reward to the coward, and the loadstone to the needle—that are the smiles and discoveries of God to a poor soul at his conversion. The manifestations of divine love puts heat and life into the soul, it makes the soul very serious and studious how to act for God, and live to God, and walk with God. "Ah!" says a soul under the beams of divine love, "it is my food and drink, it is my joy and crown to do all I can, for that God who has done so much for me—as to know me in darkness, and to speak love to me when I was most unlovely; to turn my mourning into rejoicing, and my hell into a heaven."

(4.) The fourth ground. Christ sometimes at first conversion gives his people the sweetest manifestations of his love, **to fence and fortify them against Satan's fiery temptations**. Before Christ shall be led into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil, the Spirit of the Lord shall descend upon him like a dove, and he shall hear a voice from heaven, saying, "This is my *beloved* Son, in whom I am well pleased," Matt 3 16-17. *Beloved* is an emphatical word here, and signifies that infinite affection, delight, and content that God the Father did take in Christ—that so he may be strong in resisting, and glorious in triumphing over all the assaults and temptations of Satan, Eph 6 16. So many times at first conversion, the Lord makes out sweet manifestations of his love to the soul—that so the soul may stand fast, and not give ground, and in the sense of divine love may so handle the shield of faith, as to quench all the fiery darts of the devil.

The Lord knows that when he sets upon the delivering of a poor soul from the kingdom of darkness, and translating it into the kingdom of his dear Son—that Satan will roar and rage, rend and tear, as he did him, Mark 9 25-26, "When Jesus saw that a crowd was running to the scene, he rebuked the evil spirit. 'You deaf and mute spirit,' he said, 'I command you, come out of him and never enter him again.' The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out. The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said—He's dead." No sooner did Jesus Christ look with an eye of love, pity, and compassion upon the boy—but the devil in his rage and wrath falls a-renting and tearing of him, as mad dogs do things they fasten upon. This poor child had never so sore a fit, as now he was nearest the cure.

When rich mercy and glorious power is nearest the soul, then Satan most storms and rages against the soul, Col 1 13. *Pharaoh* in his furious and violent pursuing after Israel, when he saw that God would bring them from under his power, *was a type of Satan*. The more the affections of Christ do work towards a sinner, the more furious will Satan assault that sinner. Therefore divine wisdom and goodness does the more eminently shine in giving the poor soul some sight of Canaan, and some bunches and clusters of of that land, upon its first coming out of the wilderness of sin and sorrow.

But that no soul may mistake this last proposition, give me leave to premise these **TWO CAUTIONS**.

[1.] The first caution. That **God manifests his love only to some at their first conversion, not to all.** Though he dearly loves every penitent soul, yet he does not manifest his love at first conversion to every penitent soul. God is a free agent, to work where he will, and when he will, and to reveal his love how he will, and when he will, and to whom he will. It is one thing for God to work a work of grace upon the soul, and another thing for God to show the soul that work. A man may enjoy the warmth and heat of the sun, when he cannot see the sun. Just so, a man may have grace when he cannot see that he has grace.

God oftentimes works grace in a silent and secret way, and takes sometimes five, sometimes ten, sometimes fifteen, sometimes twenty years; yes, sometimes more, before he will make a clear and satisfying report of his own work upon the soul. Though our graces be our best jewels, yet they are sometimes, at first conversion, so weak and imperfect, that we are not able to see their luster. The **existence** of grace makes our estates safe and sure, the **seeing** of grace makes our lives sweet and comfortable.

[2.] The second caution. **A man may at first conversion have such a clear glorious manifestation of God's love to him, and of his interest in God, and his right to glory, that he may not have the like all his days after**. I have conversed with several precious souls who have found this true by experience, and upon this very ground have questioned all, and strongly doubted, whether that they have not taken Satan's delusions for divine manifestations.

The fattened calf is not slain every day, the robe of kings is not every day put on every day. Every day must not be a festival day, a marriage day; the wife is not every day in the bosom, the child is not every day in the arms, the friend is not every day at the table—nor the soul every day under the manifestations of divine love.

Jacob did not every day see the angels ascending and descending; Stephen did not every day see the heavens open, and Christ standing on the right hand of God; Paul was not every day caught up to heaven, nor was John every day enrapt up in the Spirit. No saint can every day cry out, I have my Christ, I have my comfort, I have my assurance. Job had his harp turned into mourning, and his organ into the voice of those who weep, Job 30 31. The best of saints are sometimes put to hang their harps upon the willows, and cry out, "Has God forgotten to be gracious, and will he be favorable no more?" Psalm 137 2; Psalm 77 7-9.

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II. There is a second special season or time wherein the Lord is pleased to give to his children a sweet assurance of his favor and love, and that is, **when he intends to put them upon some high and hard, some difficult and dangerous service**. Oh then he gives them some sweet taste of heaven beforehand; now he smiles, now he kisses, now he embraces the soul, now he takes a saint by the hand, now he causes his goodness and glory to pass before the soul, now he opens his bosom to the soul, now the soul shall be of his court and counsel, now the clouds shall be scattered, now it shall be no longer night with the soul, now the soul shall sit no longer mourning in the valley of darkness, now Christ will carry the soul up into the mount, and there reveal his glory to it, that it may act high and brave, noble and glorious in the face of difficulties and discouragements. Divine love has a compulsive faculty, it is very powerful to put the soul upon acting in the highest and hardest services for Christ.

Christ did intend to put Peter, James, and John upon hard and difficult service, and therefore brings them up into a high mountain, and there gives them a vision of his beauty and glory; there they see him transfigured, metamorphosed, or transformed; there they see his face shining as the sun, and his raiment glistering, Matt 17 1-6. In the mount he shows them such beams of his deity, such sparkling glory, as did even amaze them, transport them, and astonish them; and all this grace and glory, this goodness and sweetness Christ shows them, to hearten and encourage them to own him and his truth, to stand by him and truth, to make him and his truth known to the world, though hatred, bonds, and contempt did attend them in so doing.

Thus God dealt with Paul before he put him upon that hard and dangerous service that he had cut out for him, Acts 9 1-23. He takes him up into heaven, and sheds abroad his love into his heart, and tells him that he is a chosen vessel; he appears to him in the way, and fills him with the Holy Spirit, that is, with the gifts, graces, and comforts of the Holy Spirit, and straightway he falls upon preaching of Christ, upon exalting of Christ, to the amazing and astonishing of all who heard him. And as he had more clear, full, and glorious manifestations of God's love and favor than others, so he was more frequent, more abundant, and more constant in the work and service of Christ than others, 2 Cor 11 21-33.

And this has been the constant dealing of God with the patriarchs, as with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, etc., and with the prophets, as with Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, etc. It is sufficient to point at these instances, they are so notoriously known to all who know anything of the scripture in power. As he in Plutarch said of the Scythians, that although they had no music nor vines among them, yet, as better things, they had gods. So the saints, though they may lack this and that outward encouragement in the service of God, yet they shall enjoy his presence, that is better than all other things in the world.

When he has put them upon weighty services—he has shed abroad his love into their hearts, he has set his seal upon their spirits, and made them to know that he has set them as a seal upon his hand. He has assured them of his countenance, and of his presence, and of his assistance. He has told them, though others should desert them, yet he will stand by them, and strengthen them, and support them, and uphold them with the right hand of his righteousness. He has told them that his **power** should be theirs to defend them, and his **wisdom** should be theirs to direct them, and his **goodness** should be theirs to supply them, and his **grace** should be theirs to heal them, and his **mercy** should be theirs to pardon them, and his **joy** should be theirs to strengthen them, and his **promise** should be theirs to cheer them, and his **Spirit** should be theirs to lead them. And this has made them as hold as lions, this has made them steadfast, and stand close to the work of God in the face of all dangers and difficulties; this has made them, with stout Nehemiah, scorn to desist or fly from the work of the Lord; this has made their bows to abide in strength, though the archers have shot sore at them. Now there are considerable reasons why God is pleased to give his children some sweet tastes of his love, some assurance of his favor, when he puts them upon some hard and difficult service, and they are these that follow.

(1.) The first reason, **That they may not faint nor falter in his service—but go through it resolutely and bravely**, in the face of all difficulties and oppositions. When God put Joshua upon that hard service of leading and governing his people Israel, he assures him of his love and of his presence "I will never leave you nor forsake you. Be strong and courageous." Joshua 1 5-6 And this makes him hold on and hold out in the service of the Lord bravely and resolutely, in the face of all discouragements "Choose whom you will serve, whether your fathers' gods or the gods of the Amorites; but as for me, and my house, we will serve the Lord," Josh 24 15. So when the Lord put Paul upon such service that occasioned bonds and afflictions to wait for him in every city, Acts 20 23, he gives him a taste of heaven beforehand, and lifts up the light of his countenance upon him, and this makes him resolute and bold in the work of the Lord. Now Paul will not consult with flesh and blood, Gal 1 15-17; now it is not reproaches, nor stripes, nor prisons, nor whips, nor perils, nor deaths, that can make him look back, having put his hand to the Lord's plough. Oh! the beamings forth of divine love upon his soul filled him with that courage and resolution that, with Shammah, one of David's worthies, he stands and defends the field, when others fall, and fly, and flee the field, 2 Tim 4 16-17.

(2.) The second reason God gives his people some tastes of his love, some sense of his favor, when he puts them upon hard and difficult services, because **otherwise he would not only act below himself, as he is a wise God, a faithful God, a powerful God, a merciful God, a righteous God**, etc.—but also act below his poor weak creatures. And to imagine that ever the great God will act below the wisdom of those who are foolish, is the greatest madness and blasphemy in the world. For what husband will put his wife, what father will put his child, what master will put his servant, what captain will put his soldier, what prince will put ambassadors, upon hard and difficult services—but they will smile upon them, and speak kindly to them, and make large promises to honor their persons, and kindly to accept, and nobly to reward their services, etc. Surely none. And will God? Will God, who will not give his glory to those who have the most glorious beings, allow his glory to be clouded and eclipsed by the prudent actings of weak worms? Surely not! Isa 42 8, and Isa 48 11.

(3.) The third reason God lifts up the light of his countenance upon his people when he puts them upon hard and difficult services, **that they may never repent of listing themselves in his service**. Ah! did not the Lord warm the hearts of his people with the glorious beams of his love, when he puts them upon hard work—they would be ready, when they meet with oppositions and hazards, to give up all, and to sit down lamenting and repenting that ever they were engaged in his service. They would be as peevish and froward as Jonah, and with him venture drowning, to throw off God's service. Ah! but now the Lord, by letting his goodness drop upon their hearts, and by putting a pledge-penny into their hands—he causes them to go cheerfully on in his work, without sighing or repenting. The kisses and embraces of God do put such life, such spirit, such mettle into their souls, as makes them bid defiance to the greatest dangers, and as crowns them conquerors of the greatest difficulties. Ah! says a soul that has walked some turns in paradise, What is dross to gold! what is darkness to light! what is hell to heaven! No more are all difficulties and oppositions to me, who has found the sweetness of divine grace, and have had the happiness to lie in the bosom of God!

Diocletian, the worst and last persecutor in all the ten persecutions, observed, "that the more he sought to blot out the name of Christ, the more it became legible; and the more he sought to block up the way of Christ, the more it became passable; and whatever of Christ he thought to root out, it rooted the deeper, and rose the higher in the hearts and lives of the saints, among whom he had scattered the beams of his love and the rich pearls of his grace." Such souls as have once been in the arms of God, in the midst of all oppositions, they are as men made all of fire walking in stubble; they consume and overcome all oppositions; all difficulties are but as whetstones to their fortitude. The moon will run her course, though the dogs bark at it. Just so, will all those choice souls who have found warmth under Christ's wings, run their Christian race in spite of all difficulties and dangers. The horse neighs at the trumpet, the leviathan laughs at the spear. Just so, does a saint, under the power of assurance, laugh at all hazards and dangers which he meets with in the Lord's service. The sense of God's love and goodness makes him to triumph over the greatest difficulties.

(4.) The fourth reason, and lastly God gives his people some tastes of his love when he puts them upon hard and difficult services, **that the mouths of the wicked may be stopped**. Should God lay heavy burdens upon his people's shoulders, and not put under his fingers to give some ease; should God double their quota of brick, and yet deny them straw; should God engage them against a potent enemy, and then desert them; should God send them upon some weighty embassage, and not give proportionable encouragements to them—what would the world say? Exod 32 12; Num 14 12-16. Would they not say that he is a hard master, and that his ways are not equal? Would they not say, Verily they are liars who say he is glorious in **power**, and wonderful in **counsel**, and infinite in **mercy**, and admirable in **goodness**, and rich in **grace**, and unsearchable in his **understanding**? For surely were he, he could not, he would not, put his children upon such hard and dangerous services—but he would own them, and stand by them; he would assist them, and smile upon them; he would be as careful to bring them bravely off, as he has been ready to bring them freely on. Oh! he could not see them in garments rolled in blood—but his affections would yearn towards them, and he would arise, and have mercy on them.

III. Then, thirdly, **WAITING times are times wherein God is pleased to give his people some secret tastes of his love, and to lift up the light of his countenance upon them** "I waited patiently for the Lord," says David, "and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he has put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God," Psalm 40 1-3. After God had exercised David's patience in waiting, he sweetly breaks in upon him, and knocks off his bolts, and opens the prison doors, and takes him by the hand, and leads him out of the horrible pit of confusion, in which he was, and causes his love and goodness so to beam forth upon him as causes his heart to rejoice, and his tongue to sing.

So after devout Simeon had waited for the consolation of Israel, that is, for Christ's coming, the Holy Spirit falls upon him, and leads him to a sight of Christ in the temple, and this makes the good old man sing, 'Now, let your servant depart in peace,' Luke 2 23-33. Ah! says Simeon, I have lived long enough! now I have got Christ in my heart, and Christ in my arms, who is my light, my life, my love, my joy, my crown; let me depart, according to your word.

Ah! saints, I appeal to you, have not many of you found by experience the sweet breathings of Christ upon you, even while you have been waiting at the door of mercy? while you have been weeping and waiting, has not the Lord Jesus come in and said, "Peace be to you! Waiting souls, be of good cheer, it is I! Be of good cheer, your sins are pardoned!" Surely you have.

Has not God made that word good unto you, "Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart wait, I say, on the Lord." Psalm 27 14. Yes! And has he not made that good to you, "They shall not be ashamed, who wait for me." Isa 49 23; These words, "shall not be ashamed," in the Hebrew dialect, do not simply import that such shall not be brought to shame, or shall not perish—but that he shall be advanced to great dignity and glory, to everlasting happiness and blessedness; that is, they shall not be deceived, or disappointed of their hopes and expectations, that wait for me. Yes! And have you not found that word made sweet to your souls, "Therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious blessed are all they that wait for him"? Yes!

And has not the Lord made that word good to you, "The Lord is good unto those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him." Lam 3 25. Yes! Waiting souls, remember this assurance is yours—but the time of giving it is the Lord's; the jewel is yours—but the season in which he will give it is in his own hand; the gold chain is yours—but he only knows the hour wherein he will put it about your necks. Well! wait patiently and quietly, wait expectingly, wait believingly, wait affectionately, and wait diligently, and you shall find that scripture made good in power upon your souls, "Yet a little while, and he who shall come will come, and will not tarry," Heb 10 37. He will certainly come, he will seasonably come, he will suddenly come. Well! I will say but this—if assurance of God's love be not a jewel worth a waiting for, it is worth nothing.

IV. Fourthly, **SUFFERING times are times wherein the Lord is pleased to give his people some sense of his favor.** "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven!" Matthew 5 11-12. When they are in sufferings for righteousness' sake, for the gospel's sake—then usually God causes his face to shine upon them. Now they shall hear best news from heaven—when they bear worst from earth. God loves to smile most upon his people when the world frowns most. When the world puts their iron chains upon their legs, then God puts his golden chains about their necks. When the world puts a bitter cup into their hands, then God drops some of his honey, some of his goodness and sweetness into it. When the world is ready to stone them, then God gives them the white stone. When the world is a-tearing their good names, then he gives them a new name, that none knows but he who has it, a name that is better than that of sons and daughters. When the world cries out, "Crucify them, crucify them," then they hear that sweet voice from heaven, "These are my beloved ones, in whom I am well pleased." When the world clothes them with rags, then the Lord puts on his royal robes, and makes a secret proclamation to their spirits, "Thus shall it be done to the men whom the King is pleased to honor." When the world gives into one hand a cup of water, God gives into the other a cup of nectar, a cup of ambrosia. When the world gnashes upon them, and presents all tortures before them, then the Lord opens paradise to them, as he did to Stephen.

When Paul and Silas were in prison for the gospel's sake, then God fills them with such unspeakable joy, that they cannot but be singing when others were sleeping, Acts 16 23-24. God turns their prison into a palace, a paradise, and they turn his mercies into praises. Paul and Silas found more pleasure than pain, more joy than sorrow, more sweet than bitter, more day than night—in the prison. God will make some beams of his goodness and glory to break through stone walls, to warm and glad the hearts of his suffering ones.

'Methinks,' said one, 'I tread upon pearls,' when he trod upon hot burning coals and 'I feel no more pain than if I lay in a bed of down;' and yet he lay in flames of fire.

When John was banished into the isle of Patmos, "for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus," Rev 1 9-10, then he is filled with the Spirit, and has the choicest manifestations, and the most glorious revelations that ever he had all his days. Now God makes him one of his court and counsel, and tells him what glorious and mighty things shall be in the latter days. Now he is in a spiritual rapture and ecstasy, and carried above himself, and above all outward things, to attend those glorious visions that God would make known to him.

It was God's lifting up the light of his countenance, which made the martyrs to sing in the fire, to clap their hands in the flames, and to tread upon hot burning coals as upon beds of roses. This made one say, when he felt the flame come to his beard, "What a small pain is this, to be compared to the glory to come? What is a drop of vinegar put into an ocean of wine? What is it for one to have a rainy day, that is going to take possession of a kingdom?" The smiles of God made another to sing under dreadful sufferings, "I am a Christian!" In Tertullian's time, the persecuted Christians sang, "Your cruelty is our glory!"

This made a French martyr to say, when the rope was about his fellow's neck, "Give me that golden chain, and dub me a knight of that noble order!" This made another to desire, when he was to die, the favor of having his chains buried with him, as the ensigns of his honor.

This made Basil say, "Fire, sword, prison, famine—are all a pleasure, a delight unto me." This made Paul to rattle his iron chains, and to glory in it, more than worldly men glory in all their outward glory.

This made Theodoret to complain, that his persecutors did him wrong, when they took him off the rack, and ceased tormenting of him; for, said he, "All the while I was on the rack, methought there was a young man in white, an angel stood by me, who wiped off the sweat; and I found a great deal of sweetness in it, which now I have lost."

Sufferings are the ensigns of heavenly nobility. No wonder then that the saints are so joyful under them.

To conclude, the smiles of God upon the prisoners of hope, is that which makes them more cheerful and delightful in their sufferings, than Jesus Christ was in his.

When Faninus, an Italian martyr, was asked by one, why he was so merry at his death, since Christ himself was so sorrowful "Christ," said he, "sustained in his soul all the sorrows and conflicts with hell and death, due to us, by whose sufferings we are delivered from sorrow, and fear of them all; and therefore we have cause of rejoicing in the greatest sufferings."

Now there are these special reasons to be given, why the Lord is pleased in suffering times to visit his people with his loving-kindness, and to lift up the light of his countenance upon them.

(1.) The first reason. **That their patience and constancy under suffering may be invincible.** God knows right well, that if his left hand in suffering times be not under his people, and his right hand over them, if he does not give them some sips of sweetness, some relishes of goodness, they would quickly grow impatient and inconstant. Oh, but now the smiles of God, the gracious discoveries of God—makes their patience and constancy invincible, as it did Vincentius, who by his patience and constancy angered his tormentors; therefore they stripped him stark naked, whipped his body all over to a bloody gore, sprinkled salt and vinegar over all his wounds, set his feet on burning coals, then cast him naked into a loathsome dungeon, the pavement whereof was sharp shells, and his bed to lie on a bundle of thorns. All which this blessed martyr received, without so much as a groan, breathing out his spirit in these words, "Vincentius is my name, and by the grace of God I will be still Vincentius, in spite of all your torments." Persecution brings death in one hand and life in the other; for while it kills the body it crowns the soul.

The most cruel martyrdom is but a detour to escape death, to pass from life to life, from the prison to paradise, from the cross to the crown.

We may see, by an eye of faith, the blessed souls of suffering saints fly to heaven, like Elijah in his fiery chariot.

John Huss, martyr, had such choice discoveries of God, and such sweet influences of the Spirit, as made his patience and constancy invincible. When he was brought forth to be burned, they put on his head a crown of paper, painted over with ugly devils; but when he saw it, he said, "My Lord Jesus Christ, for my sake, did wear a crown of thorns; why should not I then for his sake wear this light crown, be it never so ignominious? Truly I will do it, and that willingly." And as they tied his neck with a chain to the stake, smiling, he said, "That he would willingly receive the same chain for Jesus Christ's sake, who he knew was bound with a far worse chain for his sake." Well! remember this, their names who by a patient suffering are written in red letters of blood in the church's calendar—are written in golden letters in Christ's register, in the book of life.

(2.) The second reason. A second reason why the Lord lifts up the light of his countenance upon his people in suffering times, and that is, **for the confirmation of some, for the conversion of others, and for the greater conviction and confusion of their adversaries**, who wonder, and are like men amazed, when they see the comfort and the courage of the saints in suffering times. Paul's choice conduct in his bonds, was the confirmation of many. "Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly," Phil 1 14. And as the sufferings of the saints do contribute to the confirmation of some, so by the blessing of God they contribute to the conversion of others. "I beseech you," says Paul, "for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds," Philem 10. It was a notable saying of Luther, "The church converts the whole world by blood and prayer." They knew it could be but a short journey between the cross and paradise, between that short storm and an eternal calm.

Basil affirms, "that the primitive saints showed so much heroic zeal and constancy, that many of the heathen turned Christians." Just so, that choice spirit which the saints have showed in their sufferings, when Christ has overshadowed them with his love, and "stayed them with flagons, and comforted them with apples," Song 2 5, has maddened, grieved, vexed, and extremely tormented their tormentors. It would be too tedious to give you an account of all particular persecutors in this case, whom the courage, faith, and patience of the saints have tired out and made weary of their lives, and also bred wonder and astonishment in beholders and readers.

Lactantius boasts of the braveness of the martyrs in his time "Our children and women, not to speak of men, do in silence overcome their tormentors, and the fire cannot so much as fetch a sigh from them."

Hegesippus reports an observation of Antoninus the emperor, namely, "That the Christians were most courageous and confident always in earthquakes, while his own heathen soldiers were at such times most fearful and dispirited." Certainly no earthquakes can make any heartquakes among the suffering saints—so long as the countenance of God shines upon their face, and his love lies warm upon their hearts. The suffering saint may be assaulted—but not vanquished; he may be troubled—but can never be conquered; he may lose his head—but he cannot lose his crown, which the righteous Lord has prepared and laid up for him, 2 Tim 4 7-8.

The suffering saint shall still be master of the day; though they kill him, they cannot hurt him; he may suffer death—but never conquest. "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death," Rev 12 11. They love not their lives—who love Christ and his truth more than their lives; they slight, despise, and despise their lives, when they stand in competition with Christ. In these words you see that the saints by dying do overcome "They may kill me," said Socrates of his enemies, "but they cannot hurt me." A saint may say this and more. The herb heliotropium does turn about and open itself according to the motion of the sun. Just so, do the saints in their sufferings, according to the internal motions of the Sun of righteousness upon them. 'O Lord Jesus,' said one, 'I love you more than all goods, more than all my friends, yes, more than my very life.'

(3.) The third reason, A third reason why the Lord causes his goodness to pass before his people, and his face to shine upon his people in suffering times, and that is, **for the praise of his own grace, and for the glory of his own name**. God would lose much of his own glory, if he did not stand by his people, and comfort them and strengthen them, in the day of their sorrows. Ah, the dirt, the scorn, the contempt, that vain men would cast upon God, Exod 32 12; Num 14 13. Look! **as our greatest good comes through the sufferings of Christ—so God's greatest glory that he has from his saints comes through their sufferings!**

"If you are ridiculed for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you," 1 Pet 4 14. It makes much for the glory of God, that his people are cheered and comforted, quickened and raised, spiritualised and elevated—in the day of their sufferings. Oh the sight of so noble a spirit in the saints, causes others to admire God, to lift up God, to fall in love with God, and to glorify God; for owning his people, and for being a light to them in darkness, a joy to them in sorrow, and a palace to them in prison. [Dan 3 28-30; Dan 6 25-27]

God is very sensible of the many praises and prayers that he would lose, did he not cause his love and his glory to rest upon his people in suffering times. There is nothing that God is so tender of—as he is of his glory; and that his heart is so much set upon—as his glory; and therefore he will visit them in a prison, and feast them in a dungeon, and walk with them in a fiery furnace, and show kindness to them in a lion's den, that everyone may shout and cry, Grace, grace! [Isa 48 11; Gen 39 20; Dan 6 10; Zech 4 7] God loves to act in such ways of grace towards his suffering ones, as may stop the mouths of their enemies, and cause the hearts of his friends to rejoice.

IV. BELIEVING times are times wherein the Lord is graciously pleased to lift up the light of his countenance upon his people. When his children are in the exercise of faith, then the Lord is pleased to make known his goodness, and to seal up to them everlasting happiness and blessedness Eph 1 13, "In Him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation—in Him when you believed—were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit;" or in whom believing you were sealed, that is, as you were in the very exercise and actings of faith upon the Lord Jesus Christ, the Spirit of the Lord made sure, and sealed up to you your adoption, your reconciliation, your pardon, and everlasting inheritance.

He who honors Christ by believing, by fresh and frequent acts of faith upon Christ, him will Christ certainly honor and secure by setting his seal and mark upon him, and by assuring of him of an unshakable kingdom, incorruptible riches, and an unfading crown of glory. Ah Christians! you wrong two at once, Christ and your own souls, while you thus reason "Lord, give me first assurance, and then I will believe in you and rest upon you;" whereas your great work is to believe, and to hold on believing and acting of faith on the Lord Jesus, until you come to be assured and sealed up to the day of redemption. This is the surest and shortest way to assurance.

That is a remarkable passage of the apostle in Rom 15 13, "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit." "The God of hope," says the apostle, "shall fill you with all joy and peace in believing." That is, while you are in the exercise and actings of faith, the God of hope shall fill you with that joy that is "unspeakable and full of glory," and with that "peace that passes understanding." It signifies to be filled with joy and peace, as the sails of a ship are filled with wind.

Faith is the key which unlocks paradise, and lets in a flood of joy into the soul. Faith is an appropriating grace, it appropriates all to itself; it looks upon **God**, and says with the psalmist, "This God is my God forever and ever," Psalm 63 1, and Psalm 48 14. It looks upon **Christ** and says, "My beloved is mine, and his desires are towards me," Song 7 10. It looks upon the precious **promises** and says, These "precious promises" are mine, 2 Pet 1 4. It looks upon **heaven** and says, "Henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness," 2 Tim 4 8; and this fills the soul with joy and peace. **Faith has an influence upon other graces**, it is like a silver thread that runs through a chain of pearl, it puts strength and vivacity into all other virtues. It made Abraham to rejoice; and it made Noah sit still and quiet in the midst of a deluge.

Faith is the first pin which moves the soul; it is the spring in the watch which sets all the golden wheels of love, joy, comfort, and peace a-going. Faith is a root-grace, from whence springs all the sweet flowers of joy and peace. Faith is like the bee, it will suck sweetness out of every flower; it will extract light out of darkness, comforts out of distresses, mercies out of miseries, wine out of water, honey out of the rock, and meat out of the eater, Judg 14 14. 1 Pet 1 8, "Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy." Upon the exercise of faith, their hearts are filled with joy, with unspeakable joy, with glorious joy. Faith sees in Christ, a fullness of abundance; and this fills the heart with glorious joy.

Ah, Christians! believing, believing is the ready way, the safest way, the sweetest way, the shortest way, the only way to a well grounded assurance, and to that unspeakable joy and peace which flows from it, as the effect from the cause, the fruit from the root, the stream from the fountain. There is such assurance, and such joy that springs from the fresh and frequent actings of faith, that cannot be expressed, that cannot be painted. No man can paint the sweetness of the honeycomb, the sweetness of a cluster of Canaan, the sweetness of paradise, the fragrancy of the rose of Sharon. As the *being* of things cannot be painted, and as the *sweetness* of things cannot be painted—no more can that assurance and joy which flows from believing be painted or expressed; it is too great and too glorious for weak man to paint or set forth. There is in Christ not only the fullness of a *vessel*—but the fullness of a *fountain*; and this makes the heart of a saint leap, when he sees it by an eye of faith.

When Abraham believed in hope against hope, Rom 4 18, and when in the face of all dangers and difficulties, he put forth such noble and glorious acts of faith, as to conclude that "the Lord himself would provide a lamb for a burnt-offering," Gen 22 8, and that "in the mount he would be seen," Gen 22 14; God is so taken with the actings of his faith and the effects of it, that he swears by himself, that "in blessing he would bless him;" that is, I will certainly bless him, and will bless his blessing to him; "and in multiplying, he would multiply his seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore," Gen 22 17. Now the angel of the Lord, namely, the Lord Jesus, as his own words show, Gen 22 12,15-16, calls unto Abraham, out of heaven, not once but twice; and now he shows his admirable love in providing a ram, even to a miracle, for a burnt offering. "The Lord will provide," should be every saint's motto in straits and troubles.

And thus you see that believing times are times wherein the Lord is graciously pleased to reveal his love, and make known his favor to his people, and to look from heaven upon them, and to speak again and again in love and sweetness to them.

V. Hearing and receiving times, are times wherein the Lord is graciously pleased to cause his face to shine upon his people. When they are a-hearing the word of life and a-breaking the bread of life, then God comes in upon them, and declares to them that love that is better than life Acts 10 44, "While Peter yet spoke these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all those who heard the word." As Peter was speaking, the Holy Spirit, that is, the graces of the Holy Spirit, namely, the joy, the comfort, the love, the peace, etc., of the Holy Spirit, fell upon them. So in Gal 3 2, "This only would I learn of you, received you the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" By the Spirit here, Calvin and Bullinger and other expositors, do understand the joy, the peace, the assurance that is wrought in the heart by the hearing of faith, that is, by the doctrine of the gospel; for in these words of the apostle, hearing is put for the thing heard, and faith for the doctrine of the gospel, because the gospel is the ordinary means of working faith. "Faith comes by hearing," says the apostle, Rom 10 17.

So 1 Thess 1 5-6, "For our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake. You became imitators of us and of the Lord; in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit." In these words you have a divine power attending Paul's ministry, a power convincing, enlightening, humbling, raising, delighting, reforming, renewing, and transforming of those who heard him. Also you have the sweet and blessed testimony of the Spirit attending his ministry, and assuring them of their effectual calling and election, upon whom the word came in power, and raising up their spirits to joy in the midst of sorrow.

Ah! you precious sons and daughters of Zion, who have sat waiting and trembling at Wisdom's door, tell me, tell me—has not God rained down manna upon your souls while you have been hearing the word? Yes! Has not God come in with power upon you, and by his Spirit sealed up to you your election, the remission of your sins, the justification of your persons, and the salvation of your souls? Yes, without controversy, many saints have found Christ's lips, in this ordinance, to drop honey and sweetness, marrow and fatness.

And as Christ in hearing times, when his people are a-hearing the word of life, does lift up the light of his countenance upon them. Just so, when they are a-receiving the **bread of life**, he makes known his love to them, and their interest in him. In this feast of fat things, the master of the feast, the Lord Jesus, comes in the midst of his guests, saying, "Peace be here."

This ordinance is a cabinet of jewels; in it are abundance of spiritual springs, and rich mines, heavenly treasures. Here the beams of his glory do so shine, as that they cause the hearts of believers to burn within them, and as scatters all that thick darkness and cloud that are gathered about them. When saints are in this wine-cellar, Christ's banner over them is love; when they are in this Canaan, then he feeds them with milk and honey; when they are in this paradise, then they shall taste of angels' food; when they are at this gate of heaven, then they shall see Christ at the right of the Father; when they are before his mercy-seat, then they shall see the affections of mercy rolling towards them. In this ordinance they see that, and taste that, and feel that of Christ—which they are not able to declare and manifest to others. In this ordinance saints shall see the truth of their graces, and feel the increase of their graces, and rejoice in the clearness of their evidences. In this ordinance Christ will seal up the promises, and seal up the covenant, and seal up his love, and seal up their pardon sensibly to their souls.

There are many precious souls who have found Christ in this ordinance, when they could not find him in other ordinances, though they have sought him sorrowingly. Every gracious soul may say, 'I believe life eternal—but I receive, I eat life eternal.' Many a **cold** soul has been warmed in this ordinance, and many a **hungry** soul has been fed with manna in this ordinance, and many a **thirsty** soul has been refreshed with wine upon the lees in this ordinance, and many a **dull** soul has been quickened in this ordinance. In this ordinance, weak hands and feeble knees have been strengthened, and fainting hearts have been comforted, and questioning souls have been resolved, and staggering souls have been settled, and falling souls have been supported.

I do not say that ever a dead soul has been enlivened in this ordinance, this being an ordinance appointed by Christ, not to beget spiritual life where there was none—but to increase it where the Spirit has formerly begun it. Every wicked soul who takes the cup may say, 'the cup of life is made my death,' 1 Cor 11 27.

Ah, Christians! if you will but stand up and speak out, you must say, that in this ordinance, there has been between Christ and you such mutual kisses, such mutual embraces, such mutual opening and closing of hearts, as has made such a heaven in your hearts as cannot be expressed, as cannot be declared. Christ in this ordinance opens such boxes of precious ointment, as fill the saints with a spiritual savor; he gives them a cluster of the grapes of Canaan, which makes them earnestly look and long to be in Canaan. The Christians in the primitive times, upon their receiving the sacrament, were accustomed to be filled with that zeal and fervor, with that joy and comfort, with that faith, fortitude, and assurance—which made them to appear before the tyrants with transcendent boldness and cheerfulness. Now there are these reasons why God is pleased to lift up the light of his countenance upon his people, when they are a-hearing the word of life, and a-breaking the bread of life.

(1.) The first reason. **That they may highly prize the ordinances**. The choice discoveries which God makes to their souls in them, works them to set a very high price upon them. Oh! says our souls, we cannot but prize them—for what of God we have enjoyed in them, Psalm 84 10-11.

Many there are that are like old Barzillai, who had lost his taste and hearing, and so cared not for David's feasts and music, 2 Sam 19 32, seq. So many there are that can see nothing of God, nor taste nothing of God in ordinances they care not for ordinances, they slight ordinances. This age is full of careless Gallios, Acts 17, who care nothing for these things.

Oh! but souls who have seen, and heard, and tasted of the goodness of the Lord in ordinances—they dearly love them, and highly prize them! "I have esteemed your word," says Job, "above my necessary food," Job 23 12. And David sings it out "The law of your mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver" [Psalm 119 72]. Luther prized the word at such a high rate that he says he would not live in paradise, if he might, without the word—but with the word he could live in hell itself, Psalm 27 4.

(2.) The second reason. God lifts up the light of his countenance upon his people in ordinances, **that he may keep them close to ordinances and constant in ordinances**. The soul shall hear good news from heaven when it is waiting at wisdom's door, Prov 8 34-35. God will acquaint the soul with spiritual mysteries, and feed it with the droppings of the honeycomb—that the soul may cleave to them as Ruth did to Naomi, and say of them as she said of her "Where these go, I will go; where these lodge, I will lodge," Ruth 1 15-17; and nothing but death shall make a separation between ordinances and my soul.

After Joshua had a choice presence of God with his spirit in the service he was put upon, he makes a proclamation, "Choose this day whom you will serve. As for me and my family, we will worship the Lord." Josh 24 15. Let the outcome be what it will, I will cleave to the service of my God; I will set my soul under God's care, I will wait for him in his temple, Mal 3 1; I will look for him in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, Rev 2 1; I have found him a good master; I will live and die in his service; I have found his work to be better than wages; I have found a reward, not only for keeping—but also "in keeping his commandments," as the psalmist speaks, Psalm 19 11. The sweet views and visits, the choice hints, the heavenly fellowship which has been between the Lord Jesus and my soul, in his service—has put such great and glorious engagements upon my soul that I cannot but say with the servant in the law, "I love my master, and I will not leave his service, because it is well with me; my ear is bored, and I will be his servant forever," Exod 21 5; Deut 15 16-17.

(3.) The third reason why the Lord causes the beams of his love, and the brightness of his glory to shine forth upon his people in ordinances is, **To fence and strengthen their souls against all those temptations that they may meet with from Satan and his instruments, that lie in wait to deceive**, and by their cunning craftiness endeavor with all their might to work men first to have low thoughts of ordinances, and then to neglect them, and then to despise them.

Now the Lord by the sweet discoveries of himself, by the kisses and love-tokens that he gives to his people in ordinances, does so endear and engage their hearts to them, that they are able not only to withstand temptations—but also to triumph over temptations, through him who has loved them, and in ordinances manifested his presence, and the riches of his grace and goodness, to them. The sweet converse, the blessed turns and walks, which the saints have with God in ordinances, makes them strong in resisting, and happy in conquering of those temptations that tend to lead them from the ordinances; which are Christ's banqueting-house, where he sets before his people all the dainties and sweets of heaven, and bids them eat and drink abundantly, there being no danger of surfeiting in eating or drinking of Christ's delicates. Truly, many a soul has surfeited of the world's dainties, and died forever; but there is not a soul that has had the honor and happiness to be brought into Christ's banqueting-house, and to eat and drink of his dainties—but they have lived forever. Chrysostom says, that by the sacrament of the Lord's supper, we are so armed against Satan's temptations, that he flees from us as if we were so many lions which spit fire.

(4.) The fourth reason why the Lord is pleased to give his people some sense of his love, and some taste of heaven in ordinances, is, **That he may fit and ripen them for heaven, and make them look and long more after a perfect, complete, and full enjoyment of God.** Souls at first conversion are but rough-cast—but God, by visiting of them, and manifesting of himself to them in his ways, does more and more fit those vessels of mercy for glory, Isa 64 5. Ah! Christians, tell me, do not those holy influences, those spiritual breathings, those divine incomes—which you meet with in ordinances, make your souls cry out with David, "As the deer pants after the water brooks, so pants my soul after you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, even for the living God! When shall I come and appear before the presence of God?" Psalm 42 1-2.

So in Psalm 63 1-2, "O God, you are my God, early will I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my flesh longs for you in a dry and thirsty land, where there is no water to see your power and your glory, so as I have seen you in the sanctuary." (The Greeks derive their word for *desire* from a root that signifies to *burn*. Now, if one should heap ever so much fuel upon a fire, it would not quench it—but kindle it the more. So nothing can satisfy the desires of a saint but a full celestial enjoyment of God.) In these words you have David's strong, earnest, and vehement desires; here you have desire upon desire; here you have the very flower and vigor of his spirit, the strength and sinews of his soul, the prime and top of his inflamed affections—all strongly working after a fuller enjoyment of God.

Look! as the espoused maid longs for the marriage day; the apprentice for his freedom; the captive for his ransom; the condemned man for his pardon; the traveler for his inn; and the mariner for his haven. Just so, does a soul, who has met with God in his ordinances, long to meet with God in heaven. It is not a drop, it is not a lap and away, a sip and away—which will suffice such a soul. It is not *drops*—but *swimming* in the ocean, which will satisfy a soul that has looked into paradise. That soul will never be quiet, until it sees God face to face, until it is quiet in the bosom of God. The more a saint tastes of God in an ordinance, the more are his desires raised and whetted, and the more are his teeth set on edge for more and more of God.

Plutarch says, that when "once the Gauls had tasted of the sweet wine which was made of the grapes of Italy, nothing would satisfy them but *Italy, Italy*." So a soul that has tasted of the sweetness and goodness of God in ordinances, nothing will satisfy it—but more of that goodness and sweetness. A full enjoyment of God is the most sparkling diamond in the ring of glory. A little mercy may save the soul—but it must be a great deal of mercy which must satisfy the soul. The least glimpse of God's countenance may be a staff to support the soul, and an ark to secure the soul, and a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night to guide the soul; but it must be much, very much of God, which must be enough to satisfy the soul.

(5.) The fifth reason. The fifth and last reason why the Lord is graciously pleased to give his people some sense of his love, and some assurance of his favor in ordinances, is, **That they may have wherewithal to silence and stop the mouths of wicked and ungodly men**, whose words are stout against the Lord; who say, it is in vain to serve God, and what profit is there in keeping his statutes and ordinances, and in walking mournfully before the Lord Almighty? Mal 3 13-14. Now the Lord causes his face to shine upon his people in ordinances, that they may stand up, and bear him witness before the wicked world, that he is no hard master, that he reaps not where he sows not. The saints, by the gracious experiences that they have of the sweet breathings of God upon them in ordinances, are able to confute, muzzle, halt, or button up the mouths of vain and wicked men, who say unto the Lord, "Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of your ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto him?" Job 21 14-15.

In ordinances he kisses them, and there he gives them his love, and makes known his goodness and glory—that his children may, from their own experiences, be able to confute all the lies and clamors of wicked men against God and his ways. And blessed be God, who has not left himself without witness—but has many thousands who can stand up before all the world and declare, that they have seen "the beauty and glory of God in his sanctuary," that they have met with those joys and comforts in the ways of God, that do as far surpass all other joys and comforts, as light does darkness, as heaven does hell, that they have met with such heart-meltings, such heart-humblings, such heart-revivings, such heart-cheerings—as they have never met with before, in all their days.

Ah! say these souls, "One day in his courts, is better than a thousand" years elsewhere, Psalm 84 10. Oh we had rather with Moses lose all, and be whipped and stripped of all—than lose the sweet enjoyments of God in ordinances. Oh in them, God has been light and life, a joy and a crown to our souls. God is tender of his own glory, and of his children's comfort; and therefore he gives them such choice aspects, and such sweet visits in ordinances, that they may have arguments at hand to stop the mouths of sinners, and to declare from their own experience, that all the ways of God are ways of pleasantness, and that all his paths drop fatness, Prov 3 17; Psalm 65 11.

And thus much for the reasons, why God lifts up the light of his countenance upon his people in ordinances. Before I pass to the next particular, it will be necessary that I lay down these **CAUTIONS**, to prevent weak saints from stumbling and doubting, who have not yet found the Lord giving out his favors, and making known his grace and love, in such a sensible way to their souls, in breaking the bread of life, as others have found.

(1.) The first caution. Now, the first caution I shall lay down is this, **That even believers may sometimes come and go from this ordinance, without that comfort, that assurance, that joy, that refreshment that others have, and may meet with.** And this may arise, partly from their unpreparedness and unfitness to meet with God in the ordinance, 2 Chron 30 19-20; 1 Cor 11 20-34; and partly from their playing and dallying with some bosom sin; or else it may arise from their not stirring up themselves to lay hold on God, as the prophet Isaiah complains, "No one calls on your name or strives to lay hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us and made us waste away because of our sins." Isa 64 7.

Or else it may arise from the Spirit's standing at a distance from the soul. It may be, O soul, that you have set the Comforter, the Spirit a-mourning; and therefore it is, that he refuses to comfort you, and to be a sealing and witnessing Spirit unto you. You have grieved him with your sins, and he will now vex you by his silence; you have thrown the cordials away; you have trampled his manna under your feet; and therefore it is that he has veiled his face, and changed his countenance and demeanor towards you. You have been unkind to the Spirit; and therefore he behaves towards you as an enemy, and not as a friend, Psalm 77 2; Gen 31 5.

(2.) The second caution is this, **That though God does in this ordinance withhold comfort and assurance from you, yet you must hold on in the duty, you must wait at hope's hospital.** At this heavenly pool, you must lie—until the angel of the covenant, the Lord Jesus, comes and breathes upon you; at these waters of the sanctuary you must lie—until the Spirit moves upon your soul. You must not neglect your work—though God delays your comfort. You must be as obedient in the lack of assurance, as you are thankful under the enjoyment of assurance. The longer mercy is a-coming, the greater, the sweeter, and the better usually it is when it comes. Many a child has got a Benjamin's portion, a Hannah's portion, a double portion—by waiting. Just so, has many a saint got a worthy portion, a double portion of comfort and assurance—by waiting. Accordingly, wait patiently, and work heartily.

Laban often changed Jacob's wages, yet Jacob never changed nor neglected his work. Though God should change your wages, your comforts into discomforts, your spring into an autumn, etc., yet you must never change nor neglect your work, which is obeying, believing, and waiting—until God, in his ordinances, shall lift up the light of his countenance upon you, and turn your night into day, and your mourning into rejoicing. God is the same, and the commands of the gospel are the same; and therefore your work is the same, whether it be night or day with your soul, whether you are under frowns or smiles, in the arms or at the feet of God.

(3.) The third caution is this, Many of the precious sons and daughters of Zion have had and may have so much comfort and sweetness, so much life and heat, so much reviving and quickening, so much marrow and fatness in this ordinance—as may clearly evidence the special presence of God with their spirits. And yet, **they would give a world, were it in their power, for those strong comforts and full assurance, that others enjoy in this ordinance**. In this ordinance, Christ *looks* upon one and *kisses* another; he gives a *nod* to one, and his *hand* to another. Some in this ordinance shall have but *sips* of mercy, others shall have *large draughts* of mercy; some in this ordinance shall see but the back-parts of Christ, others shall see him face to face, Lam 1 16; to one he gives *silver*, to another he gives *gold*; to one he gives but a *glass* of consolation, to another he gives *flagons* of consolation, Song 2 5; some shall have but *drops*, others shall swim in the *ocean*; some shall have a *large harvest*, others shall have but a *few gleanings*, and yet they, if rightly valued, are more worth than a world.

The Sun of righteousness is a free agent, and he will work and shine forth as he pleases, and on whom he pleases. Who are you who dare say to Christ, "What are you doing?"

Remember—the least star gives light, the least drop moistens, the least pearl sparkles, and the least particle of special grace saves.

Ah! Christians, you may not, you must not say, We have not met with Christ in the sacrament, because we have not met with joy and assurance in the sacrament; for you may enjoy very much of Christ in that ordinance, and yet not so much as may boil up to full assurance, and make you go away singing, "My beloved is mine, and I am his," Song 2 16. We may enjoy the warmth and heat of the sun, when we cannot see the sun. Just so, souls may enjoy much of Christ, by holy influences, in the sacrament, when they cannot see Christ in the sacrament.

VI. Sixthly, **Times of personal AFFLICTIONS are times wherein the Lord is graciously pleased to vouchsafe to his people sweet manifestations of his love and favor.** When his hand is heavy on them, then he lifts up the light of his countenance upon them Psalm 71 20-21, "Though you have made me see troubles, many and bitter, you will restore my life again; from the depths of the earth you will again bring me up. You will increase my honor and comfort me once again." So Psalm 94 19, "When anxiety was great within me, your consolation brought joy to my soul."

Ah, Christians! has not God by all afflictions lifted up your souls nearer heaven, as Noah's ark was lifted up nearer and nearer heaven by the rising of the waters higher and higher? The ball in the emblem says 'the harder you beat me down in afflictions, the higher I shall bound in affection towards heaven and heavenly things.' Just so, **afflictions do but elevate and raise a saint's affections to heaven and heavenly things**.

When Munster lay sick, and his friends asked him how he did and how he felt himself, he pointed to his sores and ulcers, whereof he was full, and said, "These are God's gems and jewels, wherewith he decks his best friends; and to me they are more precious than all the gold and silver in the world."

Afflictions are blessings. God's corrections are our instructions, his lashes our lessons, his scourges our schoolmasters, his chastisements our corrections. And to note this, the Hebrews and Greeks both express *chastening* and *teaching* by one and the same word, because the latter is the true end of the former. The proverb is, 'Pain gives wisdom; and vexation gives understanding.' I bless God I know several precious souls of whom this world is not worthy, who have found more of God in afflictions than in any other gracious dispensation. Manasseh got more by his iron chain than ever he got by his golden crown.

Ah, you afflicted sons and daughters of Zion, have you not had such sweet discoveries of **God**, such sensible demonstrations of his love, such affections working in him towards you? Have you not had such gracious visits, and such glorious visions—which you would not exchange for all the world? Yes! Have you not had the precious presence of God with you, quieting and stilling your souls, supporting and upholding your souls, cheering and refreshing your souls? Yes! And have you not had the Lord applying precious promises, and suitable remedies, to all your maladies? Have you not found God a-bringing in unexpected mercy in the day of your adversity, suitable to that promise, Hos 2 14, "I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably to her" (or, I will speak earnestly to her heart, as the Hebrew reads it)? Yes!

Have you not found that God has so sweetened and sanctified afflictions to you, as to make them a means to discover many **sins** which lay hidden, and to purge you from many sins that cleaved close unto you, and to prevent you from falling into many sins which would have been the breaking of your bones, and the loss of your comfort? Yes! Have you not found that you have been like the walnut tree, the better for beating; and like the vine, the better for bleeding; and like the naughty child, the better for whipping? Yes! Musk, says one, when it has lost its sweetness, if it be put into the sink among filth, it recovers it. So do afflictions recover and revive decayed graces.

Have you not found afflictions to revive, quicken, and recover your decayed **graces**? Have they not inflamed that love that has been cold, and put life into that faith that has been dying, and quickened those hopes which have been withering, and put spirit into those joys and comforts which have been languishing? Yes! Oh, then, stand up and declare to all the world that times of affliction have been the times wherein you have seen the face of God, and heard the voice of God, and sucked sweetness from the breasts of God, and fed upon the delicates of God, and drunk deep of the consolations of God, and have been most satisfied and delighted with the presence and incomes of God.

When Hezekiah in his greatest affliction lamentingly said, Isa 38 9-20, "I shall go mourning to my grave, I shall not see the Lord in the land of the living. He will cut me off with pining sickness, he will break all my bones. Like a crane, or a swallow, so did I chatter; I did mourn as a dove; my eyes fail with looking upward. O Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me." So now God comes in a way of mercy to him, and prints his love upon his heart Isa 38 17, "You have in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption;" or rather, as the Hebrew reads it, "You have loved my soul from the grave, for you have cast all my sins behind your back." Ah, says Hezekiah, I have now found that in my afflictions, your affections have been most strongly carried towards me, as towards one whom you are exceedingly taken with. Oh, now you have warmed me with your love, and visited me with your grace; you have made my darkness to be light, and turned my sighing into singing, and my mourning into rejoicing.

So when Habakkuk's belly trembled, and his lips quivered, and rottenness entered into his bones, and all creature comforts failed, yet then had he such a sweet presence of God with his spirit, as makes him to rejoice in the midst of sorrows "Yet," says he, "I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation," Hab 3 16-18. And thus you see it clear, that in times of affliction God makes sweet manifestations of his love and favor to his children's souls.

VII. Seventhly, **PRAYING times are times wherein the Lord is graciously pleased to give his people some sweet and comfortable assurance of his love and favor towards them.** Prayer crowns God with honor and glory that is due to his name; and God crowns prayer with assurance and comfort. Usually the most praying souls are the most assured souls. There is no service wherein souls have such a near, familiar, and friendly fellowship with God, as in this of prayer; neither is there any service wherein God does more delight to make known his grace and goodness, his mercy and bounty, his beauty and glory, to poor souls, than this of prayer. Bernard, a man very much in prayer Lord, said. 'I never go away from prayer without you.'

The best and the sweetest flowers of paradise, God gives to his people when they are upon their knees. Prayer is the gate of heaven, a key to let us into paradise. When John was weeping, in prayer doubtless, the sealed book was open to him. Many Christians have found by experience, praying times to be sealing times, times wherein God has sealed up to them the remission of their sins, and the salvation of their souls. They have found prayer to be a shelter to their souls, a sacrifice to God, a sweet savor to Christ, a scourge to Satan, and an inlet to assurance. God loves to lade the wings of prayer with the choicest and chief blessings. Ah! how often, Christians, has God kissed you at the beginning of prayer, and spoke peace to you in the midst of prayer, and filled you with joy and assurance, upon the close of prayer!

Dan 9 17-24, is full to the point in hand; I shall only cite the words of the four last verses "And while I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin, and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the Lord my God for the holy mountain of my God; yes, while I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of evening oblation. And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give you skill and understanding. At the beginning of your supplications, the commandment came forth, and I am come to show you, for you are greatly beloved; therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision." In these words you see, while Daniel was in prayer, the Lord appears to him and gives him a divine touch, and tells him that he is "a man greatly beloved," or as the Hebrew has it, "a man of desires, that is, one that is very pleasing and delightful to God."

So Acts 10 1-4. "At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion in what was known as the Italian Regiment. He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly. One day at about three in the afternoon he had a vision. He distinctly saw an angel of God, who came to him and said, "Cornelius!" Cornelius stared at him in fear. "What is it, Lord?" he asked. The angel answered, "Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God." Praying Cornelius, you see, is remembered by God, and visited sensibly and evidently by an angel, and assured that his prayers and good deeds are not only an odor, a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable and well pleasing to God—but also that they shall be gloriously rewarded by God. So when Peter was praying, he fell into a trance, and saw heaven opened, and had his mind elevated, and all the faculties of his soul filled with a divine revelation, Acts 10 9-16.

Just so, when Paul was a-praying, he sees a vision, Acts 9 11-16, Ananias a-coming and laying his hands on him, that he might receive his sight. Paul had not been long at prayer before it was revealed to him, that he was a chosen vessel, before he was filled with the voice and comforts of the Holy Spirit. Just so, our Savior was transfigured as he was praying, Matt 17 1-2. Thus you see, that praying times are times wherein the Lord is graciously pleased to lift up the light of his countenance upon his people, and to cause his grace and favor, his goodness and kindness, to rest on them, as the spirit of Elijah did rest on Elisha, 2 Kings 2 15.

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OBJECTION. But some may object and say, **We have been at the door of mercy, early and late, for assurance, and yet we have not obtained it**; we have prayed and waited, and we have waited and prayed, we have prayed and mourned, and we have mourned and prayed, and yet we cannot get a good word from God, a smile from God; he has covered himself with a cloud, and after all that we have done, it is still night with our souls; God seems not to be at home, he seems not to value our prayers; we call, and cry and shout out for assurance, and yet he shuts out our prayer; we are sure that we have not found praying times to be times of assurance to our souls, etc., Lam 3 8. Now to this objection I shall give these answers

ANSWER 1. First, That it may he you have been more earnest and vehement for assurance, and the effects of it, namely, joy, comfort, and peace—than you have been for grace and holiness, for communion with God, and conformity to God. It may be your requests for assurance have been full of life and spirits; when your requests for grace and holiness, for communion with God, and conformity to God, have been lifeless and spiritless. If so, no wonder that assurance is denied you. **Assurance makes most for your comfort—but holiness makes most for God's honor.** Man's holiness is now his greatest happiness, and in heaven man's greatest happiness will be his perfect holiness. Assurance is the daughter of holiness; and he who shall more highly prize, and more earnestly press after the enjoyment of the daughter than the mother, it is not a wonder if God shuts the door upon him, and crosses him in the thing he most desires. The surest and the shortest way to assurance is to wrestle and contend with God for holiness. When the stream and cream of a man's spirit runs after holiness, it will not be long night with that man; the Sun of righteousness will shine forth upon that man, and turn his winter into summer, and crown him with the diadem of assurance, Mal 4 2. The more holy any person is, the more excellent he is. All corruptions are diminutions of excellency. The more mixed anything is, the more it is abased, as if gold and tin be mixed; and the more pure it is as mere gold, the more glorious it is.

Now the more divinely excellent any man is, the more fit he is to enjoy the choicest and highest favors. Assurance is a jewel of that value, which he will bestow it upon none but his excellent ones, Psalm 16 3. Assurance is that tried gold, which none can wear but those who win it in a way of grace and holiness, Rev 3 18. It may be, if you had minded, and endeavored more after communion with God, and conformity to God, you might before this time have looked upward, and seen God in Christ smiling upon you, and have looked inward into your own soul, and seen the Spirit of grace witnessing to your spirit that you were a son, an heir—an heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ, Rom 8 15-17. But you have minded more your own comfort than Christ's honor; you have minded the blossoms and the fruit—assurance and peace—more than Christ the root; you have minded the springs of comfort, more than Christ, the fountain of life; you have minded the beams of the sun, more than the Sun of righteousness; and therefore it is but a righteous thing with God to leave you to walk in a valley of darkness, to hide his face from you, and to seem to be as an enemy to you.

Answer 2. But secondly, I answer, It may be you are not yet fit for so choice a mercy, you are not able to bear so great a favor. Many heads are not able to bear strong waters. Why, the very quintessence of all the strong consolations of God are wrung out into this golden cup of assurance; and can you drink of this cup, and not stammer nor stagger? Believe it, assurance is meat for strong men; few babes, if any, are able to bear it, and digest it. The apostle says, Heb 5 12,14, that "strong meat belongs to those who are of full age" (or that are comparatively perfect, or full-grown), "even those who, by reason of use" (Greek, by reason of habit, which is got by continual custom and long practice), "have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." The Greek word properly signifies such an exercise as wrestlers, or such as contend for victory, do use, which is with all their might and strength, being trained up unto it by long exercise.

It may be, O complaining Christian, that you are but a babe in grace, 1 Cor 3 1-3; perhaps you are not yet got beyond the breast, or, if you are, yet you are not past the spoon. Ah! Christian, if it be thus with you, cease complaining of lack of assurance, and be up and growing; be more aged in grace and holiness, and you shall find assurance growing upon you. Divine wisdom sparkles much in this, in giving milk to babes—who are more carnal than spiritual; and meat, that is assurance, to strong men—who have more skill and will, who have a greater ability and choicer faculty to prize and improve this jewel assurance than babes have. The Hebrew word signifies both weight and glory; and truly, glory is such a weight, that if the body were not upheld by which glorious power that raised Jesus Christ from the grave, if it were not born up by everlasting arms—it were impossible that we could bear it, Deut 33 27. Now assurance is the top of glory, it is the glory of glory. Then certainly they had need be very glorious within—who shall be crowned with such a weight of glory as assurance is, Psalm 45 13. Well I remember this, it is mercy to lack mercy until we are fit for mercy, until we are able to bear the weight of mercy, and make a divine improvement of mercy.

Answer 3. Thirdly, You must distinguish between delays and denials. God may delay us, when he does not deny us; he may defer the giving in of a mercy, and yet, at last, give the very mercy begged. Barren Hannah prays, year after year, for a mercy. God delays her long—but at last gives her her desire; and the text says expressly, that her countenance was no more sad, 1 Sam 1 18. After many prayers and tears, the Lord comes in, and assures her, that she should have the desire of her soul; and now she mourns no more—but sits down satisfied, comforted, and cheered. After much praying, waiting, and weeping, God usually comes with his hands and heart full of mercy to his people. He loves not to come empty-handed, to those who have sat long with wet eyes at mercy's door.

Christ tries the faith, patience, and constancy of the **Canaanite woman**, Matt 15 21-29; he deferred and delayed her, he reproached and repulsed her; and yet at last is overcome by her, as not being able any longer to withstand her importunate requests. "O woman, great is your faith; be it unto you, even as you will." Christ puts her off at first—but gives in to her at last; at first a good word, a good look is too good for her—but at last good words and good looks are too little for her "Be it unto you, even as you will." At first Christ carries himself to her as a churlish stranger—but at last as an amorous lover. Though at first he had not an ear to hear her, yet at last he had a heart to grant her, not only her desires—but even what else she would desire over and above what she had desired.

God heard **Daniel** at the beginning of his supplications, and his affections of love were working strongly towards him—but the angel Gabriel does not inform Daniel of this until afterwards, Dan 9 15-25. Praying souls, you say that you have prayed long for assurance, and yet you have not obtained it. Well, pray still. Oh pray and wait, wait and pray; "the vision is for an appointed time—but at the end it shall speak, and not lie though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry," Hab 2 3. God has never, God will never—fail the praying soul; in the long run, you shall be sure to obtain that assurance that will richly recompense you for all your praying, waiting, and weeping; therefore hold up and hold on praying, though God does delay you, and my soul for yours, you shall reap in due season such a harvest of joy and comfort, as will sufficiently pay you for all your pains, Gal 6 9.

Shall the farmer wait patiently for the precious fruits of the earth, James 5 7; and will not you wait patiently for assurance, which is a jewel more worth than heaven and earth? Praying souls, remember this. It is but foolishness to think that men shall reap as soon as they sow—that they shall reap in the evening when they have but sowed in the morning. Titus Vespasian never dismissed any petitioner with a tear in his eye, or with a heavy heart; and shall we think that the God of compassions will always dismiss the petitioners of heaven with tears in their eyes? Surely no.

VIII. Eighthly, **Sometimes before the soul is deeply engaged in sore conflicts with SATAN**, the Lord is graciously pleased to visit his people with his loving-kindness, and to give them some sweet assurance, that though they are tempted, yet they shall not be worsted; though they are tried, yet they shall be crowned, 1 John 10 28; though Satan does roar as a lion upon the soul, yet he shall not make a prey of the soul; for the Lion of the tribe of Judah will hold it fast, and none shall pluck it out of his hand, Rev 5 5.

God first fed Israel with manna from heaven, and gave them water to drink out of the rock, before their sore fight with Amalek, Exod 17 8, etc. Before Paul was buffeted by Satan, he was caught up into the third heaven, where he had very glorious visions and revelations of the Lord, even such as he was not able to utter, 2 Cor 12 1-8. Before Jesus Christ was led into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan, to question and doubt of his Sonship, he heard a voice from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased " Matt 3 17. The Spirit of the Lord did first descends upon him as a dove, before Satan fell upon him as a lion. God walks with his people some turns in paradise, and gives them some tastes of his right-hand pleasures; before Satan, by his tempting, shall do them a displeasure, Psalm 16 11. But I must hasten to a close of this chapter; and therefore,

IX. Ninthly, and lastly, **After some sharp conflicts with Satan**, God is graciously pleased to lift up the light of his countenance upon his people, and to warm and cheer their hearts with the beams of his love Matt 4 11, "Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and ministered unto him." When Christ had even spent himself in fighting and dueling, in resisting and scattering Satan's temptations, then the angels come and minister cordials and comforts unto him. So after Paul had been buffeted by Satan, he heard that sweet word from heaven, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness," 2 Cor 12 7-10, which filled his heart with joy and gladness. The hidden manna, the new name, and the white stone, is given to the conqueror, Rev 7 17; to him who has fought "with principalities, and powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places," Eph 6 12, and has come off with his garments dipped in blood.

After the Roman generals had gotten victory over their enemies, the senate did use not one way—but many ways, to express their loves to them. So after our faith has gotten victory over Satan, God usually takes the soul in his arms, and courts it, and shows much kindness to it. Now the soul shall be carried in triumph, now the royal chariot attends the soul, now white raiment is put upon the soul, Rev 3 5, and Rev 7 9; now palms are put into the conqueror's hands, now the garland is set upon the conqueror's head, and now a royal feast is provided, where God will set the conqueror at the top end of the table, and speak kindly, and carry it sweetly towards him, as one much affected and taken with his victory over the prince of darkness.

Conflicts with Satan are usually the sharpest and the hottest; they spend and use most the vital and noble spirits of the saints; and therefore the Lord, after such conflicts, does ordinarily give his people his choicest and his strongest cordials.

And thus, by divine assistance, we have showed you the special times and seasons wherein the Lord is graciously pleased to give his people some tastes of his love, some sweet assurance, that they are his favorites, that all is well, and shall be forever well between him and them; and that, **though many things may trouble them, yet nothing shall separate them from their God, their Christ, their crown.** As many have found by experience.

CHAPTER 3

Containing the several HINDRANCES and IMPEDIMENTS that keep poor souls from assurance; with the MEANS and HELPS to remove those impediments and hindrances.

I. The first impediment. Now the first impediment and hindrance to assurance that we shall instance in, is, **Despairing thoughts of mercy.** Oh! these imprison the soul, and make it always dark with the soul; these shut the windows of the soul, that no light can come in to cheer it. Despairing thoughts make a man fight against God with his own weapons; they make a man cast all the cordials of the Spirit to the ground, as things of no value; they make a man suck poison out of the sweetest promises; they make a man eminent in nothing unless it be in having hard thoughts of God, and in arguing against his own soul and happiness, and in turning his greatest advantages into disadvantages, his greatest helps into his greatest hindrances.

Despairing thoughts of mercy make a man below the beast which perishes. Pliny speaks of the scorpion, that there is not one minute wherein it does not put forth the sting, as being unwilling to lose any opportunity of doing mischief.

Such scorpions are despairing souls, they are still a-putting out their stings, a-wrangling with God, or Christ, or the Scripture, or the saints, or ordinances, or their own souls. A despairing soul is a terror to himself; it cannot rest—but, like Noah's ark, is always tossed here and there; it is troubled on every side, it is full of fears and fightings. A despairing soul is like the spider, which draws poison out of the sweetest flowers.

A despairing soul is a burden to others—but the greatest burden to itself. It is still a-vexing, terrifying, tormenting, condemning, and perplexing itself. Despair makes every sweet bitter, and every bitter exceeding bitter; it puts gall and wormwood into the sweetest wine, and it puts a sting, a cross, into every cross.

Now while the soul is under these despairing thoughts of mercy, how is it possible that it should attain to a well grounded assurance. Therefore for the helping of the soul out of this despairing condition, give me leave a little to expostulate with despairing souls. Tell me, O despairing souls, is not despair an exceeding vile and contemptible sin? Is it not a dishonor to God, a reproach to Christ, and a murderer of souls? Is it not a misrepresenting of God, a denying of Christ, and a crowning of Satan? It does without doubt proclaim the devil a conqueror, and lifts him up above Christ himself. Despair is Satan's masterpiece; it carries men headlong to hell; it makes a man twice-told a child of hell; it is a viper which has stinged many a man to death.

Despair is an evil that flows from the greatest evil in the world; it flows from unbelief, from ignorance, and misapprehensions of God and his grace, and from mistakes of Scripture, and from Satan, who, being forever cast out of paradise, labors with all his art and might to work poor souls to despair of ever entering into paradise. O despairing souls, let the greatness of this sin effectually awaken you, and provoke you to labor as for life, to come out of this condition, which is as sinful as it is doleful, and as much to be hated as to be lamented.

Again, tell me, O despairing souls, has not despairing Judas perished, whereas the murderers of Christ, believing on him, were saved? Did not Judas sin more heinously by despairing, than by betraying of Christ?

Despairing Spira is damned, when repenting **Manasseh** is saved. O despairing souls, the arms of mercy are open to receive a Manasseh, a monster, a devil incarnate; he caused that gospel prophet Isaiah to be sawed in half with a saw, as some Rabbis say; he turned aside from the Lord to commit idolatry, and caused his sons to pass through the fire, and dealt with bewitching spirits, and made the streets of Jerusalem to overflow with innocent blood, 2 Chron 33 1-15.

The soul of **Mary Magdalene** was full of devils; and yet Christ casts them out, and made her heart his house, his presence chamber, Luke 7 47. Why do you then say there is no hope for you, O despairing soul? **Paul** was full of rage against Christ and his people, and full of blasphemy and impiety, and yet behold, Paul is a chosen vessel, Paul is caught up into the heaven, and he is filled with the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, Acts 8 1-2; Acts 9 1; Acts 26 11; 1 Tim 1 13,15-16.

Why should you then say there is for you no help, O despairing soul! Though the prodigal had run from his father, and spent and wasted all his estate in ways of vileness and wickedness, yet upon his resolution to return, his father meets him, and instead of killing him, he kisses him; instead of kicking him, he embraces him; instead of shutting the door upon him, he makes sumptuous provision for him, Luke 15 13-23. And how then do you dare to say, O despairing soul, that God will never cast an eye of love upon you, nor bestow a crumb of mercy on you! The apostle tells you of some monstrous miscreants who were unrighteous, fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, homosexuals, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, extortioners; and yet these monsters of mankind, through the infinite goodness and free grace of God, are washed from the filth and guilt of their sins, and justified by the righteousness of Christ, and sanctified by the Spirit of Christ, and decked and adorned with the precious graces of Christ, 1 Cor 6 9-11.

Therefore do not say, O despairing soul, that you shall die in your sins, and lie down at last in everlasting sorrow. O despairing souls, are you good at burning, that you have no mercy on yourselves—but to argue to your own undoing? Did it make for the honor and glory of his free grace to pardon them, and will it be a reproach to his free grace to pardon you? Could God be just in justifying such ungodly ones, and shall he be unjust in justifying of you? Did not their unworthiness and unfitness for mercy turn the stream of mercy from them? No! Why then, O despairing soul, should you fear that your unworthiness and unfitness for mercy will so stop and turn the stream of mercy, as that you must perish eternally for lack of one drop of special grace and mercy?

Again, tell me, O despairing soul, is not the grace of God free grace, is not man's salvation of free grace? "By grace you are saved," Eph 2 8. Every link of this golden chain is grace. It is free grace which **chose** us, Rom 11 5. Even so then at this present time also there is "a remnant according to the election of grace." It is free grace which chooses some to be jewels from all eternity, which chooses some to everlasting life, when others are left in darkness. Augustine, "The patrons of man's free will are enemies to God's free grace."

The **Lord Jesus Christ** is a gift of free grace. Christ is the greatest, the sweetest, the choicest, the chief gift which God ever gave; and yet this gift is given by a hand of love. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son," etc., John 3 16; Isa 9 6; John 4 10. "God so loved the world;" so freely, so vehemently, so fully, so admirably, so inconceivably, "That he gave his only Son." His Son, not his servant, his begotten Son, not his adopted Son, yes, his only begotten Son!

I have read of parents who had four sons; and in a famine, sore oppressed with hunger, they resolved to sell one son; but then they considered with themselves which of the four they should sell. They said the eldest was the first of their strength, therefore reluctant were they to sell him. The second was the picture of their father, and therefore reluctant were they to part with him. The third was like the mother, and therefore they were not willing to part with him. The fourth, and youngest, was the child of their old age, their Benjamin, the dearly beloved of them both; and therefore they were resolved not to part with any of them, and so would rather allow themselves to perish than to part with any of their children. But God, O you despairing soul, is is all love, he will not stand upon giving his most lovely Son to most unlovely souls.

Oh! but God's heart is so strongly set upon sinners, that he freely gives Jesus Christ, who is his firstborn, who is his very picture, who is his beloved Benjamin, who is his chief joy, who is his greatest delight. As Solomon speaks Prov 8 30, "Then I was by him as one brought up with him, and I was daily his delight" (in the Hebrew—his greatest delight), "rejoicing always before him," or sporting greatly before him, as little ones do before their parents. Why, then, O despairing soul! do you sit down sighing, and walk up and down mourning, and sadly concluding that there is no mercy for you? Hold up your head, O despairing soul! Jesus Christ himself is a gift of free grace! The consideration of his free, boundless, bottomless, and endless love, may afford you much matter of admiration and consolation—but none of desperation.

And as Jesus Christ is a gift of free grace, or a free-grace gift, so the precious **covenant** of grace is a gift of grace Gen 17 2, "I will make my covenant between me and you;" but in the original it is, "I will give you my covenant." Here you see that the covenant of grace is a free gift of grace.

God gave the covenant of the priesthood unto Phinehas as a gift, Num 25 12. Just so, God gives the covenant of grace as a gift of favor and grace to all that he takes unto covenant with himself. **From first to last—all is from free grace!** God loves freely "I will heal their backsliding; I will love them freely," etc., Hos 14 4.

So Moses "The Lord," says he, "set his love upon you to take you into covenant with him not because you were more in number than other people—but because he loved you, and chose your fathers," Deut 7 7-8.

The only ground of God's **love** is his grace. The ground of God's love is only and wholly in himself. There is neither portion nor proportion in us to draw his love. There is no love nor loveliness in us that should cause a beam of his love to shine upon us. There is that enmity, that filthiness, that treacherousness, that unfaithfulness, to be found in every man's bosom, which might justly put God upon glorifying himself in their eternal ruin, and to write their names in his black book in characters of blood and wrath. God will have all blessings and happiness to flow from free grace

(1.) that the worst of sinners may have strong grounds for hope and comfort;

(2.) for the praise of his own glory;

(3.) that vain man may not boast;

(4.) that our mercies and blessings may be sure to us.

And as God loves freely, so God **justifies** us freely Rom 3 24, "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ." And as poor sinners are justified freely, so they are **pardoned** freely Acts 5 31, "Him has God exalted," speaking of Christ, "with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Savior—to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." And as they are pardoned freely, so they shall be **saved** freely Rom 6 23, "For the wages of sin is death—but the gift of God is eternal life," etc. The gracious gift of God. *Charisma* signifies a gift flowing from the free grace and favor of God, John 10 28.

Thus you see, O despairing souls! that all is of free grace; from the lowest to the highest round of Jacob's ladder—all is of grace! Christ is a free gift, the covenant of grace is a free gift, pardon of sin is a free gift, heaven and salvation is a free gift. Why, then, O despairing souls! should you sit down sighing under such black, sad, and dismal apprehensions of God, and your own state and condition?

Truly, seeing all happiness and blessedness comes in a way of free grace, and not in a way of doing, not in a way of works, you should arise, O despairing souls! and cast off all despairing thoughts, and drink of the waters of life freely, Rev 21 6; Rev 22 18. What though your heart is dead, and hard, and sad; what though your sins be many, and your fears great; yet behold here is glorious grace, rich grace, wondrous grace, matchless and incomparable riches of free grace spread before you. Oh! let this fire warm you, let these waters refresh you, let these cordials strengthen you, that it may be day and no longer night with you, that your mourning may be turned into rejoicing, and that your beautiful garments may be put on, that so the rest of your days may be days of gladness and sweetness, and free grace may be an everlasting shade, shelter, and rest unto you, Isa 52 1.

Again, tell me, O despairing souls! do you understand, and most seriously and frequently ponder upon those particular scriptures that do most clearly, sweetly, and fully discover the mercies of God, the affections of God, the grace and favor of God to poor sinners, as that Psalm 86 5, "For you, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy, unto all who call upon you"? God's mercies are above all his works, and above all ours too. His mercy is without measures and rules. All the acts and attributes of God sit at the feet of mercy. The weapons of God's artillery are turned into the rainbow; a *bow*, indeed—but without an arrow, *bent*—but without a string. The rainbow is an emblem of mercy; it is a sign of grace and favor, and an assurance that God will remember his covenant. It is fresh and green, to note to us that God's mercy and grace to poor sinners is always fresh and green.

Again, tell me, O despairing souls! have you seriously pondered upon Neh 9 16-17, "But they and our fathers dealt proudly, and hardened their necks, and hearkened not to your commandments, and refused to obey; neither were they mindful of the wonders which you did among them—but hardened their necks, and in their rebellion appointed a captain to return to their bondage. But you are a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and forsook them not"? "You are a God," says he, "ready to pardon," or rather as it is in the original, "And you a God of pardons." He will multiply to pardon, or he will increase his pardon, as the sinner increases his sins. There is a very great emphasis in this Hebraism, "a God of pardons." It shows us that mercy is essential unto God, and that he is incomparable in forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin. Here Nehemiah sets him forth as one made up all of pardoning grace and mercy. **As a circle begins everywhere—but ends nowhere, so do the mercies of God**, Mic 7 18.

When Alexander sat down before a city, he did use to set up a light, to give those within notice that if they came forth to him while the light lasted, they might have pardon; if otherwise, no mercy was to be expected. Oh! but such is the mercy and patience of God to sinners, that he sets up light after light, and waits year after year upon them. When they have done their worst against him, yet then he comes with his heart full of love, and his hands full of pardons, and makes a proclamation of grace, that if now at last they will accept of mercy, they shall have it, Luke 13 7; Jer 3 1-15. Why, then, O despairing soul! do you make your life a hell, by having such low and mean thoughts of God's mercy, and by measuring of the mercies and affections of God by the narrow quantity of your weak and dark understanding?

Again, tell me, O despairing souls! have you seriously pondered upon those words in Isa 55 7-9 "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man" (or rather as it is in the original, "the man of iniquity") "his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon," or as it is in the original, "He will multiply pardons." "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts"? Turn, O despairing souls! to these scriptures Num 14 19-20; Exod 34 6-7; Mic 7 18-19; Isa 30 18-19; Psalm 78 34-40; Psalm 103 8-13; Jer 3 1-12; Luke 15 20-24; 1 Tim 1 13-17; and tell me whether you have seriously and frequently pondered upon them!

Oh! how can you look so much grace and so much love and favor, and such tender affections of compassion, in the face, as appears in these scriptures, and yet rack and tear your precious souls with despairing thoughts!

Oh! there is so much grace and goodness, so much love and favor, so much mercy and glory, sparkling and shining through these scriptures, as may allay the strongest fears, and scatter the thickest darkness, and cheer up the saddest spirits, etc.

Again, tell me, O despairing souls, do you not do infinite wrong to the precious blood of the Lord Jesus? Three things are called **PRECIOUS** in the Scripture the **blood** of Christ is called "precious blood," 1 Pet 1 19; and **faith** is called "precious faith," 2 Pet 1 1; and the **promises** are called "precious promises," 2 Pet 1 4. Now, what a reproach is it to this precious blood, "which speaks better things than the blood of Abel," Heb 12 24, for you to faint and sink under the power of despair; what does this speak out? Oh! does it not proclaim to all the world that there is no such worth and virtue, no such power and efficacy in the blood of Christ, as indeed there is? Oh! how will you answer this to Christ in that day wherein his blood shall speak and plead, not only with the profane who have trodden it under their feet—but also with despairing souls who have undervalued the power, virtue, and merit of it? Heb 10 29. The blood of Christ is the key of heaven which has let in millions, Rev 7 9; Isa 66 8. **Has not the blood of Jesus Christ washed away the sins of a world of notorious sinners; and is it not of virtue to wash away the sins of one sinner?** Has it had that power in it as to bring many thousands to glory already, and is there not so much virtue left in it as to bring your soul to glory? 1 John 1 7-9. Has it actually delivered such a multitude from wrath to come as cannot be numbered, and is the virtue of it so far spent as that it cannot reach to your deliverance? Are there not yet millions of thousands that shall hereafter be actually saved and justified by this blood? Why, then, should you despair of being justified and saved from wrath to come by the virtue and power of this precious blood?

There were five people who were studying what was the best means to mortify sin. One said, to meditate on death; the second, to meditate on judgment; the third, to meditate on the joys of heaven; the fourth, to meditate on the torments of hell; the fifth, to meditate on the blood and sufferings of Jesus Christ and certainly, the last is the choicest and strongest motive of all to the mortifying of sin.

O despairing souls, despairing souls! if ever you would cast off your despairing thoughts and get out of your present hell, then dwell much, muse much, and apply much this precious blood to your own souls. So shall "sorrow and mourning flee away, and everlasting joy shall rest upon you," and the Lord shall give you "an everlasting name," and be "everlasting light and glory to you," and "you shall be no more called Forsaken;" for "the Lord will rejoice over you," [Isa 55 11; Isa 56 5; Isa 60 19-20, and Isa 62 4-5; John 4 21,23] and be a wellspring of life unto you, and make his abode with you, and turn your sighing into singing, your trembling into rejoicing, and your prison into a paradise of pleasure. Just so, that your souls shall be able to stand up and say, Oh, blessed be God for Jesus Christ; blessed be God for that precious blood which has justified our persons, and quieted our consciences, and scattered our fears, and answered our doubts, and given us to triumph over sin, hell, and death. "Who is he who condemns? it is Christ that died," Rom 8 33-38.

The apostle, upon the account of Christ's death, of Christ's blood, cries out, Victory, victory; he looks upon all his enemies and sings it sweetly out, "Over all these we are more than conquerors," or "above conquerors!"

O despairing souls, to all your former sins do not add this—of making light and slight of the blood of Christ. As there is no blood which saves souls like the blood of Christ, so there is no blood which sinks souls like the blood of Christ. A drop of this blood upon a man's **head** at last will make him miserable forever; but a drop of it upon a man's **heart** at last will make him happy forever. In the day of vengeance, the destroying angel will spare you if this blood be found upon the doorposts of your hearts, otherwise you are lost forever, Exod 12 7.

Lastly, I can tell you, O despairing souls, that God has brought some out of the very gulf of despair, out of the very belly of hell; and therefore you may hope that your sins, which are your present burden, shall not be your future ruin. Does not Asaph resemble the despairing soul? "My soul refused to be comforted. I remembered God, and was troubled; I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed. I am so troubled that I cannot speak." "Will the Lord cast off forever? and will he be favorable no more? Is his mercy clean gone forever? and will his promise fail for evermore? Has God forgotten to be gracious? has he in anger shut up his tender mercies?" Psalm 77 2-9. Now, out of this gulf God delivers him Psalm 77 10, "And I said, This is my infirmity;" or "this makes me sick," as it is in the original. Here Asaph checks himself for casting the cordials, the comforts of the Spirit to the ground, and for his having such hard, sad, and black thoughts of God.

And in Psalm 77 13, he speaks like one dropped out of heaven "Your way, O God, is in the sanctuary who is so great a God as our God?" Formerly, the thoughts of God troubled him and overwhelmed him; but now, at last, the thoughts of the greatness of God, and of his interest in God, is matter of admiration and consolation to him. So Heman sighs it out thus "My soul is full of troubles, and my life draws near unto the grave." "You have laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps. Your wrath lies hard upon me, and you have afflicted me with all your waves." "Lord, why do you cast off my soul? why do you hide your face from me? I am afflicted, and ready to die from my youth up; while I suffer your terrors, I am distracted. Your fierce wrath goes over me; your terrors have cut me off," Psalm 88 3,6-7,14-16. All conclude that he was very holy, and his soul very happy, even while he was in this gulf of misery. And yet, for all this, Heman's state was good; his soul was safe and happy he calls God in the same psalm "the God of his salvation," Psalm 88 1. So Jonah, when he was in the belly of hell, concludes, "that he was cast out of the sight of God," Jon 2 4. The sense of his sin, and of God's anger and wrath, was so eminent and transcendent upon him, that it even distracts him, and makes him speak like a despairing soul "I am cast out from the presence of the Lord; I am expulsed out of God's sight," as Moses was expulsed out of Egypt. God has cast me out as one in whom he can take no pleasure nor delight, as a husband loth a wife that has been false and unfaithful to him; and yet God's heart and love is so set upon Jonah that he will save him by a miracle rather than he shall not be saved. Jonah was much in the heart of God, and God made his faith at last victorious.

To these I shall add some other famous instances. In king James' time there was one Mistress Honiwood of Kent, an ancient and pious gentlewoman, who lived many years in much horror and terror of conscience, for lack of assurance of the favor of God, and of her eternal well-being. She would very often cry out, "She was damned, she was damned." Several men of eminent piety and parts, left no means unattempted, whereby her doubts might be answered, her conscience pacified, and her soul satisfied and cheered; yet she being strongly under the power of despair, persisted in crying out, "Oh! she was damned, she was damned." When these gentlemen were about to depart, she called for a cup of wine for them, which being brought, she drank, and as soon as she had done, in an extreme passion she threw the Venice glass against the ground, saying, "As sure as this glass will break, so surely am I damned." The glass rebounded from the ground without any harm, which one of the ministers suddenly caught in his hand, and said, "Behold, a miracle from heaven to confute your unbelief, Oh! tempt God no more, tempt God no more." Both the gentlewoman and all the company were mightily amazed at this strange incident, and all glorified God for what was done; and the gentlewoman, by the grace and mercy of God, was delivered out of her hell of despair, and was filled with much comfort and joy, and lived and died full of peace and assurance.

Take another instance. There lived lately at Tilbury, in Essex, a gentleman who was a long time under such an eminent degree of despair, that he rejected all comfort that was offered to him by any hand, and would not allow any to pray with him; nay, he sent to the ministers and Christians who lived near him, and desired them, that as they would not increase his torments in hell, they would cease praying for him. He would not allow any religious service to be performed in his family, though formerly himself was much in the use of them; yet God gave him at last such inward refreshings, and by degrees filled him with such abundance of heavenly comforts, as he told all who came to him that it was impossible for any tongue to utter, or heart to imagine, who did not feel them. At last God gave him "the new name, and the white stone, which none knows but he who has it," Rev 2 17. He lived about three quarters of a year, enjoying heaven upon earth, and then breathed out his last in the bosom of Christ.

Poor I, that am but of yesterday, have known some who have been so deeply plunged in the gulf of despair, that they would throw all the spiritual cordials which have been offered to them, to the ground. They were strong in reasoning against their own souls, and resolved against everything that might be a comfort and support unto them.

They have been much set against all ordinances and pious services; they have cast off holy duties themselves, and peremptorily refused to join with others in them; yes, they have, out of a sense of sin and wrath, which has lain hard upon them, refused the necessary comforts of this life, even to the overthrow of natural life. And yet out of this horrible pit, this hell upon earth, has God delivered their souls, and given them such manifestations of his grace and favor, that they would not exchange them for a thousand worlds.

O despairing souls, despairing souls, you see that others, whose conditions have been as bad, if not worse than yours, have obtained mercy. God has turned their hell into a heaven; he has remembered them in their low estate; he has pacified their raging consciences, and quieted their distracted souls; he has wiped all tears from their eyes; and he has been a well-spring of life unto their hearts. Therefore be not discouraged, O despairing souls—but look up to the mercy-seat; remember who is your rest, and kick no more, by despair, against the affections of divine love.

II. The second impediment to assurance is, **men's entering into the lists of dispute with Satan about those things that are above their reach**, as about the decrees and counsel of God. Oh by this Satan keeps many precious souls off from assurance. Since God has cast him out of paradise, and bound him in chains of darkness, he will make use of all his skill, power and experience, to draw men into the same misery with himself; and if he cannot prevent their entering at last into paradise above, he will labor might and main to make their life a wilderness here below; and to this purpose he will busy their thoughts and hearts about the decrees of God, and about their particular elections; as, whether God has decreed them to eternal happiness, or chosen them to everlasting blessedness, etc., that so by this means he may keep them from that desirable assurance that may yield believers two heavens, a heaven of joy and comfort here, and a heaven of felicity and glory hereafter.

It is said of Marcellus, the Roman general, that he could not be quiet, neither conquered, nor conqueror. Such a one is Satan if he be conquered by faith, yet he will be tempting; if he conquers, yet he will be roaring and triumphing. Satan's great design is eternally to ruin souls; and where he cannot do that, there he will endeavor to discomfit souls by busying them about the secret decrees and counsels of God. If the soul breaks through his temptations, as David's worthies did break through the armies of the Philistines, 1 Sam 23 16, and snap his snares in sunder, as Samson did his cords, Judg 15 13-14, then his next shift is to engage them in such debates and disputes that neither men nor angels can certainly and infallibly determine, that so he may spoil their comforts, when he cannot take away their crown.

Now your wisdom and your work, O doubting soul, lies not in disputing—but in believing, praying, and waiting on God. No way to heaven, no way to assurance, like this. Adam disputes with Satan, and falls, and loses paradise; Job believes, and resists Satan, and stands, and conquers upon the ash-heap. When Satan, O trembling soul, would engage you in disputes about this or that, say to him, "Satan, revealed things belong to me," but "secret things belong to the Lord," Deut 29 29. It is dangerous to be curious in prying into hidden matters, and careless and negligent in observing known laws; say to him, Satan, you have been "a liar and a murderer from the beginning," John 8 44; you are a professed enemy to the saints' confidence and assurance, to their consolation and salvation. If you have anything to say, say it to my Christ; he is my comfort and crown, my joy and strength, my redeemer and intercessor, and he shall plead for me. Ah, Christians! if you would but leave disputing, and be much in believing and obeying, assurance would attend you; and you should "lie down in peace, and take your rest, and none should make you afraid," Job 11 13-20.

III. The third impediment that keeps poor souls from assurance, is, **The lack of a thorough search and examination of their own souls, and of what God has done and is a-doing in them**. Some there are, who can read better in other men's books than in their own, and some there are, who are more critical and curious in observing and studying other men's tempers, hearts, words, works, and ways—than their own. This is a sad evil, and causes many souls to sit down in darkness, even days without number. He who will not seriously and frequently observe the internal motions and actings of God, in and upon his noble part, his immortal soul, may talk of assurance, and complain of the lack of assurance—but it will be long before he shall obtain assurance. O you staggering, wavering souls, you tossed and disquieted souls, know for a certain, that you will never come to experience the sweetness of assurance, until your eyes are turned inward, until you live more at home than abroad, until you dig and search for the mines that are in your own hearts, until you come to discern between a work of nature and a work of grace, until you come to put a difference between the precious and the vile, between God's work and Satan's work. When this is done, you will find the clouds to scatter, and the Sun of righteousness to shine upon you, and the daystar of assurance to rise in you.

Doubting, trembling souls, do not deceive yourselves; it is not a careless, slight, slender searching into your own hearts, which will enable you to see the deep, the secret, the curious, the mysterious work of God upon you. If you do not "seek as for silver," and search for Christ and grace "as for hidden treasures," you will not find them, Prov 2 3-5. Your richest metals lie lowest, your choicest gems are in the affections of the earth, and those who will have them, must search diligently, and dig deep, or else they must go without them. Doubting souls, you must search, and dig again and again, and you must work and sweat, and sweat and work, if ever you will find those spiritual treasures, those pearls of great price, which are hidden under the ashes of corruption, which lie low in the very recesses of your souls.

Tell me, O doubting souls, has that sweet word of the apostle been ever made to stick in power upon you 2 Cor 13 5, "Examine yourselves, whether you be in the faith;" or, whether faith be in you, "prove yourselves," etc. The precept is here doubled, to show the necessity, excellency, and difficulty of the work; to show that it is not a superficial—but a thorough, serious, substantial examination that must enable a man to know whether he has precious faith or not; whether he is Christ's spouse or the devil's strumpet. All is not gold which glitters; all is not faith that men call faith; therefore, he who would not prove a cheat to his own soul, must take some pains to search and examine how all is within. We are to prove and try, as goldsmiths try their metal by the fire and the touchstone. God brings not a pair of scales to weigh our grace—but a touchstone to try our graces. If our gold be true, though it be never so little, it will pass current with him. He will not quench the smoking flax," etc. [Matt 12 20.]

Ah! how few are there in these days who keep a diary of God's mercies and their own infirmities, of spiritual experiences and the inward operations of heavenly graces! Seneca reports of a heathen man who every night asked himself these three questions first, What evil have you healed this day? secondly, What vice have you stood against this day? thirdly, In what part are you bettered this day? And shall not Christians take pains with their own hearts, and search day and night to find out what God has done, and is a-doing there? God has his doing hand, his working hand in every man's heart; either he is a-working there in ways of mercy or of wrath; either he is building up or a-plucking down; either he is a-making all glorious within, or else he is a-turning all into a hell.

Well! doubting souls, remember this, that the soundest joy, the strongest consolation, flow from a thorough examination of things within. This is the way to know how it is with you for the present, and how it is likely to go with you for the future. This is the way to put an end to all the wranglings of your hearts, and to put you into a possession of heaven on this side heaven.

IV. The fourth impediment that keeps many precious souls from assurance is, **Their mistakes about the work of grace.** Look! as many hypocrites do take a good nature for grace, and those common gifts and graces which may be in a Saul, a Jehu, a Judas, for a special distinguishing grace, etc., so the dear saints of God are very apt to take grace for a *good nature*, to take pearls of great price for stones of no value, to take special grace for common grace. Many trembling souls are apt to call their faith unbelief, with the man in the Gospel, Mark 9 24, and their confidence presumption, and their zeal passion, etc.; and by this means many are kept off from assurance. Now, the way to remove this impediment is, wisely and seriously to distinguish between renewing grace and restraining grace, between common grace and special grace, between temporary grace and sanctifying grace. Now, the difference between the one and the other I have showed in ten particulars in my treatise called "Precious Remedies against Satan's Devices,"; and to that I refer you for full and complete satisfaction.

If you will cast your eye upon the particulars, I doubt not but you will find that profit and content which will recompense you for your pains. And this I thought more convenient to hint to you, than to write over the same things that there you will find to your delight and settlement.

V. The fifth impediment to assurance is, **Their grieving and vexing the Spirit of grace** by not hearkening to his voice, by refusing his counsel, by stopping the ear, by throwing water upon that fire he kindles in their souls, and by attributing that to the Spirit, what is to be attributed to men's own passions and distempers, and to the prince of darkness and his demons. Nothing can come from the Holy Spirit but that which is holy. By these and such like ways, they sadden that precious Spirit who alone can gladden them, they set him a-mourning who alone can set them a-rejoicing, they set him a-grieving who alone can set them a-singing; and therefore it is that they sigh it out with Jeremiah, Lam 1 16, "Behold, he who should comfort our souls, stands afar off." Smoke drives away bees, and a foul smell drives away doves. Sin is such a smoke, such an ill-savor, as drives away this dove-like Spirit.

Ah, doubting souls! if ever you would have assurance, you must observe the motions of the Spirit, and give up yourselves to his guidance; you must live by his laws, and tread in his steps; you must live in the Spirit, and walk in the Spirit; you must let him be chief in your souls. This is the way to have him to be a sealing Spirit, a witnessing Spirit to your hearts. Believe it, souls, if this be not done, you will be far off from quietness and settlement. The word that in 1 John 3 19 is rendered "assure," signifies to persuade to note to us that our hearts are forward and peevish, and apt to wrangle and raise objections against God, against Christ, against the Scripture, against our own and others' experiences, and against the sweet hints and joyings of the Spirit; and this they will do, especially when we omit what the Spirit persuades us to. The soul will not quite stop wrangling, until it is quieted in the bosom of Christ. Omissions raise fears and doubts, and makes work for hell, or for the Spirit and physician of souls. Or else, when we do that which the Spirit dissuades us from. If you are kind and obedient to the Spirit, it will not long be night with your souls; but if you rebel and vex him, he will make your life a hell, by withholding his ordinary influences, by denying to seal you to the day of redemption, and by giving you up to conflict with horrors and terrors, etc., Isa 63 10. Therefore, be at the Spirit's beck and check, and assurance and joy will before long attend you.

VI. The sixth impediment to assurance is, **Doubting souls making their sense, reason, and feeling the judges of their spiritual conditions.** Now so long as they take this course, they will never reach to assurance. **Reason's arm is too short to reach this jewel, assurance.** This pearl of price is put in no hand but that hand of faith which reaches from earth to heaven. What tongue can express or heart conceive the fears, the doubts, the clouds, the darkness, the perplexities which will arise from the soul's reasoning thus—"I find that the countenance of God is not towards me as before, Gen 31 5; therefore, surely my condition is bad; I feel not those quickenings, those cheerings, those meltings as before; I am not sensible of those secret stirrings and actings of the Spirit and grace in my soul as before; I do not hear such good news from heaven as before; therefore certainly God is not my God, I am not beloved, I am not in the state of grace, I have but deceived myself and others; and therefore the issue will be that I shall die in my sins."

To make sense and feeling the judges of our spiritual conditions, what is it but to make ourselves happy and miserable, righteous and unrighteous, saved and damned in one day, ay, in one hour, when sense and reason sit as judges upon the bench? Has God made sense and feeling the judges of your conditions? No! Why, then, will you? Is your reason Scripture? Is your sense Scripture? Is your feeling Scripture? No! Why, then, will you make them judges of your spiritual estate? Is not the word the judge, by which all men and their actions shall be judged at last? "The word that I have spoken," says Christ, "shall judge you in the last day," John 12 48. "To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light, or no morning in them," Isa 8 20.

Why, then, O doubting souls, will you make your sense and feeling the judge, not only of your condition—but of the truth itself? What is this but to dethrone God, and to make a God of your sense and feeling? What is this—but to limit and bind up the Holy One of Israel? What is this but to toss the soul to and fro, and to expose it to a labyrinth of fears and scruples? What is this but to cast a reproach upon Christ, to gratify Satan, and to keep yourselves upon the rack? Well! doubting souls, the counsel that I shall give you is this, be much in believing, and make only the Scripture the judge of your condition; maintain the judgment of the word against the judgment of sense and feeling; and if upon a serious, sincere, and impartial comparing of your heart and the word together, of your ways and the word together, the word speaks you out to be sincere, to be a Nathanael, to be a new creature, to be born again, to have an immortal seed in you, etc., cleave to the testimony of the word, rejoice in it, rest upon it, and give no more way to fears and doubts. Let your countenance be no more sad; for nothing can speak or make that soul miserable, that the word speaks out to be happy, Psalm 119 24. God has bowed down the Scriptures to the capacity even of babes and sucklings.

Constantine would have all differences and disputes in the Nicene Council ended by the Bible. O doubting souls, look cheerfully to this, that all differences and controversies that arise in your hearts be ended by the word. There is danger in looking *outside* the Scripture, or *beyond* the Scripture, or *short* of the Scripture, or upon sense and feeling, so much as upon the Scripture; therefore let the word be always the man of your counsel. No way to assurance and joy, to settlement and establishment, like this. If you are resolved to make sense and feeling the judge of your conditions, you must resolve to live in fears, and lie down in tears.

VII. The seventh impediment to assurance is, **Men's remissness, carelessness, and laziness in religious services, and in the exercise of their graces.** Ah, how active and lively are men in pursuing after the world! but how lifeless and unactive in the ways of grace and holiness! Ah, doubting Christians! remember this, that the promise of assurance and comfort is made over, not to lazy but laborious Christians; not to idle but to active Christians; not to negligent but to diligent Christians John 14 21-23, "He who has my commandments, and keeps them, he it is that loves me; and he who loves me shall be loved by my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." Now "Judas said unto him (not Iscariot), Lord! how is it that you will manifest yourself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, If any man loves me, he will keep my words and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." So 2 Pet 1 10-11, "Therefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure for if you do these things, you shall never fall for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

A lazy Christian shall always lack four things, namely, comfort, contentment, confidence, and assurance. God has made a separation between joy and idleness, between assurance and laziness; and therefore it is impossible for you to bring these together, which God has put so far asunder. Assurance and joy are choice gifts which Christ gives only to laborious Christians. The lazy Christian has his mouth full of complaints, when the active Christian has his heart full of comforts. God would have the hearts of his children to be hot in pious services. "Be fervent" (or seething hot, as it is in the original) "in spirit, serving the Lord," Rom 12 11.

That service which has not heavenly heat, which has not divine fire in it, is no service, it is lost service. A lazy spirit is always a losing spirit. Oh! remember, lazy Christians, that God is a pure action, therefore he loves activeness in pious services. Remember the angels, those princes of glory, are full of life and activity, and they always behold the Father's face in glory, Matt 18 10. Remember, he who will find rich minerals must dig deep, he who will be rich must sweat for it, he that will taste the kernel must crack the shell, he who will have the marrow must break the bone, he who will wear the garland must run the race, he who will ride in triumph must get the victory. Just so, he who will get assurance must be active and lively in duty, Prov 2 4-6. It is only fervent prayer which is effectual prayer, it is only the working prayer which works wonders in heaven, and which brings down wonderful assurance into the heart.

Cold prayers shall never have any warm answers; God will suit his returns to our requests; lifeless services shall have lifeless answers; when men are dull, God will be dumb. Elijah prayed earnestly, or as it is in the Greek, "He prayed in prayer," and God answered him. (Most men have more heat in their brains, than in their hearts and services; and therefore it is that they walk in darkness, that they lack assurance.) Many there are who pray—but they do not pray in prayer, they are not lively and earnest with God in prayer; and therefore justice shuts out their prayers. When one desired to know what kind of man Basil was, there was, says the history, presented to him in a dream, a pillar of fire with this motto, 'Basil is such a one, all on a-light fire for God.' Ah! lazy, doubting Christians, were you all on fire—in hearing, in praying, etc.; it would not be long before the windows of heaven would be open, before God would rain down manna, before he would drop down assurance into your bosoms.

My advice to you, lazy Christians, is this, cease complaining of the lack of assurance, and be no more formal, slight, and superficial in pious services—but stir up yourselves, and put out all your might and strength in holy actions, and you shall experimentally find that it will not be long before you shall have such good news from heaven, as will fill you with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.

VIII. The eighth impediment to assurance is, **Men's living in the neglect of some ordinance, or in the omission of some pious duties.** Omission of diet breeds diseases, and makes the life uncomfortable, yes, sometimes a burden to a man. So the omission of holy duties and services breeds many fears, doubts, and questions in the soul, about its own sincerity, about its interest in Christ, about its finding audience and acceptance with God; and so makes the life of a Christian very uncomfortable, yes, a burden to him.

They seek Christ in some of his ways—but not in all; they wait upon him in this and that ordinance—but not in every ordinance. Are there not many doubting souls who wait upon God, in hearing the word of life; and yet neglect, and make light of waiting upon Christ, in breaking the bread of life? Are there not many who are very careful daily to perform family duties, and yet are very rarely found in closet services? Some there are, who are all **ear**, all for hearing; and others there are, who are all **tongue**, all for speaking and praying; and others there are, who are all **eye**, all for believing, all for searching, all for inquiring into this and that; and others there are, who are all **hand**, all for receiving the Lord's supper, etc. And seriously, when I consider these things, I cease wondering that so many lack assurance, and do rather wonder that any obtain assurance, considering how few there are, who are conscientious and ingenuous in waiting upon God in every way and service wherein he is pleased to manifest his grace and favor to poor souls.

Well! doubting souls, remember this, God will have you may seek his face in all. God loves as well that you should *wait* on him, as that you should *wrestle* with him. He who will not give God the honor of attending him in every duty, in every ordinance, may long enough complain of the lack of assurance, before God will give him the white stone and the new name, which none knows but he who has it, Rev 2 17. Many of the precious sons of Zion have found God giving assurance in one ordinance, others have found him giving assurance in another ordinance. God speaks peace to some in such and such services, and comfort to others in such and such duties. Therefore, as you would have assurance, O doubting souls, seek the Lord in every way and service, wherein he is pleased to make known his glory and goodness. In hearing, Christ opens his box of ointments to some, and in praying and breaking of bread, he lets his sweet myrrh fall upon the hearts of others. Some have seen the glory of the Lord in the sanctuary, who have been clouded in their closets; others have heard a sweet still voice in their closets, who have sat long trembling in the sanctuary. Remember, doubting souls, Moab and Ammon were banished to the sanctuary to the tenth generation, for a mere omission, because they met not God's Israel in the wilderness with bread and water, Deut 23 3-4. And I truly believe, that God does banish, as I may say, many from his favorable presence, as Absalom did David, for their sinful omissions, for their non-attendance upon him in all his ways. Here the proverb is most false which says, 'a little hurts not.' Ah! this or that little omission, as you call it, may expose men to a great deal of wrath, Matt 25 41-46. They did not rob the saints—but omitted the relieving of them, which was their ruin.

Therefore, if ever you would have assurance, seek the Lord, not only while he may be found—but also in every gracious dispensation where he may be found. "Then shall the joy of the Lord be your strength," and his "glory shall rest upon you." "The days of your mourning shall be ended," and "you shall lie down in peace, and none shall make you afraid." [Neh 8 9; Isa 60 20; Lev 26 6]

I would earnestly desire you, O doubting souls, seriously to consider, that all the ways of Christ are ways of pleasantness; as Solomon speaks, Prov 3 17, not only this way or that way—but every way of Christ is a way of pleasantness; every way is strewed with roses, every way is paved with gold, every way is attended with comfort and refreshing. So the psalmist, "Your paths drop fatness," Psalm 65 11-12; not only this or that path—but all the paths of God drops fatness. Oh then, walk in every way, tread in every path of God, as you would have your souls filled with marrow and fatness, Psalm 63 5; and never forget that choice saying of the prophet Isaiah, "You meet him who rejoices, and works righteousness, who remembers you in your ways," Isa 64 5. God ran and meet the soul, as the father of the prodigal ran and met him afar off with affections of love and pity. Those who would have God to meet with them in a way of peace and reconciliation, in a way of grace and favor, must remember God in all his ways; not only in this or that particular way—but in every way wherein he is pleased to cause his glory to shine. Therefore, doubting souls, cease complaining, and be more conscientious and ingenuous in waiting upon God in all his appointments, and it will not long be night with you.

IX The ninth impediment that keeps Christians from assurance is **an immoderate love of the world**. Many are miserable by *loving* hurtful things—but are more miserable by *having* them. Their thoughts and hearts are so busied about getting the world and keeping the world, that they neither seek assurance as they should, nor prize assurance as they should, nor lament the lack of assurance as they should, nor study the worth and excellency of assurance as they should; and therefore it is no wonder, that such are without assurance. As it is very hard for a rich man to enter into heaven, Matt 19 23-24, so it is very hard for a worldly Christian to get assurance of heaven. The "thick clay," Hab 2 6, of this world does so affect him, and capture him, so satisfy him, and sink him—that he is not able to pursue after assurance, with that life and love, with that fervency and frequency, as those must do, who will obtain it. It is said, Gen 13 2, "That Abraham was very *rich* in cattle, in silver, and in gold;" according to the Hebrew, Abraham was very *heavy* in cattle, in silver, and in gold; to show, says one, that *riches are a heavy burden*—and a hindrance many times to a Christian's comfort and confidence, to his happiness and assurance.

Rich men's wealth proves a hindrance to their happiness. Solomon got more hurt by his wealth, than he got good by his wisdom. Such a fire rose out of his worldly enjoyments, as did even consume and burn up his choicest graces and his noblest virtues; under all his *royal robes*, he had but a *threadbare soul*. Sicily, says one, is so full of sweet flowers, that dogs cannot hunt there, the scent of the sweet flowers diverts their smell. And ah! what do all the sweet delights and pleasures of this world do—but make men lose the scent of heaven—but divert men from hunting after assurance, and from running after Christ, in the sweetness of his ointments.

The creature is all *shadow*—and vanity of vanities. Vanity is the very quintessence of the creature, and all that can possibly be extracted out of it. It is like Jonah's gourd. A man may sit under its shadow for a while—but it soon decays and dies. "Why should you set your heart upon that which is not?" Prov 23 5. Were ever riches true to those who trusted them? As the bird hops from twig to twig, so do riches hop from man to man, etc. Worldly Christians, cease complaining of the lack of assurance, and sincerely humble and abase your souls before the Lord; for that you have so eagerly pursued after lying vanities; for that you have in so great a measure forsaken the fountain of living waters; for with Martha you have been busied about many things; when Christ and assurance, the two things necessary, have been so much neglected and disregarded by you.

Get this world, this moon, under your feet; take no rest until you have broken through this *silken net*, until you have got off these *golden fetters*. A heart which is full of the world, is a heart full of lacks. Ah! the joy, the peace, the comfort, the confidence, the assurance—which such hearts lack. The stars which have least circuit, are nearest the pole; and men whose hearts are least entangled with the world, are always nearest to God, and to the assurance of his favor. Worldly Christians, remember this—you and the world must part, or else assurance and your souls will never meet. When a worldly Christian is saved, he is *saved as by fire*; and before ever he shall be assured of his salvation, he must cry out, "all human consolations are but desolations!" God will not give the *sweets of heaven*, to those who are gorged and surfeited with the *delicacies of the earth*. The hen upon the ash-heap prefers a barley-corn above the choicest pearl; such *ash-heap Christians* prefer a little barley-corn above this pearl of price, assurance.

Those who, with Esau, prefer a *morsel of meat* before this blessing of blessings; who prefer *Paris* above *Paradise*; who prefer God's coin above his countenance—may at last with Esau seek, and seek with tears, this heavenly jewel, assurance; and yet, as he, be rejected and repulsed, Heb 12 16-17. "The world is a carcass, and those who hunt after it are dogs." This proverb makes a great many of our glistening professors to be but dogs.

X. The tenth impediment that keeps Christians from assurance, is, **The secret cherishing and running out of their hearts, to some bosom, darling sin.** It is dark night with the soul, when the soul will cast a desiring eye upon this or that bosom sin, and secretly say, "Is it not a *little* one?" Gen 19 20, though God and conscience have formerly checked and whipped the soul for so doing. **Ah! how many are there who dally and play with sin—even after they have put up many prayers and complaints against sin—and after they have lamented and bitterly mourned over their sins.** Many there are who complain of their deadness, barrenness, frowardness, conceitedness, censoriousness, and other sins; and yet are ready at every turn to gratify, if not to justify, those very sins that they complain against! No wonder that such lack assurance!

After the Israelites ate manna in the wilderness, and drank "water out of the rock," after God had been to them a "cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night," after he had led them by the hand, and kept them as the apple of his eye, after he had made them spectators of his wonders—they hankered after *the fleshpots of Egypt!* So when, after God has given a man a new name and a white stone, after he has made a report of his love to the soul, after he has taken a man up into paradise, after he has set a man upon his knee, and carried him in his bosom, after he has spoken peace and pardon to the soul, Psalm 85 8—for the soul to return to folly, oh! this cannot but prove a woeful hindrance to assurance, this will provoke God to change his countenance, and to behave not as a friend—but as an enemy!

When God's *love* is abused, his *justice* takes up the iron rod. God will strike hard and heavy, when men kick against his love and mercy. God has made an everlasting separation between sin and peace, between sin and joy, and between sin and assurance. God will be out with that man—who is in with his sin. If sin and the soul are one, God and the soul must needs be two. He who is resolved to dally with any sin—he must resolve to live in many fears. Never forget this—he who savors any one sin, though he foregoes many others, does but as Benadab, recover from one disease, and die of another. Yes, he takes pains to plunge himself into two hells—a hell here, and a hell hereafter. Therefore, as ever you would have assurance, offer up your *Isaac*, part with your *Benjamin*, pull out your right eye, cut off your right hand; otherwise assurance and joy will not be your portion.

Now that I may remove this impediment, which is of such dangerous consequence to Christians' souls, and keep Christians forever from smiling upon any bosom sin, I shall first lay down a few **considerations** to provoke them to dally and play no more with sin—but to put off that sin which does so easily beset them, which sticks so close unto them, Heb 12 1; and then in the second place, I shall propound some **means** which may contribute to the bringing of bosom sins under control, that so it may be no longer *night* with the soul.

1. The first motive to provoke you to put out all your strength and might against bosom sins—which you are so apt to play with, is seriously to consider, that **this will be a strong and choice demonstration and evidence of the sincerity and uprightness of your hearts** Psalm 18 23, "I was also upright with him, and I kept myself from my iniquity." I kept a strict and diligent watch upon that particular sin which I found myself most inclined unto. And this, says David, is a clear evidence to me of the uprightness of my heart with God. The truth is, **there is no hypocrite in the world, but does dandle and dally with some bosom sin or other**; and though at times, and for carnal reasons, they seem to be very zealous against *this* and *that* sin; yet at the very same time their hearts stand strongly and affectionately engaged to some bosom sin, as might be showed in Saul, Judas, and Herod. "Though evil is sweet in his mouth and he hides it under his tongue, though he cannot bear to let it go and keeps it in his mouth, yet his food will turn sour in his stomach; it will become the venom of serpents within him. He will spit out the riches he swallowed; God will make his stomach vomit them up. He will suck the poison of serpents; the fangs of an adder will kill him." Job 20 12-16.

Therefore, as ever you would have a sure argument of your uprightness, **trample upon your Delilahs!** This very *evidence of your uprightness and sincerity* may yield you more comfort and refreshing in a day of trouble and darkness, than for the present you do apprehend, or have faith to believe. Some there are, who can tell you, that neither the joy of the bridegroom, nor the joy of the harvest, is to be compared to that joy which arises in the soul from the sense and evidence of a man's own uprightness, 2 Cor 1 12. *Sincerity* is the very queen of virtues; she holds the throne, and will be sure to keep it. Yes, the very sight of it in the soul makes a man sit cheerful and thankful, *Noah-like*, in the midst of all tempests and storms. **Look! as the playing with a bosom sin speaks out hypocrisy, so the mortifying of a bosom sin speaks out sincerity of soul!**

2. The second motive to provoke doubting souls to trample upon their bosom sins, is solemnly to consider, that **the conquest of their darling sins will render the conquests of other sins easy**.

When *Goliath* was slain, the rest of the Philistines fled, 1 Sam 17 51-52. When a *general* in an army is cut off, the common soldiers are easily routed and destroyed. Ah! complaining, doubting souls—did you but take the courage and resolution to fall with all your might and spiritual strength upon those particular sins which stick so close unto you, and which so easily captivate you; you would find, that the great *mountains* which are before you would soon be made a *plain*, Zech 4 7. Other sins will not be long-lived, when justice is done upon your bosom sins. Thrust but a dart through the heart of *Absalom*, and a complete conquest will follow, 2 Sam 18 14.

3. The third motive to provoke you to crucify your bosom sins, be they what they will, is, seriously to **consider the very great damage that your souls have *already* sustained by your bosom sins.**

Saul, by casting an amorous eye upon Agag, lost his crown and kingdom. *Samson*, by dallying with his Delilah, lost his strength, sight, light, liberty, and life. But what are these losses to your loss of spiritual strength, to your loss of communion with God, to your loss of the Spirit of light, life, liberty, and glory; to your loss of joy unspeakable, and peace which passes all understanding; and to your loss of those fresh and sparkling hopes of glory, which were once sparkling in your bosom? Some there are, who had rather lose their *souls* than their *sins* these shall be chronicled in hell for fools and madmen!

Mark Antony was so far bewitched with his Cleopatra, that in the heat of the battle of Actium, when the empire of the world, his life, and all lay at stake, that he fled to pursue her, to the ruin and loss of all. **There are many, who are so bewitched to some *Cleopatra*, to some darling sin or other—that they pursue the enjoyment of them to the loss of God, Christ, heaven, and their souls forever!**

Ah! Christians, that the sense of what you have formerly lost, and of what you daily lose by your playing with sin, might provoke you to set upon some effectual course for the mortifying of them!

It was a blasphemous speech of Henry the Second, who said, when Mentz, his city, was taken, "That he would never love God any more, who allowed a city so dear to him to be taken from him." But it will be a blessed and happy thing for you, in uprightness to say, "Oh, we will never more love, we will never more favor, we will never more dally with our bosom sins; for they have damnified us in our spiritual enjoyments, and in our spiritual returns from heaven. Shall the sense of outward losses by this and that instrument, work us out of love with them? And shall not the sense of our spiritual losses by bosom sins—work us much more out with them. Ah, Lord! of what iron mettle is that heart, which can look upon those sad losses which have attended playing with bosom sins—and yet *still dally with those Delilahs?*

4. The fourth motive to provoke you to the mortifying of your darling sins, is, solemnly to consider, that **the conquest and effectual mortifying of one bosom sin, will yield a Christian more glorious joy, comfort, and peace—than ever he has found in the gratifying and committing of all other sins.** The pleasure and sweetness which follows victory over sin, is a thousand times beyond that seeming sweetness which is in the gratifying of sin. The joy which attends the subduing of sin—is a noble joy, a pure joy, a special joy, an increasing joy, and a lasting joy. But that joy which attends the committing of sin—is an ignoble joy, a corrupt joy, a decreasing joy, a dying joy. **The truth is--if there were the least real joy in sin, there could be no hell-torments, where men shall most totally sin, and be most totally tormented with their sin.**

The heathens, as many Christian professors now, had not the right art of mortifying sin. All their attempts are to *hide* a lust, not to *quench* it; therefore their joy was like the crackling of thorns under a pot.

Ah! doubting Christians, as ever you would have good days, as ever you would walk in the light, as ever you would, like the angels, have always harps in your hands, and hallelujahs in your mouths—be restless, until in the spirit and power of Jesus, you have brought under control, that sin which sticks so close unto you. Remember this, nothing below the conquest of bosom sins can make a jubilee in the heart. **It is not a man's whining and complaining over sin—but his mortifying of sin, which will make his life a paradise of pleasure.**

If, notwithstanding all that has been said, you are still resolved to dally with sin, then you must resolve to live as a stranger to God, and as a stranger to assurance and peace; you must expect sad trials without, and sore troubles within; you must expect to find Satan playing his part both as a lion and as a serpent, both as a devil and as an angel of light. You must expect either no news from heaven, or but bad news from heaven; and you must expect that conscience will play the part both of a scolding wife and of a lion that wants his prey; and this shall be your just wages for playing with sin. If you like the wages, then take your course, and dally with sin still; if otherwise, then **sacrifice your Isaac!**

The leper under the law was still to keep his hair shaved, Lev 14 5. So should we be still a-cutting and shaving, that though the roots of sin remain, yet they may not grow and sprout.

5. The fifth motive to work you to trample upon your bosom sins is, wisely to consider, that **it is your duty and glory to do that every day—which you would willingly do upon a dying day**. Ah! how would you live and love upon a dying day? How would you admire God, rest upon God, delight in God, long for God, and walk with God upon a dying day? How would you hate, loathe, and abhor your bosom sins upon a dying day? How would you complain of your bosom sins, and pray against your bosom sins, and mourn over your bosom sins, and watch against your bosom sins, and fly from all occasions which would tend to draw you to close with your bosom sins upon a dying day?

Ah! doubting souls, you would not for all the world gratify your bosom sins upon a dying day; and will you gratify them on other days, which, for anything you know to the contrary, may prove your dying day? Thrice happy is that soul who labors with all his might to do that at first, which he would gladly do at last; who does that on every day; which he would give a thousand worlds to do on a dying day. No way to assurance like this; no way to joy and comfort like this; no way to rest and peace like this; no way to the kingdom, to the crown, like this!

I earnestly beseech you, trembling souls, when you find your hearts running out to bosom sins, that you would lay your hands upon them, and thus expostulate the case "O my soul—would you thus dally and play with sin upon a dying day? Would you thus stroke and hug sin upon a dying day? would you not rather, show all the dislike and hatred that is imaginable against it? Would you not tremble at sin more than at hell? and abhor the very *occasions* of sin more than the most venomous serpent in all the world? Would you not rather suffer the worst and greatest punishments, than to smile upon a darling sin upon a dying day? Yes! oh would you gladly do this upon a dying day? Why not then every day? Why not then every day, O my soul?"

6. The sixth motive to provoke you to fall with all your might upon bosom sins is, seriously to consider, that **until this is done, fears and doubts will still haunt the soul**; the soul will still be fearing that surely all is naught, and that that work which is wrought upon it is not a real but a counterfeit work; that it is not a spiritual and special work—but a common work, which a man may have and perish. Until this is done, the soul can never be able to see grace in his own native beauty and glory. One flaw in the diamond does not only take away the beauty, glory and price of it—but it puts men into questioning whether it is a real diamond.

The hugging of sin in a corner, will raise such a *dust* in the soul, that it will not be able to see these pearls of glory sparkling and shining. Until this is done, doubting souls, you will be but spiritual babes and dwarfs. The *hankering of the soul after sin*, is the casting of water upon the Spirit; it is the laming of grace, it is the clipping the wings of faith and prayer. Just so, that the soul can neither be confident, nor fervent, frequent nor constant in pious services. Just so, it will unavoidably follow—that such souls will be like Pharaoh's lean cows, poor and starveling. Gideon had seventy sons, and but one bastard son; and yet that one bastard son destroyed all the rest! You may easily apply it. [Judg 8]

Look! as many men are kept low in their outward estates, by having a back door to some *Herodias*; so many doubting souls are kept low in spirituals, by their hankering after some particular sins.

Remember, Christians, **sin** is the soul's sickness, the soul's weakness. If the body is weak and diseased, it grows not. Sin is poison which turns all nourishment into corruption, and so hinders the growth of the soul in grace and holiness. Ah! Christians, as ever you would be rid of your fears and doubts, as ever you would see the beauty and glory of grace, as ever you would be eminent and excellent in grace and holiness—see that effectual justice be done upon that *Achan*, that *Jonah*, that *darling sin*, which has occasioned storms within and tempests without!

It was a grievous vexation to King Lysimachus, that his staying to drink one draught of water lost him his kingdom. Ah! Christians, it will grievously vex you, when you come to yourselves, and when you come to taste of the admirable pleasure which attends the conquest of sin—to consider that your hankering after this or that particular sin, has been the loss of that joy and comfort, that peace and assurance, which is infinitely more worth than all the kingdoms of the world! If there is but *one crack in the honey-jar*, there the wasp will be buzzing; and where there is but some one sin favored, there Satan will be tempting and upbraiding.

QUESTION. But you may say to me, Oh we would gladly have our bosom-sins subdued, we desire above all, that they may be effectually mortified. These *sons of Zeruiah* we would choose to have slain! But **what course must we take to bring under our *darling sins*, to get off our *golden fetters*, to get out of these *silken snares*?** To this question I shall give these answers

1. The first means. If ever you would have mastery over this or that bosom sin—then **engage all your power and might against your bosom sin**, draw up your spiritual forces, and engage them wholly against that sin which does so easily beset you. As the king of Syria said to his captains, "Fight neither with small nor great, but only with the *king* of Israel," 2 Chron 18 30. Just so, say I, your wisdom and your work, O doubting souls, lies not in skirmishing with this or that lesser sin—but in coming up to a close sharp fight with the *king* sin—with that darling sin, which has a kingly interest in you, and a kingly power over you.

When there is no hope of *curing*, men must fall *a-cutting*. Believe it, souls, you must fall a-cutting your bosom sins in pieces by the sword of the Spirit, as Samuel cut Agag in pieces in Gilgal before the Lord, or else you will never obtain a perfect cure, 1 Sam 15 33. Slight skirmishes will not do it; **you must pursue your bosom sins to the death—or they will be the death of your souls!**

2. The second means to bring under a bosom sin, is, to **labor to be most eminent and excellent in that particular grace, which is most opposite to a man's bosom sin**. (As when one bucket of a well goes up—the other goes down. Just so, when grace gets up—sin goes down; when grace flourishes—sin withers.) As it is a Christian's glory to be eminent in every grace, so it is a Christian's special duty to excel in that particular grace which is most contrary to his darling sins. Is it pride, is it the world, is it hypocrisy, etc., which is your bosom sin, which is the chief favorite in your soul? Oh then, labor above all to be clothed with humility, to abound in heavenly-mindedness, to transcend in sincerity, etc., I know no surer, no choicer, no sweeter way, effectually to crucify a bosom sin, than this. He who comes up to this counsel, will not be long held in sin's *golden fetters*; it will not be long before such a soul cries out, Victory, victory!

3. The third means to help us to trample upon bosom sins, is, to **look upon bosom sins now, as they will appear to us at last**; to look upon them in the time of health—as they will appear to us in times of sickness; to look upon them in the youth time of our life—as they will appear to us in the day of our death. Ah! souls, of all unpardoned sins, your bosom sins will be presented by **God**, **conscience**, and **Satan** at last—as the most filthy and ugly, as the most terrible and dreadful. Your bosom sins at last will appear to be those monsters, those fiends of hell—which have most provoked God against you, which have shut up Christ's affections of love and compassion from you, which have armed conscience against you, which have barred the gates of glory against you, which have prepared the hottest place in hell for you, and which have given Satan the greatest advantage eternally to triumph over you! Many there are, who have found these things by woeful experience. Woe, woe, to that soul which shall put it to the trial.

Ah! souls, at last your bosom sins will more press and oppress you, more sadden and sink you, more terrify and amaze you—than all your other transgressions! Those sins which seem most sweet in life—will prove most bitter in death, Job 20 11-29. Those *pleasant morsels* will prove your greatest hell, when there is but a short step between your soul and eternity. Ah! Christians, never look upon bosom sins—but with that eye which within a few hours you must behold them; and this, you will find by experience, will be a singular means to bring under control your bosom sins.

4. The fourth means to subdue bosom sins is, to **apply yourselves to extraordinary means, as fasting and prayer**, etc. Ordinary medicines will not remove extraordinary distempers; nor will ordinary duties remove bosom sins, which, by long and familiar acquaintance with the soul, are exceedingly strengthened and advantaged. You read of some devils in the Gospel which could not be cast out but by prayer and fasting, Matt 17 14-22. So bosom sins are those *white devils* which will not, which cannot be cast out but by fervent and constant prayer, joined with fasting and humiliation. Souls who are serious and conscientious in observing of this rule will find such a divine power to attend their endeavors as will enable them to triumph over those white devils within, as Christ triumphed over principalities and powers upon the cross, Col 2 14-15.

5. The fifth means. As you would have victory over bosom sins, **keep away from all those *occasions* which tend to lead you to the gratifying of them.** He who shuns not the occasions of sin, tempts two at once—Satan and his own heart! He tempts *Satan* to tempt him to taste of forbidden fruit, and he tempts *his own heart* to feed upon forbidden fruit. "Abstain from all appearance of evil," 1 Thess 5 22; "hate the garment spotted by the flesh," Jude 23. Whatever carries with it a shadow of suspicion—that abstain from, that you may neither wound God nor the gospel, nor your own consciences. If there is any fuel to feed your bosom sin in your **house**, remove it; or before your **eye**, remove it; or in your **hand**, remove it, put it far away! Your soul cannot be safe, it cannot be secure, so long as the *occasions of sin* are your companions.

Would you have a clear evidence of the truth of your grace—then shun the occasions of sin. Would you imitate the choicest saints—then shun the occasions of sin. Would you stand in shaking times—then keep far off from the occasions of sin. Would you keep always peace with God, and peace with conscience—then keep far off from the occasions of sin. Would you frustrate Satan's greatest designs, and countermine him in his deepest plots—then keep far off from the occasions of sin. Would you keep your bones from breaking, and your heart from bleeding—then keep far off from the occasions of sin. Would you keep down fears and doubts, and keep up faith and hope—then keep far off from the occasions of sin. Would you have assurance in life, and joy and peace in death—then keep far off from the occasions of sin. Do this, and you do all. If you do not do this, you do nothing at all. [Gen 39 10; Job 31 1; Psalm 26 4-6]

And thus I am done with **the impediments which hinder souls from assurance; as also with the means to remove those impediments**.

CHAPTER 4

Containing several motives to provoke Christians to be restless until they have obtained a well-grounded assurance of their eternal happiness and blessedness.

(1.) The first motive. Now, the first motive that I shall lay down to provoke you to get a well-grounded assurance, is, solemnly to consider, **That many are now dropped into hell who have formerly presumed of their going to heaven** as those who came bouncing at heaven-gate, crying out, "Lord, Lord, open to us, for we have prophesied in your name, and in your name have cast out devils, and in your name have done many wonderful works;" and yet that direful and dreadful sentence is passed upon them, "Depart from me, you workers of iniquities," Matt 7 22,26-27.[1]

The foolish virgins were in a golden dream that they were as happy as the best, and yet, when they were awakened, they found the bridegroom entered into his glory, and the door of mercy shut against them, Matt 25 10-12. So were the Jews that cried out, "The temple of the Lord! the temple of the Lord!" **Men are naturally prone to flatter themselves that their sins are not sins, when indeed they are; and that they are but small sins, when they are great and grievous**, Isa 40 27; Deut 29 19; and they are apt to flatter themselves that they have grace when they have none; and that their grace is true, when it is but counterfeit; and that their condition is not so bad as others, when it is worse; and, with Agag, that the bitterness of death is past, when God has his sword in his hand ready to execute the vengeance written. [Prov 30 12; Rev 3 17-18; Mic 3 11] I judge as in this world, so in hell—the most self-flattering souls will be the most miserable souls.

I have read of a madman at Athens, who laid claim to every rich ship which came into the harbor, whereas he was poor, and had no part in any. Ah! this age is full of such mad souls, who lay claim to God and Christ, and the promises and gospel privileges, and all the glory of another world—when they are poor, and blind, and miserable, and wretched, and naked, when they are Christless and graceless, etc. Ah, souls! does it not therefore behoove you to labor much for a well-grounded assurance, that so you may not miscarry to all eternity—but may at last be found worthy to receive a crown of glory and to enter into your Master's joy, which is a joy too great and too glorious to enter into you, and therefore you must enter into it, Matt 25 21,23.

(2.) The second motive to provoke Christians to get a well-grounded assurance is this, consider, **That there are a great many soul flatterers, soul-deceivers, and soul-cheaters in the world.** The devil has put his *angelic robes* upon many of his chief agents, that they may the more easily and the more effectually deceive and delude the souls of men. This age affords many sad testimonies of this. A hidden enemy is far worse than an open enemy.

Ah! what multitudes are there, that to some bleary eyes appear as angels of light, and yet in their principles and practices are but servants to the prince of darkness, laboring with all their might to make proselytes for hell, Matt 23 15, and to draw men to those wild notions, opinions, and conceits which will leave them short of heaven, yes, bring them down to the hottest, darkest, and lowest place in hell, if God does not prevent it by a miracle of grace. Therefore you had need look about you, and see that you get a well-grounded assurance, and not allow Satan to put a cheat upon your immortal souls. Christ has foretold us, "That in the last days there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, that shall say, Lo, here is Christ, and lo, there is Christ," Matt 24 23-24. And truly this scripture is this day fulfilled in your ears. Ah, how many blasphemous wretches have there been in these days, who have asserted themselves to be the very Christ! And it is to me no little miracle, that the very earth has not opened her mouth and swallowed up such monsters, such firebrands of hell.

The apostle tells you of some that "lie in wait to deceive, by such sleights" as cheaters and false gamesters use at dice; he tells you of cunning crafty men that do diligently watch all advantages to work, draw, and win weak and unstable souls to those opinions, principles, and practices, which tend to drown them in everlasting perdition. Satan's disciples and agents have a method of deceiving, they are doctors in all the arts of cozenage, and they will leave no means unattempted whereby they may draw men to build upon hay and stubble, upon this opinion and that notion, etc., that so men and their works may burn forever together, 1 Cor 3 15.

It is reported of king Canutus, that he promised to make him the highest man in England, who should kill king Edmund Ironside, his co-rival; which, when one had performed, and expected his reward, he commanded him to be hung on the highest tower in London. So Satan and his emissaries, they promise poor souls that such and such opinions, and notions, etc., will thus and thus advantage them, and advance them; but in the end, poor souls shall find the promised crown turned into a noose, the promised comfort turned into a torment, the promised glory turned into ignominy, the promised exaltation turned into desolation, the promised heaven turned into a hell. This age is full of soul-flatterers, of soul-undoers, who, like evil physicians, skin over the wound—but kill the patient. Flattery undid Ahab, and Herod, and Nero, and Alexander. Not bitter words—but flattering words, do all the mischief. This many have found true by woeful experience.

Those flatterers who told Dionysius, that his spittle was as sweet as honey, undid him; and those flatterers that told Caesar, that his freckles in his face were like the stars in the firmament, ruined him. And ah! how many young and old in these days have been lost and undone by those soul-flatterers, who lie in wait to ensnare and deceive the souls of men. **Smooth talk often proves sweet poison.** Many in these days have found it so. Oh that this very consideration might be set home by the hand of the Spirit, with that life and power upon your souls, as effectually to stir and provoke you to get a well-grounded assurance of your happiness and blessedness, that so you may stand fast, like the house built upon the rock, in the midst of all tempests and storms, that nothing may unsettle you, nor disquiet you, and that none may take away your crown, Matt 7 24-25; Rev 3 11.

(3.) The third motive to stir you up to get a well-grounded assurance is this, consider, That **a well-grounded assurance of your happiness and blessedness will ease you, and free you of a threefold burden**. It will free you,

1. From a burden of cares.

2. From a burden of fears.

3. From a burden of doubts.

1. Now the burden of **cares**, ah Christians! causes you to sit down sighing and groaning; ah! how do the cares of getting this and that, and the cares of keeping this and that worldly contentment, disturb and distract, vex and rack the souls of men who live under the power of carking cares, Matt 13 22. Oh—but now assurance of better things makes the soul sing care away, as that martyr said, "My soul is turned to her rest; I have taken a sweet nap in Christ's lap, and therefore I will now sing away care, and will be carefree." Assurance of an eternal kingdom and crown, is a fire which burns up all those cares which ordinarily fill the head and distract the heart. There is no way to get off the burden of cares but by getting assurance.

2. Again, assurance will free you from the burden of **fears**, as well as from the burden of cares. Men are apt to make elephants of flies, and giants of pigmies. Until men reach assurance, they will still *create* fears, rather than *extinguish* them. Now, your hearts are filled with fears of possessing the creature, with fears of lacking the creature, with fears of losing the creature, etc. And these fears make men turn, like the chameleon, into all colors, forms, and fashions, yes, they make their lives a hell. Oh—but now assurance will scatter all these fears, as the sun does the clouds; it will extinguish these fears, as the sun does the fire. Assurance made David divinely fearless, and divinely careless Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for you are with me, your rod and your staff they comfort me," Psalm 23 3. Ah! how full of fears and perplexities was Hagar, until the Lord opened her eyes to see the well of water that was near her, Gen 21 16. So the soul will be full of fears and perplexities until it comes to see assurance, to enjoy assurance. Christians, when all is said that can be, this will be found at last a most certain truth, that there is no way to be effectually rid of your fears—but by obtaining a well-grounded assurance of your happiness and blessedness.

3. Again, assurance will rid you of your burden of **doubts**. Remember, Christians

(1.) that doubts are bred and fed by ignorance and unbelief, and therefore are sinful;

(2.) that they rob the soul of all joy, comfort, and contentment;

(3.) they render men babes in Christianity;

(4.) they throw reproach upon God, Christ, and the promises;

(5.) they give Satan the greatest advantage against us.

Now you are still a-doubting. Sometimes you doubt whether that you are a thorough Christian, and not an Agrippa, an almost Christian, a half Christian, as most professors are. Sometimes you doubt of your *sonship*, and that leads you to doubt of your *heirship*. Sometimes you doubt of your acquaintance with God, and that leads you to doubt of your access to God, and acceptance with God. Sometimes you doubt of your union with God, and those doubts lead you to doubt of the truth of your communion with God, etc. The truth is, your whole life is a life of doubting, and so it will be—until you reach to a well-grounded assurance.

Though the two disciples had Christ for their companion, yet their hearts were full of fears and doubts, while their eyes were blinded so that they should not know him, Luke 24 14-15, etc. Until a Christian's eyes be open to see his assurance, his heart will be full of doubts and perplexities. Though Mary Magdalene was very near to Christ, yet she stands sighing, mourning, and complaining that they had stolen away her Lord, because she did not see him, John 20 13-16. Christians! though you may be very near and dear to Christ, yet until you come to see your assurance, you will spend your days in doubting, mourning, and complaining.

The sum of all is this, as you would be rid of your burden of cares, your burden of fears, and your burden of doubts, get a well-grounded assurance of your happiness and blessedness; but if you are in love with your burdens, then neglect but the making of your calling and election sure, and you shall certainly make sure your burdens; they shall rise with you, and walk with you, and lie down with you, until they make your lives a hell.

(4.) The fourth motive to provoke you to labor after a well-grounded assurance is, To **consider that Satan will labor with all his arts and deceits, with all his power and might, to keep you from attaining a well-grounded assurance of your happiness and blessedness**. Such is Satan's envy and enmity against a Christian's joy and comfort, that he cannot but act to the utmost of his ability to keep poor souls in doubts and darkness. Satan's envy is such against the joy and comfort of the saints, that he cannot rest, nor cease from making use of all his wiles, whereby poor souls may be kept off from assurance, and their lives made a burden to them.

Satan knows that assurance is that pearl of great price, which will make the soul happy forever; he knows that assurance makes a Christian's wilderness to be a paradise; he knows that assurance begets in Christians the most noble and generous spirits; he knows that assurance is that which will make men strong to do exploits, to shake his tottering kingdom about his ears; and therefore he is very studious and industrious to keep souls off from assurance, as he was to cast Adam out of paradise.

It is no wonder that Satan, who envied the first seeds of grace which divine love sowed in your soul, that he should envy the increase of your grace, yes, your assurance, which is the top and royalty of grace. When you were a babe, Satan cast water upon your smoking flax, that it might not flame forth into assurance; and now you are grown up to some more maturity, he is raised in his enmity, so that he cannot but put out his power and policy to keep you from assurance of felicity and glory. Satan envies your candlelight, your torchlight, your starlight, how much more that the sun should shine upon you! Satan envies your eating of the crumbs of mercy under the table, how much more that, as a child, you should sit at Wisdom's table, and eat and drink abundantly of Wisdom's delicates! Satan envies your feeding on husks among the swine, how much more that you should eat of the fattened calf! Satan envies your sitting with Mordecai at the king's gate, how much more that you should wear the king's robes! Satan envies your tasting of the least drop of comfort, how much more your swimming in those pleasures that are at God's right hand for evermore! He envies your sitting upon God's knee, how much more, then, your lying in his bosom! He envies your being admitted into his service, how much more that you should be of his court and council!

Some say of the crystal, that it has such a virtue in it, that the very touching of it quickens other stones, and puts a luster and beauty upon them. Assurance is that heavenly crystal which quickens souls, and which casts a beauty and a glory upon souls; and this makes the devil mad.

Satan knows that assurance is manna in a wilderness, it is water out of a rock, it is a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. He knows that assurance is a salve for all sores, and medicine for all diseases, and a remedy against every malady. He knows that assurance is a Christian's anchor at sea, and his shield upon land; and that it is a staff to support him, and a sword to defend him, and a pavilion to hide him, and a cordial to cheer him; and therefore it is that he labors, both as a lion and as a serpent, to keep poor souls from a well-grounded assurance. This *son of the morning* has fallen from the top of glory to the bottom of misery, and therefore he strives to make all as miserable and unhappy as himself.

Ah! Christians, have not you need to seek assurance with all your might, who have to do with so mighty an adversary, who cares not what torments he heaps upon himself, so that he may prove your tormentor, by keeping your souls and assurance asunder? Oh that this very consideration might make you restless, until you have got this "white stone" in your bosoms!

(5.) The fifth motive to provoke you to get a well grounded assurance is this, consider that **a well grounded assurance is a jewel of that incomparable value**, it is such a pearl of great price as will abundantly recompense the soul for all the cost and effort it shall be at to enjoy it. Yes, the enjoyment of assurance in that hour of death, when the soul shall sit upon your trembling lips, ready to take her leave of you, and all the world, will richly recompense you for all those prayers, tears, sighs and groans which you have breathed out in one place or another, in one service or another.

Surely the gold in the mine will recompense the digger; the crown, in the end, will recompense the runner; the fruit in the vineyard will recompense the vine-dresser; the corn in the barn will recompense the reaper; and the increase of the livestock will recompense the shepherd. Just so, assurance at last will abundantly recompense the soul for all its knocking, weeping, and waiting at mercy's door. God will never allow "the seed of Jacob to seek his face in vain," Isa 45 19. There is a reward not only in keeping—but also for keeping of his commands, Psalm 19 11. Joseph, for his thirteen years' imprisonment, had the honor to reign eighty years like a king; David, for his seven years' banishment, had a glorious reign of forty years' continuance; Daniel, for his lying a few hours among the lions, is made chief president over a hundred and twenty princes; the three children, for taking a few turns in the fiery furnace, are advanced to great dignity and glory.

Ah! doubting souls, pray hard, pull hard, work hard for assurance; the pay will answer the pains. Christ will, sooner or later, say to you, as the king of Israel said to the king of Syria, "I am yours, and all that I have," 1 Kings 20 4. 'I am yours, O doubting souls,' says Christ, 'and assurance is yours, and joy is yours; my merit is yours, my Spirit is yours, and my glory is yours; all I am is yours, and all I have is yours. Oh, this is *a hive full of divine comfort*; oh this will recompense you for all your wrestling and sweating to obtain assurance, Matt 25 34-41; Rev 3 11-12.

Augustine, in his Confessions, has this notable expression, "How sweet was it to me, to be suddenly without those sweet earthly vanities. And those things which I was afraid to lose—with joy I let go; for you who are the true and only sweetness, did cast out those from me, and instead of them did enter in yourself—who is more delightful than all pleasure, and more clear than all light."

Ah! Christians, do but hold up and hold on, and assurance and joy will come, and you shall, after your working and waiting, sit down and sing it out with old Simeon, "My eyes have seen your salvation;" my heart has found the sweetness of assurance, and "now, Lord, let your servant depart in peace," Luke 2 30.

(6.) The sixth motive to provoke you to get assurance, is this, **Consider what labor and pains worldlings take to obtain the vain things of this life.** Ah! what riding, running, plotting, lying, swearing, stabbing, and poisoning, is used by men of this world—to obtain the poor things of this world, which are but shadows and dreams, and mere nothings! How do many with Samson lay heap upon heap, to make their crowns and kingdoms sure, to make the tottering glory of this world sure to themselves! what bloody butchers do they prove! they will have the crown, though they swim to it through the blood of innocent men. Men will venture life and limb to obtain those things which hop from man to man, as the bird hops from twig to twig.

Oh! how should this stir and provoke us to be up and doing, to labor as for life—to make sure of spiritual and eternal things! Is earth better than heaven? Is the glory of this world greater than the glory of the world to come? Are these riches more durable than those which corrupt not, which "are laid up in heaven, where neither moth nor rust corrupt, and where thieves do not break through, nor steal?" Matt 6 19-20. No! Oh then be ashamed, Christians, that worldlings are more studious and industrious to obtain pebbles, than you are to obtain pearls! They labor to obtain those things which at last will be their burden, their bane, their plague, their hell. You are to labor to obtain those things which will be your joy and crown in life, in death, and in the day of judgement.

The laborious, the active Christian, is tempted but by one devil; but the idle, slothful Christian, is tempted by all devils. It is very sad, when worldlings are a-reaping; that saints as to spirituals, should be slumbering and sleeping.

Pambus wept when he saw a harlot dressed with much care and cost, partly to see one take so much pains to go to hell, and partly because he had not been so careful to please God, as she had been to please her sluttish lovers. Ah, Christians! what great reason have you to sit down and weep bitterly—that worldlings take so much pains to make themselves miserable, and that you have taken no more pains to get assurance, to get a pardon in your bosoms, to get more of Christ into your hearts!

(7.) The seventh motive to provoke you to get assurance, is to consider, **That assurance will enable you to bear a burden, without a burden**, as in Hebrews 10 34, "You joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions." Here you see that assurance of heavenly things makes these worthies patiently and joyfully bear a burden, without a burden. So the apostles, knowing that they had "a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, went through honor and dishonor, evil report and good report," 2 Cor 5 8, and 2 Cor 6 8-11. They went through many weaknesses, sicknesses, wants, and deaths; they had nothing, and yet possessed all things; they had burden upon burden cast upon them by the churches, by false apostles, and by an uncharitable world, and yet they cheerfully bore all burdens without a burden, through the power of a well-grounded assurance.

Assurance makes heavy afflictions light, long afflictions short, bitter afflictions sweet, 2 Cor 4 16-18. Where a man lacks assurance, there the *shadow* of a burden frights him, and the weight of the least burden sinks him. Such a man is still a-crying out, "No man's burden to my burden; my burden is greater than others, my burden is heavier than others." The lack of assurance oftentimes makes men's very *mercies* a burden, their *comforts* a burden, their *relations* a burden, yes, their very *lives* a burden unto them. Ah! Christians, you will never bear burdens without a burden—until you come to attain an assurance of better things. This will enable you to leap under the weight of any cross, to rejoice under the weight of any mountain, Job 7 20.

Assurance fits a man's heart to his condition, and when a man's heart is fitted to his condition, nothing proves a burden to him. Assurance of better things to come takes away the *sting*, the *poison* which attends these lower things; and the sting and the poison being taken away, the very worst of these things are so far from being a burden to a man, that they become rather a pleasure and a delight unto him. When the sting is taken out of this or that venomous creature, a man may play with it and put it in his bosom. Ah! assurance pulls out the sting which is in every cross, loss, etc., and this makes the assured soul to sit down singing, when others who are under far less crosses and losses, sit down sighing, mourning, and complaining, "Our burdens are greater than we are able to bear!"

If there were but more assurance of better things among Christians, there would be less complaints among them of this burden, and that *molehills* then would be no longer *mountains*. Christians, it is not new notions, new opinions, new nothings, as I may say, in your heads—but the gaining of a well-grounded assurance in your hearts, which will enable you to bear all kinds of burdens without a burden.

(8.) The eighth motive to provoke you to get assurance, is drawn from those **particular commands of God, whereby he engages Christians to get assurance**, as that in 2 Pet 1 10, "Therefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure for if you do these things you shall never fall." So 2 Cor 13 5, "Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you--unless, of course, you fail the test?" So Heb 6 11, "And we desire that everyone of you do show the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the end." (The saints in heaven have a happy necessity of obeying God always; but we have an unhappy necessity of disobeying continually.)

Ah! you dull, doubting, drowsy Christians, you should take all these commands of God, and press them with all the power and authority you can upon your hearts, to awaken them and provoke them to get assurance of your eternal well-being. 'The precepts of God,' says Lactantius, 'do so change the whole man, and make him so new, that you can hardly know him to be the same person—a thing which philosophy has much labored in—but could never achieve. Christians! the pressing of those very commands last cited upon your hearts, may produce that comfort and peace, and make such a blessed change in your inward condition, as may bespeak much admiration.

Take one command, and charge that upon the heart; if the heart is stout and will not yield, then take another command, and press it upon your heart; if that will not do, then take another, and lay that home upon the heart; and never leave this work until your souls are effectually stirred up to labor for assurance with all your might. Christians! you should tell your souls that the commands of God bind **directly** and **immediately**, that they bind **absolutely** and **universally**. You must obey God upon the bare sight of his will, and in one thing as well as another. Christians! if I am not much mistaken, you should make as much conscience of those commands of God which require you to get assurance of your future happiness, as you do of those commands which requires you to pray, to hear, etc.

It is very sad to consider that many who complain much of the lack of assurance, should make so little care and conscience of those commands of God which require them to get assurance. Truly, Christians! while you make light of any of God's commands, God will make as light of your comforts. Did you make more conscience to act answerable to the forementioned commands, I am very apt to believe that the Sun of righteousness would certainly and speedily cause his love and glory to beam out upon you. Mind God's commands more than your own wants and complaints, and light will break in upon you. By obeying Christ's commands, you will gain more than you can give; by kissing the Son, you will even command him, and make him and assurance yours.

(9.) The ninth motive to provoke you to get assurance is this, **You cannot gratify Satan more, nor injure yourselves more, than by living without assurance.** By living without assurance, you lay yourselves open to all Satan's snares and temptations; yes, you instigate and provoke Satan to tempt you to the worst of sins, to tempt you to the greatest neglects, to tempt you to the strangest shifts, and to reduce you to the saddest straits. Ah, Christians! in what, in what has Satan so gratified you—that you should thus gratify him? Has he not robbed you of your glory in innocency? Has he not kept your souls and your Savior long asunder? When with Joshua you have been standing before the Lord, Zech 3 1-2, has not he stood at your right hand as an adversary to resist you? Has he not often set the glory of the world before you, that he might bewitch you and ensnare you? Matt 4 8. Has he not often cast water upon those divine motions which have been kindled in you? **Have you not often found him a lion and a serpent, a tempter and a deceiver, a liar and a murderer?** 1 Thess 2 18. Yes! Oh, then, never gratify him any longer by living without assurance.

He who lives without assurance, lives without a comfortable fruition of God, and so gratifies Satan. He who lives without assurance, lives upon some creature enjoyment more than upon God, and so gratifies Satan. He who lives without assurance, lives not like the beloved of God, and so gratifies Satan. He who lives without assurance is very apt to gratify Satan, sometimes by complying with him, sometimes by following after him, and sometimes by acting his part for him, etc. Truly, Christians! there is no way effectually to prevent this sore evil—but by getting a well-grounded assurance of your everlasting happiness and blessedness. Assurance will make a man stand upon terms of defiance with Satan, it will make the soul constant in resisting, and happy in overcoming, the evil one. An assured soul will fight it out to the death with Satan; an assured soul will not fly like a coward—but will stand and triumph like a David.

And as you gratify Satan by living without assurance, so you wrong your own souls by living without assurance.

(1.) In the point of comfort and joy, you wrong your own souls.

(2.) In the point of peace and content, you wrong your own souls.

(3.) In the point of boldness and confidence, you wrong your own souls.

A man who lives without assurance, lays his precious soul open to many blows and knocks, to many frowns and wounds, from God, from the world, from carnal friends, from hypocrites, and from Satan; therefore as you would not, Christians, gratify Satan, and wrong your own souls, and exercise over yourselves spiritual cruelty and tyranny, which is the very worst of all cruelty and tyranny—give God no rest until he has made known to you the sweetness of his love, and the secrets of his bosom, until he has gathered you up into himself, until he has set you as "a seal upon his heart, as a seal upon his arm," Song 8 6.

(10.) The tenth motive, to provoke you to get a well-grounded assurance is this, **Consider the sweet profit and glorious advantage which will redound to you by gaining assurance**; and if the gain which will certainly redound to you by assurance will not provoke you to get assurance, I know not what will.

[1.] The first advantage. **It will bring down heaven into your bosoms; it will give you a possession of heaven, on this side heaven**, Heb 11 1. An assured soul lives in paradise, and walks in paradise, and works in paradise, and rests in paradise; he has heaven within him, and heaven about him, and heaven over him; all his language is Heaven, heaven! Glory, glory!

[2.] The second advantage. **Assurance will exceedingly sweeten all the changes of this life.** This life is full of changes. Assurance will sweeten both sickness and health, both weakness and strength, both wants and abundance, both disgrace and honor, 2 Cor 4 16-18, etc. While a man lives in the sense of God's unchangeable love, no outward changes can make any considerable change in his spirit. Let times change, let men change, let powers change, let nations change, yet a man under the power of assurance will not change his countenance, nor change his master, nor change his work, nor change his hopes. Though others under changes turn, like the chameleon, into all colors to save their *little all*, yet the assured soul under all changes is *semper idem*—always the same.

Souls which lack assurance are like him in Aesop, who blew hot and cold with the same breath. The wind is not more subject to change and shift from one quarter to another, from one corner to another, than they are subject to change and shift in changing times.

Antistines, a philosopher, to make his life happy, desired only that he might have the spirit of Socrates, who was always in a quiet temper of spirit, whatever wrongs, injuries, crosses, losses, etc., befell him. Let the trials be what they would, yet he continued one and the same. Ah, Christians! the lack of assurance has made many changelings in these days; but if ever you would be like Socrates, if ever you would be like the philosopher's good man, that is, *Tetragonos*—four square, that cast him where you will, like a dice, he falls always sure and square, then get assurance of everlasting happiness.

Assurance will make your souls like the laws of the Medes and Persians, which alters not. Assurance will sweeten the darkest day, and the longest night; under variety of changes, it will make a man sit down with Habakkuk, and rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of his salvation, Hab 3 17-19.

[3.] The third advantage. **Assurance will keep the heart from an inordinate running out after the world, and the glory thereof.** **Moses** having an assurance of the recompense of reward, and of God's love and favor, could not be drawn by all the honors, pleasures, and treasures of Egypt. He slights all, and tramples upon all the glory of the world, as men trample upon things of no worth, Heb 11 24-27. So after **Paul** had been in the third heaven, and had assurance that nothing should separate him from the love of God in Christ, he looks upon the world as a crucified thing "The world is crucified to me," says he, 2 Cor 12 1-3, and Rom 8 38; "and I am crucified unto the world," Gal 6 14. The world is dead to me, and I am dead to it the world and I am well agreed; the world cares not a pin for me, and I care not a pin for the world.

The loadstone cannot draw the iron when the diamond is in presence; no more cannot the vanities of this world draw the soul after them, when assurance, that choice pearl of price, is in presence.

I have read of Lazarus, than after he was raised from the grave, he was never seen to smile. The assurance that he had of more glorious things, did deaden his heart to the things of this world; he saw nothing in them worthy of a smile. Ah! were there more assurance among Christians, there would not be such tugging for the world, and such greedy hunting and pursuing after it, as is in these days, to the dishonor of God, the reproach of Christ, and the shame of the gospel.

Get but more assurance, and less money would satisfy you; get but more assurance, and less places of honor and profit would satisfy you; get but assurance, and then you will neither transgress for a morsel of bread, nor yet violently pursue after the golden wedge, etc.

So when God gave Galeacius, that Italian marquis, an assurance of everlasting happiness, he withstood many golden temptations, and cried out, 'Cursed be he who prefers all the glory of the world to one day's communion with Christ!' Justice would not be sold and bought, as it is in these days, were there more assurance in the world.

[4.] The fourth advantage. **Assurance will exceedingly heighten you in your communion with God, and it will exceedingly sweeten your communion with God.** Assurance of a man's property in God raises him high in his fellowship with God, 1 John 3 2. There are none who have such choice and sweet communion with God as those who have the clearest assurance of their interest in God, as may be seen throughout the whole book of Solomon's Song. "My beloved is mine, and I am his," says the spouse, Song 2 16. I am assured of my property in him, says she, and therefore he shall lie all night between my breasts; and upon this account it is that she holds king Jesus in the galleries, that she is sick with love, that she is raised and ravished with his kisses and embraces "His left hand is under my head, and his right hand does embrace me," Song 1 13; Song 7 5; Song 2 6. None had more assurance of her interest in Christ than she, and none higher and closer in communion with Christ than she.

The wife's assurance of her interest in her husband, sweetens and heightens her communion with her husband. The child's assurance of his interest in his father, sweetens his commerce and fellowship with his father. So the believer's assurance of his interest in God, will exceedingly heighten and sweeten his communion and fellowship with God. Assurance of a man's interest in God sweetens every thought of God, and every sight of God, and every taste of God, and every good word of God. God is as sweet to the assured soul when he has a sword in his hand—as when he has a scepter; when he has the rod of indignation—as when he has the cup of consolation; when his garments are rolled and dyed in blood—as when he appears in his wedding robes; when he acts the part of a judge—as when he acts the part of a father, etc. He has all—who has the owner of all.

[5.] The fifth advantage. **Assurance will be a choice preservative to keep you from backsliding from God and his ways.** Ah! assurance will glue the soul to God and his ways, as Ruth was glued to her mother Naomi. It will make a man "stand fast in the faith, and be courageous like a good soldier of Christ," Gal 5 1; 2 Tim 2 3. 2 Pet 1 10-11, "Therefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure for if you do these things, you shall never fall." *Stumble* you may, and he who does but stumble gets ground by his stumbling. Assurance will keep a man from *falling* foully and from falling utterly. Verily, the reason why there is so many apostates in these days is, because there are so few who have a well-grounded assurance in these days. Luther, writing to his fearful friend Melancthon, says, 'if we fall, Christ falls.'

Pliny speaks of some fish which swim backward. Ah! many professors in these days swim backward; they swim from God, and Christ, and conscience; yes, they swim from the very principles of morality and common honesty. Believe it, friends! **it is not high notions in the brain—but sound assurance in the heart, which will keep a man close to Christ when others backslide from Christ.** An assured Christian will not exchange his gold for copper; he knows that one old piece of gold is worth a thousand pennies; one old truth of Christ is worth a thousand new errors, though clothed with glistening robes; and therefore he will prize the truth, and own the truth, and keep close to the truth, when others who lack a sound assurance make merchandise of Christ, precious truths, and of their own and others' immortal souls. Get assurance, and you will stand when seeming cedars fall; lack assurance, and you can not but fall, to the breaking of your bones, if not to the utter loss of your precious soul, 2 Pet 2 3.

[6.] The sixth advantage. **Assurance will very much embolden the soul with God.** It will make a man divinely familiar with God; it will make a man knock boldly at the door of free grace; it will make a man come boldly before the mercy-seat; it will make a man enter boldly within the holy of holies. Heb 10 22, "Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." Such full assurance as fills all the sails of the soul. Assurance makes the soul converse with God as a favorite with his prince, as a bride with her bridegroom, as a Joseph with a Jacob.

Luther, under the power of assurance, lets fall this transcendent rapture of a daring faith, 'let my will be done; my will, Lord, because it is your will. It is the lack of assurance which makes the countenance sad, the hands hang down, the knees feeble, and the heart full of fears and tremblings, Heb 12 12. Oh therefore get assurance, and that will scatter your fears, and raise your hopes, and cheer your spirits, and give wings to faith, and make you humbly bold with God. You will not then stand at the door of mercy with a 'may I knock?' with a 'may I go in?' with a 'may I find audience and acceptance?' But you will, with Esther, boldly adventure yourselves upon the mercy and goodness of God.

"Now truly, I think," says one, speaking of Christ, "he cannot despise me, who is bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh; for if he neglects me as a brother, yet he will love me as a husband that is my comfort." Assurance will remove all strangeness from between Christ and the soul; of two, it will make Christ and the soul one.

[7.] The seventh advantage. **Assurance will sweeten the thoughts of death—and all the aches, pains, weaknesses, sicknesses, and diseases**—which are the forerunners of death; yes, it will make a man look and long for death. Nazianzen said of the *king of terrors*, "Devour me, devour me! Death cures all diseases, the aching head, and the unbelieving heart!"

It will make a man sick of his absence from Christ. It makes a man smile upon the king of terrors; it makes a man laugh at the shaking of the spear, at the noise of the battle, at the garments of the warriors rolled in blood. It made the martyrs to desire the lions, to dare and tire their persecutors, to kiss the stake, to sing and clap their hands in the flames, to tread upon hot burning coals, as upon beds of roses.

The assured soul knows that death shall be the funeral of all his sins and sorrows, of all afflictions and temptations, of all desertions and oppositions. He knows that death shall be the resurrection of his joys; he knows that death is both an outlet and an inlet; an outlet to sin, and an inlet to the soul's clear, full, and constant enjoyment of God; and this makes the assured soul to sing it sweetly out, "O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory? "I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far!" "Make haste, my beloved." "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!" [1 Cor 15 55-57; Phil 1 23; Song 8 14; Rev 22 20] Now death is more desirable than life. Now says the soul, 'let him fear death, who is averse to go to Christ.' So I may be with Christ, though I go in a cloud, I care not, says the assured soul. Just so, I may be with Christ, I care not though I go in a fiery chariot, says the assured soul.

The Persians had a certain day in the year, in which they used to kill all serpents and venomous creatures. The assured Christian knows, that the day of death will be such a day to him, and that makes death lovely and desirable. He knows that sin was the midwife which brought death into the world, and that death shall be the grave to bury sin; and therefore death is not a terror—but a delight unto him. He fears it not as an enemy—but welcomes it as a friend; as crookback Richard the Third in his distress cried, "A kingdom for a horse, a kingdom for a horse!"

So souls who lack assurance, when they come to die, will cry out, 'A kingdom for assurance, a kingdom for assurance!' and as Severus said, "If I had a thousand worlds, I would now give them all for Christ." So a soul who lacks assurance, when he comes to enter upon a state of eternity, will cry out, 'Oh, had I now a thousand worlds, I would give them all for assurance!' Whereas the assured soul would not for a thousand worlds but die. When his glass is out, and his sun is set, he cries not out, as Queen Elizabeth did, "A world, a world for an inch of time!" but rather, "Why is it, why is it, Lord, that your chariots are so long a-coming?"

[8.] The eighth advantage. **Assurance will very much sweeten that little oil which is in the cruse, and that handful of meal which is in the barrel**," 1 Kings 17 12, etc. Assurance will be sauce to all meats, it will make all your mercies to taste like mercies. It will make Daniel's vegetables to be as sweet as princes' delicates, Dan 1 8,12. It will make Lazarus's rags as pleasurable as Dives's robes, Luke 16 20. It will make Jacob's bed upon the stones, to be as soft as those beds of down and ivory, which sinful great ones stretch themselves upon, Gen 28 18; Amos 6 4.

Look! as the lack of assurance embitters all a sinner's mercies, that he cannot taste the sweetness and goodness of them. Just so, the enjoyment of assurance casts a general beauty and glory upon the believer's lowest mercy. And hence it is, that assured souls live so sweetly, and walk so cheerfully, when their *little all* is upon their backs and in their hands; whereas the great men of the world, who have the world at will—but lack this assurance, which is more worth than the world—live as slaves and servants to these mercies, Job 20 22. In the midst of all their abundance, they are in straits and perplexities, full of fears and cares; nothing pleases them, nor is sweet unto them, because they lack that assurance which sweetens to a believer the ground they stand on, the air he breathes, the seat he sits on, the bread he eats, the clothes he wears, etc.

Ah! were there more assurance among Christians, they would not count great mercies small mercies, and small mercies no mercies; no, no; then every mercy on this side hell would be a great mercy, then every mercy would be a sugared mercy, a perfumed mercy. Look! as the tree which Moses cast into the waters of Marah made those bitter waters sweet, Exod 15 23-25, so assurance is that tree of life which makes every bitter sweet; and every sweet more sweet.

A believer knows,

(1.) that his little mercies are from great love;

(2.) that they are pledges of greater mercies;

(3.) that his blessings are blessed unto him;

(4.) that they shall not at last be witnesses against him.

(9.) The ninth advantage. **Assurance will make a man very angelical.** It will make him full of motion, full of action; it will make him imitate the angels, those princes of glory, that are always busy and active to advance the glory of Christ. They are still a-singing the song of the Lamb; they are still pitching their tents about those who fear the Lord, Psalm 34 7; they are ministering spirits sent forth for the good of those who are heirs of salvation, Heb 1 14. Assurance will make a man fervent, constant, and abundant in the work of the Lord, as you may see in Paul. The assured Christian is more motion than notion, more work than word, more life than lip, more hand than tongue. When he has done one work, he is a-calling out for another; 'What is the next, Lord,' says the assured soul, 'what is the next?' His head and his heart are set upon his work, and what he does, he does it with all his might, because there is no working in the grave. Assurance makes a saint all fire—it makes him like the burning seraphim.

An assured Christian will put his hand to any work; he will put his shoulder to any burden; he will put his neck in any yoke for Christ; he never thinks that he has done enough, he always thinks that he has done too little; and when he has done all he can, he sits down sighing it out, "I am but an unprofitable servant." Bellarmine is of opinion that one glimpse of hell would be enough to make a man not only turn Christian—but a monk, to live after the strictest rules, to be abounding in well-doing. Surely assurance of heaven will make a man do more.

In a word, **assurance will have a powerful influence upon your heart.** In all the duties and services of religion, nothing will make a man love like this, and live like this; nothing will make a man humble and thankful, contented and cheerful, like assurance. Nothing will make a man more serious in prayer, nor sincere in praises, than assurance. Nothing will make a man more cheerful and joyful than assurance. Nothing will make a man fit to live and more willing to die, than assurance.

Ah, Christians! if ever you would act as angels in this world, get an assurance of another world; then you shall be dumb no more, nor dull no more—but be active and lively, like those whose hopes and whose hearts are in heaven.

(10.) The tenth advantage. **Assurance will sweeten Christ, and the precious things of Christ, to your soul.** Ah! how sweet is the person of Christ, the natures of Christ, the aims of Christ, the offices of Christ, the benefits of Christ, the blood of Christ, the word of Christ, the threatenings of Christ, the Spirit of Christ, the ordinances of Christ, the smiles of Christ, the kisses of Christ—to an assured soul. Now your meditations on Christ will be no more a terror, nor a horror to you; nay, now your heart will be always best, when you are most in pondering upon the sweetness and goodness, the kindness and loveliness, of the Lord Jesus. Now all the institutions and administrations of Christ will be precious to you. Upon everything where Christ has set his name, there you will set your heart. Now you will call things as Christ calls them, and count things as Christ counts them; that shall not be little in your eye, which is great in the eye of Christ; nor that shall not be great in your eye that is—but little in the eye of Christ.

Assurance will also exceedingly sweeten your behavior to all who bear the image of Christ. Nothing will make men bear with those weak saints, whose **light** is not so clear as yours, whose **parts** are not so strong as yours, whose **enjoyments** are not so high as yours, whose **judgments** are not so well informed as yours, whose **consciences** are not so well satisfied as yours, and whose **lives** are not so amiable as yours.

Assurance makes men of a God-like disposition—easy to pardon, ready to forgive, abundant in goodness, admirable in patience. It makes men to study the good of others, and rejoice in all opportunities wherein they may strengthen the feeble, and comfort the dejected, and enrich the impoverished, and recover the fallen, and enlarge the straitened, and build up the weak. Truly, the reason why men are so bitter and sour, and censorious, is because God has not given into their bosoms this sweet flower of delight, assurance.

Ah! were their souls fully assured that God had loved them freely, and received them graciously, and justified them perfectly, and pardoned them absolutely, and would glorify them everlastingly—they could not but love where God loves, and own where God owns, and embrace where God embraces, and be one with everyone who is one with Jesus. Were there more assurance among Christians, there would be more of David's and Jonathan's spirit among Christians, than there is this day.

Were there more assurance among Christians, there would be more life and more love, more sweetness and more tenderness. Were there more assurance, there would be less noise, less contention, less division, less distraction, less biting, and less devouring among the saints. Love is the attractive loadstone of love.

Assurance will make the lion and the calf, the wolf and the lamb, the leopard and the kid, the bear and the cow, lie down together, and feed together, Isa 11 6-8. Men who lack assurance love their brethren as flies love the pot. So long as there is any meat in the pot, the flies love it. Just so, those men will love as long as there is an external motive to draw love—but when that ceases, their love ceases.

Dionysius loved his bottles when they were full—but hurled them away when they were empty. So many who lack assurance love the saints while their bags are full, and their houses full of the good things of this life; but when they are empty, then they throw them away, then they cast them off, as Job's friends did him.

Ah! but assurance will make a man love as God loves, and love as long as God loves. The assured Christian will not cease to love so long as the least buds and blossoms of grace appear. Lazarus in his rags is as lovely to an assured Christian, as Solomon in his robes. Job is as delightful to him upon the ash-heap, as David is upon his throne. It is not the outward pomp and bravery—but the inward beauty and glory of saints, which wins the assured Christian.

(11.) The eleventh motive to provoke you to get a well-grounded assurance of your everlasting happiness is this, **consider that as there is a great deal of counterfeit knowledge, counterfeit faith, counterfeit love, counterfeit repentance, etc. in the world, so there is a great deal of counterfeit assurance in the world.** Many there are who talk high, and look big, and bear it out bravely—that they are thus and thus, and that they have such and such glorious assurance, whereas, when their assurance comes to be weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, it is found too light; and when it comes to withstand temptations, it is found too weak; and when it should put the soul upon divine action, it is found to be but a lazy presumption. Shall the counterfeit gold which is in the world make men active and diligent to get that which is genuine, and which will abide the touchstone and the fire? and shall not that counterfeit assurance that is in the world provoke your hearts to be so much the more careful and active to get such a well-grounded assurance that God accounts as genuine, and which will abide his touchstone in the day of discovery, and which will keep a man from shame and blushing when the thrones shall be set and the books shall be opened?

I have been the longer upon these motives to provoke your souls to get a well-grounded assurance, because it is of an eternal concernment to you, and a work to which men's hearts are too backward.

Though assurance carries a reward in its own bosom—yet few look after it; though the pains of getting it are nothing, compared to the profit which accompanies it—yet few will sweat to gain it.

If the inducements laid down will not awaken and provoke you to be restless until you have got the "white stone" and "new name," until you have got the assurance of your pardon in your bosoms, I know not what will.

CHAPTER 5

Showing the several ways and means of gaining a well-grounded assurance.

(1.) The first means. If ever you will attain to assurance, then **be much in the exercise and actings of grace.** As the believing Ephesians, Eph 1 13, were in the very exercise and actings of grace, the Spirit of the Lord "sealed them up to the day of redemption." Assurance flows in upon the actings of grace. Assurance is bred and fed, it is raised and maintained in the soul, by the actings of grace. Grace is most discernible when it is most in action, and grace is made more and more perfect by acting. Neglect of your graces is the ground of their decrease. Wells are the sweeter for drawing; you get nothing by dead and useless theories; talents hidden in a napkin gather rust; the noblest faculties wither when not improved; grace in the theory is no more discernible than fire under the ashes, than gold in the ore, than a dead man in the grave; but grace, in its lively actings and operations, is as a prince upon his throne, sparkling and shining. A Christian who would have assurance, must never leave blowing his little spark until he has blown it into a flame.

Ah, Christians! were your grace more active, it would be more visible; and were your grace more visible, your assurance would be more clear and full. As Paul once spoke to Timothy, "Stir up the gift of God that is in you," (the words are an allusion to the fire in the temple, which was always to be kept burning;) so say I to you, If ever you would have assurance, stir up the grace of God that is in you, blow up that heavenly fire, raise up those noble spirits, never cease believing nor repenting, until it be clearly given into your bosoms, that you are sure that you do believe, and that you do repent, as you are sure that you live, as you are sure that God rules in Jacob, and dwells in Zion.

Remember, Christians, all the honor which God has from you in this life, is from the actings and exercise of your grace, and not from mere theories of grace. Remember, Christians, that all your consolations flow, not from the theories—but from the acts of grace. Remember, Christians, that the lack of the exercise of grace is the reason why you do not discern your grace, and why you have no more assurance of your future happiness. He who will be rich, must still be turning the penny; and he who will attain unto the riches of assurance, must still be acting his graces, Col 2 2. There are none but lively, active Christians, who know and feel those joys, comforts, and contentments which attend the exercise of grace. If you would not be always a babe in grace, and a stranger to assurance, then see that your lamp is always burning, see that your golden wheels of grace is always going.

(2.) The second means. If you would, Christians, attain unto assurance, then **you must mind your work more than your wages; you must be better at obeying than disputing; at doing, at walking, than at talking and wrangling**. Assurance is the heavenly wages which Christ gives, not to loiterers—but to holy laborers. Though no man merits assurance by his obedience, yet God usually crowns obedience with assurance. "Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him." Then Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said, "But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?" Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him." John 14 21-23

In these words you see, that doing Christians, working Christians, are the only Christians who shall have most of the love of the Father and the Son, and who shall have the choicest manifestations of grace and favor, and who shall have most of their presence and company. So in Psalm 50 23, "Unto him that orders his conduct aright, will I declare the salvation of God." That is, I will declare myself to be his Savior, I will show him salvation, and I will show him his interest in salvation; I will save him, and I will make him see that I have saved him. He shall see the worth of salvation, and test the sweetness of salvation. So Gal 6 16, "And as many as walk according to this rule" (that is, the rule of the new creature), "peace be on them, and mercy upon the Israel of God." The Greek word that is here rendered "walk," signifies not simply to walk—but to walk by rule, in order, and measure, without turning aside—but making straight steps to our feet.

Now those choice souls who thus walk according to the law of the new creature, shall have peace and mercy *in* them, and peace and mercy *with* them, and peace and mercy *on* them. "As many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be on them." **Assurance is a jewel of too high a price to be cast into any of their bosoms, who walk contrary to the laws of the new creature.** Such may talk of assurance, and make a stir and a noise about assurance—but it is the close walking Christian, who shall be crowned with assurance. Assurance is a choice part of a believer's happiness, and therefore God will never give it out of a way of holiness. "The Lord has set apart for the godly man himself," Psalm 4 3. None are favorites in God's court, nor are admitted to be of his counsel—but those who are all glorious within, and whose raiment is of embroidered gold. That is, such whose principles are full of spiritual glory, and whose practices are amiable and answerable in purity and sanctity. These are the people who shall have the honor to have God's ear, and the happiness to know his heart. "Would you never be sad? Then live well," says Bernard.

(3.) The third means. To **gain assurance, is to be kind to the Spirit, hear his voice, follow his counsel, live up to his laws.** The Spirit is the great revealer of the Father's secrets, he lies in the bosom of the Father, he knows every name that is written in the book of life; he is best acquainted with the inward workings of the heart of God towards poor sinners; he is the great comforter, and the only sealer up of souls to the day of redemption. [Rom 8 26; John 14 26 Eph 1 13] If you set him a-mourning by your willful sinnings, who alone can gladden you—by whom will you be gladdened? Truly, Christians, when you turn your back upon the Spirit, he will not turn his face upon your souls. Your vexing of the Spirit will be but the disquieting of yourselves, Isa 63 10. *Look! as all lights cannot make up the lack of the light of the sun—so all creatures cannot make up the lack of the testimony of the Spirit.*

So say I, behold the Spirit of the Lord, who is your guide and guard, he also is only able to make a soul-satisfying view of his love and favor to you; therefore, as ever you would have assurance, beware of him and obey his voice, provoke him not; for if you do by willful transgressions, he will neither comfort you nor counsel you; he will neither be a sealing nor a witnessing Spirit unto you; nay, he will raise storms and tempests in your souls; he will present to you the Father frowning, and your Savior bleeding, and himself as grieving; and these sights will certainly rack and torture your doubting souls.

The Spirit of the Lord is a delicate visitant, a holy visitor, a blessed guest, who makes every soul happy where he lodges. "Therefore grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption," Eph 4 30. You will not grieve your guests, your friends—but courteously and friendly entertain them; why then do you make so little conscience of grieving that Holy Spirit who alone can stamp the image of the Father upon you, and seal you up to life and glory?

Ah, Christians! the way to assurance is not to sit down sighing and complaining of the lack of assurance—but it lies in your **eyeing** of the Holy Spirit, in your **complying** with the Spirit, in your **cleaving** to the Spirit, in your **following** of the Spirit, in your **welcoming** of the Spirit, and in your **honoring** and **obeying** of the Spirit. As he said of the sword of Goliath, "There is none like it!" 1 Sam 21 9. Just so, say I, "There is no means like this, to gain a well-grounded assurance of a man's happiness and blessedness". And as he said, "If there be any way to heaven on horseback, it is by prayer;" so say I, if there be any way to assurance, it is by being fearful to offend, and careful to please the Spirit of the Lord, whose office it is to witness to poor souls the remission of their sins, and the salvation of their souls.

(4.) The fourth means. If you would obtain assurance, then **be sincere, be diligent and constant in assuring ordinances.** He who will meet the king, must wait on him in his walks, Isa 64 5. Christ's ordinances are Christ's walks; and he who would see the beauty of Christ, and taste of the sweetness of Christ, and be ravished with the love of Christ, must wait at wisdom's door—they must attend Christ in his own appointments and institutions, Rev 2 1; Prov 8 34-35. That comfort and assurance which flows not in through the *golden pipes of the sanctuary*, will not better the soul, nor long abide with the soul; it will be as the morning dew, and as the flowers of the field which soon fade away, Hos 6 4; 1 Pet 1 24.

I have in the former discourse showed at large how the Lord is graciously pleased to cause his love and glory to beam forth upon souls in ordinances; and therefore I shall say no more unto this particular at this time.

(5.) The fifth means to obtain assurance is, **wisely and seriously to observe what gift of God there is in you, which brings you within the compass of the promises of eternal mercy**. Now, let the gift be this or that, if it be a gift which brings you within the compass of the promise of eternal mercy, that gift is an infallible evidence of your salvation.

For the better and further opening of this truth, premise with me these two things

[1.] First, **No man can have any sure evidence to himself of his happiness and blessedness, from the promises of Scripture.** [Isa 42 6; Isa 49 8; Joel 2 28; Ezek 32 26-27; Jer 32 40; Heb 8 10-12; Isa 32 15] The promises do not describe to whom salvation and all eternal blessings belong. The promise of giving Christ, of giving the Spirit, of giving a new heart, and of pardoning and blotting out sin—are all general promises. Now God is free to make good these to whom he pleases; therefore he often steps over the **rich** and chooses the poor; he often steps over the **learned**, and chooses the ignorant; he often steps over the **strong**, and chooses the weak; he often steps over the **noble**, and chooses the vile; he often steps over the **sweet** nature, and chooses the wicked nature, etc., that no flesh may glory, and that all may shout out "Grace, grace!" 1 Cor 1 25-29.

[2.] Secondly, Though no man can have any sure evidence of his happiness and blessedness from the promises, because **the promises do not describe the persons to whom salvation and all eternal blessings belong**; yet these promises are of most choice and singular use.

(1.) In that they discover to us that our salvation is only from free grace, and not from anything good in us or done by us.

(2.) They are a most sure and glorious foundation for the very worst of sinners to stay their filthy, guilty, wearied, burdened, perplexed souls upon. Seeing that God looks not for any penny or pennyworth, for any goodness or merit in the creature to draw his love—but he will justify, pardon, and save for his name's sake, Isa 55 1-2; seeing all the motives which move God to show mercy are in his own bosom; seeing they are all within doors, there is no reason why the vilest of sinners should sit down and say, 'There is no hope, there is no help,' Deut 7 7-8; Psalm 68 18.

[3.] Thirdly, **Promises may, and doubtless often are, choice cordials to many precious souls, who perhaps have lost the sense and feeling of divine favor.** Promises are waters of life to many precious sons of Zion. They are a heavenly fire at which they can sit down and warm themselves when they cannot blow their own spark into a flame, and when all candlelight, torchlight, and starlight fails them. When all other comforts can yield a perplexed, distressed soul no comfort, yet then the promises will prove full breasts of consolation to the distressed soul.

These things being promised, see now what gift of God there is in you who brings you within the compass of the promise of everlasting happiness and blessedness; and to help you a little in this, I shall put you in mind of these following particulars.

1. The first gift. **FAITH** is a gift of God which brings the soul within the promise of everlasting blessedness, as the Scripture does everywhere evidence "He who believes shall be saved;" "he who believes shall not come into condemnation;" "he shall not perish;" "he shall have eternal life," etc. [Mark 16 16; John 3 15-16, etc.; John 1 12] Now believing is nothing else but the accepting of Christ for your Lord and Savior, as he is offered to you in the gospel; and this accepting is principally, though not only, the act of your will. Just so, that if you are sincerely and cordially willing to have Christ upon his own terms, upon gospel terms, that is, to save you and rule you, to redeem you and to reign over you—then you are a believer. Your sincere willingness to believe is your faith; and this gift brings you within the compass of the promise of eternal happiness and blessedness.

Christian reader, in the following discourse you will find the nature, the properties, and the excellencies of a sound saving faith clearly and largely laid open before you; and therefore I shall say no more to it in this place—but refer you to what follows.

2. The second gift. **WAITING** patiently on God is a gift which brings you within the promise of everlasting happiness and blessedness. And he who has but a waiting frame of heart, has that which God will eternally own and crown Isa 30 18, "Blessed are all those who wait for him." Truly, it is no iniquity to pronounce them blessed, whom God pronounces blessed. It is no piety—but cruelty and inhumanity, for any not to be as merciful to themselves, as God is merciful to them; not to have as sweet and precious thoughts of their present condition, as God has. If God says the waiting soul is blessed, who dares judge, who dares say it is not blessed? "Let God be true, and every man a liar," Rom 3 4; Isa 64 4, "For since the beginning of the world, men have not heard nor perceived by the ear, neither has the eye seen, O God, besides you, what he has prepared for the one who waits for Him." Prov 8 34, "Blessed is the man that hears me, watching daily at my gates, and waiting at the posts of my doors." Isa 49 23, They shall not be ashamed, who wait for me;" that is, I will never fail the waiting soul; I will never put him to blushing by frustrating his patient waiting on me. The waiting soul shall carry away the crown at last.

Truly, God's glorious love and power is as much seen in keeping up a poor soul in a patient waiting on God—as it was in raising Christ from the grave, and as it is in bringing souls to glory. Nothing can make the waiting soul miserable. Hold out faith and patience but a little, and he who shall come will come, and bring his reward with him," Rev 22 11-12.

3. The third gift. **HUNGERING** and **THIRSTING AFTER RIGHTEOUSNESS** is a gift which brings the soul within the compass of the promise of everlasting happiness and blessedness Matt 5 6, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shall be filled"; or as it runs in the Greek, "Blessed are those who are hungering and thirsting," intimating that wherever this is the present disposition of men's souls, they are blessed, and may expect spiritual repletions.

Considerable to this purpose is that of Isa 44 2-5 "But now listen, O Jacob, my servant, Israel, whom I have chosen. This is what the Lord says—he who made you, who formed you in the womb, and who will help you Do not be afraid, O Jacob, my servant, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen. For I will pour *water* on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants. They will spring up like grass in a meadow, like poplar trees by flowing streams. One will say, 'I belong to the Lord'; another will call himself by the name of Jacob; still another will write on his hand, 'The Lord's,' and will take the name Israel." By *water* is meant the Spirit, say some; others understand it of the spiritual waters of grace, which God will pour out upon those who thirst and long after an abundance of grace, etc.

Of the like consideration is that of Isa 35 6-7, "The lame will leap like a deer, and those who cannot speak will shout and sing! Springs will gush forth in the wilderness, and streams will water the desert. The parched ground will become a pool, and springs of water will satisfy the thirsty land. Marsh grass and reeds and rushes will flourish where desert jackals once lived."

To the like purpose is that in Psalm 107 9, "For he satisfies the longing soul, and fills the hungry soul with goodness."

But that none may mistake nor miscarry in this business, that is of an eternal concernment to them, I shall desire them to premise with me these following things, for a better and fuller clearing of this particular truth that is under our present consideration.

First, Premise this with me **All real hungerings and thirstings after righteousness are earnest and vehement thirstings and longings.** They are like Rachel's longing for children, and like Samson's longing for water Psalm 42 1-2, "As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?" Naturalists observe, that of all the animals, the deer is most thirsty by nature—but most of all thirsty when she is hunted and pursued by dogs. Says David As the hunted deer, as the wounded deer, yes, as the she-deer, in whom the passions of thirst are strongest, pants after the water-brooks, so does my soul pant after you, O God. A gracious soul pants and faints, it breathes and thirsts, for the longing it has at all times after the righteousness of Christ imputed and infused, Psalm 119 20.

The Greeks derive their word for *desire* from a root that signifies to *burn*. Ah, Christians! real desires are burning desires; they set the soul all in a holy flame after God and Christ. If they are not vehement, if they do not put an edge upon your affections, if they do not make you like a burning seraphim, Christ will take no pleasure in them; they shall return into your own bosom without working any wonders in heaven, as those desires do, which flow from the soul's being touched with a coal from the altar.

Secondly, Premise this with me **All real hungerings in the soul after righteousness, arise from spiritual and heavenly considerations**; [Psalm 63 1-4; Psalm 27 4; Phil 3 7-10] they spring in the soul from some convictions, some apprehensions, some persuasions that the soul has—of a real worth, of a real beauty, glory, and excellency that is in Christ, and in his righteousness, imputed and imparted. Such desires after righteousness which flow from external considerations, are of no worth, weight, or continuance, but those desires after righteousness which flow from spiritual considerations, are full of spirit, life, and glory; they are such that God will not only observe but accept, not only record but reward, Psalm 145 19.

Thirdly, **Real hungerings and thirstings after Christ and his righteousness**, etc., **will put the soul upon lively endeavors**. If they are trueborn desires, they will not make the soul idle, but active; not negligent, but diligent, in the use of all holy means, whereby the soul may enjoy Christ and his righteousness Isa 26 9, "With my soul have I desired you in the night, yes, with my spirit within me will I seek you early." Real desires will make us earnest and early in seeking to obtain the thing desired, as the Hebrew word imports—which signifies to seek in the morning, when it is but dim and dusky, and it notes both an earnest and an early seeking.

A **thirsty** man will not only long for drink—but labor for it; the **condemned** man will not only desire his pardon—but he will write, and entreat, and weep, and set this friend and that, to solicit for him; the **covetous** man does not only wish for wealth—but will rise early and go to bed late, he will turn every stone, and make attempts upon all hopeful opportunities, whereby he may fill his bags and fill his barns. Even so, all holy desires will put souls upon the use of the means, whereby the mercy desired may be gained. And thus to run, is to attain; thus to will, is to work; thus to desire, is to do the will of our Father, who accepts of pence for pounds, of mites for millions.

The Persian monarch was not so famous for accepting a little water from the hand of a loving subject, as our God is for accepting a handful of meal for a sacrifice, and a pinch of goat's hair for an oblation; for accepting of that little which we have, and for accounting our little much, Lev 2 2; Exod 35 6; 2 Cor 8 12.

Noah's sacrifice could not be great, and yet it was greatly accepted and highly accounted of by God. *Such is God's condescending love to weak worms, that he looks more at their will than at their work; he minds more what they would do, than what they do do; he always prefers the willing mind before the worthiest work, and where desires and endeavors are sincere, there God judges such to be as good as they desire and endeavor to he.*

Fourthly, **Spiritual hungerings and thirstings are only satisfied with spiritual things.** John 14 8, "Show us the Father, and it suffices us." All things in the world cannot suffice us; but a sight of the Father—that will satisfy us Psalm 63 5-6, "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise you with joyful lips; when I remember you upon my bed, and meditate on you in the night-watches." Psalm 65 4, "We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, even of your holy temple." It is only God, and the precious things of his house, which can satisfy a thirsty soul.

It was a sweet saying of one, "As what I have, if offered to you, pleases you not, O Lord, without myself. Just so, the good things we have from you, though they may refresh us, yet they cannot satisfy us, without yourself." **The rattle without the breast will not satisfy the child, the house without the husband will not satisfy the wife, the cabinet without the jewel will not satisfy the virgin, nor the world without Christ will not satisfy the soul.**

Luther, in a time of great need, receiving unexpectedly a good sum of money from the elector of Germany, at which being somewhat amazed, he turned himself to God and protested, that God should not put him off with such poor low things. The hungry soul will not be put off with any bread but with the bread of life; the thirsty soul will not be put off with any water but with the wellsprings of life. As the king of Sodom said once, "You take the goods, give me the people," Gen 14 21. Just so, says the hungry soul, "You take goods—take your honors, and riches, and the favor of creatures, take you the grain, the oil, and the wine; give me Christ, give me the light of his countenance, give me the joy of his Spirit, etc." Oh the answering of spiritual breathings is very sweet to the soul Prov 13 19, "The desire accomplished is sweet to the soul." Returns from heaven make a paradise in the soul.

I have read of Darius, that when he fled from his enemy, and being in great thirst, he met with a dirty puddle of water, with carrion lying in it, and he sucked in and drank very heartily of it, and professed, "That it was the sweetest draught that ever he drunk in his life." Ah, how sweet then are those waters of life that are at God's right hand! How sweet are the droppings of God's honeycomb upon the hungry soul! Water out of the rock, and manna in the wilderness, was not so sweet to the hungry, thirsty Israelites—as spiritual answers and spiritual returns are to those who hunger and thirst after spiritual things.

(6.) The sixth means to obtain a well-grounded assurance of your everlasting happiness is, **to be much, yes, to excel in those choice particular things which may clearly and fully difference and distinguish you, not only from the profane**—but also from the highest and most glistening hypocrites in all the world. Many are much *in* and *for* church ordinances and activities, whose hearts are very carnal, and whose lives are very vain. "This is what the Sovereign Lord says I am about to desecrate My sanctuary--the stronghold in which you take pride, the delight of your eyes, the object of your affection." Ezekiel 24 21. "My people come to you, as they usually do, and sit before you to listen to your words, but they do not put them into practice. With their mouths they express devotion, but their hearts are greedy for unjust gain. Indeed, to them you are nothing more than one who sings love songs with a beautiful voice and plays an instrument well, for they hear your words but do not put them into practice." Ezekiel 33 31-32.

You have expressions of carnal hearts prizing church privileges. Just so, "The multitude of your sacrifices--what are they to me?" says the Lord. "I have more than enough of burnt offerings, of rams and the fat of fattened animals; I have no pleasure in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats. When you come to appear before me, who has asked this of you, this trampling of my courts? Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to me. New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations--I cannot bear your evil assemblies. Your New Moon festivals and your appointed feasts my soul hates. They have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them. When you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide my eyes from you; even if you offer many prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are full of blood; wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing wrong!" Isaiah 1 11-16. Zech 7 4-7; Isa 58 1-3, etc.

It is nothing to be much in those religious duties and performances wherein the worst of sinners may equalize, yes, go beyond the best of saints. Oh! but to excel in those things that the most refined hypocrites cannot reach to, this cannot but much help you on to assurance. He who has those jewels in his bosom that God gives only to his choicest favorites, needs not question whether he be a favorite, etc. If he does it, it is his sin, and will hereafter be his shame.

But you may say to me, **What are those choice particular things that may difference and distinguish Christ's *true Nathanaels* from all other people in the world?** Now, to this question I shall give these following answers

[1.] The first distinction. **A true Christian, in his constant course, labors in all duties and services to be approved and accepted of God.** He is most studious and industrious to approve his heart to God, in all that he puts his hand to. So David, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting," Psalm 139 23-24. This signifies *to make a strict search and inquisition*. So Peter approves his heart to Christ three several times together "Lord, you know that I love you; Lord, you know that I love you; Lord, you know all things, you know that I love you," John 21 15-17. You know the sincerity and reality of my love, and therefore to you I do appeal. To the same purpose the apostle speaks 2 Cor 5 9, "Therefore we *labor*, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him." The Greek word which is here rendered *labor*, is a very emphatic word; it signifies to labor and endeavor with all earnestness and might, to endeavor with a high and holy ambition to be accepted of God, judging it the greatest honor in the world to be owned and accepted of the Lord. Ambitious men are not more diligent, earnest, studious, and laborious to get honor among men, than we are, says the apostle, to get acceptance with God.

Ah! but your most refined hypocrites labor only to approve themselves to men in their praying, fasting, talking, hearing, giving, etc. Let them have but man's eye to see them, and man's ear to hear them, and man's tongue to commend them, and man's hand to reward them, and they will sit down and bless themselves, saying "it is enough; aha! so would we have it." Matt 6 and Matt 23. It is Chrysostom's observation, that "she who paints tears and blubberings, is worse than a promiscuous woman who paints to seduce."

They say of the **nightingale**, that when she is solitary in the woods, she is careless of her melody; but when she perceives that she has any auditors, or is near houses—then she composes herself more harmoniously and elegantly. Truly, this is the frame and temper of the best of hypocrites. Oh! but a sincere Christian labors in all places, and in all times, to approve himself to God; he labors as much to approve himself to God in a forest, where no eye sees him, as he does when the eyes of thousands are fixed upon him. The **sun** would shine bright, though all men were asleep at high noon, and no eyes open to see the glory of his beams. Just so, a sincere heart will shine, he will labor to do good; though all the world should shut their eyes, yet he will eye his work, and eye his God. He knows that God is *totes oculus*, **all eye**, and therefore he cares not though others have never an eye to observe him, to applaud him. Let God but secretly whisper him in the ear, and say, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" and it is enough to his soul, enough to satisfy him, enough to cheer him, and enough to encourage him in the ways and the work of his God.

[2.] The second distinction. **He labors to get up to the very top of holiness; he labors to live up to his own principles.** He cannot be satisfied with so much grace as will bring him to glory—but he labors to be high in grace, that he may be high in glory Phil 3 11, "I desire if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead, that is, to that perfection that the dead shall attain to in the morning of the resurrection." **He cannot be satisfied with so much grace as will keep him from dropping into hell**; but he must have so much grace as will make him shine gloriously in heaven.

Truly, that man is ripe for heaven, who counts it his greatest happiness to be high in holiness; that man shall never be low in heaven, a doorkeeper in heaven, who cannot be satisfied until he be got up to the very top of Jacob's ladder, until he has attained to the highest perfection in grace and holiness. Psalm 45 13, "The king's daughter is all glorious within; her clothing is of wrought gold." Her **inward** principles are all glorious, and her **outward** practice echoes to her inward principles "her clothing is of wrought gold."

It was the honor and glory of Joshua and Caleb, that they followed the Lord fully, Num 14 24, that is, they lived up to their own principles. So those virgins in Rev 14 4-5, who were without spot before the throne of God, they followed the Lamb wherever he went, that is, they lived up to their profession; there was a sweet harmony between their principles and practices. And thus the apostles lived 2 Cor 1 12, "Now this is our boast Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, in the holiness and sincerity that are from God. We have done so not according to worldly wisdom but according to God's grace." 1 Thess 2 10, "You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed." Thus we see these worthies living up to their own principles. Blessed Bradford and Bucer so lived up to their principles, that their friends could not sufficiently praise them, nor their foes find anything justly to fasten on them.

Believers know,

(1.) That their living up to their own principles, does best evidence Christ living in them, and their union with him, Gal 2 20.

(2.) They know that it is not their profession—but living up to their principles, which will effectually stop the mouths, and convince the consciences of worldly men 1 Pet 2 15, "For so is the will of God, that by well-doing," that is, by living up to your own principles, "you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." There is no greater way in the world to still and silence wicked men, to make them dumb and speechless, to muzzle and tie up their mouths, as the Greek word notes—as by living up to your own principles. The **lives** of men convince more strongly than their words; the **tongue** persuades—but the life **commands**.

(3.) They know by living up to their principles, they cast a general glory upon Christ and his ways. This makes Christ and his ways to be well thought on and well spoke on, Matt 5 16; 1 Pet 2 11-12; 2 Pet 1 5-13.

(4.) They know that the ready way, the only way to get and keep assurance, joy, peace, etc., is to live up to their principles.

(5.) They know that by living below their own principles, or contrary to their own principles, they do but gratify Satan, and provoke wicked men to blaspheme that worthy name by which they are called; they know that by their not living up to their own principles, they do but multiply their own fears and doubts, and put a sword into the hand of conscience, and make sad work for future repentance.

Now these and such like considerations do exceedingly stir and provoke believers to labor with all their might to live up to their own principles, to get to the very top of holiness, to be more and more a-pressing towards the mark; and to think that nothing is done, until they have attained the highest perfection which is attainable in this life. It is true, many hypocrites may go up some rounds of Jacob's ladder, such as make for their profit, pleasure, applause, and yet tumble down at last to the bottom of hell, as Judas and others have done. Look! Hypocrites **do** not, nor **like**, nor **love**—to come up to the top of Jacob's ladder, Gen 28 12, to the top of holiness, as you may see in the Scribes and Pharisees, and all other hypocrites that the Scripture speaks of. James 2 7. The very heathen, as Salvian observes, did thus reproach Christians who walked contrary to their principles, "Where is that good law which they do believe? They read and hear the holy Scriptures, and yet are drunk and unclean; they profess to follow Christ, and yet disobey Christ; they profess a holy law, and yet do lead impure lives."

[3.] The third distinction. **It is their greatest desire and endeavor that sin may be cured, rather than covered.** Sin most afflicts a gracious soul. David cries out, "I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me," Psalm 51 3. Daniel complains not, we are reproached and oppressed—but we have rebelled, Dan 9 5. Paul cries not out of his persecutors—but of the law in his members rebelling against the law of his mind, Rom 7 23. A gracious soul grieves more that God by his sin is grieved and dishonored, than that for it he is afflicted and chastened.

The deer feeling within her the working of the serpent's poison, runs through the thorns and thickets, and runs over the green and pleasant pastures, that she may drink of the fountain and be cured. So gracious souls, being sensible of the poison and venom of sin, runs from the creatures, which are but as thorns and thickets; and runs over their own duties and righteousness, which are but as pleasant pastures—to come to Christ the fountain of life, that they may drink of those waters of consolation, of those wells of salvation that are in him, and cast up and cast out their spiritual poison, and be cured forever.

If a snake were to sting your dearly beloved spouse to death, would you preserve it alive, warm it by the fire, and hug it in your bosom? Would you not rather stab it with a thousand wounds? You are wise, and know how to apply it.

Believers know that their sins do most pierce and grieve the Lord, they lie hardest and heaviest upon his heart, and are most obvious to his eye, Amos 2 13. The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond, Jer 17 1; their sins are against beams of strongest light, they are against the affections of tenderest mercy, they are against the manifestations of greatest love, they are against the nearest and dearest relations, they are against the choicest and highest expectations; and this makes believing souls cry out, "Oh, a cure, Lord! a cure, Lord! Oh give me purging grace, give me purging grace; though I should never taste of pardoning mercy, yet give me purging grace." When Brutus went to stab Julius Caesar, he cried out, "What, you my son Brutus!" So may God well cry out, "What, you my son! What, will you stab me with your sins? Is it not enough that others stab my honor? but will you, my son?"

It was a notable speech of Cosmus, duke of Florence, "I have read," says he, "that I must forgive my enemies—but never that I must forgive my friends." The sins of God's friends, of God's people, provoke him most, and sadden him most, and this makes them sigh and groan it out, "Who shall deliver us from this body of death?" Rom 7 24. Oh! but now wicked men labor, not that sin may be **cured**—but only that sin might be **covered**, Hos 7 10-16; and that the consequences of sin, namely, affliction and the stinging of conscience, may be removed, as you may see in Cain, Saul, Judas, and many others " Hos 5 14-15, "In their affliction they will seek me early," says God; they will then seek to be rid of their *affliction*—but not to be rid of their *sins* which have brought down the affliction upon them! Like the patient who would gladly be rid of the pain and torment, under which he groans—but cares not to be rid of those evil habits which have brought the pain and torment upon him.

"Whenever God slew them, they would seek him; they eagerly turned to him again. They remembered that God was their Rock, that God Most High was their Redeemer. But then they would flatter him with their mouths, lying to him with their tongues; their hearts were not loyal to him, they were not faithful to his covenant." Psalm 78 34-37. In these words you see plainly, that these people are very early and earnest in seeking God, to take off his hand, to remove the judgments which were upon them—but not that God would cure them of those sins which provoked him to draw his sword; and to make it drunk with their blood; for, notwithstanding the sad slaughters which divine justice had made among them, they did but flatter and lie, and play the hypocrites with God. They would gladly be rid of their *sufferings*—but did not care to be rid of their *sins!*

Ah! but a gracious soul cries out, Lord, do but take away my sins, and it will satisfy me and cheer me, though you should never take off your heavy afflicting hand. A true Christian sighs it out under his greatest affliction, as Augustine did, **"Deliver me, O Lord, from that evil man—myself!"** There is no burden like the burden of sin. "Lord! says the believing soul; deliver me from my inward burden of sin—and lay upon me whatever outward burden you please."

Sin is evil in the eye, worse in the tongue, worser in the heart—but worst of all in the life.

(4.) The fourth distinction. **Are not your souls taken with Christ as chief?** is he not in your eye the chief of ten thousand? Is he not altogether lovely? Song 5 10,16. Yes, have you any in heaven but he, and is there any on earth that you desire in comparison of him? Prov 3 15; Psalm 73 25-26; Phil 3 7-8. No! Do not you lift up Jesus Christ as high as God the Father lifts him? God the Father lifts up Christ above all principalities and powers, Eph 1 21; Phil 2 9; he lifts up Christ above all your **duties**, above all your **privileges**, above all your **mercies**, above all your **graces**, above all your **contentments**, above all your **enjoyments**; do not you thus lift up Jesus Christ? Yes! "None but Christ, none but Christ!" cries the martyr.

As he is the Father's chief jewel, so he is your choicest jewel, is he not? Yes! Truly, none can lift up Christ as chief, unless Christ has their hearts, and they dearly love him, and believe in him, for Christ is only precious to those who believe, 1 Pet 2 7. Luther had rather be in hell with Christ—than in heaven without him; is not that the frame of your heart? Yes! Surely none but those who have union with Christ, and who shall eternally reign with Christ, can set such a high price upon the person of Christ. The true believer loves Christ for Christ; he loves Christ for his personal excellencies, Song 5 10-16.

What Alexander said of his two friends, is applicable to many in our day; says he, "Haehestion loves me as I am Alexander—but Craterus loves me as I am *King* Alexander." One loved him for his person, the other for the benefits he received by him. So true Christians love Christ for his person, for his personal excellency, for his personal beauty, for his personal glory; they see those perfections of grace and holiness in Christ, which render him very lovely and desirable in their eyes; though they should never get a kingdom, a crown by it. But most of those who profess to belong to Christ, do it only in respect of the *benefits* they receive by him. When one asked Cato's daughter why she would not marry again, she being young when her husband died, answered, 'Because she could not find a man that loved her more than her goods.' Few there are, who love Christ more than his *benefits*, etc.

It was Augustine's complaint of old, that 'scarcely any love Christ but for his *benefits*.' Few follow him for love—but for loaves, John 6 26; few follow him for his inward excellencies, many follow him for their outward advantages; few follow him that they may be made godly by him—but many follow him that they may be great by him. Certainly, you are the bosom friends of Christ, you are in the very heart of Christ, who prize Christ above all, who lift up Jesus Christ as high as God the Father lifts him, and that because of his rich anointings, and because all his garments smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia, Psalm 45 6-8. This is a work too high and too hard, too great and too noble, for all who are not true Christians, who are not twice born, who are not of the blood-royal, who are not partakers of the divine nature.

[5.] The fifth distinction. **Are not your greatest and your hottest conflicts against inward pollutions, against those secret sins which are only obvious to the eye of God and your own souls?** The light of nature's education, and some *common convictions of the Spirit*, may put men upon combating with those sins which are obvious to every eye—but it must be a supernatural power and principle which puts men upon conflicting with the inward motions and secret operations of sin. "I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members." Romans 7 23. The apostle complains of a law in his members warring against the law of his mind. The war was within doors, the fight was inward. The apostle was deeply engaged against the sin within him, which made him sigh it out, "O What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?"

So David cries out, "Who can understand his errors? cleanse me from secret faults," Psalm 19 12. So Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, or for the lifting up of his heart, as the Hebrew has it, 2 Chron 32 26. His recovery from sickness, his victories over his enemies, and his rich treasures, lifted up his heart with pride. Oh! but for those outward risings and vauntings of heart, Hezekiah humbles himself, he abases and lays himself low before the Lord. A sincere heart weeps and laments bitterly over those secret and inward corruptions, which others will scarcely acknowledge to be sins. Many a man there is—who bleeds inwardly, and dies forever; many a soul is eternally slain by the inward workings of sin, and he sees it not, he knows it not, until it be too late.

The Persian kings reign powerfully, and yet are seldom seen in public. Secret sins reign in many men's souls powerfully and dangerously, when least apparently.

Oh! but a true Christian mourns over the inward motions and first risings of sin in his soul, and so prevents an eternal danger. Upon every stirring of sin in the soul, the believer cries out, "O Lord, help; O Lord, undertake for me; oh dash these brats of Babylon in pieces; oh stifle the first motions of sin, that they may never conceive and bring forth, to the wounding of two at once, your honor and my own conscience!

[6.] The sixth distinction. **Are you not subject to Christ as a head?** Yes! Devils and wicked men are subject to Christ as a Lord—but those who are by faith united to him, and who have a spiritual interest in him, are subject to him as a head. I shall open this particular thus unto you.

First, The members are **willingly** and **sweetly** subject to the head; their subjection is voluntary, not compulsory. It is so with a believing soul Psalm 27 8, "When you said, Seek you my face, my heart said unto you, Your face, Lord, will I seek." So Psalm 110 3, "Your people shall be willing in the day of your power, in the beauties of holiness." So Paul cries out, "What will you have me to do?" Acts 9 6, and professes that he is willing not to be bound only—but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of Christ, Acts 21 13. A gracious soul is in some measure naturalised to the work of Christ, and Christ's work is in some measure naturalised to the soul.

Secondly, The members are subject to the head **universally**, they do all the head enjoins. Their obedience is universal,

(1.) in respect of the act of eschewing all evil, doing all good;

(2.) in respect of the rule, the whole word of God;

(3.) in respect of their general and particular calling.

The real members of Christ do in sincerity, endeavor universally to subject to all that Christ their head requires, without any exception or reservation. Luke 1 5-6, "Zacharias and Elizabeth walked in *all* the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless." They walked without halting or halving of it with God; they fell in with every part and point of God's revealed will, without prejudice or partiality, without tilting the balance on one side or another. Acts 13 22, "I have found David the son of Jesse a man after my own heart, who shall fulfill all my will," or rather all my wills," to note the universality and sincerity of his obedience.

Thirdly, The members are subject to the head **constantly, unweariedly**. The members are never weary of obeying the head; they obey in all places, cases, and times. Just so, are the real members of Christ. Acts 24 16, "And herein do I exercise myself, to have *always* a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men." That is, *always*, or throughout in all cases, or at all times. I use all diligence, skill, cunning, and conscience, to be sincere and inoffensive in all my motions and actions towards God and towards men. So David, Psalm 119 112, "I have inclined my heart" (or rather, as the Hebrew word signifies, "I have stretched out my heart," as a man would do a piece of parchment) "to do your statutes" (the Hebrew word signifies to do accurately, exactly, perfectly) "always, even unto the end."

A gracious soul is not like a deceitful bow, nor like the morning dew—but he is like the sun, which rejoices to run his race; he is like the stone in Thracia, that neither burns in the fire nor sinks in the water.

Now tell me, pray tell me, O you doubting souls, whether you do not,

(1.) Labor in all duties and services to approve your hearts to God?

(2.) Whether you do not endeavor to get up to the very top of holiness, and to live up to your own principles?

(3.) Whether it be not your greatest desire and endeavor that sin may be cured rather than covered?

(4.) Whether you are not taken with Christ as chief? whether you do not, in your judgments and affections, lift up Christ above all, as God the Father does?

(5.) Whether your greatest and hottest conflicts and combats be not against inward pollutions, against those secret stirrings and operations of sin, which are only obvious to the eye of God and your own souls?

(6.) Whether you do not, in respect of the general bent and frame of your hearts, subject to Christ as your head?

[1.] Freely and sweetly.

[2.] Universally, in one thing as well as another, without any exception or reservation.

[3.] Constantly and unwearily.

Yes; we do these things; we would belie the grace of God if we should say otherwise. These things the Lord has wrought in us and for us, Isa 26 12. Well, then, know,

First, That your estate is good; you have certainly a blessed interest in the Lord Jesus. None can do these things but souls who have union with Christ, that are savingly interested in Christ, who are acted by the peculiar and special influences of Christ, and who are highly beloved by Christ. Truly, these are such flowers of paradise that cannot be gathered in nature's garden; they are pearls of great price which God bestows upon none but those who are the price of Christ's blood. All the men in the world cannot prove by the Scripture that these jewels can be found in any men's breasts but in theirs who have union and communion with Christ, and that shall reign forever with Christ. If these things could be found in the most shining hypocrites, or any others but real saints, they could not possibly be either a first or second evidence.

Secondly, Know that it is no iniquity—but rather **your duty, for you to suck sweetness out of these honeycombs, and to look upon these things as infallible pledges and evidences of divine favor, and of your everlasting happiness and blessedness**. Some there are, who make the witness of the Spirit, of which I shall, towards the close of this discourse, speak at large, the only evidence of our interest in Christ, and deny all other evidences from the fruit of the Spirit; but this is to deny the fruit, growing upon the tree, to be an evidence that the tree is alive, whereas all know, that the fruit growing upon the tree is an infallible and undeniable evidence that there is life in the tree. Certainly it is one thing to **judge** by our graces, and another thing to **rest** upon our graces, or to put **trust** in our graces. When one argues from the beams of the sun, that there is a sun, one would think that the most caviling spirit in the world should lie quiet and still. We have cause enough to keep off doubtings and distress of spirit upon the bare sight of our evidences. This, complaining, caviling souls will not understand.

(7.) The seventh means to get a well-grounded assurance of your everlasting happiness and blessedness is, **to grow and increase more and more in grace**. 2 Pet 1 5-11, "Add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge, etc. For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." By entrance into the everlasting kingdom of Christ, is not meant a local entrance into heaven; for heaven is nowhere called the kingdom of Christ—but the Father's kingdom. 2 Pet 1 9 shows clearly that it is meant of assurance. Now, the way to full assurance is by adding grace to grace. The Greek word that is here rendered "add," has a greater emphasis; it signifies to link our graces together, as people in a dance do link their hands together. Oh! we must be still a-joining grace to grace, we must still be adding one grace to another, we must still be a-leading up the dance of graces.

Though our graces be our best jewels, yet they are imperfect, and do not give out their full luster; they are like the moon, which, when it shines brightest, has a dark spot. Therefore, we should add still grace to grace.

Great measures of grace carry with them great evidence of truth; little measures carry with them but little evidence. Great measures of grace carry with them the greatest evidence of the soul's union and communion with Christ; and the more evident your union and communion with Christ is, the more clear and full will your assurance be.

Great measures of grace carry with them the greatest and clearest evidences of the glorious indwellings of the Spirit in you, and the more you are persuaded of the real indwellings of the Spirit in you, the higher will your assurance rise. Great measures of grace will be a fire which will consume and burn up the dross—the stubble, the fears and doubts which perplex the soul, and that cause darkness to surround the soul. Now, the more you are rid of your fears, doubts, and darkness, the more easily, and the more effectually will your hearts be persuaded that the thoughts of God towards you are thoughts of love; that you are precious in his eyes, and that he will rejoice over you, to do you good forever, Jer 32 41, etc.

'If moral virtue,' says Plato, 'could be seen with mortal eyes, it would soon draw all hearts to itself.' Oh how much the more should our hearts be drawn out after the highest measures of grace! the least grain of grace being more worth than all moral virtue.

(8.) The eighth means to gain a well-grounded assurance of your everlasting happiness and blessedness is, **to take your hearts when they are in the best and most spiritual frame and temper God-wards, heaven-wards, and holiness-wards**. Times of temptation and desertion, etc., are praying times, hearing times, mourning times, and believing times; but they are not trying times, they are not seasonable times for doubting souls to set themselves about so great and so solemn a work as that is, of searching and examining how things stand, and are likely to stand, between God and them forever, 2 Cor 13 5.

Be diligent and constant, be studious and conscientious in observing the frame and temper of your own hearts, and when you find them most plain, most melting, most yielding, most tender and humble, most sweetly raised, and most divinely composed—then, oh then, is the time to single out the most convenient place where you may with greatest freedom open your bosom to God, and plead with him as for your life, that he would show you how things stand between him and you, and how it must fare with your soul forever. And when you have thus set yourself before God, and opened your bosom to God, then wisely observe what report God and your own renewed conscience do make concerning your eternal condition "I will hear what God the Lord will speak," says David; "for he will speak peace unto his people, and they shall not return to folly," so the Hebrew may be read.

"I will listen to what God the Lord will say; he promises peace to his people, his saints--but let them not return to folly. Surely his salvation is near those who fear him." Psalm 85 8-9. Oh! so must you stand still, when you have sincerely opened yourself before the Lord, and listened and hearkened what God will say unto you. Surely he will speak peace unto you, he will say, "Son, be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven, your heart is upright with me; my soul is set upon you; I have already blessed you, and I will hereafter glorify you.'

I have read of one who was kept from destroying of himself, being much tempted by Satan unto suicide—by remembering that there was a time when he solemnly set himself in prayer and self-examination before the Lord, and made a diligent inquiry into his spiritual condition; and in the close of that work, it was evidenced to him that his heart was upright with God, and this kept him from laying of violent hands upon himself. A good conscience is *a thousand witnesses*; therefore make much of its testimony. Oh! a wise and serious observing what that testimony is, which God, conscience, and the word gives in upon solemn prayer and self-examination, may beget strong consolation, and support the soul under the greatest affliction, and strengthen the soul against the most violent temptations, and make the soul look and long for the day of dissolution—as princes do for their day of coronation.

(9.) The ninth means to gain a well-grounded assurance is, to **make a diligent inquiry whether you have those things which accompany eternal salvation** Heb 6 9, "Beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things which accompany salvation;" or as it is in the Greek, "who have salvation," as it were in the very heart of them, which comprehend salvation and which touch upon salvation.

Oh! beloved, if you have those choice things which accompany salvation, which comprehend salvation, you may be abundantly assured of your salvation.

But you may say to me—**What are those things which accompany salvation?**

To this question I shall give this answer, namely, that there are seven special things which accompany salvation, and they are these

1, Knowledge; 2, Faith; 3, Repentance; 4, Obedience; 5, Love; 6, Prayer; 7, Perseverance.

(1.) **KNOWLEDGE** is one of those special things which accompanies salvation John 17 3, "And this is life eternal, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent." Divine knowledge is the beginning of eternal life; it is a spark of glory, it works life in the soul, it is a taste and pledge of eternal life 1 John 5 20, "And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us an understanding, that we may know him who is true and we are in him who is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ; this is the true God, and eternal life." 2 Pet 1 3, "According as his divine power has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who has called us to glory and virtue." What this knowledge is, which accompanies salvation, I shall show you shortly.

In reading Scripture and pious books, let us not look so much for intellectual learning, as a savouriness of the truth upon our own hearts.

(2.) Secondly, **FAITH** is another of those special things which accompanies salvation 2 Thess 2 13, "But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God has from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth." 1 Pet 1 5, "You who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." Heb 10 39, "But we are not of those who draw back to perdition—but of those who believe to the saving of the soul." John 3 14-16, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him should not perish—but have everlasting life." John 3 36, "He who believes on the Son has everlasting life." John 5 24, "Truly, truly, I say unto you, he who hears my word, and believes on him who sent me, has everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation—but has passed from death unto life." John 6 40, "And this is the will of him who sent me, that everyone who sees the Son, and believes on him, may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day." John 6 47, "*Truly, truly*, I say unto you, he who believes on me has everlasting life." This double assertion is used only in matters of weight. Mark 16 16; Acts 16 31; Rom 10 9; Isa 45 22; Phil 2 8; John 11 25-26; 1 John 5 10. All these and many more scriptures speak out the same truth.

(3.) Thirdly, **REPENTANCE** is another of those choice things which accompanies salvation 2 Cor 7 10, "For godly sorrow works repentance to salvation, not to be repented of; but the sorrow of the world works death." Jer 4 14, "O Jerusalem, wash your heart from wickedness, that you may be saved." Acts 11 18, "God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance unto life." Matt 18 3, "Truly I say unto you, except you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Acts 3 19, "Repent, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the time of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord."

The very word *repent* was very displeasing to Luther until his conversion—but afterward he took delight in the work—to sorrow for his sin, and then rejoice in his sorrow.

(4.) Fourthly, **OBEDIENCE** is another of those precious things which accompanies salvation. Heb 5 9, "And being made perfect," speaking of Christ, "he became the author of eternal salvation unto all those who obey him." Psalm 50 23, "If you keep to my path, I will reveal to you the salvation of God."

(5.) Fifthly, **LOVE** to God, is another of those singular things which accompanies salvation. 2 Tim 4 8, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only—but unto all those who love his appearing." When God crowns us, he does but crown his own gifts in us.

James 2 5, "Hearken, my beloved brethren, has not God chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him?" 1 Cor 2 9, "It is written, eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man—the things which God has prepared for those who love him." James 1 12, "Blessed is the man who endures temptation, for when he is tried he shall receive a *crown of life*, which the Lord has promised to those who love him." The word *crown* notes to as,

(1.) the perpetuity of that life the apostle speaks of, for a crown has neither beginning nor ending;

(2.) it notes plenty; the crown fetches a range on every side;

(3.) it notes dignity;

(4.) it notes majesty. Eternal life is a coronation day; it notes all joys, all delights; in a word, it notes all good, it notes all glory.

Matt 19 29, "And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life." The whole is as if Christ had said, Whoever shall show love to me, this way or that, in one thing or another, out of respect to my name, to my honor, mercy shall be his portion here, and glory shall be his portion hereafter.

(6.) Sixthly, **PRAYER** is another of those sweet things which accompanies salvation. Rom 10 10,13, "For with the heart man believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Acts 2 21, "And it shall come to pass, that whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." That is, says one, he shall be certainly sealed up to salvation. Or as another says, He who has this grace of prayer, it is an evident sign and assurance to him, that he shall be saved. Therefore to have grace to pray, is a better and a greater mercy than to have gifts to prophesy, Matt 7 22. Praying souls shall find the gates of heaven open to them, when prophesying souls shall find them shut against them.

(7.) Seventhly and lastly, **PERSEVERANCE** is another of those prime things which accompanies salvation. Matt 10 22, "And you shall be hated of all men for my name's sake—but he who endures to the end, the same shall be saved." The same words you have in Mark 13 13.

Matt 24 12-13, "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold; but he who endures unto the end, the same shall be saved." Rev 2 10, "Fear none of those things which you shall suffer; behold the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that you may he tried, and you shall have tribulation ten days. Be faithful unto the death, and I will give you a crown of life." *A crown without cares, fears, co-rivals, envy, end.* God turns the crown of thorns into a crown of glory.

Rev 3 5, "He who overcomes, the same shall be clothed in white raiment, and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life—but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. To him that overcomes, will I grant to sit with me in my throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with my Father in his throne."

Thus you see these seven choice things which accompany salvation. But for your further and fuller edification, satisfaction, confirmation, and consolation, it will be very necessary that I show you,

(1.) What **knowledge** that is, which accompanies salvation.

(2.) What **faith** that is, which accompanies salvation.

(3.) What **repentance** that is, which accompanies salvation.

(4.) What **obedience** that is, which accompanies salvation.

(5.) What **love** that is, which accompanies salvation.

(6.) What **prayer** that is, which accompanies salvation.

(7.) What **perseverance** that is, which accompanies salvation.

I hope when I have fully opened these precious things to you in the next chapter, that you will be able to sit down much satisfied and cheered in a holy confidence and blessed assurance of your everlasting well-being.

CHAPTER 6

In the previous chapter, you saw the seven choice things which accompany salvation. But for your further and fuller edification, satisfaction, confirmation, and consolation, it will be very necessary that I show you,

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(6.) What **prayer** that is, which accompanies salvation.

(7.) What **perseverance** that is, which accompanies salvation.

I hope when I have fully opened these precious things to you, that you will be able to sit down much satisfied and cheered in a holy confidence and blessed assurance of your everlasting well-being.

I. I shall begin with the first, and show you what that **KNOWLEDGE** is, which accompanies salvation; and that I shall open in these following particulars

(1.) The first property. That knowledge which accompanies salvation is a **WORKING** knowledge, an **OPERATIVE** knowledge 2 Cor 4 6, "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our *hearts*, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Divine light reaches the *heart* as well as the head. The beams of divine light shining in upon the soul through the glorious face of Christ are very working; they warm the heart, they affect the heart, they new-mold the heart. Divine knowledge masters the heart, it guides the heart, it governs the heart, it sustains the heart, it relieves the heart. Knowledge which swims in the head only, and sinks not down into the heart, does no more good than the unicorn's horn in the unicorn's head.

1 John 3 6. "Whoever sins" (that is, customarily, habitually, delightfully,) "has neither seen him, nor known him."

Rom 6 6, "We know that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." Divine knowledge puts a man upon crucifying of sin; it keeps a man from being a servant, a slave to sin, which no other knowledge can do. Under all other knowledge, men remain servants to their lusts, and are taken prisoners by Satan at his will. No knowledge lifts a man up above his lusts, but that which accompanies salvation. The wisest philosophers and the greatest doctors, as Socrates, and others, under all their sublime notions and rare speculations, have been kept in bondage by their lusts.

That knowledge which accompanies salvation is *operative* knowledge 1 John 2 3-4, "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He who says, I know him, and keeps not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." He is a liar in a double respect (1.) in that he *says* he has that saving knowledge, which he has not; (2.) in that he denies that in his *works*, which he affirms in his *words*.

By keeping his commandments they knew that they did know him; that is, they were assured that they did know him. To know that we know, is to be assured that we know.

So James 3 17, "But the wisdom which comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere." James 3 13, "Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by *deeds* done in the humility that comes from wisdom." Divine knowledge fills a man full of spiritual activity; it will make a man work *as if* he would be saved by his works; and yet it will make a man believe that he is saved only upon the account of free grace, Eph 2 8. **That knowledge which is not operative and working, will only serve to guide souls to hell, and to double damn all who have it**, Matt 23 14.

(2.) The second property. That knowledge which accompanies salvation is **transforming** knowledge, it is metamorphosing knowledge. It is knowledge which transforms, which metamorphoses the soul 2 Cor 3 18, "But we with open face, beholding the glory of the Lord as in a glass, are *changed* into the same image, from glory to glory." Divine light beating on the heart, warms it, and betters it; it transforms and changes it, it moulds and fashions it into the very likeness of Christ.

The naturalists observe that the pearl, by the often beating of the sunbeams upon it, becomes radiant. Just so, the often beating and shining of the Sun of righteousness, with his divine beams, upon the saints, causes them to glisten and shine in holiness, righteousness, heavenly-mindedness, humbleness, etc. Divine light casts a general beauty and glory upon the soul; it transforms a man more and more into the glorious image of Christ.

Look! as the child receives from his parents features—member for member, limb for limb; or as the paper from the press receives letter for letter, the wax from the seal receives print for print, or as the face in the mirror answers to the face of the man, or as indentation answers to indentation—so the beams of divine light and knowledge shining into the soul, stamp the living image of Christ upon the soul, and make it put on the Lord Jesus, and resemble him to the life.

A father stands obliged, not only in point of honor—but also by the law of nature, to receive his child that bears his image. Just so, does Christ stand obliged to receive those who by divine light have his image stamped upon them.

Mere **notional** knowledge may make a man excellent at *praising* the glorious and worthy acts and virtues of Christ; but that **transforming** knowledge which accompanies salvation, will work a man divinely to *imitate* the glorious acts and virtues of Christ. "For you are a chosen people. You are a kingdom of priests, God's holy nation, his very own possession. This is so you can show others the goodness (or virtues) of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light." 1 Peter 2 9. When God causes his divine light, his marvelous light, to shine in upon the soul, then a Christian will preach forth the virtues of Christ in an imitable practice, and until then a man, under all other knowledge, will remain an incarnate devil.

When a beam of divine light shined from heaven upon **Paul**, ah, how did it change and metamorphose him! How did it alter and transform him! It made his rebellious soul obedient Acts 9 6, "Lord, what will you have me to do?" God bids him arise and go into the city, and it should be told him what he should do; and he obeys the heavenly vision, Acts 26 19. Divine light lays upon a man *a happy necessity of obeying God*. Divine light makes this lion into a lamb, this persecutor into a preacher, this destroyer of the saints into a strengthener of the saints, this tormenter into a comforter, this monster into an angel, this notorious blasphemer into a very great admirer of God, and the actings of his free grace, as you may see by comparing Acts 9 and Acts 26 together.

Just so, when a spark of this heavenly fire fell upon the heart of **Mary Magdalene**, Luke 7 36-37, oh what a change, what a transformation does it make in her! Now she loves much, and believes much, and repents much, and weeps much. Oh what a change did divine light make in **Zacchaeus**, and in the **jailor**! Truly, if your light, your Biblical knowledge does not better you, if it does not change and transform you, if, under all your light and knowledge you remain as vile and base as ever, your light, your knowledge, your notions, your speculations, will be like to fire, not on the hearth—but in the room, that will burn the house and the inhabitant too; it will be like mettle in a blind horse, that serves for nothing but to break the neck of the rider. That knowledge that is not a transforming knowledge, will torment a man at last more than all the devils in hell; it will be a sword to cut him, a rod to lash him, a serpent to bite him, a scorpion to sting him, and a vulture, a worm eternally gnawing him!

When Tamberlain was in his wars, one having found and dug up a great pot of gold, brought it to him; Tamberlain asked whether it had his father's stamp upon it; but when he saw it had the Roman stamp, and not his father's, he would not own it. So God at last will own no knowledge—but that which leaves the stamp of Christ, the print of Christ, the image of Christ upon the heart—but that which changes and transforms the soul; which makes a man a new man, another man than what he was before divine light shined upon him.

(3.) The third property. That knowledge which accompanies salvation is **EXPERIMENTAL** knowledge. **It is knowledge which springs from a spiritual sense and taste of holy and heavenly things**. Song 1 2, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for your love (plural love*s*) is better than wine." She means all the fruits of his love, namely, righteousness, holiness, joy, peace, assurance, etc. The spouse had experienced the sweetness of Christ's love; "his loves," says she, "is better than wine," though wine is an excellent cordial, a useful cordial, a comfortable and delightful cordial, a reviving and restorative cordial. And this draws out her heart, and makes her insatiable in longing, and very earnest in coveting, not a kiss—but kisse*s*; not a little—but much of Christ. Her knowledge being experimental, she is impatient and restless, until she was drawn into the nearest and highest communion and fellowship with Christ.

So in Song 1 13, "A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me; he shall lie all night between my breasts." "Myrrh is marvelous sweet and savory, so is my well-beloved unto me," says the spouse; "I have found Jesus Christ to be marvelous sweet and savory to my soul. Myrrh is bitter to the taste, though it is sweet to the smell. Just so, is my well-beloved unto me. I have found him to be bitter and bloody to the *old man*, to the ignoble and worser part of man; and I have found him to be sweet and lovely to the new man, to the regenerate man, to the noble part of man. I have found him to be a bitter and a bloody enemy to my sins, and at the same time to be a sweet and precious friend unto my soul." Every godly man has in him two men, Rom 7 15-26; Gal 5 17.

Myrrh is of a **preserving** nature, as the naturalists observe. "Just so, is my well-beloved unto me," says the spouse. "Oh! I have found the Lord Jesus preserving my soul from falling into such and such temptations, and from falling under the power of such and such corruptions, and from fainting under such and such afflictions, etc." Austin thanks God that his heart and the temptation did not meet together.

Considerable to the same purpose is that of Phil 1 9, "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge, and in all judgment." The Greek word that is here rendered "judgment," properly signifies *sense*, not a corporal—but *a spiritual sense and taste, an inward experimental knowledge of holy and heavenly things.* The soul has her senses as well as the body, and they must be exercised, Heb 5 14. The apostle well knew that all notional and speculative knowledge would leave men on this side heaven, and therefore he earnestly prays that their knowledge might be experimental, that alone being the knowledge which accompanies salvation—which will give a man at last a possession of salvation. Truly, that knowledge which is only notional, speculative, and general; which is gathered out of books, discourses, and other outward advantages, is such a knowledge that will make men sit down in hell, as it did Judas, Demas, the scribes and pharisees, etc. What is the scholar's knowledge of the strength, riches, glories, and sweetness of far countries, obtained by maps and books—compared to their knowledge, who daily see and enjoy those things?

Christ will at last shut the door of hope, of help, of consolation and salvation, upon all those who know much of him notionally—but nothing feelingly, as you may see in his shutting the door of happiness against the foolish virgins, Matt 25 11-12, and against those forward professors, preachers, and workers of miracles, Matt 7 22, who had much speculative knowledge—but no experimental knowledge; who had much outward general knowledge of Christ—but no spiritual inward acquaintance with Christ.

A man who has that experimental knowledge which accompanies salvation, will from his experience tell you, that sin is the greatest evil in the world—for he has found it so, Rom 7; that Christ is the one thing necessary—for he has found him so, Psalm 27 4; that the favor of God is better than life—for he has found it so, Psalm 63 3; that pardoning mercy alone makes a man happy—for he has found it so, Psalm 32 1-2; that a wounded spirit is such a burden that none can bear—for he has found it so, Prov 18 14; that a humble and a broken heart is an acceptable sacrifice to God—for he has found it so, Psalm 51 17; that the promises are precious pearls—for he has found them so, 2 Pet 1 4; that the smiles of God will make up the lack of any outward mercies—for he has found it so, Psalm 4 6-7; that only communion with God can make a heaven in a believer's heart—for he has found it so, Psalm 48 10; that if the Spirit is pleased and obeyed, he will be a comforter to the soul—for he has found it so, John 16 7; but if his motions and laws are slighted and neglected, he will stand far off from the soul, he will vex and gall the soul--for he has found it so, Lam 1 16; Isa 63 10-11.

Well! souls, remember this, that knowledge which is not experimental will never turn to your account, it will only increase your guilt and torment, as it did the Scribes' and Pharisees'. What advantage had the men of the old world, by their knowing that there was an ark, or by their clambering about the ark—when they were shut out and drowned in the flood! What does it profit a man to see heaps of jewels and pearls, and mountains of gold and silver, when he is moneyless and penniless? It is rather a torment than a comfort to know that there is a pardon for other malefactors—but none for me; that there is bread for such and such hungry souls—but none for me; that there is water and wine to cheer, comfort, and refresh such and such—but not a sip, a drop, for me; that my bottle is empty, and I may die for thirst—while others are drinking at the fountainhead; that there are houses and clothes to shelter such and such from colds, storms, and tempests—while I lie naked, exposed to the misery of all weathers. This kind of knowledge does rather torment men, than comfort them; it does but add fuel to the fire, and make their hell the hotter. The knowledge that devils and apostates have of God, Christ, and the Scriptures, etc., being only notional, is so far from being a comfort to them, that it is their greatest torment; it is a worm which is eternally gnawing them; it makes them ten thousand times more miserable than otherwise they would be. They are still a-crying out, "Oh that our light, our light were put out! Oh that our knowledge, our knowledge were extinguished! Oh that we might but change places with the heathens, with the barbarians, who never knew what we have known! Oh how happy would damned devils and apostates judge themselves in hell, if they should escape with those dreadful stripes that shall be eternally laid upon the backs of fools!"

Remember, reader, that a little heart-knowledge, a little experimental knowledge, is of greater efficacy and worth than the highest notions of the most acute scholars. He does well, who discourses of Christ—but he does infinitely better who, by experimental knowledge, feeds and lives on Christ. It was not Adam's seeing—but his tasting, of forbidden fruit which made him miserable; and it is not your seeing of Christ—but your experimental tasting of Christ, which will make you truly happy. As no knowledge will save, but what is experimental; so let no knowledge satisfy you, but what is experimental, Psalm 34 8.

(4.) The fourth property. That knowledge which accompanies salvation is a **heart-affecting** knowledge. It affects the heart with Christ, and all spiritual things. Oh, it does wonderfully endear Christ and the things of Christ to the soul Song 2 5, "Oh, feed me with your love—your 'raisins' and your 'apples'—for I am utterly lovesick!" Oh, says the spouse, my heart is taken with Christ, it is raised and ravished with his love; my soul is burning, my soul is beating towards Christ. Oh, none but Christ, none but Christ! I cannot live in myself, I cannot live in my duties, I cannot live in external privileges, I cannot live in outward mercies, I cannot live in common providences; I can live only in Christ, who is my life, my love, my joy, my crown, my all in all. Oh, the hearing of Christ affects me, the seeing of Christ affects me, the taste of Christ affects me, the glimmerings of Christ affects me; the more I come to know him in his natures, in his names, in his offices, in his discoveries, in his appearances, in his beauties, the more I find my heart and affections to prize Christ, to run after Christ, to be affected with Christ, and to be wonderfully endeared to Christ! Psalm 73 25-26. "Whom have I in heaven but you? I desire you more than anything on earth. My health may fail, and my spirit may grow weak, but God remains the strength of my heart; he is mine forever!"

Song 5 10. "He is white and ruddy, the chief of ten thousand!" The knowledge that she had of Christ did so affect and endear her heart to Christ, that she cannot but make use of all her rhetoric to set forth Christ in the most lovely and lively colors. Gal 6 14, "God forbid that I should glory in anything, except in Christ Jesus." Oh, God forbid that my heart should be affected or taken with anything in comparison of Christ. The more I know him, the more I like him; the more I know him, the more I love him; the more I know him, the more I desire him; the more I know him, the more my heart is knit unto him. His beauty is captivating, his love is ravishing, his goodness is attracting, his manifestations are enticing, and his person is enamoring. His lovely looks please me, his pleasant voice delights me, his precious Spirit comforts me, his holy word rules me; and these things make Christ to be a heaven unto me!

Oh, but all that mere notional knowledge, that speculative knowledge, which leaves a man short of salvation, never affects the heart; it never draws it, it never endears the heart to Christ, or to the precious things of Christ. Hence it is that such men, under all their notions, under all their light and knowledge, have no affection to Christ, no delight in Christ, no workings of heart after Christ.

Well, reader! remember this, if your knowledge does not now *affect* your heart, it will at last with a witness *afflict* your heart; if it does not now endear Christ to you, it will at last the more provoke Christ against you; if it does not make all the things of Christ to be very precious in your eyes, it will at last make you the more vile in Christ's eyes! A little knowledge which divinely affects the heart, is infinitely better than a world of that theoretical knowledge which swims in the head—but never sinks down into the heart, to the bettering, to the warming, and to the affecting of it. Therefore strive not so much to know, as to have your heart affected with what you know; for heart-affecting knowledge is the only knowledge which accompanies salvation, that will possess you of salvation.

(5.) The fifth property. That knowledge which accompanies salvation, is **a world-despising, a world-crucifying, and a world-forsaking** knowledge. "May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." Galatians 6 14. Divine knowledge made the apostle easily overlook all the world, as a man does easily overlook other things, who looks to find a jewel, a pearl of great price, etc. Divine knowledge makes a man have low, poor, base thoughts of the world; it makes a man slight it, and trample upon it as a thing of no value. That divine light which accompanies salvation, makes a man to look upon the world as mixed, as mutable, as momentary; it makes a man look upon the world as a liar, as a deceiver, as a flatterer, as a murderer, and as a witch that has bewitched the souls of thousands to their eternal overthrow, by her golden baits and offers.

Divine knowledge put Paul upon trampling upon all the bravery and glory of the world, Phil 3 4-9. I shall only transcribe Phil 3 7-8, and leave you to turn to the rest. "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yes doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung" (dog's dung or dog's meat, coarse and contemptible), "that I may win Christ." Divine knowledge raises his heart so high above the world, that he looks upon it with an eye of scorn and disdain, and makes him count it as an excrement, yes, as the very worst of excrements, as dogs' dung, as dogs' meat. Of the like import is that of Heb 10 34, "You joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions." Divine knowledge will make a man rejoice, when his enemies make a bonfire of his goods. This man has bills of exchange under God's own hand, to receive a pound for every penny, a million for every mite, that he loses for him. And this makes him to rejoice, and to trample upon all the glory of this world, as one did upon the philosopher's crown, Matt 19 27-30.

It was heavenly knowledge which made Moses to disdain and scorn the pomp and pleasures, the bravery and glory, the riches and advantages of Egypt and Ethiopia too, as some writers observe, "By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward." Hebrews 11 24-26.

So when a beam of divine light had shined upon Zacchaeus, Oh, how does it work him to part with the world, to cast off the world, to slight it and trample upon it, as a thing of nothing! "And Zacchaeus stood and said unto the Lord, Behold, Lord! the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, This day has salvation come to this house, for so much as he also is the son of Abraham," Luke 19 2-10. Before the candle of the Lord was set up in Zacchaeus's soul, he dearly loved the world, he highly prized the world, he eagerly pursued after the world; he would have it right or wrong, his heart was set upon it, he was resolved to gather riches, though it was out of others' ruins. Yes, but when once he was divinely enlightened, he throws off the world, he easily parts with it, he sets very light by it, he looks with an eye of disdain upon it. His knowledge lifts him up above the smiles of the world, and above the frowns of the world; the world is no longer a snare, a bait, a temptation to him. He knows that it is more to be a son of Abraham, that is, to be taken into covenant with Abraham, to tread in the steps of Abraham's faith, as children tread in the steps of their fathers, and to lie and rest in the bosom of Abraham, as sons do in their fathers' bosoms, than to be rich, great, and honorable in the world, Rom 4 12,16, and Rom 9. And this made him shake hands with the world, and say to it, as to his idols, "Get you hence, for what have I more to do with you?" Isa 30 22; Hos 14 8. Truly, that light, that knowledge, will never lead you to heaven, it will never possess you of salvation, that leaves you under the power of the world, that leaves you in league and friendship with the world, 1 John 2 15; James 4 4. If your knowledge does not put the world under your feet—it will never put a crown of glory upon your head. The church has the moon under her feet, Rev 12 1, which is clothed with the sun, and which has a crown upon her head.

Ah, knowing souls, knowing souls! do not deceive yourselves! Truly, if you are clothed with the loveliness and righteousness of the sun, which is Jesus Christ, and have a crown of victory and glory upon your heads, you will have the moon under your feet, you will tread and trample upon the trash of this world; all the riches, glories, and braveries of the world will be under your feet, in respect of your non-subjection to it and your holy contempt of it. If your knowledge does not enable you to set your feet upon those things that most people set their hearts on, you are undone forever; your knowledge will be so far from lifting you up to heaven, that it will cast you the lower into hell. Therefore let no knowledge satisfy you—but that which lifts you above the world—but that which weans you from the world—but that which makes the world a footstool. This knowledge, this light will at last lead you into everlasting light.

(6.) The sixth property. That knowledge which accompanies salvation is **soul-abasing, soul-humbling** knowledge. It makes a man very little and low in his own eyes, as you may see in the most knowing apostle Eph 3 8, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." **Paul's** great light makes him very little. Though he was the greatest apostle, yet he looks upon himself as less than the least of all saints. "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—and I am the worst of them." 1 Timothy 1 15

Christ wonderfully extols **John the Baptist**. Says Christ, he is a prophet, yes, and more than a prophet, yes, a greater is not born of woman. But the greatest wonder of all is, that John is so low in his own eyes! John 1 26-27, "I baptize with water, but among you stands one you do not know. He is the one who comes after me, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie." In this phrase John alludes to the custom of the Hebrews. Those among them which were more noble than others, had boys who carried their shoes, and untied them when they laid them aside. Oh! says John, I am a poor, weak, worthless creature; I am not worthy to he admitted to the basest, to the lowest service under Christ; I am not worthy to carry his shoes, to unloose his shoes.

After **Peter** had been in the mount, and instructed and enlightened by Christ, he cries out, "Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a *sinful man*," that is—a man, a sinner, a very mixture and compound of dirt and sin, of vileness and baseness, as you may see in comparing Matt 17 1-5; Luke 5 8.

Abraham, under all his light and knowledge, acknowledges himself to be but dust and ashes, Gen 18 27. **Jacob**, under all his knowledge, acknowledges, "I am unworthy of all the kindness and faithfulness you have shown your servant," Gen 32 10. **David**, under all his knowledge, acknowledges himself to be a worm, and no man, Psalm 22 6; he acknowledges himself to be foolish and ignorant, and as a beast before the Lord, Psalm 73 22. **Job**, under all his knowledge, abhors himself in dust and ashes, Job 42 1-5. **Agur** was very godly and his knowledge very great; and yet under all his knowledge, oh, how did he vilify, yes, nullify himself! "Surely," says he, "I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man. I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy," Prov 30 1-4. The evangelical prophet **Isaiah**, under all his knowledge and visions, which were very great and glorious, acknowledges himself to be a man of unclean lips, and to dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips," Isa 6 1-8.

Divine and heavenly knowledge brings a man near to God; it gives a man the clearest and fullest sight of God; and the nearer any man comes to God, and the clearer visions he has of God, the more low and humble will that man lie before God. None so humble as those who have nearest communion with God. The angels that are near unto him cover their faces with their wings, in token of humility. Divine knowledge makes a man look inwards; it anatomizes a man to himself; it is a mirror which shows a man the spots of his own soul, and this makes him little and low in his own eyes.

In the beams of this heavenly light, a Christian comes to see his own pride, ignorance, impatience, unworthiness, conceitedness, worthlessness, frowardness and nothingness. That knowledge which swells you with self importance, will undo you; that knowledge which puffs you with pride, will sink you; that knowledge which makes you delightful in your own eyes will make you despicable in God's and godly men's eyes 1 Cor 8 1-2, "Knowledge puffs up;" that is, notional knowledge, speculative knowledge, knowledge which ripens a man for destruction, which will leave him short of salvation. This knowledge puffs and swells a man, and makes him think himself something when he is nothing "And if any man thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know," says the apostle. Will not the heathen rise in judgment against many of our high-flown professors, who swell, who look big, and talk big under their notional knowledge.

Well! if that knowledge you have be that knowledge which accompanies salvation, it is a soul-humbling and a soul-abasing knowledge. If it be otherwise, then will your knowledge make you both a prisoner and a slave to the devil at once.

(7.) The seventh property. That knowledge which accompanies salvation is an **APPROPRIATING** knowledge, a knowledge which appropriates and applies spiritual and heavenly benefits to a man's own particular soul. This is the pith and power of heavenly knowledge—to appropriate Christ to a man's self. As you may see in Job, "*my* Redeemer lives," and "my witness is in heaven," and "my record is on high," Job 19 25, and Job 16 19. Just so, David, "the Lord is my portion," Psalm 16 5. In Psalm 18 2, he uses this word of propriety eight times together, "The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower." So the spouse, "My beloved is mine, and I am his," Song 2 16. Just so, Thomas, "My Lord and my God," John 20 28. Just so, Paul, "I am crucified with Christ nevertheless I live; 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, who has loved me, and gave himself for me," Gal 2 20.

Personal applicatory knowledge is the sweetest knowledge; it revives the heart, it cheers the spirits, it rejoices the soul, it makes a man go singing to duties, and go singing to his grave, and singing to heaven; whereas others, though gracious, who lack this applicatory knowledge, have their hearts full of fears, and their lives full of sorrows, and so go sighing and mourning to heaven. Those who have a *blemish in their eye* think the sky to be ever cloudy; and nothing is more common to weak spirits, than to be criticizing and contending, etc.

But lest any precious soul should turn this truth into a sword to cut and wound himself, let me desire him to remember, that every believer who has such knowledge which accompanies salvation, has not this applicatory knowledge, which makes so much for the soul's consolation, and which does accompany *some* men's salvation—not *all* men's salvation. If you find your knowledge to be such a knowledge as is before described in the six former particulars, though you have not attained to this applicatory knowledge, yet have you attained to that knowledge which accompanies salvation, and which will, my soul for yours, give you a possession of salvation. This applicatory knowledge which accompanies salvation, is only to be found in such eminent saints, who are high in their communion with God, and who have attained some considerable assurance of their interest in God.

Many men's salvation is accompanied with an applicatory knowledge—but all men's salvation is not accompanied with *an applicatory knowledge of man's particular interest in Christ*, and those blessed favors and benefits which come by him. Your soul may be safe, and your salvation may be sure, though you have not attained unto this appropriating knowledge—but your life cannot be comfortable without this appropriating knowledge; therefore, if you have it not, labor for it as for life. It is a pearl of great price, and if you find it, it will make your soul amends for all your digging, seeking, working, sweating, weeping, etc.

A man does not attain to health by reading Galen's or Hippocrates's medical aphorisms—but by the practical application of them to remove his diseases. You know how to apply it.

(8.) The eighth property. That knowledge which accompanies salvation is accompanied and **ATTENDED** with these things

[1.] The first attendant. That knowledge which accompanies salvation is attended with **holy endeavors, and with heavenly desires, thirstings, and pantings after a further knowledge of God, after clearer visions of God**. Prov 15 14, "The discerning heart seeks knowledge, but the mouth of a fool feeds on folly." The Hebrew word that is here rendered "seeks" signifies an earnest and diligent seeking; to seek as an **hungry** man seeks for food; or as a **covetous** man for gold—the more he has, the more he desires; or as a **condemned** man seeks for his pardon; or as the **diseased** man seeks for his cure. The word signifies to seek studiously, laboriously, industriously; to seek by pleading, praying, inquiring, and searching up and down, that we may find what we seek; to seek as men do for hidden treasure. So in Prov 18 15, "The mind of the discerning acquires knowledge, and the ear of the wise seeks it."

A man who is divinely taught, will set his heart and his ear, his inward and outward man, to know more and more. Divine knowledge is marvelous sweet, pleasing, comforting, satisfying, refreshing, strengthening, and supporting; and souls who have found the sweetness and usefulness of it, cannot but look and long, breathe and pant after more and more of it. The newborn babe does not more naturally and more earnestly long for the breasts, than a soul who has tasted that the Lord is gracious, does long for more and more tastes of God, 1 Pet 2 2-3. David, under all his knowledge, cries out, "Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law. I am a stranger on earth; do not hide your commands from me. My soul is consumed with longing for your laws at all times," Psalm 119 18-19. Job, under all his knowledge, which was very great, cries out, "Teach me what I cannot see; if I have done wrong, I won’t do it again." Job 34 32.

[2.] The second attendant. A second thing which attends and accompanies that knowledge which accompanies salvation, is **holy endeavors to edify others, to instruct others, to enlighten and inform others in the knowledge of spiritual and heavenly things**. Heavenly light cannot be hidden under a bushel. You may as easily hinder the sun from shining, as you may hinder a gracious soul from diffusing and spreading abroad that knowledge and light that God has given him. The way to get more knowledge, is to communicate that which we have. Thus did Philip of Bethsaida, John 1 45; thus did the woman of Samaria, John 4 28-29; thus did the spouse, Song 5 10-16; thus did that seraphic preacher Paul, Acts 26 29.

Divine light in the soul is like a light in a bright lantern, which shines forth every way; or like a light in a room, or on a beacon, which gives light to others. A Christian who is divinely taught, is like the lamp in the story, that was always burning and shining, and never went out. So in Gen 18 17,19, "And the Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that which I do; for I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he has spoken of him." He who communicates his knowledge to others, shall, be both of God's court and counsel; he shall lie in the bosom of God, he shall know the secrets of God.

Prov 15 7, "The lips of the wise disperse knowledge—but the heart of the foolish does not so." The Hebrew word that is here rendered, "disperse," is a metaphor taken from seedsmen scattering abroad their seed in the furrows of the field. Heavenly knowledge is very spreading and diffusive; it is like the sun the sun casts his beams upward and downward, upon good and upon bad. Just so, divine light in a gracious soul will break forth for the advantage and profit of friends and enemies, of those who are in a state of nature, and of those who are in a state of grace.

Acts 4 18-20, "And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all, nor teach, in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge you. For *we cannot but speak the things that we have seen and heard*." Opposition is the black angel which dogs the gospel at the heels. Divine knowledge is like new wine; it must have vent; it is heavenly fire which will break forth, Jer 5 14, and Jer 20 2.

The bee does store her hive out of all sorts of flowers for the common benefit. Just so, a heavenly Christian sucks sweetness out of every mercy and every duty, out of every providence and out of every ordinance, out of every promise and out of every privilege—that he may give out the more sweetness to others. "We learn—that we may teach," is a proverb among the Rabbis. "And I do therefore lay in, and lay up," says the heathen, "that I may draw forth again, and lay out for the good of many." This heathen [Socrates, etc.,] will rise in judgment against those who monopolize knowledge to themselves, who imprison their light within their own breasts, lest others should outshine and darken them.

Synesius speaks of some, who, having a treasure of rare abilities in themselves, would as soon part with their hearts as share their abilities. Truly, such men are far off from that knowledge which accompanies salvation; for that knowledge will make a man willing to spend and be spent for the edification, consolation, and salvation of others, 2 Cor 6 10; Gal 4 19. Prov 10 21, "The lips of the righteous feed many."

[3.] The third attendant. A third thing which attends and accompanies that knowledge which accompanies salvation, is **holy zeal, courage, and resolution for God**. Divine knowledge makes a man as bold as a lion, Prov 28 1. Dan 11 32, "The people who know their God shall be strong, and do exploits." So Prov 24 5, "A wise man is strong; yes, a man of knowledge increases strength," or, "He strengthens might," as it is in the Hebrew. Divine light makes a man full of zeal for God; it makes the soul divinely fearless and courageous. Josh 24 15, "Choose whom you will serve; I and my household will serve the Lord." Come what will of it, we will never change our Master, nor leave his service.

Those beams of light which shined in upon Chrysostom, did so heat and warm his heart, that he stoutly tells Eudoxia the empress, that for her covetousness she would be called a second Jezebel; whereupon she sent him a threatening message, to which he returned this answer, "Go tell her, that I fear nothing but sin."

Ah, Christians! there is an earthquake a-coming, and therefore as you would stand fast, as you would not have any earthquakes to make your hearts quake, get this zeal and courage which attends divine knowledge, and then you shall in the midst of all earthquakes be as mount Zion, which can never be moved, Psalm 125 1-2.

Those who write the story of the travels of the apostles, report that Simon the Zealot preached here in England. Ah, England, England! if ever you need some zealots, it is now! Oh how secure, how dull, how drowsy, how sleepy in the midst of dangers are you! For this and other of your abominations, I desire my soul may weep in secret.

[4.] The fourth attendant. The fourth and last thing which attends or accompanies that knowledge which accompanies salvation is, **faith and confidence in God**. Knowledge and faith are twins, they live, and lodge, and act together; they are two lovers, which may be distinguished one from another—but they cannot be separated one from another.

Psalm 9 10, "They that know your name will put their trust in you; for you, Lord, have not forgotten those who seek you." 2 Tim 1 12, "I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day." I shall not enlarge upon this branch, because I shall speak at large concerning faith in the next particular.

And thus I have showed you from the Scriptures what that **knowledge** is, which accompanies salvation.

II. Now, the second thing that I am to show you is, what that **FAITH** is, which accompanies salvation. I have formerly showed you that faith does accompany salvation—but now I will show you **what faith that is, which accompanies salvation**; and that I shall do, by divine assistance, thus

First, That faith which accompanies salvation, that comprehends salvation, that will possess a man of salvation, is known, by the OBJECTS about which it is exercised. And, by the PROPERTIES of it.

First, **the OBJECTS about which faith is exercised are these**

(1.) The first object of faith. First, **the person of Christ** is the foremost object of faith. Christ, as Redeemer, is the immediate object of faith, and God the Father is the ultimate object of faith; for we believe in God through Christ, Rom 6 11; 1 Pet 1 21; 2 Cor 3 4. It is Christ in the promises, which faith deals with. The promise is but the shell, Christ is the kernel; the promise is but the jewel casket, Christ is the gem in it; the promise is but the field, Christ is the treasure which is hidden in that field; the promise is a ring of gold, and Christ is the pearl in that ring; and upon this sparkling, shining pearl, faith delights most to look. Song 3 4, "I found the one my heart loves. I held him and would not let him go." So Song 7 5, "The king is held in the galleries."

Faith has two hands, and with both she lays earnest and fast hold on King Jesus. Christ's beauty and glory is very captivating and entrancing. Faith, when it sees Christ—will lay hold on him. Christ is the principal object about which faith is exercised, for the obtaining of righteousness and everlasting happiness. Acts 16 30-31, "And the jailor said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." Christ is in the scriptures held forth to be the object about which faith is most conversant; and the more faith is exercised upon the person of Christ, the more it buds and blossoms, like Aaron's rod. Faith looks upon him as the express image and character of his Father; faith beholds him as the chief of ten thousand; faith sees him to be *the most glorious object in all the world!*

Not but that the Father is also the object of believers' faith, John 14 1. Isa 63 15-16, with many other scriptures. But Christ is the object held forth by the Father for our faith to close with, in respect of our justification and salvation. God is the ultimate or highest object of faith; and Christ the mediate object thereof.

(2.) The second object of faith. Secondly, The second object that faith is exercised about, is **the righteousness of Jesus Christ**. Phil 3 9, "I desire to be found in Christ, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ--the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith." Paul would not be found in a legal righteousness, for he knew all his legal righteousness was but as "filthy rags," Isa 54 6. All his legal righteousness, sewed together, would but make up a coat of patches, a beggar's coat, which is good for nothing but to be cast away; therefore he desired to be found in the righteousness of Christ by faith. He knew that Christ's righteousness was a pure righteousness, a spotless righteousness, a matchless righteousness, a complete righteousness, a perfect righteousness, an absolute righteousness, a glorious righteousness. Faith loves to fix her eye upon that rich and royal robe, that blameless and spotless righteousness of Christ, with which the soul stands gloriously clothed before God, as being all beauteous, as being without spot or wrinkle in the divine account. [Col 2 10; Song 4 7; Rev 14 5; Eph 5 27]

Oh, it is the actings of faith upon this blessed object, this glorious righteousness of Christ, which makes a man intimate and bold with God, which makes a man active and resolute for God, which strengthens a man against temptations, which supports a man under afflictions, which makes a man long for the day of his dissolution, which makes him prefer his coffin above a prince's crown, the day of his death above the day of his birth; which makes him triumph over sin and Satan, hell and wrath. Adam's righteousness was but the righteousness of a *creature*—but the righteousness about which faith is exercised is the righteousness of a God, Rom 3 21, and Rom 10 3. Adam's righteousness was a *mutable* righteousness, a righteousness that might be sinned away; but the righteousness that a believer's faith is exercised about is an everlasting righteousness, a righteousness that cannot be sinned away, 2 Cor 5 21 Prov 8 18.

The righteousness of angels is but the righteousness of creatures—but the righteousness that the saints are clothed with is the very righteousness of God; and in this respect the lowest saint is more excellent and glorious than the most glorious angel.

Psalm 119 142, "Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and your law is the truth." The righteousness of Adam was a righteousness subject to shaking, and we know that Satan did shake all his righteousness about his ears, as I may say. Oh but that glorious righteousness about which faith is conversant, is an unshaken righteousness, a righteousness which cannot be shaken Psalm 36 6, "Your righteousness is like the great mountains," or rather, as it is in the Hebrew, "Your righteousness is like the mountains of God." The Hebrew notes excellent things, by adding the name of God; as cedars of God, Psalm 80 10; rivers of God, Psalm 65 9; wrestlings of God, Gen 30 8; harps of God, Rev 15 2. What more stable than a mountain! and what mountain so stable as the mountain of God! The mountains cannot be shaken, no more can that glorious righteousness of Christ, about which a believer's faith is exercised.

Adam's righteousness was a low righteousness, a righteousness within his own reach, and a righteousness within Satan's reach; it was not so high—but Adam could lay his hand upon it, as I may say; it was not so high—but Satan could reach to the top of it, yes, to the overtopping of it, as we have all found by woeful experience. Oh—but that righteousness which faith is conversant about, is a righteousness of such a height, as that neither Satan nor the world can reach to it Psalm 71 15-16,19, "My mouth shall show forth your righteousness and your salvation all the day; for I know not the numbers thereof. I will go in the strength of the Lord God I will make mention of your righteousness, even of yours alone. Your righteousness also, O God, is very high, who has done great things O God, who is like unto you?"

This glorious righteousness of Christ, about which faith is busied, is called the righteousness of faith, because faith apprehends it, and applies it, and feeds upon it, and delights in it, Rom 3 28. Rom 4 13, "For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law—but through the righteousness of faith." Rom 9 30, "What shall we say then? That the Gentiles who followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith." The righteousness of Christ about which faith is employed, is called the righteousness of faith, because faith puts on this righteousness upon the soul. Faith wraps the soul up in this righteousness of Christ, and so justifies it before God instrumentally.

Rom 10 6. "but the righteousness which is by faith," that is which is apprehended by faith, etc. Mark, faith is only the instrument; it cannot be the substance of that righteousness, as it were, whereby we are justified and saved,

(1.) because it is imperfect;

(2.) the acts of faith are transient;

(3.) then should men have something within them whereof to boast;

(4.) faith is a part of inherent holiness;

(5.) then some men should be justified more, and some less, according to the different measures of faith in them, Gen 27 15; Rom 5 1; 1 Pet 1 8; Acts 10 48.

The actings of faith on this glorious righteousness does most strengthen the soul Isa 45 24, "Surely shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength." The actings of faith on this blessed righteousness, does most gladden and rejoice the soul Isa 61 10, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he has clothed me with the garment of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness." The actings of faith upon this complete righteousness of Christ, renders souls just and righteous, pure and holy—in the account of God Rom 10 4, "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness, to everyone who believes." Christ fulfills the law for believers, and they by believing do fulfill the law in him; and so Christ by doing, and they by believing in him who does it, do fulfill the law, and so are reputed fair and spotless, complete and perfect, before the throne of God.

Faith's putting this righteousness on the soul, brings down blessings upon the soul. When Jacob had put on his elder brother's garment, he carried the blessing away. The actings of faith upon this peerless righteousness of Christ, brings down the blessing of peace, and the blessing of joy, and the blessing of remission of sins; and, in a word, all other blessings that contributes to the making us blessed here and happy hereafter, etc.

(3.) The third object of faith. Thirdly, The third object that faith is exercised about is, the **precious promises**, which are a Christian's magna charta.

2 Pet 1 4. Mark, the whole word of God is the object of faith; but the promises, more especially, are the prime object about which faith is most conversant.

As every precious stone has a rich virtue in it, so has every promise. The promises are a precious book, every leaf drops myrrh and mercy; and upon these precious promises, precious faith looks and lives. From these breasts, faith sucks comfort and sweetness. Psalm 119 49-50, "Remember your word (that is, your promise) unto your servant, upon which you have caused me to hope. This is my comfort in my affliction, for your word has quickened me." So in Psalm 27 13, "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living;" Heb 11 13, "These all died in faith (or according to faith), not having received the promises—but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them" (or, as the Greek has it, saluted them by faith; they kissed the promises, and kissed Christ in the promises), "and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." It would be an endless thing to show you how the faith of the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and other saints has been acted and exercised upon promises of sanctification, upon promises of justification, upon promises of salvation, upon promises of glorification, upon promises of protection, upon promises for direction, upon promises for support, etc. Look! as the lamp lives upon the oil, and the child upon the breasts, so does faith upon the promises.

For the further advantage and comfort of your souls in eyeing the promises, let me give you these **two sweet hints**

First, **In your looking upon the promises, mind most, eye most, spiritual promises, absolute promises**, namely, such as you see here— Jer 32 40-41; Ezek 11 19-20; Ezek 36 25-27; Isa 42 1; Ezek 20 41-43; Psalm 91 15; Isa 65 24; Jer 33 3; Isa 32 15; Ezek 34 30-31, with many others of the like import. These spiritual and absolute promises are of nearest and greatest concernment to you; these carry in them most of the heart of Christ, the love of Christ, the goodwill of Christ; these are of greatest use to satisfy you, and to settle you when you are wavering; to support you when you are falling; to recover you when you are wandering; to comfort you when you are fainting; to counsel you when you are staggering, etc. Therefore make these your choicest and your chief companions, especially when it is night within your souls, when you are sensible of much sin and but a little grace, of much corruption but of little consolation, of much deadness but of little quickness, of much hardness but of little tenderness, of many fears and but a little faith.

The Jews under the law had more temporal promises than spiritual—but we under the gospel have far more spiritual promises than temporal; therefore sit down at this fire, and be warmed; drink of these springs, and be satisfied; taste of these delicates, and be cheered. Let the eye of faith be cast upon all the promises—but fixed upon spiritual promises, upon absolute promises; they will have the greatest influence upon the heart to holiness, and to prepare it for everlasting happiness. Spiritual and absolute promises are the most precious mines to enrich you; in them you will find the greatest pearls of price.

Look not only upon some of the riches, the jewels, the pearls, that be wrapped up in the promises—but enlarge and expatiate your understandings to an effectual contemplation of all those riches and treasures which God has laid up in the promises. Cast not the eye of your faith only upon one beam of the sun—but endeavor to see all the beams of the sun; look not upon one branch of the tree of life—but upon every branch of that tree; look not upon one bunch of the grapes of Canaan—but look upon the whole land. Haman took notice, yes, and would have his friends take notice, of all his greatness, honors, and riches, Esther 5 10-12; and will not you stir up your hearts to see all those riches and pleasures that be in precious promises?

As understanding heirs, when they come to read over their documents, they will see what they will inherit in houses, what in goods, what in lands, what in money, what in jewels, what at home, what abroad; they will not sit down and say, 'Well! we find in our documents, that such and such land is ours, and look no further.' No, no, they will look all over, and take exact notice of everything; they will say, 'We have so much land, and so much money, etc.' O beloved, there is much marrow and fatness, there is much honey and sweetness, much grace and glory wrapped up in the promises. Oh press them, and squeeze them until you have obtained all the riches and sweetness which is in them.

Ah, Christians! did you this, God would be more honored, the promises more prized, your graces more strengthened, your fears more abated, your hearts more warmed and engaged, and your lives more regulated, and Satan more easily and frequently vanquished. And so much for this third object, about which faith is exercised.

(4.) Fourthly, The fourth object of faith. The fourth object and last that I shall mention that faith is set and fixed upon is, **that glory, blessedness, and life, which God has laid up for those who love him**. The things of eternity are the greatest things, they are the most excellent things. They are most excellent in their natures, in their causes, in their operations, in their effects, in their ends; and upon these faith looks and lives. Faith realizes eternal realities; it makes absent things present. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen," Heb 11 1. The substance, that is, that which gives a substantial being to the things of eternal, life. Faith alters the tenses; it puts the future into the present, Psalm 60 6; Heb 12 2. Faith makes absent glory present, absent riches present, absent pleasures present, absent favors present. Faith brings an invisible God, and sets him before the soul. Moses by faith saw him who was invisible. Faith brings down the recompense of reward, and sets it really though spiritually before the soul. Faith sets divine favor before the soul. It sets peace, it sets pardon of sin, it sets the righteousness of Christ, it sets the joy of heaven, it sets salvation, before the soul; it makes all these things very near and obvious to the soul "Faith is the evidence of things not seen."

Faith makes invisible things, visible; absent things, present; things which are afar off, to be very near unto the soul—by convincing demonstrations, by arguments and reasons drawn from the word, 2 Cor 4 17-18, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. While we look not at the things which are seen—but at the things which are not seen for the things which are seen are temporal—but the things which are not seen are eternal." Faith looks with a diligent eye, as men do at the mark whereat they shoot. Faith trades in invisible things, in eternal things. Its eye is always upwards, like the fish *uranoscopos*, which has but one eye, and yet looks continually up to heaven. Heb 6 19; Rom 8 18; Heb 10 34; Acts 7 56-56. An adopted heir to a crown cannot but have his heart at court; his mind and thoughts will be upon his future glorious condition he will be still a-creating ideas and images of it.

Faith enters within the veil, and fixes her eye upon those glorious things of eternity, which are so **many** that they exceed number, so **great** that they exceed measure, so **precious** that they are above all estimation. Says faith, "The spangled skies are but the footstool of my Father's house; and if the footstool, the outside, is so glorious, oh how glorious is his throne! Truly, in heaven there is that life which cannot be expressed, that light which cannot be comprehended, that joy which cannot be fathomed, that sweetness which cannot be dissipated, that feast which cannot be consumed; and upon these pearls of glory I look and live!"

And thus I have showed you the choice and precious objects about which that faith is exercised which accompanies salvation.

I shall now in the next place show you the **PROPERTIES of that faith which accompanies salvation**, and they are these that follow.

[1.] The first property of that faith which accompanies salvation is this **it puts forth itself into vital operation**. It makes a man full of life and activity for God; it will make a man diligent and venturous in the work and ways of God. Faith is a most active quality in itself, and so it makes a Christian most active. Faith is a doing thing, and it makes the person doing. Faith will not allow the soul to be idle. Faith is like the virtuous woman in the last chapter of the Proverbs, who puts her hand to every work, who would allow none of her handmaids to be idle.

Saving faith puts the soul upon **grieving** for sin, upon **combating** with sin, upon **weeping** over sin, upon **trembling** at the occasions of sin, upon **resisting** temptations that lead to sin, upon **fighting** it out to the death with sin, Zech 12 10. Faith puts a man upon walking with God, upon waiting on God, upon working for God, upon wrestling with God, upon bearing for God, and upon parting with anything for God. Heb 11 is a full proof of these things; Gal 2 20. Faith makes pious duties to be easy to the soul, to be delightful to the soul, to be profitable to the soul. Faith makes the soul to be serious and conscientious in doing, to be careful and faithful in doing, to be delightful and cheerful in doing, to be diligent and faithful in doing. James 2 17-26. Faith looks to precepts as well as to promises Psalm 119 66, "Teach me good judgment and knowledge; for I have believed your commandments." That faith which is not a working faith is not saving faith; that faith which is not a working faith is a dead faith; that faith which is not a working faith is a deluding faith; that faith which is not a working faith is a worthless faith; that faith that is not a working faith will leave a man short of heaven and happiness in the latter day.

Faith which accompanies salvation is better at doing than at thinking, at obeying than at disputing, at walking than at talking Titus 3 8, "This is a faithful saying; and these things I will that you affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works." The word signifies to bend their wits, and beat their brains, to maintain good works, Isa 65 24; Gen 4 4; 2 Pet 3 11; Song 2 14. Luther prefers the lowest work of a country Christian or poor maid above all the victories and triumphs of Alexander and of Julius Cesar, Matt 27 66; Isa 41 10-11; Heb 13 5-6; Ezek 36 26-27, etc. Faith will make a man endeavor to be good, yes, to be best, at everything he undertakes. It is not leaves but fruit, not words but works—which God expects; and if we cross his expectation, we frustrate our own salvation, we further our own condemnation. Faith makes the soul much in doing, abundant in working, and that partly by persuading the soul that all its works, all its duties and services, shall be owned and accepted of God, as in Isa 56 7, "Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all people." **Faith assures the soul that every prayer, every sigh, every groan, every tear is accepted.** And this makes the soul pray much, and sigh much, and mourn much.

Again, **faith spreads the promises of divine assistance before the soul**. Oh! says faith, here, O soul, is assistance suitable to the work required. And this makes a man work, as for life; it makes a man work and sweat, and sweat and work.

Again, **faith sets the recompense, the reward, before the soul**, Heb 11 25-26. Oh! says faith, look here, soul, here is a great reward for a little work; here is great wages for weak and imperfect services; here is an infinite reward for a finite work. Work, yes, work hard, says faith, O believing soul, for your actions in passing pass not away; every good work is as a grain of seed for eternal life. **There is a resurrection of works as well as of people**, and in that day wicked men shall see that it is not a vain thing to serve God; they shall see the most doing souls to be the most shining souls, to be the most advanced and rewarded. Oh the sight of this crown, of this recompense, makes souls to abound in the work of the Lord, they knowing that their labor is not in vain in the Lord, 1 Cor 15 58. One good work of a Christian is more precious than heaven and earth, says Luther, Rev 14 13.

Again, **faith draws from Christ's fullness; it sucks virtue and strength from Christ's breasts.** Faith looks upon Christ as a head, and so draws from him; it looks upon Christ as a husband, and so draws from him; it looks upon him as a fountain, and so draws from him; it looks upon him as a sea, as an ocean of goodness, and so draws from him; it looks upon him as a father, Col 1 19, and so draws from him; it looks upon him as a friend, and so draws from him, John 1 16. And this divine power and strength sets the soul a-working hard for God; it makes the soul full of motion, full of action.

In a word, faith is such a working grace as sets all other graces a-working. Faith has an influence upon every grace; it is like a silver chain which runs through a set of pearls; it puts strength and vivacity into all other virtues. **Love** touched by a hand of faith flames forth; **hope** fed at faith's table grows strong, and casts anchor within the veil, Acts 5 and Acts 16; Rom 15 13. **Joy**, **courage**, and **zeal** being smiled upon by faith, is made invincible and unconquerable, etc. Look! what oil is to the wheels, what weights are to the clock, what wings are to the bird, what sails are to the ship, that faith is to all pious duties and services, except it be winter with the soul.

And thus you see, that that faith which accompanies salvation is a working faith, a lively faith, and not such a dead faith as most please and deceive themselves with forever.

[2.] The second property of that faith which accompanies salvation is this **it is of a GROWING and INCREASING nature**. It is like the waters of the sanctuary, which rise higher and higher, as Ezekiel speaks. It is like a tender plant, which naturally grows higher and higher; it is like a grain of mustard-seed, which though it be the least of all seeds, yet by a divine power it grows up beyond all human expectations, Matt 13 32.

Faith is imperfect, as all other graces are—but yet it grows and increases gradually. The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree, Psalm 92 12-14. Now, the palm tree never loses his leaf or fruit, says Pliny. Rom 1 17, "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith as it is written, The just shall live by faith." As a gracious soul is still a-adding knowledge to knowledge, love to love, fear to fear, zeal to zeal, so he is a-adding faith to faith. A gracious soul knows, that if he is rich in faith—he cannot be poor in other graces; be knows the growth of faith will be as "the former and the latter rain" to all other graces; he knows that *there is no way to outgrow his fears but by growing in faith*; he knows that all the pleasant fruits of paradise, namely, joy, comfort, and peace—flourish as faith flourishes; he knows that he has much work upon his hands, that he has many things to do, many temptations to withstand, many mercies to improve, many burdens to bear, many corruptions to conquer, many duties to perform. And this makes the believing soul thus to reason with God 'Ah, Lord! whatever I am weak in, let me be strong in faith; whatever dies, let faith live; whatever decays, let faith flourish. An old man being once asked if he grew in grace, answered, Yes, doubtless I believe I do; for God has said in his word that we shall flourish and bring forth fruit in old age. Lord, let me be low in repute, low in parts, low in estate, so you will make me high in faith. Lord! let me be poor in anything, poor in everything, so you will make me rich in faith. Lord! let the eye of faith be more opened, let the eye of faith be more quick-sighted, let the eye of faith be the more raised, and it shall be enough to me, though Joseph be not, though Benjamin be not.

It was the glory of the Thessalonians, that "their faith grew exceedingly," 2 Thess 1 3. A growth in faith will render a man glorious in life, lovely in death, and twice blessed in the morning of the resurrection. That is but a wooden leg that grows not, no more is that any more but a wooden faith, a counterfeit faith, that grows not. So will *not* a growth in honors, a growth in riches, a growth in notions, a growth in worldly knowledge. That faith which accompanies salvation unites the soul to Christ, and keeps the soul up in communion with Christ. And **from that union and communion which the soul has with Christ, flows such a divine power and virtue, that causes faith to grow**. The union between Christ and the saints is the nearest and the highest union; and so it advantages their graces, and advances them to a higher degree of happiness than any other creatures whatever, John 17. Christ would have his people one with him and the Father, though not essentially, nor personally, yet really and spiritually.

Yet that no weak believer may be stumbled, or saddened, let them remember—

(1.) That though that faith which accompanies salvation be a growing faith, yet **there are some certain seasons and cases wherein a man may decay in his faith, and wherein he may not have the exercise and the actings of his faith**. This blessed *babe of grace* may be cast into a deep slumber; this *heavenly pearl* may be so buried under the thick clay of this world, and under the ashes of corruption and temptation, as that for a time it may neither stir, nor grow—as might be shown in Abraham, David, Solomon, Peter, and others.

(2.) Secondly, Remember this, that **the strongest faith at times is subject to shakings**, as the strongest men are to faintings, as the stoutest ships are to tossings, as the wisest men are to doubtings, as the brightest stars are to twinklings, etc. Therefore, if at certain times you should not be sensible of the growth of your faith, yet do not conclude that you have no faith. Faith may be in the root when it is not in the act. There may be life in the root of the tree, when there are neither leaves, blossoms, nor fruit upon the tree; the life which is in the root will show itself at the spring, and so will the habits of faith break forth into acts, when the Sun of righteousness shall shine forth, and make it a pleasant spring to your soul. And thus much for this second particular.

[3.] The third property of that faith which accompanies salvation is this **it makes those things which are great and glorious in the world's account—to be very little and low in the eyes of the believer**. Faith makes a believer to live in the land of *promise* as in a strange country, Heb 11 9. It is nothing to live as a stranger in a strange land—but to live as a stranger in the land of promise, this is the excellency and glory of faith.

Faith will make a man set his feet where other men sets their hearts. Faith looks with an eye of scorn and disdain upon the things of this world. 'What,' says faith, 'are earthly treasures, compared to the treasures of heaven? What are stones compared to silver, dross compared to gold, darkness compared to light, hell compared to heaven?' Matt 6 19-20. 'No more,' says faith, 'What are all the treasures, pleasures, and delights of this world, compared to the light of your countenance, to the joy of your Spirit, to the influences of your grace?'

Psalm 4 6-7. I see nothing, says David, in this wide world, only "your commandments are exceeding broad." Faith makes David account his crown nothing, his treasures nothing, his victories nothing, his attendants nothing, etc. Faith will make a man write *'worthless'* upon the best of worldly things; it will make a man trample upon the pearls of this world, as upon dross and dirt, Heb 11 24-26. Faith deadens a man's heart to the things of this world "I am crucified to the world, and the world is crucified to me," says Paul, Phil 3 8; Gal 6 14. This world, says faith, is not my house, my habitation, my home; I look for a better country, for a better city, for a better home, 2 Cor 5 1-2. He who is the heir to a crown, a kingdom, looks with an eye of scorn and disdain upon everything below a kingdom, below a crown. Faith tells the soul that it has a crown, a kingdom in expectation; and this makes the soul to scorn the things of this world, 2 Tim 4 8.

Faith raises and sets the soul high. "And has raised us up together, and has made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus," says the apostle, Eph 2 6. Faith makes a man live high "Our life is in heaven," Phil 3 20; and the higher any man lives, the less, the lower will the things of this world be in his eye.

The view of Lucian is very pleasant, who going to the top of a high mountain, saw all the affairs of men, and looked on their greatest, richest, and most glorious cities, as **little birds' nests**. Faith sets the soul upon the hill of God, the mountain of God, that is, a high mountain; and from thence, faith gives the soul a sight, a prospect of all things here below. And, ah! how like birds' nests do all the riches, honors, and glories of this world look and appear to them, that faith has set upon God's high hill.

Faith having set Luther upon this high hill, he protests that God should not put him off with these poor low things. Faith set Moses high, it set him among invisibles; and that made him look upon all the treasures, pleasures, riches, and glories of Egypt, as little birds' nests, as molehills, as dross and dirt, as things that were too little and too low for him to set his heart upon. Truly, when once faith has given a man a sight, a prospect of heaven, all things on earth will be looked upon as little and low. And so much for this third property of faith.

[4.] The fourth property of that faith which accompanies salvation is this **it purifies the heart, it is a heart purifying faith**. "Purifying their hearts by faith," Acts 15 9. Faith has two hands, one to lay hold on Christ, and another to sweep the heart, which is Christ's house. Faith knows that Christ is of a dove-like nature; he loves to lie clean and sweet. Faith has a neat housewife's hand, as well as an eagle's eye. Faith is as good at purging out of sin, as it is at discovering of sin. There is a cleansing quality in faith, as well as a healing quality in faith. Sound faith will purge the soul from the love of sin, from a delight in sin, and from the reign and dominion of sin, Ezek 16. "Sin shall not have dominion over you; for you are not under the law—but under grace," Rom 6 14,21.

Now faith purges and cleanses the heart from sin, sometimes by pressing and putting God to make good the promises of sanctification. Faith takes that promise in Jer 33 8, "And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me." This is an allusion to the purifications prescribed in the law for the cleansing of polluted persons, till which purifications were performed they could not be admitted into the camp or congregation. And that promise in Mic 7 19, "He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities, and you will cast all their sins into the bottom of the sea;" and that promise in Psalm 65 3, "Iniquities prevail against me; as for our transgressions, you shall purge them away;" and that promise in Isa 1 25, "And I will turn my hand upon you, and purely purge away your dross, and take away all your sin;" and spreads them before the Lord, and will never leave urging and pressing, seeking and suing, until God makes them good.

Faith makes the soul divinely impudent, divinely shameless. 'Lord!' says faith, 'are not these your own words? Have you said it, and shall it not come to pass? Are you not a faithful God? Is not your honor engaged to make good the promises which you have made? Arise, O God, and let my sins be scattered; turn your hand upon me, and let my sins be purged.' And thus faith purifies the heart.

Again, sometimes faith purifies the heart from sin, by engaging against sin in Christ's strength, as David engaged against Goliath, 1 Sam 17 47, not in his own strength—but in the strength and name of the Lord Almighty. Faith leads the soul directly to God, and engages God against sin, so as that the combat is changed, and made now rather between God and sin than between sin and the soul; and so sin comes to fall before the power and glorious presence of God.

That is a choice word, Psalm 61 2, "From the ends of the earth will I cry to you, when my heart is overwhelmed lead me to the rock that is higher than I." Look! as a child who is attacked by one who is stronger than he, cries out to his father to help him, and to fight for him against his enemy. Just so, faith, being sensible of its own weakness and inability to get the victory over sin, cries out to Christ, who is stronger than the strong man, and so Christ binds the strong man, and casts him out. Faith tells the soul, that all purposes, resolutions, and endeavors, without Christ, will never set the soul above its sins, they will never purify the heart from sin; therefore faith engages Christ, and casts the main of the work upon Christ, and so it purges the soul from sin.

Luther reports of Staupicius, a German divine, that he acknowledged, before he came to understand the free and powerful grace of Christ, that he vowed and resolved a hundred times against some particular sin, and could never get power over it; he could never get his heart purified from it, until he came to see that he trusted too much to his own resolutions, and too little to Jesus Christ; but when his faith had engaged Christ against his sin, he had the victory.

Again, **faith purifies the heart from sin, by the application of Christ's blood**. Faith makes a plaster of Christ's blessed blood, and lays it on upon the soul's sores, and so cures it. Faith makes a heavenly purgative of this blessed blood, and gives it to the soul, and so makes it vomit up that poison which it has drunk in. It is the excellency of faith, that it can turn the blood of Christ both into food and into physic. Faith tells the soul, that it is not all the tears in the world, nor all the water in the sea, which can wash away the uncleanness of the soul; it is only the blood of Christ which can make a blackmoor white; it is only the blood of Christ which can cure a leprous Naaman, which can cure a leprous soul. 'This fountain of blood,' says faith, 'is the only fountain which can wash heart from all uncleanness and filthiness of flesh and spirit.' Zech 13 1. Those spots which a Christian finds in his own heart, can only be washed out in the blood of the Lamb, by a hand of faith.

Again, **faith purifies the soul from sin, by putting the soul upon heart-purifying ordinances, and by mixing and mingling itself with ordinances** "The word profited them not," says the apostle, "because it was not mixed with faith in those who heard it," Heb 4 2. Faith is such an excellent ingredient, that it makes all potions work for the good of the soul, for the purifying of the soul, and for the bettering of the soul. Yet no potion, no means will profit the soul, if this heavenly ingredient is not mixed with it. Now, faith puts a man upon praying, upon hearing, upon the fellowship of the saints, upon public duties, upon family duties, and upon closet duties; and faith then comes and joins with the soul, and mixes herself with these soul-purifying ordinances, and so makes them effectual for the purifying of the soul more and more from all filthiness and uncleanness.

Faith puts out all her virtue and efficacy in ordinances, to the purging of souls from their dross and tin; not that faith in this life shall wholly purify the soul from the indwelling of sin, or from the motions or operations of sin, no; for then we would have our heaven in this world, and then we might bid ordinances adieu. But that faith which accompanies salvation does naturally purify and cleanse the heart from the remainders of sin by degrees. Sound faith is still a-making the heart more and more neat and clean—that the king of glory may delight in his habitation, that he may not remove his gracious—but may abide with the soul forever. And thus you see that that faith which accompanies salvation is a heart-purifying faith. Sin is like the wild fig tree, or ivy in the wall, cut off stump, body, bough, and branches, yet some sprigs or other will sprout out again, until the wall be plucked down, etc.

(5.) The fifth property of that faith which accompanies salvation is this **it is soul-softening, it is soul-mollifying**. Oh nothing breaks the heart of a sinner like faith. Peter believes soundly—and weeps bitterly, Matt 26 75; Mary Magdalene believes much—and weeps much, Luke 7 44. Faith sets a wounded Christ, a bruised Christ, a despised Christ, a pierced Christ, a bleeding Christ—before the soul, and this makes the soul sit down and weep bitterly "I will pour upon the house of David, the Spirit of grace and of supplication; and they shall *look* upon him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him" (all gospel-mourning flows from believing), "as one mourns for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one who is in bitterness for his firstborn," Zech 12 10, etc. Oh! the sight of those wounds which their sins have made, will wound their hearts through and through; it will make them lament over Christ with a bitter lamentation. They say nothing will dissolve the adamant but the blood of a goat. Ah! nothing will kindly, sweetly, and effectually break the hardened heart of a sinner—but faith's beholding the blood of Christ trickling down his sides.

Pliny reports of a serpent, that when it stings, it fetches all the blood out of the body; but it was never heard that ever any sweat blood but Christ, and the very thoughts of this makes the believing soul to sit down sweating and weeping. That Christ should love man when he was most unlovely, that man's extreme misery should but inflame Christ's affections of love and mercy—this melts the believing soul. That Christ should leave the eternal bosom of his Father; that he who was equal with God should come in the form of a servant; that he who was clothed with glory, should be wrapped in rags; that he whom the heaven of heavens could not contain should be cradled in a manger; that from his cradle to his cross, his whole life should be a life of sorrows and sufferings; that the judge of all flesh should be condemned; that the Lord of life should be put to death; that he who was his Father's joy should in anguish of spirit cry out, *'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'* that that **head** which was crowned with honor, should be crowned with thorns; that those **eyes** which were as a flame of fire, which were clearer than the sun, should be closed up by the darkness of death; that those **ears** which were accustomed to hear nothing but hallelujahs, should hear nothing but blasphemies; that that **face** which was white and ruddy should be spit upon by the beastly Jews; that that **tongue** which spoke as never any man spoke, yes, as never any angel spoke, should be accused of blasphemy; that those **hands** which swayed both a golden scepter and an iron rod, and those **feet** that were as fine brass, should be nailed to the cross—and all this for man's transgression, for man's rebellion! Oh! the sight of these things, the believing of these things, the acting of faith on these things, makes a gracious soul to break and bleed, to sigh and groan, to mourn and lament! That faith which accompanies salvation is more or less a heartbreaking, a heart-melting faith.

(6.) The sixth property of that faith which accompanies salvation is this **it is a world-conquering faith, it is a world-overcoming faith.** 1 John 5 4, "For whoever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory which overcomes the world, even our faith." Faith overcomes the **frowning** world, the **fawning** world, the **tempting** world, and the **persecuting** world, and that it does thus

(1.) **Faith, by uniting the soul to Christ, does interest the soul in all the victories and conquests of Christ, and so makes the soul a conqueror with Christ** John 16 33, "These things have I spoken unto you, that in me you might have peace; in the world you shall have tribulation—but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." We have to deal but with a conquered enemy; our Jesus has given the world a mortal wound; we have nothing to do but to set our feet upon a subdued enemy, and to sing it out with the apostle, "Over all these we are more than conquerors," Rom 8 37.

(2.) **Faith overcomes the world, by outbidding sights.** Faith outbids the world, and so makes the soul victorious. The world set honors, pleasures, etc., before Moses—but his faith outbid the world. Faith presents the recompense of reward, it brings down all the glory, pleasures, and treasures of heaven, of the eternal world, and sets them before the soul; and so it overtops and overcomes the world by outbidding it. So Christ, "for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame," Heb 12 2.

(3.) **Faith overcomes the world, by telling the soul that all things are its own.** Says faith—This God is your God, this Christ is your Christ, this righteousness is your righteousness, this promise is your promise, this crown is your crown, this glory is your glory, these treasures are your treasures, these pleasures are your pleasures. "All things are yours," says the apostle, "things present are yours, and things to come are yours," 1 Cor 3 22. Thus the faith of the martyrs acted, and so made them victorious over a tempting and a persecuting world, Heb 11 35.

(4.) **Faith overcomes the world, by valuing the things of this world as they are.** Most men over-value them, they put too great a price upon them; they make the world an idol, and then they cry, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" Oh but faith now gives all things their correct value; faith presents all worldly things as impotent, as mixed, as mutable, as momentary—in comparison with the soul, and so makes the soul victorious. Faith makes a man to see the prickles which are on every rose, the thorns which are in every crown, the scabs which are under every shirt, the poison which is in the golden cup, the snare which is in the delicious dish, the spot which is in the shining pearl—and so makes a Christian count and call all these things, as indeed they are, "vanity of vanities!" And so the believing soul slights the world, and tramples upon it as dirt and dross. And lastly,

(5.) **Faith overcomes the world, by presenting Jesus Christ to the soul as a most excellent, glorious, and comprehensive good, as such a good which comprehends all good**. There is no good without Christ, the chief good. Christ is that one good which comprehends all good; that one excellency which comprehends all excellencies. All the beauties, all the rarities, all the excellencies, all the riches, all the glories of all created creatures—are comprehended in Christ. As the worth and value of many pieces of copper are less than one precious jewel, so all the whole volume of perfections which is spread through heaven and earth is epitomized in Christ; and the sight and sense of this makes the soul to triumph over the world. Faith presents more excellencies and better excellencies in Christ, than can be lost for Christ, and so it makes the soul a conqueror.

I have been long upon these things, because they are of much weight and worth. I shall be the briefer in what follows. But before I leave this point, I shall give you these hints

In the first place, I shall give you some hints concerning strong faith.

In the second place, I shall give you some hints concerning weak faith.

My design in both is, to keep precious souls from mistaking and fainting. Concerning **STRONG faith**, I shall give you these short hints

(1.) The first hint. Strong faith will make a soul resolute in resisting, and happy in conquering the strongest temptations, Heb 11 3, etc., Dan 6 10, etc.

(2.) The second hint. Strong faith will make a man own God, and cleave to God, and hang upon God, in the face of the greatest difficulties and dangers, Rom 4 18, etc., Psalm 44 16-18. So Job will trust in God, though he slays him, Job 13 15-16.

(3.) The third hint. Strong faith will enable men to prefer Christ's cross before the world's crown, to prefer tortures before deliverance, Heb 11 3, etc.

(4.) The fourth hint. Strong faith will make a soul divinely fearless, and divinely courageous. It will make a man live as the child lives in the family—without fear or care, Psalm 23 4. Dan 3 16, "We are not afraid to answer you, O king; our God whom we serve is able to deliver us, and he will deliver us," etc. Mic 7 7-9.

(5.) The fifth hint. Strong faith will make a man cleave to the promise, when providence runs cross to the promise, Num 10 29; 2 Chron 20 9-11. Psalm 60 6-7, "God has spoken in his holiness," says David; "I will rejoice I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth. Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine," etc. Though David was in his banishment, yet his faith accounts all his, as if he had all in possession, and that because God had spoken in his holiness. His faith hangs upon the promise, though present providences did run cross to the promise, etc. So Joshua and Caleb, Num 14 22-24.

(6.) The sixth hint. Strong faith will make men comply with those commands which most cross them in their most desirable comforts, Heb 11 8-9, and Heb 10 34; Gen 22.

Now, O precious souls! you are not to argue against your own souls, that surely you have no faith, because that your faith does not lead you forth to such and such noble things. You may have *true* faith, though you have not so *great* faith as others of the Lord's worthies have had. As it is dangerous to make false definitions of sin, so it is dangerous to make false definitions of grace.

The philosophers say that there are eight **degrees** of heat. Now, if a man should define heat only by the highest degree, then all other degrees will not be considered as being heat. So if a man should define faith only by the highest degrees and operations of it, then that will not be considered as being faith—which indeed is faith, as I shall presently show.

In the second place, I shall give you some hints concerning **WEAK faith**.

(1.) The first hint. **A weak faith does as much justify and as much unite a man to Christ—as a strong faith does.** It gives a man as much propriety and interest in Christ as the strongest faith in the world. The babe has as much interest in the father, as he who is of grown years. A weak faith gives a man as good a title to Christ, and all the precious things of eternity, as the strongest faith in the world. A weak hand may receive a pearl—as well as the strong hand of a giant. Faith is a receiving of Christ, John 1 12.

(2.) The second hint. The promises of eternal happiness and blessedness are not given only to the *strength* of faith—but to the *truth* of faith; not to the *highest degrees* of faith—but to the *reality* of faith. He who believes shall be saved, though he has not such a strength of faith as to stop the mouth of lions, as to work miracles, as to move mountains, as to subdue kingdoms, as to quench the violence of fire, as to resist strong temptations, as to rejoice under great persecutions, Heb 11 33-35. No man that is saved upon the account of the *strength* of his faith—but upon the account of the *truth* of his faith. In the great day Christ will not bring balances to *weigh* men's graces—but a touchstone to *try* their graces; he will not look so much at the *strength* as at the *truth* of their graces.

(3.) The third hint. The weakest faith shall grow stronger and stronger. A weak believer shall go on from faith to faith. Christ is the finisher as well as the author of our faith, Rom 1 17; Heb 12 2. *Christ will nurse up this blessed babe, faith, and will not allow it to be strangled in its infancy.* He who has begun a good work will perfect it, Phil 1 6; 1 Pet 1 5. Christ is as well bound to look after our graces as he is to look after our souls. Grace is Christ's work, therefore it must prosper in his hand; he is the great builder and repairer of our graces; he will turn your **spark** into a flame, your **drop** into an ocean, your **penny** into a pound, your **mite** into a million, Matt 12 20, and Matt 13 32. Therefore do not sit down discouraged because your faith is weak. That which is sowed in weakness, shall rise in power. Your weak faith shall have a glorious resurrection. Christ will not allow such a pearl of great price to remain buried under a clod of earth.

(4.) The fourth hint. A little faith is faith, as a spark of fire is fire, a drop of water is water, a little star is a star, a little pearl is a pearl. Truly, your little faith is a jewel which God does highly prize and value; and your little faith will make you put a higher price upon Christ and grace than upon all the world, Matt 18 10; 1 Pet 2 7. Well! remember this, that the least measure of true faith will bring you to salvation, and possess you of salvation—as well as the greatest measure. A little faith accompanies salvation—as well as a great faith; a weak faith—as well as a strong faith. Therefore do not say, O precious soul, that you have not that faith which accompanies salvation, because you have not such a strong faith, or such and such a high degree of faith. **A GREAT faith will yield a man a heaven here; a LITTLE faith will yield him a heaven hereafter.**

III. The third thing that I am to show you is, what that **REPENTANCE** is, which accompanies salvation. That repentance *does* accompany salvation, I have formerly showed. Now, I shall manifest in the following particulars what that repentance is, which accompanies salvation, which comprehends salvation.

(1.) The first property. First, That repentance which accompanies salvation, is **a general, a universal change of the whole man**; a change in every part—though it be but in part. That repentance which accompanies salvation changes both heart and life, word and work; it makes an Ethiopian an Israelite, a leper an angel. "Wash, make yourself clean;" there is the change of your hearts. "Put away the evil of your doings from before my eyes, cease to do evil, learn to do well," Isa 1 16-18; there is the change of their practices.

So the prophet Ezekiel, "Cast away all your transgressions," says he, "whereby you have transgressed;" there is the change of life "And make a new heart, and a new spirit," Ezek 18 30-32; there is the change of the heart. True repentance is a thorough change both of the mind and manners. That repentance which accompanies salvation works a change in the whole man; in all the qualities of the inward man, and in all the actions of the outward man. The **understanding** is turned from darkness to light; the **will** from a sinful servility to a holy liberty; the **affections** from disorder into order; the **heart** from hardness into softness. So in the outward man, the lustful **eye** is turned into an eye of chastity; the wanton **ear** is turned into an obedient ear; the **hands** of bribery are turned into hands of liberality; and the wandering **feet** of vanity are turned into ways of purity. And truly, that repentance which changes a man in some part—but not in every part; which only makes a man a Herod, or an Agrippa, a *half* Christian, an *almost* Christian—that repentance will never bring down heaven into a man's bosom here, nor never bring a man up to heaven hereafter!

That repentance which accompanies salvation makes a man all glorious within, and his raiment to be of embroidered gold, Psalm 45 13; it stamps the image of God both upon the inward and the outward man; it makes the heart like the ark, all gold within; and it makes the life like the sun, all glorious without.

(2.) The second property. Secondly, That repentance which accompanies salvation is **a total turning as well as a universal turning; a turning from all sin, without any reservation or exception**. "I hate and abhor every false way—but I love your law," Psalm 119 163. So in Ezek 18 30, "Therefore, O house of Israel, I will judge you, each one according to his ways, declares the Sovereign Lord. Repent! Turn away from all your offenses; then sin will not be your downfall." So in Ezek 33 11. **As Noah's flood drowned his nearest and his dearest friends, so the flood of penitent tears drowns men's nearest and their dearest lusts!** Be they Isaacs or Benjamins, be they right eyes or right hands, repentance which accompanies salvation puts all to the sword; it spares neither father nor mother, neither Agag nor Achan; it casts off all the rags of old Adam; it leaves not a horn nor a hoof behind; it throws down every stone of the old building; it scrapes off all leviathan's scales; it washes away all leprous spots. And God has engaged himself to cleanse the hearts of his people from all sin, and to set their souls against all sin, Jer 33 8; Ezek 36 25,29,33; 1 John 1 9. Repentance for sin is worth nothing, without repentance from sin.

Ezek 14 6, "Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord God, Repent, and turn yourselves from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations." **Sin is a turning the back upon God, and the face towards hell; but repentance is a turning the back upon sin, and a setting the face towards God!** He who looks upon both *Jerusalem* and upon *Babylon* with an alluring eye at the same time; he who looks upon *God*, and at the same time looks upon any *sin* with an alluring eye, has not yet reached unto this repentance which accompanies salvation; his repentance and profession cannot secure him from double damnation. Thus did Herod and Judas, to their eternal ruin, James 2 20.

He who serves *God* in some things, and his *lusts* in other things, says to God as David said to Mephibosheth concerning his lands, "You and Ziba divide the lands," 2 Sam 19 29. Just so, you and Satan divide my soul, my heart between you. Ah! does not such a soul deserve a double hell? Christ takes every sin at a penitent man's hands, as Caesar did his wounds from him of whom he merited better usage, with, "And you, my son." "What, *you* wound me! What, *you* stab me!" One stab at the heart kills, one hole in the ship sinks her, one act of treason makes a traitor. Just so, one sin not forsaken, not turned from, will undo a soul forever. Sin always ends tragically, and this puts the penitent in battle array against every sin.

There are no wounds which are so grievous and terrible to Christ, as those who he receives in the house of his friends, and this sets the penitent man's heart and hand against everything which is against Christ. A true penitent looks upon every sin as poison, as the vomit of a dog, as the mire of the street, as the menstruous cloth, which of all things in the law was most unclean, defiling, and polluting. And his looking thus upon every sin, turns his heart against every sin, and makes him not only to refrain from sin—but to forsake it, and to loathe it more than hell.

(3.) The third property. Thirdly, That repentance which accompanies salvation is not only a turning from all sin—but it is also **a turning unto God**. The Hebrew word for repentance signifies to *return*, implying a going back from what a man had done. It notes a returning or converting from one thing to another, as from sin to God, from evil to good, from hell to heaven. It is not only a ceasing from doing evil—but it is also a learning to do well; it is not only a turning from darkness—but it is also a turning to light; as the apostle speaks, Acts 26 18, "To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." So in Isa 55 7, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." It is not enough for the man of iniquity to forsake his evil way—but he must also return unto the Lord; he must subject his heart to the power of divine grace, and his life to the will and word of God. As negative goodness can never satisfy a gracious soul, so negative goodness can never save a sinful soul. It is not enough that you are thus and thus *bad*—but you must be thus and thus *good*, or you are undone forever Ezek 18 21, "But if a wicked man turns away from all the sins he has committed and keeps all my decrees and does what is just and right, he will surely live; he will not die."

Negative righteousness and holiness is no righteousness, no holiness, in the account of God. It was not the Pharisee's negative righteousness, nor his comparative goodness, which could prevent his being rejected of God, his being shut out of heaven, his burning in hell, Luke 18 5; Matt 20 13-14. It is not enough that the tree bears no *bad* fruit—but it must bring forth *good* fruit—else it must be cut down and cast into the fire. That tree which is not for *fruit*—is for the *fire*. "Every tree which brings not forth good fruit," says Christ, "is hewn down, and cast into the fire," Matt 7 19. Men who content themselves with negative righteousness, shall find at last heaven-gates bolted upon them with a double bolt. *All that negative righteousness and holiness can do, is to help a man to one of the best chambers and easiest beds in hell.* That repentance which accompanies salvation, brings the heart and life not only off from sin—but on *to God*; it makes a man not only cease from walking in the ways of death—but it makes him walk in the ways of life "They do no iniquity, they walk in his ways," Psalm 119 3. He who holds not wholly with Christ, does very shamefully neglect Christ. And therefore if Christ tramples upon them at last, it is just.

(4.) The fourth property. Fourthly, That repentance which accompanies salvation, **strikes most effectually and particularly against that sin or sins, that the sinner was most apt and prone to before his conversion**. The hand of repentance is most *against* that sin, it is most *upon* that sin, which the soul has looked most with an alluring eye upon. Augustine, a great sinner, wrote twelve books on repentance, and walked most contrary to the particular sins which he had most lived in. The chief and principal sins which Israel were guilty of, were idolatry and sinful compliance. Now, when God works kindly upon them, they put the hand of repentance upon those particular sins, as you may see Isa 27 9, "By this, then, will Jacob's guilt be atoned for, and this will be the full fruitage of the removal of his sin When he makes all the altar stones to be like chalk stones crushed to pieces, no Asherah poles or incense altars will be left standing." (This was the great sin of Israel—but after their return out of captivity, they never again set up idols—but were wonderful zealous to keep their temple from such defilements, both in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, and of the Romans, and do account them as a menstruous cloth, to this very day. The Jews were willing in the Romans' time, rather to die than to allow the eagle, the Roman imperial arms, to be set upon the temple.) Here you see, when God appears and acts graciously for and towards his people, they put the *hand of repentance* upon their groves and images; these must torn down, these must no longer stand. The groves and the images shall not stand up, they shall be utterly abandoned and destroyed, demolished, and abolished.

So in Isa 30 22, "Then you will defile your idols overlaid with silver and your images covered with gold; you will throw them away like a menstrual cloth and say to them—Away with you!" Here you see the hand of repentance is against their idols of silver and gold; and not only against their idols—but also against whatever had any relation to them. Now they show nothing but a detestation of their idols, and a holy indignation against them "Away with you!" The hand of repentance makes a divorce between them and their idols, between their souls and their darling sins. Now they are as much in hating, abhorring, abominating, and despising their idols and images, as they were formerly in adoring, worshiping, and honoring of them.

So Mary Magdalene, Luke 7, walks quite contrary to her former self, her sinful self, she crosses the flesh, in those very things wherein formerly she did gratify the flesh. So the penitent jailor, Acts 16, washes those very wounds that his own bloody hands had made. He acts in ways of mercy, quite contrary to his former cruelty. At first there was none so fierce, so furious, so cruel, so bloody, so inhuman in his conduct to the Christians as Paul; at last, none so gentle, so soft, so sweet, so courteous, so affectionate to them. The same you may see in Zacchaeus, Luke 19 8, etc. In Paul, Acts 9, and in Manasseh, in 2 Chron 33 6.

(5.) The fifth property. Fifthly, That repentance which accompanies salvation, is **very large and comprehensive**. It comprehends and takes in these following particulars, besides those already named.

[1.] True repentance includes a **SIGHT and SENSE of sin.** Men must first see their sins, they must be sensible of their sins, before they can repent of their sins. Ephraim had first a sight of his sin, and then he repents and turns from his sin. "After I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh," Jer 31 18-19. A man first sees himself out of the way, before he returns into the way. Until he sees that he is out of the way, he walks still on—but when he perceives that he is out of the way, then he begins to make inquiry after the right way. So when the sinner comes to see his way to be a way of death, then be cries out, "Oh lead me in the way of life, lead me in the way everlasting," Psalm 139 24. It was so with Paul, who thought himself in as good a way for heaven as any; Acts 9 and Acts 26 compared.

[2.] For I shall but touch upon these things. That repentance which accompanies salvation, includes not only a sight and sense of sin—but also **CONFESSION and acknowledgment of sin**. Psalm 51, and Psalm 32 3-5, "When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. Selah Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord"--and you forgave the guilt of my sin." Job 33 21-27. The promise of forgiveness is made to confession. 1 John 1 9, "If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." So Prov 28 13, "He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy." If we confess our sins sincerely, seriously, humbly, cordially—then pardon attends us. *Confession* of sin must be joined with *confusion* of sin—or all is lost, God is lost, Christ is lost, heaven lost, and the soul lost forever!

The true penitent can say, with Vivaldus, "I hide not my sins—but I show them; I wipe them not away—but I sprinkle them; I do not excuse them—but I accuse them. "My sins hurt me not, if I like them not." The beginning of my salvation—is the knowledge of my transgression.

[3.] That repentance which accompanies salvation includes, not only confession of sin—but also **CONTRITION for sin**; Psalm 51 4; 1 Sam 7 2; Zech 12 10-11; Ezra 10 1-2; 2 Cor 7 11; Jer 13 17; Joel 2 13. Basil wept when he saw the *rose*, because it brought to his mind the first sin, from whence it had the prickles, which it had not, while man continued in innocence, as he thought. You know how to apply it. True repentance breaks the heart with sighs, sobs, and groans—that a loving Father is offended, a blessed Savior crucified, and the sweet Comforter grieved. Penitent Mary Magdalene weeps much, as well as loves much. Tears, instead of jewels, were the ornaments of penitent David's bed. Surely that sweet singer never sang more melodiously, than when his heart was broken most penitentially.

How shall God wipe away my tears in heaven—if I shed none on earth? And how shall I reap in joy—if I sow not in tears? "I was *born* with tears, and shall *die* with tears; why should I then *live* without them in this valley of tears?" says the true penitent. **The sweetest joys are from the sourest tears; penitent tears are the breeders of spiritual joy.** When Hannah had wept, she went away and was no more sad, 1 Sam 1 18. The bee gathers the best honey off the bitterest herbs. Christ made the best wine of water; the strongest, the purest, the truest, the most permanent, and the most excellent joy is made of the waters of repentance. If God is God, "Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy." Psalm 126 5. True repentance is a sorrowing for sin because it is offensive to God. Peter was sorry for his *sin*; Judas was sorry his for *punishment*. Peter grieves because Christ was grieved; Judas grieved because he would be damned.

But that no mourner may drown himself in his own tears, let me give this CAUTION, namely, that **there is nothing beyond remedy—but the tears of the damned.** A man who may persist in the way to paradise, should not place himself in the condition of a little hell; and he who has a genuine hope for *that great all*, ought not to be dejected nor overwhelmed for anything.

[4.] That repentance which accompanies salvation does include not only contrition for sin—but also **a holy SHAME and blushing for sin**. Ezra 9 6; Jer 3 24-25; Jer 31 19; Ezek 16 63, "Then, when I make atonement for you for all you have done, you will remember and be ashamed and never again open your mouth because of your humiliation, declares the Sovereign Lord." When the penitent soul sees his sins pardoned, the anger of God pacified, and divine justice satisfied, then he sits down ashamed.

So Rom 6 21, "What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death!" **Sin and shame are inseparable companions.** A Christian man cannot have the *seeming sweet* of sin, but he shall have the *real shame* which accompanies sin. These two God has joined together, and all the world cannot put them asunder.

Shame signifies to blush, to be abashed, to wax pale and wan, etc. So much the more God has been displeased with the blackness of sin, the more will he be well pleased with the blushing of the sinner.

It was the vile and impenitent Caligula who said of himself "that he loved nothing better in himself than that he could not be ashamed."

And doubtless, *only those things which are sinful, are shameful.* **A soul who has sinned away all shame is a soul ripe for hell, and given up to Satan!** A greater plague cannot befall a man in this life than to sin and not to blush!

[5.] That repentance which accompanies salvation, comprehends **LOATHING and ABHORRING of sin, and of ourselves for sin**, as well as shame and blushing for sin, Job 42 6; Ezek 16 61-63; Amos 5 15; Ezek 20 43, "You will remember your conduct and all the actions by which you have defiled yourselves, and *you will loathe yourselves for all the evil you have done.*" The sincere penitent loathes his sins, and be loathes himself also because of his sins. He cries out, "Oh these wanton eyes! Oh these wicked hands! Oh this deceitful tongue! Oh this crooked will! Oh this corrupt heart! Oh how do I loathe my sins, how do I loathe myself, how do I loathe *sinful* self; and how do I loathe my *natural* self, because of sinful self! My sins are a burden to me, and they make me a burden to myself; my sins are an abhorring to me, and they make me abhor myself in dust and ashes!" A true penitent has not only low thoughts of himself—but loathsome thoughts of himself.

It is very observable that those brave creatures, the eagle and the lion, were not offered in sacrifice unto God—but the poor lamb and dove; to note that God regards not your brave, high, lofty spirits—but poor, meek, and contemptible spirits.

None can think or speak so vilely of a Christian—as he thinks and speaks so vilely of himself. "Behold, I am vile!" Job 40 4. "Those who escape will remember me--how I have been grieved by their adulterous hearts, (as the heart of a husband is at the adulterous behavior of his wife), which have turned away from me, and by their eyes, which have lusted after their idols. They will loathe themselves for the evil they have done and for all their detestable practices." Ezekiel 6 9

If your repentance does not work you out with your sins, and your sins work you out of love with yourself—then your repentance is not that repentance which accompanies salvation. Some people can shed tears for nothing, some for anything; but a sound penitent sheds more tears for his sins than he does for his sufferings. And thus you see the particular things that that repentance that does accompany salvation does comprehend and include.

(6.) The sixth property. Sixthly, That repentance which accompanies salvation, has **these choice COMPANIONS attending of it.**

[1.] **FAITH**. Zech 12 10-11, "They shall *look* upon him whom they have pierced, and mourn," etc. Mourning and believing go together. So in Matt 4 17; Mark 1 14-15, "Now, after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand repent you, and believe the gospel."

[2.] **LOVE TO CHRIST** does always accompany that repentance which accompanies salvation, as you may see in Mary Magdalene, Luke 7.

[3.] A **FILIAL FEAR OF OFFENDING GOD**, and a holy care to honor God, does always accompany that repentance which accompanies salvation 2 Cor 7 10, "For godly sorrow works repentance to salvation not to be repented of for, behold, this selfsame thing, that you sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yes, what clearing of yourselves, yes, what indignation, yes, what fear, yes, what vehement desire, yes, what zeal, yes, what revenge! In all things you have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter." Truly, repentance to life has all these lively companions attending of it; they are born together and will live together, until the penitent soul changes earth for heaven, grace for glory.

(7.) The seventh property. Seventhly and lastly, That repentance which accompanies salvation is **a CONTINUED act**, a repentance never to be repented of, 2 Cor 7 10. Repentance is a continual spring, where the waters of godly sorrow are always flowing. A sound penitent is still a-turning nearer and nearer to God; he is still a-turning further and further from sin. This makes the penitent soul to sigh and mourn that he can get no nearer to God, that he can get no further from sin, Rom 7. The work of repentance is *not* the work of an hour, a day, a year—but the continual work of this life. A sincere penitent makes as much conscience of repenting daily, as he does of believing daily; and he can as easily content himself with one act of faith, or love, or joy, as he can content himself with one act of repentance "My sins are ever before me," says David, Psalm 51 3. Repentance is the fair daughter of a foul mother. Repentance is a fruitful womb. Oh, then, what then remains, but in our whole life to lament the sins of our whole life?

"Next to my being kept from sin, I count it the greatest mercy in the world to be still a-mourning over sin," says the penitent soul. The penitent soul never ceases repenting until he ceases living. He goes to heaven with the joyful tears of repentance in his eyes. He knows that his whole life is but a day of sowing tears, that he may at last reap everlasting joys. That repentance which accompanies salvation is a final forsaking of sin. It is a bidding sin an everlasting adieu; it is a taking an eternal farewell of sin; a never turning to folly more "What have I to do any more with idols?" says Ephraim, Hos 14 8. "I have tasted of the bitterness that is in sin; I have tasted of the sweetness of divine mercy in pardoning of sin; therefore, away, sin! I will never have to do with you more! You have robbed Christ of his service, and me of my comfort and crown. Away, away, sin! you shall never more be courted nor countenanced by me!"

That man who only puts off his sins in the day of adversity, as he does his garments at night when he goes to bed, with an intent to put them on again in the morning of prosperity, never yet truly repented he is a dog that returns to its vomit again; he is a swine that returns to its wallowing in the mire. Such a dog was Judas; such a swine was Demas.

It is an extraordinary vanity in some men to lay aside their sins before solemn duties—but with a purpose to return to them again, as the serpent lays aside his poison when he goes to drink, and when he has drunk, he returns to it again, as they fable it. It is sad when men say to their lusts, as Abraham said to his servants, "Abide here, and I will go and worship, and return again to you," Gen 22 5. Truly, such souls are far off from that repentance which accompanies salvation, for that makes a final and everlasting separation between sin and the soul. It makes such a divorce between sin and the soul, and puts them so far asunder, that all the world can never bring them to meet as two lovers together. The penitent soul looks upon sin and deals with sin, not as a friend—but as an enemy. It deals with sin as Amnon dealt with Tamar 2 Sam 13 15, "After this, Amnon hated Tamar with such intensity that the hatred he hated her with was greater than the love he had loved her with. 'Get out of here!' he said." Just thus does the penitent soul carry itself towards sin.

And thus you see what **repentance** that is, which accompanies salvation.

IV. The fourth thing I am to show is, what **OBEDIENCE** that is, which accompanies salvation. That obedience does accompany salvation, I have formerly proved. Now what this obedience is, which accompanies salvation, I shall show you in these following particulars

[1.] The first property. That obedience which accompanies salvation is **CORDIAL** and **HEARTY**. The heart, the inward man, does answer and echo to the word and will of God. The believer knows that no obedience but hearty obedience, is acceptable to Christ. He knows that nothing takes Christ's heart—but what comes from the believer's heart. 'Christ was hearty in his obedience for me,' says the believer; 'and shall not I be hearty in my obedience to him?' Christ will lay his hand of love, his hand of acceptance—upon no obedience but what flows from the heart. Rom 6 17, "You have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you." So in Rom 7 25, "So then with the mind, I myself serve the law of God." My heart, says Paul, is in my obedience.

So in Rom 1 9, "God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son." Many serve God with their bodies—but I serve him with my spirit; many serve him with the outward man—but I serve him with my inward man. Ezek 36 26-27; Isa 29 13; Matt 15 7-9. The heart is the presence-chamber of the King of heaven, and that upon which his eye, his hand, his heart, is most set. "My son, give me your heart, and let your eyes observe my ways." Proverbs 23 26.

God has written his law in believers' hearts, and therefore they cannot but obey it from the heart "I delight to do your will, O my God." How so? Why, "your law is within my heart," or, in the midst of my affections, as the Hebrew has it, Psalm 40 8. The heart within echoes and answers to the commandments without, as a book written answers to his mind, who writes it; as face answers to face; as the impression on the wax answers to the character engraved on the seal. The scribes and Pharisees were much in the outward obedience of the law—but their hearts were not in their obedience; and therefore all they did signified nothing in the account of Christ, who only accepts outward actions as they flow from the heart and affections. Their souls were not in their services, and therefore all their services were lost services. They were very glorious in their outward profession—but their hearts were as filthy sepulchers. Their outsides shined as the sun—but their insides were as black as hell, Matt 23. They were like the Egyptians' temples—beautiful without, but filthy within. Well! remember this No action, no service, is accepted in heaven—but that which is sealed up with integrity of heart. God will not be put off with the *shell*, when we give the devil the *kernel*.

(2.) The second property. That obedience which accompanies salvation is **UNIVERSAL** as well as cordial. The soul falls in with every part and point of God's will, so far as he knows it, without prejudice or partiality, without tilting the balance on one side or another. A soul sincerely obedient, will not pick and choose what commands to obey and what to reject, as hypocrites do; he has an eye to see, an ear to hear, and a heart to obey the first table as well as the second, and the second table as well as the first; he does not adhere to the first and neglect the second, as hypocrites do; neither does he adhere to the second and despise the first, as profane men do; he obeys not out of choice, but out of conscience Psalm 119 6, "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all your commandments." He does not pick and choose. He obeys all, in respect of his sincere purpose, desire, and endeavor; and this God accepts in Christ for perfect and complete obedience, etc.

Look! as faith never singles out his object—but lays hold on every object God holds forth for it to close with; faith does not choose this truth and reject that, it does not close with one and reject another. Faith does not say, 'I will trust God in this case, but not in that case; I will trust him for this mercy, but not for that mercy; I will trust him in this way, but not in that way.' Faith does not choose its object. Faith knows that he who has promised is powerful and faithful, and therefore faith closes with one object as well as another. So a true obedient soul does not single out the commands of God, as to obey one and rebel against another; it dares not, it cannot say, 'I will serve God in this command but not in that.' No! In an evangelical sense it obeys all Luke 1 5-6, "Zacharias and Elizabeth were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord *blameless*." That is, without complaint. They walked not only in commandments, but also in ordinances; not only in ordinances—but also in commandments. They were good souls, and good at both.

An obedient soul is like a crystal glass with a light in the midst, which shines forth through every part thereof. So that royal law that is written upon his heart shines forth into every parcel of his life; his outward works do echo to a law within.

A man sincerely obedient, lays such a charge upon his whole man, as Mary, the mother of Christ, did upon all the servants at the feast John 2 5, "Whatever the Lord says unto you—do it." Eyes, ears, hands, heart, lips, legs, body, and soul—-all seriously and affectionately observe whatever Jesus Christ says unto you, and do it.

So David does Psalm 119 34,69, "Give me understanding, and I shall keep your law; yes, I shall observe it with my whole heart." "The proud have forged a lie against me; but I will keep your precepts with my whole heart." The whole heart includes all the faculties of the soul and all the members of the body. Says David, I will put hand and heart, body and soul, all within me and all without me—to the keeping and observing of your precepts. Here is a soul, thorough in his obedience, he stands not halting nor halving of it, he knows the Lord loves to be served truly and totally, and therefore he obeys with an entire heart and a sincere spirit.

I have read of a very strange speech which dropped out of the mouth of Epictetus, a heathen "If it be your will," says he, "O Lord, command me what you will, send me where you will, I will not withdraw myself from anything which seems good to you." Ah! how will this heathen at last rise in judgment against all Sauls, Jehus, Judases, Demases, scribes, and pharisees—who are partial in their obedience, who while they yield obedience to some commands, live in the habitual breach of other commands! Truly, he who lives in the habitual breach of one command, shall at last be reputed by God guilty of the breach of every command, James 2 10, and God accordingly will in a way of justice proceed against him, Ezek 18 10-13.

It was the glory of Caleb and Joshua, that they followed the Lord fully—in one thing, as well as another, Num 14 24. So Cornelius "We are present before God, to hear whatever shall be commanded us by God," Acts 10 33. He does not pick and choose. So in Acts 13 22, "have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My heart, who will carry out all My will;" or rather as it is in the Greek, "he shall fulfill all my will*s*," to note the universality and sincerity of his obedience. He minds not only general duties of religion—but also particular duties; as a magistrate, as a minister, as a father, as a master, as a son, as a servant.

A sincere heart loves all commands of God, and prizes all commands of God, and sees a divine image stamped upon all the commands of God; and therefore the main bent and disposition of his soul, is to obey all, to subject to all. God commands universal obedience, Josh 1 8; Deut 5 29; Ezek 18. The promise of reward is made over to universal obedience, Psalm 19 11; Josh 1 8. Universal obedience is a jewel that all will wish for, or rejoice in, at the day of death and the day of judgement; and the remembrance of these things, with others of the like nature, provokes all upright souls to be impartial, to be universal in their obedience.

[3.] The third property. That obedience which accompanies salvation **springs from inward spiritual causes, and from holy and heavenly motives**. It flows from **faith**. Hence it is called "the obedience of faith," Rom 16 26. So in 1 Tim 1 5, "The goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith." Faith draws down that divine virtue and power into the soul, which makes it lively and active, abundant and constant, in the work and way of the Lord.

And as faith, so **love**, puts the soul forward in ways of obedience. John 14 21,23, "If any man loves me, he will keep my commandments." So Psalm 119 48, "My hands also will I lift up to your commandments, which I have loved." Divine love is said to be the *fulfilling of the commandments*, because it puts the soul upon keeping them. Divine love makes every weight light, every yoke easy, every command joyous. It knows no difficulties, it facilitates obedience, it divinely constrains the soul to obey, to walk, to run the ways of God's commands. Where love is, the soul says of every command, "it is a good saying." But where love is lacking, the man cries out, "it is a hard saying; who can bear it?"

And as sound obedience springs from faith and love, so it flows from a **filial fear of God** Psalm 119 161, "My heart stands in awe of your word." So Heb 11 7, "By faith Noah, after being warned about what was not yet seen, *in reverence* built an ark to deliver his family." Ah! but hypocrites and temporary professors are not carried forth in their obedience from such precious and glorious principles, and therefore it is that God casts all their services as dung in their faces, Isa 1 11.

And as that obedience which accompanies salvation flows from inward spiritual principles, so **it flows from holy and heavenly motives**, as from the tastes of divine love, and the sweetness and excellency of communion with God, and the choice and precious discoveries which the soul in ways of obedience has had of the beauty and glory of God, Isa 64 5. The sweet looks, the heavenly words, the glorious kisses, the holy embraces, which the obedient soul has had, makes it freely and fully obedient to the word and will of God.

Ah! but all the motives which move hypocrites and carnal professors to obedience, are only external and carnal—as the eye of the creature, the ear of the creature, the applause of the creature, the rewards of the creature; either the love of the loaves, or the gain of money, or the desire of ambition, Hos 7 14. Sometimes they are moved to obedience from the fear of the creature, and sometimes from the desire for the creature, and sometimes from the example of the creature, and sometimes from vows made to the creature. Sometimes the frowns of God, the displeasure of God, the rod of God—moves them to obedience, Hos 5 15; Psalm 78 34. Sometimes the quieting and stilling of conscience, the stopping of the mouth of conscience, and the disarming of conscience of all her whipping, racking, wounding, condemning, terrifying, and torturing power—puts them upon some ways of obedience. Their obedience always flows from some low, base, carnal, corrupt consideration or other.

Oh! but that obedience which accompanies salvation does always flow, as you see, from inward and spiritual *causes*, and from holy and heavenly *motives*.

[4.] The fourth property. That obedience which accompanies salvation is **a ready, free, willing, and cheerful obedience**.

(1.) It is **READY** obedience. Psalm 27 8, "When you said, Seek my face, my heart said unto you, Your face, Lord, will I seek." Psalm 119 60, "I made haste, and delayed not to keep your commandments." Psalm 18 44, "As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me."

I have read of one who readily fetched water nearly two miles every day for a whole year—to pour upon a dry stick, upon the bare command of a superior, when no reason could be given for the thing. Oh how ready, then, does grace make the soul to obey those divine commands, which are backed with the highest, strongest, and choicest arguments.

(2.) As that obedience which accompanies salvation is ready obedience, so it is **FREE** and **WILLING** obedience. Acts 21 13, "Then Paul replied—What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." The beamings out of divine love and glory make gracious souls "willing in the day of his power," Psalm 110 3. Those divine principles which are in them make them willingly obey, without compulsion. So 2 Cor 8 3. The Macedonians were willingly obedient, or, as the Greek has it, they were volunteers not only to their power—but beyond their power.

All the motions and actings of **Christ** towards his people, for his people, and in his people—are free. He loves them freely, he pardons them freely, he intercedes for them freely, he acts them freely, and he saves them freely. And so they move and act towards Christ freely; they hear, they pray, they wait, they weep, they work, they watch freely and willingly. That Spirit of grace and holiness which is in them, makes them volunteers in all pious duties and services. [1 Chron 29 6-18; 1 Tim 6 18; 1 Thess 2 8]

It is reported of Socrates, that when the tyrant threatened death unto him, he answered, "He was willing." "No then," said the tyrant, "you shall live against your will." He answered again, "No, whatever you do with me, it shall be my will." If mere human nature, a little raised and refined, will enable a man to do this, will not grace, will not union and communion with Christ, enable a man to do as much, yes, infinitely more? A saint at worst is obedient, either with a *willing will*, or an *unwilling will*; like the merchant who is *unwillingly willing* to throw his goods overboard into the tempestuous sea, to save his life.

(3.) As that obedience which accompanies salvation is free and willing obedience, so it is **CHEERFUL** and **DELIGHTFUL** obedience. It is a believer's food and drink, it is his joy and crown, it is a pleasure, a paradise to his soul—to be still obeying his Father's will, to be still found about his Father's business Psalm 40 8, "I delight to do your will, O my God; yes, your law is in my heart." As the sun rejoices to run his race, so do the saints rejoice to run the race of obedience. God's work is wages, yes, it is better than wages; therefore they cannot but delight in it. Not only *for* keeping—but also *in* keeping of his commands, there is great reward Psalm 112 1, "Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who delights greatly in his commandments;" that is, in the studying and obeying of his commandments. Psalm 119 16, "I will delight myself in your statutes; I will not forget your word." Psalm 119 35, "Make me to go in the path of your commandments, for therein do I delight." Psalm 119 47, "And I will delight myself in your commandments, which I have loved." Psalm 119 143, "Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me, yet your commandments are my delight."

Divine commands are not grievous to a lover of Christ; for nothing is difficult, to him who loves. The love of Christ, the discoveries of Christ, the embraces of Christ, make a gracious soul studious and industrious to keep the commandments of Christ, in lip and life, in word and work, in head and heart, in book and bosom. Psalm 19 5,11, compared. A good work so much the more delights, by how much the more God, the chiefest and unchangeable good, is loved.

Thus you see that that obedience which accompanies salvation is ready, free, and cheerful obedience.

[5.] The fifth property. The obedience which accompanies salvation, is **RESOLUTE** obedience. Josh 24 15, "I and my household *will* serve the Lord." He is fully resolved upon it, come what may, come what can. In the face of all dangers, difficulties, impediments and discouragements, he will obey the Lord, he will follow the Lord. So those worthies, Heb 11 38, "of whom the world was not worthy," obeyed divine commands resolutely, resolvedly, in the face of all kinds of deaths and miseries. So Paul was "obedient to the heavenly vision," though bonds were awaiting him in every place, Acts 20 23. He is better at obeying than at disputing; "I conferred not," says he, "with flesh and blood," Gal 1 15-16.

So Peter and John, and the rest of the apostles, despite all threatenings and beatings—they obey the Lord, they keep fast and close to their Master's work. "Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God. For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard. And now, Lord, behold their threatenings and grant unto your servants, that with all boldness they may speak your word. And when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ." Acts 4 19-20,29, and Acts 5 40-42, compared.

Josephus reports of such resolute Christians, that in the face of all reproaches and difficulties, followed Christ to the cross. You may as well stop the sun from running his race, as you are able to hinder gracious souls from obeying divine commands, Psalm 44 13-14. As a wicked nature makes the wicked peremptory in their disobedience (Jer 44 15-17), so the divine nature makes gracious souls peremptory in their obedience.

Thus you see, no trials, no troubles, no terrors, no threats, no dangers, no deaths—could deter them from resolute obedience to divine precepts. It is not the fiery furnace, nor the lions' den, nor the bloody sword, nor the torturing rack, which can frighten gracious souls from obedience to their dearest Lord Psalm 119 106, "I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep your righteous judgments."

[6.] The sixth property. **The end of that obedience which accompanies salvation is, divine glory.** The eye of the obedient soul, in prayer and praises, in talking and walking, in giving and receiving, in living and doing, is divine glory Rom 14 7-8, "For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone. If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord." In all actions, the obedient soul most intends to glorify God. If Satan, the world, or the old man do at any time propound other ends to the soul, this great end, divine glory, out works all those ends; for this is most certain, that which a man makes his greatest and his highest end, will out work all other ends.

Look! as the light of the sun does extinguish and put out the light of the fire, so when a man makes the glory of God his end, that end will extinguish and put out all carnal, low, base ends. That man who makes himself the end of his actions, who makes honor, riches, applause, etc. the end of his actions—he must at last lie down in eternal sorrow, he must dwell in everlasting burnings. The man is as his end is; and his work is as his end is. If his end is bad—all is bad; if his end is good—all is good—and the man is happy forever, Isa 30 33, and Isa 33 14.

[7.] The seventh property. That obedience which accompanies salvation, is a **CONSTANT** obedience. If once you say, 'it is enough,' you are undone. Psalm 119 112, "I have inclined my heart to obey your statutes always, even to the end." The causes, springs, and motives of holy obedience are lasting and permanent, and therefore the obedience of a sound Christian is not like the morning dew, or a deceitful bow Psalm 44 17-19, "All this comes upon us; yet have we not forgotten you, neither have we dealt falsely in your covenant. Our heart is not turned back, neither have our steps declined from your ways; though you have sore broken us in the place of dragons, and covered us with the shadow of death."

The love of Christ, the promises of Christ, the presence of Christ, the discoveries of Christ, the example of Christ, and the recompense of reward held forth by Christ—makes a sound Christian hold on, and hold out, in ways of obedience, in the face of all dangers and deaths. Neither the hope of life, nor the fear of death, can make a sincere Christian either change his master or decline his work. History reports, that it has been the ancient custom of pious Christians under persecuting emperors, to meet, and to bind themselves forever to fly what was evil, and follow what was good, whatever it cost them. Phil 2 12, "Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only—but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." This was the Philippians' glory, that they were constant in their obedience; whether Paul was present or absent, they constantly minded their work.

Ah! but hypocrites and temporary professors are but passionate, transient, and inconstant in their obedience; they talk of obedience, they commend obedience, and now and then they step in the way of obedience—but they do not *walk* in a way of obedience, they are only constant in inconstancy Job 27 10, "Will the hypocrite delight himself in the Almighty? Will he *always* call upon God?" Or, as the Hebrew has it—will he in every time call upon God? Will he call upon God in time of prosperity, *and* in time of adversity? in time of health, *and* in time of sickness? in time of strength, *and* in time of weakness? in time of honor, *and* in time of disgrace? in time of liberty, *and* in time of durance? etc. The answer to be given in is, he will not always, he will not in every time call upon God. As a lame horse, when he is rested, will go well enough—but after a short time he halts downright; even so a hypocrite, though for a time he may go on fairly in a religious way, yet when he has attained his ends, he will halt-downright, and be able to go no further.

The monk in Melancthon lived strictly, and walked demurely, and looked humbly, so long as he was but a monk; but when, by his seeming extraordinary sanctity, he got to be made abbot, he grew intolerably proud and insolent, and being asked the reason of it, confessed that his former behavior and lowly looks was but to see if he could find the keys of the abbey. Ah! many unsound hearts there are, who will put on the cloak of religion, and speak like angels, and look like saints, to find the keys of preferment, and when they have found them, none prove more proud, base, and vain than they. Ah! but that obedience which accompanies salvation is constant and durable. A Christian in his course goes straight on heavenwards.

"The cows went *straight* up the road to Beth-shemesh. They stayed on that one highway, lowing as they went; they never strayed to the right or to the left." 1 Samuel 6 12. So gracious souls goes straight along the highway to heaven, which is the way of obedience; though they go lowing and weeping, yet they still go on, and turn not aside to the right hand nor to the left. If by the violence of temptation or corruption they are thrust out of the way at any time, they quickly return into it again. They may sometimes *step* out of the way of obedience—but they cannot *walk* out of the way of obedience. The honest traveler may step out of his way, but he soon returns into it again—and so does the honest soul, Psalm 119 3-4, "They do nothing wrong; they *walk* in his ways. You have laid down precepts that are to be *fully* obeyed."

(8.) The eighth property, and lastly. **PASSIVE** obedience accompanies salvation as well as active. 2 Tim 3 12; 2 Tim 2 12, "Everyone that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution," from tongue or pen, from hand or heart. "If we suffer with him, we shall reign with him," Rom 9 17-18. There is no passing into paradise but under the flaming sword. "Through many afflictions we must enter into the kingdom of heaven," Acts 14 22. A sincere heart is as willing to obey Christ passively as actively Acts 21 13, "I am ready, not to be bound only—but also to die at Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus." I am willing, says Paul, to lose my comforts for Christ, I am ready to endure any dolours for Christ, I am willing to lose the creature, and to leave the creature for Christ. Friends may have the *milk* of a believer's love—but Christ has the *cream*.

So Paul, Phil 3 8, speaks of himself as having been like one in a sea-tempest, that had cast out all his precious wares and goods for Christ's sake "for whom," says he, "I have suffered the loss of all." So must we, in stormy times, cast all overboard for Christ, and swim to an immortal crown—through sorrows, blood, and death. But because I have in this treatise spoken at large of the sufferings of the saints, I shall say no more of it in this place; and thus you see what that obedience is, which accompanies salvation.

V. The fifth thing that I am to show you is, what **LOVE** that is, which accompanies salvation. That love *does* accompany salvation I have formerly showed you; but now I shall show you what that love is, which accompanies salvation; and that I shall do in these following particulars. I shall not speak of the firstness, freeness, fullness, sweetness, and greatness of Christ's love to us—but of *that love of ours* which accompanies salvation, concerning which I shall say thus

(1.) The first property. First, That love which accompanies salvation is **a SUPERLATIVE love, a TRANSCENDENT love**. True love to Christ does wonderfully transcend and surpass the love of all relations; the love of father, mother, wife, child, brother, sister, yes, life itself, Matt 10 37-38; Luke 14 26-27,34. Psalm 73 25, "Whom have I in heaven but you? And there are none upon earth that I desire besides you." Christ will be all—or nothing at all. There are the greatest causes of love, there are the highest causes of love, there are all the causes of love—to be found in Christ. In angels and men there are only some particular causes of love; all causes of love are eminently and only to be found in Christ Col 1 19, "It pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell," There is not only fullness—but an overflowing of fullness in Jesus Christ. All wisdom, all knowledge, all light, all life, all love, all goodness, all sweetness, all blessedness, all joys, all delights, all pleasures, all beauties, all beatitudes, all excellencies, all glories—are in Christ, Col 2 9.

The true lovers of Christ know that Christ loves as a head, as a king, as a father, as a husband, as a brother, as a kinsman, as a friend—and this raises up a believer to love Christ with a transcendent love. They know that *Christ loves them more than they love themselves*; yes, that he loves them above his very life, John 10 1,17-18.

Love is the loadstone of love. **Certainly they do not love Christ, who love anything more than Christ.** Christ is amiable and lovely; he is spotless and matchless in his names, in his natures, in his offices, in his graces, in his gifts, in his manifestations, in his appearances, in his ordinances. He is full of dignity, majesty, mercy, and glory. "He is white and ruddy, the chief among ten thousand." His mouth is sweetness; yes, he is full of delights, Song 5 10-16. Christ is wholly delectable; he is altogether desirable from top to toe; he is amiable and lovely, he is glorious and excellent. Christ is lovely, Christ is very lovely, Christ is most lovely, Christ is always lovely, Christ is altogether lovely. He is "the express image of God;" he is "the brightness of his Father's glory." If one could but anatomize him, it shall find in him all high perfections and supereminent excellencies. And upon these and such like considerations the saints are led forth to love Jesus Christ with a most transcendent love.

(2.) The second property. Secondly, That love which accompanies salvation is **OBEDIENTIAL love, it is OPERATIVE and WORKING love**. The love of Christ makes a man subject to the commands of Christ "If any man loves me, he will keep my commandments;" and again, "He who has my commandments, and keeps them, he it is that loves me," John 14 21. Divine love is very operative Psalm 116 1, "I love the Lord," says David. Well, but how does this love work? Why, says he, "I will walk in his ways, I will pay my vows, I will take the cup of salvation, I will offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and I will call upon the name of the Lord as long as I live," Psalm 116 2,9,13-14,17.

I have read a story of an elephant, who being fallen down, and unable to help himself, or get up again, by reason of the inflexibleness of his legs, a forester coming by, helped him up; wherewith the elephant, by the very instinct of nature, was so affected, that he followed this man, and would do anything for him, and never left him until his dying day. Ah, sirs, will not divine love make a man do more?

Divine love is not stinted nor limited to one sort of duty—but freely obeys all. He who loves, flies; he who loves, runs; he who loves, believes; he who loves, rejoices; he who loves, mourns; he who loves, gives; he who loves, lends; he who loves, bears; he who loves, waits; he who loves, hopes, etc.

Heb 6 10, "For God is not unrighteous, to forget your work and *labor of love*." Love makes the soul laborious. That love which accompanies salvation is very active and operative. It is like the virtuous woman in the Proverbs, who set all her maidens to work. It is never quiet—but in doing the will of God. It will not allow any grace to sit idle in the soul. It will incite and put on all other graces to act and operate. Love sets **faith** upon drawing from Christ, and **patience** upon waiting on Christ, and **humility** upon submitting to Christ, and **godly sorrow** upon mourning over Christ, and **self-denial** upon forsaking of the nearest and dearest comforts for Christ, etc. As the sun makes the whole earth fertile, so does divine love make the soul fruitful in works of righteousness and holiness. He who loves cannot be idle nor barren.

Love makes the soul constant and abundant in well-doing 2 Cor 5 14, "The love of Christ constrains us." Love's property is to *do eternally*. It is an eternal, lasting principle, and actions will last as long as principles; its action is as abiding as itself. It urges us and puts us forward; it carries us on as men possessed with a vehemency of spirit, or as a ship which is driven with strong winds towards the desired haven. Natural love makes the child, the servant, the wife, obedient. Just so, does divine love make the soul better at obeying God, than at disputing with God. A soul who loves Christ will never cease to obey—until he ceases to be. That love which accompanies salvation is like the sun. The sun, you know, casts his beams upward and downward, to the east and to the west, to the north and to the south. Just so, the love of a saint ascends to God above, and descends to men on earth; to our friends on the right hand, to our enemies on the left hand; to those who are in a state of grace, and to those who are in a state of nature. Divine love will still be a-working one way or another.

(3.) The third property. That love which accompanies salvation is a **SINCERE and INCORRUPT love** Eph 6 24, "Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen." That is, who love Christ in sincerity, and not in pretense and hypocritically. The true bred Christian, loves Christ for Christ; he loves Christ for that internal and eternal worth that is in him; he loves him for his incomparable excellency and beauty, for that transcendent sweetness, loveliness, holiness, and goodness that is in him. He is not of those who love Christ for loaves, neither will he with Judas kiss Christ and betray him; nor yet will he with those in the Gospel cry out, "Hosanna, Hosanna!" one day, and "Crucify him, crucify him!" the next, Matt 21 9,15.

They love Christ with a virgin love Song 1 3, "The virgins love you." That is, they love you in much sincerity, purity, and integrity; they love you for that fragrant savor, for that natural sweetness, for that incomparable goodness which is in you. So Song 1 4, "The upright love you," or "They love you in uprightnesses," that is, most uprightly, most entirely, most sincerely, and not as hypocrites, who love you for base, carnal respects; who love you in compliment—but not in realities; who love you in word and tongue—but despise you in heart and life; who love the gift more than the giver.

That love which accompanies salvation is real and cordial love, it is sincere and upright love, it makes the soul love Christ, the giver, more than the gift; it makes the soul love the gift for the giver's sake; it will make the soul to love the giver without his gifts. And truly, they shall not be long without good gifts from Christ, who love Christ more than his gifts. Judas was kin to the bag, he was not kin to Christ. Christ hath many such kinsmen. A Christian cares not for anything that has not something of Christ in it. He says with him, 'without Christ, all plenty is scarcity.' Austin prays 'Lord, whatever you have given, take all away; only, only give me yourself.' God gave him himself, and cast in many other mercies into the bargain.

Vespasian commanded a liberal gift should be given to a woman who came and professed that she was in love with him. Ah, Christians, shall Vespasian, an heathen prince, reward her liberally, who loved his person? and will not the Lord Jesus much more reward them with his choicest gifts, who love him more than his gifts? Surely Christ will not be worse than a heathen, he will not act below a heathen! He shall never be a loser, who loves Christ for that spiritual sweetness and loveliness which is in Christ; Christ will not live long in that man's debts.

(4.) The fourth property. That love which accompanies salvation is a **VEHEMENT love, an ARDENT love**. It is a spark of heavenly fire, and it puts all the affections into a holy flame Song 1 7, "Tell me, O you whom my soul loves, where you feed?" etc. This amiable, amorous, passionate compellation, "O you whom my soul loves," speaks the spouse's love to be hot and burning towards Christ. So in Isa 26 8-9, "The desire of our souls is towards you, and to the remembrance of your name. With my soul have I desired you in the night, yes, with my spirit within me, will I seek you early." This affectionate, this passionate form of speech, "With my soul have I desired you," and that, "with my spirit within me will I seek you," does elegantly set forth the vehement and ardent love of the church to Christ.

Just so, does that pathetical exclamation of the church, "Oh, feed me with your love—your 'raisins' and your 'apples'—for I am utterly lovesick!" Song 2 5. The betrothed virgin cannot show more strong and vehement love to her beloved, than by being utterly lovesick, when she meets him, when she enjoys him. It was so here with the spouse of Christ. The love of Christ to believers, is a vehement love, an ardent love—witness his leaving his Father's bosom, his putting upon us his royal robes, his bleeding, his dying, etc. And it does naturally beget vehement and ardent love in all the beloved of God. Where Christ loves, he always begets one who loves like himself. That love which is flat, lukewarm, or cold, will leave a man to freeze on this side heaven, it will fit him for the warmest place in hell. Dives' love was very cold, and he found the flames of hell to be very hot. That love which accompanies salvation is full of heat and fire.

(5.) The fifth property. That love which accompanies salvation is **LASTING love, it is PERMANENT love**. The objects of it are lasting, the springs and causes of it are lasting, the nature of it is lasting. The primitive Christians "did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death," Rev 12 11. Persecutors have taken away the martyrs' *lives* for Christ—but could never destroy their *love* to Christ Eph 6 24, "Grace be with all those who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity," or, "in incorruption," as the Greek word signifies; whereby the apostle gives us to understand, that true love to Christ is not liable to corruption, putrefaction, or decay—but is constant and permanent, lasting, yes, everlasting. 'Love never fails,' but shall last forever in heaven; in which respect the apostle lifts it up above faith, hope, and all the common gifts of the Spirit.

That love which accompanies salvation is like the oil in the cruse and the meal in the barrel, which never ran out. It is like the apple-tree of Persia, that buds, blossoms, and bears fruit every month. It is like the lamp in the story, which never went out. It is like the asbestos stone, which neither burns in the fire, nor sinks in the water. Song 8 6-7, "Love is stronger than death. Many waters cannot quench love; neither can rivers drown it. If a man tried to buy love with everything he owned, his offer would be utterly despised." Love rides in her chariot of triumph over all calamities and miseries, and cries, 'Victory, victory!' Love will outlive all enemies, temptations, oppositions, afflictions, persecutions, dangers, and deaths. Love's motto is 'I yield to none.' Love is like the sun; the sun beginning to ascend in his circle, never goes back until he comes to the highest degree thereof. True love abhors apostasy, it ascends to more perfection, and ceases not until, like Elijah's fiery chariot, it has carried the soul to heaven.

Many men's love to Christ is like the morning dew; it is like Jonah's gourd, which came up in a night and vanished in a night. But that love which accompanies salvation is like Ruth's love, a lasting and an abiding love, Ruth 1. It is love that will bed and board with the soul, that will lie down and rise up with the soul, that will go to the fire, to the prison, to the grave, to heaven with the soul.

(6.) The sixth property. Sixthly, that love which accompanies salvation, is **an ABOUNDING love, an INCREASING love**. This is clear throughout the whole book of Canticles, as all may run and read. Love in a saint, is like the waters in Noah's time, which rose higher and higher. The very nature of true love is to abound and rise higher and higher. Phil 1 9, "This I pray, that *your love may abound yet more and more*."

The longer a believer lives, the more eminent and excellent causes of love he sees in Christ. Christ discovers himself gradually to the soul. Now a believer's love to Christ rises answerable to the causes of love, which he sees in Christ. The more light the more love. Knowledge and love, like the water and the ice, beget each other. Man loves Christ by knowing—and knows Christ by loving. Man's love is answerable to his knowledge. He cannot love much—who knows but little of Christ; he cannot love little—who knows much of Christ. As a man rises higher and higher in his apprehensions of Christ—so he cannot but rise higher and higher in his affections to Christ.

Again, the daily mercies and experiences that they have—of the love of Christ, of the care of Christ, of the affections and compassion of Christ, working more and more towards them, cannot but raise their affections more and more to him. As fire is increased by adding of fuel unto it—so is our love to Christ increased, upon fresh and new manifestations of his great love toward us. As the husband abounds in his love to his wife—so the wife rises in her love to her husband. The more love the father manifests to the child—the more the sincere child rises in his affections to him. So the more love the Lord Jesus shows to us—the more he is beloved by us. Christ showed much love to Mary Magdalene—and this raises in her much love to Christ. "She loved much, for much was forgiven her," Luke 7 47-48.

As the Israelites, Num 33 29, removed their tents from Mithcah to Hashmonah, from *sweetness* to *swiftness*, as the words import—so the sweetness of divine love manifested to the soul makes the soul more sweet, swift, and high in the exercise and actings of love towards Christ. A soul under special manifestations of love, weeps that it can love Christ no more. Mr. Welch, a Suffolk minister, weeping at table, and being asked the reason of it, answered, it was because he could love Christ no more. The true lovers of Christ can never rise high enough in their love to Christ; they count a little love to be no love; great love to be but little love; strong love to be but weak love; and the highest love to be infinitely below the worth of Christ, the beauty and glory of Christ, the fullness, sweetness, and goodness of Christ. Their greatest misery in this life is, that they love Christ so little, though they are so much beloved by him.

(7.) The seventh property, and lastly, that love which accompanies salvation, is **OPEN love, it is MANIFEST love**; it is love which cannot be hidden, which cannot be covered and buried. It is like the sun, it will shine forth, and show itself to all the world. A man cannot love Christ—but he will show it in these, and such like things as follow

First, **Love to Christ makes the soul even ready to break, in longing after a further, clearer, and fuller enjoyment of Christ.** The voice of genuine love is, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly," Rev 22 20. "Come quickly, my love! Move like a swift gazelle or a young deer on the mountains of spices!" Song 8 14. "I desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which for me is best of all," Phil 1 23. It is a mercy, says Paul, for Christ to be with me—but it is a greater mercy for me to be with Christ. I desire to die, that I may see my Savior; I refuse to live, that I may live with my Redeemer.

Love desires and endeavors forever to be present, to converse with, to enjoy, to be closely and eternally united to its object, Christ. The longing of the espoused maid for the marriage day, of the traveler for his inn, of the mariner for his haven, of the captive for his ransom, etc., is not to be compared to the longings of the lovers of Christ, after a further and fuller enjoyment of Christ. Austin longed to see that head, which was crowned with thorns.

The lovers of Christ do well know—that God has reserved the best wine, the best things, until last; that until they are taken up into glory, their chains will not fall off; until then their glorious robes shall not be put on; until then all sorrow and tears shall not be wiped from their eyes; until then their joy will not be full, their comforts pure, their peace lasting, their graces perfect; and this makes them look and long after the enjoyment of the person of Christ.

It was a notable saying of one, "Let all the devils in hell," says he, "attack me; let disease decay my body; let sorrows oppress my mind; let pains consume my flesh; let heat scorch me, or cold freeze me, let all these, and whatever more can come, happen unto me—just so that I may enjoy my Savior."

Secondly, **Love to Christ shows itself by working the soul to abase itself, that Christ may be exalted**, to lessen itself to greaten Christ, to cloud itself that Christ alone may shine. Love cares not what it is, nor what it does—so that it may but advance the Lord Jesus; it makes the soul willing to be a footstool for Christ, to be anything, to be nothing, that Christ may be all in all. [Rev 4 10-11; John 3 26-81; Phil 3 7-8]

Thirdly, That love which accompanies salvation, sometimes shows itself by **working the soul to be cheerful and resolute, to be patient and constant in sufferings for Christ** 1 Cor 13 7, "Love endures all things." Love will not complain, love will not say that the burden is too great, the prison is too dark, the furnace is too hot, the chains are too heavy, the cup is too bitter, etc., Acts 21 13. A true lover of Christ can slight his life, out of love to Christ, as that blessed virgin in Basil, who, being condemned for Christianity to the fire, and having her estate and life offered her, if she would worship idols, cried, "Let money perish, and life vanish! Christ is better than all!" That love which accompanies salvation, makes a Christian free and forward in suffering anything that makes for the glory of Christ.

Fourthly, that love which accompanies salvation, shows itself by **working the soul to be pleased or displeased, as Christ is pleased or displeased.** A soul who loves Christ has his eye upon Christ—and that which makes Christ frown makes him frown, and what makes Christ smile makes him smile. Love is impatient of anything which may displease a beloved Christ.

Look what Harpalus once said, 'What pleases the king pleases me,' that says a true lover of Christ, 'What pleases Christ, that pleases me.' 'Holiness pleases Christ and holiness pleases me,' says a lover of Christ. 'It pleases Christ to overcome evil with good, to overcome hatred with love, enmity with kindness, pride with humility, passion with meekness, etc., and the same pleases me,' says a lover of Christ. 1 John 4 17, "As he is—so are we in this world." 'Our love reflects Christ's love, and our hatred reflects Christ's hatred; he loves all righteousness and hates all wickedness. Just so, do we,' say the lovers of Christ, Psalm 119 113,128,163.

It is said of Constantine's children, that they resembled their father to the life, that they put him wholly on. The true lovers of Christ resemble Christ to the life, and they put him wholly on. Hence it is that they are called Christ's body, 1 Cor 12 12.

Fifthly, True love to Christ shows itself sometimes by **working the lovers of Christ to expose themselves to suffering, to save Christ from suffering in his glory**; to venture the loss of their own crowns, to keep Christ's crown upon his head; to venture drowning, to save Christ's honor from sinking. Thus did the three children, Daniel, Moses, and other worthies of Hebrews 11.

I have read of a servant who dearly loved his master, and knowing that his master was hunted by his enemies, he put on his master's clothes, and was captured in place of his master, and suffered death for him.

Divine love will make a man do as much for Christ; it will make a man hang for Christ and burn for Christ Rev 12 11, "They did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death." Christ and his truth was dearer to them than their lives. They slighted, disdained, yes, despised their very lives, when they stood in competition with Christ and his glory, and chose rather to suffer the greatest misery, than that Christ should lose the least grain of his glory.

Sixthly, That love which accompanies salvation shows itself sometimes by working the lovers of Christ to **be affected and afflicted with the dishonors which are done to Christ** Psalm 119 136, "My eyes run down with rivers of tears, because men keep not your law," Jer 9 1-2. So Lot's soul was vexed, racked, and tortured with the filthy lives of the wicked Sodomites, 2 Pet 2 7-8. The turning of his own flesh, his wife, into a pillar of salt did not vex him—but their sins did rack his righteous soul. Psalm 69 9, "The reproaches of those who reproached you fell upon me." A woman is most wounded in her husband, so is a Christian in his Christ. Though Moses was as a mute child in his own cause, yet when the Israelites, by making and dancing about their golden calf, had wounded the honor and glory of God, he shows himself to be much affected and afflicted for the dishonor done to God.

The statue of Apollo is said to shed tears for the afflictions of the Grecians, though it could not help them. Just so, a true lover of Christ will shed tears for those dishonors which are done to Christ, though he knows not how to prevent them. It is between Christ and his lovers as it is between two lute strings that are tuned one to another; no sooner one is struck—but the other trembles. Just so, no sooner is Christ struck—but a Christian trembles, and no sooner is a Christian struck—but Christ trembles "Saul, Saul, why persecute you me?" Acts 9 4.

Though king Croesus' son was mute all his lifetime, yet when one was about to kill his father, the affection that he had for his father broke the bars of his speech, and he cried out, "Take heed of killing the king!" You know how to apply it.

Seventhly, That love which accompanies salvation does show itself by working the soul **to observe with a curious critical eye Christ's countenance and demeanor**, and by causing the soul to be sad or cheerful, as Christ's demeanor and countenance is towards the soul. When Christ looks sad—then the soul is sad, as Peter was Christ cast a sad look upon him—and that made Peter's heart sad; he went forth and wept bitterly. And when Christ looks sweetly, and speaks kindly, and acts lovingly, then to be cheerful and joyful, as the church was in Song 3 4, "It was but a little that I passed from them—but I found him whom my soul loves I held him, and would not let him go." So the church in Isa 61 10, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels."

A true lover of Christ has still his eye upon Christ, and as his countenance stands, so is he glad or sad, cheerful or sorrowful. Tigranes, coming to redeem his wife, who was taken prisoner by King Cyrus, was asked what ransom he would give for his wife. He answered that he would redeem her liberty with his own life. Having prevailed for her liberty, Tigranes asked his wife what she thought of King Cyrus. "Truly," said she, "I cannot tell, for I did not so much as look on him or see him." "Whom then," said he, wondering, "did you look upon?" "Whom should I look upon," said she, "but him who would have redeemed my liberty with the loss of his own life." So a Christian, a true lover of Christ, esteems nothing worth a looking upon, but Christ—who has redeemed him with his own blood.

Eighthly, That love which accompanies salvation, **reaches forth a hand of kindness to those who bear the image of Christ**. "He who loves not his brother, whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?" Jerome professed how much he loved Christ in Augustine, and Augustine in Christ.

Now, because many mistake in their love to the saints, and the consequences which follow that mistake are very dangerous and pernicious to the souls of men, I shall therefore briefly hint to you the **PROPERTIES of that love to the saints,** which accompanies salvation. And,

(1.) The first property. The first is this, **true love to the saints is SPIRITUAL**; it is a love for the image of God, which is stamped upon the soul. Col 1 8, "Epaphras has declared to us your love in the Spirit." A soul who truly loves, loves the Father for his own sake, and the children for the Father's sake. Many there are, who love Christians for their goods, not for their good; they love them for the money that is in their purse—but not for the grace that is in their hearts. Love to the saints, for the image of God stamped upon them—is a flower which grows not in nature's garden. No man can love grace in another man's heart—but he who has grace in his own. Men do not more naturally love their parents, and love their children, and love themselves—than they do naturally hate the image of God upon his people and ways. Remember, wicked men, God himself is wronged by the injury which is done to his image. The contempt and despite is done to the king himself, which is done to his image or coin.

True love is for what of the divine nature, for what of Christ and grace—shines in a man. It is one thing to love a godly man, and another thing to love him for godliness. Many love godly men as they are kind, or influential, or learned, or of a sweet nature—but all this is but natural love; but to love them because they are spiritually lovely, because they are "all glorious within, and their raiment is of embroidered gold," Psalm 45 13, is to love them as becomes saints; it is to love them at so high and noble a rate that no hypocrite in the world can reach to it. The wasps fly about the tradesman's shop, not out of love to him—but for the honey and the fruit which is there. This age is full of such wasps.

(2.) The second property. Secondly, **True love to the saints is UNIVERSAL**—to one Christian as well as another, to all as well as any; to poor Lazarus as well as to rich Abraham; to a despised Job as well as to an admired David; to an afflicted Joseph as well as to a raised Jacob; to a despised disciple as well as to an exalted apostle. Phil 4 21, "Greet every saint," the poorest as well as the richest; the weakest as well as the strongest; the lowest as well as the highest. They have all the same Spirit, the same Jesus, the same faith; they are all fellow-members, fellow-travelers, fellow-soldiers, fellow-citizens, fellow-heirs, and therefore must they all be loved with a sincere and cordial love. It was the glory of the Ephesians and Colossians that their faith and love reached to *all* the saints; it was not narrow, and confined to some particulars—but it was universal. Eph 1 15; Col 1 4.

The apostle James soundly condemn that partial love which was among professors in his days, James 2 1-2. Not that the apostle does absolutely prohibit a civil differencing of men—but when the rich man's wealth is more regarded than the poor man's godliness, and when men so favor the rich, as to cast scorn, contempt, disgrace, and discouragement upon the godly poor; this is a sin for which God will visit the sons of pride. It is not not race or place—but grace, which truly sets forth a man.

Pompey told his Cornelia, "It is no praise for you to have loved Pompey the *Great*—but if you love Pompey the *Miserable*, you shall be a pattern for imitation to all posterity." I will leave you to apply it.

Romanus the martyr, who was born of noble parentage, entreated his persecutors that they would not favor him for his nobility "For it is not," said he, "the blood of my ancestors—but my Christian faith, which makes me noble."

Truly, he who loves one saint for the grace which is in him; for that holiness, that image of God, which is upon him—he cannot but fall in love with every saint who bears the lovely image of the Father upon him; he cannot but love a saint in rags, as well as a saint in royal robes; a saint upon the ash-heap, as well as a saint upon the throne. Usually the most ragged Christians are the richest Christians; they usually have most of heaven who have least of earth, James 2 5. The true diamond shines best in the dark.

Yet there is a love of familiarity, which we may lawfully show more to one godly man than to another. Thus Christ loved John more than the other disciples.

(3.) The third property. Thirdly, Our love to the saints is right, **when we love them and DELIGHT in them**, answerable to the spiritual causes of love that shine in them, as the more holy and gracious they are, the more we love them. Yet this must be granted—that grace in a rugged, unhewn nature, is like a gold ring on a leprous hand, or a diamond set in iron. As a gold ring is most pleasing, when it is on a neat clean hand, and as a diamond when it is set in a ring of gold. Just so, grace is most pleasing and taking to us in a sweet nature, and not so much when it is in a rugged, unhewn nature; the beauty and glory of it being clouded and darkened by a rugged nature.

Psalm 16 3, "As for the saints who are in the land, they are the glorious ones in whom is all my delight." This is most certain, if godliness is the reason why we love any, then the more any excel others in the love, spirit, power, and practice of godliness, the more we should love them. There are some who seem to love such godly men as are weak in their judgments, low in their principles, and dull in their practices; and yet look with a squint eye upon those who are more sound in their judgments, more high in their principles, and more holy in their practices, which doubtless speaks out more hypocrisy than sincerity. Truly, he has either no grace, or but a little grace, who does not love most where the spiritual causes of love do most shine and appear. Surely those Christians are under a very great distemper of spirit, who envy those gifts and graces of God in others, which outshine their own. John's disciples muttered and murmured, because Christ had more followers and admirers than John; and *John's disciples are not all dead*, yes, they seem to have a new resurrection in these days.

Well, as the fairest *day* has its clouds, the finest *linen* its spots, the richest *jewels* their flaws, the sweetest *fruits* their worms—so when precious Christians are under temptations, they may, and too often do envy and repine at those excellent graces, abilities, and excellencies which cloud, darken, and outshine their own. **The best of men are too full of pride and self-love**, and that makes them sometimes cast dirt and disgrace upon that excellency that they themselves lack.

There is no greater argument that our grace is true, and that we do love others for grace's sake, than our loving them best who have most grace, though they have least of worldly goods. A pearl is rich, if found on a ash-heap, though it may glitter more when set in a ring of gold. Just so, many a poor believer is rich and glorious in the eye of Christ, and should be so in ours, though, like Job, he sits upon a ash-heap, though to the world he may seem to glisten most when adorned with riches, honor, and outward pomp, etc.

(4.) The fourth property. Fourthly, **True love to saints is CONSTANT** 1 Cor 13 8, "Love never fails." It continues forever in heaven. That love is never true, which is not constant. Heb 13 1, "Let brotherly love continue." True love is constant in prosperity and adversity, in storms and calms, in health and sickness, in presence and in absence. "A friend," says the wise man, "loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity," Prov 17 17. Prosperity *makes* friends, and adversity will *try* friends. A true friend is neither known in prosperity, nor hidden in adversity. Consalvus, a Spanish bishop and inquisitor, wondered how the Christians had that commandment, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' so indelibly printed on their hearts, that no torture could blot it out, and make them confess and betray one another, or cease from loving one another.

True love is like to that of Ruth's to Naomi, and that of Jonathan's to David—permanent and constant. Many there are whose love to the saints is like Job's brooks, Job 6 15-16, which in winter when we have no need, overflows with offers of service and shows of love; but when the season is hot and dry, and the poor thirsty traveler stands in most need of water to refresh him, then the brooks are quite dried up. They are like the swallow that will stay by you in the *summer*—but fly from you in the *winter*.

It is observed by Josephus of the Samaritans, that whenever the Jews' affairs prospered, they would be their friends, and profess much love to them; but if the Jews were in trouble, and needed their assistance, then they would not own them, nor have anything to do with them. This age is full of such Samaritans, yet, such as truly love will always love. In the primitive times it was very much taken notice of by the very heathen, that in the depth of misery, when fathers and mothers forsook their children, Christians, otherwise strangers, stuck close to one another; their love of piety, and one of another, proved firmer than that of nature. "They seem to take away the sun out of the world," said the orator, "who takes away friendship from the life of men," and we do not more need fire and water than constant friendship.

Ninthly, That love which accompanies salvation, does **manifest and show itself by working the soul to be quiet and still under Christ's rebukes**. Peter sits down quiet under a threefold reproof, "Lord, you know all things, you know that I love you," John 21 16-18. So Eli, "It is the Lord, let him do what seems good in his own eyes," 1 Sam 3 18. And Aaron "held his peace," when he saw the flames about his sons' ears, Lev 10 3. So David, "I was silent, I opened not my mouth, because you did it," Psalm 39 9. The lovers of Christ are like the Scythian, who went naked in the snow; and when Alexander wondered how he could endure it, he answered, "I am all forehead." Oh the lovers of Christ are all *forehead*, to bear the rebukes of the Lord Jesus.

The lovers of Christ know that all his rebukes are from love; "whom he loves, he rebukes," Rev 3 19; they can see smiles through Christ's frowns; they know, that to argue that Christ hates them because he rebukes them, is the devil's logic; they know, that all the rebukes of Christ are in order to their spiritual and eternal good, and that quiets them; they know, that all the rebukes of Christ are but forerunners of some glorious manifestations of greater love to their souls. Psalm 71 20-21, "You, who have showed me great and sore troubles, shall quicken me again, and shall bring me up again from the depths of the earth. You shall increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side." They know that **it is the greatest judgment in the world, to go on freely in a way of sin without rebukes**. "Ephraim is joined to idols—let him alone," Hos 4 17. And therefore they keep silence before the Lord, they lay one hand upon their mouths, and the other upon their hearts, and so sit mute before the holy one.

Tenthly, That love which accompanies salvation, shows itself by **working the heart to be affected and afflicted with the least dishonors that are done to Christ**. Love is sensitive of little things; it is as much afflicted with an idle word or with an impure dream, as lovers of Christ are with adultery or blasphemy. David did but cut off the tip of Saul's garment, and his heart smote him, 1 Sam 24 5; though he did it to convince Saul of his false jealousy, and his own innocency. Love will not allow of the least infirmity. Rom 7 15, "That which I do, I allow not." Love will make a man *aim* at angelic purity and perfect innocency; love will strive to be getting up to the top of Jacob's ladder; love can rest in nothing below perfection; love makes a man look more at what he should *be,* than at what he *is*; it makes a man strive as for life, to imitate the highest examples, and to write after the choicest copies. Love fears every approach of sin; it trembles at the appearance of sin; it does not, it cannot allow itself to do anything which looks like sin; it hates "the garment spotted with the flesh;" it shuns the *occasions of sin* as it shuns hell itself. This is the divine sensitivity of a Christian's love. Love says—it is better to die with hunger, than to eat that which is offered to idols. "The sin, and the coat of sin, is to be hated," says Ambrose.

Marcus Arethusius, out of his love to Christ and hatred of idolatry, would not give one halfpenny toward the building of an idol's temple, though he was punished with intolerable torments. Love knows that the least evils are contrary to the greatest good; they are contrary to the nature of Christ, the commands of Christ, the spirit of Christ, the grace of Christ, the glory of Christ, the blood of Christ. Love knows that little sins, if I may call any sin little, make way for greater sins—as little thieves unlock the door and make way for greater. Love knows that little sins multiplied, become great. As love knows that there is nothing lesser than a grain of sand—just so, love knows that there is nothing heavier than the sand of the sea, when multiplied.

Eleventhly, That love which accompanies salvation, will show itself by **keeping the doors of the heart shut against those treacherous lovers that would draw the heart from Christ**. Love is a *golden key* to let in Christ—and a *strong lock* to keep out others. Though many may knock at love's door, yet love will open to none but Christ Song 5 6, "I opened to my beloved;" and Song 8 7, "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be despised." When the world would buy his love, he cries out with Peter, "May your money perish with you!" Acts 8 20. Love makes a man look with a holy scorn and disdain upon all persons and things, which attempt either to force or flatter her out of her love and loyalty to her beloved. It is neither force nor fraud, it is neither promises nor threatenings, it is neither the cross nor the crown, the palace nor the prison, the rod nor the robe, the halter nor the golden chain—which will make love embrace a stranger in the room of Christ. 'Go,' says divine love, 'offer your gold and empty glories to others; your pleasures and your treasures to others; put on your lion's skin and frighten others; as for my part, I scorn and despise your golden offers, and I disdain and deride your rage and threats!' Love makes a man too noble, too high, too gallant, and too faithful, to open to any lover but Christ, to let any lie between the breasts but Christ Song 1 13, "A bundle of myrrh is my beloved unto me; he shall lie all night between my breasts."

When Basil was tempted with money and preferment, he answers, 'Give money which will last forever, and glory that may eternally flourish!' Love makes a man cry out when tempted, as that worthy convert did, 'I am not the man that I was; when my heart was void of divine love, I was as easily conquered as I was tempted. Oh but now he has shed abroad his love in my soul, I am not the man that I was, I had rather die than fall before a temptation.'

Twelfthly, That love which accompanies salvation, **shows itself by secret visits, by secret expressions of love**. A soul who truly loves Christ, loves to meet him in private, to meet him behind the door, Song 2 14, to meet him in the clefts of the rock, where no eye sees, nor any ear hears, nor any heart observes, Matt 6 6. Feigned love is much in commending and kissing Christ upon the stage; but sincere love is much in embracing and weeping over Christ in a closet. The Pharisee loved to stand praying in the marketplace and in the temple, Matt 6 2; but the spouse was at it in the villages, Song 7 11. Souls who truly love Christ, are much in secret visits, in secret prayer, in secret sighing, in secret groaning, in secret mourning, etc. True love is good at bolting of the door, and is always best when it is most with Christ in private. The secret discoveries which Christ makes to souls, do much oblige them to closet services. Christ shows secret kindnesses upon his people, and that draws them out to be much in secret, in closet services.

Thirteenthly, That love which accompanies salvation, shows itself by **breathing after more clear evidence and full assurance of Christ's love to the soul**. Divine love would gladly have her *drop* turned into an *ocean*; her *spark* into a *flame*; her *penny* into a *pound*; her *mite* into a *million*. A soul who truly loves Christ, can never see enough, nor ever taste enough, nor ever feel enough, nor ever enjoy enough of the love of Christ; when once they have found his love to be better than wine, then nothing will satisfy them but the kisses of his mouth Song 1 2, "Let him kiss me with the *kisses* of his mouth—for your love is more delightful than wine." Not with a kiss—but with the *kisses* of his mouth. A soul once kissed by Christ, can never have enough of the kisses of Christ; his lips drop myrrh and mercy; no kisses, compared to the kisses of Christ. The more any soul loves Christ, the more serious, studious, and industrious will that soul be to have the love of Christ discovered, confirmed, witnessed, and sealed to it. The more a virgin's love is drawn out to another, the more she desires to be confirmed and assured of his love to her.

That is a sweet word of the spouse Song 8 6, "Set me as a **seal** upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is strong as death." Set me as a seal upon your heart; that is, let me be deeply engraved as a seal into your heart and affections; let the love and remembrance of me make a deep impression in you, and set me as a seal or signet on your arm.

[1.] The seal, you know, is for ratifying, confirming, and making sure of things. Oh! says the spouse, establish and confirm me in your love, and in the outward expressions and manifestations of it.

[2.] Signets, among the Jews were used not as ornaments only—but as monuments of love that were continually in sight and remembrance. Oh! says the church, let me be still in your sight and remembrance as a monument of your love. In the old law, you know, the high priest bore the name of Israel engraved on stones upon his heart and shoulder for a memorial, Exod 28 11-12,21,29. Ah! says the church, let my name be deeply engraved upon your heart, let me be always in your eye, let me be always a memorial upon your shoulder.

[3.] Great men have their signet rings upon their hands in precious esteem Jer 22 24, "And as surely as I live," says the Lord—I will abandon you, Jehoiachin, king of Judah. Even if you were the signet ring on my right hand, I would pull you off." Ah! says the spouse, 'Oh highly prize me, Lord Jesus! highly esteem of me; oh let me be as dear and precious unto you as the signet ring on yur right hand!'

Lastly, That love which accompanies salvation, shows itself by **working a true lover of Christ to commit his richest treasures, his choicest jewels, to the care and custody of Christ**. [Psalm 31 15, so Job, so Paul; 2 Tim 1 12, and 2 Tim 4 7-8; Mic 7 8-9; Deut 6 22.] *Where* we love—we will trust, and *as* we love—we will trust. Little trust speaks out little love, great trust speaks out great love. The lovers of Christ commend to Christ's care their pearls of greatest price—their names, their lives, their souls, their crowns, their innocency, their all. It was a notable saying of Luther, "Let him who died for my soul, see to the salvation of it." Caesar received not his wounds from the swords of enemies—but from the hands of friends, that is, from trusting in them. Oh—but the lovers of Christ shall never receive any wounds by trusting in Christ, by committing their choicest jewels to his care; for he has a powerful *hand,* and a wise and loving *heart!* Christ will hold fast whatever the Father, or the saints—put into his hand.

And thus I have showed you what that love is, which accompanies salvation.

VI. I come now, in the sixth place, to show you what **PRAYER** that is, which accompanies salvation. But I see that I must contract what remains into a narrow space, lest I should tire out both the reader and myself, which, that I may not, I shall endeavor by divine assistance to mind brevity in what remains.

Now, that prayer does accompany salvation, I have formerly showed. Now I am briefly to show you what prayer that is, which accompanies salvation, and that I shall do in these following particulars.

(1.) The first property. First, **Prayer is a divine worship whereon, we speak to God in faith, humility, sincerity, and fervency of spirit, through the mediation of Christ**, begging those good things that we and others lack, and giving thanks for that we and others have received. Prayer is a speaking to God face to face; it is Jacob's ladder by which the soul climbs up to heaven; it is Noah's dove that goes and returns not until it brings assurance of peace.

The matter of prayer may be reduced to these heads

(1.) petition;

(2.) deprecation;

(3.) intercession;

(4.) expostulation.

There are other distinctions in regard of the manner; as, first, mental prayer, which is the inward lifting up of the heart to God; secondly, vocal, which is uttered by words, as the publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner;" thirdly, there is spontaneous prayer, and written prayer; fourthly, there is public or private prayer. These hints may suffice as to this.

But not to please you with notions, you must remember that that prayer which accompanies salvation is such prayer as has in it all the requisites of prayer. Now there are **four REQUISITES in prayer**.

[1.] The first requisite. First, **The person must be righteous** James 5 16, "The fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much;" John 9 31, "God hears not sinners." The Jews urge it as a proverb, 'An unclean person pollutes his own prayers.' Good motions from a bad heart make no music in heaven.

I have read of a jewel, that, being put in a dead man's mouth, loses all its virtue. Prayer in the mouth of a wicked man, which is dead God-wards, Christ-wards, heaven-wards, and holiness-wards, is a jewel that loses all its virtue Psalm 50 16-17, "But unto the wicked God says, What have you to do to declare my statutes, or that you should take my covenant into your mouth? seeing that you hate instruction, and casts my words behind you." Bias, a heathen, being at sea in a great storm, and perceiving many wicked wretches with him in the ship, calling upon the gods, "Oh," says he, "refrain your prayers, hold your tongues; I would not have the gods take notice that you are here; they will sure drown us all, if they would." You are wise, and know how to apply it. Jerome said,"What does it avail to invocate God with your voice, whom you deny in your works?

[2.] The second requisite. The second requisite in prayer is this, namely, **The matter of your prayer must be according to God's will** 1 John 5 14, "And this is the confidence that we have in him, That if we ask anything *according to his will*, he hears us." The favorites of heaven have no further the ear of the King of kings in prayer, than the matter of their prayer is sound, and "agreeable to his will," Rom 8 27. The matter of your prayer must fall under some particular or general Scriptural precept or promise, or else God will never own it nor honor it with acceptance. You must not pray as Augustine prayed before his conversion; he prayed for patience, with a proviso "Lord, give me patience," says he, "but not yet." Such hypocrisy is double iniquity, and God will deal with such sinners accordingly.

It was both a profane and blasphemous speech of that atheistical wretch, that told God he was no common beggar, he never troubled him before with prayer, and if he would hear him that one time, he would never trouble him again.

[3.] The third requisite. Thirdly, As the **matter** of your prayer must be Scriptural, so **the MANNER of your prayer must be right**. God regards not so much the matter as the manner of our prayer. God loves adverbs better than nouns; not to pray only—but to pray *well*.

Now for the better and further clearing of this truth, I shall show you, by divine assistance, what it is to pray in the right manner, and that I shall do in the following particulars

First, To pray in a right manner, is to pray **UNDERSTANDINGLY**, to pray knowingly 1 Cor 14 15, "I will pray with understanding." He who does not pray understandingly, does not pray but prate; as that parrot in Rome which could distinctly say over the whole creed John 4 22, "You worship you know not what," says Christ. So many pray they know not what. "Without knowledge the mind cannot be good," Prov 19 2. And can the prayer be good when the mind is bad? A blind mind, a blind sacrifice, a blind priest, are abominable to God. Ignorance is the source of all sin, the very wellspring from which all wickedness does issue. It was a good saying of one, "God hears not the words of one that prays," says he, "unless he who prays hears them first himself." And, truly, God will never understand that prayer which we do not understand ourselves.

Secondly, To pray in a right manner, is to pray **BELIEVINGLY** Heb 11 6, "He who comes unto God, must believe that he is;" that is, that he is really as good, as gracious, as glorious, as excellent, as constant, etc., as his word reports him to be; and that he is "a rewarder of those who diligently seek him." Mark 11 24, "Therefore I say unto you, What things soever you desire, when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you shall have them." In the Greek it is in the present tense, "you do receive them," to show the certainty of receiving them. You shall as certainly receive the good things that believingly you ask in prayer, as if you had them already in your hand. **God will never let the hand of faith, go empty away in prayer.** Faith is God's darling, and he never fails to give it a worthy portion, a Benjamin's portion, a Hannah's portion, a double portion James 1 5-7, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that gives to all men liberally, and upbraids not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering for he who wavers is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind, and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord." He who prays doubtingly, shuts the gates of heaven against his own prayers. Unbelief is virtually all ill; therefore fight especially against it. One of the ancients describes prayer thus "prayer is a climbing up of the heart to God, which cannot be done but by the power of faith."

It is reported in the life of Luther, that when he prayed it was with so much **reverence**, as if he were praying to God; and with so much **boldness**, as if he had been speaking to his friend. Faith in prayer makes a man divinely familiar and bold with God in prayer. That prayer which has not the image and stamp of faith upon it, is no prayer in divine account. **The sweetest flowers of paradise are only acceptable to God, as they are offered to him by the hand of faith.**

Augustus, when a poor man came to present a petition to him with his hand shaking and trembling out of fear, the emperor was much displeased, and said, "It is not fit that any should come with a petition to a king as if a man were giving meat to an elephant; that is, afraid to be destroyed by him.

Truly Jehovah loves to see everyone of his petitioners to come to him with a steadfast faith, and not with a trembling hand. Christ gets most glory, and the soul gets most good, by those prayers which are accompanied with the actings of faith.

Thirdly, To pray in a right manner, is to pray **INTENSELY, FERVENTLY, EARNESTLY**. So James 5 16, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much;" or, as the Greek has it, "the working prayer," that is, such prayer as sets the whole man a-work. The word signifies such a working with the liveliest activity that can be. It works wonders in heaven, in the heart, and in the earth. Such working prayer as sets all the faculties of the soul, and all the graces in the soul, at work, always speeds; it fails not of winning the day, of carrying the crown. As medicine harms the body if it works not, so does prayer the soul, if it be not working-prayer. **As a painted fire is no fire, a dead man no man—so a cold prayer is no prayer.** In a painted fire there is no heat; in a dead man there is no life. Just so, in a cold prayer there is no omnipotency, no devotion, no blessing.

It is not cold, but working prayer, which can lock up heaven three years, and open heaven's gate at pleasure, and bring down the sweetest blessings upon our heads, and the choicest favors into our hearts. Cold prayers are as arrows without heads, as swords without edges, as birds without wings they pierce not, they cut not, they fly not up to heaven. Cold prayers always freeze before they reach to heaven. So Jacob was earnest in his wrestling with God "Let me alone," says God. "I will not let you go except you bless me," says Jacob, Gen 32 24-27. Jacob, though lamed and exhausted, will not let the Lord go without a blessing. Jacob holds with his hands when his joints were out of joint, and so, as a prince, prevails with God. Jacob prays and weeps, and weeps and prays, and so prevails with God Hos 12 4, "Yes, he had power over the angel, and prevailed he wept and made supplication unto him," etc. The Jews have a saying, that 'since the destruction of Jerusalem, the door of prayers has been shut.' 'But the door of tears was never shut,' says one.

It is not the labor of the lips—but the travail of the heart; it is not the pouring forth a flood of words—but the pouring out of the soul, which makes a man a prince, a prevailer with God. A man who would gain victory over God in prayer, must strain every string of his heart; he must, in beseeching God, besiege him, and so get the better of him; he must strive in prayer even to an agony; he must be like importunate beggars, who will not be put off with frowns, or silence, or sad answers. Those who would be masters of their requests, must with the importunate widow press God so far as to put him to the blush; they must with a *holy impudence*, as Basil speaks, make God ashamed to look them in the face, if he should deny the importunity of their souls. The word signifies to strive to the shedding of blood—buffet me, or beat me down with her blows, as wrestlers beat down their adversaries with their fists or clubs. An importunate soul will never cease until he obtains; he will devour all discouragements; yes, he will turn discouragements into encouragements, as the woman of Canaan did, until Christ says, "Be unto you, O soul, as you will." As a body without a soul, much wood without fire, a bullet in a gun without powder—so are words in prayer without fervency of spirit. The hottest springs send forth their waters by ebullitions.

I have read of one who, being sensible of his own dullness and coldness in prayer, reproved himself thus "What! do you think that Jonah prayed thus when he was in the belly of hell? or Daniel, when he was in the lions' den? or the thief, when he was upon the cross?" and I may add, or the three children, when they were in the fiery furnace? or the apostles, when they were in bonds and prisons. Oh! that Christians would reprove themselves out of their cold prayers, and chide themselves into a better and a warmer frame of spirit when they make their supplications before the Lord.

An importunate soul in prayer is like the poor beggar who prays and knocks, who prays and waits, who prays and works, who knocks and begs—and will not stir from the door until he has an alms. And truly he who is good at this will not be long a beggar in grace. God will make his heart and his cup to overflow. The Jews write upon the walls of their synagogues this sentence—that prayer, without the intention of the mind, is but as a body without a soul. You know how to apply it. Jerome speaks of certain holy women in his time, that they seemed in their fervent affections to join with the holy company of heaven.

Fourthly, To pray in a right manner, is, to pray **ASSIDUOUSLY, CONSTANTLY**, as well as fervently. Luke 18 1, "And he spoke a parable unto them, to this end, that men ought *always* to pray, and not to faint;" or as it is in the Greek, not to "shrink back," as sluggards in work, or cowards in war—to pray in every opportunity. Now men pray always, first, when their hearts are always prepared to pray, or in a praying frame; secondly, when they do not omit the duty, when it is to be performed, or when they take hold on every opportunity, to pour out their souls before the Lord.

1 Thess 5 17, "Pray without ceasing." A man must always pray habitually, though not actually; he must have his heart in a praying disposition in all estates and conditions, in prosperity and adversity, in health and sickness, in strength and weakness, in wealth and wants, in life and death. So in Eph 6 18, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance, and supplication for all saints." **Our daily weaknesses, our daily wants, our daily fears, our daily dangers, our daily temptations, etc., call for our daily prayers.** Rom 12 12, "Rejoice in hope; be patient in affliction; be *persistent in prayer*." It is a metaphor taken from dogs that hunt, which will not give over the game until they have got it. A dog, of all creatures, is best able to endure hunger; he will run from place to place, and never leave it until he has got his prey. So a child of God in his hunting after God, Christ, grace, peace, mercy, glory, never gives over until he has found his heavenly prey. Song 3 4, "At length I found him whom my soul loved; I held him, and would not let him go." The spouse never left hunting after her beloved, until she had found him. Augustine's usual wish was, that when Christ came, he might find him either praying or preaching.

Gracious souls reckon that they have nothing until they speed in the things they plead for—as a hungry man eats as if he had never ate before. They pray as if they had never prayed, and think that they have done nothing until they have done the deed. If we will continue constant in our wrestling with God for blessings, though God should appear unto us in the form or shape of a judge, an enemy, a stranger, etc., yet still to press him hard for mercy, truly mercy will come in the long run, and we shall say, that it is not in vain for men to hold on praying, though God for a time delays giving the particular favors they plead for. As that emperor said, 'it behooves an emperor to die standing,' so may I say, 'it behooves a Christian to die praying.' Hypocrites are inconstant in their prayers; they are only at it by fits and starts, they are only constant in inconstancy.

Fifthly, To pray in a right manner, is to pray **SINCERELY** Psalm 17 1, "listen to my prayer—from lips free of deceit." Psalm 145 18, "The Lord is near unto all those who call upon him to all that call upon him in truth." Your heart and tongue must go together; word and work, lip and life, prayer and practice must echo one to another—or all will be lost, heaven lost, and the soul lost forever. It is not the greatness of the voice, nor the multitude of words, nor the sweetness of the tone, nor studied notions, nor eloquent expressions, which Jehovah heeds—but truth in the inward parts, Psalm 51 6. When the Athenians would know of the oracle, the cause of their often unprosperous successes in battle against the Lacedemonian, seeing they offered the choicest things they could get, in sacrifice to the gods, which their enemies did not; the oracle gave them this answer, That the gods were better pleased with their inward supplication, than with all their outward pomp in costly sacrifices. Ah, souls! the reason why you are so unsuccessful in your pious duties and services is, because you are no more sincere and upright in them. Were there more singleness and sincerity of heart in your duties, you would have surer and sweeter returns from heaven.

Ah, Christians! the more sincere you are, the more will prayer be your food and drink; and the more prayer is a delight and pleasure to you, the more will you be the pleasure and delight of God, who delights in those who delight in his service, and who count his work better than wages. Christ says to upright souls; "Hitherto have you asked nothing; ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full," John 16 24. **Christ has a full purse, a noble heart, and a liberal hand.**

[4.] The fourth requisite in prayer is this, namely, your **prayer must be to a good END**; it must be to the glory of God, and to the internal and eternal advantage of your own and others' souls. The chief end, the bulls-eye, the mark, at which the soul must aim in prayer, is God's glory "Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God," 1 Cor 10 31. When God crowns us, he does but crown his own gifts in us; and when we give God the glory of all we do, we do but give him the glory that is due unto his name; for he works all our works in us and for us. God measures all men's actions by their ends if their end is good, all is good; if the end be bad, all is bad. The end determines the action. All actions of worship are good or bad—as the mark is at which the soul aims. He who makes God the object of prayer—but not the end of prayer, does but lose his prayer, and take pains to undo himself. God will be all in all, or he will be nothing at all; he will be both the object and the end of prayer—or else he will abhor your prayer. Those prayers never reach his ear, they are never lodged in his bosom, which are not directed to his glory. The end must always be as noble as the means, or else a Christian acts below himself, yes, below his very reason.

Ah, Christians! it is not a flood of words, nor high strains of wit, nor vehemency of affections in prayer—but holy and gracious ends, which will render prayer acceptable and honorable to God, comfortable and profitable to yourselves and others; yes, the directing of one prayer to divine glory does more torture and torment Satan than all the prayers in the world that are directed to ends below divine glory. It is not simply prayer—but the soul's aiming at divine glory in prayer, that adds to Christ's crown, and Satan's hell. 'Lord,' says Austin, 'take all away; only give me yourself!' Isa 1 11; Zech 7 6; Amos 5 22; Hos 7 14. Many heathens, as Aristides, Cato, Themistocles, with divers others, did sincerely many great services for the common good, and not for their own gain; but yet they could not hit the mark—the glory of God; and so **their most glorious actions were but glorious sins**.

And thus I have showed you all the REQUISITES of prayer, even of such prayer as accompanies salvation. I shall now proceed to some other particulars for the further and fuller opening of this truth.

(2.) The second property. Secondly, that prayer which accompanies salvation, **betters the whole man.** By it, faith is increased, hope strengthened, the spirit exhilarated, the heart pacified, the conscience purified, temptations vanquished, corruptions weakened, the affections inflamed, the will more renewed, and the whole man more advantaged. Prayer is a spiritual chair, wherein the soul sits down at the feet of the Lord, to receive the influences of his grace. Prayer is the regal gate by which the Lord enters into the heart, comforting, quieting, strengthening, quickening, and raising of it. The Scripture affords us a cloud of witnesses to prove this truth—but I appeal to praying saints. Ah, tell me, tell me, praying souls, have not you, do not you find it so? I know you have and do, and that is it that makes prayer a pleasure, a paradise unto you. It was a sweet saying of Ambrose, "O Lord! I never go from you without you."

(3.) The third property. Thirdly, You may judge what prayer that is, which accompanies salvation by considering **the difference that is between the prayers of the godly and the wicked**. Now the difference between the prayers of the one and the other I shall show you in the following particulars,

The first difference. First, **Gracious souls do trade and deal with God in prayer, only upon the account and credit of Christ**. They beg mercy to pardon them, and grace to purify them, and balm to heal them, and divine favor to comfort them, and power to support them, and wisdom to counsel them, and goodness to satisfy them—but all upon the account of Christ's blood, of Christ's righteousness; of Christ's satisfaction, and of Christ's intercession at the right hand of the Father; Rev 4 10-11. They seek the Father in the Son, they present their suits always in Christ's name, for so is the will of Christ John 14 13-14, "And whatever you shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you shall ask anything in my name, I will do it." John 15 16, "Whatever you shall ask of the Father in my name, he will give you." John 16 23, "Truly I say unto you, whatever you shall ask the Father in my name, he will give you." The Greek is pregnant, and may be read not only "Whatever," but also "How many things soever you shall ask or beg of the Father in my name, he will give them to you."

There is no admission into heaven, except we bring Christ in our arms Eph 2 18, "For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." The Greek word signifies "a leading by the hand." It is an allusion to the custom of princes, to whom there is no admission, unless we be brought in by one of the favorites. As no access, so no acceptance without Christ, Eph 1 6, "wherein he has made us accepted in the beloved."

Plutarch reports, "That it used to be the practice of some of the heathens, the Molossians, when they would seek the favor of their prince, they took up the king's son in their arms, and so went and kneeled before the king."

Ah, Christians Christ is near and dear unto the Father; the Father has determined to give out all his loves and favors through his Son; if you bring Christ in the arms of your faith, you gain the Father's heart, and in gaining his heart you gain all. The father's mercies melt, his affections move, his heart turns; his compassions are kindled upon the sight of his Son's merits and mediation. As Joseph said to his brethren, "You shall not see my face unless you bring your brother Benjamin," so says God, "you shall not see my face unless you bring the Lord Jesus with you."

Now gracious souls; in all their prayers, they present Jesus Christ before the Father, and upon his account they desire those things that make for their external, internal, and eternal good.

Ah! but vain unbelievers treat and trade with God in prayer upon the account of their *own* worth, righteousness, worthiness, and services Isa 58 2-3, "Why have we fasted and you have not seen it? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you have not noticed?" Here you see they stand upon their own practices and services, and expostulate the case with God in an angry manner, because God did not answer their hypocritical performances. So the proud pharisee stands in prayer upon his own worthiness and righteousness Luke 18 11-12, "The pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself God, I thank you, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess." This pharisee was like the Egyptian temple—painted without—and vile within; varnished without—and vermin within. So did those hypocrites in Matt 6 23 stand very much upon their outward services and performances, though they were but *shining sins*—but filthy rags.

The second difference. Secondly, **Souls truly gracious pray more to get off their sins, than they do to get off their chains.** Though bonds did await Paul in every place, Acts 20 23, as himself speaks, yet he never cries out, O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from my bonds; but, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from my sins, from this body of death?" Rom 7 23. David cries not, 'I am undone' but 'I have done foolishly,' Psalm 51 4. But wicked men strive in prayer more to get off their chains than to get off their sins; more to be delivered from enemies without than lusts within; more to get out of the furnace than to he delivered from their spiritual bondage, as these scriptures evidence. [Psalm 78 34; Zech 7 5-7; Isa 26 16-17]

The third difference. Thirdly, **The stream and cream of a gracious man's spirit runs most out in prayer after spiritual and heavenly things**, as is abundantly evident by those prayers of the saints that are upon record throughout the Scripture, Psalm 4 6-7, and Psalm 27 4; but the stream and cream of vain men's spirits in prayer runs most out after poor, low, carnal things, as you may see in comparing the following scriptures together, Hos 7 14; Zech 7 5-7; James 4 3, etc.

The fourth difference. Fourthly, **A gracious soul looks and lives more upon God in prayer, than upon his prayer.** He knows, though prayer be his chariot, yet Christ is his food. Prayer may be a staff to support him—but Christ is that manna that must nourish him, and upon him he looks, and lives Psalm 5 3, "In the morning will I direct my prayer unto you" (or marshal and set in order my prayer, as it is in the Hebrew), "and will look up" (or "look out," as it is in the Hebrew) "as a watchman looks out to discover the approaches of an enemy." But vain men, they live and look more upon their prayers than they do upon God.

More—usually they never observe what returns they have from heaven. They are like those who shoot arrows—but do not mind where they fall. Wicked men think it is religion enough for them to pray; and to look after their prayers, to see how their prayers speed, is no part of their faith; but a gracious soul is of a more noble spirit; when he has prayed he will stand upon his watchtower, and observe what God will speak Psalm 85 8, "I will hear what God the Lord will speak; [I will listen, and lay my obedient ear to what the Lord shall speak,] for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints but let them not return to folly;" or, as the Hebrew may be read, "And they shall not return to folly." Wicked men would have God to be all ear to hear what they desire, when themselves have never an ear to hear what he speaks. But deaf ears shall always be attended with dumb answers. God's justice always makes mercy dumb, when sin has made the sinner deaf.

The fifth difference. Fifthly, **No discouragements can take gracious souls off from prayer**—but the least discouragements will take off carnal hearts from prayer, as you may see in the following scriptures compared together Psalm 40 1-2, and Psalm 44 10-23; Matt 15 21-29; Mal 3 14; Isa 58 1-3; Amos 8 3-5, etc.

When one of the ancient martyrs was severely threatened by his persecutors, he replied, "There is nothing," says he, "of things visible, nothing of things invisible, which I fear; I will stand to my profession of the name of Christ, and contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, come on it what will." It is neither the hope of life, nor the fear of death, that can take a real Christian off from prayer. He is rather raised than dejected, he is rather quickened than discouraged by delays or denials; he will hold up and hold on in a way and course of prayer, though men should rage and lions roar, and the furnace be heat seven times hotter, etc. But it is not so with carnal hearts, Job 27 9-10.

The sixth difference. Sixthly, When a gracious man prays, **he has his heart in his prayer**; when he falls upon the work, he makes heart work of it. In his course his heart is in his prayer; he finds by experience that the heart is *the great wheel that moves all other wheels*. It is the chief monarch in the life of man. So David, Psalm 42 4, "When I remember these things, I pour out my heart." So Hannah, 1 Sam 1 15, "I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit," said she, "and have poured out my soul before the Lord." So the Israelites in 1 Sam 7 6, "pour out their souls like water before the Lord." So the church in Isa 26 8-9, "The desire of our soul is to your name, and to the remembrance of you. With my soul have I desired you in the night; yes, with my spirit within me will I seek you early." The heart, as a prince, gives laws to all other members. The heart is Christ's bed of spices; it is his presence-chamber; it is his royal throne; it is one of those four keys which God keeps under his own belt.

Gracious souls know that no prayer is acknowledged, accepted, and rewarded by God—but that wherein the heart is sincerely and wholly. It is not a piece, it is not a corner of the heart, which will satisfy the maker of the heart. The true mother would not have the child divided. As God loves a broken and a contrite heart, so he loathes a divided heart. God neither loves halting nor halving, he will be served truly and totally. The royal law is, "You shall love and serve the Lord your God with *all* your heart, and with *all* your soul," Deut 10 12. Among the heathens, when the beasts were cut up for sacrifice, the first thing the priest looked upon was the heart, and if the heart was bad the sacrifice was rejected. Truly, God rejects all those sacrifices wherein the heart is bad.

Now wicked men are heartless in all their services, in all their prayers, as you may see in comparing the following scriptures together; I shall not transcribe the words, because I must cut short the work Isa 29 13; Matt 15 7-9; Ezek 33 30-32; Zech 7 4-6; 2 Chron 25 1-2. As the body without the soul is dead, so prayer, without the heart in it, is but dead prayer in the eye and account of God. Prayer without the heart is but an empty ring, a tinkling cymbal. Prayer is only lovely and weighty, as the heart is in it—and not otherwise. It is not the lifting up of the voice, nor the wringing of the hands, nor the beating of the breasts—but the stirrings of the heart, which God looks at in prayer. God hears no more than the heart speaks; if the heart is dumb, God will certainly be deaf. No prayer is accepted by God, but that which is the travail of the heart.

The seventh difference. Seventhly, **Gracious souls usually come off from prayer, with hearts more disengaged from sin, and more vehemently set against it.** The precious communion that they have with God in prayer, the sweet breathings of God into their hearts, while they are a-breathing out their requests in his ears, and the secret assistance, stirrings, and movings of the Spirit upon their souls in prayer—arm them more against sin, and makes them stand upon the highest terms of defiance with sin. 'How shall I do this or that wickedness against God?' says the praying soul, 'Oh I cannot, I will not do anything unworthy of him who has caused his glory to pass before me in prayer.'

Ah! but wicked men come off from prayer with hearts more encouraged to sin, and more resolved to walk in ways of sin Prov 7 14-24, "I have peace-offerings with me," says the harlot; "this day have I paid my vows therefore came I forth to meet you, diligently to seek your face, and I have found you. Come, let's drink deep of love till morning; let's enjoy ourselves with love." That is, "let us be drunken with love," which shows her unsatiable lusts. So in Jer 7 9-10, "Will you steal and murder, commit adultery and perjury, burn incense to Baal and follow other gods you have not known, and then come and stand before me in this house, which bears my Name, and say, "We are safe"--safe to do all these detestable things?"

Wicked men are like Lewis, king of France, who would swear and then kiss the cross, and then swear more bitterly and then kiss the cross. So they sin and pray, and pray and sin; and the more they pray, the more easily, resolutely, impudently do they sin. They make use of prayer to quiet their consciences, so that they may sin with more pleasure and less regret. Ah! what pains do such sinners take to go to hell, and to arm their consciences against themselves in that day, wherein they shall say, 'There is no help, there is no hope!' This age is full of such monsters, who have no pity upon themselves.

The eighth difference. Eighthly and lastly, **Gracious souls do more eye and observe how their own hearts are wrought upon in prayer**, than how others' hearts are wrought upon. When they pray, they look with a curious eye upon their own spirits, they look with a narrow eye upon their own hearts, and observe how they are affected, melted, humbled, quickened, raised, spiritualized, and bettered by prayer. But vain men, as they pray to "be seen of men," so they eye most how others like their prayers, and are affected and taken with their prayers. They are most critical in observing what operations their prayers have upon others' hearts—but never mind, to any purpose, how they operate upon their own hearts. A worse plague cannot befall them!

And thus I have endeavored to show you what a wide difference there is between the prayers of the godly and the ungodly; and by this, as by the former particulars laid down, you may see what prayer that is, which accompanies salvation.

VII. Now, in the seventh place, I shall show you what that **PERSEVERANCE** is, which accompanies salvation, and that I shall do in these following particulars.

(1.) The first property. First, That perseverance which accompanies salvation, is **perseverance in a holy PROFESSION**. Heb 4 14, "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, who has passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession by a strong hand," or by a hand of holy violence. So in Heb 10 23, "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering" (or as it is in the Greek, "without tilting, or tossing to one side or other"), "for he is faithful who has promised." Therefore let no temptation, affliction, opposition, or persecution, take us off from our holy profession—but let us hold our profession with a forcible hand, yes, with both hands, in the face of all difficulties, dangers, and deaths—as Cynaegirus, the Athenian captain, did the ship which was laden with the rich spoil of his country.

(2.) The second property. Secondly, That perseverance which accompanies salvation, is a **perseverance and holy and spiritual GRACES**. It is a persevering in love, John 15 9-10; and a persevering in faith and hope, 1 Cor 13 13, etc. Perseverance is not a particular distinct grace of itself; but such a virtue as crowns all virtue; it is such a grace as casts a general glory and beauty upon every grace, it is a virtue which leads every grace on to perfection. So Col 1 23; 1 Tim 4 15; Heb 13 1, and Heb 11 13. These all died in faith, or as it is in the Greek, they all died according to faith, that is, persevering in faith.

To persevere in holy and heavenly graces, is to persevere in believing, in repenting, in mourning, in hoping; it is to persevere in love, in fear, in humility, in patience, in self-denial, etc. Now it is this perseverance in holy and gracious graces, which accompanies salvation, which leads to salvation. (Nothing seems to be done—if there remains anything unfinished. Let a man do ever so much, if he does not persevere, he will be found to have done nothing.)

No grace—no, not the most sparkling and shining grace, can bring a man to heaven of itself, without perseverance; not **faith**, which is the champion of grace, if it faints and fails; not **love**, which is the nurse of grace, if it declines and waxes cold; not **humility**, which is the adorner and beautifier of grace, if it continues not to the end; not **obedience**, not **repentance**, nor any other grace—except they persevere until the end. It is perseverance in grace, which crowns every grace, and every gracious soul with a crown of glory at last. Rev 2 10, "Be faithful to the death, and I will give you a crown of life."

Such as only believe *for a time*, and repent for a time, and love for a time, and rejoice for a time, and hope for a time, as all hypocrites only do etc.—but do not persevere and hold out, will be doubly miserable in the day of vengeance. Perseverance is the accomplishment of every grace; without it, he who fights cannot hope to overcome; and he who for the present does overcome, cannot look for the crown, unless he still perseveres and goes on conquering and to conquer, until he finds all his enemies slain before him.

The third property. Thirdly, That perseverance which accompanies salvation is **an abiding or continuing in the word or doctrine of Christ**. You must persevere, and hold fast the faith of the gospel, without wavering in it or departing from it. John 15 7, "If you *abide* in me, and my words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you." 1 John 2 14, "I have written unto you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you." 1 John 2 24, "Let that therefore abide in you which you have heard from the beginning. If that which you have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, you also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father." 2 John 9, "Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son." None shall receive the end of their faith, the salvation of their souls—but those who hold fast the doctrine of faith, soundly, sincerely, and entirely to the end John 8 31, "If you continue in my word, then are you my disciples indeed."

It is the end that crowns the action, as the evening crowns the day, as the last act commends the whole scene. It is not enough to begin well—unless we end well; the beginning is not so considerable as the end. Manasseh and Paul began badly—but ended well. Judas and Demas began well—but ended badly." Nero's first five years were famous—but afterwards who more cruel? It is not the knowledge of the doctrine of Christ, nor the commending of the word of Christ—but the abiding in Christ's word, the continuing in Christ's doctrine, which accompanies life and glory, and which will render a man happy at last. Such that, with Hymenaeus and Alexander, put away, or make shipwreck of the doctrine of the faith, shall, by the Lord or his people, or by both, be delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme, 1 Tim 1 19-20; 1 Cor 5 5. Usually the end of such is worse than the beginning. Double damnation attends those who begin in the spirit and end in the flesh, 2 Pet 2 20-22; 2 Tim 3 13.

The fourth property. Fourthly, and lastly, That perseverance which accompanies salvation is a **perseverance in holy and gracious actions and motions**; it is a continuing in pious duties and religious services, Phil 3 10-14; Isa 40 31. The life of a Christian consists in motion, not in sitting. A Christian should be ever moving towards heaven; he must never stand still, he must always be a-going on from faith to faith, and from strength to strength. Not to go forwards, is to go backwards. When saints have done their work in this life, they shall sit upon thrones in everlasting life. Perseverance is a going on, a holding out in ways of piety and sanctity. Acts 13 43, and Acts 14 22 signify a continuance in prayer and supplication, with an invincible and strong constancy.

Acts 1 14, "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication." Acts 2 42, "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayer." Acts 2 46, "And they continued daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, and ate their food with gladness and singleness of heart." 1 Tim 5 5, "Now she who is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusts in God, and continues in supplications and prayers night and day." Rom 12 12, "Persistent in prayer."

Christians must work hard in a *wilderness*, before they sit down in *paradise*. They must make a constant progress in *holiness* before they enter into *happiness*. It is the excellency of perseverance, that it keeps a Christian still in motion God-wards, heaven-wards, holiness-wards. It is a grace which quickens a man to motion, to action; it keeps a man still going, still doing. And motion is the excellency of the creature; and the more excellent any creature is, the more excellent is that creature in its motions, as you may see in the motions of the celestial bodies, the sun, moon, and stars. Perseverance is a perpetual motion in ways of grace and holiness, Psalm 44 16-20. Perseverance will make a man hold up and hold on in the work and ways of the Lord, in the face of all impediments, discouragements, temptations, tribulations, and persecutions. As the moon holds on her motion though the dogs bark, so perseverance will make a Christian hold on in his holy and heavenly motions though vain men bark and bite, etc.

And thus I have showed you what perseverance that is, which accompanies salvation.

VIII. The eighth and last thing which accompanies salvation is **HOPE**. I shall gather up what I have to say concerning hope into as narrow a compass as I can, being unwilling to tire the reader's patience, and my own spirits. The philosophers excluded hope out of their catalogs of virtues, but God by his word has taught us better. I shall show very briefly,

(1.) That hope does accompany salvation.

(2.) What that hope is, which accompanies salvation.

1. That hope does accompany salvation, these scriptures speak it out Rom 8 24, "For we are saved by hope;" Gal 5 5, "For we though the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith;" Eph 1 18, "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints;" 1 Thess 5 8, "But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet—the hope of salvation;" Titus 3 7, "That, being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life;" Titus 1 2 "In hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before the world began." By all these scriptures it does fully appear, that hope does accompany salvation.

2. The second thing that I am to show you is, **what hope that is, which accompanies salvation**; and that I shall do with as much brevity and perspicuity as I can, in the following particulars

First, That hope which accompanies salvation, **is a grace of God whereby we expect good to come, waiting patiently until it comes**. This very title, "the God of hope," may serve as a sovereign antidote against the blackest and horridest temptations; for why should any despair of his mercy—who has proclaimed himself to be the God of hope?

(1.) I call it a **grace of God**, because he is the **giver** of it; and therefore he is called the God of hope. Rom 15 13, "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing." Now God is called the God of hope, because he is the only **object** of our hope, and he is effective, the only **author** and **worker** of hope in the soul. A saving hope is no natural affection in men. Men are not born with true hope in their hearts, as they are born with tongues in their mouths. Hope is nobly descended, it is from above, it is a heavenly babe which is formed in the soul of man by the power of the Holy Spirit. And as hope is no natural affection, so hope is no moral virtue, which men may attain by their frequent notions; but hope is the gracious virtue which none can give but God.

(2.) I say it is a grace of God, **whereby we expect good to come**; I say good, not evil, for evil is rather feared than hoped for by any. The **OBJECT** of this hope has four qualities

1. It must be bonum—good.

2. It must be Futurum—future.

3. It must be Possibile—possible.

4. It must be Arduum—hard or difficult to obtain.

(3.) I say hope is a grace of God, whereby we expect good to come, **patiently waiting until it comes**. Hope makes the soul quiet and patient until it comes to possess the good desired and hoped for Rom 8 25, "But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." The Hebrew word, which is often translated hope, signifies a very vehement intention, both of body and mind, a stretching forth of the spirit or mind, in waiting for a desired good.

2. Secondly, **That hope which accompanies salvation is always conversant about holy and heavenly objects, as about God and Christ**. 2 Cor 4 18, "So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal." Hope fares well; it is nourished at a prince's table; it lives upon honey and milk, oil and wine; it lives upon the sweetmeats, the delicacies of heaven—as God, Christ, and glory, Psalm 31 24; Psalm 33 22; Psalm 38 15; Psalm 42 5; Psalm 43 5; Psalm 39 7; Psalm 71 5, and Psalm 15 5.

1 Tim 1 1, "Paul an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the commandment of God our Savior, and Lord Jesus Christ, who is our hope." In these words, **Christ** is set forth as the chief object of our hope, because by his merits and mercy, we hope to obtain the remission of our sins, and the eternal salvation of our souls. Sometimes hope is exercised about the righteousness of Christ Gal 5 5, "For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith."

Sometimes hope is exercised about God the **Father** 1 Pet 1 21, "Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God." Jer 14 8, "Oh the hope of Israel, the Savior thereof in the time of trouble." Jer 17 13, "O Lord, the hope of Israel, all who forsake you shall be ashamed." Jer 17 17, "You are my hope in the day of evil."

Sometimes hope is exercised and busied about the **word** and **promises** Psalm 119 49, "Remember your word unto your servant, upon which you have caused me to hope." Psalm 119 81, "My soul faints for your salvation; but I hope in your word." Psalm 119 114, "You are my hiding-place, and my shield. I hope in your word." Psalm 130 5, I wait for the Lord, my soul does wait, and in his word do I hope." Psalm 119 74, "I have hoped in your word." Psalm 119 147, "I hoped in your word."

Hope in the promises will keep the head from aching, and the heart from breaking; it will keep both head and heart from sinking and drowning. Hope exercised upon the promises, brings heaven down to the heart. Ah! what abundance of comfort and sweetness may hope find, yes, does hope find is the promises. The promises are the ladder by which hope gets up to heaven. Hope in the promise will not only keep life and soul together—but will also keep the soul and glory together; hope in the promise will support distressed souls; hope in the promise will settle perplexed souls; hope in the promise will comfort dejected souls; hope in the promise will recover wandering souls; hope in the promise will confirm staggering souls; hope in the promise will save undone souls.

Psalm 42 5, "Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and in God." Psalm 119 49-50, "Remember your word to your servant, for you have given me hope. My comfort in my suffering is this Your promise preserves my life."

The promise is the same to hope, that hope is to the soul; the promise is the anchor of hope, as hope is the anchor of the soul. Look! what the breasts are to the child, and oil is to the lamp—that are the promises to hope. "For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently." Romans 8 24-25 The promises are hope's rich storehouse. Hope lives and thrives, as it feeds upon the promises, as it embraces the promises. The promises are the sweetmeats of heaven, upon which hope lives. Every degree of hope brings a degree of joy into the soul, which makes it cry out, 'Heaven, heaven!' Heb 11 13; Psalm 16 11; Titus 3 7.

Again, hope is exercised about the glory and felicity, the happiness and blessedness that is at God's right hand. Titus 2 13, "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior, Jesus Christ." Hope makes a man stretch out his neck and put forth his hand, and look as earnestly for the glorious appearing of Christ, as Sisera's mother did for the happy return of her son. The hoping soul is often a-sighing it out, 'Why are his chariot wheels so long a-coming?'

Col 1 5, "For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven." Hope in this place, is put for the things hoped for, namely, all that glory and felicity, that blessedness and happiness, which is laid up for us in heaven. [So in Rom 8 24-25; Col 1 27; Rom 5 2, etc.] So in Heb 6 18, "Who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." Hope here is put for the object of hope, namely, heaven and happiness. Hope lays such fast hold, as the Greek word here signifies, upon heaven and happiness, that none shall ever be able to take those precious things out of hope's hand. So hope is put for the glorious things hoped for, Eph 1 18. And thus you see those precious and glorious objects, about which that hope which accompanies salvation is exercised.

3. Thirdly, That hope which accompanies salvation, **is grounded upon the firmest foundations**, namely the **promises** of God, Prov 10 28, as has been fully showed before; and it is built upon the **free grace** of God, 1 Pet 1 13. It is built upon the **infinite and glorious power** of God, Rom 4 21. It is built upon the **truth and faithfulness** of God, 2 Tim 2 13. These four precious and glorious foundations bear up the hopes of the saints, as the pillars bore up the curtains in the tabernacle. A believer's hope is founded upon the love of Christ, the blood of Christ, the righteousness of Christ, the satisfaction of Christ, and the intercession of Christ, etc.

But the hopes of hypocrites and wicked men, are always built upon weak, slender, and sandy foundations. Sometimes they build their hopes upon their **outward profession**, upon their lamps, though they have no *oil*, Matt 25 3; and sometimes upon their **duties and services**, as the Jews, scribes, and Pharisees did, Isa 58 1-3; Matt 6 1-2, etc; and sometimes upon their **outward privileges**, crying out, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord;" and sometimes they build their hopes upon **others' good opinion of them**, and sometimes upon flashes of joy, and sometimes upon enlargements in duties, and sometimes upon the heat and vigor of their spirits in religious services, etc. Every false principle in religion is "a reed of Egypt," which will certainly deceive souls at last; therefore take heed of leaning upon any of those reeds! All these are but sandy foundations, and those who build their hope upon them will certainly fall—and great will be their fall.

The hopes of the saints are built upon the surest and the strongest foundations. It was a good saying of one of the ancients, "I consider," said he, "three things in which all my hope consists, namely 1. God's love in my adoption; 2. the truth of his promise; 3. his power of performance. Therefore, I can say with sure confidence, I know on whom I have believed, 2 Tim 1 12. And I am certain, first, that in his love he adopted me; secondly, that he is true in his promise; and thirdly, that he is able to perform it. This is the threefold cord which is not easily broken."

4. Fourthly, That hope which accompanies salvation, **may be distinguished from all false hopes, by the excellent properties of it**, and they are these that follow.

[1.] The first property of that hope which accompanies salvation is this **it elevates and raises the heart to live above, where its treasure is.** True hope is from above, and it makes the heart to live above it is a spark of glory, and it leads the heart to live in glory. Divine hope carries a man to heaven, for life to quicken him, and for wisdom to direct him, and for power to uphold him, and for righteousness to justify him, and for holiness to sanctify him, and for mercy to forgive him, and for assurance to rejoice him, and for happiness to crown him. Divine hope takes in the pleasures of heaven beforehand; it lives in the joyful expectation of them; it fancies to itself, the pleasures and joys of eternity; and lives in a sweet anticipation of what it possesses by faith. Hope's richest treasures, and choicest friends, and chief delights, and sweetest contents, are in the country above; and therefore hope loves best to live there most. Matt 6 20-21; Phil 3 20; Col 3 1.

Mark, wicked men's hopes never raise them as high as heaven; under all their hopes they are great enemies, and as great strangers to God, Christ, and heaven, as ever.

[2.] The second property of that hope which accompanies salvation is this **it will strengthen the soul against all afflictions, oppositions, and temptations** 1 Thess 5 8, "But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for an helmet, the hope of salvation." Look! as the helmet defends and secures the head, so does hope defend and secure the heart. Hope is a helmet which keeps off all darts that Satan or the world casts at the soul. The hope of heavenly riches made those worthies in Heb 11 to despise the riches of this world. The hope they had of a heavenly country made them willing to leave their own country, and to live in the land of promise as in a strange country. The hope they had of possessing at last a house not made with hands—but eternal in the heavens, made them willingly and cheerfully to live in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens, and caves of the earth. The hope they had of a glorious resurrection made them courageously to withstand the strongest temptations, etc., Rom 5 2-5; Dan 3 37; Psalm 4 6-7; Heb 10 34; 2 Cor 4 16-18. It was a wicked and hopeless cardinal who said, 'He would not leave his part in Paris for a part in paradise.'

A saint's hope will outlive all fears and cares, all trials and troubles, all afflictions and temptations. Saints have much in hope, though little in hand; they have much in expectation, though but little in possession; they have much in promise, though but little in the purse. A saint can truly say, 'my hopes are better than my possessions.' Hope can see heaven through the thickest clouds; hope can see *light* through darkness, *life* through death, *smiles* through frowns, and *glory* through misery. Hope holds life and soul together; it holds Christ and the soul together; it holds the soul and the promises together; it holds the soul and heaven together; and so it makes a Christian to stand and triumph over all afflictions, oppositions, and temptations. Some are truly persuaded that the lack of this divine hope has been the reason that many among the heathen has laid violent hands upon themselves. See Heb 11 10,14,16,25,32, compared.

[3.] The third property of that hope which accompanies salvation is this **it makes the soul lively and active** Psalm 119 166, "Lord, I have hoped for your salvation, and done your commandments." Hope puts the soul upon doing, upon obeying 1 Pet 1 3, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, has begotten us again unto a *living* hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." It is called a living hope, because it brings life and comfort into the soul; and it is called a living hope in opposition to the withering and dying hopes of hypocrites and wicked men; and it is called a living hope, because it flows from living causes, namely, the Spirit of Christ, and the soul's union and communion with Christ; but mainly it is called a lively hope because it puts the soul upon living endeavors. Hope will make a man pray as for life, hear as for life, and mourn as for life, and obey as for life, and work and walk as for life. Hope will not say—'this work is too hard, and that work is too hot; this work is too high, and the other work is too low.' A man's duties and services usually are as his hopes are if his hopes are weak and low—so will his services be; but if his hopes are spiritual, noble, and high—so will his motions mad actions be. Divine hope makes saints as far excel all other men in their actings, as the angels do excel them. Some say hope and fasting are the two wings of prayer. Fasting is but as the wing of a bird—but hope is as the wing of an angel, bearing our prayers to the throne of grace.

Hope will make a man put his hand to every work. Hope makes a man more motion than notion; it makes a man better at *doing* than at *saying*, etc. Hope gives life and strength to all pious duties and services 1 Cor 9 10, "He who ploughs should plough in hope; and he who thrashes in hope shall be partaker of "his hope." Hope will put a Christian upon ploughing and thrashing, that is, upon the hardest and most difficult services for God and his glory. If fleshly hopes of gaining the honors, riches, and favors of this world made Absalom, Ahithophel, Jehu, Haman, and many heathen—full of life and activity, full of motion and action; truly holy and heavenly hopes will make men much more lively and active, by how much heavenly hopes are more excellent than earthly. A man full of hope will be full of action. A living hope and a diligent hand are inseparable companions. Hope will make a man do—though he dies for doing. Fleshly hopes put the Romans upon doing very strange and amazing exploits, as you may see in Plutarch, and other historians.

[4.] The fourth property of that hope which accompanies salvation is this **It will make a man sit, Noah-like, quiet and still in the midst of all storms and tempests, in the midst of all disturbances and changes.** When others are at their wits' end, then hope will house the soul, and lodge it composed and quiet in the bosom of God Job 11 18, "You will be secure, because there is hope; you will look about you and take your rest in safety." The Hebrew word that is here rendered rest, is from a root that signifies to rest and sleep quietly, as as men rest in their beds, or as the body rests in the grave.

Hope will bring the soul to bed safely and sweetly, in the darkest night, in the longest storm, and in the greatest tempest Heb 6 19, 20, "We have this **hope as an anchor for the soul**, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf." Hope is that anchor for the soul, which keeps it quiet and still in all storms and tempests; it keeps the soul from dashing upon the rocks, and from being swallowed up in the sands. Hope is an anchor which is fastened above, not below; in heaven, not in earth; therefore the ship, the soul of a believer, must needs be safe and secure. That ship will never be split upon the rocks, whose anchor is in heaven. Hope enters within the curtain, and takes fast anchor-hold on God himself; and therefore blow high, blow low, rain or shine, the soul of a saint is safe. Hypocrites in stormy times are like ships without anchors, tossed up and down with every wave, and in danger of being split upon every rock, Job 27 9-10.

Divine hope settles the heart. Our best and greatest estate lies in invisibles. Our perfect and complete estate here lies not in what we have in possession—but in what we have in expectation.

[5.] The fifth property of that hope which accompanies salvation is this **It will work the soul to a quiet and patient waiting upon God for mercy, though God should delay the giving in of mercy**. Rom 8 25, "But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." Psalm 130 5-6, "I wait for the Lord, my soul does wait, and in his word do I hope. My soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning; I say, more than those who watch for the morning." Hope will make a man wait, yes, wait long for a mercy, as it did Abraham, Rom 4 18-21. Though the vision tarries, yet hope will wait for it, Hab 2 1-3. 'Yet a little, little while,' says hope, 'and he who shall come will come, and will not tarry,' Heb 10 36-37. 'The longer I wait for a mercy, the greater, better, and sweeter, at last, the mercy will prove,' says hope. 'It is not mercy, if it be not worth a-waiting for,' says hope. 'And if it is a mercy, you can not wait too long for it,' says hope. Patience is nothing else but hope spun out. If you would lengthen patience, be sure to strengthen hope.

Says hope, 'though deliverance tarries, though this and that mercy tarries, yet it will come at last, therefore wait.' Hope is not hasty in prefixing the time when God shall show mercy, neither will it limit God to the way or manner of showing mercy—but leave both the time and the manner to him who is wise and faithful. Says hope, 'Christ knows his own time, and his own time is best; though he stays long, yet he will certainly come, and he will not stay a moment beyond the time he has prefixed; and therefore, says hope, be not weary, O soul—but still wait patiently upon the Lord.' The Lord shows much mercy in timing our mercies for us.

1 Thess 1 3, "Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope." Hope is the mother of patience and the nurse of patience; hope breeds patience, and hope feeds patience. If it were not for hope, the heart would die; and if it were not for hope, patience would die. Look! as faith gives life and strength to hope, so does hope give life and strength to patience, therefore patience is called patience of hope. Hope maintains patience, as the fuel maintains the fire.

[6.] The sixth property of that hope which accompanies salvation is this **It is soul-purifying hope**; it puts a Christian upon purifying himself, as Christ is pure 1 John 3 3, "And every man who has this hope in him *purifies* himself, even as Christ is pure." Divine hope runs out into holiness. He who has the purest and strongest hopes of being saved, is most studious and laborious to be sanctified. The Greek word which is rendered *purifies*, is a metaphor taken either from the ceremonial purifications in time of the Law, or else from goldsmiths purifying metals from their dross; and it notes thus much to us, that those who have hopes to reign with Christ in glory, who have set their hearts upon that pure and blissful state, that paradise, that holy and spiritual state of bliss which is made up of singleness and purity, they will purify both their body and soul, that they may answer to that excellent copy that Christ has set before them, knowing that none shall enjoy everlasting glory, but those who labor after perfect purity.

Now hope purifies the heart and life thus, by keeping the purest objects, as God, Christ, the word, and the soul together, and by making the soul serious and conscientious in the use of all soul-purifying ordinances, and by being a fire in the soul to burn up all those corruptions and principles of darkness which are contrary to that purity and glory, which hope has in her eye; and by working the soul to lean upon Christ, to live in Christ, and to draw purifying virtue from Christ, who is the spring and fountain of all purity and sanctity. And thus hope purifies those who expect to be like Christ in glory.

[7.] The seventh property of that hope which accompanies salvation, is this **It is permanent and lasting**; it will never leave the soul until it has lodged it in the bosom of Christ. Prov 14 32, "The righteous has hope in his death." The righteous man's hope will bed and board with him; it will lie down with him, and rise up with him; it will to the grave, to heaven with him his motto is, 'my hope lasts beyond life.' "The hope of the righteous is joy, but the expectation of the wicked comes to nothing." Proverbs 10 28. Austin's hope made him long to die, that he might see that head which was once crowned with thorns. Hope made the ancient Christians to call the days of their death, not dying but birthdays, Heb 3 6, and Heb 6 11; 1 Pet 1 13; Psalm 131 3.

That hope which accompanies salvation is a long-lived hope; it is a living hope. 1 Pet 1 3, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, has begotten us again unto a lively hope," or a living hope a hope that will not die, a hope that will not leave a man in life nor death. In prosperity and adversity, in health and sickness, in life and death, I will hope. It is neither the smiles nor the frowns of the world, which shall bury a Christian's hope. A Christian's hope will live in all weathers, and it will make a Christian bear up bravely in all storms and under all changes.

Psalm 71 14, "But I will hope continually, and will yet praise you more and more." No trials, no troubles, no afflictions, no oppositions, shall keep down my hope, says David. I am peremptorily resolved, in the face of all dangers, difficulties, and deaths, to keep up my hopes; come what will come on it, I will rather let my life go than my hope go I will hope continually. A hopeless condition is a very sad condition; it is the worst condition in the world; it makes a man's life a very hell. If "hope deferred makes the heart sick," as the wise man speaks, Prov 13 12, then the loss of hope will make the soul languish, it will make it choose strangling rather than life; it will make a man's life a continual death. A soul without hope is like a ship without anchors. Lord, where will a soul anchor, which anchors not upon you by hope? A man were better part with anything than his hope.

When Alexander went upon a hopeful expedition, he gave away his gold; and when he was asked what he kept for himself, he answered, 'the hope of greater and better things.' A believer's hope is not like that of Pandora, which may fly out of the box, and bid the soul an everlasting farewell. No! it is like the morning light; the least beam of it shall commence into a complete sunshine. It shall shine forth brighter and brighter until it has fully possessed the believer of his Christ and crown.

This will be the hypocrite's hell and horror when he comes to die—that his hope will be like the morning dew, like the spider's web, like the crackling of thorns under a pot, and like the giving up of the Spirit, Job 8 13-14, and Job 11 20, and Job 27 8; Prov 14 32, and Prov 11 7. And this is now the upright man's joy, that whatever leaves him, yet his hope will not leave him, until he has put on his crown and is set down in paradise. And thus you see what hope that is, which accompanies salvation. Before I close up this chapter, take these two **CAUTIONS** with you; they make for your comfort and settlement.

[1.] The first caution is this that **all saints have not these things which accompany salvation, in the same degree**. If you have but the least measure or degree of that knowledge which accompanies salvation, or of that faith which accompanies salvation, or of that repentance, or of that obedience, or of that love, etc., which accompanies salvation, you may be as assuredly confident of your salvation, as if you were already in heaven. The least degree, O Christian, of those things which accompany salvation, will certainly yield you a heaven hereafter, and why then should it not yield you a heaven here? It will undoubtedly yield you a crown at last; and why should it not yield you comfort and assurance now? I judge it may, if you are not an enemy to your own soul, and to your own peace and comfort. The Scripture tells you of *saints of several sizes* some are babes, some are children, some are young men, some are old men. Now, all these do not attain to the same degree; but happy is he who has the least degree.

[2.] The second caution is this Though you do not find everyone of those things in you who do accompany salvation, yet if you do find some of those things, ay, though but a few of those things, yes, **though but one of those things which accompanies salvation, your estate is safe, and happiness will be your portion at last**. Your sense and feeling of one of those precious things which accompanies salvation, should be of more power to work you to conclude that your estate is good, than any other thing should work you to conclude that all is naught, and that you shall miscarry at last. Do not always side with sin and Satan against your own precious soul. No saints are at all times sensible that all those precious things which accompany salvation are in them. It is not always *day* with the saints.

Having thus discovered to you the **way** and **means** of attaining to a well-grounded assurance—I shall now hasten to a close.

CHAPTER 7

Showing the difference between a true and a counterfeit assurance; between sound assurance and presumption.

(1.) The first difference. **A sound and well-grounded assurance is attended with a deep admiration of God's transcendent love and favor to the soul, in the Lord Jesus.** The assured soul is often a-breathing it out thus "Ah, Lord! who am I, what am I, that you should give into my bosom, *the white stone of forgiveness*; when the world has given into their bosoms only *the black stone of condemnation?* Rev 2 17. Lord! what mercy is this, that you should give me assurance, give me water out of the rock, and feed me with manna from heaven; when, many of your dearest ones spend their days in sighing, mourning and complaining for lack of assurance. Lord! what manner of love is this, that you should set me upon your knee, embrace me in your arms, lodge me in your bosom, and kiss me with the sweet kisses of your blessed mouth, with those kisses which are better than wine, yes, better than life; when many are even weary of their lives because they lack what I enjoy? Psalm 63 3. Ah, Lord! by what name shall I call this mercy, this assurance that you have given me? It being a mercy which fits me to do duties, to bear crosses, and to improve mercies; which fits me to speak sweetly, to judge righteously, to give liberally, to act seriously, to suffer cheerfully, and to walk humbly. I cannot," says the assured soul, "but sing it out with Moses—Who is like unto you, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like you, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? Exod 15 2. And with the apostle, Oh, the height, the depth, the length and breadth of the love of Christ, which passes knowledge!" Eph 3 18-19.

"If the queen of Sheba," says the assured soul, "was so swallowed up in a deep admiration of Solomon's wisdom, greatness, goodness, excellency and glory, that she could not but admiringly breathe it thus out—Happy are your men, happy are these your servants, who stand continually before you, and that hear your wisdom," 1 Kings 10 8, Oh then, how should that blessed assurance that I have of the love of God, of my saving interest in God, of my union and communion with God, of my blessedness here and my eternal happiness hereafter, work me to a deep and serious, to a real and perpetual, admiration of God!"

Assurance of Christ's love made Jerome admiringly to say, "O my Savior, did you die for love of me alone, a death more dolorous than death—but to me a death more lovely than life itself! I cannot live, love you, and be longer from you!"

[2.] The second difference. Secondly, **A well-grounded assurance always begets in the soul an earnest and an impatient longing after a further, a clearer, and fuller enjoyment of God and Christ.** Psalm 63 1, "O God, you are *my* God"—here is assurance; well, what follows?—"early will I *seek* you. My soul *thirsts* for you; my flesh *longs* for you in a dry and thirsty land, where there is no water." David, though in a wilderness, seeks not for bread or water or protection—but for more of God.

Holy and heavenly privileges are the food by which assurance is cherished and maintained. The assured soul cries out, "I desire to be depart, and to be with Christ!" Phil 1 23; and, "Make haste, my beloved!" Song 8 14; and, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!" Rev 22 17. "O Lord Jesus," says the assured soul, "you are my light, you are my life, you are my love, you are my joy, you are my crown, you are my heaven, you are my all. I cannot but long to see that beautiful face which was spit upon for my sins, and that glorious head which was crowned with thorns for my transgressions. I long to be with you in paradise, to see the glory of your Jerusalem above, to drink of those rivers of pleasures that are at your right hand, to taste of all the delicacies of your kingdom, and to be acquainted with those secrets and mysteries which have been hidden from all ages, and to be swallowed up in the full enjoyment of your blessed self!" Eph 3 5; Col 1 26. The assured soul's motto is, "O my God! when shall I be with you, when shall I be with you?"

[3.] The third difference. Thirdly, **A well-grounded assurance is usually strongly assaulted by Satan on all sides.** "The devil marches well armed, and in mighty array," says Luther. Satan is such a mighty enemy to joy and peace, to the salvation and consolation, of the saints, that he cannot but make use of all his devices and stratagems to baffle and amuse, to disturb and disquiet, the peace and rest of their souls. No sooner had Jesus Christ heard that lovely voice from heaven, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," Matt 3 17 and Matt 4 1-2, etc.—but he is desperately assaulted by Satan in the wilderness. No sooner was Paul dropped out of heaven, after he had seen such visions of glory that was unutterable—but he was presently assaulted and buffeted by Satan, 2 Cor 2 12.

Stand up, stand up, assured Christians, and tell me whether you have not found the blast of the terrible one to be as a mighty storm. Since the Lord said unto you, "Be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven," have not you found Satan to play the part both of the lion and the wolf, of the serpent and the fox? And all to weaken your assurance, and to work you to question the truth of your assurance, and to cast water upon your assurance, and to take off the freshness and sweetness, the beauty and glory, of your assurance; I know you have. I truly think that they have very much cause to question the truth of their assurance, who know not what it is to have their assurance assaulted strongly by Satan.

Satan's malice, envy, and enmity is such against God's honor and glory, and your comfort and felicity, that he cannot but be very studious and industrious to make use of all traps, snares, methods, and ways, whereby he may shake the pillars of your faith, and weaken and overthrow your assurance. Pirates, you know, do most fiercely assault those ships and vessels that are most richly laden; so does Satan assault those precious souls who have attained to the riches of full assurance. Satan is that old serpent, as John speaks, Rev 12 9. He is as old as the world, and is grown very cunning by experience, he being a spirit of greater than five thousand years' existence.

Assurance makes a paradise in believers' souls—and this makes Satan to roar and rage. Assurance fits a man to do God the greatest service and Satan the greatest disservice—and this makes him angry against the soul. Assurance makes a saint to be too hard for Satan with all weapons. Assurance makes a saint to lead that "strong man" captive, to spoil him of all his hurting power, to bind him in chains, and to triumph over him; and this makes his hell a great deal hotter, Rom 8 32-39. And therefore never wonder at Satan's assaulting your assurance—but expect it and look for it. Luther cries out, "I am attacked by all the world without, and within by the devil and all his demons."

The jailor is quiet when his prisoner is in bolts—but if he escapes then he pursues him with haste and fury. So long as the soul is in bolts and bondage under Satan, Satan is quiet and is not so apt to molest and vex it; but when once a soul is made free, and assured of his freedom by Christ, John 8 36, then says Satan, as once Pharaoh did, "I will chase them, catch up with them, and destroy them. I will divide the plunder, avenging myself against them. I will unsheath my sword; my power will destroy them," Exod 15 9. The experience of all assured saints does abundantly confirm this. Israel going into *Egypt* had no enemies, no opposition—but traveling into *Canaan* they were never free.

[4.] The fourth difference. Fourthly, **A well grounded-assurance makes a man as bold as a lion; it makes him valiant and gallant for Christ and his cause, in the face of all dangers and deaths.** The number of opposers makes the Christian's conquest the more illustrious. After the Holy Spirit had fallen upon the **apostles**, and had assured them of their internal and eternal happiness, oh! how bold, how undaunted, how resolute were they in the face of all oppositions, afflictions, and persecutions! as you may see from the book of Acts. So assurance had this operation upon **David's** heart Psalm 23 4,6 compared, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." Well, David—but how does this assurance of yours operate? Why, says he "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." So **Moses**, having an assurance of the "recompense of reward," he fears not the wrath of the king, "for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible," Heb 11 26-27. So in Heb 10 34, "You joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions." Oh, that knowledge, that assurance that they had in their own hearts of enjoying in heaven a better and a more enduring substance, made them bear cheerfully and gallantly the confiscation of their worldly goods. The archers—the world, the flesh, and the devil—shoot mightily at a soul under assurance, yet assurance will make a man to break a bow of steel, to trample down strength, and to triumph over all oppositions and afflictions.

Colonus the Dutch martyr called to the judge who had sentenced him to death, and asked him to lay his hand upon his heart, and asked him whose heart did most fastest—his or the judge's. Assurance will make a man do this, and much more for Christ and his cause.

[5.] The fifth difference. Fifthly, **A well-grounded assurance of a man's own eternal happiness and blessedness, will make him very studious and laborious to make others happy.** Psalm 66 16, "Come and hear, all you who fear God, and I will tell you what he has done for my soul." I will acquaint you with the soul blessings, with the soul favors, which God has crowned me with. I was darkness—but he has made me light; I was unrighteousness—but he has made me righteous; I was deformed—but he has made me complete; I was full of sores, and spots, and blemishes—but he has washed me, and made me all fair, without spot or wrinkle. I have found the lack of assurance, I now see the worth of assurance; I have long sought assurance, and now I find the sweetness of assurance. Ah! it is such a pearl of price, it is such a beam of God, it is such a spark of glory, which makes my soul a rich amends for all its waiting, weeping, and wrestling. [Eph 5 8; 1 Cor 1 30; Col 2 10; Isa 1 6; Eph 5 26-27; Song 4 7]

So, when it pleased God to call **Paul** by his grace, and to reveal Christ in him and to him, ah! how does he labor, as for life, to bring others to an acquaintance with Christ, and to an acceptance of Christ, and to an assurance of everlasting happiness and blessedness by Christ! After Paul had been in paradise, he makes it his all, to bring others to paradise, 2 Cor 12. So the **spouse** in the Canticles, having assurance of her interest in Christ, how does she labor, by all holy and heavenly rhetoric and logic, by all the strains of love and sweetness, to draw the daughters of Jerusalem to a sight of Christ! Song 5 10-16, and Song 6 1, etc. When a beam of divine light and love had shined upon **Andrew**, he labors to draw his brother Simon to the fountain of all light and love, John 1 40-42. And when **Philip** had but a cast of Christ's countenance, his pulse beats, and his heart calls upon Nathanael to come and share with him in that loving-kindness which was better than life, John 1 43-47.

The constant cry of souls under the power of assurance is, "Come, taste and see how good the Lord is," Psalm 34 8. Ah, sinners, sinners! "his ways are ways of pleasantness, and all his paths are peace," Prov 3 17; his "commands are not grievous," 1 John 5 3—but joyous; "his yoke is easy, and his burden is light," Matt 11 30; not only for keeping—but also "in keeping of his commands there is great reward," Psalm 19 11. Assurance will strongly put men upon winning of others by counsel, by example, by prayer, and by communicating their spiritual experiences to them. Assurance will furnish a man with will, skill, and experience to confute all those false reports that vain men frequently cast upon the Lord and his ways. It will make a man proclaim to the world "that one day in the Lord's courts is better than a thousand years elsewhere," Psalm 84 10; that there are more glorious joys, more pure comforts, more abiding peace, more royal contents, more celestial delights, in one day's walking with God, in one hour's communion with God, etc., than is to be found in all things below God.

And by these and such like ways, souls under the power of a well-grounded assurance do endeavor to make others happy with themselves. A soul under assurance is unwilling to go to heaven without company. He is often a-crying out, "Father, bless this soul too, and crown that soul too let us to heaven together, let us be made happy together."

[6.] The sixth difference. Sixthly, **A well-grounded assurance of God's love, and of a man's everlasting happiness and blessedness, will exceedingly arm and strengthen him against all wickedness and sin.** Ezek 16 60-63. No man loathes sin, and himself for sin, as such a man; no man wars and watches against sin more than such a man; no man sighs and mourns, bleeds and complains, under the sense of sinful motions and sinful operations more than such a man, Luke 7 44,50. Every stirring of sin makes a man who is under the power of assurance to cry out, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?" Rom 7 22-25. Psalm 85 8, "I will hear what God the Lord will speak; for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints and let them not turn again to folly," or, as the Hebrew will bear, "And they shall not return to folly." God's speaking peace to his people fences and fortifies them against folly and vanity.

The assurance that Joseph had of his master's love armed him against the lascivious assaults of his lustful mistress; and will not divine love, which is stronger than death, do this and more? Song 8 6-7. Assurance makes a man say to his sins, as he to his idols, "Get you hence, for what have I any more to do with idols!" So says the assured soul, "Away pride, away passion, away worldly-mindedness, away uncleanness, away uncharitableness, etc., for what have I any more to do with you!" Assurance makes the soul speak to sin as David speaks to sinners Psalm 119 115, "Depart from me, you workers of iniquity; for I will keep the commandments of my God " so says the assured soul, "Depart from me, O my lusts, for I have tasted of the love of God, and I have given up myself wholly and only to God, and I cannot but keep the commandments of my God!"

The Jewish Rabbis report, that the same night that Israel departed out of Egypt towards Canaan, all the idols and idolatrous temples in Egypt, by lightning and earthquakes, were broken down. So when Christ and assurance comes to be set up in the soul, all the idols of Satan and a man's own heart are cast down, and cast out as an abomination. Sound assurance puts a man upon "purifying himself, even as Christ is pure," 1 John 3 2-3. The assured Christian knows, that it is dangerous to sin against light, that it is more dangerous to sin against love, that it is most dangerous to sin against love revealed and manifested to the soul. To sin under assurance, is to sin against the great mercies of God, it is to sin against the highest hopes of glory; and this will certainly provoke God to be angry. God may well say to such a Christian, "Is this your kindness to your best friend?"

1 Kings 11 9, "And the Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice." To sin under assurance, is to sin in paradise; it is to sin under the flaming sword, it is to sin in the suburbs of heaven, it is to run the hazard of losing that favor "which is better than life," of that "joy which is unspeakable and full of glory," and of that "peace which passes understanding." To sin under assurance, is to cast reproach upon Christ, to grieve the Spirit, to wound conscience, to weaken your graces, to blur your evidences, to usher in calamities, to embitter your mercies, and to provoke the tempter to tempt you.

Truly, that assurance is but presumption, which allows men to play with sin, to be bold with sin, to make light of sin, to walk on in ways of sin. Such assurance will never bring a man to heaven, it will never keep him from dropping into hell, yes, it will double his damnation, and make him the most miserable among all damned, wretched, forlorn spirits. Ah, Lord! from such false hopes deliver my soul; and give me more and more of that divine hope which makes sin to be more hateful than hell; and which makes the soul to be more careful to avoid the one, than it is fearful of falling into the other. This made Anselm say that he had rather be thrust into hell without sin, than go into heaven with sin.

[7.] The seventh difference. Seventhly, **A well-grounded assurance is always attended with three fair handmaids, or with three sweet companions.**

(1.) The first handmaid. The first is **LOVE**. Oh! the assurance of divine favor does mightily inflame a man's love to Christ. Mary Magdalene loved much; Christ's love to her drew out her love very much to himself, Luke 7. Assurance makes the soul sing it out with that sweet singer of Israel, "I will dearly love you, O Lord, my strength," the Hebrew signifies—to love intimately and dearly, as a tender mother loves the fruit of her womb. Psalm 18 2.

Lovers know not how to keep silence; lovers of Christ are full of gracious expressions. Love is the attractive loadstone of love. It is impossible for a soul not to love Christ—who knows he is beloved of Christ. Christ's love constrains the soul to love, not by force—but *loving necessity*. A believer cannot find the heart of Christ to be beating towards him—but his heart will strongly beat towards Christ. Divine love is like a rod of myrtle, which, as Pliny reports, makes the traveler who carries it in his hand, that he shall never be faint, weary of walking, or loving. Love overpowers all else. Love is the diadem; none but the queen must wear it. Love is the wedding garment; none but the spouse can fit it. Love is a loadstone to draw, as well as a fire to warm. He who does not love Christ, was never assured of the love of Christ.

(2.) The second handmaid, or companion which attends a well-grounded assurance, is **HUMILITY**. **David**, under assurance, cries out, I am a worm and no man!" The Hebrew word which is here rendered *worm*, signifies *a very little worm*, which a man can hardly see or perceive. Psalm 22 6. **Abraham**, under assurance, cries out, that he is but "dust and ashes!" Jacob, under assurance, cries out, "I am not worthy of all the faithfulness and unfailing love you have shown to me!" **Job**, under assurance, "abhors himself in dust and ashes!" **Moses** had the honor and the happiness to speak with God "face to face;" he was very much in God's favor; and yet a more humble soul, the earth did never bear. "Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth." Numbers 12 3. The great apostle **Paul**, under all the revelations and glorious manifestations of God to him, counts himself "less than the least of all saints," Eph 3 8. That is mere presumption, that is a delusion of the devil, and no sound assurance, which puffs and swells the souls of men with pride; which makes men prize themselves above others, above the value which God has put upon them.

(3.) The third handmaid or companion which attends assurance, is holy **JOY**. Ah! this assurance causes the strong waters of consolation to overflow the soul. Assurance raises the strongest joy in the soul Luke 1 46-47, and Mary said, "My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior." When a man comes to be assured that God is his Savior, presently his spirit rejoices in God. This truth is held forth by three parables in that of Luke 15, and also in 1 Pet 1 8-9, "Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy (to dance and leap for joy), for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls." They have heaven's happiness beforehand. Oh the joy, the joy, the inexpressible joy which attends a well-grounded assurance! Assurance raises a paradise of delight in the soul. A Christian, under the power of assurance, works all his works in Christ. In Christ, therefore, and in him alone, he rejoices.

[8.] The eighth difference. Eighthly, and lastly, **A well-grounded assurance sometimes springs from the testimony and witness of the Spirit of God.** The Spirit sometimes witnesses to a believer's spirit, that he is born of God, that he is beloved of God, that he has union and communion with God, and that he shall reign forever with God Rom 8 26, "The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God." The Spirit himself witnesses not only the gifts and graces of the Spirit—but the Spirit itself witnesses together with our own spirit, that we are the children of God. Sometimes the saints have two witnesses joining their testimonies together to confirm and establish them in these blessed and glorious truths, that they are the sons of God and heirs of glory; and this is their honor as well as their comfort, that the blessed Spirit should bear witness at the bar of their consciences that they are the sons of God 1 Cor 2 12, "We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us;" that is, that we may know our election, effectual calling, justification, sanctification, and glorification. A man may receive many things that are freely given of God—and yet not know them until the Spirit comes and makes them known to the soul.

QUESTION. But you may say to me, **How shall we know the whispering of the Holy Spirit—from the hissing of the old serpent?** How shall we know the report, the witness, and testimony of the Spirit of Christ—from that report, witness, and testimony that the old serpent deludes and deceives many by, in these days wherein he mostly appears in his angelic robes? "For Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light." 2 Corinthians 11 14.

ANSWER. I answer, you may know the whispering of the Spirit from the hissing of the old serpent, etc., by these following things, which I desire that you would seriously consider, as you prize the peace and settlement, the satisfaction, consolation, and salvation of your own souls.

(1.) The first difference. First, **The Spirit of Christ does not witness by any outward voice**, as God did from heaven of Christ, Matt 3 17; nor by an angel, as to the Virgin Mary, Luke 1 30-34; **but by an inward, secret, glorious, and unspeakable way,** he bids believers be of good cheer, their sins are forgiven, as Christ said to the palsied man in the Gospel, Matt 9 2. And this truth is to be solemnly minded against those poor deceived and deluded souls in these days, who would make others believe that they have had such and such glorious things made known by an outward, audible voice from heaven. It is much to be feared that they never found the inward, the sweet, the secret, the powerful testimony and report of the Spirit of Christ—who boast, and brag, and rest so much upon such fanatical testimony.

In 1 Kings 19 11-13, you read of "a great and powerful **wind** tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an **earthquake**, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a **fire**, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a **gentle whisper**," and the Lord spoke to Elijah in that gentle whisper. Ah, Christians! the Spirit of the Lord makes not a great noise—but he comes in a gentle whisper, and makes a soft and secret report to the soul, that it is beloved, that it is pardoned, and that it shall be forever glorified.

(2.) The second difference. Secondly, **The testimony and witness of the Spirit of Christ, is only gained and enjoyed in holy and heavenly ways**, as you may clearly see by comparing these Scriptures together. [Acts 10 4; Dan 9 20-22; Isa 64 5; Acts 10 44, etc.] The Spirit of the Lord is a **Holy** Spirit, and he cannot, he will not make any report of the love of the Father to the soul, outside of a way of holiness. Truly, all those glorious reports that many boast they have met with in sinful ways, in wretched and ungodly ways, are from the hissing of the old serpent, and not from the whisperings of the Spirit of grace. I think it is little less than blasphemy for any to affirm, that the blessed Spirit of Christ makes reports of the love and favor of God to people walking in ways of wickedness and sin. Yet this age has many such monsters.

(3.) The third difference. Thirdly, **The testimony and witness of the Spirit of Christ, is a clear, a full, a satisfying testimony and witness**, John 14 17; 1 John 3 24. The soul sits down under the home-reports of the Spirit, and says, 'Lord, it is enough!' The soul being full, sits down and sweetly sings it out "My beloved is mine, and I am his. I am my well-beloved's, and his desire is towards me," Song 2 16, and Song 7 10. "The Lord is my portion and the lot of my inheritance," Psalm 16 5. "I have none in heaven but you, neither are there any on earth which I desire in comparison of you," Psalm 73 25. "Henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness," 2 Tim 4 8. "Make haste, my beloved," etc., Song 8 14.

Such power, majesty, and glory, attends the glorious testimony of the Spirit of Christ—as scatters all clouds, as resolves all doubts, as answers all objections, as silences the wrangling soul, etc. If the testimony of the Spirit of Christ were not a full, satisfying testimony, it could never fill the soul with such joy as is "unspeakable and full of glory," and with "such peace as passes understanding." If the testimony were not satisfactory, the soul would still be under fears and doubts, the heart would still be a-wrangling and quarreling, "I may perish, and I may be undone, I may have the door of mercy shut against me!" etc.

If you bring news to a condemned person that the king has pardoned him, and that he will receive him to favor, and confer such and such dignity upon him—yet this does not quiet him nor satisfy him, until he knows for sure, that it is the king's act. Until he is satisfied in that, he cannot say it is enough, he cannot be cheerful, he cannot be delightful, etc. But when he is satisfied that it is the king's act, that the king has certainly done this and that for him, then he is satisfied, and then sighing and mourning flies away, and then he rejoices with joy unspeakable. So it is with a believing soul under the testimony and witness of the spirit of Christ.

(4.) The fourth difference. Fourthly, Though the Spirit is a witnessing Spirit, yet **he does not *always* witness to believers their adoption, their interest in Christ**, etc. There is a mighty difference between the *working* of the Spirit—and the *witness* of the Spirit. There are oftentimes many glorious and efficacious *works* of the Spirit, as faith, love, repentance, holiness, etc., where there is not the *witness* of the Spirit, Isa 50 10. David at that very time had the Spirit, and many sweet workings of the Spirit in him and upon him—when he had by sin lost the witness and testimony of the Spirit, Psalm 51 10-12.

Though the Spirit of the Lord is a witnessing and a sealing Spirit, yet he does not **always** witness and seal up the love and favor of the Father to believers' souls, as you may see by these scriptures, [Job 23 8-9; 1 John 5 13; Psalm 88; Psalm 77; Mic 7 8-9; Isa 8 17] and as the experience of many precious Christians can abundantly evidence. All believers do not see alike *need* of this testimony, they do not all alike *prize* this testimony, they do not all alike *observe* it and *improve* it; and therefore, it is no wonder if the Spirit be a witnessing Spirit to some and not to others.

You do but gratify Satan and wrong your own souls, when you argue that certainly you have not the Spirit, because he is not *always* a witnessing and a sealing Spirit to your souls. Though it be the office of the Spirit to witness, yet it is not his office *always* to witness to believers their happiness and blessedness. The Spirit may act one way and at one time of the soul—yet he does not act similarly at other ways and times. Sometimes the Spirit works upon the understanding, sometimes upon the will, sometimes upon the affections, sometimes upon faith, sometimes upon fear, sometimes upon love, sometimes upon humility, etc. Our hearts are the Spirit's harps. If a man should always plucking one string in an instrument, he would never play various tunes, he would never make pleasant music; no more would the Spirit, if he should be always a-doing one thing in the soul. Therefore he acts variously. Sometimes he will show himself a quickening Spirit, sometimes an enlightening Spirit, sometimes a rejoicing Spirit, sometimes a sealing Spirit, and always a supporting Spirit, etc.

(5.) The fifth difference. Fifthly, **The testimony and witness of the Spirit is a sure testimony, a sure witness.** The Spirit is truth itself; he is the great searcher of the deep things of God. The Spirit of the Lord is the discoverer, the confuter, and destroyer of all false spirits. [Titus 1 2; John 14 17; 1 Cor 2 10; 1 John 4 1-5] The Spirit is above all possibility of being deceived. He is omnipotent, he is omniscient, he is omnipresent, he is one of the cabinet-council of heaven; he lies and lives in the bosom of the Father—and can call them all by name upon whom the Father has set his heart—and therefore his testimony must needs be true. It is a surer testimony than if a man should hear a voice from heaven pronouncing him to be happy and blessed. You may safely and securely lay the weight of your souls upon this testimony; it never has, it never will deceive any that has leaned upon it. This testimony will be a rock that will bear up a soul, when other false testimonies will be but "a reed of Egypt," which will deceive the soul, which will undo the soul; as I am afraid many in this deluding age have found by sad experience.

(6.) The sixth difference. Sixthly, **The testimony of God's Spirit is always accompanied with the testimony of our own.** These may be distinguished—but they can never be separated. I do not say that the testimony of our spirits is *always* accompanied with the testimony of the Spirit. No; for a believer has often the single testimony of his own spirit, when he lacks the testimony of the Spirit of Christ, and the single testimony of his own conscience will afford him much courage and comfort, 2 Cor 1 12 Yes, it will make a paradise of delight in his soul, etc.

When the Spirit of God gives his witness to a man, his own spirit also gives witness. Look! as face answers to face, so does the witness of a believer's spirit answer to the witness of the Spirit of Christ. Rom 8 16, "The Spirit witnesses together with our spirits, that we he the sons of God." Now, if our own consciences do not testify first, that we are sons and heirs, the Spirit does not testify; for the Spirit bears witness together with our spirits. John is very express in 1 John 3 21, "but if our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. But if our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and knows all things." 1 John 5 8-12, and "There are three who bear witness in earth—the Spirit, and the water, and the blood, and these three agree in one." By the *Spirit* we may understand the Holy Spirit, by whose strength we lay hold on Christ and all his benefits. By *water* we may understand our regeneration, our sanctification; and by *blood* we may understand the blood and righteousness of Christ, which is imputed and applied by faith to us. "And these three agree in one," that is, they do all three of one accord testify the same thing.

(7.) The seventh difference. Seventhly, **The witness of the Spirit is ever according to the word.** There is a sweet harmony between God's inward and the outward testimony—between the Spirit of God and the word of God. The scriptures were all inspired by the Spirit, 2 Pet 1 20-21; and therefore the Spirit cannot contradict himself—which he would do, if he would give to the conscience any testimony contrary to the testimony of the word. It is blasphemy to make the inner testimony of the Spirit, to contradict the testimony of his written word. The Spirit has revealed his whole mind in the word, and he will not give a contrary testimony to what he has given in the word.

The word says that those who are born again; that those who are new creatures, that those who believe and repent—shall be saved. "If you are born again, if you are a new creature, if you believe and repent—you shall be saved," says the Spirit. The Spirit never justifies where the word condemns, the Spirit never approves where the word disapproves, the Spirit never blesses where the word curses. In the Old Testament all revelations were to be examined by the word, Deut 13 1-4. Isa 8 20, "To the law and to the testimony if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." We are not only blind—but lame too; therefore **the Spirit shall lead us to the knowledge and practice of all necessary saving truths.**

So in John 16 13, "But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears." Here the Holy Spirit is brought in as some messenger or ambassador who only relates things faithfully according to what he has been commissioned to speak. Such people as look and lean upon the hissing of the old serpent, may have a testimony that they are happy, against the testimony of the word; but wherever the Spirit of Christ gives in his testimony, it is still according to the word. Look! the testimony of the Spirit answers exactly to the testimony of the word.

(8.) The eighth difference. Eighthly, **The witness of the Spirit is a holy witness, a holy testimony.** Nothing can come from the Holy Spirit but that which is holy—that which is *effectually* holy. Nothing makes the heart more in the love, study, practice, and growth of holiness, than the glorious testimony of the Holy Spirit. And the more clear and full the Spirit's testimony is, the more holy and gracious it will make the soul. Nothing puts such golden engagements upon the soul to holiness—as the Spirit sealing a man up to the day of redemption—as the Spirit speaking and sealing peace, love, and pardon to the soul, Psalm 85 8; 1 Cor 15 31; 2 Cor 5 14. Nothing makes a man more careful to please Christ, more fearful to offend Christ, more studious to exalt Christ, and more circumspect to walk with Christ, than this testimony of the Spirit of Christ.

Truly, that is not the blessed whispering of Christ's Spirit—but the hissing of the old serpent—which makes men bold with sin, which makes men dally with sin, which makes man a servant to sin, which breeds a contempt or neglect of holy duties, or a carelessness in walking with God. And from those hissings of the old serpent, O Lord, deliver my soul, and the souls of all those who put their trust in you!

(9.) The ninth difference. Ninthly and lastly, **Assurance is a jewel, a pearl of that price, that God only bestows it upon renewed hearts.** The Spirit never sets his *seal* upon any—but upon those who Christ has first printed his *image* upon. God gives to none the white stone of forgiveness, Rev 2 17—but to those from whom he has taken the heart of stone; Ezek 36 25-27. Christ never tells a man that his name is written in the book of life, until he has breathed into him spiritual life, Luke 10 20. Christ never says, 'Son, be of good cheer, your sin is pardoned,' until he has first said, 'Be healed, be cleansed!' Luke 5 18-20. Christ never gives a man a new name—until he has made them new creatures, Isa 56 5; 2 Cor 5 17. Christ makes the slaves of Satan into his sons—before we cry 'Abba, Father!' Rom 8 15. Christ makes enemies into his friends—before he will make us of his court or counsel, Eph 2 13-20.

Christ will never hang a pearl in a swine's snout; nor put new wine into old bottles; nor his royal robes upon a leprous back; nor his golden chain around a dead man's neck; nor his glistening crown upon traitor's head! The Spirit never sets his seal upon any—but upon those who Christ has first set as a seal upon his heart, Eph 1 13; Song 8 6. The Spirit only bears witness to such as hate sin as Christ hates it, and who love righteousness as Christ loves it, who hate sin more than hell, and who love truth more than life, Psalm 45 7. A soul sealed by the Spirit will pull out right eyes, and cut off right hands, for Christ; such souls will part with a *Benjamin*, and offer up an *Isaac*, for Christ. This is a serious warning against those deceived and deluded souls, who remain yet in their blood, and who wallow in their sins—and yet boast and brag of the seal and of the witness and testimony of the Spirit.

And thus I have showed you the difference between the whisperings of the Spirit and the hissing of the old serpent; between a true assurance and a false one.

CHAPTER 8

Several special questions about assurance

[1.] The first question. But methinks I hear some precious souls saying, "We have, after much praying, weeping, and waiting, gained this pearl of price, assurance; but oh, how shall we do to **strengthen** it, how shall we do to **keep** it? Satan will labor to weaken our assurance, and to rob us of this jewel which is worth more than a world! What **means** must we use to strengthen our assurance and to secure it?" Now to this question I shall give these following answers

First, If you would have your assurance strengthened and maintained, then **keep close to soul-strengthening ways, be serious and sincere, be diligent and constant in the use of those means and ways wherein you first gained assurance**, as prayer; the word, breaking of bread, communion of saints, etc. A serious and cordial use of holy and heavenly means is blessed, not only with a *preservation* of assurance—but likewise with an *addition* and *increase* of it. The ways of God, and his goings in the sanctuary, have wrought wonders upon you, when you were dead; how much more will they work upon you and for you, now that you are by grace made alive? He who will not apply himself to God's strengthening methods, will quickly find his assurance weakened, if not wholly gone. He who thinks himself too good for ordinances, will quickly grow weak in his assurance. The choicest prophets, and highest apostles, who had attained to the fullest assurance, kept close to the ways and precious institutions of Christ. Truly, those who pretend to live above ordinances, and yet live below them, never knew by experience what a mercy it was to have a well-grounded assurance, or else they have lost that blessed assurance that once they had. The doing heart, the diligent heart, turns the spark into a flame, the mite into a million, the penny into a pound, etc.

Secondly, If you would strengthen and maintain your assurance, then **dwell much upon your spiritual and eternal privileges**, namely, your adoption, justification, reconciliation, glorification, etc., 1 Pet 2 9. This you shall find by experience will mightily tend to the strengthening and maintaining of your assurance. He who neglects this rule will quickly find his *sun* to set in a *cloud*; and say, "My harp is tuned to mourning, and my flute to the sound of wailing!" Job 30 31. Holy and heavenly privileges are the food by which assurance is, cherished and maintained.

Thirdly, If you would strengthen and maintain your assurance, then **look that your hearts run more out to *Christ*—than to *assurance***; more to the *sun* than to the *beams*; more to the *fountain* than to the *stream*; more to the *root* than to the *branch*; more to the *cause* than to the *effect*, Song 1 13. Assurance is sweet—but Christ is more sweet! Assurance is lovely—but Christ is altogether lovely! Song 5 16. Assurance is precious—but Christ is most precious! Prov 3 15. Though assurance is a flower which yields much comfort and delight—yet it is but a flower. Though assurance be a precious box—yet it is but a box. Though assurance be a ring of gold—yet it is but a ring of gold. And what is the flower compared to the root? What is the box compared to the precious perfume? What is the ring compared to the diamond? All these are no more than assurance is, compared to Christ. Therefore let your eye and heart, first, most, and last—be fixed upon Christ; then will assurance bed and board with you; otherwise you will quickly find your summer to be turned into winter.

Fourthly, If you would strengthen and maintain your assurance, then **look that your hearts are more taken up with Christ—than with your GRACES.** Though grace is a glorious creature, yet it is but a creature; therefore let grace have your eye—but be sure that Christ has your heart! Christ must have your heart. Christ will not allow your very graces to be rivals with him. He who minds his graces more than Christ, or that sets his graces upon the throne with Christ—will quickly find what it is to lose the face and favor of Christ. Your graces are but Christ's servants and handmaids; you may look upon them—but you must not love them. It is a reproach to Christ, that those who have married the *master*, should at the same time love the *servants!*

Christ is the pot of manna, the cruse of oil, the bottomless ocean, the most sparkling diamond in the ring of glory, etc.

The queen may look upon her glistening courtiers—but she must love upon the king! The wife may take pleasure in her lovely babes—but she must live upon her husband, and be most observant of her husband. So gracious souls may look upon their graces—but they must live upon king Jesus; they may take pleasure in their graces—but they must live upon Christ, and be most observant of Christ. This is the way to keep Christ and assurance; and he who walks contrary to this rule will soon find the loss of both. Christ will be all in all—or he will be nothing at all. Though his coat was once divided, yet he will never allow his crown to be divided, John 19 23; Isa 42 8.

Fifthly, If you would have your assurance strengthened and maintained, then **labor to improve it to the strengthening of you against temptations, to the fencing of you against corruptions, to the raising of your resolutions, to the inflaming of your affections, to the bettering of your lives**. 'We have,' says Cyprian, 'no such *notions* as many philosophers have—but we are philosophers in our *deeds*. We do not *speak* great things—but we *do* great things in our lives.' Assurance is a pearl of great price; he who will keep it must improve it. The ready way to maintain our natural strength, and to increase it, is to exercise it. Assurance is one of the choicest and chief talents which God ever entrusted man with, and he who does not improve it, and employ it, will quickly lose it, etc. God will not allow so golden a talent to gather rust, Matt 25 28. Win gold and wear gold, improve gold and keep gold; win assurance and wear assurance, improve assurance and keep assurance.

Dionysius, being advised that one of his subjects had *hidden* a great amount of money, commands him upon pain of death to bring it to him, which he did—but not all. He then went and dwelt in another country, where he took up some useful employment and profitably used the remainder of his money. When Dionysius heard of this, he sent back the money which he had taken from him, saying, 'Now you know how to *use* riches, take back what I took from you.' I shall leave you to make the application.

Sixthly, If you would have your assurance strengthened and maintained, then **walk humbly with your God.** Mic 6 8. God makes the humble man's heart his house to dwell in Isa 57 15, "For thus says the high and lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy—I dwell in the high and holy place, with him who is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." The highest heavens and the lowest hearts are the habitations wherein the Holy One delights to dwell. Now this phrase, "I will dwell with the humble," includes several things

1. It includes God's superintending the humble.

2. It includes God's assisting and strengthening of the humble.

3. It includes God's protection; I will dwell with the humble, that is, I will protect him and secure him, Job 22 29.

4. It includes God's sympathizing with the humble.

5. It includes God's applying all suitable good to the humble, Isa 57 18, and Isa 63 9.

6. It includes God's ruling and overruling the heart and the affections of the humble.

7. It includes God's teaching and instructing of the humble.

8. Lastly, it includes and takes in a clearer, a fuller, and a larger manifestation and communication of God to humble souls, Psalm 10 17, and Psalm 25 9.

'Ah!' says God, 'I will dwell with the humble; that is, I will more richly, more abundantly, and more gloriously manifest and make known my grace and glory, my goodness and sweetness, my loving-kindness and tenderness—to humble souls!'

Now tell me, humble souls, will not God's dwelling thus with you contribute very much to the strengthening and maintaining of your assurance? James 4 6, "But he gives more grace therefore he says, God resists the proud" (or as the Greek word emphatically signifies—he sets himself in battle array against the proud), "but gives grace to the humble." Humility is both a grace, and a *vessel* to receive grace. God pours in grace into the humble souls, as men pour liquor into an empty vessel And truly, the more grace you have, the more will your assurance be strengthened and maintained. Well! remember this, the humble man's mercies are the *sweetest* mercies, the *greatest* mercies, the most *growing* and *thriving* mercies, the most *blessed* and *sanctified* mercies, and the most *lasting* and *abiding* mercies. Therefore, as you would have your assurance strengthened and maintained, walk humbly with your God! I say again, walk humbly, walk humbly with your God, and you shall wear the crown of assurance to your grave!

Seventhly, If you would keep and maintain your assurance, then **take heed and watch against those very particular sins by which other saints have lost their assurance**. Take heed of carnal confidence and security. David lost his assurance by not guarding his heart against those evils, Psalm 30 6-7. Again, take heed of a light, slight, careless, and negligent spirit in holy and spiritual things. The spouse in the Canticles lost her assurance, and her sweet communion with Christ, by her lightness of spirit, Song 5 2-3,6. Again, take heed of a stout and unyielding spirit under the afflicting hand of God; this made God hide his face from them, Isa 57 17. In a word, take heed of tasting of forbidden fruit, remembering what Adam lost by a taste!

Eighthly, If you would maintain and keep your assurance, then **frequently and seriously consider of the great difficulty of recovering assurance when it is lost.** Oh! the sighs, the groans, the complaints, the prayers, the tears, the heart-renting, the soul-bleeding—which the recovery of your lost assurance will cost! The *gaining* of assurance at first cost you dear—but the *regaining* of it, if you should be so unhappy as to lose it, will put you to more pains and effort. Of the two, it is easier to *keep* assurance now you have it—than to *recover* it when you have lost it. It is easier to keep the house in reparations, than to build it up when it is fallen.

A man may easier make a seeing eye blind—than a blind to see; a man may soon put an instrument out of tune—but not soon put it in again; a man is easily borne down the stream—but cannot swim so easily up the stream, etc.

Ninthly, and lastly, **Consider solemnly the sad and woeful evils and hindrances which will certainly follow upon the loss of your assurance.** How can the bird fly without wings, and the wheels go without oil, and the workman work without hands, and the painter paint without eyes? etc. I will only touch upon a few of these hindrances.

(1.) None of the precious things of Christ will be so sweet to you—as formerly they have been.

(2.) You will neither be so fervent in duty, nor so frequent in duty, nor so abundant in duty, nor so spiritual in duty, nor so lively in duty, nor so cheerful in duty—as formerly you have been.

(3.) Afflictions will sooner sink you, temptations will sooner overcome you, oppositions will sooner discourage you.

(4.) Your mercies will be bitter, your life a burden, and death a terror to you; you will be weary of living, and yet afraid of dying, etc.

[2.] Now, the second question is this Suppose some have not been so careful to keep and maintain their assurance as they should have been—but upon one account or another have left that blessed assurance which once they had; **how may such sad souls be supported and kept from fainting, sinking, and languishing under the loss of assurance?** To this question I shall give these following answers

First, Souls who have lost that sweet assurance which once they had, may be supported and kept from fainting and sinking, **by considering, that though they have lost their assurance, yet they have not lost their sonship; for once sons and always sons.** You are sons, though dejected sons; you are sons, though comfortless sons; you are sons, though mourning sons, Rom 8 15-17. Once children of God—always children; once heirs of God—always heirs; once beloved of God—always beloved; once happy in Christ—always happy [Psalm 89 30-32,34; John 13 5; Jer 31 3]

2 Sam 23 5, "Although my house be not so with God. For He has established an everlasting covenant with me, ordered and secured in every detail . Will He not bring about my whole salvation and my every desire?" 'Well,' says David, 'though neither myself, nor my house, have been so exact and perfect in our walkings before God as we should—and we have broken our covenants with him, and dealt unworthily with him, and turned our backs upon him, yet he has made with me an everlasting covenant, he has engaged himself to an everlasting covenant, that he will be my Father, and that I shall be his son. And this is my salvation and everlasting ground of consolation and supportation to my soul.'

The second support is this, **Consider, that though your comfort, joy, and peace, does depend much upon your assurance; yet your eternal happiness and blessedness does not depend upon your assurance.** If it did, you might be both happy and miserable in a day, yes, in an hour! Your happiness lies in your union with God, in your communion with God, in your interest in God; and not in your seeing and knowing your interest. Your joy and comfort lies in your seeing and knowing your interest in God—but your everlasting happiness lies in your being savingly interested in God. The welfare and happiness of the child lies in the kinship which he has in his father—but the joy and comfort of the child lies in his seeing, in his knowing of his interest in his father. It is so between the Lord and believers Psalm 144 15, "Happy are the people who are in such a case; yes, happy is that people whose God is the Lord."

Among the philosophers there were two hundred and eighty opinions concerning happiness, some affirming happiness to lie in one thing, some in another. Ah! but by the Spirit and word we are taught that happiness lies in our oneness with God, in our nearness and dearness to God, and in our conformity to God, etc. Mark, the Scripture pronounces him happy, whose **hope** is in God, though he lacks assurance Psalm 146 5, "Happy is he who has the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God." Again, he is happy who **trusts** in the Lord, though for the present he lacks assurance. Prov 16 20, "And whoever trusts in the Lord, happy is he." Again, he is happy who **fears** the Lord, who has set up God as the object of his fear, though he lacks assurance of the love of God Prov 28 14, "Happy is the man who always fears the Lord;" who fears to offend, who fears to disobey, who fears to rebel, etc. Again, he is happy that **believes** in Christ, that **rests** and **stays** upon Christ—as the Scriptures everywhere testify, though he may lack assurance.

Happiness lies not in any transient act of the Spirit, as assurance is—but in the more permanent and lasting acts of the Spirit. The philosopher could say, "That he was never a happy man—who might afterwards become miserable." If a man's *eternal* happiness did lie in the *assurance* of his happiness, then might a man be crowned with Xerxes's favorite in the morning, and beheaded with him in the evening of the same day.

But this is the believer's blessedness—that his condition is always good—though he does not always see it to be good; that his state is always safe—though it is not always comfortable.

To make up happiness, these things must concur

1, it must be a **suitable** good to our natures;

2, it must be an **excellent** good—a good which has worth and excellency in it;

3, it must be a **sufficient** good; a few shavings of gold will not make a man rich, etc.;

4, it must be a **permanent** good. It is permanency which sets the greatest price, and has the greatest influence, into our happiness and felicity.

The third support to keep those precious souls from fainting and sinking who have lost that sweet assurance that once they had, is to **consider that though their loss be the greatest and saddest loss that could befall them, yet it is a recoverable loss, it is a loss that may be recovered**, as these scriptures clearly evidence. [Psalm 71 20-21, and Psalm 42 5,7-8; Isa 54 7-8; Mic 7 18-19; Song 3 4; Psalm 84 11, etc.] And does not this age furnish us with many instances of this kind? Doubtless many there are among the precious sons and daughters of Zion, who have lost this pearl of price, and after waiting, weeping, and wrestling, have found it again! Therefore be not discouraged, O sighing, losing souls! In the loss of temporals, it is a great support to men's spirits that their loss may be made up, and why should it not be so in spirituals also?

The fourth support to keep their hearts from sinking and breaking who have lost that sweet assurance that once they had, is, seriously to **consider that your loss is no greater, nor no sadder, than what the noblest and the choicest saints have sustained**, as you may see by comparing these scriptures. [Psalm 30 6-7, and Psalm 51 12; Job 23 8-9; Isa 8 17] Many of those who were once the worthies of this world, and are now triumphing in that eternal world among the princes of glory, had lost that sweet assurance and sense of divine love and favor which they once enjoyed. Therefore let not your spirits faint and fail. In temporal losses it is a comfort and a support to have companions with us; and why should it not much more be so in spirituals?

The fifth support to bear up their spirits who have lost that sweet assurance that once they had, is for them to remember, and seriously mind, that **though they have lost assurance, yet they have not lost the blessed breathings and sweet influences of the Spirit upon them**. Witness their love to Christ, their longing after Christ, their fear of offending Christ, their care to please Christ, their high esteem of Christ, and their mourning for the dishonors that by themselves or others are done to Christ, etc. [Song 3 5; Mic 7 7-9, compared, Isa 8 17; Isa 50 10] A man may enjoy the warmth, heat, and influence of the sun, when he has lost the *sight* of the sun. David had lost his assurance, he had lost the sight of the sun; and yet he enjoyed the warmth and influences of it upon his heart, as is evident in Psalm 51.

Though your sun, O Christian, is set in a cloud—yet it will rise again, and in the interim you have and do enjoy the warmth and influences of the sun! Therefore sorrow not, mourn not, as one without hope. Those warm influences which the Sun of righteousness has now upon your heart, are infallible evidences that he will shine forth and smile upon you as in the days of old; therefore let your bow still abide in strength, Psalm 42 5,7-8,11.

The sixth support to keep their hearts from fainting and sinking who have lost that sweet assurance that once they had, is seriously to **consider, that it will be but as a day—but as a short day, before the loss of your assurance shall be made up with a more clear, full, perfect, and complete enjoyment of God**. Before long, O mourning soul, your sun shall rise and never set, your joy and comfort shall be always fresh and green. God shall soon comfort you on every side, it shall be night with you no more, you shall be always in the bosom of God, Isa 57 18-20. Psalm 71 20-21, "Though you have made me see troubles, many and bitter, you will restore my life again; from the depths of the earth you will again bring me up. You will increase my honor and comfort me once again." The time is at hand, O perplexed soul, when you shall have smiles without frowns, light without darkness, day without night, wine without water, sweet without bitter, and joy without sorrow!

The year of jubilee is at hand. You now sow in tears, you shall shortly reap in joy! Yes, "everlasting joy shall be upon your head," and "sorrow and sighing shall flee away," therefore faint not. [Lev 25; Psalm 129 5; Isa 35 2]

[3.] The third question is this, namely, **What MEANS must souls use to recover assurance when it is lost?** I shall give a few short answers to this question, and so draw to a close.

First, If you would recover assurance, then **you must labor diligently to find out that sin, that Achan, which has robbed you of your wedge of gold, of your assurance**. Surely it is not for mere infirmities—but enormities, that God has put out your candle, and caused your sun to set at noon. Surely you have been *feeding*, not *tasting*, of forbidden fruit. So God has stripped you of your robes, and taken the crown from off your head, and turned you out of paradise. But this is not all.

Therefore, in the second place, **weep much, mourn much, over the Achan, over those wicked messes which have turned your day into night, your rejoicing into sighing**, etc. David does thus in Psalm 51, and God takes him up from his knees, and restores to him "the joy of his salvation." Though God is displeased with your sins, yet he is well-pleased with your tears. Rev 2 4-5. When ancient Rome was heathenish, if the malefactor brought to be whipped fell upon his knees before the one whom he had wronged, it was held a greater offence if the offended one allowed the offender to be whipped. The promise is, that he will "revive the spirit of the contrite," Isa 57 15.

It is said of Adam that he turned his face towards the garden of Eden, and from his heart lamented his fall. Ah! losing souls, turn your face towards heaven, and from your hearts lament your fall, lament your loss. Nothing touches God's heart, like penitent tears. No sooner does Ephraim weep over his sins—but the affections of God are stirring towards him, and God cannot hold, but he must proclaim to the world that mourning Ephraim, bemoaning Ephraim, is his dear son, his pleasant child, and that he will "surely have mercy on him;" or, as the Hebrew has it, "I will abundantly have mercy on him," Jer 31 18-20.

It is an excellent expression of Basil, "It grieves, it irks, it is tedious to our most munificent, great, glorious God—that we ask anything little of him. He would have us ask great things of him." When our hearts are set to weep over our sins, God will so act in ways of love towards us, that it shall not long be night with our souls. God will never allow them to be drowned in sorrow—who are set upon drowning their sins in penitential tears. The Jews have a saying, that since the destruction of Jerusalem, 'the *door of prayers* has been shut.' 'But the *door of tears* was never shut,' says one. God has by promise engaged himself that those who "sow in tears shall reap in joy," Psalm 126 5. The tears of God's people have such a kind of omnipotency in them, that God himself cannot withstand them. 2 Kings 20 5, "I have seen your tears. I will heal you, and three days from now you will get out of bed and go to the Temple of the Lord." [Psalm 39 12; Job 16 20; Mark 9 24-25, etc.]

Thirdly, If you would recover assurance, then **do not sit down discouraged—but be up and doing!** Remember what a pearl of great price you have lost, and "repent and do your first works," Rev 2 4-5. Resume the good old work of believing, meditating, examining, praying, hearing, mourning, etc. A man who has been recovered formerly out of such or such a disease, if he relapses, he will use the same means again, he will apply the same remedies again—"this remedy once healed me—I will try it again."

Begin again, and resume those very ways by which at first you got assurance. Resume family duties, apply yourself to public ordinances, be much in closet services; stir up every gift which is in you, stir up every grace which is in you, stir up all the life which is in you, and never leave off blowing, until you have blown your little spark into a flame! Never leave off using your penny, until you have turned your penny into a pound. Never leave off improving your mite, until your mite is turned into a million. God will be found in the use of means, and he will restore our lost mercies in the use of means, Psalm 22 26. But this is not all.

Therefore, in the fourth place, **wait patiently upon the Lord**. David did so, and at length the Lord brought him out of the horrible pit—out of the pit of confusion, and set his feet upon a rock, and established his goings, and put a new song of praise into his mouth, Psalm 40 1-3. God never has, nor never will fail, the waiting soul. Though God loves to try the patience of his children, yet he does not love to tire out the patience of his children; therefore he will not contend forever, neither will he be always angry, lest the spirits of his people should fail, Isa 57 16-19.

Assurance is a jewel worth waiting for. It is a pearl which God gives to none but such as have waited long at mercy's door. It is a crown that everyone must win by patient waiting, before he can wear it. God does not think the greatest mercies too good for waiting souls, though he knows the least mercy is too good for impatient souls. The *breasts of the promises* lie full and open to waiting souls, Isa 30 18, and Isa 64 4, and Isa 49 23. The waiting soul shall have anything from God—but the froward and impatient soul gets nothing from God but frowns, and blows, and wounds, and broken bones. Sad souls would do well to make that text their bosom companion, John 14 18, "I will not leave you comfortless," or orphans, "I will come to you." And that Heb 10 36-37, "For you have need of patience, so that after you have done God's will, you may receive what was promised. For in yet a very little while, the Coming One will come and not delay."

Fifthly and lastly, If you would recover assurance, then **take heed of refusing comforts when God brings them to your door**; take heed of throwing gospel cordials away. This was Asaph's sin "My soul refused to be comforted." God comes and offers love to the soul—and the soul refuses it; God comes and spreads the promises of consolation before the soul—and the soul refuses to look upon them; God comes and offers the riches of grace—and the soul refuses to accept of them. Ambrose says, "If I would offer you gold today, you would not say, 'I will come and get it tomorrow.' And will you lightly put God off when he offers peace and comfort to your soul?"

Sometimes the *hand*—the *man* who brings the cordial—is not liked, and therefore men refuse it. Well! remember this when gold is offered, men care not how great or how base he is, who offers it. Neither should we care by whom the cordials and consolations of the gospel are offered to us, whether they are offered by the hand of Isaiah, a prophet of the blood-royal; or by Amos, from among the herdsmen of Tekoa. If the *sweets of heaven* are set before you, it is your wisdom and your duty to taste of them, and to feed upon them, without stumbling at the hand which presents them.

Now for a close I shall make a few short **USES** of what has been said, and so conclude.

[1.] The first use. **You who have assurance, be thankful for it.** It is a jewel more worth than heaven and earth; therefore be thankful. Assurance is a mercy nobly-descended; it is from above. Man is not born with it in his heart, as he is with a tongue in his mouth, James 1 17. Assurance is a peculiar mercy; it is a flower of paradise which God sticks only in his children's bosoms. Assurance is a mercy-sweetening mercy; it is a mercy which puts the garland upon all our mercies. Assurance makes every bitter sweet, and every sweet more sweet. Assurance has amazing transforming powers. It changes iron to gold, ignominies to crowns, and all sufferings to delights! He enjoys little, who lacks assurance; he lacks nothing who enjoys it. Therefore be thankful if you have experienced the sweetness of it.

How much cause have you to rejoice, upon whose heads the Lord has put the crown of assurance, a crown of more worth and weight than all princes' crowns in the world. Oh, what cause have you to be thankful for assurance!

[2.] The second use. If God has given you assurance, then **do not envy the outward felicity and happiness of the men of the world**, Psalm 37 17-18; Prov 23 17. Alas! what are mountains of dust, compared to mountains of gold? what are the stones of the street, compared to rocks of pearl? what are crowns of thorns, compared to crowns of gold, etc.? No more are all the treasures, honors, pleasures, and favors of this world, compared to assurance. The great men of the world are objects of pity—but not of envy. Who envies the prisoner at the bar? Who envies the malefactor who is going to execution? Who envies the dead man that is going to his grave? God has done more for you by giving you assurance than if he had given you all the world, yes, ten thousand worlds!

When the Spanish ambassador boasted that his master was king of such a place, and of such a place, and of such a place, etc., the French ambassador answered, 'My master is king of France, king of France, king of France;' signifying thereby, that France was of more worth, than all the kingdoms under the power of the king of Spain. Ah, Christians! when the men of the world shall cry out, 'Oh, my riches! oh, my honors! oh, my preferments!' You may well cry out, 'Oh, assurance, assurance, assurance!' there being more real worth and glory in that than is to be found in all the wealth and glory of the world. Therefore do not envy the outward prosperity and felicity of worldly men, etc.

[3.] The third use. If God has given you assurance, then **give no way to slavish fears**. Fear not the scorn and reproaches of men, fear not any necessities. God will not deny him a crust—to whom he has given a Christ; he will not deny him a crumb—upon whom he has bestowed a crown; he will not deny him a less mercy—upon whom he has bestowed assurance, which is the prince of mercies. Fear not death, for why should you fear death, who have assurance of eternal life?

[4.] The fourth use. If God has given you a well-grounded assurance of your everlasting happiness and blessedness, then **question his love no more**. God does not love to have his love always called into question, by those who he has once assured of his love. No sins of God's children, makes any alteration in His love to them. Just so--none, no, not even God's sharpest dispensations, should make any alteration in our thoughts and affections towards Him. Psalm 89 30-35; Jer 31 3; Eccles 9 8.

[5.] The fifth use. If God has given you assurance, **then live holily, live angelically, keep your garments pure and white, walk with an even foot, be shining lights**, Rev 3 4; Matt 5 16. Your happiness here is your holiness, and in heaven your highest happiness will be your perfect holiness. Holiness differs nothing from happiness—but in name. Holiness is happiness in the bud, and happiness is holiness at the full. Happiness is nothing but the *quintessence of holiness*. The more holy any man is, the more the Lord loves him, John 14 21-23.

Augustine does excellently observe, in his tract on John 1 14, "that God loved the humanity of Christ more than any man, because he was fuller of grace and truth than any man." The philosopher could say, "that God was but an empty name without virtue." So are all our professions without holiness. Holiness is the very marrow and quintessence of all religion. Holiness is 'God' stamped and printed upon the soul; it is Christ formed in the heart; it is our light, our life, our beauty, our glory, our joy, our crown, our heaven, our all. The holy soul is happy in life, and blessed in death, and shall be transcendently glorious in the morning of the resurrection, when Christ shall say, "Lo, here am I, and my holy ones, who are my joy! Lo, here am I, and my holy ones, who are my crown! Upon the heads of these holy ones will I set an immortal crown!" Even so, Amen! Lord Jesus.